Urban politics and the role of guilds in the city of Utrecht (1250-1450)
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Chapter 4

Popular movements and elite leadership

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Popular movements and elite leadership:
Exploring a late medieval conundrum in cities of the Low Countries and Germany[1]

A historiographically controversial aspect of late medieval popular movements is the involvement of elites as leaders of, or coalition partners with, groups of common citizens and workers. For example in Utrecht, a relatively important episcopal city in the Northern Low Countries, craft guilds and other groups of artisans often worked together with factions within the ministerial (knightly) or bourgeois elite, a collaboration that became something of a tradition from the later fourteenth century. The rival parties in Utrecht, although of changing character and composition, became known by the names of the city's most important families: the *Gunterlingen* and the *Lichtenbergers*.

In 1379–80, conflict arose over a range of issues of common interest, such as the election procedures for the city council, the role of the assembly of guild members (*morgensprake*) in local government, a contested milling excise, and other issues concerning public finances. During this civic crisis, the *Gunterlingen* were led by a certain Gerrit de Bole van Heemskerk, a knightly figure belonging to the Gunter family who had a castle in nearby Holland. He was later exiled with 27 men. In this struggle, Gerrit and other members of the faction of the *Gunterlingen* apparently stood on the side of those who, in vain, challenged the rule of the city council. While Gerrit's non-elite associates were not poor or marginal men – all of the banished participants were citizens and guild members – they were of much lower status than he and probably had very different interests at stake.[2]

Such partnerships as that between the aristocrat Gerrit and the guildsmen, whose objectives and interests appear fundamentally incompatible, might seem inexplicable. Drawing upon the recent work of Samuel Cohn, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, and others, this contribution aims to explore such partnerships more fully and to offer the beginnings

2   Muller, *Rechtsbronnen* I, 66-68; HUA, SA 227, f. 80v-87; 587 (1380/81), f. 32v and *passim*; Bruch, *Croniken*, 232; Idem, *Chronographia*, 343-344. In Holland, the family branch was known as Boel van Heemskerke. All banished participants in this crisis had citizen rights, implying that this was a revolt by those with political rights and guild membership at least, and not by impoverished people.

of an explanation by focusing on the conditions and circumstances for collective political action, particularly the organisation of violence. By exploring the conditions for successful political action, and developments therein, elite involvement and leadership can be understood more easily.

As I will argue, elite involvement was partly a result of a culture of violence which permeated medieval urban politics as much as it did 'rural' politics. Elite leadership was further favoured by dramatic developments in the way that cities were governed in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In this contribution, I will mainly focus on cities in the Low Countries and Germany where craft guilds gained access to city councils and the political establishment. Many examples will be taken from Utrecht, which greatly resembled neighbouring Flemish and German cities in its political and social developments, but which is relatively unknown to modern researchers.[3]

Historiographical context

One of the central elements in the historiography on 'preindustrial revolts' that prevailed until very recently was the supposed spontaneity of protesting crowds.[4] These crowds seemed unable to organise themselves properly and were frequently led, or manipulated, by people who came from outside their ranks. These leaders were usually of (much) higher social standing than the protesters themselves, such as kings, nobles, mayors, or clerics. This picture of the typical 'preindustrial revolt' was based predominantly on early modern cases, but the few medievalists who addressed medieval revolts from a synthetic point of view in the later twentieth century, notably Michel Mollat, Philippe Wolff, and Guy Fourquin, had come to similar conclusions about the leadership of revolts, though from other directions.[5] According to Fourquin, who was influenced by the economist Vilfredo Pareto and by anti-Marxism, political revolts in the (late) Middle Ages, especially in the growing cities, had typically been initiated and led by 'new' elites, while

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3   Utrecht was the largest city of the Northern Low Countries with about 13,000 inhabitants around 1400. Further reading on Utrecht: De Bruin et al., *'Een paradijs vol weelde'*; J.M. van Winter, 'Verfassung und Verwaltung im spätmittelalterlichen Utrecht', in: W. Ehbrecht (ed.), *Verwaltung und Politik in Städten Mitteleuropas. Beiträge zu Verfassungsnorm und Verfassungswirklichkeit in altständischer Zeit* (Cologne 1994) 47-54.
4   Cohn, *Lust of liberty*; Idem, 'Authority and popular resistance', in: H. Scott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750: Volume II: Cultures and Power* (Oxford 2015) 418-439.
5   M. Mollat and Ph. Wolff, *Ongles bleus, Jacques et Ciompi: Les révolutions populaires en Europe aux XIVᵉ et XVᵉ siècles* (Paris 1970); G. Fourquin, *Les soulèvements populaires au Moyen Âge* (Paris 1972).

rebelling poor and common people, whether from rural or urban origin, tended to follow traditional elite figures.[6]

In the first new synthesis of late medieval revolt in Western Europe since the 1970s, Samuel Cohn showed that these ideas about medieval revolts needed revision. In the period between 1200 and 1425, he found that archival and narrative sources did not show that 'peasants, artisans, and workers failed to lead their own revolts and instead had to rely on the organisational skills, military expertise, eloquence, and charisma of class outsiders'.[7] Instead, to a much greater extent than had been assumed, commoners were capable of rational and strategic planning of collective political action; leadership 'from the inside' was not exceptional in medieval popular revolts.[8] In general, craft guilds – representing mostly artisans and shopkeepers from the middling groups – produced their own leaders. Even disenfranchised workers, such as the Florentine Ciompi (1378-82), Cohn found, were in some cases able to manage relatively successful collective actions by themselves.[9]

That commoners could and often did organise and lead their own movements is thus a well-accepted position. Nevertheless, elite participation is detectable in most revolts by artisans and workers in cities in the Low Countries, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere where craft guild revolutions took place. Elites appear in the sources as allies of guilds or other groups of commoners, as apparent leaders, or as those who represented the protest group to the outside world. Even during the heyday of urban craft guild revolutions, in the years and decades around 1300, coalitions between craft guilds and patrician factions, and probably shared leadership of the 'movement', were the rule rather than the exception.[10]

The presence of elites led earlier researchers to believe that political conflicts in these cities really originated with power struggles between elite families and that their leaders were able to assemble large followings from the local guild community to pursue their own private goals. Consciously or not, they thus downplayed the ability of the guilds and of commoners to pursue their own goals.[11] But this position, too, has been recently

