



Universität  
Basel

## Research Project

### Dissertation Vicent: Drawing Continuity: The Making of Bourgeois Family Trees

#### Project funded by own resources

**Project title** Dissertation Vicent: Drawing Continuity: The Making of Bourgeois Family Trees

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**Organisation / Research unit**

Departement Geschichte / Allgemeine Geschichte des 19./20. Jhds (Arni)

**Project Website** <https://dg.philhist.unibas.ch/de/personen/fiona-vicent/dissertationsprojekt/>

**Project start** 01.01.2019

**Probable end** 31.07.2023

**Status** Completed

Das Dissertationsprojekt ist Teil des Sinergiaprojektes "Genealogical diagrams"

The project examines the crafting of family trees in the kin groups constituting the bourgeoisie of Basel in the 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> cen., most of which descended from the old patriciate. Having long opposed struggles for democratic reform, even at the cost of the traumatic loss of the revolutionary 'hinterland' in 1833, these families eventually, in 1875, relinquished their political monopoly, yet retained economic and symbolic power (Sarasin 1997). Hence, there is, first, a complex constellation of continuity and discontinuity, comprising the kind of crisis-laden "triggering events" that have been identified as constituting the "matrix" of genealogical work (Jettot & Lezowski 2016, 18–22). Secondly, Basel presents us with the case of a society where a close-knit network of kin groups was a crucial 'mover of modernity', a modernity that has long been falsely associated with the declining importance of kinship (Sabeau & Teuscher 2007). This constellation provides an ideal setting for further examining the tendency of the middle classes to adapt the genealogical enterprise of a bygone nobility for the maintenance of social hierarchies by purging it of its mythical contents (Timm 2016; Hohkamp 2018), thus constituting a historical bridgehead between 'old' noble and 'new' generalized forms of genealogy (Bouquet 1996). However, applying the overall approach of the Sinergia project, the subproject will open up additional pathways for research: Examining the actors, the work, and technologies that went into the production of bourgeois family trees, as well as the uses of the diagrams, f.e. in the context of socialization, might bring to light the conceptual productivity of bourgeois "family treeing" (Edwards 2017) beyond social mimicry and iconological continuation: What is actually produced through family trees? Relations among the living or relations between the living and the dead? How do family trees structure sociality by abstracting from relationships with those diagrammatically excluded, and how do they concretize what counts as kin? How does the very production of genealogical data and the crafting of trees itself generate relationships among those involved? This study will furthermore specifically pay attention to the gender aspect by not only analyzing how the patrilineal order is diagrammatically (re-)presented, but also by asking how the production of diagrams negotiated the (possibly contentious) gendered structure of descent and transmission. At the basis of the study are two sets of sources held by the public record office of Basel (Staatsarchiv Basel): 1) the large collection of representative family trees dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> cen., and 2) the documentation of their making as preserved in family estates.

#### Financed by

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