Political Representation

Communities, Ideas and Institutions in Europe
(c. 1200–c. 1690)

Edited by

Mario Damen
Jelle Haemers
Alastair J. Mann

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

An Introduction: Political Representation

Communities, Ideas and Institutions in Europe (*c. 1200–c. 1690*)

Mario Damen, Jelle Haemers and Alastair J. Mann

In the late medieval West, the political representation of subjects was organized under the term "Estates" (*Staten*, *États*), which regularly met with representatives of the prince with the aim of negotiating central issues such as war, taxation and trade regulations. Due to the emergence of larger administrative structures and the monetization of society, princes were more and more inclined to consult their subjects—especially the urban communities—in order to raise taxes and mobilize support in their struggle with noble contenders and princely competitors. On the other hand, local and regional communities themselves developed representative structures. This implies that the political coordination of a medieval state was not imposed by central authorities; it was always the product of a negotiation process between the various administrations and interest groups with a stake in the territory.[1] What is more, categories of subjects and their representatives had an interest in cooperation not only with each other, but also with those who claimed to rule them. Thus the functioning of a medieval or early modern state can only be understood by recourse to the social and ideological background (i.e. practice and theory respectively) of political representation.

These two structural developments (state-formation and communalism) have until now dominated research on representative institutions and have shown that medieval and early modern governmental politics involved dynamic processes of pressure from below as well as design from above. First, research on the "top-down" formation of so-called "modern states" has outlined that, due to the growing complexity of administration and economic imperatives, princes consulted over tax and to solidify support.[2] As a result,

---

1 John Watts, *The Making of Polities: Europe, 1300–1500* (Cambridge, 2009); Michel Hébert, *Parlementer. Assemblées représentatives et échanges politiques en Europe occidentale à la fin du moyen âge* (Paris, 2014).

2 Wim Blockmans, "Representation (Since the Thirteenth Century)", in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 7: *c. 1415–c. 1500*, ed. Christopher Allmand (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 29–64; Christopher Fletcher, "Political Representation", in *Government and Political Life in England and France, c. 1300–c. 1500*, ed. Christopher Fletcher, Jean-Philippe Genet and John Watts (Oxford, 2015), pp. 217–39.

pressure groups managed to influence state politics through well-established representative institutions.[3] A second line of research, the historiography on the "bottom-up" rise of parliamentary institutions, has shown that local and regional communities themselves developed representative structures. In this sense, initiation of representation came from "below" and was not triggered by a territorial prince.[4]

Both the bottom-up and top-down approaches to the study of representative institutions show that political representatives became the main power brokers between kings and princes on the one hand, and the subjects on the other. However, these approaches leave some questions unanswered. Though the political points of view of the prince and his officers are abundantly studied, it remains unclear what interests the representatives stood for. Knowledge of the social background of representatives is, however, crucial for clarifying their exact role in facilitating governmental policies. Princes and their officers accumulated different species of "state capital", as Pierre Bourdieu would say, such as instruments of coercion, economic resources, competencies, prestige and authority, which enabled them to exercise power over the territory and its inhabitants.[5] However, in the Low Countries, for example, they did not manage to monopolize "state capital", since representatives of categories of subjects also accumulated instruments of coercion, which enabled them to influence the process of decision-making. Research is needed to clarify which groups in society these people really represented, and how they were connected with the officers of the prince, who more often than not originated from similar social circles.

Scholarship on late medieval France and Germany has shown that representatives not only needed social and political capital to establish intermediary levels of power; they also needed "symbolic power" to defend their relatively autonomous position. The symbols and rituals used during a meeting of representative institutions were important to convince its participators of the symbolic power of the assembly.[6] However, the ceremonial aspect in itself cannot

---

3   Jan Dhondt, *Les assemblées d'états en Belgique avant 1795* (Ghent, 1965); Helmut Koenigsberger, *Monarchies, States General and Parliaments: The Netherlands in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2001).

4   Peter Blickle, ed., *Resistance, Representation, and Community* (Oxford, 1997); André Holenstein, "Empowering Interactions: Looking at Statebuilding from Below", in *Empowering Interactions: Political Cultures and the Emergence of the State in Europe, 1300–1900*, ed. Wim Blockmans, Jon Mathieu and André Holenstein (Farnham, 2009), pp. 1–34.

