*Gender and family economies at times of crisis: between work and social resources. Barcelona,18th-19th century.*

Montserrat Carbonell (University of Barcelona). montsecarbonell@ub.edu

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to show how the family economies and strategies of ordinary people, characteristic of the ancien régime, operate at times of crisis. This approach will be from a gender perspective in order to demonstrate the role played by women in this process. For this I will present a historiographical review of the studies on family economies and strategies in the last two decades and the role played by women’s agency in them. Beyond paid work in the formal and informal sphere, and even beyond unpaid work in the domestic sphere, a further space of activity exists to obtain essential resources for survival. Various authors have given this phenomenon a name: *economies of improvisation*(Hufton, 1974), *survival strategies* (Woolf 1989), mixed *welfare economies* (Harris, 2009), *grassroots economies* (Narotzky, 2012). This approach allows us to observe the degree of complementarity of survival strategies which juxtaposed paid work and access to the social resources available. This multi-dimensionality of survival strategies and the role played by women’s *agency* (Sen, 1998) characterizes grassroots economies at times of crisis. At the same time, the success of the strategies of the grassroots economies does not only depend on the labour market and the employment rate, but also on the institutional framework and the offering of institutions, organizations, quasi-organizations and formal and informal social welfare networks. The present research deals with an early industrial city from southern Europe. In the Barcelona of the late 18th-early 19th centuries, the factory system developed very early, with new textile industries devoted to the production and printing of cotton textiles (*indianas*-calicoes). In the second half of the 1700s the city’s population almost tripled thanks both to the immigration of men and women and to natural population growth. The economic, social and demographic transformation which took place explains the urban densification, the increase in rents, the rise in food prices and the generalization of poverty and inequality, in a world in which labour opportunities for men and women, boys and girls, increased exponentially as the industrial city gradually came into existence (Mora 2013, Borderias 2014).To understand how the family strategies and economies of ordinary people operate, I chose to show various lines of complementary activity on obtaining resources for survival: ad hoc recourse to hospices, to microcredit institutions for the poor, public soup kitchens and begging. In short, this approach from Southern Europe will allow us to compare the survival strategies of ordinary people at times of crisis with the grassroots economies of different urban contexts in the Europe of the ancien régime.