

Conference report on Gender in the European Town

The scope of the conference, Gender in the European Town, was to look at the urban arena as spaces that created and embodied developments in social, cultural, political, and economic spheres. The notion of civic-identity and gender-identity were explored from every angle imaginable. Gender and identity was discussed in the courts, in the factories, in colonies and in promenading through the town and meeting at certain gendered and/or political places, and most importantly of all - the transmission of these notions went across local, national and transnational borders. The changing roles and dynamics of the towns and gender from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century was explored, and the difficulties in transnational comparative studies were celebrated and highlighted.

These central themes were explored further in four parallel strands in each of the three days, the conference lasted. The strands were divided up into more specific themes, that would enable the discussion to be more exact and focused. The strands were 'Political Culture and Civic Identity', 'Stretching the Urban Economy' and 'Space Place Environment: Rethinking Space', of which the latter was divided into two parallel strands, due to the high number of participating papers. There were three sessions in each strand per day, each with up to three papers, a panel and discussion. This allowed for much reflection and focused discussion of the papers within the given themes in each session, and these discussions often did not end with each session, but the debates were carried on over a cup of tea/coffee and cake - of which there was plenty.

The conference was started off each day with a renowned historian, who would not only present their own reflections on the central themes of the conference as keynote-speakers, they also presented their own current research. Furthermore they also participated as discussants at a Ph.D. master class. At this master class seven Ph.D. candidates, myself included, had the honour and the privilege - with shaking hands and trembling voices - to present our research, our questions and our difficulties to a more than capable panel of experts, who in turn asked interested and expanding questions and offered new directions and methodology. It is my understanding that, although it was an intense few hours, which resembled exam-like conditions, we all felt it had been a worthwhile and valuable experience, and new connections were made.

Upon leaving the conference, I and my colleagues from Aarhus University, felt full of new inspiration and motivation to carry on our work. Our heads had been filled with so much new research and so many new ideas about how to think about gender and the notion of civic-identity in the scope of the town as a space and place. I had presented my own research for the first time at an international conference, and I felt I was welcomed into the world of international academia.

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