RESIDENZENFORSCHUNG

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF URBAN SPACES THROUGH THE AGES
SOZIALE FUNKTIONEN STÄDTISCHER RÄUME IM WANDEL

Edited by Gerhard Fouquet, Ferdinand Opll,
Sven Rabeler and Martin Scheutz

THORBECKE

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Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen

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Urban Space and Social Protest

The Long Tradition of Social Unrest in Flemish Cities during the Late Middle Ages (Late Thirteenth to Early Sixteenth Century)

MARC BOONE

The ›spatial turn‹ and in the first place the re-discovery of the theories of the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre's ›La production de l'espace‹ (the first French edition dates from 1974, the work appeared in English only in 1991) have fundamentally influenced the way the social history of the cities of the former Low Countries, and more specifically of the county of Flanders, is (re-)considered[1]. The so-called ›spatial turn‹ calls for looking at the construction of a cloth hall or of a town hall or of a town wall no longer as a functional and architectural answer to specific urban needs exclusively, but it additionally strives to decode the construction as a process of social production that is inscribed into a space assembled from multiple layers of meaning. As a recent synthesis of urban history in the former Low Countries makes clear: This way of looking at space and at urban space in particular intends to distinguish itself consciously from an older historiography, in which ›urban facilities‹ are reduced to an enumeration of services and infrastructure as an expression of an urban society with increasingly better and more advanced facilities[2]. Then, urban space, too, is anything but a ›neutral‹ space. It does not exist in and of itself but is the result of a kind of sustained social production, defined by material constraints within which a society simply functions. It acquires mental shape in words and images as, for example, in cartographic representations.

The abundant number of social movements, rebellions, internal conflicts that from the nineteenth century onwards have caught the attention of historians have time and again been considered as being very characteristic for urban life during the late middle ages in

1 A first round-up was made during a conference in Dartmouth College (New Hampshire) in 1999, which resulted in a thematic issue of The Journal of Interdisciplinary History: ARNADE, HOWELL, SIMONS, The productivity (2002). The theme was put on the agenda of one of the sessions at the 9th International Congress of the European Association of Urban Historians (EAUH) in Lyon in 2008, followed up by a conference at Columbia University in 2010 when it was geographically enlarged in order to include comparisons with French and Italian cities. BOONE, HOWELL, Power of Space (2013), p. 1.

2 BILLEN, DELIGNE, Stedelijke ruimte (2016), pp. 207–209.

the Low Countries[3]. Once more, because of their size and economic importance and because of their early chronology, these phenomena seem to have been in the first place characteristic of the urban space in the county of Flanders. A great historiographic tradition that goes back to Henri Pirenne's medieval democracies has developed as a result of this[4]. In the following text I will explore the connection between the two phenomena: urban spatial development and social movements. However, it should be stressed from the beginning that not a single straightforward narrative will be the result. Urban infrastructure and facilities were both witnesses to the way in which this space came into being as well as active agents in that process. In the towns of medieval Flanders and of the Low Countries in general the production of urban space was influenced by the ever changing and uncertain power relations in politics and society. The competing claims to power between prince and town, the internal conflicts within the urban elites, the struggle between patrician families and artisans' guilds, the rivalries among individual ecclesiastical institutions: All these circumstances contributed to the maintenance of quasi-permanent building sites, to persistent alterations of existing buildings, of their functionality and, therefore, also of the symbolically loaded messages they were considered to convey. Urban ideology as well as urban space therefore has rightly been described as the result of a kind of ›bricolage‹[5]. Given their impact on urban finances and the as always important sensitivity if not explosive aspects concerning the organisation of urban fiscal policy, the great building initiatives and costly interventions in urban space have been in the heart of political debate and therefore in the core of social and political movements.

I will therefore go deeper into the role and functions of the development of emblematic spaces (walls, central marketplaces, halls, defensive structures, etc.) and deal, while departing from this typology of ›sensible places‹, with the way in which they functioned over time in the context of the ongoing dialectic relationship among city and prince and internally between social groups within the cities.

