

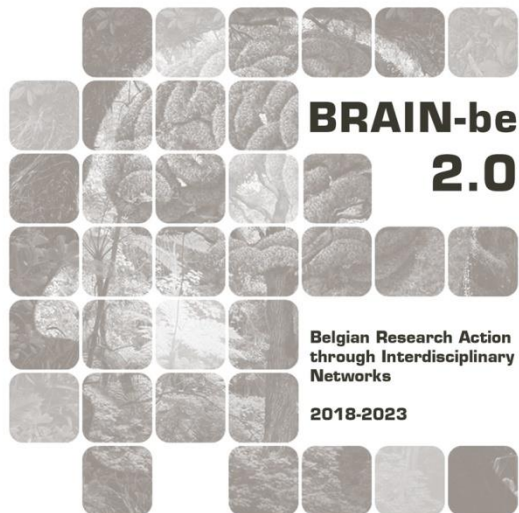
LORD

Lordship and State Formation in the County of Flanders, 15th - 18th C.

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Pillar 2: Heritage science





NETWORK PROJECT

LORD

Lordship and State Formation in the County of Flanders, 15th - 18th C.

Contract - B2/191/P2/LORD

FINAL REPORT

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Published in 2025 by the Belgian Science Policy Office

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BUYLAERT F., CAPPELLE K., LAMBRECHT T. and VERFAILLIE J. ***Lordship and State Formation in the County of Flanders, 15th - 18th C. Final Report.*** Brussels: Belgian Science Policy Office 2020-2024, 21 p. (BRAIN-be 2.0 - (Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks)

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ABSTRACT

Context

Lordship is often used to characterize how pre-industrial societies fundamentally differed from modern ones, where public and private spheres are distinct. In pre-modern systems, private entities like families or monasteries could hold legally valid claims to public authority, a concept alien to contemporary democracies. This historical framework is echoed in concerns about "techno-feudalism", linking Big Tech's influence to a perceived regression to pre-modern dynamics. As lordship remains a cornerstone in understanding pre-modern societies, it is critical to study how these systems functioned. The LORD-project sought to unravel this enigma and advance our comprehension of lordship's role in historical governance.

Objectives

The project adopted a two-pronged approach to examine lordship. First, it focused on seigneuries as arenas of conflict and collaboration between lords and peasants, analysing power dynamics over time to identify which groups held dominance. Second, it expanded the scope to explore lordship as a broader concept, encompassing diverse forms of authority, from seigneurial control to household, military, and administrative power.

By combining these perspectives, the project aimed to uncover how seigneurial lordship integrated with other power structures and shaped evolving power relations within the seigneurie.

Conclusions

The LORD-project revealed that Flanders was an extreme outlier in the European spectrum of lordship. Unlike other regions where lordship often served to extract wealth from peasants, control over seigneuries in Flanders shifted towards peasants, who minimized taxation, limited seigneurial power, and used seigneurial courts to benefit small and middling landowners. This unique trajectory was influenced by urbanization and princely courts that curbed exploitative lordship.

The findings reshaped three key debates: first, the political economy of lordship, demonstrating how empowered peasants hindered agrarian capitalism; second, state formation, highlighting how seigneuries evolved into administrative pillars for emerging principalities; and third, urban history, revealing parallels between rural and urban social dynamics in the Low Countries. These insights bridged divides between urban and rural histories, advancing comparative research and fostering new scholarly collaborations.

Keywords

state formation, seigneurie, lordship, legislation, taxation

1. INTRODUCTION

Both for academics and laymen, “lordship” is a much-used shorthand to think about how pre-industrial societies were fundamentally different from today. In fact, the very definition of modernity is often linked with lordship: present-day liberal democracies consciously distance themselves from their “pre-modern” predecessors with the axiomatic separation of a public sphere (often understood as “the state”) and a private sphere (often understood as “society”), but “lordship” straddles that separation, as it is essentially about private individuals or institutions having a legally valid claim to public authority. The idea that a high-ranking family or a monastery had a hereditary claim over the governance of this or that village is thus utterly alien and exotic for present-day citizens. It is no coincidence in that respect that current concerns about the corrosive impact of social media and Big Tech on democratic systems and values are often framed as the rise of “Techno-Feudalism” (i.e. a regression to a pre-modern era). Implicitly or explicitly, ideas about lordship as a cornerstone of societies that we call “pre-modern” or “feudal” are thus a benchmark in present-day political thought. In that sense, it is extremely important that we understand how societies with lordship worked. As we discuss below, this is still something of an enigma and the LORD-project was a concerted effort to remedy this.

2. STATE OF THE ART AND OBJECTIVES

In twentieth-century scholarship, the dominant concept was that of “feudalism”, which suggested that hierarchical relations in medieval Europe were largely mediated through vassalage. From the 1970s onwards, however, this intellectual edifice crumbled when it became clear that this view did not sit well with the available evidence. This opened up new room for debate about how power relations in medieval Europe were conceptualized, and for better or worse, “lordship” is now filling that void as a new master noun.

