The Roots of Urban Self-Government

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Jonathan Doucette

Preface

In the following, I summarize the dissertation "The Roots of Urban Self-Government". It is comprised of this summary and the four articles listed below:

Article 1: The Collapse of State Power, the Cluniac Reform Movement, and the Origins of Urban Self-Government in Medieval Europe. *International Organization*, FirstView: 1-20. (Co-authored with Jørgen Møller).

Article 2: The Diffusion of Urban Medieval Representation: The Dominican Order as an Engine of Regime Change. *Perspectives on Politics*, FirstView: 1-16.

Article 3: Urban Growth in Northwestern Europe: Evidence from a Natural Experiment.

Article 4: Conquered or Granted? Authoritarian Succession and the Growth of Urban Self-Government in Medieval Europe. Under review at *Comparative Political Studies*.

The summary presents the main research question and gives an overview of the theoretical framework and empirical strategies that are employed across the articles. To keep track of the articles going forward, I assign each a subscript based on its primary explanatory factor:

Article	Explanatory factor
1_{clu}	Cluniac reform movement
2_{dom}	Dominican representative practices
3_{agr}	Agricultural endowments
4_{suc}	Succession

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

If one surveyed the world in AD 1000, Europe would be considered a poor and rural society in comparison to the older civilization centres in the Middle East and East Asia. Yet, the same Europe would later see the emergence of modern democracy, the modern market economy, and the bureaucratic state. At least since the nineteenth century, scholars have wrestled with explaining this reversal of fortune – the so called "Rise of Europe" or "Why Europe?" problem. While many different explanatory factors have been emphasized, there seems to be a general consensus that the medieval flourishing of urban corporate self-government, which could balance the power of European rulers, is key to understanding this development (e.g. Weber 1921; de Tocqueville 1835; Angelucci et al. 2017; Blaydes and Chaney 2013; Stasavage 2010; Møller 2015; van Zanden et al. 2012; Kuran 2004; Greif and Tabellini 2010; North et al. 2009; Hall 1985).[1] In the period 1000-1400 AD, urban self-governing institutions spread across the Latin West. This was part of the medieval "associational revolution" (Reynolds 1997; Blickle 1997; Sabetti 2004; Finer 1997; Johanek 2000; Poggi 1978; Myers 1975; Epstein 2000).[2] This dissertation aims to explain the emergence of self-governing towns in medieval Europe. Furthermore, it seeks to account for the subsequent spread of urban autonomy across the European continent.

Since Weber (1921) and Tocqueville (1835), scholars have stressed that "free" or self-governing towns were particularly important for understanding Europe's development. Rulers could not force self-governing towns to finance their war-making and state-making efforts. In return for support, such towns therefore demanded power-sharing and formed the development of local administration, which

[1] In this dissertation, 1000 AD to 1400 AD denotes the medieval period, while 476 AD to 999 AD is considered the early medieval period.

[2] Scholars have also emphasized other corporate self-governing institutions, such as parliaments, guilds, and parishes, that also spread across the Latin West. However, as I discuss in the "What is urban self-government" section, urban self-government appears to have played a particularly important role in Europe's development.

resulted in states bound by the rule of law (e.g. Ertman 1997; Fukuyama 2011; 2010; Møller 2017b; Hui 2005; Tilly 1990; van Zanden et al. 2012). Self-governing towns also buttressed parliaments that subsequently could be used in nineteenth and twentieth-century democratization efforts. In fact, no parliaments were introduced without a polity first having self-governing towns. The historical legacy of self-rule also empowered civil society to balance rulers, thereby providing a more secure bedrock for democracy (e.g. Downing 1989; Møller 2017c; de Tocqueville 1835; Greif and Tabellini 2010; Giuliano and Nunn 2013; Putnam et al. 1993; Cox and Dincecco 2020). Finally, self-governing towns became centres of innovation and trade and hampered the ability of rulers to arbitrarily transgress the property rights of their subjects (e.g. Boix 2015; Bosker et al. 2013b; Long and Shleifer 1993). Hence, to more fully understand the European development, we need a satisfying account for the emergence and spread of urban self-government.

Scholars have put forward and tested a series of potential explanations for the emergence of urban corporate self-government, emphasizing factors such as trade and proto-industrialization, warfare, and state collapse. Economic development resulted in a class of merchants that fought for institutions of self-government that could be used to protect their economic interest from princely interference. War forced cash-poor rulers to grant concessions - including self-government - to towns in exchange for financing, while the collapse of princely power presented an opportune moment to seize self-government (see Downing 1992; Ertman 1997; Acemoglu et al. 2005; Stasavage 2010 & 2011 ; van Zanden et al. 2012; Blaydes and Chaney 2013; Boucoyannis 2015; Blaydes and Paik 2016; Møller 2015; Abramson and Boix 2019). Yet, two objections can be raised against this literature: first, that the intensification of trade, war, and state collapse also took place in other parts of the world absent urban autonomy; and second, that most of these factors have trouble explaining the timing of the emergence of urban self-government.

A good explanation, as Stasavage (2016, 145) argues with regards to representation and consent, must account for both the cross-regional variation in corporate self-government and its intra-regional pattern. However, the factors emphasized by the literature, such as trade and warfare, do not seem well placed to answer why the development took place in the back-of-beyond parts of Europe and not in the economic powerhouses located in the Middle East or East Asia. During the medieval period, the Middle East and Eastern Asia were host to polities and towns that were comparably, if not more, economically developed than what was seen in Europe (Bosker et al. 2013b; Goldewijk et al. 2010; Long and Shleifer 1993). At various times during this period, they also saw state collapses and prolonged periods of conflict (see e.g. Nüssli and Nüssli 2008; Farooqui 2011; Finer 1997; Farooqui 2011; Roy 2015; Stasavage 2016). Thus, we lack a satisfying explanation for the regional pattern of self-government, or more generally for why urban self-government arose in Europe and not elsewhere.

Current accounts also fall short in regards to explaining the intra-European variation in urban autonomy. Self-governing towns emerged in the latter half of the eleventh century. Yet, the intensification of trade and warfare in Europe did not begin until a century later (Bosker et al. 2013b; Dincecco and Onorato 2016). In contrast, the collapse of state power happened several hundred years before the first urban transitions (Stasavage 2011). Consequently, the timing of the emergence of self-government remains unexplained by the factors emphasized by the existing literature.

A final objection can be raised against the prior literature on corporate self-government. Many studies have focused on territorial parliaments in places such as Britain or Aragon (e.g. Møller 2017a; Kokkonen and Møller 2020a; van Zanden et al. 2012; Abramson and Boix 2019; Stasavage 2016; Kokkonen and Møller 2020b). Yet, this level of analysis ignores important points concerning medieval Europe. Such parliaments were primarily called to discuss extraordinary events such as wars or successions. Thus, the vast ma-

jority of policies were negotiated and implemented at the local level between lords and towns. In addition, the ability of parliaments to constrain rulers was arguably strengthened by the presence of urban self-governing units that were not easily coerced (Blickle 1997, 3-4; Sabetti 2004, 74-77; Møller 2015, 196; Angelucci et al. 2017; Stasavage 2011, 51-53).[3] Explaining variation in urban self-government therefore takes primacy over explaining variation in parliaments if we want to elucidate the intra-regional spread of self-government.

To address these gaps, this PhD dissertation aims to answer the following research questions:

Why did urban self-government emerge, and how did it spread?

To answer these two questions, one concerning the origins of self-government and one concerning its spread, it is first necessary to make clear what urban self-government actually is. In short, it can be understood as the presence of a governing body of a town that has the right to regulate at least one core policy area, such as taxation, judicial affairs, or defence. In addition, the body must be constituted of inhabitants from the polity in question that are chosen by (at least some of) the inhabitants themselves (Stasavage 2014, 342).

In Chapter 2, I review the concept of self-governing institutions and discuss why I choose to focus on their urban form. I then consider the consequences of urban self-government in detail. Next, I discuss the properties that are required for a satisfactory explanation of transitions to self-government. Finally, I review existing explanations and discuss their shortcomings in terms of these properties. I conclude that they primarily fail to account for two points: first, the absence of urban self-government in other regions of the world; and second, the timing of the emergence of self-government.

Chapter 3 presents a general model of regime change. The model stresses the importance of factoring in the supply of viable institu-

[3]A few studies have recognized this point and analyzed the emergence of urban self-government (see Becker et al. 2018; Angelucci et al. 2017; Belloc et al. 2016; Wahl 2015; Blaydes and Paik 2016). However, they all focus on factors that were also present in other parts of the world.

tions. For example, developments in trade may increase the demand for regime change. However, if self-government is not thought of as a useful institution, it will never enter the mind of reformers and revolutionaries. Thus, self-government must enter the supply of viable institutions for it to appear. A satisfying explanation must, therefore, demonstrate why urban self-government entered the supply of viable institutions in medieval Europe during the eleventh century. Failure to do so is exactly the reason that prior explanations are not able to account for the cross-regional and temporal pattern.

To remedy this, I bring in the Catholic Church. The presence of the Church pervaded all areas of both daily and political life in medieval Europe, from the life of the lowest peasant to the life of the emperor himself (e.g. Ullmann 1970; Southern 1970; Tierney 1982; Mann 1986; Oakley 2012). Nevertheless, the Church has been conspicuously absent from extant explanations. It was within the Church that ideas about corporate self-government without undue interference from secular lords were first formulated as a means to ensure responsible clerical government. Article 1_{clu} points out that these ideas were first pursued by the monastic Cluniac reform movement, which started a bottom-up push for autonomy among townsmen in Western Europe in the eleventh and twelfth century. This movement was subsequently taken up by the Pope himself, who formalized and propagated ideas about corporate self-government (thus initiating the investiture conflict). He urged town-dwellers to establish assemblies and target lay invested bishops. As a result, self-government entered the supply of viable institutions among townsmen.

Approximately 100 years after the Cluniac reform movement and the investiture conflict, the Church developed ideas about political representation. Article 2_{dom} demonstrates that these ideas were put into practice by the monastic Dominican order in particular. Their organizational success and popularity opened the eyes of townsmen to the use of representatives. Prior to these monastic movements, reform-minded townsmen never thought to demand self-government.

However, after self-government with representatives entered the institutional supply, they quickly spread across Europe. Thus, it is vital to bring in the Church if we want to explain their unique presence in medieval Europe.

Yet, even if townsmen are aware of corporate self-government, there is no guarantee that it will be introduced. A regime change also depends on factors that encourage citizens or elites to demand a new regime, and on the factors that govern the ability of rulers to quash or circumvent these demands. In Article 3_{agr}, I discuss how the agricultural endowments of an area mattered for its economic development. Specifically, I argue that greater potential for crop growth in the surroundings of a village or town reduces the incentive for inhabitants to engage in proto-manufacturing and trade. In the long run, this discourages economic development. By extension, this lowered the capacity of a locality to wrest self-government from its ruler, and it repressed incentives to gain self-government as there were fewer merchants who needed protection from lordly interference. Following Article 4_{suc}, I go on to argue that successions momentarily weakened the position of would-be rulers, which allowed towns to establish self-government. This effect was pronounced in lordships that had been divided due to a large historical supply of heirs. It was also strengthened in towns that had walls, as rulers had to invest many resources to quash their demands. Article 3 thus helps in explaining the spatial pattern of self-government, while Article 4 accounts for the timing of self-government.

In Chapter 4, I give an overview of the datasets used to test the arguments put forth in the dissertation. In addition, I present newly collected data that allows me to track the temporal and spatial development of urban self-government more accurately than previously. Finally, I introduce a freshly compiled dataset of Catholic institutions in medieval Europe.

Chapter 5 presents the empirical strategies and results that underline the arguments from Chapter 3. Using a series of difference-in-difference approaches (and an instrumental variable analysis), I

show, based on articles 1_{clu} and 2_{dom}, that the presence of the Church, in the form of Cluniac monasteries and Dominican convents, had a profound positive effect on urban self-government. Next, I utilize a natural experiment – the introduction of rye to Northwestern continental Europe around the eighth century - to empirically probe the expectation that greater local agricultural potential hinders economic development when agricultural surpluses can be imported from the surrounding region, which, by extension, hampers the establishment of self-government. These expectations from Article 3_{agr} are corroborated. Furthermore, I test the argument from Article 4_{suc} using another natural experiment, namely the natural death of rulers, finding that successions increase the likelihood that self-government is introduced.

Subsequently, I conclude on the overall weight of the evidence in Chapter 6, finding that previous studies were partly right in stressing the importance of economic endowments, warfare, and state collapse in accounting for within-Europe variation in urban self-government. However, it also points out that greater explanatory weight must be given to the role of the Church, as it both explains the timing of the emergence of urban autonomy in Europe and provides an answer for why Europe was the only region that saw a plethora of strong urban polities that could balance rulers during the medieval period.

Chapter 2: Urban self-government - its consequences and causes

What is urban self-government

Urban self-government is present when an institutionalized governing body of a geographically small polity (i.e. a town) has the right to regulate at least one core policy area, such as taxation, judicial affairs, or defence. In addition, the body must be constituted of inhabitants from the polity in question that are chosen by (at least some of) the inhabitants themselves (Stasavage 2014, 342). I focus on urban manifestations of self-government in particular for a number of reasons. These are outlined below.

Territorial assemblies generally met much less frequently. In addition, they were usually not engaged in the day-to-day governing of the realm, instead focusing on extraordinary events such as wars or successions. Attendance in territorial assemblies was often viewed as a duty rather than a privilege. In contrast, people often fought for the right to attend urban assemblies (Stasavage 2011, 47, 53-54; Møller 2017a, 184). Thus, the presence of territorial assemblies did not habituate the citizenry to participate in politics. Finally, the ability of such assemblies to constrain the ruler often relied on the presence of representatives from local self-governing units (Angelucci et al. 2017; Stasavage 2011, 51-53). Supporting this, no European polity introduced a parliament without first having self-governing towns (Cox and Dincecco 2020, 24). As a result, I concentrate on urban assemblies rather than territorial assemblies.

In addition to urban and territorial assemblies, Europe's rural population was also divided into rural parishes beginning around 800 AD. By circa 1100 AD, these had acquired rights of self-government (Reynolds 1997, 79-82; Blickle 1997). Rural parishes did not, however, have a comparable importance for European state and regime formation. Abramson and Boix (2019) provide evidence that premodern growth and executive constraint was primarily contingent on medieval urban agglomeration. Supporting this, townsmen were

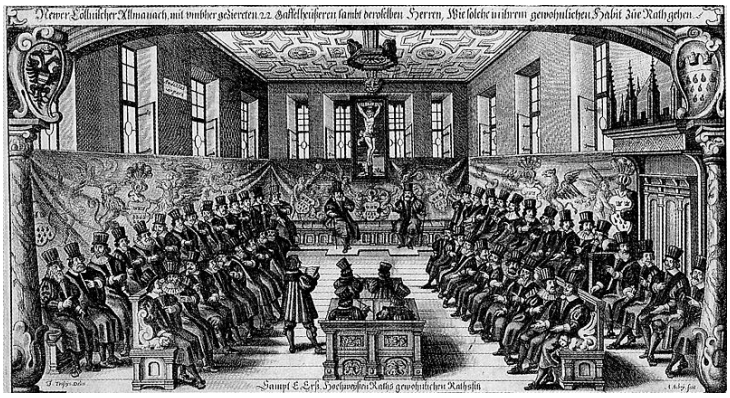
significantly more likely to be represented in territorial assemblies in comparison to peasants (Stasavage 2011, 61; Møller 2015, 182).