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6 Fourquin, *Les soulèvements populaires*, 87-108 and 143-209. Fourquin's discussion of the leadership of revolts, however, shows more nuance than Cohn's short remark in *Lust of liberty*, p. 109, suggests.
7 Cohn, *Lust of liberty*, 129.
8 See the discussion and examples in: Ibidem, 109-129.
9 Ibidem, 119-129, see also the recent discussion by Patrick Lantschner in 'Revolts and the political order'.
10 Braekevelt et al., 'The politics of factional conflict'; Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns'; Haverkamp, '"Innerstädtische Auseinandersetzungen"'; Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 252; for Tournai in the early 15th century, see Lantschner, 'Revolts and the political order', 12-17.
11 Most influential in this respect, amongst others on the historiography of the Northern Low

revised. In a joint effort of specialists on late medieval Flemish revolts and elites, Jonas Braekevelt, Frederik Buylaert, Jan Dumolyn, and Jelle Haemers turned the question on its head and looked at the leading role of patrician families and factions in Flemish cities in the context of fully fledged corporate politics.[12] They found that corporate groups supported one faction or another strategically, in order to profit politically from the divides within the elite. They also argued that the links between commoners and patrician leaders could be explained by ties of political clientelism, mostly in the periphery of the groups. Even then, though, they found it 'sometimes difficult to understand why corporate groups and common labourers supported factions led by patrician families'.[13]

It is not simply the presence of elites in 'popular' movements that demands better explanation, but also the periodisation of such cooperation. Most of the revolts by artisans and lower-class workers with leadership from their own ranks took place in the heyday of urban craft guild revolutions, in the decades before and around 1300 and in the fourteenth century.[14] At some point in the late Middle Ages, protesting groups of commoners began to rely more on leaders from the outside than before. Mollat and Wolff had explained this shift by linking what they supposed were revolts arising from poverty and misery to the social upheavals caused by the Black Death (1346–53).[15] Fourquin, for his part, argued that the (late) fourteenth and fifteenth century showed more revolts by poor people, and fewer revolts by middle-class citizens challenging ruling elites. This he explained by the growth of economic problems and social tensions as routes for social mobility were increasingly barred for lower-class people.[16]

More recently, Samuel Cohn, refining his thesis from *Lust for Liberty* about the 'non-pre-modern' character of medieval revolts, suggested that the turning point for this transformation took place around 1400, or somewhat earlier or later, depending on the region and the circumstances.[17] From the fifteenth century onwards, in his view, popular revolts gradually developed into the 'classical' pre-industrial revolt which had been inspired in many ways by cases in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and which

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Countries, was the (anti-Marxist) work by Heers, *Parties and political life*; compare also, for English historiography, Liddy and Haemers, 'Popular politics', 773-774.

12 Braekevelt et al., 'The politics of factional conflict'.

13 Ibidem, 31.

14 Compare the non-exhaustive list in Cohn, 'Authority and popular resistance', 422-423; Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns', 374-378.

15 Mollat and Wolff, *Ongles bleus*. For criticism of the 'Black Death' theory, see Cohn, *Lust of liberty*, 205-227.

16 Fourquin, *Les soulèvements populaires*, 193-209.

17 Cohn, 'Authority and popular resistance', 426ff.

often had links to food shortage or subsistence problems, which involved more 'proletarian' protesters, and which were led by elites such as nobles, mayors, or clerics.

Cohn, while successfully challenging Mollat and Wolff's thesis about the Black Death, also tentatively linked the transformation to a 'growing gap between rulers and those they ruled' and 'an increasing imbalance in class power', leading in general to more repression of political dissent and more reliance, by protesters, on the military experience and leadership of prominent figures.[18] German and Flemish researchers of urban history have noted fundamental changes in the character and repression of urban revolts as well, which they assign roughly to the period from the later fourteenth and fifteenth century onwards. This is usually connected to processes of growing state power and of oligarchisation, in the cities as well as at a central level of government. Governments were on the whole more willing to repress protest actions by their poorer and/or unenfranchised subjects and had more means to do so.[19]

The question remains. Why did craft guilds and commoners, who knew their way around city politics and were capable of producing their own leaders, turn to patricians or other members of the ruling elite when their issues about local government turned to violent clashes? And, generally speaking, why did ordinary (middle-class or lower-class) people follow members of the social and political elites whose power they often sought to reduce? What explains the growth of elite involvement and leadership in popular revolts *after* the craft guilds had become established members of the community and political consciousness had developed among different layers of urban society? These changes cannot be connected simply to the abolition of the political craft guilds – the cradles of late medieval revolt – at the end of the Middle Ages. The development started earlier, in the late fourteenth or fifteenth century, only to speed up when the craft guilds lost their political rights in most cities in the course of the sixteenth century.

This contribution aims to explore the issue of leadership further and to examine developments in the conditions and circumstances for collective political action and revolt in cities, mainly in the Low Countries and Germany, from the late thirteenth until the sixteenth century. 'Leadership' will be understood in a very specific way. Here, I will use the term exclusively to refer to the practical leadership of a revolt in a political and

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18 Ibidem, 431.
19 See e.g. for Flanders Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns'; M. Boone, 'Het falen van de netwerken', in: W. Prevenier (ed.), *Prinsen en poorters: Beelden van de laat-middeleeuwse samenleving in de Bourgondische Nederlanden, 1384-1530* (Antwerp 1998) 344-354. For German cities, see Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 251-254 and 412-414. Similar tendencies were at work elsewhere, compare Watts, *The making of polities*; Najemy, *History of Florence*, 156-187; Schreiner and Meier, *Stadtregiment und Bürgerfreiheit*.

military manner: leaders were those who commanded the protesters during their actions, who negotiated with the authorities or other parties, who decided on planning and strategies, whether or not assisted in this by others or delegated to do so by the group. Leaders were thus not necessarily those who roused the crowds and encouraged them to action in the first place.[20]

In what follows, I will suggest an explanation that, on the one hand, takes account of the relatively high level of political organisation and bottom-up initiatives within many late medieval cities. These were features that were particularly pronounced in cities where the craft guilds and middling groups gained access to local political institutions, as in many larger cities in the Low Countries and Germany.[21] On the other hand, it attempts to do justice to the socio-political developments that took place over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in local government as well as within corporate organisations. It will incorporate some of the arguments already brought forward, such as the attractiveness of coalitions with groups from an already divided elite, and the importance of political clientelism. However, my argument hinges primarily on the organisation of violence.