The spate of lordship studies that took shape since the turn of the twenty-first century is contested, however, because this new perspective comes with problems of its own. The first problem is that lordship is surprisingly difficult to define. Whereas fiefs and vassals were clear-cut concepts, lordship is currently an umbrella term that covers a wide range of different meanings. Some historians stick to a strict definition of the term, that is, public authority that doubled as a private property claim, whereas others adopt a more-open ended definition, according to which lordship is more of a synonym with all kinds of hierarchical power relations (e.g. the lordship of God over humankind, the lordship of an abbot over his monks, the lordship of a father over the patriarchal household, and so on). Somewhat paradoxically, the second problem is that the use of lordship as an analytical lens is overly restrictive because it comes with an interpretive slant, namely that these hierarchical power relations were extremely lopsided, providing only benefits to the lord and only drawbacks for the subjects. In the field of medieval economic history, the long-standing assumption was and is that lordship is an extractive institution that enabled extreme surplus-extraction by a small elite at the expense of immiserated peasants (e.g. the key publications on “manorialism” by the founding fathers of *New Institutional Economics*, which partly hark back to older marxist approaches to lordship). In the field of Ancien Régime political history, then, lordship is a source of extreme confusion. On the one

hand, specialists of the High and Late Middle Ages are inclined to see local lordship as an impediment for state formation, precisely because seigneurial elites prioritized their own interests at the expense of both their subjects and their princely overlords. On the other hand, specialists of the Early Modern era are inclined to imagine local lordship as the lowest rung of the state administration, thus ignoring contemporary evidence that lordship was not delegated princely authority, but an independent and legitimate source of governance in what was still a polycentric society.

Responding to this state-of-the-art, the project pursued a two-pronged approach. The first is to return to the classic question about power relations between lords and their subjects. Building on recent and not-so-recent scholarship on pre-industrial peasantries and elites and sidestepping the historiographical ballast of the “feudalism”-paradigm, the idea is to take stock of how seigneuries worked as arenas of conflict and collaboration between lords and peasants. After defining the stakeholders, their specific interests, a long-run analysis helps to understand which groups had the upper hand and when within the seigneurie. The second approach ties in to the first, in the sense that the project first prioritizes a narrow definition of lordship (i.e. the seigneurie) and then opens up the perspective to understand how this narrow definition fits into more diverse and open-ended definitions of lordship as a synonym of power relations. The protean concept of lordship is thus probed in two stages. The first stage exclusively focuses on seigneuries, that is, containers of lordship that were, institutionally speaking, completely cut-and-dried. These well-documented institutions have left a huge paper trail that lends itself to quantitative analysis and survey analysis. The second stage is a more general discussion of how lordship strictly defined – that is, control over a seigneurie – was combined with other forms of power in a more expansive definition of lordship as authority broadly defined (i.e. the power of a father of the household, the power of an elite male with expert military training, the power of a courtier, a princely official, an urban or rural alderman, and so on). In turn, this insight in how seigneurial lordship was combined with other forms of power helps to understand how power relations evolved within the seigneurie as the shared political project of local lords and peasants.

3. METHODOLOGY

The key methodological choices of the project are informed directly by the state-of-the-art outlined above. Geographically speaking, we have opted to study the county of Flanders because it was one of the key case-studies in the construction of the twentieth-century grand narrative of “feudalism”, so that it is an important case to test the merits or demerits of alternative models. Also, Flanders is an important case-study to explore how restrictive definitions of lordship were combined with other forms of power into expansive definitions of lordship: this county was home to both a strong princely administration that historians have long described as a “state” but also to strong, independent-minded towns. By exploring how seigneurial lords also were active as urban aldermen and as princely officials to strengthen their political positions, we can remedy an important handicap of older scholarship in which seigneuries are often studied in complete isolation. As we discuss below under ‘Results’, our analysis reveals that princely or urban interference within seigneuries often helps to explain shifts in the balance of power between lords and peasants. Chronologically speaking, we decided to study the county of Flanders from the fifteenth- up to and including the eighteenth century to address the conundrum outlined above, namely that medievalists and early modernists cultivate

different and contrasting interpretations of seigneurial lordship. Initially, the project's point of departure was the 1470s, but our approach was so successful that we managed to push this back to the mid-thirteenth century.

In unpacking the seigneurie in Flanders, we adopted a three-pronged approach. The first was a survey analysis on the basis of feudal documentation: seigneuries were often, if not always, fiefs and thus subject to registration procedures that left a paper trail in the form of legally binding descriptions of specific seigneuries (so-called *dénombrements*), which included a detailed overview of the rights of the lord, and in the form of feudal registers (overviews of seigneuries for one of the fifteen rural districts of Dutch-speaking Flanders). The result is a near-exhaustive overview of the c. 800 seigneuries with high and middle justice in the county which was published as a two-volume repertory. Next to this, we also developed snapshots for three rural districts that reveal that the ratio of seigneuries with high or middle justice to seigneuries with only low justice oscillated around one to three, thus suggesting that Flanders was home to c. 3000 seigneuries in total. In the form of QGIS-analysis, the spatial distribution of seigneurial lordship was then cross-checked with available soil maps, maps of the c. 60 towns of the county, and so on. Next to this, the carefully reconstructed overviews of owners of the seigneuries with high- and middle justice were then cross-checked with the available databases of urban aldermen and princely officials to explore how seigneurial lordship was enmeshed with urban and princely lordship and how this evolved over time.

