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Introduction

On 23 May 1432, the city council of Utrecht took an unexpected decision. It announced the demolition of the meat hall, where the members of the butchers' guild sold their products and held their guild meetings. The motivation brought forward in the announcement was that the butchers' meetings had often led to 'great troubles' for the city and the good people of Utrecht. The hall was to be demolished so thoroughly that it could never be rebuilt. Until a new venue was decided by the council, the butchers were to sell meat from their homes, and no butcher should refuse to do so, it was added rather threateningly.¹

Six months later, on 7 January 1433, the city council announced the next step in a resolution: it abolished the butchers' guild altogether and created a new guild for the brewers, to whom that honour had been previously denied. In this way, the number of 21 guilds in Utrecht would be maintained. The meat sale was, in future, to be located in two newly built, smaller meat halls, one in the upper and one in the lower part of town. The butchers themselves were to be distributed among the other guilds in such a way that guilds losing brewers as their members would be compensated by gaining an equivalent number of butchers. The motivation for this move was stated more clearly in this resolution. According to the council, the butchers had caused many fights, scuffles and other troubles for the city by their meetings. Too many times, they had gathered 'hastily' in the meat hall and on the *Plaets*, the square that was the centre of political life in Utrecht. The intention of this resolution was to prevent such troubles from happening again.²

The move of the Utrecht city council against the butchers' guild was a radical one, in the sense that it took away long-established rights from a craft guild and its members. The butchers' guild was almost certainly among the first 'common guilds' (*gemene gilden*) that proclaimed the ordinance in 1304 by which they claimed an important role in local government and a high degree of autonomy.³ Still, the measures against the butchers were not

¹ J.C. Overvoorde and J.G.C. Joosting (eds.), *De gilden van Utrecht tot 1528*, 2 vols. (The Hague 1896-1897) II, 89.

² *Ibidem*, II, 89-92.

³ The guild ordinance of 1304 in: *Ibidem*, I, 52-55. The guild ordinance only mentions the bakers as one of the participating guilds. The butchers' guild is mentioned for the first time in the 1340s: S. Muller Fz (ed.), *De middeleeuwse rechtsbronnen der stad Utrecht*, 4 vols. (The Hague 1883-1885) I, 42-43, 57-62.

meant to undermine the system of the political guilds in Utrecht. The city council, itself a body in which the 21 common guilds were represented, took care to create a new guild in place of that of the butchers. By benefiting the brewers in the city, the council surely hoped to gain their recognition and at the same time stimulate the local beer trade.⁴ In the future, however, the former members of the butchers' guild were effectively denied the right to influence urban policies as an economic corporation.

As stated in the resolutions, the direct cause of the butchers' guild's abolition lay in their reputation for using violence to advance or defend their interests. Butchers had indeed been active in many of the violent political conflicts in the city since the early fourteenth century, and most recently in the years between 1425 and 1432. In this period, they had allied themselves with prominent citizens and ecclesiastical leaders who were involved in the prolonged Utrecht schism (1423-1449), a conflict that divided the city and Sticht (princebishopric) between several candidates following the death of bishop Frederik of Blankenheim in 1423. In this conflict, this coalition had tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to gain the upper hand in local government through a number of power coups.⁵ Even if the butchers had crossed a line in the use of violence that contemporaries deemed unacceptable – in 1425, for instance, a former mayor was killed – it is nevertheless clear that their actions were not unusual, given the general violent character of political conflict in this period. Therefore, a reason for the guild's abolition may also have been the factionalism that reigned in the city council in this period.

Even though great care was taken to repair the consequences of the guild's abolition for the organisation of the city's government, the measures against the butchers were, at the least, dubious from a constitutional point of view. It was clear that, by these actions, the city council placed itself *above* the guilds, forcing individual guilds to comply rather than warranting their rights and taking decisions that touched upon the constitution *together with* the membership of all the guilds, as had been laid down in the city's constitution, the

⁴ Overvoorde and Joosting, *Gilden* II, 91; on the attempts to stimulate the beer trade in Utrecht: L. Alberts, 'Craft beers uit de late middeleeuwen. Stichts hopenbier en kuitbier', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 2017, 72-83, esp. 74.

⁵ On this period in general, see A.J. van den Hoven van Genderen, 'Op het toppunt van de macht (1304-1528)', in: R.E. de Bruin et al. (eds.), *'Een paradijs vol weelde'. Geschiedenis van de stad Utrecht* (Utrecht 2000) 113-189, at 163-166; J. Smithuis, *Het Utrechtse Schisma en de Hollands-Stichtse betrekkingen: Partijstrijd en kerkelijke strijd (1423-ca. 1434)* (unpublished master thesis, University of Leiden 1999); see also chapter 5.

Stadsboek.⁶ By this action, in other words, the city council had effectively altered the way urban politics was done in Utrecht, and diminished the autonomy of the separate guilds.

Topics and scope of research

The events surrounding the butchers' guild's abolition in Utrecht in 1432-1433 illustrate a number of general features and tensions in late medieval urban government that are central to this thesis. On the one hand, they highlight the fact that conflict, and the use of violence for political goals, were unmistakable elements of urban politics. Even though the violence of the butchers was condemned by the Utrecht city council, it continued to be an important aspect of local politics throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, as it was in other cities across Europe.⁷ Apart from popular protest movements and revolts, political violence was an attribute of elite factions and broader coalitions of citizens or 'parties'.⁸ On the other hand, late medieval urban governments likewise aimed at consensus that was projected inward and outward via specific discourses.⁹ The abolition of the butchers' guild, and the wording of the resolutions leading to it, would never have been achieved without a degree of consensus within the Utrecht city council, or within its ruling group, and were likewise aimed at strengthening consensus in the city (whether they were successful in this effort or not).¹⁰

⁶ Edition of the *Stadsboek* (or *Liber albus*): Muller, *Rechtsbronnen* I, 4-68; see esp. 39 (nr 86).

⁷ D.A. Berents, *Misdaad in de middeleeuwen. Een onderzoek naar de criminaliteit in het laat-middeleeuws Utrecht* (Utrecht 1976) 96-106; Van den Hoven van Genderen, 'Op het toppunt', 177-189; J.E.A.L. Struick, *Utrecht door de eeuwen heen* (Utrecht/Antwerp 1968) 91-129 (partly outdated). For other regions, see e.g. J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, 'Patterns of urban rebellion in medieval Flanders', *Journal of medieval history* 31 (2005) 369-393; G. Naegle, 'Revolts and wars, corporations and leagues: Remembering and communicating urban uprisings in the medieval Empire', in: J. Firnhaber-Baker with D. Schoenaers (eds.), *The Routledge history handbook of medieval revolt* (London/New York 2017) 236-264; P. Blickle (ed.), *Resistance, representation and community* (Oxford 1997); P. Lantschner, 'Revolts and the political order of cities in the late Middle Ages', *Past & Present* 225 (2014) 3-46.

⁸ Cf. the distinction made recently in P. Lantschner, *The logic of political conflict in medieval cities. Italy & the Southern Low Countries, 1370-1440* (Oxford 2015) 60-86.

⁹ This consensus should be distinguished from the 'consensus' that John Najemy coined for late medieval Florence and that refers to the politics of a small ruling elite to keep power in their hands by promoting consensus among non-elite citizens and guild members. This form of consensus can be equated to 'elitism': J.M. Najemy, *Corporatism and consensus in Florentine electoral politics, 1280-1400* (Chapel Hill 1982).