Note that I focus on institutionalized urban assemblies. Informal assembly governance was a widespread phenomenon around the world, including in pre-medieval Europe (Ahmed and Stasavage 2020, 3; Reynolds 1997, 5, 35-68). In contrast, European self-government was enshrined in law and recognized by rulers (Berman 1983; Sabetti 2004), which also granted the ruled the right to petition rulers. The right to petition was common in Europe. Yet, it was absent in Asia and in the Ottoman Empire (Møller 2017b, 16; Blickle 1997, 151-52). As a result, the impetus for standardizing law came from societal actors in Europe. A similar regional pattern also held with respect to institutionalized local self-government (Hui 2005; Kuran 2004; Rothstein and Broms 2013).

The definition implies, of course, that there are degrees of self-government – with some towns being able to regulate all major policy areas, while other towns might only be able to decide on defensive policies. Consequently, it might be beneficial to distinguish between three major categories of urban government: i) government under autocratic control, ii) self-government within one or two policy areas, and iii) self-government within many or all policy areas.

The first category, i), denotes towns that are completely under the authority of an emperor, monarch, or lord. As an example, this category includes the Byzantine town of Constantinople. Constantinople was governed by a government official, the *eparch*, who acted on behalf of the emperor. The *eparch* actively regulated all political and economic life in the town. He was also in charge of keeping public order and providing poor relief (Finer 1997, 652-653). The category also includes the French town of Vezelay after 1155 AD. In 1152 AD, the townsmen of Vezelay had enlisted the help of the Count of Nevers to oust the reigning abbot, and establish self-government. However, in 1155 AD, the abbot managed to obtain the help of the king, who subsequently terminated the town's self-government and installed the abbot as ruler (Dutallis 1978, 78).

Figure 1: Town council in Cologne 1655



The second category, ii), contains towns that have the right to govern a few policy areas, while still being controlled by a lord or monarch in most areas. For instance, this includes thirteenth-century Cologne. In 1258 AD, the town had a city council comprised of inhabitants chosen among the townsmen that was able to regulate financial affairs. However, it had to issue other charters jointly with its archbishop (Nicholas 1997, 306). The final category, iii), includes towns with councils that can decide on many or all policies independently of lordly interference. The most autonomous of these have also been termed city-states. Venice is a prominent example of this category as its republican government, chosen from among the citizenry, acted much as a regular state by expanding its territory and holding the Ottoman Empire at bay in the Mediterranean (Finer 1997, 985).

The second part of the definition stresses the presence of townsmen in the urban assembly who must be selected by the inhabitants of the town itself. This criteria implies that towns that were governed by, for instance, a council picked by the residing bishop or administrators appointed by a lord cannot be considered self-governing. There were large differences among self-governing towns in the inclusiveness of the procedure for selecting assembly members. For example, in thirteenth-century Cologne, only members of a small number of influential families were allowed to select assemblymen. However, after a popular revolt in 1396 AD, the council was restructured. The

new assembly was comprised of representatives from twenty-two corporations that included a much larger part of the town's inhabitants (Stasavage 2011, 114-115; Scribner 1976, 236-37).[4] Unfortunately, sources are generally scarce on this subject. Thus, I cannot investigate empirically whether my arguments hold equally for different degrees of inclusiveness. Moreover, irrespective of its degree of inclusiveness, an autonomous town council could represent the general interest of the town vis-à-vis kings and local lords. I therefore focus on the delineation between towns where the citizenry had no influence on appointments to the assembly with towns where at least part of the citizenry partook in selecting their own government.[5]

The consequences of urban self-government

In his study of democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville (1835, 57) argued the following:

> *The institutions of a township are to freedom what primary schools are to science; they put it within reach of the people; they make them taste its peaceful employ and habituate them to making use of it.*

Thus, town assemblies could be thought of as schools for inclusive government. In accordance with this insight, scholars attempting to explain the "Rise of Europe" are almost unequivocal in assigning a crucial explanatory role to urban self-government.

Self-governing towns forced European rulers to share power when they needed money to pay for war. This resulted in parliaments that exercised considerable constraints on monarchs. The strength of parliament depended on the presence of multiple representatives (including townsmen), which ensured that the ruler could not simply pay off one group. This forced rulers to build states which re-

[4]The new system was, nevertheless, not successful, and in a few years, the prior elite had successfully regained control of the council (Scribner 1976, 236-37; Stasavage 2011, 115).

[5]Table A3 in the appendix for Article 2_{dom} does indicate that the Church also had a positive effect on the inclusiveness of urban government.

lied on the support and infrastructure of local self-governing units. As a result, state builders used administrative techniques first developed within towns as a basis for subsequent local government. This resulted in states bound by the rule of law. In comparison, Chinese rulers during the Warring States period (475-221 BC) and Russia's Peter the Great (1682-1725), who were unconstrained by self-governing towns, repressed dissent and imposed the state from above (Ertman 1997, 19-34; Fukuyama 2011, 422-424; 2010, 4-5; Møller 2017b; Hui 2005, 202-204, 211-214; Tilly 1990, Chap. 1; van Zanden et al. 2012, 847; Riasanovsky 1969, 252-259; Taylor 2003, 29; Ertman 2017, 13-15; Siebeck 2001, 226, 265-266; Weber 1964, 62, 90-91). Self-governing towns thus put rulers on a path towards rule-bound states, while the absence of such towns made it possible for rulers to simply impose the state from above. The first path is what Tilly (1990, Chap. 1) terms the *capital-intensive* mode of state formation wherein rulers made compacts with urban elites, exchanging political influence for resources to wage war. The second path he terms the *coercion-intensive* mode of state formation as rulers extorted war-making resources directly from their populace. Over the long run, the first mode proved itself more effective in war as it afforded better access to borrowing and more effective taxation.

In addition, the constraint on European rulers imposed by corporate self-governing groups paved the way for later democratic institutions in two ways. First, it left behind parliaments which could be utilized as a basis for democratization once pressure for suffrage extension kicked in during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Dahl (1989, 215) writes "As movements toward greater democratization gained force, therefore, the design for a 'representative' legislature did not have to be spun from gossamer fibers of abstract democratic ideas; concrete legislatures and representatives, undemocratic through they were, already existed". Second, it created a vibrant and organized civil society that could exercise oversight over political leaders. Thus, self-government results in what we may call "democratic learning" - the habituation of citizens to govern-

ing themselves (Downing 1989; Møller 2015, 116, 120-121; Møller 2017c, 245-49; de Tocqueville 1835; Greif and Tabellini 2010; Putnam et al. 1993; Persson and Tabellini 2009; Miller 2013). For example, Angelucci, Meraglia, and Voigtländer (2017) document how urban self-government in Britain reinforced the power of parliament vis-à-vis the king during the Civil War and helped broaden the franchise during the critical early days of British democracy. In fact, Cox and Dincecco (2020, 24) find that no medieval polity introduced a parliament without first having a self-governing town. Kuran (2004) contrasts the balancing power of European corporations with the ineffectual medieval waqf's of the Middle East. He argues that the historical lack of strong local associations can explain the low levels of democratization found in the Middle East today.

Further empirically supporting these notions, Guiso et al. (2016) show that inhabitants of Italian towns with medieval self-government have higher levels of social capital today compared to inhabitants of other Italian towns. In the same vein, Giuliano and Nunn (2013) find that a historical legacy of assembly-based institutions is correlated with stronger support for democratic institutions and higher levels of democracy across countries today. Bentzen et al. (2017) report similar results.

The development of rule-bound states and corporate constraints in turn prevented rulers from arbitrarily strangling innovation and violating property rights, which began a self-reinforcing process that spurred economic growth (Boix 2015, 262-263; Bosker et al. 2013b; Acemoglu et al. 2001; Long and Shleifer 1993). The within-town effect of self-government is disputed. However, current results indicate an initial positive effect on urban population growth that disappears over time (Bosker et al. 2013b; Stasavage 2014; Wahl 2019). Thus, the most profound effects of urban self-government on economic development may go through their impact on later state and regime formation rather than their direct effect within the town.

The above scholars disagree on the details concerning how self-governing towns mattered for European state formation, regime change,

and economic development. However, they all agree that they did so - at least initially - by acting as a counter-weight to the autocratic rulers of medieval and early modern Europe. The prominence of self-governing towns as a variable in these literatures begs the question: Why were they omnipresent in medieval Europe and not elsewhere? In the next sections, I describe the development of urban self-government in Europe and discuss whether prior explanations can give a satisfying account of its emergence and spread.

Transitioning to self-government

> *But if the township has existed since there have been men, the freedom of a township is a rare and fragile thing.*

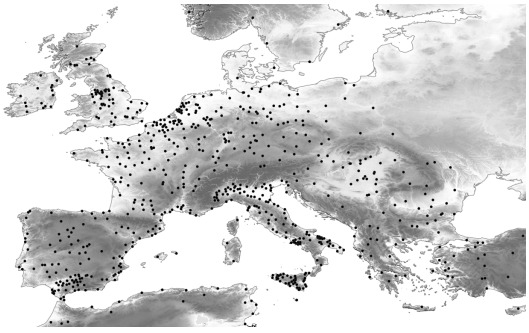
In his quote above, Alexis de Tocqueville (1835, 57) points to the historical rarity of towns governed by citizen assemblies. Before the emergence of such assemblies in Europe, towns were usually ruled by either a lord, a bishop or an abbot, who had the final say in all policy decisions. These rulers extracted taxes and tolls, and they sometimes used the citizens as soldiers. Transitions to self-government usually occurred in one of two ways: citizens attempted to take control of government during opportune moments wherein their ruler was either dead (as happened in the Duchy of Brabant in 1261 AD) or away on business (as happened in Cambrai in 1076 AD); alternatively, the citizens and their lord negotiated a deal where the cities gained self-rule in exchange for providing revenue. This deal was, for instance, struck between the citizens of Wismar and the Count of Holstein (Uytven and Blockmans 1969, 403; Poggi 1978, 36-59; Bartlett 1993, 106-132; Arnold 2009, 173-176; Holland 2019, 213).

A satisfying explanation for the commonality of these transitions in Europe in comparison to other regions should have three properties. First, and most importantly, it must fit the cross-regional pattern of local self-government. That is, it must explain why self-government emerged in medieval Europe and not, for instance, medieval India. Second, it must be consistent with the spatial pattern of

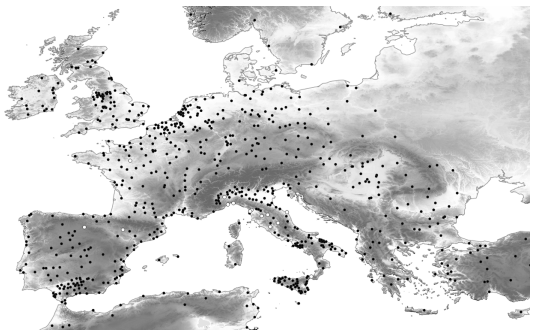
self-government within Europe. Thus, it should account for the clusters of self-governing towns that appeared in some parts of Western Europe (see Figure 2). Third, it should match the temporal development of self-government, which started in the eleventh century, peaked in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and petered out in the fourteenth century (Stasavage 2016, 147).

To get a sense of this development, Figure 2 presents the evolution of urban self-government over time. In the year 1000 AD, no town in Europe had established self-government. A hundred years later, the first towns in northern Italy, Spain, and France had wrested power from their overlords. By 1200 AD, local self-government had also spread to southern France and Germany. In the next 100 years, many towns in Germany, Spain, and France transitioned, and the first self-governing towns in Eastern Europe began to appear. A few new towns achieved self-government by the fourteenth century. However, a number of towns also lost their autonomy, and only a few towns transitioned in the following centuries.

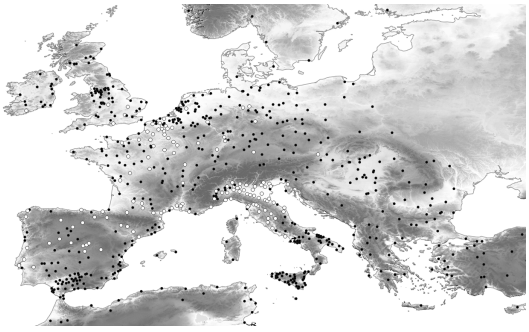
Figure 2: The evolution of urban self-government over time



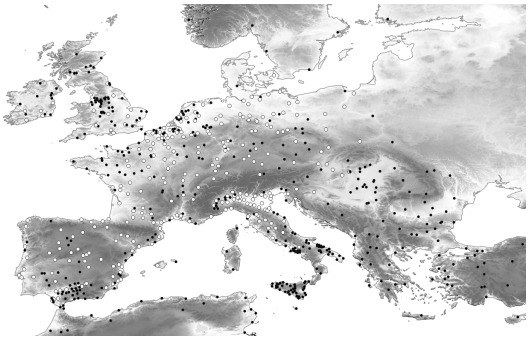
(a) 1000 AD



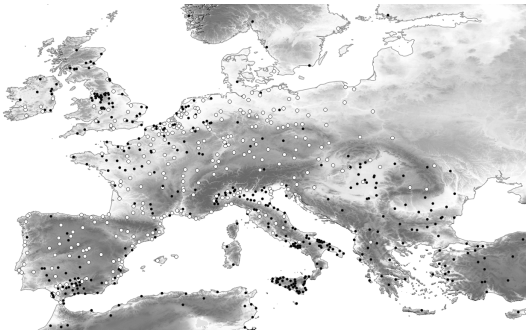
(b) 1100 AD



(c) 1200 AD



(d) 1300 AD



(e) 1400 AD

Note: Black dots are towns without self-government. White dots are towns with self-government. Based on the *commune* variable from Bosker et al. (2013b).

Previous explanations for self-government

Three bodies of theory are prominent in the literature that attempt to explain the emergence of corporate self-government (Stasavage 2011, 96-106).[6] The first argues that initial geographic or economic endowments propelled some towns to grow. As a result, the capacity of the new urban economic actors increased. These actors subsequently established self-governing institutions to enforce contracts, protect property rights, and resist taxation from kings and lords (Pirenne 2014; Rokkan 1975; North and Thomas 1973; Wahl 2015; Abramson and Boix 2019). An example of this dynamic, was the establishment of the Rheinisch Urban League in 1254 AD, which attempted to protect inter-town trade from lordly tolls (Pfeiffer 1997, 389-398).