The second approach was to develop a long-run reconstruction of fiscal surplus extraction in the form of seigneurial taxes from the fourteenth century up the abolition of seigneuries in 1795. Proceeding from the detailed seigneurial accounts that survive for a handful of seigneuries for longer spans of time, we thus developed a proxy to measure the financial burdens that lordship imposed on ordinary peasants who lived out their lives as tenants of this or that seigneurie. As fiscal burdens were negotiated and renegotiated through time, this constitutes a good proxy for the long-run trends in the power relations between lords and peasants.

The third approach was geared towards the seigneurie as a source of public services, a subject that is nearly completely ignored in the available scholarship on lordship. A systematic review of the extant archives revealed nearly one hundred seigneurial *custumals*, that is, village regulations issued by the seigneurial administration. This corpus allowed to investigate what seigneurial administrations did for peasants in return for the payment of seigneurial taxes. Charting the spectrum of services provides another good proxy for the social dynamics within the seigneurie and to identify which interests were pursued by whom in the form of legislation. Contrary to modern states, the princely administrations of Ancien Regime Europe were not interested in or capable of providing a legal framework for daily life (the priority was usually what we call 'high politics', that is, war, diplomacy, religion, and the taxes necessary to fund these policies). On the local level, the seigneurie was one of the institutions addressing the need for public order maintenance, the organization of markets, and so on.

4. SCIENTIFIC RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions of our project were surprising in the sense that Flanders turned out to be an extreme outlier in the spectrum of lordship in Europe. Whereas in many parts of Europe lordship clearly conforms to the old idea of an oppressive institution that helped elites to siphon off surplus from the peasantry, in this county control over the seigneurie shifted away from lords to peasants. They

reduced seigneurial taxation to an absolute minimum (c. four per cent of the harvest, the lowest estimate on record for all of Europe), imposed severe restrictions on seigneurial rule, and used the seigneurial court to issue rules that greatly benefited the class of small and middling landowners at the expense of their lord and the landless segment of the village. The reason why Flanders developed this extreme trajectory was that both nearby towns and newly established princely courts of law helped to impose restrictions on rapacious lordship. As a result, the Flemish case helps to conceptualize lordship not as a static object but as a dynamic power relation that could evolve in very different directions in tandem with different patterns of urbanization and state formation. Thanks to this, the LORD-project has shifted the needle in three debates.

A first important conceptual spillover of the project is thus that the political economy of lordship is revealed as crucially important to explain macro-economic trends. Because the class of small and middling peasants could defend their interests through the seigneurie, they successfully blocked the sort of experiments with agrarian capitalism that were flourishing in those parts of Flanders and the Low Countries where seigneuries were thin on the ground. Apart from the publications listed below, this allowed the LORD-team to successfully bid for funding for a large-scale project on the political economy of the countryside of the entire Low Countries between c. 1250-1650 (the GOA-Project "Lordship and Agrarian Capitalism in the Low Countries, c. 1250-1650", awarded by the Ghent Research Council).

The second debate in which we intervened successfully thanks to the LORD-project is that on state formation. The gradual transfer of power from lords to peasants helps to understand how seigneuries evolved from "miniature kingdoms within a kingdom" into the local basis of government in emerging principalities such as the Burgundian-Habsburg Low Countries. Our research reveals that princely administrations were not intent on undermining seigneurial rule as a stumbling block for princely rule, but rather increasingly relied on seigneurial courts to do much of the legal heavy lifting in society for which princely courts were not sufficiently developed. In that sense, the Flemish case-study was an important contribution to the comparative studies carried out in the context of the ERC Starting Grant STATE: Lordship and the Rise of States in Western Europe. The research on seigneuries has also highlighted the need to develop similar social histories for other rural institutions such as so-called castellanies (the administration of rural districts) and parishes (the village community as a Christian community with its own administration rather than the aggregate of subjects of a local lord).

The third and last discussion to which the LORD-team could contribute was that of urban history. As a precociously urbanized society, the medieval Low Countries have received special scrutiny since the late nineteenth century, resulting in a mountainous body of scholarship that stresses how Netherlandish urban society was dominated by the middling sort of people, both at the expense of the urban poor and of the urban elites. Our research reveals that this was not typically urban but in fact also typical for Netherlandish rural societies. In that sense, the LORD-project has provided a much-needed antidote to the pernicious effects of siloed research, with little or no meaningful interactions between urban historians and rural historians. Traditionally, the former were mainly interested in political history and the latter in economic history, and our research for Flanders shows that this divide can and should be bridged. Working papers that are now under review – e.g. a paper comparing urban fire regulations with those of seigneurial villages – help to explore the design space for comparative research.

5. DISSEMINATION AND VALORISATION

5.1 (Conference) presentations

2020

DE WAELE Tom (2020), *My project in a nutshell: Dynamics between princely fiscality and seigneurial surplus-extraction in Flanders (ca. 1440 - ca. 1795)*. Posthumus presentation 1, 10.12.2020.

HOLLESTELLE Jesse (2020). *State Formation and Seigneurial Lordship in the County of Flanders c. 1550 - c. 1800*. Posthumus presentation 1, 10.12.2020.

