

INSTITUTIONAL LANDOWNERS, RENTAL CLUSTERS URBAN PLANS AND URBAN SOCIETY

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This session solicits research contributions concerning the broad range of urban institutional landowners whether lay or religious. In Latin Christendom, church properties grew in the urban settings from Late Medieval periods and became ever more prominent during the Post Tridentine era. In Paris alone, men's religious communities owned appreciable groups of rental properties (some 450 dwellings in the 18th century). Hospitals possessed extensive urban domains, recent investigations into the Trinity Hospital in Paris have shown the extent to which long term ownership allows detailed study of neighborhood use and occupancy both in terms of the town plan and the social structure of the neighborhoods. During the initial periods of fast urban expansion, urban governments also acquired land previously owned by large landowners: eg. Ghent and Bruges in Flanders. In the Southern Netherlands, war (16th century) and Counter Reform (17th century) led religious institutions to settle within the city walls, establish and expand domains, often choosing neighborhoods where large parts of the houses were leased to members of the lower social class and where the owners did not mind to sell their property and reinvest elsewhere. In general an overall study of institutional rental clusters and landholdings should lay the foundations for long-term studies in urban evolution since these "rental parks" remained in the hands of a single landlord for extended periods of time. A serial enquiry into land occupancy and tenant society will enrich our perspectives regarding urban evolution.