The organisation of violence – as a threat or as actual (physical) violence – was a precondition for successful political action in the late Middle Ages (and arguably also before that time). As a result, the question of how to organise violence determined to a large degree how political action groups and coalitions came about and how they were structured and led. In order to be successful, this political violence, or the threat of it, needed to be managed in such a way that it was likely to lead to negotiation instead of sheer repression. If repression became inevitable, it had to be managed in such a way that the perpetrators could feel to some extent protected, and, if they lost, that they could reasonably hope to survive and return into their former positions in society again. How political dissent and violence was organised was strongly influenced by developments in urban governments and within the political craft guilds during the late Middle Ages. These developments particularly favoured the role of elite leadership in revolts, to the detriment of the craft guilds as the typical units of collective action.

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20 Compare Cohn, *Lust of liberty*, 109.
21 Prak, 'Corporate politics'; Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 251-252.

The state monopoly on violence, as well as modern norms and values concerning the use of violence in political conflicts, have made it possible to distinguish relatively sharply between peaceful forms of protest and negotiation, on the one hand, and violent conflict and revolts, on the other. Unwittingly, our modern political culture greatly influences the way we look at late medieval political conflict, too. But, confronted with overwhelming evidence, historians have increasingly acknowledged that violent encounters and armed protests in late medieval cities were an integral part of urban political culture in this period.[22]

Marc Boone, who studied the role of violence in the major cities of Flanders, speaks of an almost uninterrupted flow of violent struggles in the city in which members of the craft guilds were involved, and concludes that violence, for the craft guilds, was a normal element of political action and an instrument of collective communication between the guilds and the city government.[23] Some might consider the medieval Flemish cities unique in their artisans' readiness to rebel, compared to other European cities, but the number of violent encounters in German cities, for example, does not seem to be much different.[24] Patrick Lantschner, who studied several cities in Italy, Flanders, and northern France comparatively, summarised this view, stating that, generally speaking, 'revolts ... formed a fundamental part of the political interactions in late medieval cities'.[25]

Still, the sheer number of battles, small-size tumults, armed protest meetings, and other forms of violent political encounters, continues to amaze us.[26] The ease with which

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22 Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns', 370, *passim*; M. Boone, '*Armes, coursses, assemblees et commocions:* Les gens de métiers et l'usage de la violence dans la société urbaine flamande à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Revue du Nord* 87 (2005) 7-33; Lantschner, 'Revolts and the political order'. Compare also Schilling, 'Civic republicanism', 6-30.

23 Boone, '*Armes, coursses, assemblees et commocions*', 9, 13: *(...) l'action des gens de métiers mêlés aux luttes intestines quasi ininterrompues (...); (...) l'emploi de la violence par ces mêmes corps de métiers [doit nous inciter à considérer] non seulement comme un élément dans une lutte pour s'emparer du pouvoir dans la cité (ou pour le consolider), mais également comme un élément d'action politique. La violence et son utilisation étant un instrument de communication collective (...).*

24 Compare the large number of late medieval urban revolts and political unrest in German cities, estimated by Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 251, 413; and Haverkamp, '"Innerstädtische Auseinandersetzungen"', 90-91. See also Naegle, 'Revolts and wars'.

25 Lantschner, 'Revolts and the political order', 4.

26 In addition, commoners could use all kinds of verbal forms of dissent and protest, e.g. by spreading rumours, or using mockery or insults towards rulers. Although these forms of dissent could have a large impact in the city, they will not concern us here as long as they were not the result of some organised form of political action. See for these forms of protest J. Dumolyn, J. Haemers, H.R. Oliva Herrer and V. Challet (eds.), *The voices of the people in late medieval Europe.*

people seemed to take up weapons in urban political conflicts is often considered 'remarkable', or a 'paradox', particularly considering the availability, and popularity, of peaceful channels of negotiation, such as petitioning, pursuing lawsuits, and different forms of consultation.[27]

The occurrence of armed assemblies and (physically) violent protest in late medieval urban politics has been treated and analysed in a number of ways, but not usually as a precondition for successful political action. Often, it is analysed as part of repertoires or traditions of collective action, in the manner established by Charles Tilly, looking at the precise forms in which dissent was expressed, during one event or over a longer period of time, and the orchestrated or symbolic character of the violence used.[28] Violence is also viewed as a 'last resort' and therefore as a sign of the level of discontent or even desperation on the side of the protesters. Likewise, it is considered in the context of existing legal systems, norms, and values, paying attention to its legitimation in the face of repression.[29] These are all relevant ways of studying political violence. Nevertheless, integral to all of these approaches is the notion that the use of arms in political conflicts was extraordinary, and that it was, in short, an anomaly in the way urban politics functioned normally, or should have functioned. In this respect, modern historians seem influenced not only by modern circumstances, but also by the powerful late medieval discourse of peace and order which was advocated, amongst others, by the craft guilds themselves.

The popularity of viewing politics as bargaining is telling in this respect. In this view, bargaining and negotiating are supposed to be the rule, and violent encounters to be the opposite, the exception. It has been stated, for instance, that armed protests and revolts in late medieval Flemish cities were 'lapses' in the process of bargaining which needed to be solved so that the bargaining could resume.[30] There are many indications, however,

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Communication and popular politics (Turnhout 2014), esp. the editors' introduction, 'Medieval voices and popular politics', 1-12; J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, '"A bad chicken was brooding": Subversive speech in late medieval Flanders', *Past & Present* 214 (2012) 45-86.

27 Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns'; Liddy and Haemers, 'Popular politics', 777, *passim*; Boone and Prak, 'Rulers, patricians and burghers', 102-103.

28 Tilly, *From mobilization*. Tilly has been most influential in Flemish historiography on late medieval revolts, see e.g., Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns'; R. Verbruggen, *Geweld in Vlaanderen. Macht en onderdrukking in de Vlaamse steden tijdens de veertiende eeuw* (Brugge 2005); J. Haemers, *For the common good. State power and urban revolts in the reign of Mary of Burgundy (1477-1482)* (Turnhout 2009). See also Hanagan, Moch and Te Brake, *Challenging authority*.

