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# Guild Brotherhood, Guild Capital?

*Social Network Strategies of Master Weavers and Drapers in Fourteenth-century Ghent* *

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**Abstract**

This article is intended to add to the debate on guild networks a stronger emphasis on the functionality of social ties among craftsmen within the organization of manufacture and the guild's political economy by investigating the social relations within a population of master weavers in fourteenth-century Ghent. Over the last few decades most guild studies in medieval history have successfully shifted towards a growing attention to the 'extra-economic' aspects of guilds, pointing at the social, political and cultural experiences of craft guilds in establishing social networks, defending members' interests, and defining artisanal culture. Gervase Rosser, in particular, has thoroughly grasped these expressions of the collective consciousness of medieval craft guilds in international literature, identifying them as part of a 'guild brotherhood'. Discussions on the construction of 'identity', 'solidarity', 'trust' or 'civil society' among artisans are, however, hardly ever grounded in the material conditions for industrial production and the concrete power relations of late medieval urban society. As appears from the evidence upon which this study draws, the social networks of Ghent master weavers were not equally distributed in a brotherhood kind of way. Rather, it was especially in entrepreneurship that such 'guild capital' could be made, as drapers built on their actual inclusion within the social fabric of the guild and the city by establishing intergenerational social mobility, political factions, and class endogamy. This was particularly so within the large-scale and socially polarized textile sector of a European industrial centre like the Flemish city of Ghent.

* I would like to thank Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, the editorial board of *TSEG*, and the anonymous reviewer for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. I also thank Kate Elliott for correcting my English.

In the mid-fourteenth century, Robbrecht van Eecke, a wealthy weaver and draper in the major industrial centre of Ghent, married Clare van Huse.[1] Clare was not an ordinary weaver girl. She was the daughter of Willem van Huse, arguably the most important weaver in Ghent at the time who had joined the revolutionary rule of Jacob van Artevelde in 1338-1345 as one of his five captains.[2] Robbrecht did not propose to Clare just for love. The marriage sealed the alliance between two of the most powerful and wealthy weaver families in fourteenth-century Ghent. Both Robbrecht and Willem were strong politicians, either as aldermen in the urban government or as superior deans (*opperdekens*) of the weavers' craft guild.[3] As economic actors they were not simple master weavers either, but *drapiers* or *drapeniers* as contemporaries called them: an upper middle class of textile entrepreneurs who employed a large group of people, who were in charge of the finished textiles, and who were recruited from within the industry itself, though still depending on the commercial classes for the supply of wool and for international export.[4] Certainly, Robbrecht and Willem belonged to the elite of their craft and tried to consolidate that position by picking the 'right' friends and family. Not only did they engage in networks among other drapers and weaver-politicians, they also had ties with the more ordinary weavers of the craft guild. Robbrecht and Willem were related to Louwereins van Westvorde,[5] a *scamel* or smaller draper, through whom they closed the social gaps between the guild's elite and its rank and file. Actors like Robbrecht van Eecke and Willem van Huse typically represented and led the urban members of the weavers' guild in late medieval Ghent politics, or during revolts when they stood side by side with their more ordinary guild brothers. However, by investing in social networks and

1 City Archives Ghent (hereafter SAG), Year registers of the Gedele Aldermen (hereafter Gedele), series 330, no. 8, fol. 327v.

2 D. Nicholas, *The Van Arteveldes of Ghent. The varieties of vendetta and the hero in history* (Leiden 1988) 12, 16 and 25.

3 Willem was dean in 1361, 1362 and 1365, see: G. Espinas and H. Pirenne (eds.), *Recueil de documents relatifs à l'histoire de l'industrie drapière en Flandre* I: 2 (Brussels 1906-1966) 629, and alderman in 1342, 1345 and 1366, see: P.-C. Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek der stad Ghent; van 't j. 1301 tot 1793* I (Ghent 1852-1861) 52, 58, 90. From 1360 until 1385, Robbrecht was elected eight times as alderman, see: Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 83, 87, 90, 93, 96, 100, 108, 116.

4 J. Deploige and P. Stabel, 'Textile entrepreneurs and textile workers in the medieval city', in: V. Lambert and P. Stabel (eds.), *Golden times. Wealth and status in the Middle Ages in the Southern Low Countries* (Tielt 2016) 241-282.

5 SAG, Year registers of the Keure Aldermen (hereafter Keure), series 301, no. 1, fol. 20v; SAG, Gedele, series 330, no. 5, fol. 51v. See below for more details on the Van Westvorde network.

endogamous strategies they tried as a guild elite to strengthen their position and broaden their scope within the textile industry and the guild system as well. While the social capital created on the field of the guild certainly reflected the collective consciousness of an entire urban group of artisans, the network strategies of master weavers and drapers, I will argue, incorporated first and foremost the functional aspects of their interests rooted in the social organization of industrial manufacture.

The British historian Gervase Rosser, a specialist in medieval guilds and fraternities, would call such networks among craftsmen examples of a 'guild brotherhood', or the 'art of solidarity' as he entitled his recent book on English guilds, a synthesis of his work on the topic since the 1990s.[6] Drawing on Durkheimian theory, Rosser insists that guilds managed necessary working relationships of 'organic' interdependence between individuals by providing the key element of trust. He claims that guilds, while embodying both an open and a hierarchical social composition, were able to create a trusted brotherhood community in which masters and journeymen alike essentially inhabited the same cultural environment, shared collective responsibility for their mutual obligations, and behaved like friends during public ceremonies like the fraternity feast.[7] For Rosser, guilds are in the first place religious associations that combined moral and devotional purposes and practices with economic and political ones.[8] Above all, guilds formed a symbolic and cultural identity that worked as a means to create community feelings and distinguish between insiders and outsiders.[9]

Although the growing re-evaluating literature on the 'extra-economic' aspects of guilds is very necessary for our understanding of the social consciousness of urban groups in the late Middle Ages, the recent preoccupation of guild studies with the construction of 'identities', 'solidarities', 'trust' or 'imagined communities' by artisans are hardly ever

6 G. Rosser, *The art of solidarity in the Middle Ages. Guilds in England 1250-1550* (New York 2015).

7 G. Rosser, 'Crafts, guilds and the negotiation of work in the medieval town', *Past and Present* 154 (1997) 16; G. Rosser, 'Part list. Making friends in the medieval English guilds', in: M. Davies and A. Prescott (eds.), *London and the kingdom. Essays in honour of Caroline M. Barron* (Donington 2008) 118-134; G. Rosser, 'Going to the fraternity feast. Commensality and social relations in late medieval England', *Journal of British Studies* 33:4 (1994) 430-446; G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster, 1200-1540* (Oxford 1989) 281-293; G. Rosser, 'Finding oneself in a medieval fraternity. Individual and collective identities in the English guilds', in: M. Escher-Apsner (ed.), *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften in euopäischen Städten* (Frankfurt 2009) 255-291.

8 A lot of these arguments can already be found in: C. Wyffels, *De oorsprong der ambachten in Vlaanderen en Brabant* (Brussels 1951).