¹⁰ The resolution of abolition states that it was taken unanimously, but this was something that was stated about most city council resolutions and may not have reflected the truth in this case. There are no records in Utrecht that would reveal details of council discussions. See also F. Camphuijsen, *Scripting justice. Legal practice and communication in the late medieval law courts of Utrecht, York and Paris*

The aim of this study is to analyse the dynamics of urban politics in late medieval Utrecht through the alternating lens of conflict and consensus. In this discussion, conflict and consensus are understood as powerful drives for political change, as well as for stability. Under this overarching theme, three specific issues are addressed: 1) the development of the city's political institutions, seen from the viewpoint of social and political groups seeking representation and influence, 2) the development of political discourse and urban historiography, and 3) the organisation of political action and the role of violence in urban politics.

The first issue concerns the nature and development of late medieval urban government in Utrecht. Central to it are the concepts of 'oligarchy' versus the influence of 'popular' politics or representative government.¹¹ What characterised a city government as more closed (oligarchic) or more open (representative), and how did it evolve either way? How did local government develop in Utrecht? Here, formal political institutions, such as the city council and the 'common guilds', are considered alongside political practices (day-to-day politics). The idea behind this is that, in their impact on urban politics and the development of the city government as such, formal structures were as important as informal practices. The issue of 'oligarchy' and 'popular' representation relates to another issue, notably the social and institutional development of the craft guilds themselves, and their role in urban politics. Did they represent the 'popular' voices in the city? Did they contribute to political consensus or to conflict in the city? As will be seen, it is not possible to answer this question in the same way for all craft guilds, as there were significant differences between them with regard to their actual influence and position in urban politics.

The second issue concerns the development of political discourse and urban historiography in Utrecht. What was the craft guilds' impact on the 'official' ideology of the city and what constituted the self-image propagated by Utrecht's government in the later Middle Ages? These questions are partly explored via an analysis of the Dutch Beke (*Nederlandse Beke*), a Middle-Dutch chronicle that was produced by an author closely connected to Utrecht's city government around 1393. As will be argued, this chronicle represents the tentative beginnings of an urban historiographical tradition in Utrecht.

(unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam 2017) 153-155.

¹¹ The term 'representative' government is used here, and not 'democratic', as there was no such thing as democracy before the modern era. Urban government was at all times limited to the community of citizens or burghers, which was a privileged category of urban dwellers.

Finally, this thesis addresses the issue of the organisation of political action and the role of political violence in the city. How normal was violence in late medieval urban politics and how did it shape the organisation of political action over time? How did power coups and violent outbreaks come about, and what kind of groups were behind them? What explains the frequent coalitions between elite groups or factions and groups of ordinary guildsmen and commoners in urban politics?

It should be noted that these three topics all relate in one way or another to the field of politics in the late medieval city, including closely related social and cultural phenomena. This thesis is primarily focused on the politics involved at the level of city government, and not at other levels, for instance that of politics within the craft guilds. The latter would deserve a separate study. In addition, this thesis does not address any questions of urban politics as a means of structuring economic relations in the city. This is an important limitation because the politics of craft guilds (or merchant guilds, for that matter) was naturally aimed at protecting and advancing socio-economic interests of the members of the craft or trade. Getting access to the governing bodies of the city was at least partly instrumental to this endeavour. Once craft guilds became involved in local government, they attempted to influence economic and financial policies.¹²

The period under consideration starts with the first mentions of political activity by craft guilds and the common citizenry in Utrecht, i.e. from about 1250, and continues until the year 1450 approximately. After 1450, except for some temporary experiments, the organisation of the city government did not formally change until the end of the city's guild constitution in 1528. However, after 1450, the city and Sticht of Utrecht were less able to follow their own political course, as they were drawn more and more into (inter)regional political conflicts. In 1456, Duke Philip the Good forcefully installed his bastard son David (1456-1496) on the episcopal see, despite protracted resistance of the city's and Sticht's

¹² On the 'political economy' of the craft guilds and the scholarly debate about their influence on the economic development of European cities: B. de Munck and J. Dumolyn, 'The political culture of work in Europe, 1450-1650' (forthcoming); 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* 53 (2008) Suppl. 45-71; P. Stabel, 'Guilds in late medieval Flanders: myths and realities of guild life in an export-oriented environment', *Journal of medieval history* 30 (2004) 187-212; J. Lucassen, T. de Moor and J. Luiten van Zanden, 'The return of the guilds: Towards a global history of the guilds in pre-industrial times', *International review of social history* 53 (2008) Suppl. 5-18. An in this light outdated survey of protectionist policies of the Utrecht guilds: D.A. Berents, 'Protectie en gilden te Utrecht in de late middeleeuwen', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 1976, 30-72.

leaders.¹³ Traditionally, this date is seen as the moment when the city was definitely drawn into the Burgundian, later Habsburg, power sphere.

In 1528, the Emperor Charles V took over temporal authority of the bishop and ended the city's autonomy. He took the opportunity to install a new city government in Utrecht that would be obedient to his authority and expressly excluded the craft guilds from any representation.¹⁴ Charles V is known to have employed this strategy in many other, previously (semi-)autonomous cities in the Empire.¹⁵ In short, the year 1528 can be seen as the beginning of formal oligarchic rule in Utrecht which would last until the end of the early modern era.

Historiography and key concepts

The late medieval city of Utrecht presents an interesting but often overlooked case for the study of urban politics in the late Middle Ages. Within the Northern Low Countries, it held a unique position as one of the oldest urban centres. It was also the only city in this region where craft guilds gained access to urban government in the wave of guild revolts shortly after 1300. Apart from Utrecht, only Dordrecht would know craft guild influence in city politics, although at a later date (on a permanent basis only after 1400) and in a limited way.¹⁶

Despite the exceptional character of Utrecht's city government, it has not been studied as much as one would expect. Overall, it has been treated as a city led by patricians, only assigning leverage to the craft guilds in periods of crisis, as a movement of the 'common people'. There have been almost no in-depth studies of the workings of the city's guild

¹³ J.E.A.L. Struick, 'Het bewind van de gilden en de strijd om het bisdom in de stad Utrecht, 1455-1456', in: W. Jappe Alberts et al. (eds.), *Postillen over kerk en maatschappij in de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw. Aangeboden aan prof.dr. R.R. Post bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar aan de Katholieke Universiteit te Nijmegen* (Utrecht 1964) 85-116; R.R. Post, *Geschiedenis der Utrechtse bisschopsverkiezingen tot 1535* (Utrecht 1933) 164-171.

¹⁴ A.H.M. van Schaik, 'Een nieuwe heer en een andere leer', in: R.E. de Bruin et al. (eds.), *'Een paradijs vol weelde'. Geschiedenis van de stad Utrecht* (Utrecht 2000) 191-249, at 191-197.

¹⁵ Naegle, 'Urban uprisings', 239; for its impact in Ghent in and after 1540 see J. Dambuyne, 'De middenstand in opstand. Corporatieve aspiraties en transformaties in het zestiende-eeuwse Gent', *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde te Gent* N.S. 57 (2003) 71-122.