Present-day historiography has stressed time and again that the violence that at first sight looked to be the overwhelming feature of the numerous urban revolts (certainly in the ›long fourteenth century‹) was indeed an integral part of revolts, but that, all in all, it remained limited. Frequently, violence was directed only towards figures imbued with authority whom those in revolt considered to be responsible for what went wrong in their eyes. Aggression and the collective threat to unleash violence within the city, therefore, was more a tool in order to reach a specific political target than an expression of the people's nature. Official chroniclers nevertheless depicted those in revolt as such, and they highlighted above all the violent aspects of political resistance. Their narratives allowed in

3 DUMOLYN, HAEMERS, Patterns (2005), pp. 369–393; BOONE, Grafschaft Flandern (2008), pp. 24–45.

4 PIRENNE, Les villes (1939): a posthumously published collection of all his texts related to urban history, among others the seminal ›Les démocraties urbaines‹, first published in 1910 in French (an English version was published in 1915). Since 2005 all of Pirenne's publications belong to the public domain, they can be freely consulted electronically: http://digitheque.ulb.ac.be/fr/digitheque-henri-pirenne/index.html [11/9/2017]. BILLEN, BOONE, Construire (2010), pp. 3–24.

5 BOONE, HAEMERS, Bien commun (2016), pp. 146–158.

the first instance to justify the repression of revolts[6]. When, for example, in 1303 artisans flung the burgomaster of Ypres through a window of the cloth hall and lynched nine aldermen accused of having transgressed corporate rights, chroniclers reported these ›crimes‹ with abhorring detail. An annual mass was even established to condemn the injustice and to preserve (till the end of the Ancien Régime!) the memory of this misdeed[7]. And yet, this kind of audacious laundering of past events is the exception rather than the rule. Historians, in the line of the work of sociologists like Charles Tilly, have come to recognise more regularity, a kind of discipline and a strategic repertoire in the manifestation of collective resistance[8]. Along these lines an almost anthropological reading of urban resistance teaches us that those in revolt employed not only the sword but even more often their banners and the pen to carry out acts of political resistance against transgressions of their rights and for the maintenance of privileges[9]. There were hotheads in every conflict, and sometimes actions took place »in hot blood« (*in hitte van bloede*[10]), as was said in the medieval town. Yet, the leading groups within the craft guilds – generally belonging to the well-off middling groups – employed rituals instead and used violence sporadically in order to reach, above all, the goal of the revolt: to be heard and to put their point of view on the political agenda. Space and the temporary use of space were crucial in this respect. A phenomenon that occurred on regular basis was the so-called *wapeninghe*, a demonstration of force by armed guild members on the central market place of the town in order to show their potential threat to peace and their capacity to mobilise armed forces. An essential feature remains that these *wapeninghen* were staged on the central space in the city. In the biggest city of the county of Flanders, Ghent, counting around 50.000 inhabitants in the course of the fifteenth century, this meant they had to take place on the Friday market. If they were not staged on that particular spot, they did not acquire the same meaning both in the eyes of those staging them – mainly the armed guild members, gathered around their banners – as in the eyes of those at whose power they were aimed, local elites and more often the prince or his representatives.

In the line of theories by influential sociologists and historians of the beginning of the twentieth century like Weber or Pirenne, cities have been characterised by (if not reduced to) their market function[11]. The market place, therefore, is of crucial importance as a focusing point of interest in the first place for its economic value and importance but also for the expression of political power. In many towns the original marketplace was relocated

6 DUMOLYN, Legal Repression (2000), pp. 479–521 provides an overview of the repressive measurements and their justifications.

7 BOONE, HAEMERS, Bien commun (2016), p. 146.

8 TILLY, Contentious French (1986), see two of the most recent general views on societal violence in the late middle ages (with abundant references to the vast literature): SKODA, Medieval Violence (2013), and LANTSCHNER, Logic (2015).

9 Alongside of the spatial turn, the so-called linguistic turn also has allowed to reconsider the late medieval urban uprisings, an overview in DUMOLYN, HAEMERS, Bad Chicken (2012), pp. 45–86.

10 The expression »hot anger« (*chaude colle*) was time and again deployed as an explanation for a violent act. As such it can be found in pardon letters issued by the prince, in juridical treatises and in medical literature. ARNADE, PREVENIER, Honor (2015), pp. 18–19.