5   Pierre Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field", *Sociological Theory* 12 (1994), pp. 1–18.

6   Tim Neu, Michael Sikora and Thomas Weller, eds., *Zelebrieren und Verhandeln. Zur Praxis ständischer Institutionen im frühneuzeitlichen Europa* (Münster, 2009).

fully explain why representative institutions were so powerful. Political ideas and ideological weapons were therefore an essential tool for representatives to convince the people whom they represented of the decisions they took.[7] Research on discursive strategies and means of propaganda is therefore indispensable to understand the rationale behind the decision-making process of these meetings.[8] However, studies on representative institutions have not yet fully explored the political ideas of representatives and the discursive strategies they used in their negotiations with state officers.

This book wishes to identify the gaps in academic research on representative institutions and open up ways for the methodological renewal of this area of research by looking at:

1. the balance between a bottom-up and top-down approach (the ways in which representative institutions functioned as a platform for political dialogue);
2. ways to link the achievements of prosopographical research with changes in political dialogue;
3. patterns in which political discourses were triggered by these developments.

Thus it is geared towards the identification and the analysis of the agency of networks and the circulation of ideas, as a way to overcome the limits set by historical and theoretical studies on political representation.

In a chronological sense, the starting point of this collection of essays is the thirteenth century, the age in which representative structures institutionalized at a higher than just local level. Its final point is situated around 1650, tailing off in the 1690s, when, at least in Western Europe, most of the "modern states" had reached their basic form. Traditionally, research on representative institutions is characterized by a national, or sometimes a regional, approach. Researchers have been predominantly interested in the history of their "own" national representative institutions. They have tended to focus on legitimating modern states, and they were not particularly inclined to make a cross-boundary comparison of developments and structures. Comparative research is, therefore, relatively scarce. Moreover, as research traditions were modelled along the

---

7 Neithard Bulst, "Rulers, Representative Institutions and their Members as Power Elites: Rivals or Partners?", in *Power Elites and State Building*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard (Oxford, 1996), pp. 41–58; Martin Gosman, *Les sujets du père: les rois de France face au représentants du peuple dans les assemblées de notables et les états généraux, 1302–1615* (Paris, 2007).

8 Jens Feuchter and Jörgen Helmrath, eds., *Politische Redekultur in der Vormoderne. Die Oratorik europäischer Parlamente in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008); Graeme Small and Jan Dumolyn, "Parole d'Etat et mémoire collective dans les pays bourguignons: les discours prononcés devant des assemblées représentatives (XVe–XVIe siècles)", *Publication du Centre Européen d'Etudes Bourguignonnes*, 52 (2012), pp. 15–28.

lines of the nineteenth-century nation state, political units, which existed in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, but did not have a "follow-up" in more recent history, have usually been neglected. In short, this collection of essays aims to address the origins of representation, its implementation and institutional development in a comparative European framework.

1   Top-down or Bottom-up? Princes, Communities and Representation

In the first part of the volume, the focus is on institutional developments of representative institutions in Western Europe. It would be too simplistic to maintain that this process was only a reaction to the growth of princely power. Meetings of the representatives of subjects were not only dependent on the initiative of the ruler. In several areas of Europe, the catalyst for representation came from "below" and was not triggered by a territorial prince. It was firmly grounded in different kinds of collective action, aiming for self-organization and cooperation at a local level which had been flourishing since the twelfth century. Particularly in the more urbanized societies, like Northern Italy and the Low Countries, which were highly dependent on (international) commercial relations, these platforms had to resolve all kinds of problems concerning trade and judicial and economic issues. Nevertheless, in agricultural regions where princely power was relatively weak—Northern Europe, Switzerland, parts of the Holy Roman Empire—subjects, often well-organized after centuries of struggle and negotiations with local lords, took the initiative as well. In short, there was not a "standard model" for representation, as in principle a representative institution was the expression of the political desires of the most powerful actors in society. The balance of power between these political actors differed from place to place and depended greatly on social-economic structures. Equally, the comparative perspective of this volume demonstrates that medieval and early modern princes and elites were also conscious of the institutional fashions evident in the actions of neighbouring states and kingdoms. Authority, legitimacy, affirmation, consultation and indeed representation itself were attractive developments for a wide range of political entities and participants. Hence in the first part of the book the different institutional settings of representation in late medieval and early modern Europe will be discussed.