29 The legal aspects of revolt and violent political conflict have been a distinctive trait of German historiography. See e.g. R. Barth, *Argumentation und Selbstverständnis der Bürgeropposition in städtischen Auseinandersetzungen des Spätmittelalters* (Cologne 1974); B. Kannowski, *Bürgerkämpfe und Friedebriefe. Rechtliche Streitbeilegung in spätmittelalterlichen Städten* (Cologne 2001).

30 W.P. Blockmans, *De volksvertegenwoordiging in Vlaanderen in de overgang van Middeleeuwen*

that violence was considered an element of normal urban politics, and, moreover, that it was an essential part of the ongoing bargaining process within the city.[31] Jelle Haemers described the ritual of the *wapeninge*, or call to arms, in Flemish urban politics. In this political tradition, which has analogies in the German practice of *Bannerlauf* (literally, 'running with the banner') and similar practices in Italy, armed artisans marched up to the city hall under the banner of their craft guild when they felt their rights had been violated.[32] Standing armed on the central marketplace, they would threaten violence to support their demands, and would sometimes end up in fights with other guilds or with the city government.[33]

Haemers has rightly characterised the *wapeninge* as 'a symbolic sign to start negotiations about the rights of the guilds'.[34] The often symbolic character of the violence was directed precisely at the goal of opening up negotiations, not of closing them down. It is also clear that violence was fundamental to craft guilds' acquisition of access to local governments in the first place. In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the ability of craft guilds to mobilise armed support and organise revolts of the citizenry, partly by taking over communal defence systems in their neighbourhoods, was arguably the most important factor in their political successes.[35]

The culture of violence in urban politics becomes less of a paradox if we compare it to the culture of feuding in the politics of the surrounding countryside. Feud remained an important practice in the late Middle Ages in the Low Countries and Germany, and, with some regional variation, in other parts of Europe as well (although there one might prefer to speak of warfare instead of feuding).[36] Central to feud was the defence of rights and the purposeful use of violence as a reaction to violations thereof, within the boundaries set by custom and law.[37] The violence itself was in many respects meant not only to redefine the status quo and take (back) what was considered 'right', but also to

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naar Nieuwe Tijden (1384-1506) (Brussels 1978); Haemers, 'A victorious state', 107-111.

31 Compare Lantschner, 'Revolts and the political order', 4, who stated in this context that revolts were 'intensifications of existing processes of negotiation'.

32 Compare the custom to carry guild banners or flags during urban revolts in Germany and Italy: W. Ehrbrecht, 'Aufruhr', in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 12 vols. (Stuttgart [1977]-1999) I, cols. 1206-1207 [from *Brepolis Medieval Encyclopaedias – Lexikon des Mittelalters Online*]; Cohn, *Lust of liberty*, 177-192.

33 J. Haemers, 'A moody community? Emotion and ritual in late medieval urban revolts', in: E. Lecuppre-Desjardin and A.-L. van Bruaene (eds), *Emotions in the Heart of the City (14th-16th Century)* (Turnhout 2005) 63-82; see also Verbruggen, *Geweld in Vlaanderen*, 102-144.

34 Haemers, 'A moody community?', 75.

35 Wyffels, *De oorsprong*, ch. 5.

36 Kaminsky, 'The noble feud'; Netterstrøm and Poulsen, *Feud*; Hoppenbrouwers, 'Bloedwraak en vete'; J. Firnhaber-Baker, '*Jura in medio*: The settlement of seigneurial disputes in later medieval Languedoc', *French history* 26 (2012) 441-459, at 445-447.

37 Following the broad definition by Reinle, *Bauernfehden*, 61.

open up negotiations with the opposing party. It has been emphasised that feuds were usually conducted alongside, or as part of, legal procedures and diplomatic manoeuvres.[38]

Although much of the scholarship has concentrated on aristocratic feuds in the countryside, this feuding culture was undeniably also present in medieval cities. Feuds that were at least partly about the division of power were for a long time the most common means of political competition between knightly families and patrician factions. Communes, guilds, and city governments were also involved in feuding outside the city collectively. The intramural political conflicts which concern us here, between craft guilds, city governments, or other groups of city dwellers, were very similar to 'feuds' or 'wars', too. The comparison has been made within the context of German citizens' struggles (*Bürgerkämpfe*) ending in written peace settlements (*Friedebriefe*). In an analysis of the practice of *Friedebriefe*, Bernd Kannowski noted strong similarities between noble feuding and this type of inner-city conflict, although he did not equate the two because, as he argued, violent urban risings were usually grounded in the universally acknowledged right to rise against bad or illegal government (*Widerstandsrecht*) rather than in the right to feud (*Fehderecht*).[39] Patrick Lantschner, in turn, framed urban revolts within the general theory and practices of medieval warfare. I disagree with Lantschner, however, that rebels 'imitated' the practices of warfare of the surrounding countryside. Rather, they were fully engaged in these practices within the city.[40]

It seems safe to state, therefore, that inhabitants of cities and the countryside shared a similar culture of violence in politics, performed through feuding, revolts, or through other forms of violent political action.[41]

In medieval politics, this culture of violence was instrumental first of all in deterring the opposing party and threatening it into complying with one's demands. Showing off one's moral strength and willingness to use violence, as well as being able to mobilise armed supporters, was just as important – or even more important – than the actual use of violence. That feuding was about deterrence as much as about fighting has been pointed out by Hillay Zmora, amongst others. Focusing on feuds between German

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38 Netterstrøm and Poulsen, *Feud*, esp. Netterstrøm, 'Introduction'; see also, for late medieval Southern France, Firnhaber-Baker, '*Jura in medio*'.

39 Kannowski, *Bürgerkämpfe und Friedebriefe*. I would like to thank Professor Christine Reinle for drawing my attention to this study. See also Reinle, *Bauernfehden*, 40.

40 Lantschner, 'Revolts and the political order', 37-44.

41 Compare Reinle, *Bauernfehden*, 340: *Die Bereitschaft zum gewaltsamen Konfliktaustrag war ein Strukturmerkmal der spätmittelalterlichen wie der frühneuzeitlichen Gesellschaft. Sie war schichtenübergreifend gegeben und bildete die Grundlage für eine milieuübergreifende Akzeptanz von Fehdeführung.* See also Reinle's discussion of feuds by commoners: Idem, 'Peasant's feuds in medieval Bavaria (fourteenth-fifteenth century)', in: Netterstrøm and Poulsen, *Feud*, 161-174.

nobles and princes in the late Middle Ages, Zmora argued that to be successful in feuds – and, one might add, in politics in general – it was important not only that one win sufficient supporters and allies, but also that 'one was prepared to feud and, crucially, was believed to be so'. [42] Thus, being successful in feuding was closely related to one's moral reputation and one's ability to build and mobilise networks of friends and allies who would be prepared to support you with violence if needed. This was all the more important, because, as Zmora also noted, most feuds were conducted between parties who lived relatively close to each other and were largely dependent on the same social and political networks.

