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Gender in Urban Europe

Sites of Political Activity and Citizenship, 1750–1900

Edited by
Krista Cowman, Nina Javette Koefoed and Åsa Karlsson Sjögren

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Modern conceptions of citizenship are frequently associated with the emergence of nation-states, but throughout the period covered by this volume, citizenship continued to be practised at a local level. An on-going growth in urban populations prompted an associated rise in the power and complexity of local government, making towns and cities a central site for the privileges and demands of modern citizenship. This volume investigates the complex and sometimes unexpected ways in which women and men negotiated the gendering of citizenship in urban locations, at the same time paying attention to the interrelated impact of social class, age and marital status on its development. Through an integrated set of local studies exploring the gendering of political activities across a variety of sites, the volume explores the processes through which groups developed political activity and the connections between such activity and the expansion of citizenship. It contributes to an overall discussion of the connections between the formation of gendered and class-dependent citizenship, and the development of democracy and political representation.

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Preface

In Europe today, most of the population lives in towns and women still make up the majority; thus the relationships between men and women and an understanding of masculinity and femininity are central to the idea of the city. As women constituted a significant majority in most towns, which were governed by men of a certain social order, the cultural dynamics of gender were and remain important. Towns were central to migratory patterns and crucial in the transmission of ideas across what came to be seen as the idea of Europe. Europe was identified as a place in the mind's eye, but boundaries shifted, nation-states were not fixed, and people identified as much with locality, region or principality as nationality. Thus, many people shaped their identities from urban culture. As places which fostered and disseminated key social, economic, political and cultural developments, towns were central to the creation of gendered identities and the transmission of ideas across local, national and transnational boundaries. This book is one of a series of publications from a European network of historians whose interests lie in examining the ways that the European urban experience was gendered over time and across borders. We also ask what influence gender has on the shape of towns themselves.

The research network Gender in the European Town: The Making of the Modern Town is interjecting gender into urban historiography and therefore altering perspectives on urban identity and development. The period from about 1600 is fundamental to how our modern cities have developed and shapes our contemporary understanding of towns and the way they work in cultural, spatial and gendered ways. The idea of the city is central to contemporary practices, which draw on ideas and imagined spaces of the past. Concentrating on the three-hundred-year period between 1650 and 1950 that traces the emergence, diversification and developing hegemony of the town in the history of Europe, this network interrogates the operation of gender in three distinct, but interrelated, areas of urban study: the economic, the political and the spatial.

The network examines the influence of gender on the shape of towns, on urban spaces and as a force for urban change through relational studies, which explore the subtle and changing nature and operation of power,

patriarchy and privilege through the lens of the town, alert to the ways that these factors shaped and were shaped by gendered identities. This research explores relationships of gender, space, workplace, commerce, trade and sociability and will promote a wider understanding of the issues of gender and urban experience. Asking new questions and exploring a range of towns, the network will contribute to a wider understanding of the spaces, places and dynamics that shape the contemporary urban European world. The scope and scale of this project will ultimately tell us a great deal more about the formation of urban identities and cultures, and help us to understand the European inflection of these developments over an important formative period. It will broaden our idea about the development and legacy of towns in this period and will help us to understand the contribution of gender to the culture of towns over time.