The over-simplicity of the distinct top-down or bottom-up approaches to the creation of representative institutions is challenged in this collection by both Peter Hoppenbrouwers and Tim Neu. A more nuanced blending of

motivations is suggested. The essay by Hoppenbrouwers provides a wide-ranging survey of the different types of assemblies of estates, their foundations and purposes, all including the third estate rooted in urbanization; following Blockmans, the presence of cities is a necessary ingredient for "popular" representation and in definitions of representative assemblies as opposed to royal or princely councils.[9] Assemblies in non-royal principalities and in composite states add to the variability of institutional conditions. The importance of urban representatives to the appearance of Estates is nevertheless balanced by their growing importance and regular gathering on their own in the more urbanized societies of the Low Countries and Italy. Hoppenbrouwers differentiates between temporary gatherings and permanent institutions with enhanced levels of power and authority. In particular, the various estates of the Low Countries, of the Iberian *Cortes* and the "near-ubiquitous" English Parliament are explored to plot the origins of assemblies of estates beginning, accepting Marongiu's "watershed", with the Cortes of the kingdoms of Leon and Castile summoned by Alfonso IX of Leon in 1188. There, nobles, clergy and men of the towns were present to consult over matters of peace and war.[10] Hoppenbrouwers then outlines the beginning of parliamentary discourse, emerging from classical and biblical foundations and underpinned by Renaissance ideologies and through an anatomy of parliamentary competency, showing aspects both universal and optional.

Seeking watersheds in representative development, Neu replaces examination by typologies and terminologies with a methodological approach aimed at understanding how representative Estates emerged. He also rejects the "dualistic" response of princes versus assemblies. Hintze's top-down model of competitive political culture in Europe, with princes and representative institutions evolving in response to an atmosphere of competition, is contrasted with David Stasavage's territorial and economic analysis, where elites with liquid capital promote representative assemblies with access to credit and with tax moderating powers. However, Neu deploys Michael Saward's novel methodology where both claims to represent as a political actor and claims to influence taxation as a collective political actor were preconditions for the

---

9   Wim Blockmans, "A Typology of Representative Institutions in Late Medieval Europe", *Journal of Medieval History* 4 (1978), pp. 189–215, at 204–09.

10   For instance, Antheun Janse, "Noble Representation in an Urban Society: The Case of Holland in the Fifteenth Century", in *Town and Country in Medieval North Western Europe: Dynamic Interactions*, ed. Alexis Wilkin et al. (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 241–64; Antonio Marongiu, *Medieval Parliaments: A Comparative Study*, trans. Stuart Woolf (London, 1968), pp. 29–32.

appearance of representative assemblies.[11] Neu uses these tools to test whether the Estates of Hesse and Württemberg can be explained as representative institutions that satisfy the preconditions of this "claim-making" criteria.

Neu's essay concludes a series of national studies following on from Hoppenbrouwers' general survey. The first of these is María Asenjo-González's consideration of the Cortes of Castile in terms of representation and fiscal engagement. Castile's Cortes, with its autonomous cities, is contrasted with other Iberian assemblies. The former was the more easily manipulated but crown control evolved over time, particularly during the fifteenth century. Entering the century, two or three urban representatives, or *procuradores*, represented each city. Then, in stages, they became increasingly independent of their urban deputies as the crown paid their salaries, until in the 1440s their numbers were much reduced to a core of "court *procuradores*", even though the cities issued mandates that limited the extent to which they were bound by the votes of their *procuradores*. These individuals became not merely more dependent on the crown but also, by the second quarter of the century, elements of a "royal council" supplanted the role of the full Cortes. By the time the Cortes returned in 1455, the level of gentrification had solidified the link between Cortes and court. However, although it no longer had legislative power into the next century, the Cortes still embraced an important role in fiscal oversight and tax approval, moderating and agreeing the *servicio* and *millones* taxes, with power in particular over how these taxes were raised from their own areas. Asenjo-González shows that for all its authoritative weaknesses and self-interested urban oligarchy, the significance to the fiscal state of Castile and the frequency of meetings before 1640, the Castilian Cortes was a representative assembly with peculiar yet mutable characteristics.