11 On the influence of both Weber and Pirenne: BOONE, Cities (2012), p. 339.

over the course of the eleventh to twelfth centuries to a new site that soon grew into the ›grand (market-)place‹. This process of relocation did not involve a simple expansion of the existing market square. Through a planned relocation political powers – whether municipal or princely – created new sites which had nothing to do with old power relations. Unfortunately, we are not as well informed as in the case of certain Italian towns – Bologna comes to mind as a very well documented example –, but fortunately, urban archaeology revealed much of the ongoing massive interventions that must have taken place in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries[12]. In certain towns, such as Ypres or Ghent (its *Vrijdagmarkt* square), municipalities went so far as to tear down existing developed premises in order to make a new marketplace possible. In other towns, such as Lille, Brussels or 's-Hertogenbosch, marshy, less inviting areas were drained, levelled and ultimately made suitable for building, be it after major investment[13]. Every town developed its own emphasis in this process: Sometimes different competitive marketplaces were retained, as in Ghent, but most of the towns privileged one large central marketplace. All over, though, a similar sort of rationale can be found: Distinct space was created which was invested with new meaning. And that meaning soon became political and implied that in the context of cities characterised by social unrest and upheaval the control over that particular space was essential to communicate a series of social and political ambitions.

In the first eye-witness account of social and political troubles that took place in Ghent in the course of the month of March 1302, preceding the great revolt of the Flemish cities against the old urban elites linked to the cause of the king of France and which came to a paroxysm in the so-called battle of the Golden Spurs near Courtrai in 1302, the armed forces of the guilds took over the city and its meaningful symbolic space[14]. The outcome of this revolt and the open warfare between the count of Flanders and the king of France linked to the internal urban revolts resulted in the political break-through of the guilds in the political structures of the great Flemish cities[15]. That political guild influence turned them into what Knut Schulz has labelled a »politische Zunft«[16]. That situation was to last until the imperial power of the Habsburg monarchy (first of all that of Emperor Charles V) was finally capable of removing – at least on a temporary base – the guild representatives from the political scene in the aldermen's benches in the course of the sixteenth century. In the meantime, the highly symbolic space of the Ghent Friday market was the theatre of how political power was staged in a city reputed for its many revolts and social movements[17]. Traditionally, it was the theatre of the culminating moment of the joyous entry of every new prince (count of Flanders, duke of Burgundy, prince or king of the Habsburg dynasty). After having entered the city from the south and after a religious ceremony

12 CROUZET-PAVAN, »Pour le bien commun …« (2003), pp. 33–35, and IDEM, Les villes vivantes (2009), pp. 144–149.

13 BILLEN, DELIGNE, Stedelijke ruimte (2016), pp. 220–221.

14 Annales Gandenses (1896), pp. 19–20.

15 BOONE, Société urbanisée (2002), pp. 51–56, 66–68.

16 SCHULZ, Politische Zunft (1994), pp. 1–20.

17 As such it figures among the ›Erinnerungsorte‹ of Belgian history: BOONE, Gent: Vrijdagmarkt (2007), pp. 215–225.

at the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Peter's, the procession continued to the city's central and oldest parish church of Saint-John's (today's cathedral of Saint Bavo) and to the town hall where the new count swore to respect the city's privileges before ending the ceremony on the Friday market where the prince and the Ghent population reaffirmed their mutual allegiance and respect, thus performing the contractual aspect of the relationship between a medieval ruler and his subjects[18].

