



## CALL FOR PAPERS

### PRINTING AND DISSEMINATING THE LAW IN THE HABSBURG NETHERLANDS, THE DUTCH REPUBLIC AND THE PRINCE-BISHOPRIC OF LIEGE IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY)

Liège, University of Liège, 5-6 December 2019

#### Presentation

Nowadays, the law is the sparkling star of a complex normative galaxy. The purpose of the law is to provide a reference point for a community while it manifests the sovereign's will. If this situation does not entirely reflect the status of the law in the early modern period, it must be recognized that early modern lawyers like Jean Bodin did not hesitate to place the legislative power at the forefront of princely prerogative. The law is therefore a legal instrument in the service of the government of a given territory, but it is also a means of communication between rulers and subjects.

The drafting and publication of the law are two sides of the same coin. The early modern period paved the way for the printing of legislative acts and, consequently, for the wide dissemination of promulgated texts. However, there is no evidence of the vanishing of handwritten texts. In addition to the printing of new laws, in the form of placards and ordinances, we should also recognise the importance attached to more substantial customs. Indeed, princes and sovereigns were keen to ensure that customs were repeatedly renewed and updated to reinforce the legislative corpus. With each successive round of amplifications the authorities - central, provincial or local - turned again to the printing presses.

This international conference aims to question the topic of the printing and distribution of laws in the early modern period by comparing the Habsburg Netherlands, the Dutch Republic and the Prince-Bishopric of Liege. The authorities in all three territories made extensive use of printing to ensure the rapid mass dissemination of official documents - including legislation. At the local level, for example, the arrival of the first printers in several cities is directly linked to the willingness of the municipal authorities to have a press at their disposal. The advent of the privilege system also allowed some printers to secure monopolies that they tried to transform into dynastic monopolies in order to secure substantial revenues.

While several investigations have been dedicated to this topic, it must be noted that this phenomenon has not yet received all the attention it deserves and that many issues still need to be addressed; we have thus far had an incomplete and unrepresentative perspective on the printing of laws in the early modern period.

The organizers welcome contributions on any facet of this subject. Possible themes include:

- which formats are used for printing laws? Does the layout of legislative texts meet a particular standard or not?

- Relationship between printers and authorities: What links do the authorities - central, provincial or municipal - have with printers? Can we establish an accurate profile of printers active in the field of ordinance printing? What status did these printers have in urban society? What role did these documents play in their output? What were the advantages of being an official printer? By what means was legislative production supervised and monitored by the various authorities?

- The effects of print on law-making: did the printing of laws have an influence on the decision-making process? Are explicit references to the printing of laws included in the promulgated acts themselves?

- The dissemination of the law: is it possible to trace the distribution channels? What are the roles of the different actors in the book trade? Is it possible to know the places and times of publication of printed texts?

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Please submit a proposal (300 words maximum) and a CV (maximum 1 page) by 30 June 2019 to Renaud Adam ([renaud.adam@uliege.be](mailto:renaud.adam@uliege.be)) and Nicolas Simon ([n.simon@uclouvain.be](mailto:n.simon@uclouvain.be)). Participants will be notified by the end of August. The conference proceedings will be published in English.

Organizing Committee: Renaud Adam (ULiège), Annick Delfosse (ULiège), Julien Régibeau (ULiège), Nicolas Simon (UCL/USL-B), Arthur der Weduwen (University of St Andrews).

Scientific Committee: Renaud Adam (ULiège), Wim Decock (KUL, ULiège), Annick Delfosse (ULiège), Frederik Dhondt (VUB/UGent), Nicolas Simon (FNRS-UCL/USL-B), Andrew Pettegree (University of St Andrews), Arthur der Weduwen (University of St Andrews).