Marco Gentile's essay on the duchy of Milan in Northern Italy develops a case study of representation without the more expected representative assembly. Stasavage's view of the city state is questioned, as is the conventional and partial view of the Milanese duchy as merely the sum of city states. The dualist paradigm of cities versus princes is rejected and Gentile highlights various territorial and non-territorial political actors that were represented, sometimes indirectly but represented nevertheless. Distinctions are drawn between the Milanese ducal council, not a representative institution in the late medieval

---

11   Felix Gilbert, ed., *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 302–53; David Stasavage, *States of Credit. Size, Power and the Development of European polities* (Princeton, 2011); Michael Saward, *The Representative Claim* (Oxford, 2010). See also Tim Neu, *Die Erschaffung der landständischen Verfassung. Kreativität, Heuchelei und Repräsentation in Hessen, 1509–1655* (Köln, 2013).

period, and urban city councils, and also semi-corporate urban factional groups within the cities. Parma, Piacenza and Alessandria are especially considered as having local or civic councils that had bilateral relationships with the ducal council. Even though some of their council members were chosen from a shortlist that had ducal approval, such councils had a significant role in taxation. More remarkably, these cities were, from the fourteenth century, each divided into distinct quarters that fed into councils. Political representation in a vertical manner was built around aristocratic families and personal ties in this quartered orientation. They offered an alternative representational feature, not in the traditional sense, not necessarily elected as their selection procedures varied, but representative in its way.

The Irish Parliament is often seen as a clone of that of England and an example of a colonial institutional development in parallel but following behind the more powerful neighbour. However, Coleman Dennehy's essay confirms a range of contextual conditions that made the Irish model different, in spite of English efforts to the contrary from the thirteenth century. The Irish Parliament may have had Lords and Commons but it evolved distinctly with a state and society differently forged. For example, the "replication thesis" is clearly countered by pre-Reformation conditions. The "lower clergy" as an estate lasted in Ireland for 700 years after they were removed from England, and even had their own chamber, the "proctors" house, until the English Reformation of the 1530s. The racial, political, regional and confessional elements were different in Ireland. It was, with its "marcher society" and Gaelic law, without the mono-cultural qualities of England, and so the English crown had trouble dominating peripheral areas in the extremities of the four provinces of Ireland. Dennehy provides a survey of representation through the Irish House of Commons from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries in a political landscape that lacked urban features. Even the Tudor and Stuart attempts at domination were hampered after the 1530s as new types of burghs and towns made an intervention by English politics more problematic.[12] Universality is challenged in political but also in structural terms. Indeed, such multifarious circumstances are a deliberate feature of the case studies commissioned for this section. Representation as visited on the medieval and early modern territorial entities of Castile, Milan, Ireland, Hesse and Württemberg offer up more evidence of a range of institutional settings in the European theatre and invite yet more comparative research in the future.

---

12 Henry Richardson and George Sayles, *The Irish Parliament in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1952), pp. 20–22.

2   Prelates, Nobles and Patricians: The Composition of the Representative Institutions

Parliaments and Estates cannot be viewed as homogeneous institutions, but rather as conglomerates of interest groups. Therefore, we have to discern the political strategies of the three estates: the clergy, the nobility and the cities. Evidently, the political strategies of the representatives cannot rightly be understood without analysing their social background. Did they merely represent themselves and their own interests or was there a broader sense of responsibility and representation? The analysis of the social embedding and the political background of representatives can be done by mapping out the relations of the representatives involving kinship, friendship and patronage. The reconstruction of their social networks helps us to understand better not only the different interest groups within the Estates, but also the informal structures that influenced the process of decision-making.[13] Indeed, given the highly personalized nature of politics in late medieval and early modern Europe, we cannot study the working and development of representative institutions without knowing which persons and officeholders staffed their ranks. In the second part of the book, some relevant case studies for different European regions and countries will be presented. The different chapters explore the ways and methods by which research into the composition of representative institutions is done nowadays.

Since the 1970s, more and more historians working on state and representative institutions have taken a prosopographical approach. First it was only popular among German ancient historians and English (early) modernists. Influenced by new methodological approaches from the social sciences, German and French medievalists began to take it seriously.[14] Nowadays it is commonplace among historians working on institutions in the past to collect data with respect to the origin, family connections, education, career and network of the members and officers of a certain institution. The focus is always on the people who held the offices and who embodied the institutions. This renders it possible to reconstruct how the offices and institutions developed and to detect and reconstruct the underlying political and social networks. However,