2021

DE WAELE Tom (2021), *De heerlijke rekening als historische bron*. Herfstvergadering van de Koninklijke Zuid-Nederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis, 16.10.2021, Gent.

DE WAELE Tom (2021), *Research Design Course: Dynamics between princely fiscality and seigneurial surplus-extraction in Flanders (ca. 1440 - ca. 1795)*. Posthumus presentation 3, 18.10.2021.

DE WAELE Tom (2021), *Seigneurial surplus extraction and state fiscality in Flanders*. Medieval Feedback Group Ghent University, 22.10.2021, Gent.

DE WAELE Tom (2021), *Work in progress: Seigneurial accounts and seigneurial income*. Posthumus presentation 2, 07.05.2021.

HOLLESTELLE Jesse (2021), *Research Design Course: The Disputed Power of the Lord: Seigneurial Lordship and the Process of State Formation*. Posthumus presentation 3, 19.10.2021.

HOLLESTELLE Jesse (2021), *Work in progress: Lordship and State Formation in Early Modern Flanders*. Posthumus presentation 2, 06.05.2021.

ROMEIN Annemieke, WAGNER Andreas, LIMBACH Saskia and VAN GELDER Klaas (2021), *Linked Histories: Police-Ordinances as an Information-Hub for Early Modern History*. Data for History: Modelling Time, Places, Agents, 19-21.05.2021, Berlin.

VAN GELDER Klaas (2021), *Joyous Entries and Local Lordship in the Burgundian and Habsburg Netherlands*. GEMS-lecture, 06.05.2021, Gent / online.

VAN GELDER Klaas (2021), *Orde op zaken. Regels voor het dagdagelijkse leven in het oude Land van Beveren in de 16e en 17e eeuw*. Erfgoedhuis Hof ter Welle, 02.12.2021, Beveren.

2022

BUYLAERT Frederik, CAPPELLE Kaat & VAN GELDER Klaas (2022), *Princely Legislation and Seigneurial Justice in the County of Flanders, c. 1400-1600*. 4th Workshop on Legal Culture, 07-09.09.2022, Lisbon.

CAPPELLE Kaat (2022), *De zoektocht naar onzichtbare vroegmoderne (getrouwde) vrouwen in bronnen*. Colloquium. Meer dan de muze Clio!?... Vrouwelijke historici over lokale en regionale geschiedschrijving, 19.11.2022, Waasmunster.

CAPPELLE Kaat (2022), *Project Lordship and state formation in the County of Flanders, 15th-18th C*. Wetenschappelijke bijeenkomst Rijksarchief Vlaanderen, 22.11.2022, Brussel.

CAPPELLE Kaat (2022), *Wills and Matrimonial Contracts Responding to Municipal law: the Case of Antwerp (16th century)*. World Economic History Congress, 25-30.07.2022, Paris.

VAN GELDER Klaas and CAPPELLE Kaat (2022), *Seigneurial Police Ordinances in Late Medieval and Early Modern Flanders: Presentation of the Sources and Challenges in Tagging*. RHONDA-meeting, 28.06.2022, online.

2023

BUYLAERT Frederik, CAPPELLE Kaat & VAN GELDER Klaas (2023), *Comparing "good governance" in town and countryside: the evidence from Flanders, c. 1250-1550*. International Workshop on Good Governance in the Late Medieval City (1200-1600), 01.02.2023, Utrecht.

CAPPELLE Kaat (2023), *"Al wat de man vergaert, dat kan het wijf verstrooijen"*. *Echtgenotes en recht in de Antwerpse metropool, 16de eeuw*. 28.11.2023, Amsterdam.

DE WAELE Tom (2023), Session organizer of "Navigating the normative and juridical framework in the Low Countries". European Social Science History Conference, 12.04.2023, Göteborg.

DE WAELE Tom (2023), *'To avoid all further lawsuits and difficulties': Conflict, dialogue and pragmatic strategies in seigneuries of Burgundian and Habsburg Flanders*. European Social Science History Conference, 12.04.2023, Göteborg.

DE WAELE Tom, LAMBRECHT Thijs and VERFAILLIE Joke (2023), *Lords, Peasants and Labour Services in the Low Countries, 13th-18th centuries*. Alternative currencies. Commodities and services as exchange currencies in the monetarized economies of the 13th to 18th centuries. Datini-conference, 15-18.05.2023, Prato.

HOLLESTELLE Jesse (2023), *Non-Revolutionary Abolition of the Feudal System? A Sketch of an Alternative Trajectory*. European Social Science History Conference, 14.04.2023, Göteborg.

HOLLESTELLE Jesse (2023), Session organizer of "Local Autonomy in Decline: Legislation and Jurisdiction in the Early Modern Low Countries (c. 1450-1800)". European Social Science History Conference, 14.04.2023, Göteborg.

VAN GELDER Klaas (2023), *Policing the Village: Seigneurial Police Regulations in the County of Flanders as Indicators of Local Autonomy, 13th-18th Centuries*. European Social Science History Conference, 14.04.2023, Göteborg.

