

**Political representation: communities, ideas and institutions in Europe (c. 1200 - c. 1650).**

**Workshop 13-14 September 2012, The Hague**

In June 2011 the The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) awarded a group of scholars from the Netherlands, Belgium and Scotland with an internationalization grant to the project *Political representation: communities, ideas and institutions in Europe (c. 1200 - c. 1650)*.

The aim of the project is threefold:

- a. To stimulate and expand co-operation between researchers in different European universities and research institutions working on political representation and representative institutions throughout Europe.
- b. To enhance cross-fertilization of research-traditions by different specialists and teams.
- c. To build a network of specialized scholars in order to prepare a proposal for an international research project on political representation, the formation of representative institutions and the ways in which these helped to shape social and political identities in late medieval and early modern Europe.

In order to build up a network of scholars, a series of three workshops is planned in the years 2012-2014. These workshops will each last two days and accommodate a maximum of 25 participants consisting of the core group of participants in the project plus additional invited scholars from other European countries. The first workshop will take place on 13 and 14 September 2012 in The Hague at the Huygens Institute of Netherlands History.

*Top-down or bottom-up? Princes, communities and representation*

The first workshop addresses the origins of representation and the divergent institutional developments of representative institutions. The main aim is to offer a comparative view on institutional developments all over Europe and to obtain the first rough sketches of the international research project.

It would be too simplistic to maintain that the institutional development of representative institutions was only a reaction on the growth of princely power. Meetings of the representatives of the subjects were not only dependent on the initiative of the ruler. In several areas of Europe initiation of 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 that had been flourishing since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Especially 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. In agricultural regions where princely power was weak – Northern Europe, Switzerland, parts of the Holy Roman Empire – the subjects, often well organised 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 highly on the social-economic structures. Hence, in this first workshop the different institutional settings of representation in late medieval and early modern Europe will be discussed.

As a point of departure, speakers are invited to comment and reflect on the challenging book of David Stassavage, *States of credit. Size, power and the development of European polities* (Princeton 2011). This book focuses on the trilateral relationship between political representation, public credit and state formation, stressing the differences between territorial states and city-states. In smaller political units the frequency of representative assemblies was higher than in larger ones because of relatively low transport- and communication costs. Moreover, representative assemblies in city-states were dominated by (oligarchies of) merchants who were inclined to grant credits to their governments, as they were both the main money providers, and the ones who could monitor the ways in which the money was spent. As a result governments of city-states could borrow money at lower interest rates than in territorial states, where merchants generally formed a minority within the representative institutions. Stassavage maintains that this was a major reason why city-states were able to defend themselves effectively against territorial states during military conflicts over a long time-span.

Of course, the relationship between taxation and political representation is a recurrent theme in books on representative institutions. However, *States of credit* offers several interesting points of discussion. Is it, for example, useful to distinguish between city-states and territorial states when doing comparative research on representative institutions? Are these two institutional paths a relevant framework for studying representation in all parts of Europe? Can Stassavage's model be applied to all European countries? Is the relationship between public credit, taxation and representation really dominant in the process of institutionalization of representative institutions? Speakers are invited to reflect on these and other questions and on the way in which these questions can be translated into a new, comparative pan-European research project. Furthermore, the plans and themes for the two remaining workshops can be discussed.

The workshop will take place in the Huygens Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis (= Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands) in The Hague. Getting there: <http://www.huygens.knaw.nl/en/contact/bereikbaarheid/>

## Program

*Thursday 13 September*

9.00-9.15 arrival participants, coffee

9.15-9.30 welcome, aims of the workshop

9.45-11.15 guided tour Binnenhof (Houses of Parliament, we visit the senate see [http://www.eerstekamer.nl/begrip/english\\_2](http://www.eerstekamer.nl/begrip/english_2))

*Session 1. Chair: Mario Damen*

11.30-12.00 Wim Blockmans: Conditions for effective political participation.  
12.00-12.30 Discussion (discussant Alastair Mann)

12.30-13.30 Lunch at Huygens ING

*Session 2. Chair: Ida Nijenhuis*

13.30-14.15 Marco Gentile: Political representation in late medieval Northern Italy: utility and limitations of the City-State paradigm (14th - 15th century)  
14.15-14.35 Discussion (discussant: Hans Cools)

14.45-15.15 María Asenjo: Political Representation in the Spanish Kingdoms at the End of the Middle Ages  
15.15-15.35 Discussion (discussant: Jelle Haemers)

15.35-16.00: coffee and tea

*Session 3. Chair: Wim Blockmans*

16.00-16.30 Tim Neu: Speaking in the name of. Collective action, claim-making, and the development of pre-modern representative institutions  
16.30-16.50 Discussion (discussant: Ida Nijenhuis)

17.00-17.30 Paul Cavill: Britain: the late developer?  
17.30-17.50 Discussion (discussant: Marjolein 't Hart)

*Friday 14 September*

9.00-9.30 coffee

Session 4. Chair: Alastair Mann

9.30-10.00 Robert Stein: Desperate princes and helpful towns. Financial involvement and the rise of representation in the Low Countries

10.00-10.20 discussion (discussant: Jan Burgers)

10.20-10.50 Jelle Haemers: A financial revolution in Flanders? Fiscal innovation and political centralisation in the county of Flanders during the 1480s

10.50-11.10 discussion (discussant:: Arie van Steensel)

11.10-11.30 coffee

Session 5. Chair: Hans Cools

11.30-12.00 Peter Hoppenbrouwers, A comparative approach to the history of medieval political representation

12.00-12.15 discussion (discussant:: Mario Damen)

12.15-12.30 Next workshops, application for research program

12.30-13.30 lunch at Huygens ING