9 Rosser, *The art of solidarity*, 6-7.

grounded in the concrete power relations of urban society and the material conditions for production in the late Middle Ages.[10] As forms of free association guilds are in the long term given an important role in substituting and mediating the growing gap between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the economy by such processes as urbanization, commercialization, professional differentiation, and changing household compositions during the late Middle Ages and early modern period that created a growing interdependence between people.[11] Influenced by Max Weber, Katherine Lynch for instance has explained the emergence of voluntary guilds and fraternities – 'based on ties of the "spirit" rather than those of blood' – in pre-modern Europe as an instrumental answer to the substantive lack of social capital generated by relationships of family and kinship.[12] In this regard, guilds and fraternities are often linked to the concept of 'civil society', which is believed to have promoted an ethos that emphasized shared civic values and social cohesion.[13] But was the social capital of associational life always that straightforwardly 'voluntary' and 'individualistic'? What about the actual inclusion (or exclusion) of artisans within 'civil society' determined by the socio-economic structures with which they engaged and within which they acted, as they redefined rather than overcame the existing social boundaries?[14] Was the separation between the public and private spheres always that strict, when artisans complemented their guild capital with lineage strategies for instance?[15]

10 For a recent and comprehensive overview from a European perspective see: C. Lis and H. Soly, *Worthy efforts. Attitudes to work and workers in pre-industrial Europe* (Boston 2012). For the guilds in the Southern Netherlands in particular see: B. De Munck, *Guilds, labour and the urban body politic. Fabricating community in the Southern Netherlands, 1300-1800* (New York 2018).

11 M. Boone, et al., 'Introduction. Citizenship between individual and community, 14th-18th centuries', in: M. Boone and M. Prak (eds.), *Statuts individuels, statuts corporatifs et statuts judiciaires dans les villes européennes* (*moyen* âge *et temps modernes*) (Leuven 1996) 3-10.

12 K. Lynch, *Individuals, families, and communities in Europe, 1200-1800. The urban foundation of Western society* (Cambridge 2003) 212.

13 E. Muir, 'The sources of civil society in Italy', in: R.I. Rotberg (ed.), *Patterns of social capital. Stability and change in historical perspective* (Cambridge 2001) 41-68; R.D. Putnam, *Making democracy work. Civic traditions in modern Italy* (Princeton 1993); A. Black, *Guilds and civil society in European political thought from the twelfth century to the present* (London 1984).

14 M.F. Van Dijck, 'Bonding or bridging social capital? The evolution of Brabantine confraternities during the late medieval and the early modern period', in: N. Terpstra, A. Prosperi and S. Pastore (eds.), *Confraternities between laity and clergy in the pre-modern world* (Turnhout 2010) 143-170; B. De Munck, 'From brotherhood community to civil society? Apprentices between guild, household and the freedom of contract in early modern Antwerp', *Social History* 35:1 (2010) 1-20.

15 For the ongoing role that 'friends and relatives' or '*vrienden ende maghen*' played in late medieval Flemish urban society see: M. Carlier, 'Solidariteit of sociale controle? De rol van vrienden en magen en

In the case of Flanders (and also in the cities of Brabant and Liège) – comparable to the towns in Germany and Northern Italy – it was particularly the craft guilds that provided the brotherhood kind of social, economic and political protection to the middling sort of people in the large cities of Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres.[16] While in Flanders most guilds originated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as religious confraternities among members of the same trade, the craft guilds soon developed into specialized and specific corporations that embodied separate fraternities but remained inextricably linked to their craft structure – a phenomenon that becomes apparent in the contemporaneous distinction between *ghilde* ('confraternity') and *ambochte* ('craft').[17] Therefore, the guilds in Flanders cannot be understood without taking into account the fundamental influence of the urban occupational structures and the relations that emerged from the organization of artisanal production. Various scholars such as Marc Boone, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Bert De Munck, Steven L. Kaplan and James Farr have pointed to the socio-political and cultural significance of craft guilds, while simultaneously acknowledging the considerable gap between the 'norms' of guild discourses and the 'reality' of an internal milieu of tense class and patriarchal relations, as the guild ideology in the first place advocated the voice of a self-conscious urban middle class of prosperous masters who dominated the guilds.[18] Because of the greatly widened gap between masters and journeymen and between richer and poorer masters

buren in een middeleeuwse stad', in: M. Carlier et al. (eds.), *Hart en marge in de laat-middeleeuwse stedelijke maatschappij* (Leuven 1997) 71-91; M. Danneel, *Weduwen en wezen in het laat-middeleeuwse Gent* (Leuven 1996) 419-420. See also: L. Kooijmans, *Vriendschap en de kunst van het overleven in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 1997).

16 P. Stabel, 'Guilds in late medieval Flanders. Myths and realities of guild life in an export-oriented environment', *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004) 191-192.

17 Wyffels, *De oorsprong*, 33-34; P. Trio, *De Gentse broederschappen (1182-1580). Ontstaan, naamgeving, materiële uitrusting, structuur, opheffing en bronnen* (Ghent 1990) 15-18.

18 M. Boone, 'Les métiers dans les villes flamandes au bas moyen âge (XIVe-XVIe siècles). Images normatives, réalités socio-politiques et économiques', in: P. Lambrechts and J.-P. Sosson, *Les métiers au moyen âge. Aspects économiques et sociaux* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1994) 1-21; J. Dumolyn, '"I thought of it at work, in Ostend". Urban artisan labour and guild ideology in the later medieval Low Countries', *International Review of Social History* 62:3 (2017) 389-419; J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, '"Let each man carry on with his trade and remain silent". Middle-class ideology in the urban literature of the late medieval Low Countries', *Cultural and Social History* 10:2 (2013) 169-189; De Munck, *Guilds*, 179-212; S.L. Kaplan, 'Social classification and representation in the corporate world of eighteenth-century France. Turgot's "Carnival"', in: S.L. Kaplan and C.J. Koepp (eds.), *Work in France. Representations, meaning, organization and practice* (Ithaca 1986) 176-228; J.R. Farr, *Hands of honor. Artisans and their world in Dijon, 1550-1650* (Ithaca 1988).

in the late Middle Ages, every subgroup of craftsmen – whether an independent master manufacturer, a poorer master-labourer, or a young journeyman – could therefore have embarked on conflicting socio-economic interests.[19]

But even if these authors have convincingly linked the political, social and cultural networking features and manifestations of guilds to their broader socio-economic realities, they often tend to neglect the practical functions of guild networks as relations of production as well. Peter Stabel has emphasized the primary function of Flemish guilds as being to regulate and define industrial manufacture and commercial exchange, often in close collaboration with the city authorities and later on with representatives of their own in the central urban government.[20] He added that since the thirteenth century this had been of concern especially to the craftsmen-entrepreneurs who had succeeded to the merchant's role of quality control and human resources management.[21] In this respect, Simona Cerutti has approached the craft guilds in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Turin from a much more instrumental perspective, viewing corporate associations as a way for individual artisans and their family networks to gain access to and get control over economic resources.[22] Maarten Prak has ultimately concluded that guilds 'conveyed a strong moral framework of Christian charity' that through strict labour relations gradually introduced 'a more general bourgeois culture'.[23] Inasmuch as craft guilds were patriarchal communities with a strong sense of social cohesion, already by the thirteenth century they were also business-like institutions that organized relations of production between labourers and employers.

In this article, I wish to add to the debate on 'guild brotherhood' and 'guild civil society' a stronger emphasis on the position and functionality of social ties among craftsmen within the organization of manufacture and the guild's political economy, by taking a group of weavers from fourteenth-century Ghent as a case study. How and why have master

19 C. Lis and H. Soly, '"An irresistible phalanx". Journeymen associations in Western Europe, 1300-1800', *International Review of Social History,* Supplement 39 (1994) 11-52.

20 Stabel, 'Guilds', 192.

21 P. Stabel, 'Labour time, guild time? Working hours in the cloth industry of medieval Flanders and Artois (thirteenth-fourteenth centuries)', *TSEG* 11:4 (2014) 27-53. See also: S. Hutton, 'Organizing specialized production. Gender in the medieval Flemish wool cloth industry (c. 1250-1384)', *Urban History* 45:3 (2018) 382-403.

