

M38 **URBAN NETWORKS: BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE**

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Period: Medieval/Early modern

Date: Friday, 31 August 2012

Time: 09:00-12:30

Room: 217

Description

Recent studies on the social history of late medieval and early modern cities have often focused on the typically urban range of formal and informal associations. It is believed that they formed a reasonably autonomous intermediate level between the private domain (the individual and his family, from nuclear to extended) and the (urban, regional or “national”) authorities. Central to the study of these associations are concepts such as ‘civil society’ and ‘social capital’. The former denotes the variety of associations and its collective role in the social fabric of the city. The latter refers to the social relations and networks between people and the agency that individuals derive from these relations. Both concepts, however, have inevitably led to a rather static view of urban society, discarding the possibility of overlap between networks, of mobility and changing equilibria and, most of all, neglecting the permanent state of fluidity of social relations in general. For example, studies focusing on only one actor in the field of civil society (one association, one family etc.) are valuable for their in-depth knowledge of that actor, but they fail to grasp the complex mediation between urban associations and their members. A more nuanced approach is called for, paying due attention to overlooked, but rather elusive phenomena such as continuously changing social relations and overlap between urban networks.

Related to the issue of overlapping networks is the dichotomy between the individual and the various collectives to which they belonged. Recent research has shown that combined membership of different types of associations could create more efficient social networks for individuals and groups and could even enhance social efficiency of urban society as a whole. But, although each collective offered opportunities, they also had their limitations and their own specific patterns of social, political, cultural and economic inclusion and exclusion. Membership of certain associations could strongly be determined by social status, family ties and loyalties or could be a matter of individual choice. It remains to be seen to what extent the development of social strategies and the construction and use of networks was initiated by individual agency or by the structures of different collectives. Could city dwellers actively build (and make use of) their networks to position themselves in society or should we consider individual agency as determined by existing structures?

We welcome paper proposals dealing with the following questions:

1. Network strategies. Did city dwellers actively develop networks and did they strategically make use of them? This question also touches upon the opportunities and restrictions of networks and the extent of awareness of it. Is it possible to discern clusters in combined membership of networks? We encourage – but do not limit ourselves to – the use of new technologies and methodologies to study urban networks (i.e. GIS, UCINET, Pajek, Social Networks Visualizer etc.).

2. Conflicting networks. Polarization in different fields of society (political, religious, cultural,...) could deeply influence urban society. However, starting from individual agency and networks, it remains to be seen how deep polarization was really rooted. How did city dwellers cope with conflicting networks of patronage, loyalties or dependencies within formal and informal urban groupings such as guilds, chambers of rhetoric, neighborhoods and so on? For example, did religious reform polarize urban networks? What was the effect of processes of state formation and bureaucratization?

3. Materializing networks. How and to what extent did networks visualize their presence in urban society? Did performance, architecture or the use of urban space contribute to the sustainability of networks?

Scientific Programme

1122 COIMBRA, WHEN THE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS DOMINATED THE SPACE

Lia Nunes (Mosteiro De Santa Clara-A-Velha Coimbra, Portugal)

1051 SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND ACCESS TO FORMAL NETWORKS IN DIVERGING URBAN SOCIETIES. THE CITIES OF MECHELEN, 'S-HERTOGENBOSCH AND LEIDEN IN THE 17th CENTURY

Jord Hanus (University of Antwerp , Department of History, Antwerp, Belgium)

M. F. Van Dijck (Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

899 RULING THE CITY: THE SOCIAL NETWORKS OF A CASTILIAN OLIGARCHY (1450-1520)

Maria Angeles Martin Romera (University Complutense of Madrid, Medieval History, Madrid, Spain)

855 FLORENTINE MERCHANTS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN CITIES: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli (University of Florence, Firenze, Italy)

Jeroen Puttevils (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

852 HÔPITAUX ET RÉSEAUX DE MÉTIER À BRUXELLES AU 14E SIÈCLE

Thibault Jacobs (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium)

513 OVERLAPPING NEIGHBOURHOOD SOCIAL NETWORKS WITHIN FIFTEENTH CENTURY LONDON

Justin Colson (Institute of Historical Research, University of London, Centre for Metropolitan History, London, U.K.)

266 THE TOWN OF BAMBERG: CONFLICTING, COMPETING OR COMPLEMENTING COMMUNITIES?

Claudia Esch (University of Bamberg, Germany)

1454 CONNECTING INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS: SOCIAL RELATIONS AND CONFIGURATIONS IN LATE-MEDIEVAL VIENNA

Gruber Elisabeth (Department of History, Vienna, Austria)