This character was formally respected as one of the culminating moments of Ghent's rebelliousness in the course of the fourteenth century. On 26th January 1340 the king of England, Edward III, was indeed acclaimed as king of France by the great Flemish cities. Under the control of Ghent and of the leader of its revolt at that moment, James van Artevelde, the urban rebels had driven the count of Flanders into a forced exile at the royal court in Paris, while entering into a political and military alliance with the king of England. At the start of the so-called Hundred Years War, the latter had proclaimed himself heir to the throne of France. This ceremony consecrated a formal alliance between the cities of both Flanders and Brabant, aiming at subjecting their rulers to a form of control by the elites of the cities and concluded on 3rd December 1339. In the long run, this proved to be a fundamental constitutional text that even if it did not have immediate consequences, was to be unearthed in the course of the sixteenth century when it served as a source of inspiration for the *acte van verlatinghe* of 1581 by which the Estates General of the Low Countries declared that they no longer accepted king Philip II of Spain as their ruler[19]. What is important, however, is that the whole ceremony on the Friday market square of Ghent respected both the will of the people of the city, their political representatives in the first place being the guilds, and in a more general way the subjects of the count of Flanders while at the same time the interests of the central authority remained respected since not an urban republic was proclaimed, but the outcome remained within the feudal boundaries of a mutual respect between ruler and those he ruled.

The public manifestation of the military power of the guild militia became a symbol for their political breakthrough in most of the cities of the old county and above all in the bigger cities. In this respect certain models of modes of conduct and deliberate imitations are noteworthy. In the city of Ghent an annual ceremony, called the *auweet* (derived from the French notion *au guet* referring to being on guard to watch over the city), allowed the military forces of the city, organised by the trade guilds and corporative organisations like the shooting guilds, to march through the city on Mid-Lent. The accounts of the city make clear that the undertaking, financially supported by the city, allowed a demonstration of force. Its first manifestations date from the beginning of the fourteenth century, but it became a well ordained military pageant from around 1360 onward when the internal political order establishing the guilds' influence was in place. In the course of the year 1488, however, this typical Ghent phenomenon was deliberately imitated in the city of Bruges at the very moment when the heir to the Burgundian heritage and son of the Roman emperor Frederic III, Maximilian of Austria, was imprisoned by the people of Bruges and

18 BOONE, DE HEMPTINNE, Espace urbain (1997), pp. 297–301.
19 BOONE, Dutch Revolt (2007), pp. 358–359.

their allies from Ghent. During three days, from the 11th till the 13th of March 1488, the armed militia of the Bruges guilds marched »as the men from Ghent are accustomed to do at Mid-Lent«[20]. The ca. 2.000 participants marched past all relevant monuments, churches and public spaces in the city and also along the buildings where the numerous communities of foreign merchants were housed, while on the last round on 13th March a special tour along the house where Maximilian was kept imprisoned was organised. The fact that the *auweet* was organised when darkness prevailed added a specific visual effect to the performance alongside the acoustic elements since both in Ghent and Bruges the bells of the city's belfry rang during the whole pageant. The Bruges rebels had the intention of perpetuating the tradition of the *auweet* on each yearly renewal of the benches of aldermen, their defeat in 1490 against the military power mobilised by Maximilian, however, nipped this ambition in the bud.

Indeed, when in the course of the fifteenth century the power of the dukes of Burgundy gradually overcame and annihilated that of the cities within their territories, the inevitable confrontations with the great Flemish cities were the occasion to review the use of the urban space, or to consider it a battle ground for the competing power ambitions. After having crushed the rebellion of the city of Bruges, throughout the fifteenth century the economic and commercial hub of the Low Countries, in the years 1436–1438, Duke Philip the Good reoriented the confrontation with urban particularism towards the biggest city in his territories and the one where the spirit of urban rebellion was most alive: Ghent[21]. In the course of the 1430s and while the confrontation with Bruges was unravelling, disturbances of public order took place in Ghent, which we can follow quite closely thanks to the correspondence between the ducal court and the members of the Council of Flanders present in Ghent[22]. Time and again the urban space was a decisive element in the lengthy process of negotiation. When in 1432, dealing with aldermen and deans of some guilds – those active in the construction business seem to have been targeted in particular – accused of corruption and a fraudulent use of the city's financial means, the armed battalions of guildsmen, with banners deployed, occupied the Friday market, they nevertheless kept negotiations alive. Finally, the aldermen and deans declared that the action and the armed occupation of the square, described by the representatives of ducal power as *rebellion, assemblee et armee desordonnee*, was on the contrary inspired by a common responsibility to maintain *le bien commun et la paix et transquillité de la dessus dicte ville* [...] *comme bons et loyaulx subgez sont tenuz et doivent faire a leur prinche*. The duke, in full consciousness that his new born son (and at that moment his unique successor) Josse de Bourgogne was staying in his residence in Ghent and could have become an easy target if the situation grew out of control, easily gave in and pardoned the people of Ghent for the heavy disturbances that had occurred.