Deborah Leigh Simonton

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Introduction

Krista Cowman, Nina Javette Koefoed and Åsa Karlsson Sjögren

Modern conceptions of citizenship are frequently associated with the emergence of nation states.[1] From the mid-eighteenth-century onwards government, politics, welfare provision and particularly the military were centralised, encouraging a sense of cohesive national identity. This was strengthened through a growing personification of the nation and developed and reinforced through increasing use of cultural items such as symbols, most notably in the French example of Marianne, that aimed to shift public allegiance from the figure of the monarch to the more abstract concept of the nation. Indeed, in many parts of Europe throughout the twentieth-century, nationality became the basis on which citizenship was awarded to—or withheld from—those inhabiting the boundaries of a nation state. Yet the shift away from locally-defined citizenship comprising a reciprocal relationship of rights, duties and responsibilities passing between a city-state and its inhabitants to a new identity of citizenship that focussed on the nation was not a clear linear progression. Throughout the period covered by this volume, citizenship continued to be practised at a local level. An on-going growth in urban populations prompted an associated rise in the power and complexity of local government, making towns and cities a central site for the privileges and demands of modern citizenship. This also had important implications for how citizenship was gendered. Charles Tilly's contention that the shift to national citizenship created a 'sturdily-constructed gender barrier' that would take feminists 'more than a century' to dismantle appears overly pessimistic when viewed from the perspective of the local.[2] Whilst citizenship as defined at a national level was restricted to men for much of this period, local citizenship did not follow the same pattern. As growing populations demanded more from their localities in terms of support and infrastructures, local government expanded and began to acquire the historic responsibilities of religious, philanthropic and charitable bodies such as poor relief, health and education. The administration associated with this shift from private philanthropy to elected public boards or corporations enabled the urban middle-classes to develop models of active citizenship, independent of but connected to those operating at a national level. Women's involvement in these new elected bodies, which

chronologically came later than men's, was frequently invoked in support of arguments for a re-gendering of national citizenship.

This volume investigates a number of examples, which illuminate the complex and sometimes unexpected ways in which women and men negotiated the gendering of citizenship in urban locations at the same time paying attention to the interrelated impact of social class, age (generation) and marital status on its development. Thus it will contribute to an overall discussion of the connections between the formation of gendered and class-dependent citizenship and the development of democracy and political representation, a question still highly relevant today. Through an integrated set of local studies exploring the gendering of political activities across a variety of sites, the volume explores the processes through which groups developed political activity and the connections between such activity and the expansion of citizenship. Each essay outlines how a particular activity was constituted as political and explores how this contributed to a gendered concept of citizenship. While the majority of chapters will concentrate on shorter historical periods of about 50 years, collectively they overlap to provide a longer chronological overview, showing developments across the region throughout the long nineteenth-century.

THE CHARACTER OF URBAN NORTH-WEST EUROPE

Comparative urban history reveals patterns that develop in particular regions over time and the complex connections through which ideas are spread within and between nation states. Here, our focus is on the emergence and development of a gendered concept of citizenship in a number of locations in North-West Europe between 1750 and 1900. Our chosen region, roughly bordering the North Sea and stretching from Ireland, England and Scotland over the Netherlands and Germany to Denmark and Sweden, shared a number of religious, cultural and political factors which combined to provide a coherent background against which issues of political activity and of citizenship can be explored.

Whilst each of the countries considered here had particular national characteristics, there are clear examples of transnational transferences, which shaped their urban developments. Some of these were economic, connected to historic maritime trading links, although these in turn influenced social, political and cultural developments. Indeed, as Corrine Péneau has observed, trade 'on both sides of the Baltic and the North seas' shaped urban culture from the late medieval period as 'elites on both sides [of the water] began to have the same lifestyle' sharing luxury goods and tastes.[3] There were similar patterns too in the forms of political activity and citizenship that emerged across this region. North-West European Towns shared patterns of development originating in the medieval guild systems and locally-defined types of citizenship (the burghership) which constituted

their urban life, politically and legally, in small provincial towns as well as in cities, although they evolved and developed at different rates; indeed many parts of Northern Europe were unique in continuing to develop large numbers of towns into the early-modern era.[4]

During the period covered by this volume industrialisation and political reform were spreading unevenly through North-West Europe. Guild systems and burghership started to be displaced although their influence persisted in certain areas, as we shall see. Political similarities can be discerned throughout this region during this time. Although the impact of the French Revolution was felt across North-West Europe, monarchies were retained across the countries examined in this study. Consequently a liberal rather than a republican model of citizenship is what is being considered in the chapters in this volume, (with one exception in the case of the Netherlands). Power was moving away from monarchs towards an enfranchised 'people' during this period, although who could vote, and for what, remained a matter of live debate.