VAN GELDER Klaas (2023), *The Parish as the Main Stage: Seigneurial Joyous Entries in the Burgundian and Habsburg Netherlands*. Parish & Performance: Annual Symposium of the My-Parish Network, 13.05.2023, Warwick.

2024

CAPPELLE Kaat (2024), *Lordship and State Formation in the County of Flanders, 15th – 18th C.* Printemps Scientifique / Wetenschappelijke Lente Belgian State Archives, 10.06.2024, Brussel.

COOMANS Janna, CAPPELLE Kaat and BUYLAERT Frederik (2024), *Fire risk and regulation in Flemish urban and rural communities, 1300-1600*. What is politics? En ville, à la campagne. Perspectives historiques (XIIIe-XVIIe siècles) et sociologiques, TELEMMe, université Aix-Marseille, 17-18.10.2024, Marseille.

VAN GELDER Klaas (2024), *The Well-Ordered Police Manor: Manorial Police Regulations in Flanders, 13th to 18th Century*. AMEMG: Annual Conference of the Atlantic Medieval and Early Modern Group, Mount Saint Vincent University, 4-5.10.2024, Halifax.

VERFAILLIE Joke (2024), *De docent en de archiefwetenschap*. Bijeenkomst Rijksarchief Vlaanderen, 22.03.2024, Leuven.

VERFAILLIE Joke (2024), *Zware lasten! Zoeken naar personen in fiscale documenten uit de 17^{de} en 18^{de} eeuw*. Familiekunde Vlaanderen, 26.04.2024, Gent.

5.2 “LORD contactdag” conference, 9th September 2024

The LORD project organised a concluding conference at the State Archives in Ghent on September 9th 2024. A diverse audience of 81 guests (historians, genealogists, legal historians, archivists, heritage experts, students and visitors of the archival reading room) listened to and debated the following presentations:

Session 1: Finance (chair: Sieben FEYS)

CAPPELLE Kaat, *Introductie tot het onderwerp ‘heerlijkheden in de lage landen’, welkomstwoord*.

DE WAELE Tom, *De ‘réaction seigneuriale’ in Vlaanderen? Breuklijnen en continuïteit van heerlijke surplusextractierechten benaderd via buitenpoortelij en beste hoofden, ca. 1450 - ca. 1795*.

LAMBRECHT Thijs and VERFAILLIE Joke, *Heerlijke karweien in het graafschap Vlaanderen, 13^{de}-18^{de} eeuw*.

VAN DER HOEVEN Erwin, *Herzele (1444-1502): de heerlijkheid als ruimte van onderhandeling*.

Session 2: Lords (chair: Reinder KLINKHAMER)

PRINS Maarten J., *Heren van Holland. Onderzoek naar heerlijkheden en hun eigenaars in Holland, 1500-1795*.

BRANDSMA Margreet and FEYS Sieben, *Heren zonder grenzen. Edingen / Enghien tussen Brabant en Henegouwen*.

VAN GELDER Klaas, *Een heer, een dorp, een blijde intrede: de vele facetten van een onderbelicht ritueel in 18^{de}-eeuws Brabant*.

Session 3: Law and justice (chair: Tom DE WAELE)

OPSOMMER Rik, *Over de grens, lenen en heerlijkheden in Frans-Vlaanderen, 14^{de}-15^{de} eeuw*.

FIEREMANS Niels, *Beschermheren? De verdediging van heerlijke onderdanen voor de Brabantse prinselijke hoven*.

KLINKHAMER Reinder, *Heerlijke rechtspraak en agrarisch kapitalisme in het Land van den Bergh (Gelre), ca. 1460-1560*.

CAPPELLE Kaat, *Op zoek naar verwijzingen naar vorstelijke wetgeving in politiereglementen uit Vlaamse heerlijkheden, 13^{de}-18^{de} eeuw*.

Session 4: Hidden archives / conclusion (chair: Thijs LAMBRECHT)

VAN DEN BERGHE Alexandra, *Sporen van heerlijkheden in familiearchief: de familie Lippens*.

DEKOSTER Kevin, *Heren en heerlijkheden in (het archief van) de kasselrij Ieper*.

BUYLAERT Frederik, *Slotwoord*.

The proceedings of this conference will be published (eds. Kaat Cappelle and Joke Verfaillie), see 6.2.

5.3 Workshops & other educational activities

At the Belgian State Archives, the LORD team organized several activities. In collaboration with Histories vzw, the largest heritage organisation of Flanders, Kaat Cappelle and Joke Verfaillie hosted three workshops with lectures and practical exercises for an enthusiastic audience of reading room visitors, genealogists and heritage professionals. In “Archieven van justitieraden, leenhoven en schepenbanken. Graven in middeleeuwse en vroegmoderne bronnen van het Rijksarchief”, they highlighted local case studies from the countryside around Leuven (29.04.2022), Gent (14.10.2022) and Bruges (10.11.2023). Joke Verfaillie was also co-organizer of the Flemish-Dutch palaeography championship “Schrift-ure. Prijskamp oud schrift lezen. Wie wordt de beste paleograaf van Vlaanderen en Nederland?”, in collaboration with Wat staat daer?, an online practice tool for learning

to read old manuscripts. The preliminary round was online, the final was a live event in the Utrecht city archives (01.10.2022).