22 S. Cerutti, *La ville et les métiers. Naissance d'un langage corporatif* (*Turin, 17e-18e siècles*) (Paris 1990).

23 M. Prak, 'Moral order in the world of work. Social control and the guilds in Europe', in: H. Roodenburg and P. Spierenburg (eds.), *Social control in Europe, vol. I: 1500-1800* (Columbus 2004) 179.

weavers and drapers constructed social capital in their attempt to amplify their economic and political interests? I claim that this 'guild capital' was not equally distributed in a brotherhood kind of way, as it was structured by the social contradictions and different relations of super- and subordination that characterized the hierarchical order of the craft guilds. Therefore, when master weavers and drapers in fourteenth-century Ghent established networks between them, they did so from within their position in the production of woven cloth. Paraphrasing Pierre Bourdieu, 'social capital' was as much a social instrument as it was a social result.[24] Artisanal entrepreneurs in particular required various social network strategies.[25] Through intergenerational social mobility, endogamy, and political factions wealthier master weavers and drapers established close and long-lasting relations that exceeded mere social and economic reciprocity. Ultimately, such network strategies were instrumental in controlling crucial fields within the craft guild, urban politics, and the textile industry.

## Sources and methodology

While scholars such as Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly have already paid considerable attention to the existence of manufacturing and subcontracting networks among artisans in the late medieval and early modern Southern Netherlands,[26] there have been few empirical cases in which the actual relations of the craftsmen themselves have been investigated.[27] In this article I focus on a group of weavers that appear in three consecutive repression lists[28] in the midst of the political turmoil in

**24** My interpretation of the concept of 'social capital' is strongly influenced by Pierre Bourdieu. See especially his *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris 1994).

**25** Stabel, 'Labour time'.

**26** See especially: C. Lis and H. Soly, 'Subcontracting in guild-based export trades, thirteenth-eighteenth centuries', in: S.R. Epstein and M.R. Prak (eds.), *Guilds, innovation, and the European economy, 1400-1800* (Cambridge 2008) 81-113; and C. Lis and H. Soly, 'Export industries, craft guilds and capitalist trajectories, 13th to 18th centuries', in: M.R. Prak (ed.), *Craft guilds in the early modern Low Countries. Work, power, and representation* (Aldershot 2006) 107-132.

**27** An exception, adopting a social-political perspective, is: J. Haemers, *De Gentse opstand (1449-1453). De strijd tussen rivaliserende netwerken om het stedelijke kapitaal* (Kortrijk 2004).

**28** The first list is a list of 177 weavers taken hostage by the Flemish count in 1349 after they were defeated by the fullers during the *Goeden Disendach* revolt. See: N. De Pauw (ed.), *Cartulaire historique et généalogique des Artevelde* (Brussels 1920) 133-137. The second list is based upon the weaver taxes. A means of political repression, this *weversgeld* was levied in 1351-1354 and 1357-1357 and had to be paid by each master weaver and his apprentices on a weekly basis. It provides 329 names of masters. See:

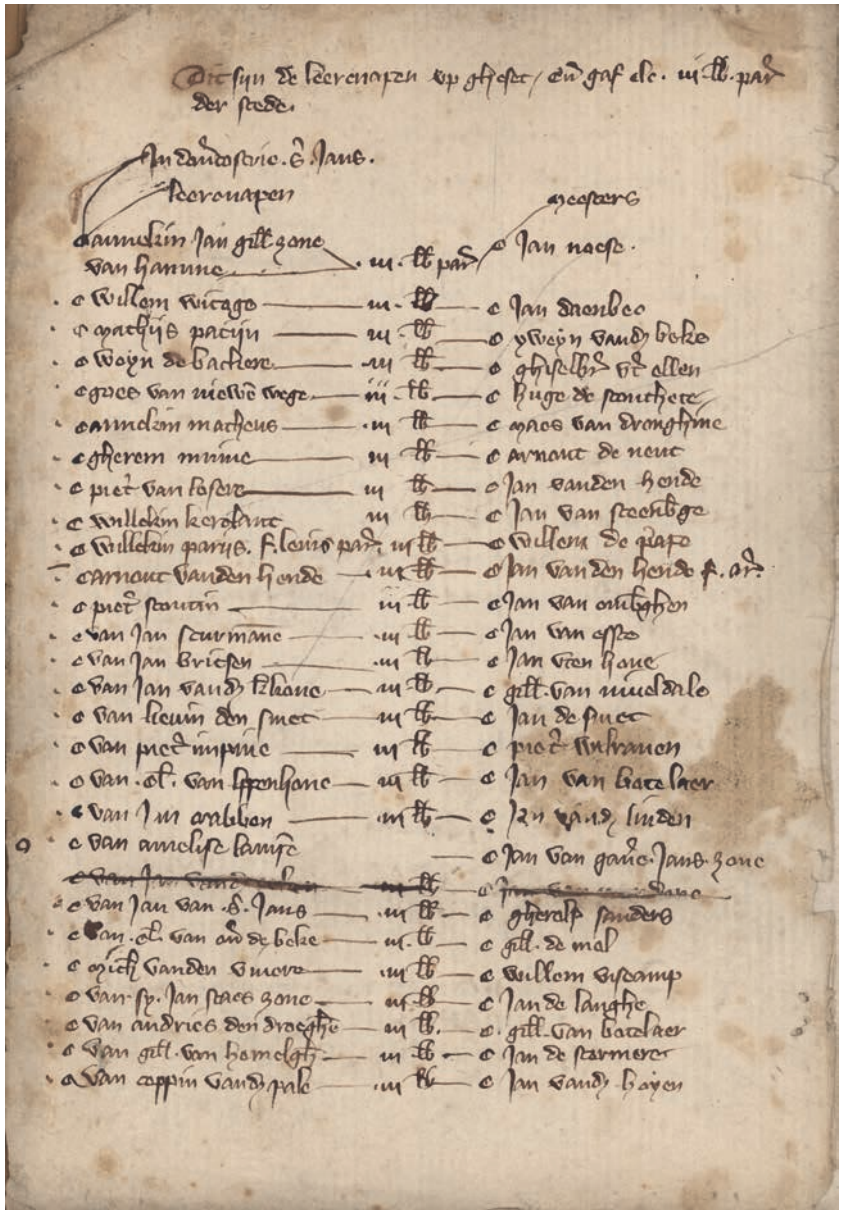

*Illustration 1 Detail from a list of Ghent master weavers with their according apprentices, 1349-1353. In the wake of the mid-fourteenth-century political troubles, the weavers were subjected to the* weversgeld, *a special tax they had to pay for each week of work. (Stadsarchief Gent, series 195, no. 2).*

mid-fourteenth-century Ghent, when they struggled for – and by 1360 permanently consolidated – their formal political and economic power in the city. The three lists provide 730 original names of Ghent master weavers (or about 16 per cent of a total weaver population of approximately 5,000 at the time)[29] which were submitted to prosopographical research that reconstructed the social structures of the weavers' craft guild based on concentrations of wealth and power.[30] Political power was measured by the number of political mandates as a city alderman or a guild dean that each weaver had enjoyed;[31] wealth was measured by the number of entrepreneurial activities, as drapers could easily be identified in the city accounts when they delivered cloth for the urban magistrate.[32] Of course, these proxies only expose the tip of the iceberg, but in general they are good indicators of the political and economic background of each weaver in the population. Accordingly, an (elite) group of political and entrepreneurial guildsmen could be discerned from the more ordinary master weavers.

Next, the networks in- and outside the prosopography were examined, exposing three types of social capital resources: relatives, wives, and friends.[33] The main sources I used were the aldermen's registers as the official product of the judicial tasks of the two benches of Ghent alder-

Espinas and Pirenne (eds.), *Recueil* I: 2, 454-470. The third list was recorded in 1362 in the aftermath of another struggle between the weavers and fullers. This time the count sided with the weavers but made them swear an oath never to take arms against him or the city government again. The list provides an additional 313 names. See: Espinas and Pirenne (eds.), *Recueil* I: 2, 503-510.