The same could be observed in the microcosms of late medieval cities. When we consider urban politics in this period in the light of a prevailing culture of violence, comparable to the mores and practices of feuding, the frequent occurrence of armed assemblies in the marketplace, the shouting of threatening cries, and, more in the background, the forging of alliances and coalitions in order to acquire more support, become more easily understandable. These phenomena were all signs to negotiate, or, in the case of groups outside the political establishment, they conveyed the message that they should be taken seriously as a negotiating partner. An important condition for political success – apart from actually having the means to challenge the existing balance of power – was that these symbolic performances needed to be in some way or another embedded in local customs, laws, and values concerning political violence.

Thus, instead of starting from a contraposition between peaceful popular politics, on the one hand, and violent revolt, on the other, it may be more useful to allow for quite a large grey zone in late medieval urban politics (varying according to local and regional customs), in which the use and threat of violence co-existed with non-violent political practices and were considered perfectly normal forms of political action.

Forms of political action groups

Turning to the groups that initiated political action and revolt in the city, it becomes clear that these were also centred on the organisation of violence. This does not only apply to clear-cut military organisations, such as neighbourhood militias,[43] 'traditional' feuding

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42 H. Zmora, 'The morals of feuding in late medieval Germany', in: Netterstrøm and Poulsen, *Feud*, 147-160, esp. 158. See also C. Garnier, 'Symbole der Konfliktführung im 14. Jahrhundert. Die Dortmunder Fehde von 1388/89', *Westfälische Zeitschrift* 151/152 (2002) 23-46.

43 For example, in fifteenth-century Brussels: Van Uytven, 'Plutokratie', 377-380; and in Tournai:

groups based on strong mutual bonds of (quasi-) kinship, or their politically orientated counterparts: aristocratic factions with their armed and often liveried followings of relatives, helpers, and attendants which were long important to the political scene in medieval cities.[44] Organising violence was also central to the groups and coalitions that would challenge the rule of lords, aristocrats, and patricians in the city. These were the voluntary associations of the communes and the guilds, appearing from as early as the eleventh century onwards in both rural and urban contexts in Western Europe.[45]

The political cooperation in communes and guilds was based on an oath-bound association (*coniuratio*), creating horizontal bonds of brotherhood (*fraternitas*) between the members. The aim of the oath was to secure mutual protection and support (*mutuum auxilium*, *Schutz und Hilfe*, etc.).[46] The oath was not only meant to create a union of 'brothers', based on internal peace, consensus, and shared values and goals. It also had much to do with defining the group against the outside world and with providing military aid and physical protection to each other in case of resistance to the group's initiatives.

The violent character of this form of political association was emphasised by Otto Oexle, an expert on the origins and development of the *coniuratio*. Oexle found that the organisation of violence was a fundamental element in the creation of oath-bound associations from the start. The peasants in Normandy who formed a *coniuratio* against some regional lords around the year 1000, did so with the explicit aim of organising armed resistance against aristocratic violence, and the fraternity of the *Capuciati*, a broad-based coalition of peasants, towns, and nobles in southern France that aimed to restore peace in the region, crushed a mercenary army in 1183, based on the principle 'mutual aid against all' (*mutuum auxilium contra omnes*). The early communes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were likewise set on pursuing their goals of peace and liberty violently, if needed. Of course, in the eyes of contemporary power holders – lords, nobles, and clerics – these initiatives were contradictory and bad: 'they pretended to bring peace, but

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Lantschner, 'Revolts and the political order', 14-16, 26.

44 Their practices and culture of violence have been studied extensively, see e.g. for Ghent, F. Blockmans, *Het Gentsche stadspatriciaat tot omstreeks 1302* (Antwerp 1938); for Florence, C. Lansing, *The Florentine magnates: Lineage and faction in a medieval commune* (Princeton, NJ 1991).

45 O.G. Oexle, 'Die Kultur der Rebellion. Schwureinung und Verschwörung im früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Okzident', in: M.T. Fögen (ed.), *Ordnung und Aufruhr im Mittelalter. Historische und juristische Studien zur Rebellion* (Frankfurt am Main 1995) 119-137; Idem, 'Gilde und Kommune. Über die Entstehung von "Einung" und "Gemeinde" als Grundformen des Zusammenlebens in Europa', in: P. Blickle (ed.), *Theorien kommunaler Ordnung in Europa* (Munich 1996) 75-97; Blickle, *Kommunalismus*; Reynolds, *Kingdoms and communities*.

46 The definition and following discussion based on Oexle, 'Die Kultur der Rebellion'.

in reality they exerted violence'.[47] These associations were characterised by the way in which the members worked and took decisions together. Based on the principle of equality, they would regularly hold assemblies and choose their leaders, who thus headed the group by means of delegation.

As Oexle argued, the appearance of the sworn association (*coniuratio*) constituted a foundation for the 'culture of [popular] rebellion' in the medieval West.[48] Indeed, this form of political collaboration typically started as an initiative outside the political establishment and within an often hostile world, though there are also cases in which communes managed to be integrated rather peacefully in the existing political structures through privileges from their overlords.[49]

As we know, communes gradually became established government institutions in their own right, and guilds – originally merchant guilds, but later also craft guilds – partly too. Even so, the voluntary association of the *coniuratio* appears to have remained the basic form for political action and resistance in the city during the later Middle Ages, as Wilfried Ehbrecht and others have noted.[50] City records and other contemporary sources dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries convey this by referring to political groups behind tumults or revolts in the city in terms indicating a voluntary association, such as *coniuratio, conspiratio/Verschwörung, eninge, confederacions, alliances*. Such initiatives within the city were in principle considered illegal by the local authorities because they implied an infringement on the internal peace and unity of the community. Alternatively, the formation of associations appears from terms referring to groups holding (illegal) meetings (*assemblé, vergaderinge*, etc.).[51] Similar associations seem to have formed the basis of very small groups of protesters as well. City council records in Utrecht from the 1360s, for instance, make note of trials of groups of artisans, consisting of a few men only, who had tried in vain to take up arms against local authorities. They were sentenced above all for making a 'unity' (*eninge*) among themselves, within their