The second body, the so-called "bellicist" approach, contends that warfare forced cash-poor rulers to turn to their towns for aid. In return for resources to wage war, the towns then demanded increased autonomy. Warfare also allowed town merchants to buy cheap land from nobles trying to finance their conflicts, thus strengthening their position vis-à-vis their territorial overlord (Levi 1988; Tilly 1990; Dincecco and Onorato 2018; 2018; Blaydes and Paik 2016; Cox and Dincecco 2020). For instance, after Dortmund had experienced a long siege in 1393 AD, its rulers introduced a new tax to bring down the town's debt. However, in 1400 AD, the citizens revolted and successfully gained increased representation on the town council (Becker et al. 2018, 1). Another example is the interaction between the town of Barcelona and the Crown of Aragon. Due to the town's involvement in overseas trade, it had ample resources to bargain with the monarchy. At the same time, the Crown of Aragon was engaged in a series of costly conflicts with Valencia, Majorca, and Sicily. This

[6]Some of the scholars working within this field have focused on explaining assemblies at the realm or region level. However, their explanations are, in most cases, also valid for the urban level. The main exception is Stasavage's (2010) argument concerning polity size, which cannot be expected to work in the same way at the town level. Empirically, I show that it does not constitute a robust cause of urban self-government. In the "Polity size" section in Appendix B, I elaborate on this point.

allowed Barcelona to extend its privileges piece by piece to include self-government, judicial competencies, and the right to a war fleet (Blockmans 1989: 737, Albaladejo 1989: 722-23). During the Hundred Years' War (1340-1440 AD), the French crown was in need of support from the towns, due to both the prolonged war and a series of internal wars among the great dukes. In exchange for help, a number of towns gained increased autonomy and the right to elect their own aldermen (Blockmans 1989, 742-3).

The third body emphasizes the collapse or weakening of state power as a primal cause (Jones 1981; Blockmans 1989; Dutallis 1978; Hilton 2011; Stasavage 2011). The first proposed mechanism goes through the initiative of local elites that exploit the weakening of rule to demand representation. The second is grounded in the initiative of rulers trying to regain control of state power, who propose representation in return for help in conducting his or her foreign policy.

For instance, if a monarch was engaged in contesting the political authority over a territory with a rivalling ruler, towns could establish temporary coalitions with either the monarch or the rivalling ruler. Under the condition that the towns did not challenge their coalition partner, the town could then bargain its resources for increased local autonomy (Blockmans 1989, 735). Between 1285 and 1311 AD, the Polish king needed help in order to ward off competitors. In exchange for commercial and judicial privileges, a number of towns gave him their support (Blockmans 1989, 742-3). Sometimes rulers even encouraged towns to establish self-government in order to gain an advantage over competitors. In an attempt to undermine the Capetian monarchy in France, the Seneschal of Normandy ordered the town of Evreux to set up a commune in 1193 AD. Yet, the Capetian kings were just as eager to play this game and granted communal rights to a number of towns in order to strengthen their position (Hilton 2011, 132-133).

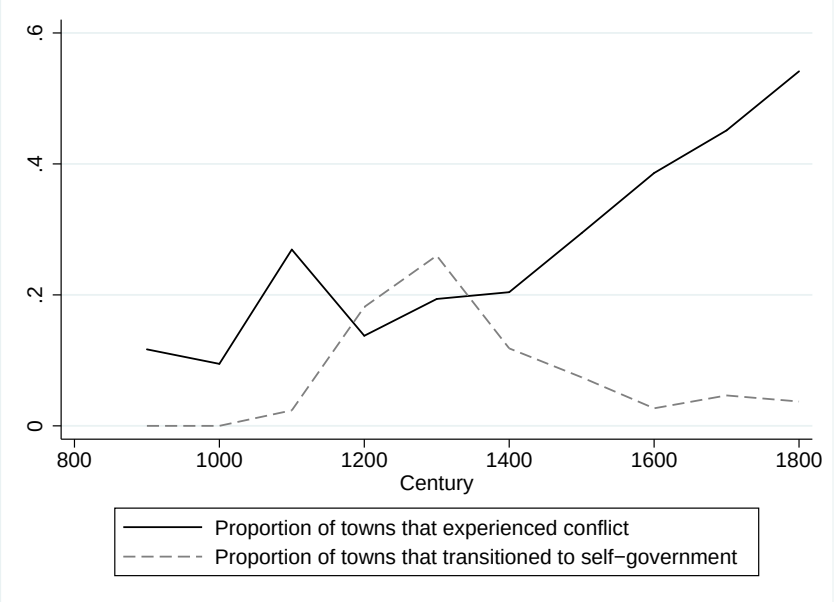
The first body, the economic endowments literature, does well in explaining the spatial concentration of urban self-government in

Europe. Patterns of urban agglomeration and manufacturing are consistent with the distribution of self-government that is depicted in Figure 1 (see Abramson and Boix 2019, 801, 817). However, it fails to satisfy the first criteria: it cannot account for the cross-regional pattern. The size of townships in Europe could easily be matched by towns in China, India, North Africa, and the Middle East during the Middle Ages (Goldewijk et al. 2010; Bosker et al. 2013b). In fact, estimates suggest that China and the Middle East were more urbanized in 1000 AD, and India equally so, when self-government emerged in Europe (Goldewijk et al. 2010, 568; Bosker et al. 2013b, 1424). Overall, urban growth in Europe appears to have taken off in earnest around 1100-1200 AD, and it continued unabated, with a setback during the Black Death, until the modern period (Bosker et al. 2013b, 1424), thus occurring after the first transitions to self-government. The initial growth phase, however, overlaps with the peak in transitions. Yet, it is not possible to adjudicate what came first using century-level data (see e.g. the following studies on the effect of self-government on growth: Stasavage 2014; Guiso et al. 2016; Wahl 2019; Bosker et al. 2013b). In the "Revisiting the causes of corporate self-government" section of the appendix, I therefore re-examine this question using self-coded data on political and economic institutions in 459 towns in Northwestern Europe, which has annualized data for each town. I describe the coding in more detail in the "Data" section. I find support for an endogenous relationship where development helped foster self-government and self-government also promoted later growth. Thus, it seems that the economic endowments explanation provides some leverage in accounting for the spread of self-government in Europe. However, it still cannot explain the cross-regional pattern. Additionally, the sequence of economic development and transitions does not indicate that development had primacy, as the first wave of transitions occurred before economic development intensified in Europe.

Within the second body of literature, the bellicist approach, Becker et al. (2018, 19, 26) provides the most credible causal evidence,

finding that conflict has a positive effect on the emergence of self-government in the Holy Roman Empire. However, as with the economic development argument, it has problems accounting for the cross-regional pattern. Stasavage (2016, 154-156) points out that rulers in the Byzantine Empire, Abbasid Caliphate, and the Chinese Empire were also involved in frequent conflicts. Like their European counterparts, they also increased taxation to finance these war efforts. Yet, unlike the Europeans, they did not obtain the consent of their subjects (see also Hoffman 2015; Hui 2005; Kaegi 2008). Quantitative evidence also suggests that China experienced inter-state war in 56% of all years in the early modern period, while France and Britain experienced inter-state war in 53% and 52% of all years, respectively (Dincecco and Wang 2018, 343). Finally, the development of conflict over time in Europe does not match the spread of self-government.

Figure 3: Conflict and self-government in Europe



Note: Data on self-government from Bosker et al. (2013b), and data on conflict exposure from Dincecco and Onorato (2016). Data from Becker et al. (2018) has not been used as is it not publicly available.

Figure 3 plots the proportion of towns that transitioned to self-government over time in comparison with the proportion of towns that were exposed to conflict.[7] The emergence of self-government does coincide with a slight increase in conflict. However, conflict exposure decreases just when the majority of towns transition to self-government. Conflict exposure rises again after the fourteenth century when towns stop transitioning. Thus, it seems that conflict might be a trigger of transitions to self-government, but it seems unlikely to be a deeper cause.

The final body of literature, the state collapse perspective, does have considerable empirical backing. The slow state collapse of the Carolingian Empire following the Treaty of Verdun in 843 AD did lead into the first wave of transitions to self-government as the initial weakening of royal power in West Francia matches the areas that first experienced self-government in Europe. Moreover, as I show in the "Evidence from the Holy Roman Empire" section in Appendix B, the collapse of state power in the Holy Roman Empire (former East Francia) after Frederick II's death in 1250 AD also kick-started a new wave of transitions. However, like the development and bellicist perspectives, it has trouble explaining both the within-Europe sequence of events and the lack of similar waves of self-government in other regions of the world. As Wickham (2016, 109) writes about Europe, "there had been plenty of periods of weak or chaotic rule in earlier centuries without autonomous lordship developing". Moreover, the first transitions to urban self-government occurred approximately two hundred years after the collapse of the Carolingian Empire. There are also plenty of other areas of the world that experienced prolonged state collapse without seeing a similar blossoming of autonomous towns, such as the Spring and Autumn Period (771–476 BC) in China, the collapse of Ashikaga rule in Japan (1467-1568 AD), and the dissolution of the Abbasid Caliphate following a Mongol invasion that culminated with the sacking of Baghdad

[7]Specifically, the proportion of transitions is calculated as the proportion of towns that did not have self-government the previous century who transitioned in a given century.

in 1258 AD (Mann 1986; Wickham 2009; Hung 2001; Mason and Caiger 1997, 144-148; Lapidus 1984, 5-6). Thus, the argument does not posses the properties required of a satisfying explanation.

A final perspective also warrants some consideration. One may interject that urban polities were not a new phenomenon. Prior to the rise of Christianity, the Mediterranean hosted several powerful city-states, including Athens, Sparta, Carthage, and Rome. In particular, the Romans might have had an important role in spreading urban autonomy as they established a general system of urban self-rule under imperial overlordship. It was, however, dismantled during the third and fourth centuries, as *curators* and *logistai* were imposed by the central government on the towns (Hanson 2016, 81-82). This legacy of urban autonomy had a limited impact on the medieval development of self-government for two reasons. First, the Roman system of urban government, which was the last surviving urban system prior to the emergence of medieval self-government, had completely broken down after the dissolution of its western part (Stasavage 2011, 103). Thus, a Roman heritage cannot explain why urban self-government re-emerged in the eleventh century. Stasavage (2016, 150) also makes this point and shows that the scholarly rediscovery of the Greek polis around 1260 AD had no substantial impact on the development of self-government in Europe. Second, the development of corporate rights of self-government was based in Roman law. Yet, the principles of representation and consent had never spread to political institutions in Roman times as these principles in the law referred only to individuals. Roman law was, thus, used in an entirely new way when representation and consent were applied to corporations (Berman 1983, 149; Oakley 2012, 149; Stasavage 2016, 150-151; Møller 2018, 1077). Tellingly, urban self-government did not appear in the Eastern Roman Empire although Roman law had never been forgotten there. In the subsection "A Roman legacy" in Appendix B, I provide further evidence that medieval self-government was not simply a resurgence of Roman urban government but rather a new form of government.

In this dissertation, I put forth an argument that possess all three properties. First, I present a general framework for explaining regime change, which emphasizes the supply of institutions as a crucial, but previously overlooked, factor for understanding both the emergence and spread of urban self-government. Second, I outline how developments within the Catholic Church played a key role in igniting the first wave of transitions by making urban self-government a viable regime form. Then, I discuss how a particular Catholic monastic order furthered the spread of self-government and promoted the use of representatives in town government. Finally, I present a new take on the economic endowments argument and consider how lordly successions acted as triggers of transitions.

Chapter 3: Explaining transitions to self-government

A general framework for explaining regime change

This dissertation aims to illuminate the causes of the emergence and spread of urban regime change in medieval Europe. Yet, most modern theories of regime change focus on factors that either give rise to citizen or elite demand for new institutions or makes elites more willing to accept new institutions, arguing, for instance, that higher levels of economic development increases calls for democracy among the populace (e.g. Lipset 1959; Inglehart and Welzel 2010; Boix 2011) or contending that information asymmetries make rulers more likely to accept regime forms that dilute their power (e.g. Ahmed and Stasavage 2020). These theories, for the most part, ignore the underlying question of why certain institutions are valid choices while others are not - what I term the *supply of viable institutions*.

Entering the supply of viable institutions requires two steps: first, that an institution is even conceived of as possible; and second, that it is viewed as a legitimate choice. If one takes a historic view of regime change, the importance of these two steps becomes easily apparent. In many parts of the world today, democracy is considered the only legitimate game in town. This causes otherwise autocratic regimes to adopt democratic-like institutions, such as elections or parliaments, to disguise themselves as democracies (Levitsky and Way 2002; Schedler 2015). In contrast, practically no newly established autocracies attempt to rule as monarchies (Geddes et al. 2014). Thus, monarchy is a conceivable regime choice but not a legitimate one. For many centuries, however, democracy was not seriously considered a legitimate regime form, and its modern form, which combines competitive elections with universal suffrage, was not even conceived of. In contrast, monarchic rule reigned supreme and was practised across Europe (Kokkonen and Sundell 2014). Thus,

the supply of (viable) institutions structures both which institutions citizens and elites demand and which institutions they are willing to accept. As explained in more detail below, prior to 1000 AD, towns were ruled by lay lords or lord-bishops, and nobody had considered that urban self-government may present a viable alternative.

Once a crisis hit or an opportune moment arises to get rid of the current regime, citizens and elites evaluate which institutions from the supply might provide a better fit. This evaluation is not based on a thorough analysis of the cost and benefits of the entire supply of institutions. Rather, citizens and elites survey external organizations for institutions that can deliver easy solutions to their perceived challenges. In practice, this implies that citizens and elites focus on organizations that are legitimate, close by, visible, and have recently demonstrated success (Weyland 2008, 291-292; Gilovich et al. 2002).

Once the demands for regime change have been made, the relative bargaining positions of rulers and ruled determine whether the ruler is willing to concede to the institutional demands. It is in this step that factors emphasized by prior work matter, as, for instance, economic development reduces the cost of accepting democracy for the elite (Boix 2011).

Figure 4: Model of regime change

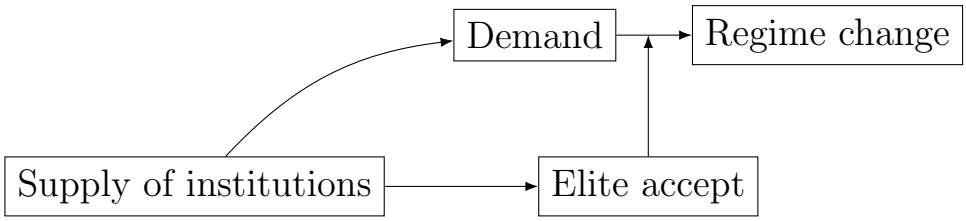


Figure 4 presents my model of regime change. It can be illustrated with an example. Imagine that the town of Troyes was hit by an exogenous crisis in 1289 AD, such as a failed harvest due to poor weather. As a result, the citizens demand a new regime which is perceived to offer better protection from similar crises in the future. Their specific demand depends on the supply of viable institutions. As it is 1289 AD, it is unlikely that they call for democracy. Thus,

they may instead demand the introduction of urban self-government, which had recently spread to a number of nearby towns. The success of this demand in turn depends on the willingness of the local lord, the Count of Champagne, to accept urban autonomy. At this point in time, the county of Champagne included several towns with local assemblies. Thus, the count may be willing to grant self-government in exchange for a future tax increase.