Alongside these political similarities a shared religious heritage could be seen as a key distinguishing feature for North-West Europe. Religion played a significant role in local and national political life both through the position of the church and through the struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism; the latter's lack of strength at national level in comparison with much of Southern Europe led to stronger nationally-defined religious identities, with established churches in much of the region.[5] But religion also lost aspects of its legitimizing grounds within politics and nation-building during the period under investigation.[6]

This volume thus investigates the special implications of a Reformed Protestant state for the development of citizenship in a geographical region which subsequently produced the main model for 20th century welfare states. As Grell and Cunningham have noted, Protestant regions developed a distinct model of charitable activity, which aimed to eliminate forms of poverty rather than to retain a proportion of 'deserving' poor as recipients of charitable donations that would benefit the spiritual standing of the giver.[7] Countries throughout North-West Europe retained strong connections between Church and state in the post-reformation era, which had specific implications for the shape of their local political life and regulation of society. The connection can be seen in the responsibility of the monarch to ensure the good Christian life of the people, but also in the political and administrative roles that were delegated to the local clergy. These made the local pastor, the church and Protestant moral values central players in the development of political culture, even though the implication of these factors changed over time and varied between different localities.[8]

The patriarchal character of Protestant states placed great emphasis on the role of the father in the home, the household being one of the three estates (state, church and household) which combined to make the nation. This model, which invested ultimate authority, but also social responsibility,

in male heads of households, had important implications for the ways in which citizenship developed.[9] Another significant characteristic of North-West Europe in relation to household structure was its marriage pattern. Couples in this region tended to marry late after accumulating the income necessary for independent living, thus leading to a predominance of two-generation households in the region, unlike the three-generation model that characterized southern Europe.[10] Later marriage also brought greater numbers of unmarried adults to urban centres. All of these factors had significant implications for the development of political citizenship in towns and cities, as this was often connected to an individual's ability to be classified as the 'head' of a household, economically and socially independent. Protestantism impacted on citizenship in other ways too. One common heritage in post-reformation states was an emphasis on literacy emanating from both Church and state. Lutheran states in particular developed high levels of literacy, originally within a domestic or ecclesiastical setting as Appel and Fink-Jensen have noted.[11] Rising literacy rates encouraged a shared experience of the enlightenment throughout the region, which influenced the development of shared public cultures from the late eighteenth-century.

THE SELECTED TOWNS

Recent research has drawn attention to the importance of the local in shaping political activity.[12] Whilst high politics were practiced by an elite minority at the centre of the state, historians of socialist and radical movements have turned to the local study as a means of investigating the political activities of groups who lacked access to the central structures of political power.[13] Women's historians have also followed this trend, arguing that domestic responsibilities and differences between local and national suffrage made local politics an easier site for women to access.[14] The essays in this volume build on these approaches to show how different patterns of formation of both nation states and citizenship were linked to political activities at local levels. They show how local political practices were gendered, both in terms of facilitating women's access, but also through shaping and popularising idealised models of masculinity that permeated urban life.

The towns and cities that we consider in this volume have been chosen as ones that have a story to tell that is significant to our overall narrative about the role of gender in the development of political activity and citizenship. By examining towns that have (for the most part) hitherto been under-researched, we take the opportunity to reflect upon how they do or do not differ from the ones that are most often examined, and thus present new insights into, for example, the different types of political activity found and the implications of this on a national level. There is also one capital city, Copenhagen, discussed in this volume, but the main focus is deliberately on provincial sites outside of the main trading routes and political centres.

Each of the chapters addresses explicitly the specific urban context in which it is operating and outlines the distinctive and representational aspects of its location. By selecting towns which are representative in size, economy and governance models, the volume offers a series of discussions which will have broader applicability elsewhere across the region. At the same time, the inclusion of case-studies of more politically radical towns such as Carlow and Wells emphasizes that the category of the political citizen was created and refined in many sites beyond a nation's capital. Each chapter considers a different aspect of citizenship that collectively combines to demonstrate the multiplicity of its forms in urban environments. This enables us to offer a comparative theorisation of the political processes emerging from a variety of conditions in different sizes of town, and to consider how they in turn influenced macro-political processes.