¹⁶ J. van Herwaarden et al. (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht tot 1572* (Hilversum 1996) 23-25, 114-122. In the eastern part of the Northern Netherlands, alternative forms of citizen involvement in urban politics developed, notably on a district basis: M. Prak, 'Corporate politics in the Low Countries: Guilds as institutions, 14th to 18th centuries', in: M. Prak, C. Lis, J. Lucassen and H. Soly (eds.), *Craft guilds in the early modern Low Countries. Work, power and representation* (Aldershot 2006) 74-106.

constitution during the course of its existence (1304-1528), apart from surveys of its basic institutions.¹⁷ Hence, it did not profit much from recent international research on the practices of guild politics, popular politics and (urban) revolts, (elite) factionalism, or the development of political elites in late medieval cities. That is probably the reason why the case of Utrecht tends to get little attention in comparative studies and surveys on late medieval guild and urban politics in the Low Countries or the German Empire.¹⁸

Local research on the late medieval city has focused traditionally on the functioning of its administrative and judicial institutions, partly in competition with ecclesiastical authorities, and less on the conflicts within or about them. So far, explanations for recurring political conflicts in the city have basically alternated between fierce competition among different governing bodies in the city (e.g. between the bench of aldermen and the ‘council’ – an explanation that is now usually dismissed) and ‘family feuds’, factions or ‘parties’ in the city’s patriciate, which could connect to larger territorial and interregional conflicts.¹⁹ The researchers who have allowed the Utrecht craft guilds proper agency describe them as representatives of a ‘democratic’ or ‘popular’ movement in the city, as opposed to inevitable oligarchic and ‘aristocratic’ tendencies.²⁰ In the older works of Struick and others, the guilds tend to be presented as a homogeneous interest group that, apart from their apparent victory in 1304, was largely unsuccessful in securing its political influence in the longer run.²¹ Yet, it is also acknowledged that the guilds’ support was indispensable at times. Some have noted

¹⁷ The introduction in Overvoorde and Joosting, *Gilden*, I, i-cxxii, presents a mostly static view; see also the older S. Muller Fz, ‘De gilden’, in: Idem, *Schetsen uit de middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam 1900) 109-158; and, covering a longer period: I. Vijlbrief, *Van anti-aristocratie tot democratie. Een bijdrage tot de politieke en sociale geschiedenis der stad Utrecht* (Amsterdam 1950). For the period from 1528, see N. Slokker, *Ruggengraat van de stad. De betekenis van gilden in Utrecht, 1528-1818* (Amsterdam 2010).

¹⁸ For the Holy Roman Empire, the neglect is also caused by the conventional limitation in German scholarship to cities and towns within present-day Germany.

¹⁹ Berents, *Misdaad*, 96-106; J.W.J. Burgers, ‘Tussen burgerij en adel. De financiële, politieke en maatschappelijke carrière van de Utrechtse patriciër Lambert de Vries (ca. 1250-1316?)’, *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 106 (1991) 1-32, esp. 28-31; Van den Hoven van Genderen, ‘Op het toppunt’, 121-124; Muller, *Rechtsbronnen* IV, 7; Struick, *Utrecht*, 64, 68-91-111.

²⁰ E.g. Vijlbrief, *Van anti-aristocratie*; Struick, *Utrecht*, 91, 100; C.A. van Kalveen, ‘De gildenbeweging van april 1525 en haar voorgeschiedenis’, *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 1972, 93-114; Idem, ‘Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de Gildenbewegingen te Utrecht, mei-augustus 1525’, *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 1979, 54-86.

²¹ E.g. Struick, ‘Het bewind van de gilden’, 85-86; Berents, *Misdaad*, 100; for the revolt of 1525: Van Kalveen, ‘De gildenbeweging’.

that the Flemish cities probably were an important source of inspiration for the Utrecht guildsmen.²²

As said, most of these statements and hypotheses were not the result of in-depth research on Utrecht's urban and craft guild politics. An exception is Kaj van Vliet, whose more recent analysis of the emergence and first political actions of the craft guilds in the thirteenth century continues to be very useful, including for the present study.²³ It should be said that research into Utrecht's craft guilds has been hampered by a general lack of sources from the guilds themselves, as their archives were largely lost after the Middle Ages. Most extant sources date from about 1340 onwards and were produced by the city council.²⁴ This may provide a partial explanation for the lack of research interest in the Utrecht guilds as socio-economic and political institutions, or in the political activities of citizens of the middling and lower social groups.

Still, the scarcity of research also seems to have been due to the influence of a Dutch school of thought that was inspired particularly by the works of Jacques Heers (from the 1970s) and by research on urban politics in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch Republic.²⁵ Heers considered late medieval politics mainly as the playground of elite 'clans' or 'parties' with their personal followings, and largely denied any socio-economic aspects or causes of political conflicts. This viewpoint led to an almost exclusive focus on ruling elites in research on late medieval politics in the Northern Netherlands. Heers' works inspired, for instance, Brokken's study of the parties of the Hoeken and Kabeljauwen in Holland.²⁶ Dutch

²² Muller, 'De gilden', 156; Idem, *Rechtsbronnen* IV, 20 n. 2; J.W. Berkelbach van der Sprenkel, *Geschiedenis van het bisdom Utrecht van 1281 tot 1305* (Utrecht 1923) 107-116; L. Schmedding, *De regering van Frederik van Blankenheim, bisschop van Utrecht* (Leiden 1899) 16-17.

²³ K. van Vliet, *Markt in middeleeuws Utrecht* (unpublished master thesis, University of Utrecht 1991); Idem, 'De stad van de burgers (1122-1304)', in: R.E. de Bruin et al. (eds.), *'Een paradijs vol weelde'. Geschiedenis van de stad Utrecht* (Utrecht 2000) 73-111.

²⁴ However, the extant sources on late medieval guilds, crafts and trades were assembled and edited at an early stage by Overvoorde and Joosting, *Gilden*; on the development of the city's administrative and judicial registers, see Muller, *Rechtsbronnen* IV.

²⁵ J. Heers, *Parties and political life in the medieval West*, trans. D. Nicholas (Amsterdam 1977); Idem, *Le clan familial au moyen âge. Etude sur les structures politiques et sociales des milieux urbains* (Paris 1974); D.J. Roorda, *Partij en factie. De oproeren van 1672 in de steden van Holland en Zeeland, een krachtmeting tussen partijen en facties* (Groningen 1979).

²⁶ H.M. Brokken, *Het ontstaan van de Hoekse en Kabeljauwse twisten* (Zutphen 1982) 217, 253 and *passim*; see also H. Brand, *Over macht en overwicht. Stedelijke elites in Leiden (1420-1510)* (Leuven/Apeldoorn 1996) 102-110; M. Carasso-Kok (ed.), *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam. Een stad uit het niets tot 1578* (Amsterdam 2004) 217-228. The contrast in this respect between Dutch and Flemish historiography is obvious from: M. Boone and M. Prak, 'Rulers, patricians and burghers: The great and little traditions of urban revolt in the Low Countries', in: K. Davids and J. Lucassen (eds.), *A miracle mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European perspective* (Cambridge 1995) 99-134, esp. 109.

historiography may have been especially receptive to the ‘elitist’ view since most Dutch towns had patrician governments in the late Middle Ages without significant craft guild or common citizen participation, and this situation seemed to mirror the oligarchic government of the ‘regents’ in the cities of the early modern Republic.²⁷

The last decades, however, have seen a slow turn in Dutch historiography on the Middle Ages towards more attention for non-elite political actors and initiatives, both in rural and in urban contexts. An important proponent of this view is Maarten Prak, who has studied common burgher initiatives and political participation, via craft guilds, civic militias, and otherwise in Utrecht and other cities and towns of the Northern Netherlands from approximately 1300 to the end of the Dutch Republic.²⁸ His studies and surveys on the topics of citizenship, guilds and popular politics can be considered exemplary. In a rural context, new views allowing more political agency to non-elite groups have been developed on medieval rural revolts and the ‘revolution’ of communal movements, by Peter Hoppenbrouwers, Tine de Moor, Bas van Bavel and others.²⁹ These studies may spark a wider interest in the role of middling groups and commoners in local urban politics across the Northern Low Countries, next to the more traditional focus on ruling elites.

