

Groupe de Recherche d'Histoire (GRHis), Université de Rouen Normandie (France)
Institut Universitaire de France

Call for papers

Gender Differences in the History of European Legal Cultures : 8th Conference

NORTH VS SOUTH?

Gender, law and economy in early modern and modern Europe (15th-19th century).

University of Rouen Normandie, 17-18 November 2016
Maison de l'Université, salle des conférences, Place Emile Blondel, Mont St Aignan

Organizers

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Beatrice Zucca Micheletto (GRHis-Université de Rouen Normandie)

The aim of the 8th conference of the network Gender Differences in the History of European Legal Cultures will be to analyse the consequences of different European juridical systems on the development of specific economic roles for men and women. At the core of the comparative analysis, at the European scale, there will be the different economic evolutions of European regions in the early modern and modern times. Customary laws characterized Northern Europe and Roman law characterized Southern Europe, but at the local level there were many differences, depending on urban statutes, craft rules, family structures, political and economic systems.

Some gender historians of early modern economy applied to early modern societies categories that had been created by the economists of emerging countries in order to challenge the relationships between women's economic rights, marital economy and economic development. In a provocative and stimulating article, Amy L. Erickson suggested a relationship between the development of English capitalism, in the 18th century, and the fact that married women, under the regime of the “common law”, lost all their properties. This allowed husbands to use, and to invest, much more capitals than if they had had to save their wives' dowry, in case they had to claim it, when widowed, as it was current in Mediterranean Europe, under the regime of the Roman law. At the same time, single women had the complete control on their goods, much more than in most early modern societies. The outcome was that, in early modern England, there was an important stock of potential investors¹.

In a recent article, Tina De Moor and Jan Luiten Van Zanden argued that in Early Modern North-West Europe the transfer of property – from parents to children and from bride to groom – was a crucial factor for the development of “labour-market oriented” strategies, that enabled the rapid economic growth of the area. Indeed, in North-West Europe the necessity/will to amass resources with a view to marriage encouraged young girls to enter the temporary service. At the same time, a marital regime based on the conjugal fund, stimulated the wives to take part actively in the business family. In contrast, in South Europe the endowment system would have kept women away from the labour market, since their position was more or less fixed by the presence of the dowry, that they received as inheritance portion

¹ Amy Louise Erickson, *Coverture and Capitalism*, « History Workshop Journal », No. 59 (Spring, 2005), p. 1-

from their family estate and got back from their husband's heirs in widowhood².

Sheilagh Ogilvie suggested a link between the exclusion of both women and Jews from the “social capital” represented by guilds' networks in Southern Germany, and the subsequent lack of capitalistic development of that region of Europe³. The research about women and guilds in Early Modern European cities often insisted on the exclusion of women from guilds, at least in the early modern period. The problem of the presence, or rather absence, of women from guilds is part of the more general problem of the evolution of women's role in skilled activities, during the early modern times, since the “decline thesis”, developed in 1919 by Alice Clark, and challenged, for the Italian case, by Angela Groppi and Simona Laudani and, for the French case, by Claire Crowston and Daryl Hafter.

More generally, the aim of the conference is to question the narrative of the “great divergence” between the economies of Northern and Southern Europe in relation with the opportunities that different juridical systems gave to women and men to act in the society as economic actors. Were they so different? Were women allowed to play a public role, recognised at an institutional level? Which role did women's property play in the urban economy? And how did a specific kind of marital economy influence the economic development? Are “industrious” and “industrial” revolutions useful tools to understand the economic development and, if it is the case, are they related to specific juridical systems?

Conference language: English, French

Please, send suggestions for contributions in the form of an abstract in English or in French (3000 characters max) **by July 30th 2016** to : anna.bellavitis@univ-rouen.fr and to beatrice.zucca@gmail.com.

The conference will cover the expenses of accommodation and most meals of all speakers. The participants will be asked to make every effort to secure travelling expenses from their own institutions but the organizers are working towards reimbursing the cost of budget travelling for those unable to find other sponsors.

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² Tina De Moor & Jan Luiten van Zanden, *Girl power: The European marriage pattern and labour markets in the North Sea region in the late medieval and early modern period*, « *The Economic History Review* », 1(63), 2010, p. 1–33

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