CITIZENSHIP AND GENDER HISTORY

The concept of citizenship has informed much recent research in the fields of both gender and urban history. T. H. Marshall's classic text, *Citizenship and Social Class*, identified three forms of citizenship, the civil, which emerged in the eighteenth-century, the political, connected to nineteenth-century franchise reforms, and the social which emerged alongside post-war welfare states.[15] Each phase of citizenship was associated with the acquisition of corresponding civil, political and social sets of rights. Marshall's explanation of these forms as overlapping but ultimately evolving, his ascription of a particular historical period to each form, his broader chronology which linked the development of citizenship to that of capitalist economies and his insistence that citizenship involved more than suffrage have all made his theories attractive to historians.[16] His work has been less useful for gender historians, however, as each of his categories implicitly genders the citizen as male. His chronology does not map easily onto women's acquisition of rights, and whilst he may recognise this, noting, for example, that the status of wives was 'in some important respects, peculiar' with regard to eighteenth-century property law, he does not discuss the complexities of women's citizenship as compared to men's, nor consider what aspects of masculinity may have underpinned the construction of his categories.[17]

Marshall's unproblematised assumption of a masculine norm has not rendered his work useless for feminist scholars, however. Although some have critiqued the narrowness of his definition, many have found that he offered a framework to build on. As Walby observed, acknowledging that women historically lacked men's access to citizenship could open 'the way to discuss degrees of citizenship obtained by different social groups at different times.'[18] Studying the history of those who struggled for inclusion in contemporary definitions of citizenship underpinned scholarship on women's politics, both in parties and in the wider feminist movement.[19]

Others scholars have sought to extend the definition of citizenship beyond the temporal evolutions suggested by Marshall. Lister takes Marshall's idea of citizenship as a developing process but has argued that individual human agency is critical to this, suggesting a dual understanding that recognises citizenship as being at once a process of acquiring status connected to a series of rights, *and* a practice involving 'both obligations and political participation, broadly defined.'[20] Attention has also been paid to citizenship as an identity offering both a sense of belonging to a community and a capacity to participate in and exercise politics.[21] Cultural citizenship, defined by Rosaldo as permitting citizens 'the right to be different' without forfeiting the benefits of full democratic participation, has broadened the term further.[22] Whilst cultural citizenship has been associated with recent waves of migration, scholars such as Stevenson have emphasised its connections to developing media and mass communications to suggest that its recognition could have important consequences for our understandings of 'the politicization of everyday life.'[23] Historical explorations of the civil, political and social aspects of citizenship have been joined by investigations into its economic and sexual dimensions.[24] Canning and Rose have highlighted its discursive dimensions, emphasising the 'specific practice of claims making' as a means of exploring historically gendered forms of citizenship.[25]

Citizenship has traditionally been regarded as involving a balance between rights conferred by the state, on the one hand, and obligations towards the state on the other. Recent research has considered the ways in which the argument of obligations fulfilled leading to rights to follow was used in the struggle for universal parliamentary suffrage.[26] Isin and Nielsen have interpreted citizenship defined by rights and obligations as a passive form of citizenship, operating in contradiction to the active form comprising actual actions by the citizen.[27] Following from this, they argue for the importance of moving beyond the idea of the individually acting citizen, to look in more detail at the act or acts that enable subjects to constitute themselves as citizens. Their work distinguishes between the active citizen, performing within established structures of citizenship, and the activist citizen, performing a creative act of citizenship that in turn may 'create a sense of the possible and of a citizenship that is yet to come.'[28] Thus, they show how acts of citizenship might transform subjects into citizens and create both inclusion and exclusion in a variety of ways, and negotiate the forms of citizenship and political actions recognised as political.[29]

The contributions to this volume build on the approach of Isin and Nielsen to consider a variety of acts of citizenship within the context of urban history. Focusing on such acts enables us to question the conditions that have led to certain acts being constituted as political as well as the identity of those who were able to perform such acts at a particular time. Whilst we do not believe that acts of citizenship were restricted to urban sites, there are good reasons for locating our study in towns and cities. The concept of citizenship has long been associated with the physical space of