---

13   Reinhard, *Power Elites and State Building*, passim.
14   Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, "Prosopografie en middeleeuwse geschiedenis: een onmogelijke mogelijkheid?", *Handelingen maatschappij en oudheidkunde Gent* 45 (1991), pp. 95–117, at 97–100; Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography", *Daedalus* 100 (1971), pp. 46–79, at 52–55; Katharine Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography. Approaches and Applications* (Oxford, 2007).

this labour-intensive task requires the research of a great many sources, most of them hidden in the archives. On the other hand, many collections of edited sources are increasingly used for this type of research. In England, "The History of Parliament" offers hundreds of biographies of members of parliament, which allow researchers to make analysis—chronologically or diachronically—of cohorts of the members.[15] Scotland has the enormous database of *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland* covering the 1230s to 1707.[16] For the Low Countries, there are the edited volumes of the meetings of the Estates of the different principalities from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.[17] The meetings of the Estates (or States) General were also edited in separate edition projects.[18]

The article by Ida Nijenhuis on the States General in the first half of the seventeenth century draws upon this material. The States of Holland dominated in the assemblies of the States General; the latter becoming a sovereign entity after the Dutch Revolt. Thanks to the abundancy of the material, Nijenhuis is able to use a statistical approach combined with a qualitative take, which conveys the daily practice of representation. However, new research into political representation demonstrates that it is not always necessary to examine biographical or even statistical information to reveal political movements and networks. Michael Penman's article, for example, focuses on an early episode of political representation in Scotland when less biographical information is available on the attendees to assemblies. He examines the dynamics of Scottish politics and the interaction between the crown and the land on the basis

---

15   See http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org.

16   http://www.rps.ac.uk.

17   For Holland: *Bronnen voor de geschiedenis der dagvaarten van de Staten en steden van Holland voor 1544*, I: *1276–1433*, ed. Walter Prevenier and Hans Smit (The Hague, 1987); II: *1433–1467*, ed. Smit (The Hague, 2005); III: *1467–1477*, ed. Hans Smit (The Hague, 1998); IV: *1477–1494*, ed. Henk Kokken and Marian Vrolijk (The Hague, 2006); VI: *1506–1515*, ed. Jan Burgers, Jim P. Ward and Hans Smit (The Hague, 2006). For Flanders: *Handelingen van de leden en van de Staten van Vlaanderen. Excerpten uit de rekeningen der steden, kasselrijen en van de vorstelijke ambtenaren (1384–1405)*, ed. Walter Prevenier (Brussels, 1959); *(1405–1419)*, ed. Antoon Zoete (Brussels, 1981–1982); *(1419–1467)*, ed. Wim Blockmans (Brussels, 1990–1995); *(1467–1477)*, ed. Blockmans (Brussels, 1971); *(1419–1467: overzichtstabel en indices)*, ed. Blockmans (Brussels, 2006); *(1477–1506)*, ed. Blockmans (Brussels, 1973–82).

18   The history of one of these edition projects has been studied at length by Marie Van Eeckenrode, "Un fantasme historiographique? La publication des sources servant à l'histoire des assemblées d'états des Pays-Bas", in *Pour la singuliere affection qu'avons a luy. Etudes bourguignonnes offertes à Jean-Marie Cauchies*, ed. Paul Delsalle et al. (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 479–89.

of petitions and legislation during the reign of Robert Bruce (r. 1306–29), a period of regime change. Interest groups, individuals and corporations, as well as in their "estates" through separate external and symbiotic institutions of merchants and clergy, engaged in a dialogue with the crown rooted in petitioning. This process was mediated through changes in participation, attendance and expectation. The insistence that traditional rights of tenants-in-chief be protected in spite of royal demands persisted, regardless of the challenging internal and external security situation. Meanwhile Bruce, to secure his dynasty, was recreating for Scotland the "listening authoritarianism" of Edwardian England under Edward I (r. 1272–1307).

Apart from the "normal" representatives from the three or four estates, other participants to meetings of representative assemblies played a political role that should not be underestimated. These men were often either financial or juridical experts, some of them university trained, and in the service of the prince as officers or councillors.[19] Alastair Mann shows in his article the broad range of these "participating officers" in Scotland, from the justice clerk to the chancellor. It is striking that most of these officers up until the fifteenth century were clergymen, whereas after 1500 they predominantly had a noble or baronial background. Mann makes it clear, however, that they did not simply represent the interests of the crown, but that they primarily pursued their "class interests" as land owners protecting their hereditary rights and social status.