At the State Archives in Ghent, members of the project team organized various guided visits with tutorials about specific archival documents from the medieval and the early modern period. The selection of those documents was either thematic or regional / local – e.g. 17th-18th century Zottegem (15.09.2023, guided tour for Cultuurwerking Sotteghem). Every year, they also gave a tour with a general introduction on archives & archival institutions to the new cohort of history students (Ba 1, Ghent University). In addition, Joke Verfaillie and Thijs Lambrecht are the lecturers of two courses in Ba 3 (Ghent University): Introduction to archival science, and Archival science: internship, of which the lessons take place in the Ghent State Archives.

At Ghent University, Joke Verfaillie provided a guest lecture on the Council of Flanders (14th-18th century) as part of the course “Schrift, bestuur en administratie in de middeleeuwen en vroegmoderne tijd” (prof. dr. E. De Paermentier, Ba 3, 17.05.2022). A guest lecture from Klaas Van Gelder took place at the Canadian Université de Laval, Québec, for the Séminaire d’histoire des Amériques IV (prof. dr. Donald Fyson), in which he made a comparison between early modern police regulations in Flanders, and the police regulation of Québec from 1676.

Buylaert and Lambrecht selected the theme of this project (lordship) as the main focus of their seminar on medieval history (*Historische Praktijk 2: Middeleeuwen*) from academic year 2021-2022 to 2023-2024. Assisted by De Waele and Hollestelle, students were introduced to the debates and literature concerning medieval lordship. Additionally, students (c. 20 to 25 each year) were tasked (in group and individually) with the analysis and presentation of documents relating to lords and lordship, such as seigneurial legislation, accounts, surveys of seigneurial rights (*dénombrements*) and so on. This resulted in group presentations and individual papers.

The theme of this project also attracted a number of bachelor and master students who were keen to engage in new research on the history of lordship in the late medieval and early modern Low Countries. Buylaert and Lambrecht (co-)supervised five master’s theses on topics directly related to and inspired by the LORD-project:

- Ceddrich Gordenne, *Hoge heerlijkheden in het land van Aalst : heerlijkheden, heerlijke rechten, en heren in de laatmiddeleeuwse kasselrij Aalst, 15e eeuw* (unpublished MA thesis Ghent University, 2023)
- Elie Deschepper, *De institutionele invloed op de transitie naar het agrarisch kapitalisme in Kust-Vlaanderen : een vergelijkende studie van de kasselrij Ieper en het Brugse Vrije tussen ca. 1400-1600* (unpublished MA thesis Ghent University, 2023)
- Erwin Van der Hoeven, *Ontfaen vanden insetenen vanden heerscepe van Herselle : De heerlijkheid Herzele (1444-1502): een ruimte van onderhandeling* (unpublished MA thesis Ghent University, 2023)
- Bert Langaskens, *De doorgaande waarheid’ in ‘de Vlaamse heerlijkheid’* (unpublished MA thesis Ghent University, 2024)

- Frederik Cools, *De impact van heerlijke instituties op het opkomende agrarisch kapitalisme in Kust-Vlaanderen. Een case-study van het institutionele framework van de heerlijkheid Watervliet (1497-1560)* (unpublished MA thesis Ghent University, 2024)

Lastly, Klaas Van Gelder and Kaat Cappelle combined their activities within the LORD-project with a temporary position (10%) at, respectively, the University of Antwerp (History) and Ghent University (Law).

5.4 Websites, social media posts, news letters

The LORD project has its own permanent page on the website of the Belgian State Archives, in Dutch as well as French. It provides all interested parties with basic information about the content of the project, collaborators, contact addresses and news releases. In the near future, at least two important deliverables will be added in full pdf, namely the books of Speecke e.a. (2023) and Van Gelder (2023) – see 6.2.

Almost all communication to a wider audience occurred through the official channels of the State Archives, namely the Facebook pages (both Dutch and French) and the general newsletters, monthly sent to subscribers. As a rule, the information provided through both channels is complementary. Of course, important news was also shared through the news letters of the History Department and the Legal History institute of Ghent University. The former also has an active account on Facebook and X. Initial communications dealt with the announcement and launch of the project, as well as the recruitment of the scientific personnel (01.2020). A first, much appreciated content message was inspired by the covid pandemic and shed light on some 17th-century hygiene measures found in local regulations (03.2020). Other news items covered specific sources or the results of a digitization action (e.g. the feudal records of ‘Land van Dendermonde’, 05.2021), and, of course, the announcement of and updates on the concluding conference (06; 07.; 08. and 09.2024).

One series of news items deserves extra emphasis. As a prelude to the publication of the repertory and guide to local police regulations in medieval and early modern Flanders (book, Van Gelder 2023), in 2022, the State Archives in Ghent published a monthly LORD news teaser on social media. Based on input from Klaas Van Gelder and Kaat Cappelle, Joke Verfaillie selected and compiled twelve short stories. In all cases, a combination of text and images put one specific rule or regulation in the picture, which was either very typical or very striking and therefore a possible subject matter for discussion (e.g. gender aspect: the fact that women in the rural village of Assenede only had to pay half the amount of a fine, compared to men).

