

slistheid ligt mijns inziens in het gebrek aan een sterk conceptueel kader. Judge leunt meer aan bij het primordialisme van Anthony Smith dan bij het constructivisme van Benedict Anderson, maar blijft verder op de vlakte over wat het begrip natie nu eigenlijk inhoudt. Waar stopt culturele identiteit en waar begint politieke identiteit? Wat is een natie en onder welke omstandigheden komt ze tot stand? Bij gebrek aan helderheid over die essentiële kwesties, en bij gebrek aan sterke argumenten, kan de centrale stelling van het boek niet overtuigen. Op die redenen is het te hopen dat de term 'eerste Belgische Revolutie' geen gemeengoed wordt, want ze is ongefundeerd en onnodig verwarrend.

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Bruno Blondé, Marc Boone and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene (eds.), *City and Society in the Low Countries, 1100-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). 316 p. ISBN 9781108474689.

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This volume is a welcome addition to the study of urban Europe in the medieval and early modern periods. In seven chapters, bookended by an introduction and epilogue written by the three editors, multiple authors analyze the factors that made the Low Countries relatively unique – the number of cities, the absence of a primary metropole, and the political and economic structures, built on legal privileges, that enabled cities to become powerful negotiators with their territorial overlords. Two themes in particular emerge: the constant seesaw of cooperation and competition among cities and between cities and their princes, and the presence and power of the middling sorts, the artisans, merchants, members of town councils who dominated the legal, political, economic, religious, and material landscapes of this region. The chapters are thematically organized, beginning with economic, social and political conditions before moving to religion, infrastructure, material culture and education. It is not comprehensive, focusing more on structures than events, but it does an excellent job of giving an overview of the state of the field and affirming the importance of these cities in European history.

After an introduction that describes the key importance of Belgian and Dutch scholarship in the origin and development of urban history, Chapter 2 focuses on the economic factors and natural resources that drove much of Low Countries development from the twelfth century. The limitations of resources impelled innovations in agriculture and transportation; a dense network of cities developed rather than a hierarchy dependent on a central place. It was not a one-size fits

all model: in larger industrial and trade cities, highly specialized activities were concentrated, but it was the smaller towns, bigger industrial centers and country villages that ultimately, by their competition and some cooperation, created the kinds of goods that were sought after across Europe and beyond. The authors also lay to rest the old truism that an innovating society of merchant-entrepreneurs gave way to stodgy guilds and regulation, which destroyed or limited economic growth, instead arguing that such institutions and their regulations promoted both innovation and investment in labor far more effectively than a kind of free market.

Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate how conflict and community shaped the social and political arenas. Communal ideals were aspirations, indicating less social homogeneity or harmony than the need to find some way to bind disparate groups together. Chapter 3 points to the blurring of categories once deemed fixed – urban merchants cared about landownership and saw it as a buffer against economic fluctuations, and nobility, far from remaining aloof from the urban environment, participated in the service economy and luxury markets. This did not mean that the nobility dominated social problems, however – the success of the middling groups meant that when the gap between rich and poor widened in the sixteenth century, the institutions that were created reflected the values inculcated by the merchants and artisans that dominated the urban community, of hard work, discipline, and care for profits. Chapter 4 likewise draws attention to the importance of political ideals but also the discipline and regulation provided by urban governments that shaped the community and sometimes created tensions. Such tensions, furthered by anxieties about safeguarding privileges, indicated less the failure of communal principles than the productive dynamism of a society constantly adapting to new conditions.

Chapter 5 convincingly argues for the key importance of religion in the development of these cities, from the early presence of collegiate churches to the arrival of mendicant orders and the popularity of movements like the *Devotio Moderna* in the north. Citizens actively participated in religious life, creating foundations, establishing chapels, and joining confraternities and rhetorical societies, and the authors argue that the Reformation was more of a transformation of this active engagement through the rise of literacy and advent of printing than a definitive break from previous practice. In this rich religious world, municipal government involvement was considerably less purposeful than the term civic religion implies; in fact, they argue that municipal irenicism might have successfully adapted to reformed movements had not the central government foreclosed such possibilities.

The final three chapters provide a welcome turn to spaces, material culture, and the practical and formal knowledge needed to successfully work and live in these cities. While noting that there was no rational process in the expansion of municipal power, Chapter 6 argues that urban authorities competed for control

over the land and resources in cities with princes, ecclesiastical institutions and other lords, but ‘gradually cast themselves as protectors of public space’ that secured that expansion. Chapter 7 re-evaluates the consumer revolution, pointing to the production and consumption of luxury goods, but also the widespread demand from the middling sorts for new items, from linens and clothing to majolica, paintings, and pewter. The diversity of products increased enormously in this period, but so too did fashionable trends and books of manners that served to distinguish the better sort from everyone else. Education, too, underwent major shifts between 1100-1600, from monasteries and parishes to direct urban control. Chapter 8 addresses the increasing formalization of craft education as well as changes in primary, secondary, and university education, which had a late start in the Low Countries compared to other places. What emerges most strongly is the hybrid nature of learning—the ways in which practical knowledge, formerly only the hands of artisans, became prized as the mechanical arts for the elites, and how classical and biblical education infused the work of rhetoricians performing plays and wrestling with questions of theology. This fluidity, coupled with a flourishing publishing industry, may have inflected new scientific thinking and undergirded innovative developments in cartography, instrument-making, and engineering.

Overall, this volume engages with recent scholarship on Low Countries urban history in this crucial period in an accessible and thoughtful way and situates its findings relative to other urban centers, especially those of northern Italy. One downside: few footnotes are included, but a select bibliography is provided for each chapter. Some topics (environmental history, health and hygiene, the presence of war, women’s roles) could have been addressed more directly, and one hopes they will in future volumes. The authors persuasively make the case that this region and this period are well worth studying, especially in our current era of unprecedented mobility and urban growth.

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Fernando Martínez Luna, *Een ondraaglijk juk. Nederlandse beeldvorming van Spanje en de Spaanjaarden ten tijde van de Opstand (1566-1609)* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2018). 207 p. ISBN 9789087046736.

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De imagologie analyseert de oorsprong, het doel en het effect van de (stereotype) beelden die in een natie circuleren over een andere natie. In dit boek bestudeert Fernando Martínez Luna het beeld dat in Nederland werd gevormd over Spanje en