The predominance of the nobility is also a theme in Mario Damen's paper. He stresses the fact that nobles were, thanks to their various positions at the one time, "multi-faceted players in the political arena" of the late medieval Low Countries. They could have a position within the prince's household and simultaneously occupy an office within the princely administration at a "national", regional, or local level, or even in the city administration. Damen explores the possibilities of convocation lists as a source for a reconstruction of the composition of the second estate (the nobility) in Brabant, a highly urbanized principality in the heart of the Low Countries. He juxtaposes the result with the attendance of nobles at some important meetings of the Estates in the fifteenth century. He demonstrates that the second estate cannot be viewed as a homogeneous power block but consisted of several networks—based on social, geographical, familial and political bonds—partly overlapping, each with its own interests and trying to pursue its political strategies.

---

19   Hébert, *Parlementer*, pp. 171–74.

3   Controlling the Estates and Explaining Their Working: Ideas and Discourses

As previously mentioned, the birth of representation can be seen as both a top-down as well as a bottom-up development. This resulted not only in political confrontation and cooperation, but also in the creation and maintenance of ideologies and discursive practices justifying princely power and/or the interference (of delegates) of subjects. The third and final part of this book deals with this remarkable "ideological world of representation" from two perspectives: what was the role of the prince and what were the obligations and rights of his subjects? Two different approaches can be taken here. On the one hand, the discourse of political thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, Baldo degli Ubaldi or Coluccio Salutati has to be investigated. "Rights of resistance" subjects often claimed to have been legitimated by such learned discourse.[20] On the other hand, however, it can be questioned to what extent local discourses on the likes of economic and personal freedom, property, self-organization, and taxation, as developed by stake-holders and often meant for "internal" use in the communal life of cities or villages, were translated into the many privileges or "constitutional texts". For instance, the English Magna Carta, the Brabantine *Blijde Inkomsten*, and similar charters that were "granted" by princes throughout the later Middle Ages were mainly based on customary rights.[21] Though the influence that learned treatises had on contemporary thinking is not absent from this book, most attention goes to the second of the perspectives mentioned. Which resources did the representatives (both delegated by the prince and by the people) use to justify their mandate and the decisions taken? As a result, the essays focus on the political thought of representatives and the rationale which legitimated the existence of the Estates, and on the transfer and circulation of ideas and discourses with regard to representative institutions. Theoretical research demonstrates that what creates the power of words is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them, as ideologies owe their structure and functions to the social conditions of the production and circulation of ideas.[22] Therefore, the meticulous scrutiny of the political ideology and the discursive practices of representatives and subjects

---

20   See some of the essays in Angela de Benedictis, ed., *Revolten und politische Verbrechen zwischen dem 12. und 19. Jahrhundert: rechtliche Reaktionen und juristisch-politische Diskurse* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 2013).

21   Richard Kaeuper (ed.), *Law, Governance, and Justice. New Views on Medieval Constitutionalism* (Leiden, 2013).

22   Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Oxford, 1991), p. 169. See also Teun Van Dijk, "Politics, Ideology, and Discourse", in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*,

presented here in four essays not only clarifies the interests that were at stake, but also the arguments with which they defended their autonomy vis-à-vis the king or the prince and those whom they claimed to represent.

So, these essays raise a series of fundamental questions concerning the discursive strategies used by representatives, their ideological environment, the origins of their ideas, and the evolution of the discourse of the representatives in time and space. For instance, Robert Stein confirms that urban delegates in general, and the fourteenth-century city clerk of Antwerp Jan van Boendale in particular, developed a sophisticated discourse on political representation which has widely influenced political thinking in the Low Countries. Boendale's *Brabantse Yeesten*, a chronicle mainly lauding the deeds of the dukes of Brabant, though also paying attention to the interests of the urban elites in Brabant, clearly propagated principles such as rights of political participation. In Boendale's work, political representation is considered as a core value of late medieval politics and even as a basic principle of a territory's identity. Local custom and regional institutions of political representation are therefore regarded by urban subjects as an integral part of their history.[23] Also in other chapters from this part of the book, we encounter examples from the texts of clerks, chancellors, aldermen, university-trained intellectuals, writers and so on, who have contributed to similar ideas in other regions (see also Alastair Mann's essay). It is on the basis of their writings and texts that historians can reconstruct the ideologies of individuals and collectives concerning political representation. Stein's essay therefore carefully shows that historians should be aware of the hidden agenda of these texts.