20 HAEMERS, LECUPPRE-DESJARDIN, Conquérir et réconquérir (2007), pp. 119–139.
21 Both rebellions have been studied in detail by two of my former students: DUMOLYN, De Brugse opstand (1997), and HAEMERS, De Gentse opstand (2004).
22 See the extracts of these accounts in BOONE, Armes (2005), pp. 26–29.

The systematic pressure on the central government by what one could describe as the ›occupy the central market movement‹ continued as part of a strategy to express political aims from ›below‹. In 1436 and 1440 similar movements took place. Once again, armed militia of the guilds, banners unfolded, occupied the Friday market. In 1436 we know that negotiations lasted for some time as the duke himself was present in Ghent and several dozens of rolls were written, translated from and into the language of the rebels (Flemish) and the French in use at the ducal court and exchanged between the parties until *les diz de Gand se appaisierent et alerent hors de leurs armures, chacun en sa maison*[23]. These repeated experiences with an almost uncontrollable use of public space may, alongside other motives the desire to get a stronger grip on the city's fiscal system being the most notorious one, have prompted duke Philip the Good to opt for an open confrontation with Ghent. The outcome, the Ghent defeat on the battlefield of Gavere in 1453, implied among other measures the handing over of the guild banners as the symbols for military mobilisation. As such, the ceremony was already formulated and foreseen in the text of an ultimate attempt to reach a peace agreement discussed in Lille in the course of 1452 under the auspices of ambassadors sent by the French king[24]. Moreover, the ultimate ceremony following the battle was fixed and conserved for future generations in a series of images which were incorporated in a luxurious manuscript offered to the duke in the context of a reconciliation which took place in the context of a renewed ›joyous entry‹ in 1458[25]. That visit implied a fundamental change concerning the way the duke put the public space within the city at his use. Not only he adopted a circuit through the city that differed from the traditional and century-old trajectory followed by all the preceding counts of Flanders. He did so in full knowledge of the power claim that lied behind the symbolic power of the trajectory, while the streets and places he visited on that occasion reverberated with texts, songs and live performances which all presented one unique message: that the duke posing as the forgiving father received the city of Ghent as the lost son again in his magnitude and misericordia[26].

In the long run this blow to Ghent's political culture provoked yet another outburst of rebelliousness on 29th July 1467, the day after the joyous entry of the new duke Charles the Bold. Fuelled by anger over the taxes imposed after the defeat in 1453 and by the new duke's unwise displacement of the city's most cherished and popular saint's procession (the procession of Saint Lievin, which ended traditionally on the Friday market), riots broke out at the return of the Saint's relics. During these riots the duke in person felt threatened and had to return the confiscated guild banners and to abolish some of the most contested measures of the Gavere peace treaty[27]. Concerning the banners: These were once again

23 BOONE, Armes (2005), p. 29 note 68, the original text in General Archives of the Realm (Brussels), Chambers of accounts, n° 21807, fol. 11v.
24 Edited in BOONE, Diplomatie (1990), pp. 35–36.
25 On this manuscript, now in the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Vienna), cod. 2583: CLARK, Made in Flanders (2000), pp. 127–129. Recently put in context of the collection of Ghent's medieval cartularia and archives: VAN GASSEN, Het documentaire geheugen (2017), pp. 218–220.
26 BOONE, DE HEMPTINNE, Espace urbain (1997), pp. 298–300.
27 ARNADE, Secular Charisma (1991), pp. 69–94.

returned to him on 8th January 1468 in his palace in Brussels as part of a separate honourable amend. At that occasion one of the most important charters of the town, the royal charter granted in 1301 by the king of France Philip IV regulating the election of the Ghent aldermen, was cancelled and declared to be no longer valid[28]. That was a great ceremony of the Burgundian theatre state labelled as the first of the twelve magnificence's characterising his reign by the duke's propaganda. The American scholar Peter Arnade, who interpreted all these events with the eyes of an anthropologist, concluded that they illustrate

> »that in the late medieval Burgundian Netherlands no stable public world with sharply defined symbolic and political boundaries existed, but only a playing ground upon which the political communities of city and state, claimed, fought and negotiated for political credibility and public prestige«[29].