Figure 5: Map of Troyes in 1820 AD

Consider then the same crisis occurring in 920 AD rather than 1289 AD. At this point in time, no other town had introduced self-government. Thus, it would be unlikely that the citizens of Troyes thought of self-government as a solution to their crisis. However, even if the citizens did demand self-government, the idea would likely to be so foreign to the Count of Champagne that he would strike down any attempt at establishing self-rule.

Based on the theoretical model, I put forth two implications. I then interrogate these implications empirically to assess the usefulness of my theoretical model. First, as citizens and elites survey other organizations that are easily visible when contemplating regime change, it is more likely that a town will introduce self-government if another nearby town has done the same. Second, because citizens and elites tend to focus on recently demonstrated successes, the

above expectation is likely to weaken when urban self-government has been present for many years. In Appendix C, I find empirical support for both of these expectations (see the "Implications of model for regime change" section).

Economic development, conflict, and state collapse either strengthened the position of towns or made local lords and kings more dependent on town support. This made it more likely both that the towns would demand self-government and that their ruler would acquiesce to granting it. However, all of this is contingent on the underlying supply of viable institutions. The failure to consider this supply clarifies why prior explanations are unable to account for the timing and cross-regional pattern of self-government. As I will argue, it is no accident that medieval European towns demanded self-government with representatives while other towns did not.

How self-government entered the supply of institutions

In his translation of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*, Alfred, king of the Anglo-Saxons (847-899 AD), writes the following:[8]

> *In the case of the king, the resources and tools with which to rule are that he have his land fully manned; he must have praying men, fighting men and working men. You know also that without these tools no king may make his ability known. Another aspect of his resources is that he must have the means of support for his tools, the three classes of men.*

Here, the King articulated a widely held perception concerning the division of medieval society into three categories: those who pray, those who fight, and those who work (Powell 1994, 104-109). Previous explanations have spent much time and words on the two last societal groups while, for the most part, ignoring the first (Møller

[8]Quoted from Powell (1994, 103).

2018; Grzymala-Busse 2019). Yet, examining those who pray is crucial if we want to know why urban self-government became a viable regime form in medieval Europe.

In articles 1_{clu} and 2_{dom}, I present a new take on the emergence and spread local self-government. My explanation places the origin of self-government within a (at the time) European institution: the Catholic Church.

The Cluniac origins of self-government

Article 1_{clu} begins with a puzzle. Why did the collapse of public authority in the Carolingian Empire in the ninth and tenth centuries pre-empt a wave of urban self-government when earlier collapses of royal power did not? The answer lies in the growth of the Catholic Church in the centuries prior (see Figure 18 in the "Data" section). In the article, I argue that the collapse of royal power and subsequent concentration of Church lands in the hands of local lay lords sparked a Church reform movement that sought to reverse this lordly influence. Figure 6 depicts the extent of the Carolingian Empire prior to its division and subsequent collapse.

The Cluniac reform movement (circa 994-1200 AD) sought to eliminate irresponsible clerical government via ecclesiastical independence. It started in the small monastery of Cluny located in the Black Valley, far from the centres of power in West Francia (Bouchard 1987, 91; Melville 2016, 55; Wickham 2016, 111). Its cry for clerical reform quickly caught on, and Cluniac monasteries spread across Europe (see Figure 7).

The movement's attempt at eliminating irresponsible clerical government was not only popular with other clerics, it also fostered associationalism among townsmen. According to Wilson (2016a, 513), the reform movement created a "general belief among townsfolk that self-government was essential to ensuring a peaceful, godly community".

In the eleventh century, the ideals of the Cluniac reformers had been taken up by townsmen, who founded sworn associations of be-

Figure 6: Carolingian Empire prior to its division in 843 AD

Note: Based on Lienhard and Morice (2016b).

Figure 7: Cluny monasteries in 1109 AD

Note: The sources for the map are described in detail in the "Data" section.

lievers that tried to reform their local churches in accordance with the ideals. They argued that the community of believers rather than the

lord should elect a town's bishop (Jordan 2001, 88-91). The Cluniac expectation that self-government led to responsible office-holding led urban communities to champion for town self-government. Thus, the Cluniac reform movement fostered "civic emancipation through its sustained critique of allegedly corrupt and immoral senior clergy and the secular lords accused of protecting them" (Wilson 2016a, 513). Article 1_{clu} illustrates how urban reformers targeted Gerard, the bishop of Cambrai, in 1076 AD because he was invested by the Emperor and not the Pope. Subsequently, Gerard travelled to Rome to defend himself. In the meantime, the townsmen of Cambrai had declared a commune and swore to never have him back (Holland 2019, 213).

The Cluniac reform movement began near the end of the tenth century and peaked in the eleventh under the abbots Odilo (994-1049 AD) and Hugh (1049-1109 AD). During the twelfth century, the movement slowly petered out. Afterwards, clerical reformers turned to new, more dynamic monastic orders, such as the Cistercians, Dominicans, and Franciscans (Moore 1966, 174; Fried 2015, 164; Melville 2016, 147-167, 249-245). Thus, the first empirical expectation of the dissertation is:

H1: *towns in the proximity of Cluny monasteries are more likely to establish self-government between 1000 AD and 1200 AD.*

The Cluniac reform movement also inspired a direct attack on unreformed clerical government, such as lay investiture and simony, by Pope Gregory in 1075 AD, wherein he urged the formation of local assemblies to press for responsible clerical government - what has been termed "the Gregorian reforms" (Morris 2000, 33, 80; Fried 2015, 134-5; Oakley 2010, 220-221; Howe 2016, 6-9; Cowdrey 2000, 63, 278; Moore 1966, 29). These reforms also had important implications for urban government.

I therefore put forth two additional hypotheses. The first is not included in Article 1_{clu}. By encouraging urban assemblies to target lay investiture and otherwise unreformed bishops, Gregory promoted urban associationalism. Reinforcing this dynamic, the Gregorian

Figure 8: Portrait of Odilo of Cluny by Francesco Andreani

Note: Painted around 1730-1750 AD.

reforms, by severing lay and religious power, delegitimized the lay authority of bishops who had hitherto ruled many medieval towns as imperial or royal lords. Because the Gregorian reforms targeted bishop investiture in particular, towns under the control of a bishop were more likely to be affected. Because the Cluny reforms targeted unreformed clergy, its effects were also likely to be stronger in towns under episcopal control. Consequently, the second and third expectations of the dissertation are:

H1a: *towns with a bishop are more likely to establish self-government after 1075 AD.*

H1b: *the effect of proximity to a Cluny monastery is stronger in towns with a bishop.*

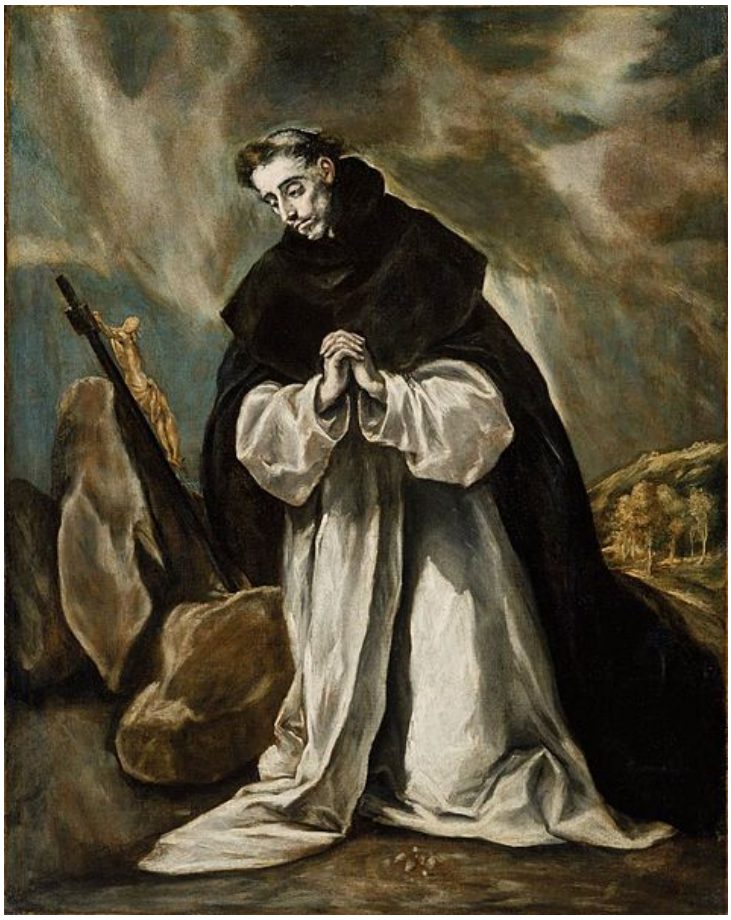
The Cluniac reform movement and the offshoot Gregorian reforms irreversibly altered the supply of institutions in medieval Europe. The reforms delegitimized the common practice of town rule by lay invested clerics, and they underlined the effectiveness of self-government. Thus, the reforms helped establish urban autonomy as a viable regime form in the minds of medieval townsmen.

The Dominican impetus

The Cluniac reform movement and its offshoot the Gregorian reform movement take us through the first large wave of transitions to urban self-government between 1000 AD and 1200 AD. However, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the wave spread to modern-day Germany and Eastern Europe. To understand this development, I turn to one of the new monastic orders of the thirteenth century: the Dominicans.

The Dominican order took its name from Dominic, who founded it in 1216 AD. Each convent chose a prior to represent them via elections. The priors made up the provincial chapter, who then elected delegates to represent their interest at the chapter general, which was the main governing body of the organization. The integrity of the election of representatives at each step was a serious matter, and attempting to deprive a friar of his vote was severely punished (Tunmore 1941, 482-83; Hinnebusch 1965, 217-232; Lawrence 1994, 82-83; Finer 1997, 1031). While the Dominican order was not the first to use representation, it developed the most extensive practice of representative government in medieval Europe (Lawrence 1994, 82; Tierney 1995, 83; Finer 1997, 1030-31).

Figure 9: Portrait of St. Dominic by El Greco



The order was highly successful and quickly spread across Europe, as illustrated by Figure 10. The administrative skills of the order's monks and its close ties with merchants made its monasteries a highly visible part of the cityscape (Powell 2008, 566-568; Stanford 2005, 187-188; Lawrence 1994, 166-181; Zaldivar 2012, 189-191, 201; Garcia-Serrano 1997, 3, 24; Casagrande 2013, 184, 187-188, 194; Bonacini 2013, 116-118; Pincelli 2013, 127). In fact, its monasteries often hosted town council and guild meetings, and the monks often acted as arbiters when there was a political crisis (Zaldivar 2012, 178, 183-188, 203; Röhrkasten 2006, 135; Jakobsen 2008, 204-214; Lawrence 1994, 177; Casagrande 2013, 195). For example, after a number of internal governmental conflicts, several Italian towns

tasked their Dominican friars with rewriting their constitution and laws to promote better government (Thompson 1992, 24; Prudlo 2010, 1278; Prudlo 2011, 201).

Figure 10: Dominican monasteries by 1300 AD

Note: Larger dots are monasteries established by 1250 AD. Smaller dots are monasteries established by 1300 AD. The sources for the map are described in detail in the "Data" section.

The contemporary success of the Dominican order and its high visibility in the cityscape made it likely that townsmen would consider it an institutional success. If we return to the general model of regime change, we can understand this as an introduction of councils with representatives to the supply of viable institutions. Because the order's mode of government had become autocratic by the fifteenth century (Hinnebusch 1965, 240-42; Gailbraith 1923, 190-91; Showalter 1973, 565-66), I put forth the following expectation:

H2: *before the fifteenth century, towns with Dominican monasteries are more likely to establish self-government (with representatives).*

Over a period of four centuries, two Catholic monastic orders showcased new organizational practices that became part of the institutional supply of townsmen. Thereby, the orders provided the

foundation for the emergence and spread of self-government in medieval Europe.

This argument is compatible with insights from the previous literature. It provides an account of how townsmen organized and acquired the idea that self-government (with representatives) promotes responsible government. It does not, however, specify why only some of the towns that were exposed to the reform movements or the Dominicans were able to translate this idea into reality. Here the *realpolitik* emphasized by previous explanations, such as warfare and endowments, kicks in, as towns had to seize opportune moments of lordly weakness or amass enough wealth to realize the idea and escape from autocratic control. Consequently, the change in institutional supply only mattered when it was buttressed by demands for regime change and when these demands were not shut down by rulers. This is the subject of the next section.

The demand for and acceptance of self-governing institutions

To understand which towns acted on the impetus towards self-government, I focus on two factors in articles 3_{agr} and 4_{suc}: local agricultural endowments and lordly successions. The first explains why only a subset of towns within a region achieved self-government, while the second explains the timing of self-government.

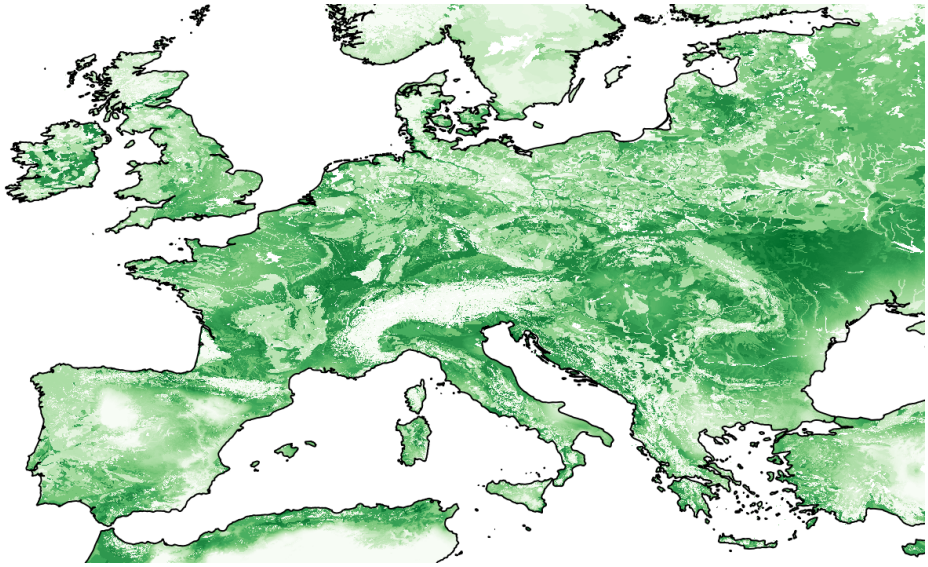
Agricultural endowments

Agricultural endowments matter for both the likelihood that urban actors will demand self-government and for their chances of success in wresting it from their overlord. Endowments do so because they affect the type and extent of economic activity in a town. Bustling towns that are teeming with markets, traders, and corporations require well-regulated transactions and secure rivers and roads. Such concerns were not often on the minds of local lords. Thus, the economic actors of such towns demanded self-government so that they

might secure these things for themselves (Pirenne 2014, 109-111; Abramson and Boix 2019, 798; Long and Shleifer 1993; North and Thomas 1973). Population growth and the organization of economic interests into corporations also strengthened the bargaining position of the citizens vis-à-vis their overlord, thereby making it more likely that the lord would accept self-government.

In Article 3_{agr}, I contend that greater agricultural endowments have a negative effect on economic development at the settlement or town level. Towns with a greater potential for growing crops were thus less likely to become self-governing. Figure 11 provides an overview of differences in agricultural potential across Europe.