The reception of the ideas articulated in the sources that have come down to us constitutes a serious problem. As Jan Dumolyn and Graeme Small point out, at least for the medieval period, we have very few complete texts of speeches and discourses pronounced during meetings of representatives. On the most important discussions, the separate deliberations of the estates behind closed doors, historians have very little information. However, cunningly using speech act theory, Dumolyn and Small show that not only the text itself, but also the setting and the scene where it was pronounced added meaning to the words and phrases uttered by the delegates present in the meeting. The authority of the speakers was greatly influenced by their social position,

---

ed. Keith Brown, (Oxford, 2006) pp. 728–40; Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Harlow, 2010).

23   This is also true for nobles, see, among others, Valerie Vrancken, "United in revolt, common discourse: urban and noble perceptions of 'bad government' in fifteenth-century Brabant (1420–1421)", *Journal of Medieval History*, 43 (2017), pp. 579–99.

the mandate of their home town, the rhetorical strategy used, and the language in which ideas were framed. All these aspects have to be taken into account if we want to know how the text was perceived and what the audience did with the many speeches they listened to when meeting at the Estates General. Of course, much of this changed with the advent of the printing press. In the early modern period, political ideas received a much wider audience thanks to print. Pamphlets, for example, were not only directed at the members of parliament but were also intended to mobilize support among the general public. This created an interactive process of decision-making which was very different compared to the medieval period. Though, one should not underestimate the power the spoken word retained in later times.[24]

Furthermore, texts informing us about the contents of debates at meetings of the Estates seem to be full of *topoi*: the king or the prince is a good governor and defender of the common good. In the speeches of the prince's officers, the good or even affectionate relationship with the subjects is the cement of a political pact. According to many historians, this rhetoric, which is a mélange of information and propaganda, appeals to both the reason and the pride, love and loyalty of subjects. The goal is to create a consensus on the course of princely politics and, of course, to obtain consent for the new aides or taxes demanded.[25] Clearly, not only princes but also subjects regularly made use of the "common good" ideology to legitimize their proposals to the meetings of institutions of political representation. Framing their demands and wishes in a language that was used by the authorities themselves could enhance the chances of these demands being approved.[26] It is, of course, a well-known rhetorical

---

24   See, for instance, Arlette Farge, *Dire et mal dire: l'opinion publique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1992); Elisabeth Horodowich, *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice* (New York, 2008); Thomas Cohen and Lesley Twomey, eds., *Spoken Word and Social Practice. Orality in Europe (1400–1700)* (London, 2015). Compare with two recent studies on deviant speech in the late medieval period: Christian Liddy, "'Sire ye be not king': Citizenship and Speech in Late Medieval and Early Modern England", *The Historical Journal*, 60 (2017), pp. 591–96; Jelle Haemers and Chanelle Delameillieure, "Women and Contentious Speech in Fifteenth-Century Brabant", *Continuity and Change* 32 (2017), pp. 323–47.

25   See, for instance, Jean-Philippe Genet, "Political Language in the Late Medieval English Parliament", and Michel Hébert, "Opening Speeches and Political Oratory in the French Provincial Estates of the Later Middle Ages", in *Parlamentarische Kulturen vom Mittelalter bis in die Moderne*, ed. Jens Feuchter and Jörgen Helmrath (Düsseldorf, 2013), resp. pp. 245–70, and 351–68.

26   Studies on the use of the "common good" as justifying principle can be found in Élodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure van Bruaene, eds., *De Bono Communi. The Discourse and Practice of the Common Good in the European City, 13th–16th centuries* (Turnhout, 2010); and in the special issue of *Revue Française d'Histoire des Idées Politiques*, 32 (2010), n° 2.

strategy in representative meetings to propose particular group interests as be-
ing common to the collectivity of the realm in order to convince governors of
the necessity to take care of such interests. Consensus and unanimity were
therefore important values for delegates which had to be accentuated when
returning to the court or their home towns. As Marie Van Eeckenrode shows
in this volume, when studying the ideological consistency of reports of the
delegates of sixteenth-century Hainaut, these values were essential for the jus-
tification of decisions taken during meetings. Indeed, the lack of references to
discord in these reports, though one knows that disagreement was more the
rule than the exception for meetings of Estates, demonstrates that they pri-
mordially served to legitimize the decisions taken, instead of reporting what
truly was said during these encounters. Such a conclusion is a warning, once
again, for historians who study such documents.