**29** W. Prevenier, 'Bevolkingscijfers en professionele strukturen der bevolking van Gent en Brugge in de 14de eeuw', in: *Album Charles Verlinden* (Ghent 1975) 269-303.

**30** The results of the prosopography research were published elsewhere: W. Saelens, 'Het verraad van de ambachtsman. Een nieuwe "klassenstrijd" binnen het Gentse weversambacht in de veertiende eeuw', *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 69 (2015) 3-40. The prosopographical database is to be found in: W. Saelens, *'t Quadie van Ghent. Een sociaal-politieke studie van de Gentse wevers in een eeuw tussen oud en nieuw (1302-1385)* (unpublished master's thesis University of Ghent 2015) 153-203. See there for a more extensive discussion of the prosopographical database.

**31** Aldermen lists in: Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek*. Dean lists in: Espinas and Pirenne (eds.), *Recueil* I: 2, 628-630.

**32** The fourteenth-century city accounts of Ghent are entirely published: J. Vuylsteke (ed.), *Gentsche stads- en baljuwsrekeningen 1280-1336* (Ghent 1900-1908); N. De Pauw and J. Vuylsteke (eds.), *De rekeningen der stad Gent. Tijdvak van Jacob van Artevelde 1336-1349* (Ghent 1874-1885); A. Van Werveke (ed.), *Gentsche stads- en baljuwsrekeningen 1351-1365* (Ghent 1916); D. Nicholas and W. Prevenier (eds.), *Gentse stads- en baljuwsrekeningen (1365-1376)* (Brussels 1999); and J. Vuylsteke (ed.), *De rekeningen der stad Gent. Tijdvak van Philips van Artevelde 1376-1389* (Ghent 1891-1893).

**33** Under 'friendship' any form of personal relationship of social interdependence is understood that fell outside familial and matrimonial structures. See: Kooijmans, *Vriendschap,* for an extensive review of pre-modern friendship.

men.[34] The first and most important one was called the *Keure* and registered the legal transactions of urban citizens by payment: sales and leases of real property, sales and repayments of rents, donations and exchanges, pledges, acknowledgements of debt, marriage contracts, wills, etc.[35] The lower bench of *Gedele* had custody of all city orphans. When a minor (up to the age of 25) lost one of his or her parents, the *Gedele* aldermen were responsible for the child and his or her possessions.[36] The post-mortem documents of probated wealth in particular offer a unique insight into the 'capital' of the orphans, their families and friends. In Jelle Haemers' and Shennan Hutton's work the aldermen's registers have already proved their worth for the reconstruction of the actual social and economic traffic, relations and agents in late medieval Ghent, but they have not yet been thoroughly confronted with the mid-fourteenth-century repression lists, the city accounts and the lists of aldermen.[37] A combination of these sources allows us to identify and link the various backgrounds and networks of a particular professional group in the urban fabric.

Although a very rich source, the aldermen's registers highlight some methodological difficulties as well. Relatively few relations of weavers from my prosopographical sample reappeared in the sources: 154 relations of only 73 weavers (of a total of 730) have been identified. Most of these relations, moreover, were isolated one-on-one relationships; broader social networks of weavers could only occasionally be reconstructed. Indeed, a lot of transactions of social capital took place outside the reach of the source material. Only when it was worth registering (a marriage or an exchange of credit, for instance) did contemporaries make the effort legally to ratify such a transaction before the city aldermen. Moreover, because this involved a cost, the aldermen's registers are also socially biased towards the middling and upper social groups, leaving out most of the poorest and largest group of weavers. The methodology is here therefore more of a qualitative than quantitative nature. In what follows below, I have focused on some specific examples of guild networks and their functionalities, departing from the players themselves who were active on the different (economic and political) fields of urban textile.

34 SAG, Keure, series 301 and SAG, Gedele, series 330.

35 J. Decavele, 'Bestuursinstellingen van de stad Gent (einde 11de eeuw-1795)', in: W. Prevenier and B. Augustyn, *De gewestelijke en lokale overheidsinstellingen in Vlaanderen tot 1795* (Brussels 1997) 289.

36 Ibidem, 293-294.

37 Haemers, *De Gentse opstand*; S. Hutton, *Women and economic activities in late medieval Ghent* (New York 2011).

## The Flemish textile industry and the Ghent weavers in the late Middle Ages

The thirteenth century witnessed a fundamental transition in the social organization of the textile industry in the great cloth-producing centres in medieval Flanders.[38] In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, merchants dominated the textile industry and trade in raw materials and cloths.[39] These 'merchant capitalists' used their access to capital to control the successive cycles of manufacture and commerce. They provided the raw materials like spun woollen yarn or dyestuffs, and after buying the cloth from the local producers they put the finished products into circulation on the international market.[40] These merchants also acted as entrepreneurs, as they ordered and regulated the work of producers on demand, while potentially owning workshops of their own where labourers were put to work.[41] Before 1300, the city governments were controlled by these patricians, an oligarchic elite that got its wealth from the possession of urban land and commercial activities.[42]

From the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, these production relations gradually began to change, when an emerging (upper) middle class of petty commodity producers and drapers started to undermine the strong position of the merchants. This shift made richer masters less dependent on merchant capital and freer to become artisanal entrepreneurs themselves.[43] Guild masters with an entrepreneurial spirit now became the key figures in cloth production and were able to hire wage labourers who worked at the drapers' workshops, or subcontract other artisans who operated from their own homes. Merchants were still in charge of trade and export, but the organization of labour

**38** A recent overview in: B. Blondé et al., 'Living together in the city. Social relationships between norm and practice', in: B. Blondé, M. Boone and A.-L. Van Bruaene (eds.), *City and society in the Low Countries, 1100-1600* (Cambridge 2018) 59-92.

**39** H. Van Werveke, *De koopman-ondernemer en de ondernemer in de Vlaamsche lakennijverheid van de middeleeuwen* (Antwerp 1946).

**40** J.H. Munro, 'Industrial transformations in the North-West European textile trades, c. 1290-c. 1340. Economic progress or economic crisis?', in: B.M.S. Campbell (ed.), *Before the black death. Studies in the 'crisis' of the early fourteenth century* (Manchester 1991) 110-148; E. Coornaert, 'Draperies rurales, draperies urbaines. L'évolution de l'industrie flamande au moyen âge et au XVI siècle', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 28 (1950) 60-96.

**41** Van Werveke, *De koopman-ondernemer.*

**42** F. Blockmans, *Het Gentsche stadspatriciaat tot omstreeks 1302* (Antwerp 1938).

**43** H. Soly, 'The political economy of European craft guilds. Power relations and economic strategies of merchants and master artisans in the medieval and early modern textile industries', *International Review of Social History,* Supplement 53 (2008) 49-53.

was now in the hands of these industrial entrepreneurs who themselves belonged to the textile crafts.[44] The transformation of the urban political economy towards more industrial capital for the drapers formed the basis of the emancipation of the Flemish craft guilds in 1275-1302, eventually resulting in a new city government structure which included the guild elites as political lobbies.[45] The urban normative framework provided by the city governments that regulated quality principles and trade and manufacture relations now became co-influenced by the guilds. The more affluent guild members in particular enjoyed major, enduring influence in urban politics. This was all the more the case in a medieval, cloth-producing metropolis with a strong and active textile community like Ghent.[46]

As a result of growing competition from Brabant, Holland and England, while dealing with the political and military insecurity in Europe, most of the Flemish urban textile industries adapted by specialising in high-quality cloth.[47] This transition to the production of more expensive and luxurious draperies – a prominent process in Ghent with the production of so-called *dickedinnen*[48] – in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries strengthened the position of the draper as a *local expert craftsman* even further since the textile industry required more and more capital that could not only be provided by outside merchants.[49] The small workshop usually remained the central place of production, but this system was much more flexible than is traditionally assumed.[50] Merchants and entrepreneurs in the large-scale export industries easily circumvented guild restrictions on the workshops' size as they were

44 G. Espinas, *La draperie dans la Flandre française au moyen âge* (Paris 1923).

45 Soly, 'The political economy'.

46 M. Boone, 'A medieval metropolis', in: M. Boone and G. Deneckere (eds.), *Ghent. City of all times* (Antwerp 2010) 53-92.

