

Session 40:**Gateways to Work in Urban Spaces: Women's Strategies, Networks, Institutions, and Mobilities (18th–20th Century)**

Urban labor markets have historically shaped and been shaped by women's access to work, their professional trajectories, and their ability to sustain and progress within urban environments. This panel invites contributions that explore the multiple pathways through which women entered and navigated urban labor markets, considering both the mechanisms of access and the skills and knowledge required to participate in different types of urban economies.

Additionally, we aim to examine how women's work contributed to transforming urban spaces themselves. The presence of female labor influenced the design of urban infrastructure, the creation of institutions, and the development of services tailored to the needs of a working female population. How did cities adapt to the presence of large numbers of female workers? How did women's participation in different sectors—industrial, commercial, service-based—shape the urban environment?

Contributions may address the following themes:

- Mechanisms of access to urban labor markets: The role of family ties, friendship networks, migration chains, employer recruitment strategies, guilds, professional associations, or charitable institutions in shaping work opportunities.
- Control, exclusion, and restriction policies: Historical and institutional mechanisms of control, expulsion, and veto affecting specific groups of women in their access to particular occupations. This may include legal barriers, moral regulations, social stigmatization, or policies limiting certain groups (e.g., migrant women, lower-class women, or married women) from entering specific labor sectors.
- Education and skills acquisition: The training, apprenticeships, or informal learning processes necessary to work in industrial, commercial, or service-based urban economies.
- Mobility and career progression: How women adapted to urban labor demands, switched professions, or leveraged personal and institutional support to sustain long-term employment.
- Urban transformations and female labor: The impact of women's work on urban infrastructure, including the development of nurseries, schools, daycare centers, hospitals, professional training centers, and other institutions supporting female workers.
- Comparative and transnational perspectives: Differences in women's access to urban labor markets and their impact on city structures across regions, economic models, and historical contexts.

We welcome interdisciplinary, comparative, and transnational historical approaches that shed light on the diverse ways women engaged with and reshaped urban economies between the 18th and 20th centuries.

Organizers

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- Manuela Martini Université de Lyon Lumière-2
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Submit your proposal via the conference website before October 22nd, 2025:

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