

Sovereignty and commercial cities (c. 1400-c. 1650)

14-15 December 2023

Tilburg University
Tilburg, the Netherlands

ERC Consolidator Grant Project [CaPANES](#) (2023-2027)

A two-day workshop will be organized in Tilburg in December 2023, which has the goal to bring together scholars working on urban history, legal history and economic history of the later medieval and early modern period. The workshop focuses on the sovereignty of cities of trade.

Over the past decades, several strands of scholarship have re-evaluated aspects of sovereignty, mostly with regard to states, but increasingly also in reference to other entities such as companies and cities. For a long time, sovereignty has – from the viewpoint of intellectual history – been considered from the angle of state formation processes and international law. Nowadays sovereignty is no longer exclusively defined as doctrinal and conceptual but also as pertaining to discourse and practice. Sovereignty was built up in concrete interactions. Moreover, literature on empires has become entangled with questions relating to political economy. Also, from the perspective of the history of commercial law, more attention is increasingly being paid to “public” as opposed to private modes of organization. This workshop seeks to explore the connection points between the debates in the different (sub)disciplines, whilst zooming in on cities with a marked mercantile importance. For many regions of Western Europe cities have been considered as semi-autonomous communities that were precursors of the states, which later eclipsed and absorbed the jurisdiction of the former.

The scientific committee invites potential speakers to propose a topic of presentation that is connected to (one or more of) the following questions:

- How was the sovereignty of cities of trade understood? In which form did it surface in diplomacy, letters and contemporary writings such as travel reports and urban histories?
- What were the balances of power between urban, princely and foreign governments? To what extent did notions relating to sovereignty have a part in this?
- To what extent was sovereignty an integral part of the political economy of cities of trade?

If interested, please send in an abstract of 500 words to d.deruysscher@tilburguniversity before 1 October 2023. Upon selection, you will be invited to present. The Scientific Committee consists of Prof. D. De ruyscher, dr M. den Hollander, dr M. In't Veld and the Advisory Committee of the CaPANES project.



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