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47 According to a twelfth-century French chronicle, referred to by Oexle: Ibidem, 135: *Sie geben vor, Frieden schaffen zu wollen, in Wahrheit aber üben sie Gewalt*.
48 Ibidem, 136.
49 Watts, *The making of polities*, 98-109; J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, 'Reclaiming the common sphere of the city. The revival of the Bruges commune in the late thirteenth century', in: J.-P. Genet (ed.), *La légitimité implicite*, 2 vols. (Paris 2015) II, 161-188, at 164-169.
50 Ehbrecht, 'Aufruhr'; see also Watts, *The making of polities*, 107, who speaks of 'a host of other associations modelled along similar lines' (as the commune, consulate or guild); and J. Dumolyn, 'The vengeance of the commune: Sign systems of popular politics in medieval Bruges', in: H.R. Oliva Herrer, V. Challet, J. Dumolyn and M.A. Carmona Ruiz (eds.), *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública* (Sevilla 2014) 251-289.
51 Braekevelt et al., 'The politics of factional conflict', 18; Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 254; Dumolyn, 'The vengeance of the commune', 251, 264. Compare, for Italian cities, Hyde, 'Contemporary views'.

guilds, indicating probably the formation of an oath-bound association, for the purpose of mutual protection and support.[52]

In many cases, we lack explicit information about the way political protesters united precisely and what form(s) of collaboration and support was promised or understood between them before undertaking action. Usually, we have to rely on what authorities chose to say about them. In some instances, however, there is more information available. In the city of Regensburg in Germany, there is evidence about a *coniuratio* that formed the basis of political collaboration between an aristocratic family from the surrounding countryside, the Auer family, and 37 citizens of Regensburg in 1330. The *coniuratio* later grew to include about 200 citizens. In this association, they swore to provide each other protection and support *(Schutz und Hilf)* and also to uphold the alliance that they had concluded with several craft guilds in the city. The primary goal of the *coniuratio* was to hold the council accountable for their financial management. A violent tumult ensued, of which one of the results was to get craft guilds more involved in local government for the time being.[53] Another example is the classic *Bannerlauf* in Bremen, which took place in 1365. The protesters' group in this city was known as the Great Company (*Grande Cumpanie*), a clear indication of its military set-up; this was also an oath-bound association that was sworn in this case by a socially diverse group of citizens who united against policies of the city council.[54]

To summarise, there are many indications that political action groups in medieval cities were fundamentally constructed as associations capable of mobilising armed support, of providing physical protection, and of actually using violence if needed. The (threat of) violence that ensued from the formation of these groups, may be considered a normal part of the ongoing bargaining process in these cities. This urban political culture of violence formed part of a more general feuding culture, although the differences between noble feuding and urban political conflicts should not be ignored. At the same time, the political necessity to organise violence effectively put a heavy strain on the collective associations striving for political goals. The challenges for protesters to unite and organise themselves successfully in this way could only be solved in a limited number of cases. And these challenges became more demanding as time went by.

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52 HUA, SA 227, f. 23 and 27v; compare also Muller, *Rechtsbronnen* I, 42, where members of the butchers' guild of Utrecht are forbidden to form 'unities' among them without the city council's consent.
53 K. Bosl, *Die Sozialstruktur der mittelalterlichen Residenz- und Fernhandelsstadt Regensburg. Die Entwicklung ihres Bürgertums vom 9.-14. Jahrhundert* (Munich 1966) 86-87.
54 Ehbrecht, 'Aufruhr'; H. Schwarzwälder, '"Bannerlauf" und "Verrat" in Bremen, 1365-1366', *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 53 (1975) 43-90.

The difficulties involved in organising violence and the increasing pressures put on late medieval urban protesters are well illustrated by a conflict that took place in Utrecht in 1346. In the autumn of 1346, the city of Utrecht was in a great uproar when first an armed protest against the city council and then a large-scale battle took place. It was the first time that Utrecht had experienced such political trouble within its community since the city's craft guilds had gained political recognition in 1304. The conflict, which could be characterised as a combination of elite faction struggle and popular movement, erupted between two alliances: on one side, the bishop of Utrecht with his troops, the city council, and at least one craft guild (the furriers) which appeared with its banner unfurled, and on the other, a large, diverse group of citizens from different guilds, amongst others butchers, tanners, and blacksmiths.

When the two sides met in battle, on 22 November, the bishop's coalition won decisively. Some protesters were executed in the aftermath, while others were exiled for 100 years. The collective sentence of exile was pronounced publicly by the bishop, in close consultation with the city council.[55] The document named eight citizens and their 'collaborators' (*medewerkers*), who, in the words of the sentence, had been assisting those eight on the day of the battle and who fled the city with them afterwards. According to the text, they had not only left or 'cleared' (*ontrumet*) the city, but also 'cleared' their guilds.[56] In what followed, the names of the collaborators, nearly 100 men in total, were listed in the order of the guilds they had belonged to before they became involved in the action.

A further step was taken two weeks later: the bishop (as lord of the city), the city council, and the remaining guild community took a fundamental decision on the exact conditions for lawful violent resistance against the city government. These conditions were articulated negatively, so that anyone who resisted with violence against decisions of the city council was to be executed. However, there were a number of conditions: that the city council had been installed by the guilds and was sitting in the city hall at the time of the decision, that the case in question fell within the council's competence, and that

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55 Muller, *Rechtsbronnen* I, 57-65, esp. 60-62 (sentence dated 4 December 1346); an extensive narration of the second confrontation, including a description of the executions (which have not been registered otherwise), is supplied by an anonymous editor of the well-known *Nederlandse Beke* chronicle, amongst others in The Hague, KB 71 F 30, f. 86v-87r; see also Smithuis, '1346'; Struick, *Utrecht*, 76-77.
56 Muller, *Rechtsbronnen* I, 60-61.

their decision had been taken in the interest of the city.[57] The resolution continued by stating that, in case of such unlawful resistance, the city council could demand bystanders physically to 'protect the council and strengthen the law', and if any of the protesters got wounded or killed in the process, the council's helpers would not be punished harshly.[58]