In general, there has been an increased interest in the Netherlands for the role of common people in medieval society, which has led to more inclusive history-writing. This has become particularly apparent in a wave of new surveys of urban history published since the 1990s. These books are often the result of impressive collective efforts and offer an overview of the history of single towns or cities narrated in one or more volumes.³⁰ Contrary to the older tendency to start at the beginning of the early modern period, they now all

²⁷ For the impact of a similar historiographic tradition in the UK, see C. Liddy and J. Haemers, ‘Popular politics in the late medieval city: York and Bruges’, *English historical review* 128 (2013) 771-805.

²⁸ E.g. Prak, ‘Corporate politics’; also, starting from the example of Utrecht: Idem, ‘Citizens, soldiers and civic militias in late medieval and early modern Europe’, *Past & Present* 228 (2015) 93-123; Idem, ‘Gilden, schutterijen en andere vormen van burgerlijke invloed’, in: L. Lucassen and W. Willems (eds.), *Waarom mensen in de stad willen wonen, 1200-2010* (Amsterdam 2009) 59-78.

²⁹ P.C.M. Hoppenbrouwers, ‘Rebels with a cause. The peasant movements of Northern Holland in the later Middle Ages’, in: W. Blockmans and A. Janse (eds.), *Showing status. Representation of social positions in the late Middle Ages* (Turnhout 1999) 445-482; B. van Bavel, ‘Rural revolts and structural change in the Low Countries, thirteenth – early fourteenth centuries’, in: R. Goddard, J.L. Langdon and M. Muller (eds.), *Survival and discord in medieval society: Essays in honour of Christopher Dyer* (Turnhout 2010) 249-268; T. de Moor, ‘The silent revolution: A new perspective on the emergence of commons, guilds, and other forms of corporate collective action in Western Europe’, *International review of social history* 53 (2008) Suppl. 179-212.

³⁰ A few examples: Carasso-Kok (ed.), *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam* (2004); Van Herwaarden et al. (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht* (1996); and, most recently, F. Cerutti et al. (eds.), *Tien eeuwen Gorinchem. Geschiedenis van een Hollandse stad* (Utrecht 2018).

include substantial chapters or even separate volumes on the medieval history of the town concerned. For Utrecht, such a history, with the title *Paradijs vol weelde* ('Paradise full of wealth'), was edited and published in 2000.³¹

For a more comprehensive conceptual and historiographical framework for this study, it is necessary to turn to the scholarly literature concerning cities in other regions and territories, particularly in the neighbouring Southern Low Countries and Germany, where a longer tradition of research on late medieval urban politics and society exists.³² In fact, an important aim of this thesis is to integrate the case of Utrecht more fully into current research on the later medieval urban network of the Low Countries, which in a broader sense included nearby cities and towns in Northern France and the German Lower Rhine area. In this context, the case of Utrecht is particularly interesting because it was one of the few examples of cities in this area where, following Fabian Wahl's categorisation, craft guilds became a 'major force' in urban politics.³³ In these cities, craft guilds came to dominate or completely took over local government. Apart from Utrecht, this only happened in Ghent, Bruges and Liège, all shortly after 1300, and towards the end of the fourteenth century also in Cologne.³⁴

In general, it is thought that cities needed a 'critical mass' of artisans for craft guilds to emerge and develop into political guilds (i.e. guilds with a role in local government). Craft guild movements have only been observed in large and middle-sized cities.³⁵ Utrecht

³¹ De Bruin et al., *'Een paradijs vol weelde'*.

³² Historiography on Italian cities was also read and used to some extent (see the bibliography at the end of this thesis). Especially influential have been the works on medieval Florence of John M. Najemy: see, amongst others, Najemy, *Corporatism and consensus*; Idem, *A history of Florence, 1200-1575* (Malden, MA 2006); Idem, 'Guild republicanism in trecento Florence: The successes and ultimate failure of corporate politics', *The American historical review* 84 (1979) 53-71.

³³ F. Wahl, 'Participative political institutions in pre-modern Europe: introducing a new database', *Historical methods* 49 (2016) 67-79

³⁴ On Cologne, see esp. M. Groten, *Köln im 13. Jahrhundert. Gesellschaftlicher Wandel und Verfassungsentwicklung* (Cologne 1995); K. Militzer, 'Führungsschicht und Gemeinde in Köln im 14. Jahrhundert', in: W. Ehbrecht (ed.), *Städtische Führungsgruppen und Gemeinde in der werdenden Neuzeit* (Cologne 1980) 1-24. There were more Imperial cities with similar guild constitutions more to the south in the Rhine area, namely Trier, Mainz, Speyer and Strasbourg; see, amongst others, A. Haverkamp, "'Innerstädtische Auseinandersetzungen" und überlokale Zusammenhänge in deutschen Städten während der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts', in: R. Elze and G. Fasoli (eds.), *Stadtadel und Bürgertum in den italienischen und deutschen Städten des Spätmittelalters* (Berlin 1991) 89-126; S. von Heusinger, *Die Zunft im Mittelalter. Zur Verflechtung von Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in Straßbourg* (Stuttgart 2009).

³⁵ B. de Munck, *Guilds, labour and the urban body politic. Fabricating community in the Southern Netherlands, 1300-1800* (New York 2018) 6-8; J. Dumolyn, 'Guild politics and political guilds in fourteenth-century Flanders', in: J. Dumolyn, J. Haemers, H.R. Oliva Herrer and V. Challet (eds.), *The voices of the people in late medieval Europe. Communication and popular politics* (Turnhout 2014) 15-48; W. Blockmans, 'Regionale Vielfalt im Zunftwesen in den Niederlanden vom 13. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert', in: K. Schulz (ed.), *Handwerk in Europa. Von Spätmittelalter bis zur Frühen Neuzeit*

belonged to the last category. According to rough estimates, it counted about 10,000 inhabitants in the middle of the fourteenth century and ca. 20,000 by 1500.³⁶ In this respect, Utrecht was comparable to Brabantine cities such as Mechelen and Leuven that also developed local governments with craft guild influence later in the fourteenth century.³⁷ The episcopal city of Cologne was much larger, counting about 40,000 inhabitants, but Liège, with about 25,000 inhabitants (in 1450), was quite similar to Utrecht.³⁸ In comparison, Ghent and Bruges were among the larger cities in late medieval Europe, with about 64,000 and 45,000 inhabitants, respectively, already around 1350.

These figures do not tell the whole story, however, as episcopal cities, Utrecht included, had relatively large numbers of clerical residents who did not count as citizens. For the late fifteenth century, the number of clergy in Utrecht has been estimated roughly at 1500, that is 7-8% of the total population; in Liège, a chronicler even stated that only a quarter of the population were citizens.³⁹ This makes the potential guild population in these episcopal cities even smaller. By comparison, large portions of the inhabitants in the industrial cities of Flanders and Artois were active in the textile production alone (although, of course, many of them did not have citizenship either). In all, these estimates suggest that an export-oriented industry with masses of artisans and dependent labourers, such as in the late medieval textile industry, could be an important factor in the emergence of guild-dominated urban governments, but that it was not an absolute precondition.⁴⁰ The dominant position of the craft guilds in Utrecht, therefore, was remarkable within its specific socio-economic context.