(01.2022) Van je familie moet je het hebben... / Caeskerke et Nieuwcapelle: amendes pour l’installation de pièges pour les voleurs

(02.2022) 's Nachts breekt een mens best geen potten! / Waterdijk et Philippe: mieux vaut ne pas casser de pichets la nuit!

(03.2022) Zeg niet te gauw...het is weer een vrouw / Assenede: “toute femme est redevable de la moitié des amendes pécuniaires imposées aux hommes”

(04.2022) april: de zomer is in het land! / Quand au pays de Beveren(-Waas), l'été débute le 1er avril (04.2022)

(05.2022) Kinderen vs. kerkgebouwen / Les enfants à l'église

(06.2022) Soms is het midden van de weg de veiligste plek / Insolite: propreté publique

(07.2022) Ga niet met andermans pluimen lopen! / Du danger d'avoir une plume à son chapeau

(08.2022) Drugspreventie in het ancien régime / Du bon usage des plantes

(09.2022) Over luistervinken en andere ongein / À propos des oreilles indiscretes

(10.2022) Halloween avant la lettre - Gruwel wordt bestreden met gruwel / Halloween – Éventail des châtiments qui étaient appliqués en Flandre

(11.2022) Kopen voor de kaars uitgaat! / Ventes à la bougie

(12.2022) Je kan/mag niet alles voor je karretje spannen / Le chien dans les archives

Within the week, each post had an average online reach of 7787 people, including 26 share actions and 208 responses. This follow-up series created a momentum in which a wider audience got exposed to the fascinating and still relevant content of one of the LORD project's main sources.

Websites, URL:

<http://www.arch.be/index.php?l=nl&m=lopend-onderzoek&r=onderzoeksprojecten&pr=lordship-and-state-formation-in-the-county-of-flanders-15th-18th-century>

<https://www.arch.be/index.php?l=fr&m=nos-projets&r=projets-de-recherche&pr=le-projet-lordship-and-state-formation-in-the-county-of-flanders-15th-18th-century>

Social media, URL:

<https://www.facebook.com/rijksarchief> and <https://www.facebook.com/archives.etat>

<https://www.facebook.com/geschiedenis.ugent> and https://x.com/History_UGent

6. PUBLICATIONS

6.1 Papers / book chapters

2020

DE WAELE Tom (2020), *The acquisition of seigneuries and the exertion of seigniorial power in Late Medieval Flanders: The case of Wedergrate and the Goux family*, *The Medieval Low Countries* 7, p. 157-192. Peer reviewed.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.MLC.5.122705>.

2021

DE WAELE Tom (2021), *De heerlijke rekening als historische bron: een stand van het onderzoek betreffende het graafschap Vlaanderen (ca. 1450 - ca. 1795)*, *Handelingen van de Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 75, p. 83-117. Peer reviewed.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.21825/kzm.87029>

2022

BRERO Thalia, BUYLAERT Frederik & GRAHAM-GOERING Erika (2022), *Dynasties and Dynastic Rule between Elite Reproduction and State Building in Europe*, in SRODECKI Paul, KERSKEN Norbert & PETRAUSKAS Rimvydas (eds.), *Unions and divisions. New forms of rule in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London - New York: Routledge), p. 40-52.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003199007-4>

CAPPELLE Kaat (2022), *'Out of extraordinary love and affection'. Gender, spousal wills and the conjugal strategy of commercial households in sixteenth-century Antwerp*, *Rechtskultur. European Journal of Legal History* 10, p. 1-28. Peer reviewed.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.17176/20230427-161230-0>

DE WAELE Tom (2022), *Inperking van heerlijke rechten in veertiende-eeuws Vlaanderen : "Dat niemen wie hi zij edel of onedel dwinghen mach"*, *MADOC* 36-3, p. 131-143.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5117/MADOC2022.3.002.WAEL>

2023

LAMBRECHT Thijs (2023), *Labour Legislation and Rural Servants in the southern Low Countries, c.1600-c.1800*, in: WHITTLE Jane & LAMBRECHT Thijs (eds.), *Labour Laws in Preindustrial Europe. The Coercion and Regulation of Wage Labour, c.1350–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer), p. 144-163.

URL: <https://openaccess.boydellandbrewercms.com/?fileid=-34355>

VAN GELDER Klaas (2023), *Local Lordship and Joyous Entries in the Burgundian and Habsburg Netherlands*, *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 138-1, p. 31-70. Peer reviewed.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.51769/bmgn-lchr.9921>

VAN GELDER Klaas (2023), *Het huldegedicht uit 1743 voor de nieuwe heer van Moerkerke in een breder heerlijk, ritueel en cultureel perspectief*, *Erfgoedblad Damme* 24-3, p. 4-13.

URL: https://zwinrechteroever.be/ons_tijdschrift/

2024

BUYLAERT Frederik, CAPPELLE Kaat & VAN GELDER Klaas (2024), *Princely Legislation and Seigneurial Justice in the County of Flanders, c. 1400-1600*, in VITORIA André (ed.), *Jurists and the Medieval State, 1100-1500: Varieties and Development of a Symbiotic Relationship* (Leiden: Brill, *Medieval Law and Its Practice*). In review.

