

How Open Science can make the difference for grant applications in History Research

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University of Mannheim Open Science Day, 24th September

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Project: Political, economic and social networks in the late medieval village

- Will provide a new study of the nature of English medieval village communities before and after the Black Death of 1349
- How far were villages marked by?:
 - Social hierarchies or communal ties
 - Kinship groups or impersonal commercial networks
- And how did this change after the Black Death and between different regions?
- Will explore these questions by applying Social Network Analysis techniques to medieval court records
- These will allow us to explore how far individual attributes such as gender, family, wealth and officeholding impacted on default debts, land transfers, land inheritance, pledging and violence
- Team – Spike Gibbs (PI), Sophie Henle (Doctoral candidate/academic employee)

BW-Stiftung Eliteprogram for Postdocs

Baden-
Württemberg
Stiftung

WIR STIFTEN ZUKUNFT



- Annual programme offered by the BW-Stiftung
- Up to 150,000 euros awarded per project
- Funds projects in all academic spheres except clinical medicine
- Funds 14 places per year
- Strong focus on networking and training

The challenge – how to incorporate Open Science

- Narrow: Open Science Component in application
 - 2023 round had specific OS request
 - Specifically optional, but in a competitive application important to include
- Wider: Justifying medieval history for funding
 - Justifying spending money on improving wind turbines, developing drugs for tuberculosis or understanding how people have biases in judgements is, if not easy, at least straightforward
 - History is more difficult to justify – why should government money be spent to investigate people who died long ago
 - A public facing OS component is an useful approach – draw on history as an interesting topic, and a way for people to develop research skills

The solution – speaking to the Open Science Office

- I had very little knowledge about OS or how I could incorporate it into my project (although a strong desire too)
- I was pointed in the direction of David Morgan and Philipp Zumstein
- They quickly suggested a meeting and helped me develop a concrete plan to incorporate OS into my project
- This not only included advice about how to do this, but also how to effectively communicate this to funders (including providing detailed feedback on this part of the written application)

How Open Science will be used in the project

- Imbed OS at all stages of the project from initial planning to publication of the results
- Ensure methodology, data and results of the project are disseminated widely to allow scrutiny and for use in other projects
- Aims delivered in 4 specific steps

How Open Science will be used in the project

1. Pre-registration of research plan

- *Ensure academic integrity*
- *Agree research questions, hypotheses and analyses after data gathering complete but before analysis*
- *Document will be deposited and made OA*
- *Allows separation of results that respond directly to starting hypotheses and results developed through previously unpredicted patterns*

How Open Science will be used in the project

2. FAIRness of datasets

- *Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-useable*
- *Deposit data and any associated code in Mannheim MADATA repository*
- *FDZ will help ensure data is re-usable for other projects and replicability*

How Open Science will be used in the project

3. Creation of searchable database

- *Legacy post-project – work with colleagues to create searchable version of database*
- *Based on open-source software and online so accessible*
- *User friendly and searchable so people can easily explore the networks without specialist knowledge*
- *Hope data will be used to develop teaching of SNA and medieval history as currently little suitable material for historians*

How Open Science will be used in the project

4. Open Access publications

- *Research articles will be published in journal with which Mannheim has OA agreement*
- *Further article on database construction and how it can be used for teaching will be submitted to community-led, diamond OA journal Zeitarbeit - hosted by the Universitätsbibliothek Mannheim*

Summary

- Embedding OS principles into projects is not only an important aim for researchers on its own merits, but a way to signal to funders that you are committed to best-practice research
- For research areas with less obvious socio-economic benefits (like the humanities), having a public-facing OS element is also a good way to show why your research has wider value
- Practically, many researchers (like me) may not be initially that familiar with OS principles beyond general knowledge of OA, or lack the knowledge to turn ideas into concrete steps with can be communicated to funders
- Therefore, access to expertise at the OS office was central to my grant application and creating a stronger project