

M08	FEMALE AGENCY AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN LATE MEDIEVAL, EARLY MODERN AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY CITIES
Organisers:	Bert De Munck (University of Antwerp) Prof. Dr. Nicholas Terpstra (University of Toronto) Drs. Ellen Decraene (University of Antwerp)
Period:	All periods
Date:	Saturday, 1 September 2012
Time:	14:00-15:30
Room:	116

Description

The diversity of clubs, associations, brotherhoods and guilds that together formed civil society, is ascribed an important role in the molding of early modern social and political culture. As a result, among other things, of a broadening of the scope of civil society-research to include late medieval and early modern religious brotherhoods and poor relief schemes, recent scholars have moreover shown that women were active members of urban associational life. On the whole, however, historical interest in civil society is not reflected in scholarly attention to the participation of female actors – notwithstanding the intricate relationship of civil society with the private sphere of the family. All too often historical research on civil society is inclined to focus exclusively on formal (generally institutional) social networks and the (male) public sphere.

This session starts from the assumption that late medieval, early modern and nineteenth century (urban) civil society cannot be understood without fully taking female networks into account.

It will examine

- 1) how civil society transformed as a result of changing positions of women in the household (both economically and culturally) and
- 2) how women's agency was affected by their role in public life.

Possible perspectives include:

- [inclusion and exclusion] To what kind of public associations did female actors have access? What role did family ties, neighborhood relationships and bonds of friendship play in their admittance? Can marriage for instance be conceived of as a kind of gateway for female actors to formal networks?
- [female agency] What did membership mean for female agency in both public life and the private sphere of family and household? Was there a relationship between economic change (female position on the labour market, 'industrious revolution', etc.) and the evolution of female participation in civil society?
- [social participation and role] What social and institutional activities did female groups engage in? In what sense and to what extent were female actors included or excluded from collective activities and boards? Did their collective devotional, charitable or philanthropic work arise out of contemporary gendered expectations about women's 'proper' social role, or did they transgress these?
- [formal versus informal networks] How were formal and informal networks intertwined (or not)? Did membership of guilds and confraternities and informal networks overlap? Can we trace changes in the mutual importance of these networks for female actors over time?

- [evolution] Did women's groups face different challenges from those of their male counterparts? Did they evolve differently as a result of interaction with political and ecclesiastical authorities or with other social groups?

Scientific Programme

1620 BEYOND 'THE PUBLIC' AND 'THE PRIVATE': FEMALE AGENCY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS IN A SMALL EARLY MODERN CITY IN THE SOUTHERN NETHERLANDS (AALST)

Ellen Decraene (University of Antwerp, Centre for Urban History, Antwerp, Belgium)

1252 INFANTICIDE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON. FEMININE SOLIDARITY IN A CRIMINAL PRACTICE

Yolanda Fuertes Garcia (Universidad de Cantabria, Dpto. Historia Moderna y Contemporanea, Santander, Spain)

933 WOMEN AND THEIR AGENCY IN PUBLIC LIFE OF CZECH URBAN SOCIETIES IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

Michaela Malaniková (Masaryk University of Brno, Department of History, Brno, Czech Republic)

680 UNCOVERING PATHWAYS OF FEMALE AGENCY IN THE CIVIL SOCIETY OF LATE MEDIEVAL FLORENCE

Carole Frick (Southern Illinois University, Historical Studies, Edwardsville, USA)