On the topic of medieval urban society and politics, Flemish (or Belgian) historiography can be considered as much more advanced than Dutch historiography. Historically, the main research focus of Belgian researchers has been on the metropolises of Ghent and Bruges in Flanders (e.g. by Marc Boone and Jan Dumolyn), but there has also

(Munich 1999) 51-63; Prak, 'Corporate politics'; E. Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt im Mittelalter, 1150-1550. Stadtgestalt, Recht, Verfassung, Stadtregiment, Kirche, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft* (Vienna 2012) 251.

³⁶ A.J. van den Hoven van Genderen and R. Rommes, 'Rijk en talrijk. Beschouwingen over de omvang van de Utrechtse bevolking tussen circa 1300 en het begin van de 17^e eeuw', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 1995, 53-85. They estimated that the population of Utrecht grew from about 6,500-7,000 inhabitants in 1300 to 13,000 in 1400.

³⁷ R. van Uytven, 'Beroering onder de Brabantse steden', in: R. van Uytven et al. (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Brabant van het hertogdom tot heden* (Leuven 2011) 171-179.

³⁸ Estimations of the number of inhabitants in several German cities: Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 58-61. Cologne and Prague were the largest cities of the Empire. For Liège: Lantschner, *The logic*, 11.

³⁹ Van den Hoven van Genderen and Rommes, 'Rijk en talrijk', 63-67.

⁴⁰ Compare Dumolyn, 'Guild politics', 32 and 48.

been interesting research on the smaller Flemish towns (e.g. by Peter Stabel) as well as on the towns of late medieval Brabant (amongst others by Raymond van Uytven and Jelle Haemers), and on Liège, notably by Geneviève Xhayet.⁴¹

Major strands of research on cities in the Southern Low Countries include analyses of the tradition of urban revolts, guild politics and corporate political culture, popular politics in general, (elite) factionalism, bargaining networks, and repertoires of violence.⁴² Many of these topics connect with international research on the pre-industrial period in general. Among the most influential in this respect have been Charles Tilly, with his works on the organisation and ‘repertoires’ of collective political action and on the underlying processes of state formation, and Wayne te Brake with his contribution to research on the politics of ‘ordinary people’.⁴³ These scholars have sparked much research. The present study has profited much from them, and seeks to connect to, these larger developments in international and Flemish literature.

In addition, this thesis has benefited much from the historiography on German cities and towns in the late Middle Ages. One obvious reason for using this literature is that Utrecht was a city of the Holy Roman Empire itself, and that it showed similarities in its development to other episcopal Rhine cities in this period, such as Cologne or Strasbourg. In terms of concepts and structural comparisons, much could be learned from the works of Schilling,

⁴¹ See the bibliography at the end of this thesis. On the small Flemish towns: P. Stabel, ‘L’encadrement corporatif et la conjoncture économique dans les petites villes de la Flandre orientale: contraintes ou possibilités?’, in: P. Lambrechts and J.-P. Sosson (eds.), *Les métiers au moyen âge. Aspects économiques et sociaux* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1994) 335-348. On the Brabantine cities of Leuven and Mechelen, see the recent publications of Jelle Haemers: J. Haemers, ‘Bloed en inkt. Een nieuwe blik op opstand en geweld te Leuven, 1360-1383’, *Stadsgeschiedenis* 7 (2012) 141-164; Idem, ‘Ad petitionem burgensium. Petitions and peaceful resistance of craftsmen in Flanders and Mechelen (13th-16th centuries)’, in: J.A. Solórzano Telechea, B. Arízaga Bolumburu and J. Haemers (eds.), *Los grupos populares en la ciudad medieval Europea* (Logroño 2014) 371-394. For Liège, see also Lantschner, *The logic*, 95-130.

⁴² Historiographic overviews in J. Haemers, ‘A victorious state and defeated rebels? Historians’ view of violence and urban revolts in medieval Flanders’, in: D. Nicholas, B.S. Bachrach and J.M. Murray (eds.), *Comparative perspectives on history and historians: Essays in memory of Bryce Lyon (1920-2007)* (Kalamazoo 2012) 97-118; M. Boone, ‘Les métiers dans les villes flamandes au bas moyen âge (XIVe-Xve siècles): images normatives, réalités socio-politiques et économiques’, in: P. Lambrechts and J.-P. Sosson (eds.), *Les métiers au Moyen Âge. Aspects économiques et sociaux* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1994) 1-22; J. Braekevelt, F. Buylaert, J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, ‘The politics of factional conflict in late medieval Flanders’, *Historical research* 85 (2012) 13-31.

⁴³ Esp. C. Tilly, *From mobilization to revolution* (Reading 1978); W. te Brake, *Shaping history. Ordinary people in European politics* (Berkeley 1998); M.P. Hanagan, L.P. Moch, and W.P. te Brake (eds.), *Challenging authority: The historical study of contentious politics* (Minneapolis 1998).

Ehbrecht, Isenmann, Schulz, Haverkamp, Czok, Von Heusinger, Blickle and others.⁴⁴ Schilling's concept of 'civic republicanism', as an epitome of the ideology and culture of the late medieval urban (corporate) communities, has been influential in the Low Countries as well, more than Blickle's *Kommunalismus*.⁴⁵ A number of other 'German' concepts have been adopted here as they proved to be closely related to phenomena in Utrecht. Among these are Schulz's 'political guilds' (a concept that also has been adopted by Flemish researchers), the term *Bürgerkämpfe* (instead of the older *Zunftkämpfe* or 'guild struggles') as well as the concept of the *Ratselite* ('council elite', meaning the ruling elite in the city council, which was the dominant government institution in most German towns). German historiography has traditionally focused on institutional history, social stratification in the city, and norms and practices of political violence and conflict resolution. With regard to the latter topics, Germany has a particularly strong tradition of studying feuds and related phenomena, which has proven very useful for my understanding of political violence in an urban context.⁴⁶ A small drawback is that German researchers in general tend to use their own idiom, which sometimes makes translation to international phenomena and concepts difficult.

For the sake of clarity, some concepts that are used in this thesis are explained here briefly. The first is 'oligarchy', a term that is used widely to describe late medieval (and early modern) urban governments, but that is not understood in the same way by everyone. According to the most common definition, 'oligarchy' (and its derivation 'oligarchisation') refers to the (development of a) government by the few, understood to be a small, privileged

⁴⁴ See the bibliography at the end of this thesis. Some important edited volumes in the field are: W. Ehbrecht (ed.), *Verwaltung und Politik in Städten Mitteleuropas. Beiträge zu Verfassungsnorm und Verfassungswirklichkeit in altständischer Zeit* (Cologne 1994); K. Schulz (ed.), *Handwerk in Europa. Von Spätmittelalter bis zur frühen Neuzeit* (Munich 1999); B. Schwineköper (ed.), *Gilden und Zünfte. Kaufmännische und gewerbliche Genossenschaften im frühen und hohen Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen 1985).

⁴⁵ H. Schilling, 'Civic republicanism in late medieval and early modern German cities', in: Idem, *Religion, political culture and the emergence of early modern society. Essays in German and Dutch history* (Leiden 1992) 3-59; P. Blickle, *Kommunalismus. Skizzen einder gesellschaftlichen Organisationsform*, 2 vols. (Munich 2000).