This example from Utrecht in 1346 is indicative of a number of developments that were common to many late medieval cities, including those where craft guilds had not become part of the local government. There were three developments, in particular, which affected the conditions for political action and revolt. The first development was the swift expansion of law-making and judicial powers concentrated in the hands of local city councils and benches of aldermen, so that these were soon able to decide over the life and death of most of the city dwellers without much interference by other powers. This was a development that was shared by many cities in late medieval Europe, and certainly by the bigger ones in the Low Countries and Germany.[59] Part and parcel of this development was a more repressive attitude towards dissent and violence in general, which increasingly became matters of criminal justice and law enforcement. This negative attitude ensured that political dissent and protest were also framed more readily as rebellion and disobedience towards the authorities.[60]

The 1346 resolution from Utrecht reflects this development in that it criminalised armed resistance against the city council, threatening offenders with no less than capital punishment, unless some general and probably highly debatable conditions about the lawfulness of the council's government had been met. Moreover, it provided the council with a licence to react immediately with violence itself. This obviously made the existing traditions concerning political protest more risky for action groups, and even for acknowledged corporations within the city, such as the guilds. The butchers' guild in

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57 Ibidem, 64: *(...) oft gheviel dat die raet van Utrecht, die ware inder tijd ende opt huys zaten van der meenre ghilden weghen, enigherhande zaken overdroeghen om der stat orbaer, welke zaken den rade voerseyt gheboerden te berechten na der ghewoente der stat van Utrecht, so wi hem daer ieghens versette dat mit ghewelt te keren, dat soude men rechten aen sijn lijf. (...)*

58 *Ende waer oec yemant daer bi, die daer toe gheeyschet worde om den raet te bescermen ende om dat recht te starken, ende daer vechtende worde ende daer yemant quetsede of doet sloeghe van den ghenen die hem ieghens den raet versetten, daer en soude hi sijn lijf noch die stat van Utrecht nyet om verboren.* Compare the custom of German city councils to defend their position with armed helpers or 'friends', mirroring the political action by their opponents: Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 254.

59 Watts, *The making of polities*, 213-215; Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 327-329. For Utrecht, Muller, *Rechtsbronnen*, 3.

60 Compare the central notion of authority and obedience that was emphasised by German city governments from the fifteenth century onwards: Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 333-340; see also J. Watts, 'Public or plebs: The changing meaning of the commons, 1381-1549', in: H. Pryce and J. Watts (eds.), *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* (Oxford 2007) 242-260.

Utrecht, which had gained access to the city government with the other craft guilds in 1304, was the first guild in Utrecht to be affected by the changed atmosphere regarding political protest and violence. Its members were put under stricter control by the city council, forbidding them to 'unite' without the council's approval and to meet outside the meat hall.[61] The guild was eventually abolished by the city council in 1433 on the grounds of the butchers' unceasing habit of meeting frequently in their guild hall and in the central marketplace, and of rushing out and starting fights, in performances that were probably similar to the *wapeninge* of craft guilds in Flemish cities.[62]

Second, the increasing level of law enforcement and intolerance was not only a matter of acquiring more effective means of government but also the result of a process of consensus building within the citizenry, especially within the ruling group. In cities with political guilds, in particular, this ruling group was not only involved in local government but often had great influence within the craft organisations, as well. A new ruling elite slowly emerged in these cities, which strove on the whole for consensus and the conservation of acquired rights in both corporate organisation and city government.[63] One result of this development was a growing social and political gap in many guilds between guild management and common guild members, as well as between politically successful guilds and 'minor' guilds.[64] Generally speaking, guild leaders who acted as members of government, and who possibly also belonged to the ruling elite, were less able or willing to serve as representatives for protest initiatives arising from their own guilds. These developments meant that political craft guilds typically became less apt to act as vehicles for political protest and dissent, unless the protest concerned the interests of the guild as a whole (as an institution). In fifteenth-century Flanders, for example, a new 'guild discourse' of middle-class (master) artisans, organised in the established craft guilds, was voiced in literary works by members of the chambers of rhetoric (*rederijkerskamers*). Instead of political action, these authors recommended that artisans and lower-class workers in the city practise silence, endurance, and obedience to authorities.[65]

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61 Muller, *Rechtsbronnen* I, 42-43 (undated resolution).
62 Overvoorde and Joosting, *Gilden* I, 89-92. In other cities, butchers and butchers' guilds were also relatively active in inner-city conflicts and revolts: see D. Nicholas, *The later medieval city, 1300-1500* (London 1997) 134, 139-140.
63 This process has been labelled in different regions as the advance of pacification politics, consociationalism, or consensus politics: see Boone, *Gent en de Bourgondische hertogen*, 158-160, *passim*; Boone and Prak, 'Rulers, patricians and burghers', 106; Najemy, *History of Florence*, 182-187; Schreiner and Meier, *Stadtregiment und Bürgerfreiheit*; compare Van Uytven, 'Plutokratie'; Dumolyn and Haemers, 'Patterns', 379-380; Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 769-772.
64 This mechanism is elucidated brilliantly in Najemy, *Corporatism and consensus*, 9-14, *passim*.
65 J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, '"Let each man carry on with his trade and remain silent". Middle-class ideology in the urban literature of the late medieval Low Countries', *Cultural and social*

At the same time, the grounds for political protest did not disappear as craft guilds and artisan interests became part of local political establishments. A third and final development was the evolution of new cleavages within the community which did not necessarily correspond to corporate divisions of interests. To the contrary, they were more likely to disrupt the guild community from within. This is illustrated by the fact that protesters in many late medieval urban revolts, such as in Utrecht in 1346, cannot easily be identified with one or a few guilds, but often came from a wider range of guilds and backgrounds.[66] For this reason, researchers of revolts in German cities have come to prefer to speak in more encompassing terms like *Bürgerkämpfe* (citizen conflicts) and *innerstädtische Auseinandersetzungen* (intramural clashes) as opposed to the *Zunftkämpfe* (guild conflicts) favoured by older historiography, which tended to ignore the complex divisions of interests and to reduce conflicts to a simple contraposition of craft guilds versus patrician government.[67] In Ghent, too, historians have found that cleavages that arose within the corporate community along socio-economic lines and divided (sub)elites from a 'proletarian basis', became increasingly important in the fifteenth century.[68] As a result of the developments mentioned above, political protest in the later Middle Ages was more likely due to other divisions of power and interest: between city government and ordinary citizens, between consensus and popular politics, between ruling elite and commoners, or between rich and poor.[69] And more often than not, the craft organisations were on the side of the status-quo.

