

Ghent University – Department of History is hiring:

1 PhD researcher (m/f/x) for an FWO Senior Research project on the pragmatic, socio-economic and legal historical context in which the oldest borough charters in the Low Countries and northern France were negotiated and codified  
(late 11<sup>th</sup>-early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries)

Project title: *“A Pragmatic Reality: The Performance and Codification of Collective Agency in the ‘Age of Freedom’ of Urban Communities in the Southern Low Countries and Northern France (late 11th - early 13th Centuries)”*

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PHD WORK PACKAGE

Research on the early development of urban communities in Western Europe has long been determined by a political and institutional approach of the liberties, laws and customs these communities were granted by their rulers in the form of so-called ‘borough charters’. As a result of this narrow focus, we still remain ignorant of the pragmatic context in which these laws and rights were negotiated and materialized, of the socio-economic conditions that shaped the agency of the social groups involved, and of how legal concepts reflected an underlying ‘law in minds’.

This project proposes an interregional comparative study of a corpus of about 150 typologically varying borough charters dated pre-1200 granted to cities and communes in the southern Low Countries and northern France during the pioneering phase of their development. The methodology relies on three approaches which will examine interrelations between people, documents and contexts from an anthropological perspective:

- 1) a **pragmatic-documentary analysis**, with the aim to reconstruct the context in which law and liberties were written down during the experimental period of pragmatic literacy and record-based government;
- 2) a **political and socio-economic analysis**, aiming to untangle the ‘collectiveness’ within early-stage urban communities;
- 3) a **legal historical analysis**, with the goal to consider the charters as the consolidation of medieval expectations of law in the power struggle between rulers and subjects.

The PhD research will be carried out partly on an individual basis and partly in collaboration with the project leaders, and will result in several (co-authored) publications. In addition, the PhD fellow will present their results at scholarly meetings home and abroad and is expected to complete the PhD within four years.

The project is led from Ghent University (Els De Paermentier and Jan Dumolyn, Dept. of History and Dirk Heirbaut, Dept. of Metajuridica, Private and Corporate Law) in collaboration with the Free University of Brussels (Georges Declercq and Bart Lambert, Dept. of History). The place of employment is Ghent University (Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 35, Ghent).

## OFFER

A full time 4-year PhD contract (one year, renewable with three years after a positive first-term evaluation) that is funded by the **Research Foundation — Flanders** (FWO). The starting date of employment will be decided in consultation with the selected candidate and will start **no later than 1 November 2023**.

The PhD fellow will have the opportunity to participate in (inter)national conferences and will be in close contact with colleagues from the [Henri Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies](#) (UGent), the [HOST Research Group for Urban History](#) (VU Brussels) and the [Ghent Legal Institute](#) (UGent).

## CANDIDATE PROFILE

- You hold a Master's degree in History or an equivalent Master's degree and have a keen interest in medieval urban history, socio-political history and law history.
- You have demonstrable experience in working with original medieval documentary sources. Knowledge of the auxiliary sciences of diplomatics and palaeography is a plus.
- You have sufficient knowledge of Latin and are willing to improve this during the period of the project.
- You can work both independently and in a team, you are a critical thinker who works accurately and systematically.
- You have good oral and written communication skills in Dutch, English and French and are willing to improve these during the period of the project.

## HOW TO APPLY

- **Apply no later than 12 September** at the latest by sending an e-mail to [els.depaermentier@ugent.be](mailto:els.depaermentier@ugent.be) with the following documents (to be attached in pdf):

- Motivation Letter
- Curriculum vitae
- Master's thesis

Master's students who will obtain their Master's degree in September 2023 are encouraged to apply.

The applicants will be informed about the results of the first selection shortly after the date of submission. The interviews with the selected candidates will take place in the week of **18-22 September 2023**.

For more information, please send an e-mail to Els De Paermentier ([els.depaermentier@ugent.be](mailto:els.depaermentier@ugent.be)).