The history of the political confrontations staged on the Ghent Friday market had not ended, however. Once the death of Duke Charles in the battle in the outskirts of Nancy became known in Ghent where the Burgundian court and the heir to the ducal throne, Duchess Mary of Burgundy, resided, representatives of all the principalities of the Burgundian Netherlands assembled in Ghent where they obtained a set of general and specific privileges which have been labelled as the »first constitutional set of texts for this part of Europe as a whole«[30] with good reasons. In the course of the events that followed two of the most emblematic figures of the late Duke Charles' autocratic policy, his chancellor Guillaume Hugonet and the nobleman Guy de Brimeu, lord of Humbercourt, were executed on Friday 3rd of April 1477 on the Friday market, despite a final appeal for grace by the young duchess[31].

With the execution of Guy de Brimeu the people from Ghent revenged another urban conflict since on the order of Duke Charles, the same de Brimeu had been the executioner of the destruction of the city of Liège at the start of the former's reign in 1468[32]. When de Brimeu was beheaded in Ghent in 1477, an anonymous chronicler of Liège noted: *sic perierunt hostes sancti Lamberti et incendiarii urbis inclytae Leodiensis et respirabat terra aliquo tempore*[33]. A year before the destruction of Liège, the duke had already intervened in the urban space of that city by taking away the ›perron‹ from its centre. This most significant symbol, comparable to the belfries in the Flemish cities and representing the power of the city's communal institutions, had been removed – a symbolic gesture that was echoed in contemporary poems – and transported to Flanders, more specifically to the city of Bruges. There it was put on display at the place (the bourse, as Bruges was the hub for international trade in Northern Europe) where the Italian merchants had their hotels and exchange places, so as to give the operation a maximal international outreach. It also served

28 BOONE, Charter van Senlis (2003), pp. 23–27.
29 ARNADE, Crowds (1994), p. 497, and IDEM, Realms (1996), pp. 127–158.
30 BLOCKMANS, Le privilège général (1985), pp. 495–516.
31 BOONE, Justice (2003), p. 56.
32 PARAVICINI, Guy de Brimeu (1975), pp. 177–206.
33 Chroniques relatives à l'histoire de la Belgique (1876), p. 488.

as a clear warning to the rebellious cities of Flanders, remembering how far the duke was prepared to go in order to impose his authority. Indeed, when a year later the final destruction of Liège followed, official representatives of the three great cities of Flanders (Ghent, Bruges and Ypres) were obliged to watch the gruesome spectacle from the hills surrounding the town[34]. The ›perron‹ returned to Liège in 1477, immediately after the news of the duke's death on the battlefield of Nancy had reached Flanders.

One of the recipes aiming at containing future urban revolts Duke Charles the Bold and Guy de Brimeu had in mind was to impose their power and order on rebellious cities by erecting a major military building, a citadel. It was during Duke Charles' reign applied to Liège while plans concerning Ghent were drafted though not (yet) executed. The inspiration and technical aspects were borrowed from Italy where many dynasties that had finally gained control over a city had expressed this by imposing a citadel on the urban territory, the one built by the Sforza in Milan being the earliest and most cited example. Many of the engineers the Burgundian and Habsburg rulers put at work in the Low Countries came from Italy and imported techniques and concepts that had proven their effectiveness in another major urban landscape[35].

Three elements seem to be very important to me: On the political level the whole operation allowed for a fundamental shift in the relationship between city and state to become visible; in the field of economics the impact of the reshuffling of urban space provoked by the establishment of a princely citadel reshaped economic and financial behaviour; and finally, concerning a series of more religious and cultural aspects, urban identity was affected by the deliberate attack on the city's spatial integrity. These three elements will be treated in the reverse order.