47 J.H. Munro, 'The symbiosis of towns and textiles. Urban institutions and the changing fortunes of cloth manufacturing in the Low Countries and England, 1270-1570', *Journal of Early Modern History* 3 (1999) 1-74.

48 M. Boone, 'L'industrie textitle à Gand au bas moyen âge ou les resurrections successives d'une activité réputée moribonde', in: M. Boone and W. Prevenier (eds.), *La draperie ancienne des Pays-Bas. Débouchés et stratégies de survie, 14e-16e siècles* (Leuven 1993) 31-38.

49 R. Holbach, 'Some remarks on the role of "putting-out" in Flemish and Northwest European cloth production', in: Boone and Prevenier (eds.), *La draperie ancienne,* 211, 219 and 221; R. Holbach, *Frühformen von Verlag und Grossbetrieb in der gewerblichen Produktion (13.-16. Jahrhundert)* (Stuttgart 1994).

50 Master weavers who ran small workshops probably employed a workforce of three to six workers, including journeymen, apprentices, household members and unskilled workers: R.S. DuPlessis and M.C. Howell, 'Reconsidering the early modern urban economy. The cases of Leiden and Lille', *Past and Present* 94 (1982) 54-55.

allowed to outsource the work to other producers.[51] This is what made a subcontracting system so attractive. The changes in the fabric of the urban textile economy therefore had major consequences for the social organization of manufacture. The coordination of networks between weavers – and thus the distribution of the social assets of individual artisans – was now in the hands of the industrial entrepreneurs.

## Investing in social capital

A draper who eagerly invested in the expansion of his available social resources was Louwereins van Westvorde, who appears as a central figure in a broad weavers' network (see illustration 2). One of the weavers he had very personal ties with was Robbrecht van Eecke (mentioned in the introduction). Indeed, Louwereins' daughter Amelberghe was married to Jan Zoetamijs, a son from Van Eecke's second marriage.[52] Also Mergriete van Westvorde, another of Louwereins' female family members – it remains unclear whether she was a daughter as well – was married to a very wealthy and powerful draper, Jan Hondertmaerc.[53] By letting both Amelberghe and Mergriete marry two of the richest and most powerful drapers at the time, Louwereins and his family were definitely trying to improve their access to the political and economic power of the guild and the city. Through the alliance with Robbrecht van Eecke, Louwereins moreover had connections with Willem van Huse, Robbrecht's father-in-law, whom he seemed to have known very personally as well, since they conducted several legal actions together in 1345-1347 as *Keure* aldermen.[54] Belonging to the most active cloth supplying drapers as well as weaver-politicians of fourteenth-century Ghent, the families of Willem van Huse, Robbrecht van Eecke and Jan Hondertmaerc were firmly bonded through strong matrimonial relationships.[55]

51 Lis and Soly, 'Subcontracting'.

52 SAG, Gedele, series 330, no. 5, fol. 51v.

53 SAG, Gedele, series 330, no. 7, fol. 97v.

54 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 20 and fol. 22v.

55 Robbrecht van Eecke delivering cloth eleven times: Van Werveke (ed.), *Rekeningen 1351-1364*, 28, 103, 462, 515, 557; Nicholas and Prevenier (eds.), *Rekeningen 1365-1376*, 107, 129; Vuylsteke (ed.), *Rekeningen 1376-1389*, 73, 117, 309, 337. Willem van Huse, six times: Vuylsteke (ed.), *Rekeningen 1280-1336*, 588, 827; De Pauw and Vuylsteke (eds.), *Rekeningen 1336-1349* I, 155, 270, 381; De Pauw and Vuylsteke (eds.), *Rekeningen 1336-1349* II, 483. Jan Hondertmaerc, seven times: Nicholas and Prevenier (eds.), *Rekeningen 1365-1376*, 107; Vuylsteke (ed.), *Rekeningen 1376-1389*, 79, 116, 308.

Louwereins himself did certainly not belong to the subaltern ranks of weavers but he did not quite dominate the guild either. He delivered cloth to the city only twice and was an alderman of the city's higher bench in 1345 and of the lower one in 1361 and 1385.[56] As a small draper with access to the extensive capital and power of the ruling weaver-drapers of the craft guild, he managed, however, to make some more ordinary guild members depend on him as well. In an earlier marriage of his daughter Amelberghe, Louwereins' son-in-law was Lievin van der Erloe, a small draper with whom he also shared a seat in the city government in 1385.[57] Louwereins also knew Michiel van West, another small draper, when on 15 March 1344 both agreed upon a payment contract in the *Keure* registers.[58] Next, Louwereins was befriended by a certain Willem de Wulslaghere, a city politician and a cloth supplier with whom he lent some money to a weaver journeyman in 1361.[59] Like Louwereins, these individuals were all small drapers. But Van Westvorde also bridged the gap with the more common weavers of the guild. Through his connection with Michiel van West, Louwereins was tied to a small master called Kerstiaen Blancaerd, for whom Michiel stood surety (*borg*) on 11 December 1360 during a legal action about an unpaid debt.[60] Louwereins was furthermore linked with a journeyman of a family member of his, Joes van Landeghem, who owed money to Louwereins as well as to the draper Willem de Wuslaghere. Joes's debts were eventually paid by his master, who had promised before the *Keure* aldermen that he would allow Joes to share in his profits so that he could pay Louwereins and Willem.[61] Unlike ties among the guild elite, relations between these lower social groups of the guild seemed less solid, as most ties were not familial or matrimonial but derived from friendship or economic interdependence.

The Van Westvorde network exemplifies a typical vertical guild network. From an economic perspective, Lis and Soly already noted that such relationships between drapers, self-employed artisanal producers and labouring weavers were in fact industrial networks that managed

56 Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 58, 84, 117; Van Werveke (ed.), *Rekeningen 1351-1364*, 28, 413.

57 SAG, Gedele, series 330, no. 1, fol. 168v.

58 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 12v.

59 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 25v.

60 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 20.

61 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 25v.