⁴⁶ Particularly useful have been C. Reinle, *Bauernfehden. Studien zur Fehdeführung Nichtadliger im spätmittelalterlichen römisch-deutschen Reich, besonders in den bayerischen Herzogtümern* (Wiesbaden 2003); H. Zmora, *State and nobility in early modern Germany. The knightly feud in Franconia, 1440-1567* (Cambridge 1997); and the classic O. Brunner, *Land und Herrschaft. Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschichte Österreichs im Mittelalter* (Vienna 1965). See also H. Kaminsky, 'The noble feud in the later Middle Ages', *Past & Present* 177 (2002) 55-83; P. Hoppenbrouwers, 'Bloedwraak en vete in de late middeleeuwen', *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 123 (2010) 158-177, and other contributions in this issue (nr. 2) that was dedicated to violence and feuding in the late Middle Ages.

and often hereditary elite.⁴⁷ Sometimes, the related concept ‘plutocracy’ is used, implying another character of the ruling elite, based on criteria of wealth.⁴⁸ Several researchers, including James Farr and John Watts, suggest that urban governments in the late Middle Ages remained essentially oligarchic, regardless of the participation of non-elite citizens through the craft guilds or other forms of citizen representation.⁴⁹ However, such a view makes it difficult to distinguish between governments with a more open or a more closed elite, and with more or less participation (however limited) from below. Also, it does not allow to distinguish between cities where the oligarchic character of the government was a result of the local constitution (e.g. through election arrangements) or of the unconstitutional behaviour of the ruling elite.⁵⁰

In order to make these distinctions more clearly, a more limited definition of ‘oligarchy’ is applied here. This definition is used in German historiography and also follows more closely the meaning that late medieval burghers assigned to it. In this view, the term ‘oligarchy’ is reserved to those governments of the few who use their position of power in an illegitimate or unconstitutional way to advance their own group’s interests and suppress the rest of the population. For contemporaries, this kind of government was a form of ‘tyranny’.⁵¹ Such an understanding of the concept of oligarchy underscores the importance of studying the actual power relations and behaviour of the ruling elite in the city in day-to-day politics, within the context of constitutional arrangements. This, in its turn, can contribute to a better understanding of citizens’ reactions to government (or elite) policies. In addition, a more restricted use of the concept may help avoid any reductive or teleological reasoning.

Another central concept in this thesis is that of popular politics. It is sometimes said that so-called ‘popular’ movements were initiated particularly by well-to-do citizens (e.g. rich

⁴⁷ Cf. C. Shaw, *Popular government and oligarchy in Renaissance Italy* (Leiden/Boston 2006) ix; Najemy, *Corporatism and consensus*, 11.

⁴⁸ See esp. R. van Uytven, ‘Plutokratie in de “oude democratieën der Nederlanden”. Cijfers en beschouwingen omtrent de korporatieve organisatie en de sociale structuur der gemeenten in de late middeleeuwen’, *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse maatschappij voor taal- en letterkunde en geschiedenis* 16 (1962) 373-409; Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 245.

⁴⁹ J.R. Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300-1914* (Cambridge 2000) 164-189; J. Watts, *The making of polities: Europe, 1300-1500* (Cambridge 2009) 109-112.

⁵⁰ For the importance of behaviour, compare Darcy K. Leach, ‘The Iron Law of *what* again? Conceptualizing oligarchy across organizational forms’, *Sociological theory* 23 (2005) 312-337.

⁵¹ Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 245-246 and 407-408; compare Schilling, ‘Civic republicanism’, 19-30, who uses a broader definition of oligarchy but also stresses the importance of public accountability: “The ideals of internal political order held by the burghers of German cities amounted to an oligarchic government that was obliged to follow the collective will of the citizenry (...)” (at p. 29-30). See for a review of the matter also Prak, ‘Corporate politics’, 81-83.

merchants or *nouveaux riches*) who aimed to become part of the ruling elite.⁵² Here, following the definition of Wayne te Brake, popular politics is simply taken to signify the collective political activities of people who did not belong to the group who could expect to be elected into governing positions, shortly: citizens or subjects outside the ruling elite or ‘patriciate’. The term is therefore limited to the political domain; in social, economic or cultural respects, these people did not have to be ‘popular’ or ‘common’ at all.⁵³ As opposed to oligarchic governments, ‘popular’ or representative governments can thus be defined, as Christine Shaw has done, as governments in which citizens from various social groups could participate in practice, e.g. through election in governing bodies.⁵⁴ In practice, these options were mostly restricted to social groups from the middling groups of independent artisans and retailers with citizen- and/or guild membership, and up.

There are several terms to designate the urban ruling or political elite, i.e. the small group of (often) wealthy citizens that had the best chances of being elected into governing positions. One of the terms that is often used but lacks clarity is the term ‘patriciate’. Here, the term ‘patriciate’ is only used to signify the elite families that ruled the city of Utrecht before 1300 in an hereditary fashion and who could be distinguished by their knightly lifestyle and castle-like residences in the city. When a family is called ‘patrician’ in a later period, therefore, this refers to its ancestry in one of these older families. Contrary to more open ‘ruling elites’, a ‘patriciate’ is in general associated with hereditary status, the awareness of a ‘right’ to govern and a knightly or aristocratic lifestyle. In cities where the government remained oligarchic throughout the late medieval period, such as Lübeck, the term ‘patriciate’ might therefore continue to be useful.⁵⁵

The terms for the political groups that strived for power or representation in urban government also need to be briefly clarified. For elite action groups, a term that is often used is that of factions. This term was adopted from the field of sociology and political anthropology by those who saw similarities in the political behaviour of elite or knightly

⁵² This view relates to the standpoint of continuous oligarchy or plutocracy in the late medieval towns; see e.g. Watts, *The making of polities*, 109-112; but compare also, more nuanced, Dumolyn and Haemers, ‘Patterns’; Boone, ‘Les métiers’, 7-9.

⁵³ Te Brake, *Shaping history*, 1-7.

⁵⁴ Shaw, *Popular government*, ix.

⁵⁵ Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt, 773-775*; and see the useful discussion in J. Dumolyn, ‘Later medieval and early modern urban elites: Social categories and social dynamics’, in: M. Asenjo-González (ed.), *Urban elites and aristocratic behaviour in the Spanish Kingdoms at the end of the Middle Ages* (Turnhout 2013) 3-18, at 3-7.

families (urban or rural) with their ‘friends’, allies and followers, in medieval Dutch often called *magen ende vrienden*.⁵⁶ In Flemish historiography, urban factions have been broadly defined as relatively fluid ‘clusters’ of ‘high-density social networks’ or ‘social capital’ among elite families.⁵⁷ These definitions, however, lack the aspect of conflict that is central to sociological definitions. In short, such clusters only become factions when they start competing with another, opposing faction for power, honour or resources.⁵⁸ By contrast, Patrick Lantschner reserved the term for more ‘established players’ in urban politics, based on diverse examples in Italy and the Low Countries where factions or *parties* (according to contemporary language) sometimes had considerable resources and even could play a formal role in government, like the Guelfs in Florence. Contemporaries often used the term *pars* or ‘parties’ to describe such factions and other structural divisions in the community.⁵⁹ The term ‘faction’ also connects to the basic structure of these groups. In social science, this term basically refers to political groups with a core of one or a few leaders, who recruit members (supporters or followers) on a personal basis.⁶⁰

For late medieval Utrecht, a middle ground definition is followed, whereby factions are elite action groups competing for political power, and organised around a small core group of elite (often knightly) leaders with their allies and supporters in- and outside the city. As will be seen, they sometimes could wield considerable resources and develop into larger, relatively established parties (*partijen*), such as those of the Gunterlingen and Lichtenbergers (named after prominent Utrecht families) in the fourteenth century, but this is not considered a precondition for calling them factions.