   Another problematic issue being tackled in this volume is the fact that we
do not know how these texts (or speeches) were received by audiences. Did
the representatives really understand all the references made to classic authors
by the prince's officers, and were they so impressed by these wise councillors
that they immediately approved the new aides or taxes demanded? We have
reason to believe that they made their own story out of it. That is shown by
some examples mentioned by Small and Dumolyn, yet it is David Grummitt's
essay which really elaborates on this point. He argues that late medieval sub-
jects maintained a public sphere in which parliamentary issues were discussed
at length, explained, and criticized. Several historians have already shown that
"the public sphere", as defined by Jürgen Habermas (the "*Öffentlichkeit*"), has
older origins than the German scholar thought.[27] Grummitt adds that four-
teenth- and fifteenth-century commoners (i.e. privileged inhabitants of rural
and urban communities) had a sophisticated language at their disposal to dis-
cuss matters which belonged to the English Parliament. Pamphleteering, mur-
muring, gossiping et al. belonged to a common repertoire of contention used
to voice popular (dis)satisfaction with a certain decision taken by parliament.
The language of petitioning, as it has been studied by a number of scholars,[28]

---

27   Patrick Boucheron and Nicolas Offenstadt, eds., *L'espace public au Moyen Âge. Débats au-
      tour de Jürgen Habermas* (Paris, 2011); Laurent Bourquin, Philippe Hamon, Pierre Karila-
      Cohen and Cédric Michon, eds., *S'exprimer en temps de troubles. Conflits, opinion(s) et
      politisation de la fin du Moyen Age au début du XXe siècle* (Rennes, 2011); Jean-Philippe
      Genet, ed., *La légitimité implicite* (Paris, 2015), 2 vols.
28   W. Mark Ormrod, "Murmur, Clamour and Noise: Voicing Complaint and Remedy in Peti-
      tions to the English Crown, c. 1300–c. 1460", in *Medieval Petitions: Grace and Grievance*, ed.
      W. Mark Ormrod, Gwilym Dodd and Anthony Musson (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 135–55;
      John Watts, "Popular Voices in England's War of the Roses, c. 1445–c. 1485", in *The Voices

contained a lot of elements, and was at the same time a resource of popular thinking on governmental issues. Grummitt therefore shows that subjects can no longer be considered as passive receptors of the ideologies used by officers of the crown to justify royal policies. In contrast, they actively absorbed these languages and ideas in order to create a discursive register to talk about political issues. So, state ideology and popular thinking cannot be regarded as two separate worlds, but as overlapping fields of conflict and cooperation; just as the origins of political representation were likewise not as clear-cut.

Summing up, Estates and parliaments have a multifaceted history. The diversity of interests of delegates, local customs and traditions, and different institutional origins determined the outlook and the functioning of representative institutions. This volume demonstrates that the diversity of representative institutions should be regarded as a richness and a challenge for scholarship. By analysing the differences and similarities of political representation across Europe, it intends to denounce the prevailing master narrative of such institutions for its reliance on national history, its adherence to a periodization that upholds clearly demarcated transformations between medieval and early modern institutions, and its lack of attention to ideology as a category of analysis. Furthermore, this collection of essays shows that the continuity and intensity of political collaboration in the countries and regions under scrutiny came from the fact that both princes and subjects were at the same time *included* in discussions about the way a territory should be governed. As a result, research on the interests, the social background, the ideas and the rhetorical strategies of delegates should be taken into account when explaining the history of representative institutions. We hope that the results of this volume will inspire further research into the rich world of political representation in Europe.

---

of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics*, ed. Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Rafael Oliva Herrer and Vincent Challet (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 107–22; Christian Liddy, "Urban Enclosure Riots: Risings of the Commons in English Towns, 1480–1525", *Past and Present* 226 (2015), pp. 41–77; Christopher Fletcher, "News, Noise, and the Nature of Politics in Late Medieval English Provincial Towns", *Journal of British Studies*, 56 (2017), pp. 250–72. See also Jelle Haemers, "Révolte et requête. Les gens de métiers et les conflits sociaux dans les villes de Flandre (XIIIe–XVe siècles)", *Revue Historique* 677 (2016), pp. 27–55.