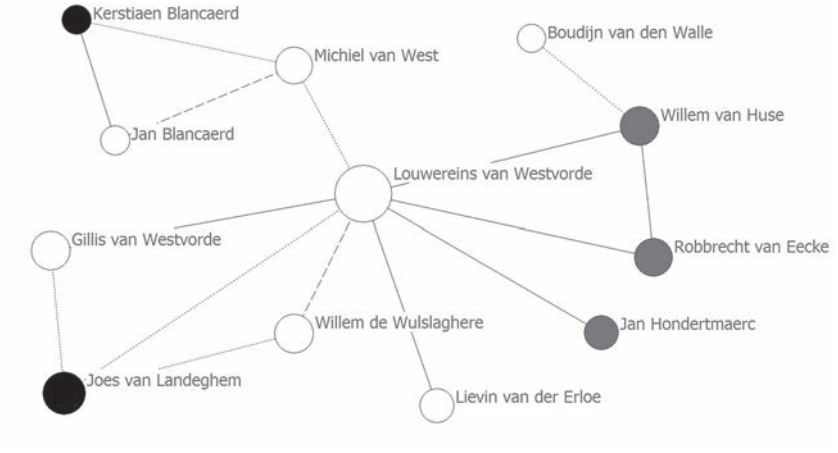


*Illustration 2 Weavers' network surrounding the small draper Louwereins van Westvorde.*
*Black node: small master/journeyman* — *Solid line: familial/matrimonial relation*
*White node: small draper* — *Dotted line: economic relation*
*Grey node: guild elite* — *Dashed line: friendship relation*

specific production relationships.[62] Smaller drapers and master weavers often relied on their wealthier colleagues for both economic and political power. These drapers usually controlled the supply of wool as they bought the raw materials directly from the merchant classes, while often acting as a political vanguard as well. Through the connection with a draper, an ordinary weaver was looking for an economic gateway to raw materials, capital, working tools and other factors of production, while the smaller drapers, in their turn, had a lower position vis-à-vis their more creditworthy colleagues. In the case of the Van Westvorde network, a poorer weaver like Joes van Landeghem, for example, depended on Gillis van Westvorde who employed him, and on Louwereins van Westvorde and Willem de Wulslaghere who gave him credit.[63] Richer masters and drapers, on the other hand, needed more durable networks in order to consolidate their socio-economic position. Through matrimonial strategies such investments in social capital went beyond mere economic or financial trust.

62 Lis and Soly, 'Subcontracting'.

63 Holbach, 'Some remarks', 207-208.

## The need for credit in the textile industry

The need for working tools like the broadloom and raw materials like quality (usually English) woollens made weaving into an expensive business. Each weaving enterprise, therefore, often found itself in need of money. On 10 August 1339, two representatives of the weaver Boudijn van den Walle appeared before the *Keure* aldermen, to whom they promised to pay a debt of four pounds and four shillings tournois to Willem van Huse for a cash loan (see also illustration 2).[64] For the creditworthy draper Willem, the amount of little over four pounds – as the equivalent of about seventeen daily wages of an average master artisan[65] – was not that big a deal. And neither would it normally have been for Boudijn, as a small draper himself. Nevertheless, as it appears, Boudijn van den Walle found himself in need of short-term credit at the time, and it was none other than Willem van Huse who was willing to lend him the money. Coincidentally or not, 1339 also was the one year in which Van den Walle supplied cloth to the city council. In 1357, the draper Lievin van den Woelpitte was in greater debt. To Willem de Quinquere, another draper, he owed 34 pounds tournois, also for an outstanding loan. By 17 August, Lievin and his wife had repaid (‘*betaelt ende vergolden*’) the debt, as is mentioned in a quittance in the *Keure* registers of that day.[66] Guild networks often had a financial dimension. This becomes apparent when weavers and drapers maintained credit relations with one another. Legal acts such as loan contracts, financial transactions, payments, and debt acknowledgements were registered by the *Keure* aldermen. Of the 154 cases of weaver relations, at least 43 (or c. 28 per cent) can be identified as relations of credit. Unsurprisingly, most of these transactions were settled among drapers, since they needed a higher concentration of different sorts of capital to purchase the most expensive types of wool and dominate several stages of production.

Transactions of credit and debt were not always expressed in ready money but also in other resources like wool. On 9 November 1360, the ordinary weaver Heinric van Oedonc was supplied with two sacks of wool from Jurdaen ser Sanders, who as a hosteller and draper definite-

64 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 4v.

65 W. Prevenier, ‘Prijzen en lonen in de domeinen der Gentse abdijen (St. Pieters en St. Baafs) (13e-14e eeuw)’, in: J. Craeybeckx and C. Verlinden (eds.), *Dokumenten voor de geschiedenis van prijzen en lonen in Vlaanderen en Brabant* (Bruges 1959-1973) IV, 239-241 and 310-325.

66 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 148r.


*Illustration 3 Coat of arms of the Ghent weavers' craft guild. Detail from Pieter de Keysere,* Wapenen vanden edelen porters van Ghendt alzo zij van hauts tijden in schepenen bouck staen. Hier near volgen die wapenen vanden neeringhen van Ghendt ende die ambachten*, 1524. (source: Ghent University library).*

ly belonged to the commercial elite of the city.[67] According to the contract, Heinric had promised to make the wool into fabric ('*omme lakene te makene van diere wulle*') and return the rest of the profit to Jurdaen ('*ghevende hem dreste*').[68] The latter had thus arranged for the raw materials and the capital to buy them, but the actual weaving of the cloth was subcontracted to a smaller weaver. Whereas a more ordinary weaver needed wealthy drapers for his economic capital to finance the capital-intensive stages of production, a draper – besides further increasing his stock of money by taking credit himself – needed a subcontracted master for his labour. As the number of looms that a draper and his wage labourers were allowed to work with was usually restricted by the guild, large entrepreneurs indeed tried to circumvent such measures by putting out the weaving to outside workshops in order to maximise production.[69] Establishing broader manufacturing relations and integrating smaller producers in their networks was crucial in this. In doing so, drapers managed to control large segments of the industry, not necessarily by controlling the flows of goods and raw materials as merchants would do, but by regulating, setting up and financing manufacturing and subcontracting networks.[70] An ordinance of Count Louis of Male on 10 October 1359 that ratified the internal regulations of the Ghent weavers' craft guild stipulated that the guildsmen would particularly oversee the drapers and the

67 Jurdaen supplied cloth to the city government on several occasions, while he also paid the hostellers' tax in the city accounts on several occasions in 1340-1345: De Pauw and Vuylsteke (eds.), *Rekeningen 1336-1349* II, 1, 23, 546-547, 557, 560.

68 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 11r.

69 In Bruges, for instance, the number of looms per weaver were limited to four: Lis and Soly, 'Subcontracting', 88-89.

70 Stabel, 'Labour time', 33-34.

(limited) number of looms they could own.[71] In trying to confine drapers' economic freedom in an ordinance that regulated the basic principles of production, labour and exchange, the craft guild clearly drew great attention to the monopolistic role of these textile entrepreneurs within the crucial stages of the production process.[72]

## Controlling the political field of the guild

As a political institution, the craft guild played an important role in regulating and defining manufacture and commercial exchange. The analysis of guild privileges and ordinances clearly shows a deep concern for this.[73] Moreover, the numerous disputes dealing with the political and economic room for manoeuvre of specific guilds were brought before the urban and guild authorities.[74] In such circumstances, it was crucial for artisans to gain a fair share of political participation, often leading to guild factions in the city government. During the 1330s the weaver Jan van Wettere, for example, was elected three times as an alderman of *Gedele*. His final service in the city government was in 1337, but Jan, as a *pater familias*, was shortly thereafter succeeded in 1339 by his son Lievijn. After the political exclusion of the weavers in 1349-1360, Jan's second son, who was named after him, was next in line and followed his father and older brother as a new city politician in the 1370s and 1380s, serving four times on the *Gedele* and once on the *Keure* aldermen's benches. Also Lievijn resumed his role in the city council in 1377 and 1381, once for *Gedele* and once for the *Keure*.[75]

Another close group of weavers appeared in 1366, when the rich political drapers Lievin Pitkin, Robbrecht van Eecke, Arend van Lueseghem, Jan, son of Willem den Otter, Lievin de Bosschere and Jan de Backere were in charge of the weavers' hospital for the poor as '*gouvernerrers ende beleeders*'.[76] In the 1360s, they formed a large political faction in Ghent. Except for two years in which none of them managed to get elected, they shared positions on the aldermen's benches or alter-

71 Espinas and Pirenne (eds.), *Recueil* I: 2, 490-491.

72 Stabel, 'Guilds', 204-205.

73 Ibidem, 192-193.

74 M. Boone, 'Les gens de métier à l'époque corporative à Gand et les litiges professionels (1350-1450)', in: Boone and Prak, *Statuts individuels, statuts corporatifs,* 23-48.