BUYLAERT Frederik, LAMBRECHT Thijs, VAN GELDER Klaas & CAPPELLE Kaat (2024), *The Political Economy of Seigneurial Lordship in Flanders, c. 1250-1570*, *Past & Present*. Peer reviewed.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtae016>

CAPPELLE Kaat & VAN GELDER Klaas (2024), *Tagging Manorial Police Regulations in Medieval and Early Modern Flanders: Some Methodological Reflections*, *The Journal for Digital Legal History* 2-1, p. 1-17. Peer reviewed.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.21825/dlh.89679>

DE WAELE Tom (2024), *Book Review Jaap Ligthart, Vorst aan de grond? De veranderende financiële functie van het vorstelijk domein in de Nederlanden (1356-1473)*, *TSEG - The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 21-2, p. 196-198.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.52024/329zdp50>

DE WAELE Tom (2024), *Subjects' strategies against lordship in Burgundian and Habsburg Flanders*, *Rural History*, p. 1-28. Peer reviewed.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0956793324000037>

HAEMERS Jelle & BUYLAERT Frederik (2024), *'Murder as 'Good Lordship'. The Pardon Letter of Frederick van Horn for the Murder on John van Dadizele and the Discourse of Loyalty, Treason, and Vengeance at the Court of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian of Austria (1481)*, *Francia* 51, p. 177-200.

LAMBRECHT Thijs, VERFAILLIE Joke & DE WAELE Tom (2024), *Lords, peasantries and the remuneration of labour services in the Southern Low Countries, 13th - 18th centuries*, in Mezzi di scambio non monetari. Merci e servizi come monete alternative nelle economie dei secoli XIII-XVIII - Alternative currencies. Commodities and services as exchange currencies in the monetarized economies of the 13th to 18th centuries (Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini" Prato serie II – Atti delle "Settimane di Studi" e altri Convegni 51), p. 259-276.

URL: <https://doi.org/10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0.09>

'Introduction: Lordship and the Decentralized State in Late Medieval Europe', in: Frederik Buylaert, Erika Graham-Goering & Jim van der Meulen (eds.), *Lordship and the Decentralized State in Late Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press & The British Academy, 2024), 1-18 (with E. Graham-Goering & J. van der Meulen).

'Seigneurial Lordship and the State in the County of Flanders (c. 1350-1550)', in: Frederik Buylaert, Erika Graham-Goering & Jim van der Meulen (eds.), *Lordship and the Decentralized State in Late Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press & The British Academy, 2024), 90-106.

6.2 Books

2023

SPEECKE Mathijs, ADRIAENS Miet, HOLLESTELLE Jesse, DONCHE Pieter & BUYLAERT Frederik (2023), *Repertorium van de hogere heerlijkheden van het graafschap Vlaanderen (c. 1360 - c. 1570)* (Gent - Brugge: Skribis, Historische monografieën Vlaanderen 5).

VAN GELDER Klaas (2023), *'Politie' in de heerlijkheid. Gids en repertorium van heerlijke politiereglementen in het graafschap Vlaanderen, 13de-18de eeuw* (Brussel: Algemeen Rijksarchief en Rijksarchief in de Provinciën, Gidsen 92).

VERFAILLIE Joke (2023), *Inventaris van het archief van de heer en de schepenbank van Nieuwland te Gent, 1429-1796* (Brussel: Algemeen Rijksarchief en Rijksarchief in de Provinciën, Inventarissen Gent 171).

2025 (in press & forthcoming)

BUYLAERT Frederik & ADRIAENS Miet (2025), *Lordship, Capitalism, and the State in Flanders (c. 1250-1570)* (Oxford Studies in Medieval Europe) (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

CAPPELLE Kaat & VERFAILLIE Joke (eds.) (2025), *Heerlijkheden in de lage landen. Handelingen van de LORD-contactdag (9 september 2024)*. In preparation, see also 5.2.

GRAHAM-GOERING Erika, VAN DER MEULEN Jim & BUYLAERT Frederik (eds.) (2025), *Lordship and the Decentralized State in Late Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press & The British Academy).

VERFAILLIE Joke (2025), *Inventaris van het archief van de baronie Eksaarde, 1349-1819* (Brussel: Algemeen Rijksarchief en Rijksarchief in de Provinciën, Inventarissen Gent).

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 Researchers

dr. Klaas VAN GELDER, postdoctoral researcher, State Archives in Ghent (01.09.2020 – 30.09.2021)

dr. Kaat CAPPELLE, postdoctoral researcher, State Archives in Ghent (01.10.2021 – 15.09.2024)

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prof. dr. Georges MARTYN, legal historian, Ghent University

dr. Julie VAN BOGAERT, science communication coach, Ghent University

dr. Klaas VAN GELDER, historian / archivist, Vrije Universiteit Brussel / State Archives in Brussels
(added to the committee 01.10.2021)

7.3 Other

Finally, the LORD team would like to thank their co-authors, reviewers and all people with whom they collaborated in general (see chapters 5 and 6), as well as all speakers and audience members of the LORD conference. A final acknowledgement goes to the PhD Training Programme of the N.W. Posthumus Institute, Research School for Economic and Social History in the Netherlands and Flanders, which both PhD-students of the project attended.