The informal trade network of the Manila Galleon

The Manila Galleons were trade ships that linked the Philippines and Mexico between the 16th and 18th centuries, then part of the Spanish dominions. Their role in trans-Pacific trade was instrumental as they carried silks, ceramics, spices and silver between Acapulco and Manila. However, our knowledge about the informal side of this trade is rather limited. The EU-funded TRANSPACIFIC project will focus on its impact on human-environment interaction. It will check contraband trading, as
well as the diffusion of diseases, the role of technologies, the spread of knowledge, and the contacts between populations across the Pacific.

Objective

This project will provide a radically new history of early modern trans-Pacific trade, by critically re-evaluating conventionally-used sources, examining hitherto neglected historical archives and records in a range of Asian and European languages, and analysing recent archaeological evidence using new methodologies and perspectives. An interdisciplinary team, comprising specialists in Chinese, Japanese, Latin American, Southeast Asian, economic, environmental, and medical history, maritime archaeology, and geographical sciences, will, for the first time, systematically investigate the roles of actors, objects, side-effects, and exchanges that were 'invisible' or marginal to conventional histories of the Manila Galleon trade (1565 to 1815). They will also examine informal trade routes and networks in this trans-Pacific trade connection, concentrating on the 16th to 18th centuries. To achieve this goal, this project will expand upon the structure and impacts of contraband, informal, accidental, and undesired exchanges of cargoes, people, knowledge, technologies, and diseases across the Pacific, to evaluate, first, the complexity, nature, and degree of the global interconnectivity of Asian and European sub-regional networks, and, second, to reassess both their positive and negative impacts on trans-Pacific trade generally, and on indigenous actors and societies in China, Japan, and the Viceroyalty of Peru specifically. Our aim is to replace the outdated image of the galleon trade as being a pure exchange of silks, ceramics, and spices for silver between Acapulco and Manila, and to create a novel and more comprehensive bottom-up narrative that places human-environment interaction at the core of analysis. TRANSPACIFIC will substantially transform the understanding of the trans-Pacific Manila Galleon trade and its impacts, and, in so doing, will open the way for the re-evaluation of other major trans-maritime networks.

Fields of science

humanities > history and archaeology > history
natural sciences > chemical sciences > inorganic chemistry > transition metals
humanities > history and archaeology > archaeology
engineering and technology > materials engineering > ceramics

Programme(s)

H2020-EU.1.1. - EXCELLENT SCIENCE - European Research Council (ERC)
Topic(s)

ERC-2018-ADG - ERC Advanced Grant

Call for proposal

ERC-2018-ADG

See other projects for this call

Funding Scheme

ERC-ADG - Advanced Grant

Host institution

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN

Net EU contribution

€ 2 218 622,00

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Vlaams Gewest > Prov. Vlaams-Brabant > Arr. Leuven

Activity type

Higher or Secondary Education Establishments

Links

Contact the organisation  Website
Participation in EU R&I programmes
HORIZON collaboration network

Non-EU contribution

€ 0,00

Beneficiaries (3)
KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN

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€ 2,218,622,00

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Activity type

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Non-EU contribution

€ 0,00

PARIS-LODRON-UNIVERSITAT SALZBURG

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€ 0,00
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