75 Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 35, 40, 45, 48, 63, 92, 98, 100, 102, 109, 110, 117.

76 Espinas and Pirenne (eds.), *Recueil* I: 2, 513-515.

**Table 1 Intergenerational social mobility within the prosopographical population of Ghent weavers based on family name correspondence**

| | Politician | | Draper | | Draper/ politician | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| No family tree | 91 | 72 | 112 | 76 | 142 | 67 |
| Family tree | 35 | 28 | 35 | 24 | 70 | 33 |
| **Total** | **126** | **100** | **147** | **100** | **212** | **100** |

nated with one another.[77] Two of the weaver-drapers who were deans of the guild during those years – and as such had a crucial say in the aldermen's election system – were no strangers either: Willem van Huse, who took the role of dean in 1361-1362 and 1365; and Jan Hondertmaerc, who was dean in 1369.[78] As such, this particular group of weavers managed to take control over important parts of the political infrastructure of both the city and the guild.

Because of the organization of the election system the occurrence of political nepotism in fourteenth-century Ghent was not that hard to pursue. Indeed, the leaving aldermen and the weavers' dean were responsible for choosing the so-called *kiesheren*, city electors who in their turn picked the new aldermen. As for the weavers' aldermen, the dean moreover provided a list of candidates which the *kiesheren* had to select from.[79] Sometimes, the election of the new weavers' dean even took place at the home of the retiring dean.[80] The urban administration as well as the guild officials could therefore always leave their mark on the annual election of the city magistrate.

Establishing bonds of friendship played an important role – as it did in the example above – but family was the first and most obvious pool of social successors to tap. The family could lead to intergenerational social mobility: the transfer of social capital from one generation to another. If a corresponding surname suggests kinship, then there were 35 weaver-politicians of a total of 126 (or c. 28 per cent) who had a genealogical tree of family members pre- or succeeding them in one of the city councils. Furthermore, 35 of the 147 cloth suppliers (c. 24 per cent)

77 Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 82-94.

78 Espinas and Pirenne (eds.), *Recueil* I: 2, 629.

79 M. Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen, ca. 1384-ca. 1453. Een sociaal-politieke studie van een staatsvormingsproces* (Brussels 1990) 34-36 and 45-48.

80 V. Fris, *Dagboek van Gent van 1447 tot 1470 met een vervolg van 1477 tot 1515*, I, 36.

shared a name with one or more other drapers. If one takes both factors together, then this applied to 70 of the 212 weaver-drapers and weaver-politicians (c. 33 per cent) (see table 1).

## The feel of the game among the guild elite

The marriage between Robbrecht van Eecke and Clare van Huse that I mentioned at the beginning of this article sadly ended in 1363 when Clare died. It would not take long, however, for Robbrecht to marry again.[81] As was the case with his deceased wife, Robbrecht chose his new spouse, Kateline, very carefully. Like Clare, Kateline was quite well off, as a descendant of the patrician Zoetamijs family. Robbrecht and Kateline had a son, Jan, who kept his mother's family name.[82] In the final quarter of the fourteenth century, Jan Zoetamijs, in his turn, did his share of the expansion of the family patrimony as well. By marrying Amelberghe, daughter of the draper Louwereins van Westvorde, he successfully involved the Van Eecke-Zoetamijs family in the Van Westvorde network (cf. supra).[83] Another example of a drapers' coalition concealed through marriage was the matrimonial bond between the Van de Velde, Van der Eeken and De Meyere families. Jan van de Velde, who was dean in 1346-1348, was married to Lysbet van der Eeken, the niece of Jan de Meyere, a *Keure* alderman in 1348.[84] Furthermore, through Lysbet, Jan van de Velde was now also related to Jan van der Eeken: her brother, who made it to a *Keure* politician as well in the later part of the century.[85] Likewise, the powerful draper Jan uten Hove, who enjoyed a seat on the aldermen's benches five times during 1320-1332,[86] wedded Kateline, the widowed mother of Jan van der Stickele, another respected weaver-politician dur-

81 SAG, Gedele, series 330, no. 5, fol. 51v; V. Fris, 'Notes pour server à l'histoire du patriciat Gantois', *Bulletijn der Maatschappij van Geschied- en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 17: 9 (1909) 305.

82 This suggests that Jan was born as a bastard.

83 SAG, Gedele, series 330, no. 5, fol. 51v.

84 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 5v; Jan van de Velde as cloth supplier in 1344, 1347 and 1348: De Pauw and Vuylsteke (eds.), *Rekeningen 1336-1349* II, 371 and III, 198, 298; and as dean in 1346-1348: Espinas and Pirenne (eds.), *Recueil* I: 2, 629. Jan de Meyere as alderman: Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 63.

85 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 31r. Jan van der Eeken delivered cloth in 1344, 1355 and 1378: De Pauw and Vuylsteke (eds.), *Rekeningen 1336-1349* II, 377; Van Werveke (ed.), *Rekeningen 1351-1364*, 222; Vuylsteke (ed.), *Rekeningen 1376-1389*, 117; and was an alderman during the years 1378, 1381 and 1387: Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 104, 110, 120.

86 Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 28, 31, 36, 38, 41. Uten Hove as cloth supplier in 1331 and 1339: Vuylsteke (ed.), *Rekeningen 1280-1336*, 795; De Pauw and Vuylsteke (eds.), *Rekeningen 1336-1349* I, 387.

ing the second quarter of the fourteenth century.[87] Stepfather and stepson even shared a seat in the city government in 1327, 1329 and 1332.[88]

As they were looking for women with good-sounding names who could expand the scope of their social networks, drapers like Robbrecht van Eecke, Jan van de Velde and Jan uten Hove had a particular 'feel of the game' – as Bourdieu would have described it – for gaining social capital. Conversely, these women and their families also benefited from such matrimonial arrangements, since they often joined in the draping process.[89] Stronger personal bonds like marriage or familial affinities between craftsmen ensured more durable and permanent access to the guild capital. 'Concerns of lineage', as James Farr has uncovered in the artisanal milieus of sixteenth-century Dijon, also played a role among wealthy weaver-drapers in Ghent.[90]

In her study on marriage practices in late medieval Douai Martha C. Howell showed a remarkable endogamous tendency among craftsmen. She called this *trade endogamy*, for artisans especially seemed to pick spouses whose occupations matched theirs. Howell argued that endogamy was crucial in assuring trade rights and business connections to remain property of the lineage – the marriage exchange essentially being an exchange of property.[91] In the case of the Ghent weavers, I could find 95 weavers' wives of whom the original surname is known (most women only appear in the sources by their first name, as wife of their husband). Because they rarely acted in their own names in the public sphere, it is difficult to spot married women in the source material, let alone to link a certain trade to them.[92] Therefore, I have assumed that women with names corresponding to the name of a weaver in all probability were born into a weavers' family. Only for common names such as De Backere, have I rejected this supposed connection. Accordingly, 42 marriages could be identified as having been solemnized between two weaver families. Caution is clearly required, but with a total of 95 marriages, this brings the percentage to 44 per cent, which was quite high, definitely for a large guild that required a constant flow of new labour forces.

87 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 56r.

88 Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 32, 36, 38, 41, 44, 46, 60.

89 Hutton, 'Organizing', 14-15.

90 Farr, *Hands*, 145.

91 M.C. Howell, *The marriage exchange. Property, social place, and gender in cities of the Low Countries, 1300-1550* (Chicago 1998) 190-194. See also: Haemers, *De Gentse opstand*, 94-98.