In many of the stories concerning individual cities, it remains striking how the choice of the new citadel to be imposed upon the urban space implied the destruction of important and often venerable ecclesiastical institutions. Of course, we should realise that these institutions were often situated in a location which was highly interesting from a military point of view and allowed for keeping the city's centre under permanent threat. In Ghent, Utrecht and Liège the way the citadels were implanted implied the destruction of an old abbey or major ecclesiastical institution, and from a legal and perhaps even practical point of view the expropriation of the property of one proprietor may have been ›easier‹ to perform than to erase a whole quarter of a town involving a great number of individual proprietors. The way in which the church was treated also allowed for a clear manifestation of power supremacy, on the part of the prince (and in some respect of the city, too), against an institution that for centuries had questioned the formers' power assumptions. The power that was capable, however, of modifying and changing the urban ecclesiastical geography dramatically, clearly gained a kind of moral and effective superiority. Big cities, imbued with an important symbolic meaning like Ghent, Liège or Utrecht, also ranked high as nodal points in the urban networks of the Low Countries[36]. To be able to impose a new ecclesiastical

34 BOONE, Charles le Téméraire (2010), pp. 188–189, 194.
35 On the citadels: BOONE, Cuckoo's Egg (2013), pp. 84–93.
36 Le réseau urbain (1992), passim.

siastical order on these central places of worship, spiritual power and ecclesiastical wealth clearly enhanced the social capital of those involved. The abolition of very old ecclesiastical structures and the modification of collective behaviours – the imposed abolition of the Ghent procession of Saint Lievin comes to mind, or the modification of Utrecht's seal – all of them intimately linked to the construction of urban collective identity, strengthened the prince's ambition to control and master the city. Determining the city's religious calendar was a clear illustration of almost absolute power since it touched upon an almost divine order. The chronological coincidence between the first elaboration of a plan to modify the religious geography and to redraw the map of the bishoprics in the Low Countries, from the reign of Charles the Bold on, and the intervention in the local religious map may therefore not be a mere accident.

The process of state formation can be (and has been) read as a struggle for fiscal monopoly between prince and city[37]. A profound modification of the city's geography and the implantation of a citadel (sometimes accompanied by new defences) imposed an enormous financial burden on the city's budget. In the case of the construction of citadels extremely considerable sums were involved. At the very start of the Burgundian period, the great building programmes in Sluis and in Lille of Philip the Bold – the only duke whose finances have been studied in detail – put a heavy burden on the prince's income and provoked a longstanding financial relationship between the duke and the Italian banking company of the Rapondi, originating from Lucca[38]. In the cases of the citadels of Utrecht, Antwerp and Ghent we know that the financial burden of their construction was to a large extent devolved upon the cities' finances, provoking a sudden and drastic surge of indirect taxes, still the most important source of income for a city, and even an increase of the city's debt through the well-known technique of the sale of annuities, which over a longer period provoked another heightening of indirect taxes. There is a remarkable parallel to be recalled: Just as the massive sale of annuities, sold in order to allow the cities to pay their due to the prince, and the handling of the collective debt contributed to the creation of a certain ›civic responsibility‹, the construction of citadels equally offered an opportunity for the prince and his representatives to seduce a part of the urban elites to prefer the immediate profit deriving from collaboration with the princely constructions above urban interests. There is no question that the big work sites opened important markets for contractors and entrepreneurs active in the building industries. The case of sixteenth century Antwerp shows how this led to widespread collusion between local politicians and entrepreneurs[39]. But however small the number of possible decision makers and of those who realised the bigger profits remained, in the context of an important participation of guild-based labour forces in the city government (which was the case in both Ghent and Utrecht), the opening of the big building sites must have had a wide-spread impact on political allegiances. The citadels therefore constituted not only an open attack on the visual and symbolic unity

37 BOONE, Les ducs (2002), pp. 323–341.
38 LAMBERT, The City (2006), pp. 108–111.
39 A synthetic view, based on detailed older research by the same author: SOLY, Urbanisation (1981), pp. 391–413.

of the city, they also jeopardized its political coherence. And once this process was under way, it continued to produce effects, as an inspiring research on sixteenth century Ghent made clear[40]. Social change affecting the composition of ruling elites helps to explain, as morality and political or economic strategy do, how and why the attitude of the political elite changed fundamentally when dealing with investment in urban public debt.