Figure 11: Agricultural endowment in Europe



Note: Darker green indicates a better potential rain-fed crop yield. Data from Zabel et al. (2014).

If a town has a good potential for crop growing, it will engage in its comparative advantage, agriculture, which limits agglomeration as farming is land intensive (Eaton and Kortum 2002; Donaldson 2018). Conversely, if a town has poor agricultural endowments, farming is a high-cost activity when compared with manufacturing (van Bavel and van Zanden 2004). As a result, medieval towns with

poor potential were incentivized to produce other commodities, for instance bricks or cloth, that could be exchanged for food. Consequently, poor endowments lead to a higher focus on manufacturing and trade, which resulted in greater economic development in the long run.

Figure 12: Nuremberg in 1493 AD

An example is the town of Nuremberg. Its soils provided meager agricultural returns, which could not sustain its growing population. Thus, the town started producing bricks, sweet produce, and metalware that could be traded for food (Eiden and Irsigler 2000, 51-55). This led to the establishment of markets, which both benefited the town's population and provided access to supplies for nearby merchants. In 1219 AD, the town obtained full self-government, as it was raised to the status of *reichsstadt* (SN 2018). Thus, the next empirical expectation of the dissertation is:

H3: *towns with good local agricultural endowments are less likely to establish self-government.*

This expectation contrasts with previous scholars who have argued that good endowments promote growth and by extension local self-government (e.g. Bosker et al. 2013b; Andersen et al. 2016; Nunn and Qian 2011; Abramson and Boix 2019; Schmidt et al. 2018). This can be explained by their focus on regions rather than settlements.

My argument supposes that townsmen substitute activities related to agriculture with proto-manufacturing when the agricultural endowments of a town's environs are poor. However, this presumes that a town can import agricultural surpluses from other nearby settlements within the region. This implies that the negative effect of good agricultural endowments should be weaker in towns that have higher trade cost. Therefore, a conditional expectation can also be put forth:

H3a: *the effect of good local agricultural endowments is weakened in towns with poor access to trade.*

Successions

Successions affect the likelihood of introducing self-government via two pathways. In the first, towns utilize bargaining related to the establishment of power-sharing arrangements under the new lord to demand self-government as a concession. In the second, towns use the absence of state power following an increase in political instability after the death of a lord to take self-government for themselves (Kokkonen and Sundell 2019, 10; Kokkonen and Møller 2020a, 7; Tullock 1987; Brownlee 2007; Acharya and Lee 2019; Kokkonen and Sundell 2019; Blainey 1988; Holsti 1991). These two pathways are what Blockmans (Blockmans 1989, 740) terms the *bargaining metropoles* path and the *autonomous metropoles* path, respectively. The implication of both paths is that the likelihood of a city transitioning to self-government increases after a succession.

For instance, when the Duke of Brabant, Henry III, died in 1261 AD, the towns under his authority formed an urban league. Subsequently, the league was successful in gaining political influence, and their consent was sought for all important ducal matters under Henry's successor (Uytven and Blockmans 1969, 403). Consequently, I put forth the following empirical expectation:

Figure 13: Portrait of Henry III, the Duke of Brabant

Note: From the "Docum Brabantiae Chronica" by Adriaan van Baerland, Jan Moretus, and Plantijnsche Drukkerij (ca. 1600 AD).

H4: *towns are more likely to transition to self-government following a succession.*

Article 4_{suc} posits that this relationship is moderated by two factors that influence the ability of the lord to deny towns self-government. First, I argue that the presence of town walls greatly increases the cost of subjugating a town, as walls made a small group of citizens capable of repulsing a much larger force (Bachrach 1994, 119; Tracy 2000; Engel and Holtz 1989, 159-223; Bradbury 1992,

135). Consequently, lords had a lower likelihood of success in coercing walled towns into giving up self-government.

Second, I contend that lordships which had experienced many partitions due to a large number of heirs were less able to deny self-government. This is, of course, only true for lords that practiced partible inheritance - the division of properties among a lord's sons. Poland presents a clear example. In 1138 AD, King Boleslaw divided his lands between his five sons. As a consequence, subsequent rulers had to grant numerous privileges to Poland's cities in order to secure their succession and ward of competitors (Blockmans 1989, 742-743). Generally, I expect the following:

H4a: *walled towns are more likely to transition to self-government following a succession.*

H4b: *towns in lordships practicing partible inheritance with a history of producing many heirs are more likely to transition to self-government following a succession.*

To test the four main empirical expectations (and their sub-hypotheses), Chapter 4 presents the data used in the four corresponding articles.

Chapter 4: Data

First, I showcase existing data on self-government in Europe and discuss its limitations. Next, I present two newly collected datasets on self-government that provide better temporal precision and better coverage for smaller towns. Then, I provide an overview of additional variables in the second newly coded dataset, which are used to the test the hypotheses from articles 3_{agr} and 4_{suc}. Hereafter, I introduce my dataset of Catholic institutions in medieval Europe, which I use to test the hypotheses from articles 1_{clu} and 2_{dom}. Finally, I discuss the quality of the data and its implications for my results.

Extant data on urban self-government in Europe

Collective decision making by societal groups was, according to Reynolds (1997, 5, 35-68), already present around the tenth century in Western Europe. However, the institutionalization, and subsequent contestation, of local self-government did not occur before the medieval period. The institutionalization of self-government, which further eased collective action, served to protect the townsmen from arbitrary transgression by lordly rulers (see e.g. Blockmans 1989, 737-741; Uytven and Blockmans 1969, 403; Lurie 2015, 365-366, 378; Pfeiffer 1997, 389-405). Indeed, a core value for prospective citizens was their willingness to defend the freedoms of a town from external threats (Johanek 2000, 308). Tracking the institutionalization of self-government across Europe thus allows me to capture the strength of local societal groups.

To get a sense of the development of local self-governing institutions over time, I begin by surveying the existing datasets of town regime change. Bosker et al. (2013b) provide a measure of self-government for 677 towns at the town-century level of analysis that covers all of Europe: the *commune* variable. They only include towns that reach at least 10.000 inhabitants between 800 AD and 1800 AD. The variable is set to 1 in centuries where a local council comprised of inhabitants is present, and 0 otherwise. The coding of

some towns are, however, problematic as the construction of town halls and the granting of city charters are used as proxies for self-government (Bosker et al. 2013a, 10-11). The granting of town charters was not always equal to the establishment of self-government. In some cases, charters only included provisions for courts and customs. Such charters were used to confirm the lord's ownership of the town rather than assert its self-government (Cantoni et al. 2020, 2). This measure thus approximates a distinction between categories i) and ii)+iii).

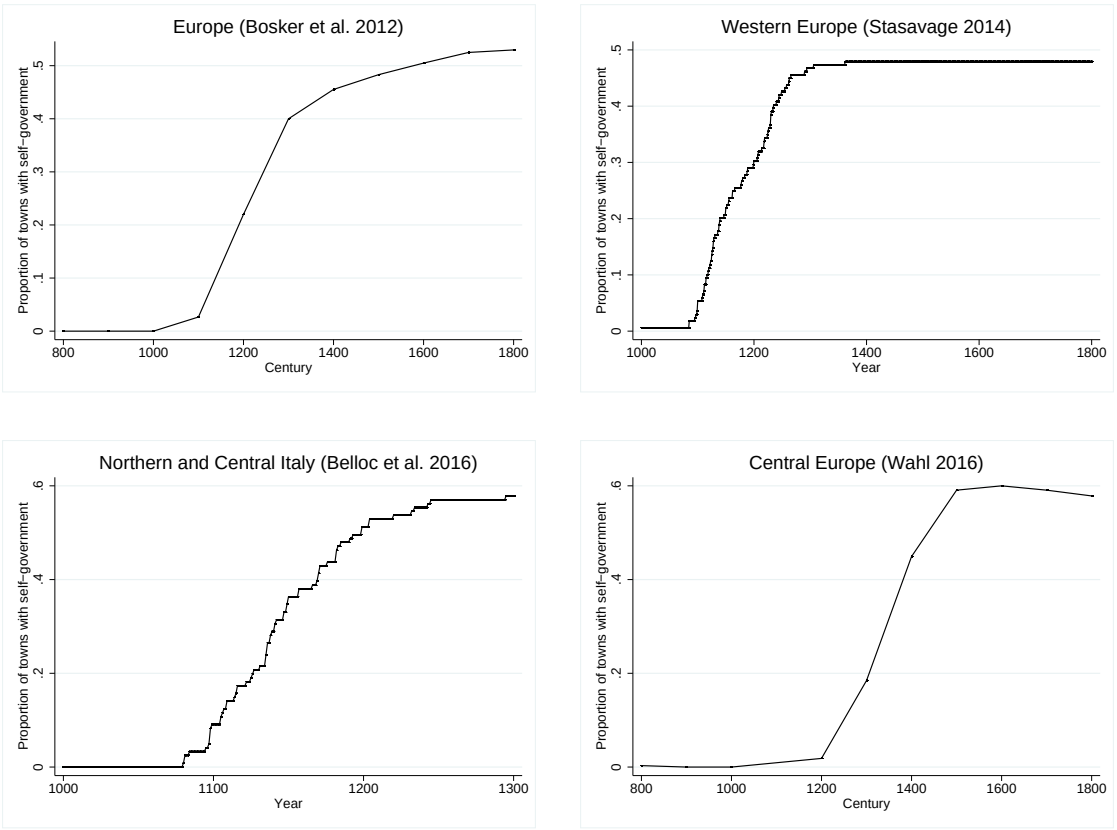
Based on the above dataset, Stasavage (2014) constructs a more precise measure of town autonomy for 169 Western European towns between 1000 AD and 1800 AD, which is available at the town-year level. It is equal to 1 in years where a town has institutions of self-government whose members are chosen by the inhabitants of the town, and 0 otherwise. Moreover, these institutions must have prerogatives in multiple core policy areas to score a 1. This measure consequently approximates a distinction between categories i)+ii) and iii). Belloc et al. (2016) provide a similarly precise measure for 121 northern and central Italian towns, which cover the period 1000 AD to 1300 AD. They look for mentions of the presence of *consules* and a description of citizens ejecting their lordly leadership from the town. Consequently, their measure also seems to distinguish between categories i)+ii) and iii).

Finally, Wahl (2016) presents a dataset measuring regime change in 325 Central European towns between 800 AD and 1800 AD at the town-century level. He also codes the presence of self-governing institutions. However, his main focus is distinguishing between different compositions of the town government (guild representatives, elected representatives, and different citizen group representatives). As a result, he primarily distinguishes between categories i) and ii)+iii).

Figure 14 provides an overview of the development of self-government over time according to each dataset. They generally agree that the first self-governing towns begin to appear during the late eleventh century. However, the majority of towns transition to self-government

some time during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with the last transitions occurring during the fourteenth century. The emergence of self-governing towns is thus primarily a medieval phenomenon. Regional differences in autonomy are apparent. Based on the data provided by Stasavage (2014) and Belloc et al. (2016), it seems that the first transitions primarily happen in Western Europe, and northern and central Italy in particular. Comparing their trend to the data from Wahl (2016) suggests that the German parts of Western Europe are latecomers in comparison with the others.

Figure 14: The evolution of urban self-government over time



There are two main challenges with using existing datasets. The first is the lack of temporal precision, which hampers the analysis of divergent trends based on significant historical events. This is

partly addressed by the datasets of Stasavage (2014) and Belloc et al. (2016). However, the latter only covers parts of Italy, while the former primarily includes large cities. The second issue is, consequently, poor coverage of middle-sized and small towns - at least if temporal precision is also required.[9] In the next section, I therefore present two new datasets that help address these challenges.

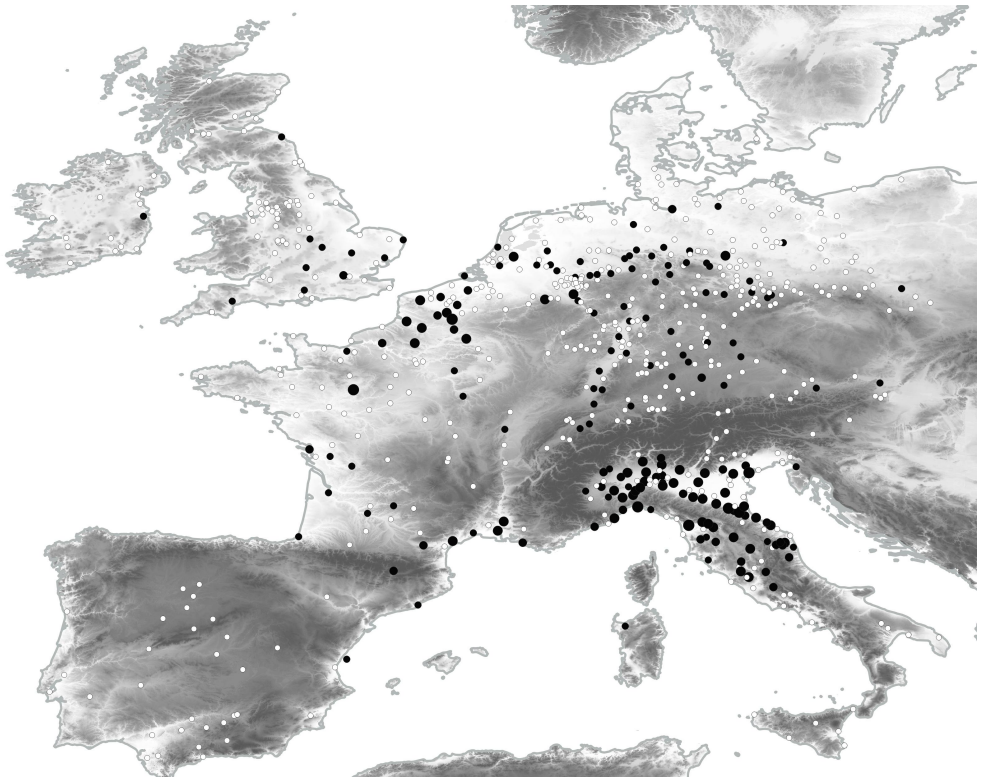
Enlisting new data to track self-government in Europe

To provide improved coverage of smaller towns, I have supplemented Stasavage's dataset using the three other sources mentioned above. The 121 towns from Belloc et al. (2016) have been directly incorporated and checked for inconsistencies. In addition, I have added additional towns from Wahl (2016) and Bosker et al. (2013). All towns that achieved self-government in the period 1000-1300 AD according to these authors were recoded for additional temporal precision. Self-government was coded as having begun at the first date for which a local governing body comprised of representatives of the citizenry with prerogatives over multiple policy areas is mentioned - resulting in a dataset of 680 European towns. It approximates the distinction between categories i)+ii) and iii) of self-government. The main work used for coding Britain was Tait (1968), and for France, it was Dutallis (1978). To code German towns, I looked primarily at town histories written by historians and official town chronicles produced by the towns themselves. The sources are presented in more detail in the appendix. Figure 15 shows the geographical distribution of the 680 towns and the century in which they transitioned to self-government (if they did so before 1300 AD).