In Dutch and Italian historiography, the term ‘parties’ is sometimes reserved for the (supra-)regional networks between local factions, such as the Guelfs and Ghibellines in Italy or the Hoeken and Kabeljauwen in Holland. Here, however, the term is used according to

⁵⁶ Braekevelt et al., ‘The politics of factional conflict’; S. ter Braake, ‘Parties and factions in the late Middle Ages: The case of the Hoeken and Kabeljauwen in The Hague (1483-1515)’, *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009) 97-111. On the notion of *magen ende vrienden*, see also P.C.M. Hoppenbrouwers, ‘Maagschap en vriendschap. Een beschouwing over de structuur en functies van verwantschapsbetrekkingen in het laatmiddeleeuwse Holland’, *Holland* 17 (1985) 69-108.

⁵⁷ Braekevelt et al., ‘The politics of factional conflict’, 19; J. Haemers, ‘Factionalism and state power in the Flemish Revolt (1482-1492)’, *Journal of Social History* 42 (2009) 1009-1039, at 1010 and *passim*.

⁵⁸ Following J. Boissevain, *Friends of friends. Networks, manipulators and coalitions* (Oxford 1974) 192-200, with definition at p. 192.

⁵⁹ Lantschner, *The logic*, 68-77. Lantschner reserves the term ‘coalitions’ for the less established groups that were based on short-term, more *ad hoc* cooperation (p. 77).

⁶⁰ See esp. Boissevain, *Friends of friends*, 192-200; J.M. Bujra, ‘The dynamics of political action: A new look at factionalism’, *American anthropologist* N.S. 75 (1973) 132-152, at p. 133 and *passim*.

contemporary usage to mean, alternatively, the elite faction or the larger groups and coalitions that grew out of these divisions, in the context of this thesis mostly within the urban community. The usage of the term in historiography contrasts, of course, with the modern meaning of ‘parties’. In sociology and common usage, political parties are understood as institutionalised and formalised groups with delegated leadership and a membership based on shared interests, values (or ideology) and goals. The main difference between parties and factions, in this sense, lies in the parties’ established status (vis-à-vis the informality of factions) and in the mainly horizontal bonds between the members (against the vertical bonds between leader[s] and followers). Seen in this way, corporate groups or guilds, with their formal equality between the full members and their elected leadership, show much similarity to the modern ‘parties’.⁶¹

A final concept that needs to be explained is that of the ‘guild’. The variation in terms across European towns for the associations of merchants, craftsmen and retailers, i.e. associations based on profession and shared (economic) interests, reflects the considerable local and regional variation in the emergence and development of these corporations.⁶² For German towns alone, more than ten different terms are known to have been current in the late Middle Ages, ranging from *Gilde* and *Zunft* to *Amt*, *Antwerk*, *Gaffel* or *Einung*. Often, a distinction is made between the earlier merchants’ ‘guilds’ or *hansas* and the later craft or retailer organisations with names such as *Zunft*, *métier* or *ambacht*. In English historiography, the term ‘craft guild’ developed to distinguish artisan corporations from merchant ones. In the core, however, they were much alike. Central to all these corporations was the artificial ‘brotherhood’ of equals, based on a mutual oath, with the goal of providing solidarity and conviviality, regulating the trade, and defending common interests. In late medieval Utrecht, the term ‘guilds’ or ‘common guilds’ (*gemene gilden*) for craft organisations appears for the first time in 1304, when they awarded themselves with a formalised role in local government.

⁶¹ See for a discussion of the differences between the two types of political action groups and their supposed continuum (as factions can develop into parties, and vice versa) the influential contribution of Bujra, ‘The dynamics’. Compare also Lantschner, *The logic*, 63-68, who rightly states that corporate groups such as guilds did not always act as a single, institutionalised action group, but that they often consisted of various networks and sub-groups competing with each other or with outside parties.

⁶² In general, see Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 803-809; F. Irsigler, ‘Zur Problematik der Gilde- und Zunftterminologie’, in: B. Schweineköper (ed.), *Gilden und Zünfte. Kaufmännische und gewerbliche Genossenschaften im frühen und hohen Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen 1985) 53-70; Najemy, ‘Guild republicanism’, 55-56; A. Black, *Guilds and civil society in European political thought from the twelfth century to the present* (London 1984) 3-11; S. von Heusinger, ‘Von “Antwerk” bis “Zunft”’. Methodische Überlegungen zu den Zünften im Mittelalter’, *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 37 (2010) 37-71.

Before that date, mentions are scarce and limited to the terms *confraternitates* or *ambochte* with their aldermen (*oudermanni, seniores*), while the term *hansa* was used for the older organisation of Rhine merchants. In this thesis, the local terminology is followed as much as possible.

Social, economic and political backgrounds: the medieval city of Utrecht

Utrecht was already a venerable old city in the late Middle Ages. The *civitas* was founded before the year 700 by Utrecht's first bishop, Saint Willibrord, and developed under the protection of the Frankish (later East-Frankish) kings. In 1122, Roman Emperor Henry V confirmed the settlement's first borough rights which had been given by Bishop Godebald (1114-1127) shortly before.⁶³ Soon after this date, the power of the emperors in these regions decreased, which allowed the bishop of Utrecht to develop as a territorial lord in his own right. In the late Middle Ages, the bishop's ecclesiastical authority extended over the bulk of the Northern Low Countries, while his secular territory, the Sticht, included the present-day Dutch provinces of Utrecht (*Nedersticht*), Overijssel (*Oversticht*), Drenthe and the town of Groningen. Utrecht's urban community followed its own path of development, securing more privileges from the city lord in the twelfth to fourteenth century. It thus became much like the 'free cities' (*Freistädte*) in the German Empire that largely evaded the authority of the Holy Roman rulers as well as that of their own city lords, without rejecting their nominal authority.⁶⁴

The religious origin and character of Utrecht was a cause of pride and prosperity for its citizens, as was the settlement's favourable location near the Rhine and the Vecht rivers, which made it a point of connection between north-south and east-west trade routes. For a long time, Utrecht controlled the Rhine trade from the city towards the delta in the North Sea, and it welcomed traders from Hamburg and Lübeck who preferred inland navigation over the dangerous North Sea route to the south. For this purpose, shiploads needed to be transported over land to the connecting waterway at nearby 't Gein. Utrecht's own developing group of

⁶³ In the absence of the original charter, this Imperial confirmation is taken as the city's date of acquiring borough rights. More context in: K. van Vliet, 'Utrecht, Muiden en omgeving. Utrechts oudste privileges opnieuw bezien', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 1995, 5-52; Idem, 'De stad van de burgers', 73-83.

