

> Thursday, October 14th, 2021

12:00 - 13:30

IFLAME RESEARCH SEMINAR

**RESEARCH
SEMINAR**



EMPOWERING CHANGEMAKERS FOR A BETTER SOCIETY



ABSTRACT

FLOW OF IDEAS: ECONOMIC SOCIETIES AND THE RISE OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

BY FRANCESCO CINNIRELLA (UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO)

We argue that economic societies, established during the eighteenth-century, contributed to technological progress through the diffusion of new ideas generated during the Scientific Revolution in Europe.

Economic societies functioned as a catalyst for the translation of scientific knowledge into useful knowledge and the diffusion to interested parties. We test this hypothesis by combining information on more than 3,300 society members from the membership lists of all active economic societies in the German lands with several measures of innovation and upper-tail human capital.

We find a robust positive relationship between the local number of society members and the number of valuable patents and exhibitors at the world fair. The positive impact of society members on early establishment of vocational schools and on skilled mechanical workers accounts for a potential mechanism.

We further show that grid-cell pairs with members from the same economic society show a higher technological similarity.

We interpret it as evidence that economic societies generated information networks which fostered spatial knowledge diffusion and shaped the geography of innovation.



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