

Brief summary of the Aix meeting (1-2 September 2011)

Theme: Gender and Luxury in the Modern Urban Economy: A European Perspective

Aims of the meeting: to prepare a second book and to begin to organize our session for the next EAUH Conference in Prague (2012).

This was the second meeting of the Theme grouping: the Urban Economy as part of the Gender in the European Town Network, funded by the FKK in Denmark.

The meeting was held in Aix-en-Provence, and hosted by the Theme Leader, Anne Montenach, and the Maison méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme at the University of Aix-Marseille.

This was a working seminar, to which members of the Centre were invited along with interested members of GENETON. The meeting was structured around pre-circulated papers, with brief presentations by the authors and formal comment by two readers, followed by an open discussion. Nine papers were presented on luxury and we had the opportunity to meet Anna C. Fridrich and to discuss her paper for the 'agency' book. The definition of luxury and the shifting meaning of the term were at the core of the discussion, as well as the role of towns as major crossroads for luxury trades. Gender aspects were not forgotten – e.g. luxury and male/female construction of the self, roles of men and women in luxury trades, etc.

Three main themes emerged from the meeting: control (sumptuary laws), consumption and production/commercialization. These three themes could constitute the different sections of the book. It has been suggested a dialogue by clusters to determine exactly who is doing what inside each theme and to avoid gaps or repetitions. Drafts could be put on blackboard in order to facilitate exchanges.

At this time, papers cover mostly Northern Europe and the 18th century. By circulating the Call for Papers for Prague, we hope to get proposals dealing with Southern Europe and the 19th century, so that the book could cover Western Europe in the 18th-19th centuries.

We envisage a book of maximum 14 papers (6000-7000 words each). No book proposal will be sent before Prague but we plan to set two different deadlines for the papers: one for the participants in the Aix meeting – who will not necessarily attend the Prague session (main session, 8 papers) – and another one for the newcomers.

It was a stimulating and successful meeting, which has helped identify and prepare the way forward.