The map confirms the picture from Figure 14, namely that the

[9]It should be noted that the availability of data will always constrain the extent of precision that is possible to attain (especially for smaller towns). However, the systematic differences in self-government for towns hit by earthquakes and towns unaffected by earthquakes in Belloc et al. (2016) are apparent at the town-year level of analysis. This suggests that disaggregating below the century level can yield meaningful insights.

Figure 15: Urban self-government in Europe, 1000-1300 AD



Note: Dots represents towns in the dataset. White dots never achieve self-government. Dot size indicates the number of years a town had self-government between 1000 AD and 1300 AD - more years correspond to larger dots. Coastline data from Patterson and Kelso (2019). Data on elevation from EEA (2019).

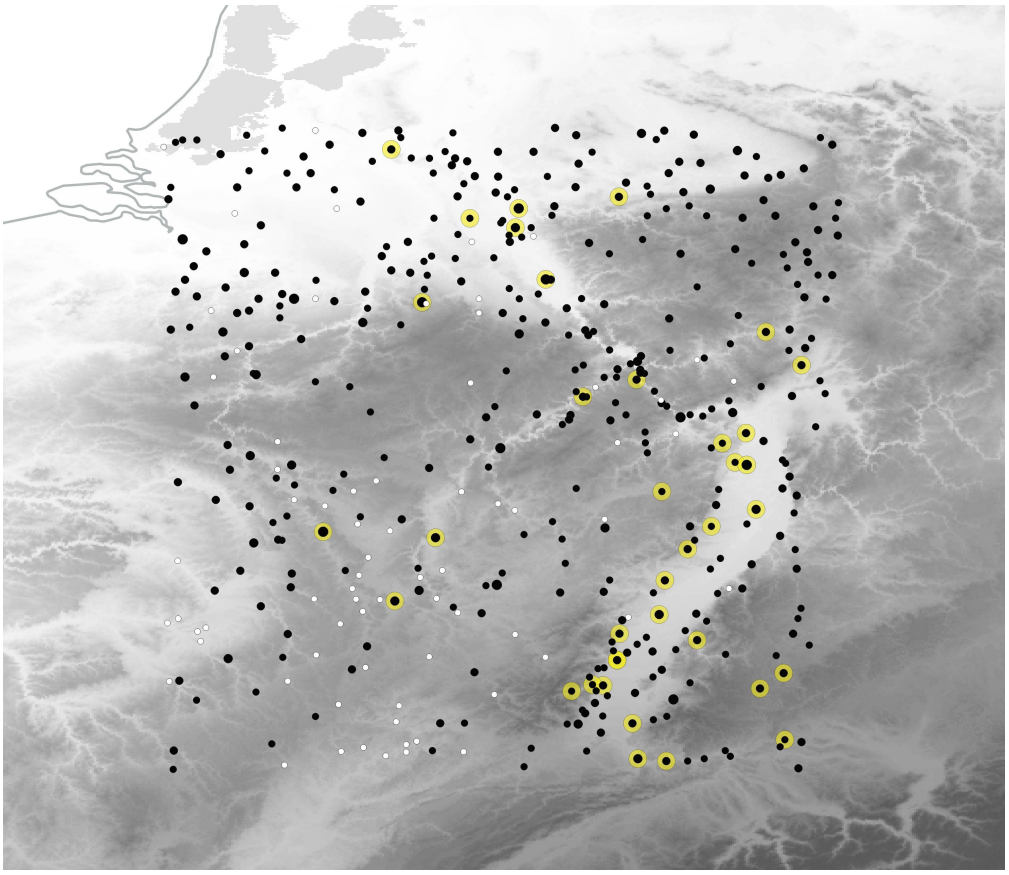
first towns to achieve self-government were located in northern and central Italy, northern France, and the Benelux region. The second wave was more geographically spread out as towns located in Britain, southern France, northern Iberia, and Germany also began to transition in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Consequently, by the end of the thirteenth century, self-governing towns were present across broad swatches of Western Europe. Data is generally sparse with regards to institutional changes in town government within Scandinavia. The evidence available suggests that many towns were able to attain the second category of self-government some time during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. No city-states proper emerged

in Scandinavia, probably because of the relatively small urban populations and the relative strength of royal power (see Jacobsen 1991; Andrén 1985; Mackeprang 1900; Lindberg 1941; Gustafsson 2006).

Despite the additional towns, the above dataset does mostly cover larger European towns. I therefore also introduce a second dataset with more variation in town size. In terms of contemporary population size, it ranges from small villages of around 100 inhabitants to major cities with more than a million inhabitants. In addition to including smaller towns, the dataset also has additional advantages, which are utilized in articles 3_{agr} and 4_{suc}. First, by providing information on the foundation date of a town, it allows me to use the introduction of rye cultivation as a quasi-natural experiment. Second, the source book contains information on the lordly ownership of the towns from 1000-1400 AD. This allows me to investigate the impact of successions much more accurately than previously possible. To construct this dataset, I employ a systematic survey of 459 towns located in western Germany, eastern France, southern Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and northern Switzerland between 1000 AD and 1400 AD - *Die Urbanen Zentren des Hohen und Späteren Mittelalters* (Escher and Hirschmann 2005). For each town, it records the year when a governing body of citizens is first mentioned (if it is ever mentioned). It can, thus, best be thought of a delineating category i) from categories ii)+iii). I also code when and if a town obtained the status of either *reichstadt* or *imperial*, which implied that they were completely independent from lordly authority, except for the *imperial* towns which were, at least nominally, under the authority of the Emperor (Johanek 2000). These towns can thus be thought of as belonging to category iii). Figure 16 presents the location of the towns, the number of years each town had self-government (based on the i) and ii)+iii) categorization), and whether a town has had the status of either *reichstadt* or *imperial* during the 1000 AD to 1400 AD period.

The map shows that institutions of urban self-government were widespread in Northwestern Europe during the medieval period, as

Figure 16: Urban self-government in Northwestern Europe, 1000-1400 AD



Note: Dots represents towns in the dataset. White dots never achieve self-government. Dot size indicates the number of years a town had self-government between 1000 AD and 1400 AD - more years correspond to larger dots. Towns with the status of *reichstadt* or *imperial* are enclosed in a yellow circle. Coastline data from Patterson and Kelso (2019). Data on elevation from EEA (2019).

a majority of settlements had a self-governing body before 1400 AD. When compared with Figure 15, it is clear that many of these settlements only have a low degree of self-government as they are only coded as having self-government in this dataset. This is consistent with the historical evidence that indicates an ubiquitous presence of corporate self-governing bodies in medieval Western Europe (see Reynolds 1997, 168-202). It also highlights the difference between

the towns that had prerogatives over a few policy areas, which were almost everywhere, and the towns with more wide-reaching independence, which were concentrated in a few areas.

Data on urban development, lordly ownership, and lordly succession

The dataset based on *Die Urbanen Zentren des Hohen und Späteren Mittelalters* (Escher and Hirschmann 2005) has information on the annual degree of self-government in 459 towns between 1000 AD and 1400 AD. I use this dataset to probe the expectations from articles 3_{agr} and 4_{suc}.

The empirical strategy in Article 3_{agr} relies on knowledge concerning the foundation date of each town and on information concerning their urban economic development over time. The next chapter describes the empirical strategy in detail; however, the main point is that I require information on urban development from the eighth century to the end of the self-government waves. *Die Urbanen Zentren des Hohen und Späteren Mittelalters* records such information for each town. All towns in the book contains a detailed history, and the authors of each town history were required to mention the date of introduction for a number of factors (for example, if the town ever had a guild).

Specifically, I code the following variables:

i) the year a town was first mentioned (notice that for some towns this information was only available at the level of periods. For instance, some towns were described as appearing during Roman times. These I code to the median century of the period);

ii) an indicator for the presence of a monastery in 800 AD, as monasteries functioned as centres for lordly administration during this period (Wood 1994, 183-194);

iii) the number of markets in a given town-year between 800 AD and 1400 AD as the granting of market rights is a strong predictor of urban growth (see Cantoni and Yuchtman 2014);

iv) an indicator for the presence of a castle in a town-year between 800 AD and 1400 AD as they proxied for lordly authority (Lyon 2017, 17-20);

v) the number of guilds in a town-year between 800 AD and 1400 AD (note that guilds did not appear before well into the medieval period), which indicates the number of well-developed manufacturing sectors (Epstein and Prak 2008, 7-15);

vi) an indicator for the presence of long distance trade (which is defined as regular trading with towns that are more than 50km away) between 1000 AD and 1400 AD (information was generally not available for this variable prior to 1000 AD); and

vii) an indicator for the presence of town wall in a town-year (this was coded for Article 4_{suc}).

To get a sense of the data, Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for each variable in 1000 AD and 1300 AD (for the towns that have been founded prior to 1000 AD).

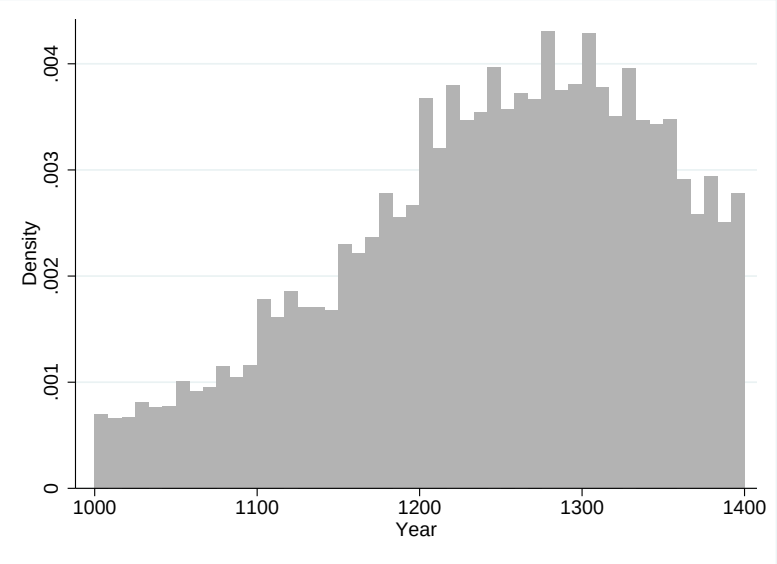
Article 4_{suc} uses data on the lordly ownership of each town to connect successions with self-government. Based on *Die Urbanen*

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for Northwestern European towns founded before 1000 AD

	Mean	Standard deviation
	1000 AD	
Foundation year	515	373
Monastery in 800 AD	0.048	0.215
Markets	0.254	0.498
Castle	0.222	0.416
Guilds	0	0
Long-distance trade	0.032	0.177
Wall	0.103	0.304
	1300 AD	
Markets	1.322	1.346
Castle	0.672	0.470
Guilds	0.717	2.909
Long-distance trade	0.209	0.407
Wall	0.711	0.454

Zentren des Hohen und Späteren Mittelalters, I was able to code ownership data for 293 towns, which is related to 43 lordly houses and 7 episcopal seats. Article 4_{suc} presents all houses and seats in more detail. Figure 17 shows the availability of this data over time. Note that the decline in data after 1330 AD can partly be attributed to the number of towns that achieve full self-government, and thus drop out of the sample. As could be expected, a general increase in data can be seen over time. To ensure that my findings in Article 4_{suc} are not simply driven by a correlation between data quality and successions over time, all models include year fixed effects in this article.

Figure 17: Availability of data on lordly ownership



To implement the empirical strategy of Article 4_{suc}, I code the year each lord died or was deposed. My main source on information on lordly succession is the *Medieval Lands* database, which has relied heavily on the following sources: *Monumenta Germaniæ Historica, Gallica* website by the French National Library, and the *Europäische Stammtafeln* series (Cawley 2006). The database is hosted by the Foundation for Medieval Genaelogy. If there was no evidence that a ruler abdicated, died in combat, or was deposed, I code the ruler

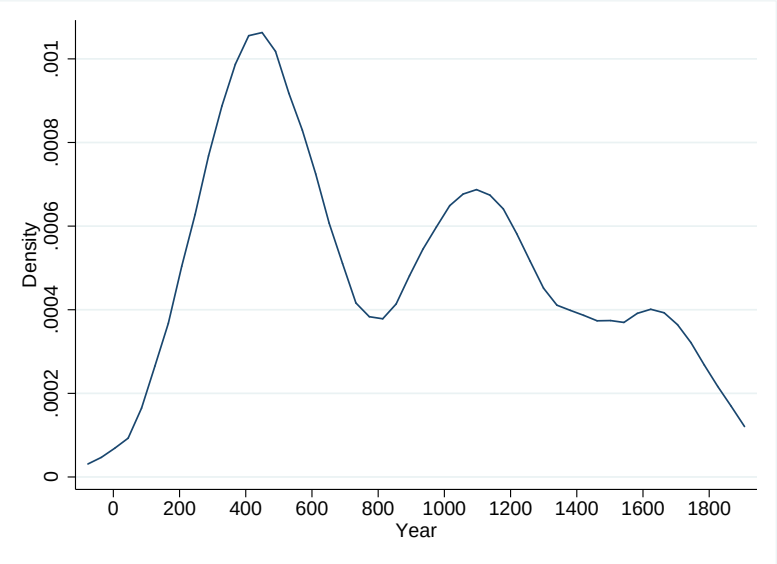
as having died a natural death. Data on succession for the episcopal seats is based on my Church dataset, which is presented below.

Data on the Church in the Middle Ages

To code spatial and temporal data on European monastic development, I use the *Atlas zur Kirchengeschichte: die Christlichen Kirchen in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Jedin et al. 1987), which contains information on the spread of the following monastic orders over time: the Cluniacs, the Dominicans, and the Franciscans. For more precise information on the spatial location of each monasteries, I also consult the *Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilization* (McCormick et al. 2018). My temporal precision is limited by these sources. Thus, I have data for the following time periods for each monastic order: the Cluniacs 910 AD, 911-997 AD, 998-1058 AD, 1059-1109 AD, and 1110- AD; the Dominicans 1216-1250 AD, 1251-1300 AD, and 1301-1400 AD; and the Franciscans 1209-1300 AD. So, for instance, 911-997 AD implies that I have the location of all monasteries that were constructed sometime between 911-997 AD (without knowing exactly which year in this period). German towns in my data that are matched with a monastery are quality checked against the *klosterdatenbank* (GS 2019). These checks suggest that the atlases do well in identifying towns with a monastery. However, the checks cannot be used to ascertain if the atlases underestimate the number of monasteries.

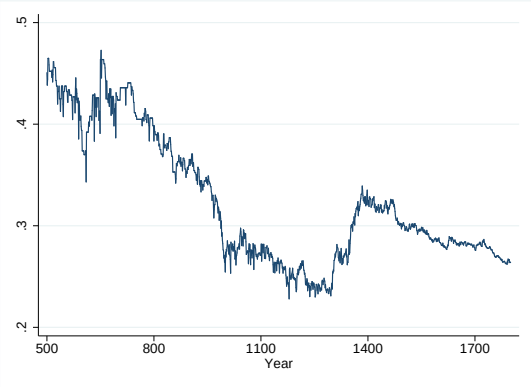
Data on episcopal seat is generally of better quality. To construct a dataset of bishoprics, I have scraped the *Catholic Hierarchy* database (Cheney 2019), which contains information on the foundation date, location, and episcopal succession for each episcopal seat in Europe between 0 AD and 1800 AD, covering a total of 1053 seats. The data has been checked against two alternative databases of episcopal seats (see Chow 2018; Lienhard and Morice 2016a). Figure 18 plots the temporal development of episcopal seats in Europe. It indicates that the spread of Christianity peaked during the fifth and the eleventh centuries.