⁶⁴ Compare Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 281-293.

merchants focused on regional trade and the Rhine trade. They lived in the district of the town called the *Stathe* and united themselves in the *hansa* of Rhine merchants. This *hansa* was probably closely connected to the early city government that included from 1196 onwards a council, next to the bishop-appointed bench of aldermen.⁶⁵

The Rhine merchants did not form the only elite in the emerging city. Utrecht was home to several families of ministerials (originally unfree servants of the church) who had received property in the settlement from the bishop early on. Together with the wealthy merchants, these families appear to have dominated the urban community of Utrecht in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By 1300, they could be perceived as one social group or patriciate: they intermarried, shared a knightly lifestyle and also had, as far as we know, privileged access to the bench of aldermen and the advisory council.⁶⁶ Their status and power in the city were symbolised by fortified town castles in the city centre, of which there were about twenty in 1300.⁶⁷ Their power networks extended to the countryside, where they acquired fiefs and had relatives among ministerial and noble families, as well as to the institutions of the Utrecht church, where they or their relatives obtained positions of influence.⁶⁸

The Utrecht church, especially the secular members of the bishop's court and the five chapters connected to the five major churches in town, formed another elite in the city. Unlike in other bishoprics, the cathedral chapter in Utrecht did not manage to assert its superiority over the other chapters, leading to the situation that all five chapters participated not only in the election of a new bishop but also in the government of the bishopric and the *Sticht*. The residences of these chapters and other religious institutions, such as the abbey of Saint Paul, formed sometimes extensive immunities with their own jurisdiction in the city

⁶⁵ See on these developments in general Van Vliet, 'De stad van de burgers'; Ph. Maarschalkerweerd, 'De steden', in: C. Dekker, Ph. Maarschalkerweerd and J.M. van Winter (eds.), *Geschiedenis van de provincie Utrecht tot 1528* (Utrecht 1997) 259-290; M.W.J. de Bruijn, 'Consules civitatis. Ontstaan en opkomst van de Utrechtse gemeenteraad', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 1996, 5-44. The *hansa* of the *mercatores Reni* was first mentioned in 1233, but must have been older than that: K. Heeringa (ed.), *Oorkondenboek van het Sticht Utrecht tot 1301. Deel II* (The Hague 1940) 270 (nr. 851).

⁶⁶ Based on the known names of aldermen and councillors in the thirteenth century: Van Vliet, 'De stad van de burgers', 107. Probably, the patriciate was not completely closed.

⁶⁷ Only the bishop, the provosts and members of the secular chapters, the ministerials and a select group of rich merchants had been allowed to build such stone residences in the city: Van Vliet, 'De stad van de burgers', 90; see also M.W.J. de Bruijn, *Husinghe ende hofstede. Een institutioneel-geografische studie van de rechtspraak over onroerend goed in de stad Utrecht in de middeleeuwen* (Utrecht 1994).

⁶⁸ See the detailed studies of A.L.P. Buitelaar, *De Stichtse ministerialiteit en de ontginningen in de Utrechtse Vechtstreek* (Hilversum 1993); A.J. van den Hoven van Genderen, *De Heren van de Kerk. De kanunniken van Oudmunster te Utrecht in de late middeleeuwen* (Zutphen 1997).

centre.⁶⁹ Ministerials and ecclesiastical institutions were also deeply involved in the development of the bishop's vast waste lands in the Utrecht countryside, providing for the organisation and management of extensive peat extractions. This process, that lasted until the thirteenth century, contributed greatly to the economic and demographic development of the countryside and created the conditions for the development of smaller towns in the region.⁷⁰

For Utrecht itself, the thirteenth century was characterised by demographic growth and expansion, as well as by an increasing focus on regional trade and production. By 1300, the city counted multiple bridges, halls and market places where retailers and artisans produced and sold their goods.⁷¹ The estimated population in 1300 was around 6,000. It is also in this century that the Utrecht craft guilds must have originated and developed. They probably included corporations (*confraternitates, ambochten*) for producers of (luxury) leather and fur products, retailers in cloth, grain, dairy and other goods, bakers, butchers and producers of other common commodities.⁷² The Rhine merchants, meanwhile, also developed an interest in the growing local market, especially for wine. As far as we know, the craft guilds in Utrecht were the first to emerge in the Northern Low Countries, a fact that could be connected to the local presence of the merchant's *hansa* that acted as an example for the retailers and artisans.⁷³

The bustling regional economy was mirrored by a slow decrease in the importance of long-distance trading. First, Utrecht's position as a commercial entrepot was challenged by the counts of Holland to the west. Under the counts' protection, alternative trade routes were stimulated, while Utrecht suffered from increased hostility and disadvantageous policies. By 1300, Utrecht had already lost its first position to the nearby Holland town of Dordrecht. This did not mean that Utrecht's economy collapsed. On the contrary, the city's main growth took place after 1300, since it profited from the general increase of the population and the urbanisation across the Northern Low Countries. The population of Utrecht doubled to an estimated 13,000 in 1400 and probably grew further to over 20,000 in 1500. The city also proved attractive to ministerial families from the countryside who wanted to acquire Utrecht

⁶⁹ Analysed in detail in De Bruijn, *Husinghe ende hofstede*.

⁷⁰ Buitelaar, *De Stichtse ministerialiteit*; Maarschalkerveerd, 'De steden'.

⁷¹ See mainly Van Vliet, *Markt*; Idem, 'De stad van de burgers'.

⁷² A complete list of the Utrecht guilds, as they were known from the fourteenth century onwards, is provided in chapter 1. More details on early mentions of craftsmen and petty traders in the city: Van Vliet, *Markt*, 70-77.

⁷³ Compare for Dordrecht: Van Herwaarden et al., *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 40-45, 114-115.

citizenship and residency. Until far into the sixteenth century, Utrecht remained the largest and most important city of the Northern Netherlands.⁷⁴ However, while the early urban settlement had been dominated by (long-distance) trade, the later medieval city was characterised more by its regional economic function, apart from continuing to be an important political and religious centre.

With hindsight, the fourteenth and early fifteenth century were the political heyday for the city in terms of its autonomy and impact on the surrounding countryside, and its influence on episcopal and territorial politics, partly through the emerging Estates of the Nedersticht.⁷⁵ The city's position of power and autonomy would only falter with the advent of the Burgundian dukes in the Northern Low Countries. From the 1420s onwards, Duke Philip the Good gradually acquired the neighbouring principalities of Holland, Zeeland and Brabant and made his power felt in the Sticht, until he was able to place his own bastard son David on the Utrecht see in 1456.

Structure

In what follows, the workings and development of urban politics in late medieval Utrecht are analysed in five chapters. Originally, these chapters were written and published as articles in different academic journals, while one was part of an edited book. As they were not changed for the purpose of this thesis, these contributions reflect the state of research at the moment of their conception. Another consequence of this set-up is that the chapters do not provide one chronological storyline or one line of thought that is developed over several chapters. Instead, they offer separate analyses on topics within the larger theme and within the period described above.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the development of institutions and political practices in Utrecht, in particular with regard to the representation of craft guilds and middling groups in urban government, and the development of a new political elite. Related to these political and

⁷⁴ Van den Hoven van Genderen and Rommes, 'Rijk en talrijk'; Van Schaik, 'Een nieuwe heer', 201.

⁷⁵ C.A. Rutgers, 'Stad en Staten. De bijdrage van de stad Utrecht tot de definitieve vorming van de Staten van Utrecht', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 1972, 55-100; P.W.A. Immink, 'De stadsvrijheid van Utrecht', in: *Opstellen aangeboden aan Prof. Jhr. Dr. D.G. Rengers Hora Siccama (1906-1942)* (Utrecht 1942) 314-434; A.J. van den Hoven van Genderen, *Het kapittel-generaal en de Staten van het Nedersticht in de 15^e eeuw* (Zutphen 1987); Post, *Utrechtse bisschopsverkiezingen*, 102 ff.

social evolutions is the development of the city's political discourse, which is discussed in chapters 2 and 3, mostly for the late thirteenth and fourteenth century, when Utrecht changed from a patrician-led commune to a corporate community. Chapter 3 also specifically goes into the creation (and framing) of a collective memory of political strife in the city via the chronicle of the Dutch Beke (*Nederlandse Beke*), which can be seen as an early example of urban historiography in the city of Utrecht. Chapters 4 and 5, finally, discuss the development and organisation of violence by elite factions and parties, craft guilds and coalitions of citizens in Utrecht for political purposes, which intertwined with the political and social developments described before.

At the end of this thesis, the research findings of the separate chapters are recapitulated in a summarizing conclusion, in which also paths for further research will be sketched.