Conclusion: elite leadership of popular movements

What did these developments mean for the organisation of political action? Again, the case of Utrecht in the middle of the fourteenth century may serve as an example.

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    history 10 (2013) 169-189. The quotation in the title is derived from the title of an anonymous poem which survived in a sixteenth-century collection (*Elc doe sijn neringhe ende swijch al stille*).

66 See e.g. Lantschner, 'Revolts and the political order', 10-11, *passim*, who, instead of speaking of 'guilds' or other established entities within the city, which often were not politically united, prefers to think in terms of an unorderly framework of 'units of varying degrees of consolidation' within an essentially 'polycentric political order' which would enter into ad hoc coalitions on the eve of revolt.

67 Following the influential arguments of K. Czok, see esp. K. Czok, 'Die Bürgerkämpfe in Süd- und Westdeutschland im 14. Jahrhundert', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte der oberdeutschen Reichsstädte* 12/13 (1966/1967) 40-72; Idem, 'Zunftkämpfe'. See also Verbruggen, *Geweld in Vlaanderen*; Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 254-260.

68 J. Haemers, *De Gentse opstand (1449-1453). De strijd tussen rivaliserende netwerken om het stedelijke kapitaal* (Kortrijk-Heule 2004) 109-118.

69 Compare Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 412-414; Cohn, 'Authority and popular resistance'.

According to the verdict after the battle in November 1346, those who had taken up arms against the city council had left their guilds and followed eight citizens in battle, and in exile.[70] In this case, leaving their guilds was probably not a voluntary act, but, in practice, it may have been the only choice they had. Small groups of guild members with dissenting views could have little hope of getting their guild leaders to defend their interests and march up to the city hall together with their guild brothers under the guild's banner. Or maybe they refused to march up with their guild to defend a cause that was not theirs, which could have been seen as a rebellious act in itself. In any case, they had to find other associations for cooperation, protection, and support. The actual arrangements and coalitions that resulted from this process may have been diverse and were often not successful. In general, however, the new challenges tended to encourage a leading role for elite figures – whether they were in- or outsiders to local government – who could attract a range of collectivities in the community ready for political action.

The advantages of elite leadership, or of close collaboration with elite leaders, were multiple. First of all, they were able to offer effective protection, support, and practical military leadership during a protest action, especially if they were knights versed in warfare. They could also provide arms and suitable clothing to those who did not have any (mainly lower class participants, as guild members and burghers usually had their own military equipment). In addition, with the help of their networks, they could continue to offer support and protection afterwards, in the event that the group lost and had to flee or was exiled.

Elite members, especially if they were settled in the countryside, but also when they came from high-standing local families, were more likely to escape the city's justice. Moreover, they were in an excellent position to conduct or even command negotiations for the group as a whole. These negotiations could not only concern the political goals of the protesters, but also practical questions regarding their legal rights, their positions, properties and families. Again, high connections within the regional nobility and at princely courts could help tip the power balance just enough in the advantage of the protesters, especially if the city had powerful enemies. In many cities, from Italy to Germany and the Low Countries, the fate of exiled rebels often became closely linked to regional and even international politics.[71] Of course, the risk remained that the elite

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70 The order of events does not appear clearly from the source text: did the act of following the eight 'commanders' on the day of battle automatically mean that they left their guilds, in the eyes of the guilds and the city council? Or did the collaborators consciously leave their guilds behind in order to join the protest group?
71 C. Shaw, *The politics of exile in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge 2000).

participants would 'betray' the cause(s) of the rest of the group and attend their own concerns first.[72] However, this risk did probably not outweigh the perceived advantages of working together on the eve of revolt.

How should we define this type of collaboration? It was essentially a contractual relationship, pragmatic in nature. Nevertheless, it may also have created some form of subordination and dependence in the shorter or longer run. In the case of coalitions between relatively well-organised political groups (e.g. guilds) and elite factions, there was less dependency and rather a purely political and military, strategic collaboration. As in the case of the Auer revolt in Regensburg, the bond may have been that of an oath-bound association or a formal alliance.[73] In the case of small, relatively powerless urban groups seeking protection and mediation, however, the relationship may well have been one of clientelism from the start. In some studies, part of the networks of dependency around elite faction leaders have been unravelled through the prosopographic method.[74]

The main point to be made here, is that the incentive to collaborate with elite leaders arose from the need to join or create action groups that were able to organise violence in such a way that it could be used effectively and with as few risks as possible for the participants. The relationship between (groups of) commoners and elite members did not, therefore, necessarily stem from pre-existing ties of social or economic dependence, although a combination of political and social motives to follow an elite leader was of course possible as well.

We may conclude that a focus on the practical conditions for political organisation in the late Middle Ages, and on the central role that violence played in political action in general, makes it much easier to account for elite leadership in late medieval urban revolts, even if it seems paradoxical at first. To collaborate with, or even submit to, leaders from outside their own groups and interests could be a perfectly reasonable choice for politically conscious groups of citizens and craft guild members. It was an option that was likely to become more popular as craft organisations and urban governments in cities with craft guild participation typically became less open to bottom-up initiatives and more repressive towards political dissent.

In a schematic version of urban political development, three consecutive basic forms of political action and revolt could perhaps be discerned: first, the patrician feuding

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72 Braekevelt et al., 'The politics of factional conflict', 28; Cohn, *Lust of liberty*, 127-128.
73 Bosl, *Die Sozialstruktur*, 86-87.
74 For example, Haemers, *De Gentse opstand*; Idem, 'Factionalism'; J.F. Padgett and C.K. Ansell, 'Robust action and the rise of the Medici, 1400-1434', *American journal of sociology* 98 (1993) 1259-1319; D.V. Kent, *The rise of the Medici. Faction in Florence, 1426-1434* (Oxford 1978).

group or faction; second, the craft organisations; and third, diverse groups of craft guilds, artisans, and/or workers acting under shared or exclusive elite leadership. In reality, of course, these options overlapped and existed side by side, according to circumstances. What seems most remarkable, however, is that the leadership by elite members, even if it was a practical choice in the beginning, may in the end have had the opposite result of what the protest groups, struggling against consensus and oligarchy, stood for: the growth of ties of dependence and clientelism in the city.