Figure 18: Episcopal seat foundations over time

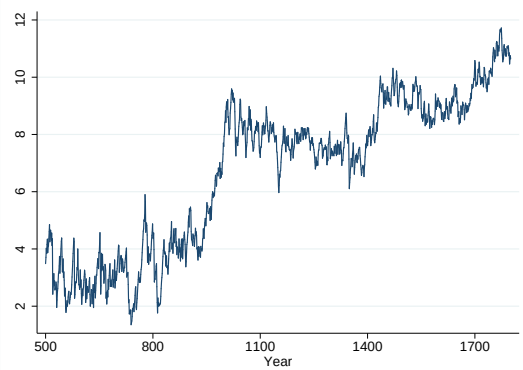


Data on episcopal successions is of less reliable quality. However, by combining data from the scraped dataset (Cheney 2019), and data from Chow (2018), it was possible to complete the dataset on episcopal succession in the 7 episcopal seats used in Article 4_{suc}. For possible future users, I present an overview of the data quality of the succession data. The left graph in Figure 19 shows that the quality of the data was generally substantially poorer prior to 1000 AD. This is in line with historical datasets of urban population size (see e.g. Bosker et al. 2013b). The quality seems to decrease at the end of the thirteenth century. This may, however, reflect the spread of Christianity in Eastern Europe. The right graph gives an example of the development in a possible outcome, the average tenure of bishops, which seems to markedly increase after the fourteenth century.

Figure 19: Episcopal succession data availability and average tenure over time



(a) Proportion of seats with missing succession data



(b) Average bishop tenure

Data validity

Even with the validity checks mentioned above, there are bound to be a number of misclassifications when using datasets that are based on medieval sources. If these are randomly distributed, it will not pose a major problem. However, as both Figure 17 and Figure 19 illustrate, there is a clear upward trend in data quality over time (with a marked increase around the tenth century). To ensure that my results are not simply capturing this positive time trend, all models that use time series data include time fixed effects.

A more specific problem is that members of the Catholic Church often performed central administrative tasks for the secular elite during the Middle Ages (Møller 2019, 2020). This makes it likely that towns with Catholic institutions also had better record keeping, and thus, it may be more likely that their establishment of self-government is recorded. In the Dominican paper, this is somewhat alleviated, as the effect of the order is compared to a contemporary monastic order which is not hypothesized to affect self-government. However, one might still worry that Catholic-driven differences in record keeping are confounding the results. I therefore

use my dataset of episcopal successions to construct a map that approximates the spatial distribution of Catholic record keeping quality. Specifically, I calculate the proportion of years between 1000 AD and 1400 AD that an episcopal seat had missing succession data. Then, I spatially interpolate this value across Europe. Figure 36 in Appendix C presents the resulting map. I then assign all towns in the Bosker et al. (2012) dataset a record keeping quality score based on their location on the map and rerun my main models controlling for this score. Table 10 in Appendix C provides evidence that accounting for better record keeping due to the Catholic Church's presence does not substantially alter the findings of the dissertation. Within episcopal towns, there is also no correlation between data availability and transition date (p-value of 0.30).

To summarize, I find it highly unlikely that the results presented in this dissertation are caused by measurement error stemming from poor data quality. However, it is probable that at least some towns are misclassified. Thus, the reported coefficients should not be taken at face value but rather as indicators of the kind of effect size that is likely.

The reliability of the coding

Ideally, an alternative coder should return similar transition dates and locations for Catholic institutions if he or she recoded all the towns in my various datasets. However, it was not feasible for me to enlist another person to redo all of my coding. Thus, I do not have precise data on the reliability of the coding.

Yet, as I will argue, reliability issues are unlikely to substantially influence my results. First, if I compare the coding of the 13 German towns with self-government that appear in both my dataset of 680 European towns and Stasavage's (2014) dataset of 168 Western European towns, the across dataset transition dates have a Pearson's R of 0.91. This is comparable to modern indicators of regime change (see Skaaning et al. 2015, 1509). Second, the *Die Urbanen Zentren des Hohen und Späteren Mittelalters* (Escher and Hirschmann 2005)

contains a table for each town that lists the time interval that each town characteristic appeared. Thus, it was always clear if, for instance, a town ever had a wall and in what century the wall was built. This makes it likely that an alternative coder would return similar results. Third, the Catholic institutions' data is coded by going through location and time data that is presented in the maps and databases. Thus, it does not rely on judgements by the coder. Finally, I follow Lueders and Lust (2018) and replicate my analysis (when possible) using at least one other dataset to ensure that the findings do not rely on my coding decisions.

Chapter 5: Empirical strategies and results

Empirical strategies

This dissertation aims at uncovering the *causes* of urban self-government, and thus, it attempts to establish credible causal inferences. The effect of an explanation is given by the difference in outcomes (e.g. if it establishes self-government or not) between town i if it either receives treatment or not (e.g. if it has a Dominican monastery or not): $Y_i^{t=1} - Y_i^{t=0}$. The fundamental challenge is that we cannot observe town i's outcome both with and without treatment - that is, we cannot observe both $Y_i^{t=1}$ and $Y_i^{t=0}$ (Eaton and Kortum 1986; Morgan and Winship 2007).

As a result, we instead have to compare the outcome of treated town 1, $Y_1^{t=1}$ with the outcome of untreated town 2, $Y_2^{t=0}$, which then serves as our counterfactual. If town 1's outcome in absence of treatment ($Y_1^{t=0}$) is similar to town 2's outcome ($Y_2^{t=0}$), then town 2 is a valid counterfactual. The golden standard for making such comparisons is experiments where units are randomly assigned to a treatment or control group (Angrist and Pischke 2008). For instance, if testing hypothesis 2, I would randomly assign Dominican monasteries to one group of medieval towns and not to another, and then compare their levels of self-government in the proceeding years. However, this strategy is, for obvious reasons, not useful when examining historical developments.

Simple comparisons of the observed difference in self-government between, for example, towns with good and poor agricultural potential are likely confounded, as I cannot be certain that such towns do not also differ on other characteristics that influence their likelihood of attaining self-government. One could imagine that areas with good agricultural potential also have earlier state building, which could affect the region's political stability and hence its presence of urban self-government. Consequently, this dissertation uses four main strategies to approximate $Y_i^{t=1} - Y_i^{t=0}$ comparisons and increase

the likelihood that the presented estimates can be given a causal interpretation.

The first strategy is a difference-in-difference design where differences in outcome trends are compared for treated and untreated units, which rely on less stringent assumptions than the simple comparison. The second is instrumental variable analysis where I use a third variable, z, to identify exogenous variation in treatment (in this case, Cluny proximity), which then approximates the experimental comparison. The third is natural experiments where exogenous events are leveraged to find as-if random assignment of treatment to different towns. The fourth and final strategy is using falsification tests and observable implications. This strategy relies on identifying time periods, areas, outcomes, or other contexts where treatment should have either a stronger or a null effect if the argument is correct. I then test if the implication of the arguments holds in these contexts. If, for instance, an effect is found where none should be expected, it suggests that an alternative theoretical mechanism may be driving any observed relationship between the primary treatment and self-government.

In the next four sections, I go through the strategies and detail how each article makes use of them. None of the articles are able to provide estimates that match the $Y_i^{t=1} - Y_i^{t=0}$ comparison. However, I believe that they supply estimates that are closer to this ideal than much previous literature.

Difference-in-difference

The simple difference-in-difference approach compares the difference in outcome for the treatment group over two periods ($y_{p=2}^{treat} - y_{p=1}^{treat}$), with treatment occurring in the second period, with the difference in outcome for the control group ($y_{p=2}^{control} - y_{p=1}^{control}$) over the same two periods - where p denotes period, thus giving us the *difference-in-difference*: $(y_{p=2}^{treat} - y_{p=1}^{treat}) - (y_{p=2}^{control} - y_{p=1}^{control})$. This has two benefits over a simple comparison. First, because it looks at changes over time, it excludes all possible covariates whose impact remains con-

stant over time, such as a Roman legacy (see Wahl 2017). Second, by subtracting the trend in self-government among non-treated towns, it accounts for any general trend in self-government that coincides with treatment. The core assumption of this approach is that the treated towns would have a followed a similar trend in self-government in the absence of treatment - the parallel trends assumption (Angrist and Pischke 2008, Chap. 5).

Articles 1_{clu} and 2_{dom} apply this design. They compare the difference in the number of transitions to self-government among towns located near either a Cluniac monastery or a Dominican monastery before and after each order's appearance, with the difference in self-government among non-monastic towns. Thus, they assume that, for instance, a Dominican town would have had a similar increase in the likelihood of attaining self-government after 1200 AD as a non-Dominican town if the order had never existed.

While this assumption is weaker than the one required for a simple cross-sectional comparison of towns, it may still be problematic. If, for example, Dominican towns were also more likely to experience higher growth after 1200 AD compared to non-Dominican towns, then Dominican towns may have been more likely to see an increase in self-government during this period even in the absence of the order. I therefore relax the parallel trends assumption in three ways. First, I include a number of controls that measure changes in characteristics that are related to other determinants of self-government (see Chapter 2 for an overview).

Second, I allow all controls (including time-invariant characteristics) a differential impact over time, which accounts for unthought-of possible violations of the parallel trends assumption that are related to measured characteristics. For example, if agricultural potential has a constant effect on self-government over time, then the basic difference-in-difference approach controls for this confounder. Imagine then that the effect of agricultural potential changes over time, for instance due to the invention of the heavy plough (see Andersen et al. 2016); then, it is plausible that the parallel trend assumption

does not hold in the basic set-up. If, however, I condition on a set of covariates (that includes a measure of agricultural potential) interacted with time ($\boldsymbol{\beta X}_{ip} + \boldsymbol{\delta}(\boldsymbol{X}_{ip} \times P_p)$), then the assumption is more likely to hold.

Third, I allow towns within each kingdom to have a different trend in self-government over time, thus controlling for kingdom-specific changes. In particular, this is aimed at the state collapse literature which posits that differences in self-government are driven by collapses of royal power. Allowing each kingdom a differential effect across time controls for such collapses.

Note, however, that the parallel trend assumption can generally be thought of as more credible if the estimate for the effect of the Cluniac reform movement or the Dominican order remains relatively unchanged as additional controls and interactions with time are added, as this indicates that the non-monastic towns provide a more plausible counterfactual trend in self-government (Wing et al. 2018, 459).

IV estimation

In Article 1_{clu}, I supplement the difference-in-difference analysis with the instrumental variable approach, where I use distance from the original monastery in Cluny to identify exogenous variation in a town's proximity to a Cluny monastery. The first assumption required for a valid IV design is that the instrument, distance to Cluny, is strongly correlated with the explanatory variable, proximity to nearest Cluniac monastery. The monasteries that took part in the Cluny reform movement were often tied to other nearby Cluny abbots. Sometimes, monks were even brought in from Cluny Abbey to lead the monastery. Consequently, Cluniac practices and ideas travelled from neighbouring monastery to neighbouring monastery (Bouchard 1987, 90; Bouchard 1990, 380; Melville 2016, 67-71). This is confirmed in Article 1_{clu}, which shows that the Cluniac monasteries spread in concentric circles from Cluny. The article also provides evidence that the instrument is strongly associated with proximity to other Cluny monasteries.

Table 2: IV - distance to Cluny and known determinants of self-government, 900-1000 AD

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Outcome	Pop. growth	Became bishop seat	Conflict
Distance to Cluny	-0.0151	0.0028	-0.0020
	(0.0117)	(0.0023)	(0.0033)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	643	643	643

Data from Bosker et al. (2013b). Estimated using OLS. Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The second assumption required for valid IV results is that the instrument is unrelated to town regime change, except through its association with proximity to other Cluny monasteries - the exclusion restriction. When the original monastery was built, the town of Cluny was an insignificant settlement in the Black Valley, far from the seats of power in West Francia (Bouchard 1987, 91; Melville 2016, 55; Wickham 2016, 111). Thus, it is unlikely that distance to Cluny is correlated with urban self-government in general. Preferably, I would assess this assumption by investigating if distance to Cluny predicts pre-movement urban transitions. However, because no towns had self-government before the reform movement, I examine whether the instrument is correlated with tenth-century changes in known determinants of self-government: population growth, bishop presence, and conflict.[10]

Table 2 finds no significant correlation between distance to Cluny and pre-movement urban development. This indicates that the instrument identifies variation in monastery location that is exogenous to other urban changes that trigger regime change. In addition, Article 1_{clu} interrogates the relationship between the instrument and guild revolts. The revolts tried to expand the inclusiveness of town assemblies, and started in the late thirteenth century and lasted until

[10]The following controls are used: longitude, latitude, sea port, navigable river, being on a Roman road hub, elevation, terrain ruggedness, and soil quality.

the fifteenth century. As the Cluny reform movement ebbed out in the twelfth century, the instrument should be unrelated to these revolts. Reassuringly, there is no correlation between distance to Cluny and guild revolts. Finally, the article also provides a sensitivity test based on Conley et al. (2012), which indicates that it would require a substantial violation of the exclusion restriction to invalidate the findings.

Natural experiments

Natural experiments use observational settings where the assignment of treatment is as close to as-if random as possible, to approximate experiments in contexts where they are not feasible (Dunning 2012). Articles 3_{agr} and 4_{suc} both employ this method, albeit in very different ways.

Article 3_{agr} seeks to test the effect of agricultural potential on urban self-government. A simple correlation between the soil's suitability for crop growth and the likelihood that a town gains self-government likely suffers from selection problems. People that have a preference for agriculture over manufacturing may be more likely to found settlements in areas that have greater soil. Thus, I exploit a natural experiment, namely the introduction of rye to Northwestern Continental Europe around the eighth century. Rye seems to have travelled from Turkey and the south Balkans via tribal migrations. Once introduced, rye became the preferred crop of this region, and its popularity did not wane before the early modern period. Prior to rye's introduction, the main crops grown in Northwestern Europe were emmer wheat, spelt, and barley (Zohary et al. 2017, 65-66; Rösch et al. 1992, 206-209, 217-220; Rösch 1998, 122; Rösch et al. 2008, 234; Behre 1992, 145-148; Speleers and van der Valk 2017, 99; Brombacher and Hecker 2015, 335; Bakels 2005, 398; van Zeist et al. 1994, 193).