In addition to the religious and cultural meaning and the economic and financial impact, some concluding remarks on the general political importance of this relatively short period of citadel building in the bigger cities of the Low Countries are necessary. Of course, from the more general point of view of military strategy and of the geo-strategic models developed in this period of fundamental change in military techniques and tactics, the citadels in the bigger cities are but a part of a general movement to establish a new line of defence on a ›national‹ scale. But even within that perspective the label of the new ›Italian‹ mode of constructing urban defences has to be questioned[41]. What stands out concerning the Low Countries is the combination of indigenous traditions, well embedded in the Burgundian period, and some new techniques experienced in the context of the solving of a fundamental problem, namely how to impose a political power (a *signoria*) upon a city? And how to press it upon an urban population who has lived in a fundamentally different context? The remodelling of urban space is therefore necessary and inevitable, fuelled by a mix of religiously inspired spatial modifications. Chronologically this development started with the autocratic reign of Charles the Bold, the first duke of Burgundy, strong enough to cherish the dream that he could definitively deal with urban counter power, and it lasted until the final confrontation between urban and regional powers and the central power in Madrid and Brussels in the second half of the sixteenth century. In the way the citadels were perceived and treated in the military phase of the Revolt of the Low Countries, fundamental aspects came to the foreground. The estates of Friesland put it very clearly in 1577 when referring to their efforts to dismantle the duke of Alba's citadel in Groningen: »we are destroyers of citadels, but builders of free cities«[42]. In the same year, following close upon the pacification of Ghent in 1576, the Vredenburg in Utrecht, the citadels in Antwerp and in Ghent were taken as targets of popular uprisings, their partial destructions linked and embedded within another civic project: the construction of new city walls. In performing this, a link was made with the political culture that the imposition of the citadel also had sought to dismantle: In Ghent a rotational system was imposed on neighbourhoods in order to get the job done, enabling the mobilisation of around 450 citizens to work at any given time, thus refunding the solidarity based on neighbourhood structures, another fundamental element of urban political culture that the repression of Charles V in 1540 had sought to eradicate. Especially in the case of Antwerp, the assault on the citadel took a symbolic turn since the citadel was a favourite public works project of the emperor's governor, the duke of Alba, and since it offered an occasion to expel the bad dreams the city's sack by the Spanish army of Flanders had left. Both in Antwerp, with the ballad of

40 BAGUET, Social change (2017), p. 363.
41 MARTENS, Militaire architectuur (2009), p. 24.
42 ARNADE, Beggars (2008), pp. 263–272.

the complaint of »Madonna citadel« transformed into »Madonna Castilla«, and in Utrecht, with the legend of Catrijn van Leemput, a heroic citizen-warrior involved in the taking of the Vredenburg, which entered into political mythology, the *reconquista* of the citadels marked the regaining of urban identity.

Hence, the importance and the nature of the many revolts and subversive acts and the discourses developed in that respect that underpinned the points of view of the subjects. These discourses became multi-layered and were the building stones of an urban discourse that even if it did not have the same intellectual impact as in the case of the Italian urban ideology that developed in the same period, was, however, of great historical significance[43] – not in the least because of the fact that the urban identity was very intensely interwoven with the collective memory which was confined not only in written texts such as privileges, but also in a set of ritualised appropriations of urban space, through processions and public manifestations of all kind. These received of course all necessary interest from the part of the prince and his administration when they sought to silence the voices of dissent. The confiscation of urban archives, the ban put on the organisation of collective manifestations and pageants, the ultimate punishment consisting of (partially or entirely) destroying a city in revolt: All repressive measures the dukes of Burgundy and their Habsburg successors experienced made clear that they understood perfectly well where the danger came from. From their point of view, it was not only necessary to dominate the written world of privileges and of collective memory, dominating the urban space was just as important.

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43 DUMOLYN, HAEMERS, Bad Chicken (2012), pp. 85–86.

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