92 For the social and economic consequences of marriage for women in late medieval Ghent see: Hutton, *Women*, especially 103-121.

As heredity facilitated the (monopolistic) transfer of various sorts of capital across generations, the accumulation of social capital was strongest among the elite of drapers and independent producers. We could speak not only of trade endogamy but also of a certain class endogamy among richer craftsmen, as they married among their peers of a similar social-economic background as well. Confronting the weaver marriages with the prosopographical results, 36 of the 42 weaver marriages (or c. 86 per cent) can be situated among the upper ranks of the craft guild: 26 per cent among weaver-politicians, 24 per cent among drapers, and 36 per cent among draper-politicians, while 14 per cent were concluded among lower class weavers (see table 2). This high number is of course affected by the sources' social bias, but still suggests that the correlation between marriage and social class must have been a strong one.

**Table 2 Number of weaver marriages within their social context**

| Social context | Weaver marriages | |
|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Lower class | 6 | 14 |
| Politicians | 11 | 26 |
| Drapers | 10 | 24 |
| Draper-politicians | 15 | 36 |
| **Total** | **42** | **100** |

Class interests, rather than guild interests, become even more apparent when wealthy weavers were allying with families outside the field of the craft guild. Some had connections with the nobility. Pieter van der Hasselt, for instance, had connections with the knights Jan and Goessin vanden Moure with whom he promised before the Ghent aldermen on 4 April 1344 to pay a reimbursement of 2.000 *conincxscilden* to Symoen van Mirabeel, another knight, on pain of exile.[93] The aforementioned Jan uten Hove had contacts with the knight and landowner Willem van Leeuwerghem, for whom he stood surety in legal proceedings about contested property on 11 February 1361.[94] Social interactions were also taking place among the broader layers of the urban bourgeoisie. Before Willem van Huse, for example, joined Jacob van Artevelde's coup of urban

93 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 13v.

94 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 24v.

power, he already knew the latter's brother Willem, probably a hosteller, from whom he obtained a payment in 1337.[95] Appearing alongside some important drapers in a list of weaver hostages in 1349, Willem van Artevelde also seems to have sided with such drapers as Van Huse during the mid-fourteenth-century uprisings.[96] Jan Sleepstaf, another active cloth supplier and weaver-politician during the 1360s and 1370s,[97] married Annekine, daughter of the hosteller Gillis van Ponteraven.[98] And Jan Hugeszone, who himself was a powerful politician residing in both the *Gedele* and *Keure* administrations in the 1340s and 1360s, shared some of his social and economic capital with the famous patrician and merchant family Van Vaernewijck of Ghent,[99] when in 1354 he bought some land from Volcwive van Vaernewijck.[100]

At the highest ranks of late medieval society the social cleavages between the 'urban elite' and the 'artisanal milieu' as Jelle Haemers called them overlapped each other.[101] Coalitions, opportunism and compromises between different factions and urban groups often had to be made. In Ghent the guild elites would usually remain loyal to their craft as guild members or as a political vanguard during the fourteenth century. Unlike in the case of Ypres and the smaller towns of Flanders, where the drapers and other wealthy craftsmen would often make common cause with the merchant classes to form the local elite,[102] in Ghent (and in Bruges) a vertical guild consciousness remained strong.[103] Nevertheless, it cannot be denied either that besides vertical and inclusive, brotherhood-like forms of guild consciousness, the social network strategies of master weavers and drapers were also structured by horizontal and exclusive mechanisms of solidarity among the guild elite.

95 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 4v.

96 De Pauw (ed.), *Cartulaire*, 134.

97 Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 83, 90, 93, 95, 98, 100, 105, 110; Nicholas and Prevenier (eds.), *Rekeningen 1365-1376*, 63, 118.

98 SAG, Gedele, series 330, no. 8, fol. 159 and 252v; De Pauw and Vuylsteke (eds.), *Rekeningen 1336-1349* III, 9.

99 Hugeszone as alderman of the Keure in 1340, 1343, 1371 and 1379, and alderman of Gedele in 1362 and 1364: Vander Meersch (ed.), *Memorieboek* I, 49, 54, 85, 88, 96, 105. On the Van Vaernewijck family see: F. Buylaert, *Repertorium van de Vlaamse adel (ca. 1350- ca. 1500)* (Ghent 2011) 701-705.

100 SAG, Keure, series 301, no. 1, fol. 140r.

101 Haemers, *De Gentse opstand*, 62-101 and 109-118.

102 J. Dumolyn, 'Guild politics and political guilds in fourteenth-century Flanders', in: J. Dumolyn et al., *The voices of the people in late medieval Europe. Communication and popular politics* (Turnhout 2014) 46-47.

103 Saelens, 'Het verraad', 36-37.

## Conclusion

Recent research on medieval and early modern guild history has considerably improved our knowledge of the practices, discourses and self-images of artisanal life outside the realm of 'the economic', rightfully drifting away from the literature inspired by the New Institutional Economics that proliferated in the 1990s.[104] But in the reconstruction of guild motivations to organise brotherly love, solidarity and charity, conflicting interests within the guild order are often neglected. Whereas Rosser considers English 'crafts' as just one type of 'guild', craft guilds in late medieval Flanders were first and foremost socio-economic institutions that mediated manufacturing and commercial relations. As a result of the material conditions and social organization of the production system, social boundaries were created and strengthened that conflicted with the propagated unity of the guild ideology. This was particularly true in the large-scale textile sector of an industrial centre like Ghent that specialized its scope of production to expensive export-oriented textiles in the later Middle Ages. As such, high levels of 'guild capital' were needed for individual weavers and their families to get access to woollens, markets and credit. A draper, a subcontracted master, or a labouring master were therefore not necessarily like any other master. It was especially in entrepreneurship that real 'capital' could be made, and as a consequence of the accumulation of social capital among entrepreneurial craftsmen social polarization was produced and reproduced.[105] The higher the social rank of a weaver, the more his relations with peers grew into solid bonds of friend- and kinship. Intergenerational social mobility, political factions, and class endogamy via matrimonial strategies all added to one's actual inclusion within the guild and access to its capital.

The weaver networks in fourteenth-century Ghent studied here therefore suggest a more complex and non-linear conclusion. In contrast to most current historiography – often influenced by the classical sociological ideas of Weber and Durkheim and their modern interpre-

104 See: S.R. Epstein and M. Prak, 'Introduction', in: Idem (eds.), *Guilds, innovation, and the European economy, 1400-1800* (Cambridge 2008) 1-24.

105 Compare to Stabel, 'Labour time', on the role of drapers and their capital in the (time) regulation of labour.

tations, notably those of Robert Putnam – putting forward that a successful process of growing civil society in the form of associational guild life gradually substituted ties of blood and kinship as the founding elements of community, it seems that the spheres of the family, the guild, the economy, and politics in urban society of the medieval and early modern Southern Netherlands were much more entangled with one another.[106] At least in the case of the fourteenth-century Ghent weavers, personal bonds of kin- and friendship through concerns about credit, human resources, and access to economic and political gateways were adopted to complement guild capital rather than to replace them by it. Instead of being the result of trusted 'family-like societies' that filled the gap between a growing independence on traditional forms of solidarity, on the one hand, and a growing interdependence between urban socio-economic actors, on the other, guild networks among Ghent weavers were dialectically shaped by both the social contradictions and the social investment strategies of the actors involved in the textile industry. From this perspective, the 'guild brotherhood', in all its social and cultural aspirations of creating an inclusive artisan society, was trapped within the concrete power relations of super- and subordination intrinsic to the greatly specialized, high-quality and export-oriented textile industry of late medieval urban Flanders.

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**106** De Munck, *Guilds*, 6-10; Lis and Soly, *Worthy efforts*, 335-342.

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