To utilize this change in agricultural potential, I focus on a sample of towns that were established prior to the eighth century, as they had not been founded based on their observable potential for growing

rye. Thus, the assignment of rye suitability in this sample is likely to be as-if random. To evaluate if this is the case, Article 3_{agr} examines the correlations between the rye suitability of a town's surrounding area and a number of urban characteristics in 800 AD.[11]

Figure 20: Predicting town development in 800 AD based on rye suitability

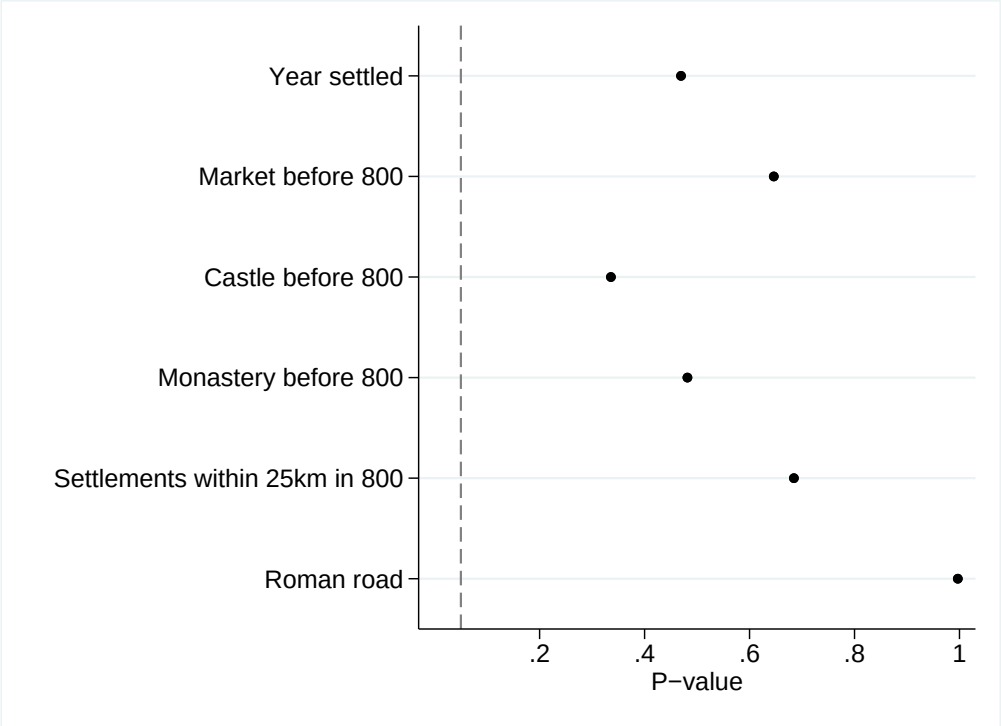


Figure 20 presents p-values from regressions where town characteristics in 800 AD is predicted using rye suitability. Across all indicators, there is no relationship with rye suitability. This makes it more plausible that the assignment of rye suitability is as-if random, thus suggesting that an estimate of rye suitability's effect on urban self-government can be given a causal interpretation when using this sample.

[11]There are 212 towns in the restricted sample. Data on rye suitability from Zabel et al. (2014). Data on town characteristics are from the dataset described in the "Enlisting new data to track self-government" section.

Article 4_{suc} looks at the effect of successions on transitioning to self-government. However, as with agricultural potential, the assignment of successions is far from random. If, for instance, a ruler is weak, other elites may be more tempted to instigate a coup. Inspired by Kokkonen and Sundell (2019) and Jones and Olken (2005), I use the natural death of lords due to age, accident, or disease to establish the causal effect of succession. The timing of such deaths are unlikely to be related to town developments. Supporting this, the article shows that natural ruler death cannot be predicted by changes in town characteristics. Additionally, it provides evidence that there is no increased likelihood of a town transitioning to self-government in the years leading up to a natural death. This would be the case if townsmen could predict the nearing demise of their ruler or if my measure for natural deaths was contaminated by deaths caused by ruler weakness.

Falsification tests and observable implications

Even with the strategies outlined above, there might still be valid reasons to question the proposed mechanisms of the individual articles. Thus, all my articles also employ falsification tests or observable implications to further interrogate if their theoretical interpretations are justified. In short, the approach is based on discerning testable empirical implications based on the mechanisms of the argument and then correlating them with the explanatory variable. This can be outcomes with which the explanatory variable should have no effect if the theorized mechanism is correct - what is often termed "falsification tests". It can also be outcomes that connect the treatment with town self-government. Finally, it can be interactions of the explanatory variable with a contextual factor that determines the strength of its effect based on an empirical implication. Hypotheses 3a and 4a are examples of this (these will be evaluated in the "Empirical results" section). The use of these kinds of tests can corroborate whether the overall relationship between treatment and outcome is driven by one theoretical mechanism and not another (Morgan and

Winship 2007, 239-242).

Article 1_{clu} reports a falsification test where proximity to a Cluny monastery is correlated with transitions to self-government that occur after the end of the reform movement (ca. 1201-1800 AD). If proximity was capturing other town characteristics that generally made it more likely that a town would establish self-government, then we should expect to also see an increase in post-1200 AD self-government as distance to a Cluniac monastery decreases. However, the article finds that this it not the case after the Cluny reform movement peters out. Conversely, it finds a strong effect on early transitions (1000-1200 AD), which is in line with the theoretical argument.

In Article 2_{dom}, I perform three falsification tests. First, I compare the Dominican order to its contemporary rival, the Franciscans. The Franciscans were an urban monastic order much like the Dominicans in almost all respect, except, crucially, their organizational structure which lacked the representative element of the Dominicans (Lawrence 1994, 44-49; Southern 1970, 272-299). If the expected positive relationship between Dominican monasteries and self-government is mainly driven by the order's preference for urban centres, then I would expect a similar effect for the Franciscans. Second, as the Dominican order autocratized at the end of the fourteenth century, I would not expect a positive effect of the order after this point in time. Third, as the order use of representation was not targeted at lay lords in the same way as the Cluniacs' use of autonomy, its demonstration effect should be concentrated in the actual town hosting the Dominican monastery. Thus, I would not expect a positive effect of being located near a town with a Dominican monastery. The article finds no effect of the Franciscans, Dominican monasteries after 1400 AD, or closeness to other towns with a Dominican monastery.

Article 3_{agr} evaluates the credibility of the proposed mechanisms in several ways. First, it provides evidence of a negative relationship between rye suitability and medieval economic development.

This indicates that good, local agricultural potential hampers self-government by decreasing the capacity of economic actors. It also examines the effect of rye suitability in an area where rye never became a widely grown crop - the Iberian Peninsula. Reassuringly, rye suitability has no effect on urban development in this context. Finally, it tests the effect of corn suitability - an unpopular crop that was not introduced until the fifteenth century - on self-government in Northwestern Europe and finds that is has no effect (see Figure 33 in Appendix C for this result).

To check if ruler experience could be driving any found relationship between successions and self-government, Article 4_{suc} examines the effect of successions in towns owned by bishops. Episcopal successions were much less dependent on the cleric's relationship to local elites as bishops were primarily appointed by either the emperor or a collegium of other clerics (de Mesquita 2000; Edelstein 1975; Bouchard 1977; Feine 1964, 380-383; Reuter 1995; Jaeger 1983). Thus, towns under episcopal control were much less likely to use successions to bargain for self-government. In support of this, the article finds no effect of episcopal successions.

Empirical results

Why were self-governing towns ubiquitous in medieval Western Europe and not in other parts of the world? Why are some parts of Europe teeming with self-governing towns while others only had a few? And why did Cambrai establish self-government already in 1077 AD? This chapter provides answers to such questions by going through the findings of each article.

Findings I: The Cluniac reform movement

To understand how the wave of transitions to self-government originated in Western Europe, Article 1_{clu} contends that we should look to the Cluniac reform movement, which fostered civic emancipation through its criticism of corrupt ecclesiastical government.

In support for hypothesis 1, the article finds that towns that are closer to a Cluny monastery are much more likely to establish self-government. To get a sense of the magnitude of this effect, Figure 21 plots the effect of increasing the distance to the nearest Cluny monastery by a standard deviation. These results are based on the IV approach sketched above. It shows that such an increase in proximity to the nearest Cluny monastery reduces the likelihood that a town achieves self-government by approximately 15 percentage points, which is equal to a 0.3σ decrease in likelihood. The effect is thus substantial.[12] Note here that the estimate does not vary substantially when controls for town characteristics are added, which further bolsters the validity of the IV approach.[13]

This contributes to explaining the initial surge in self-governing towns in Western Europe. Moreover, as the order was absent from other regions of the world, it can also help explain why we did not see similar developments there. The Cluniac reform movement also sparked Pope Gregory's attempts at reforming the practices governing episcopal investiture (these reforms began in 1075 AD). To test if his attack on poor episcopal governance had an effect on town self-government (hypothesis 1a), I employ my annualized dataset of 680 European towns (1000-1300 AD).[14] Figure 22 depicts the results from a series of difference-in-difference models.

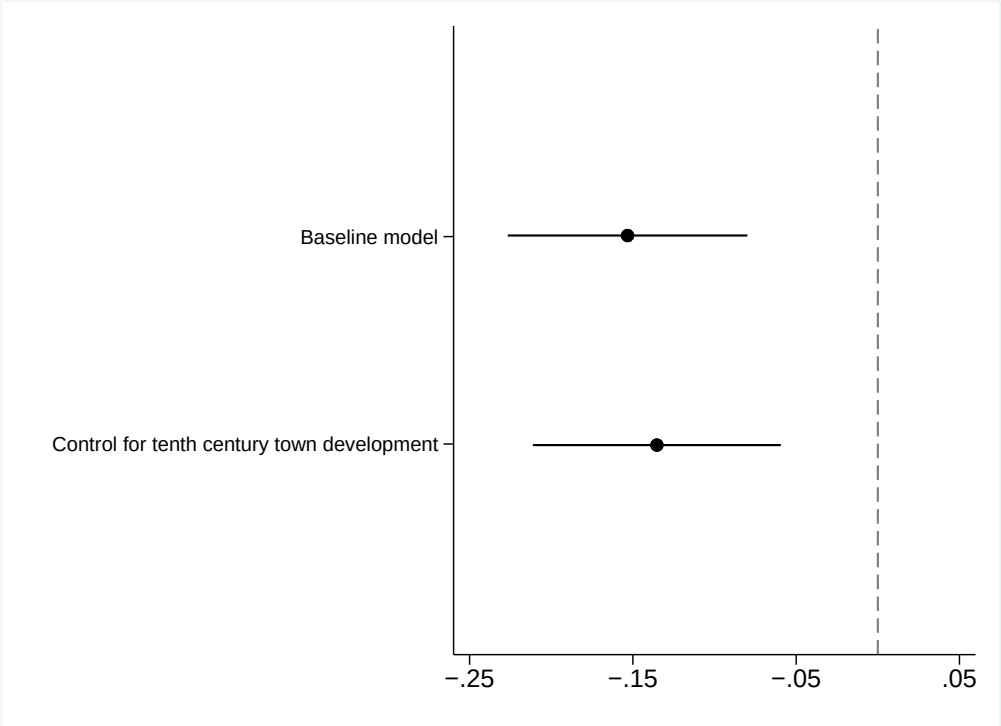
Across all models, a significant increase in the likelihood of having self-government can be observed for bishopric towns after Gregory's initiation of the investiture dispute. In models (b) and (c), which attempt to account for any possible differential trends, episcopal towns are approximately 10 percentage points more likely to transition to

[12]One could object that the effect should be concentrated in towns that are in the immediate vicinity of a Cluny monastery. Figure 30 in Appendix C therefore reports the effect of similar models where the distance measure has been exchanged for an indicator variable that is equal to 1 if a town is within 5km of a Cluniac monastery. These models find that towns in the vicinity of a monastery are a substantial 40 percentage points more likely to establish self-government.

[13]The Appendix in Article 1_{clu}, shows that the results hold when using the Stasavage (2014) dataset. Figure 31 in Appendix C of the dissertation shows that they also hold when using my own dataset of annualized self-government in 680 towns between 1000 AD and 1300 AD.

[14]Results are similar when using the Bosker et al. (2013b) dataset and the Stasavage (2014) dataset. These findings are available upon request.

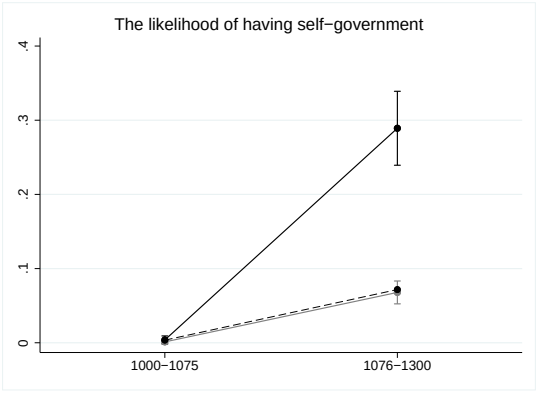
Figure 21: The Cluniac reform movement and self-government - IV results



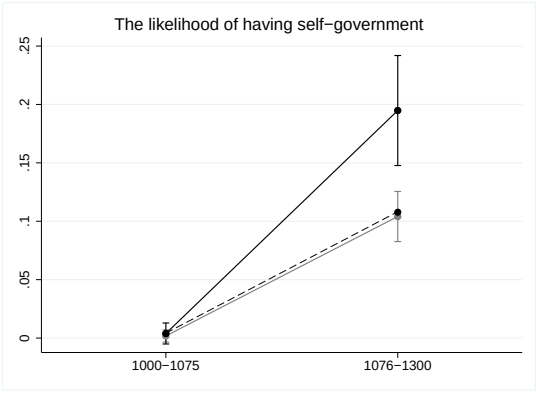
Note: Estimated using OLS. Town level of analysis. Dots represent a standard deviation (ca. 300km) increase in distance to the nearest Cluny monastery. Lines are 95% confidence intervals. For additional modelling detail, see Article 1_{clu}.

self-government. Although this is not as strong as the effect observed for Cluniac monasteries, it is still qualitatively important. Note, though, the large drop in effect size between model (a) and models (b)-(c), which suggests that the non-episcopal towns may not provide a satisfactory counterfactual trend in self-government. Nevertheless, these results are suggestive of a positive effect of Gregory's reform program on urban self-government.

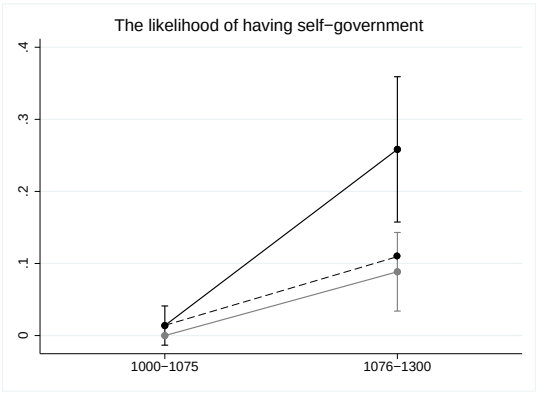
Figure 22: The Gregorian reforms and self-government



(a) Naive comparison



(b) Controlled comparison



(c) Matched comparison

Note: Estimated using OLS. Town-year level of analysis. The black dots are the probability of having self-government in towns with a bishop. The gray dots are the probability of having self-government in towns without bishops. The dashed line represents the counterfactual trend in self-government without the Gregorian reforms. Graph (a) is without controls. Graph (b) is with all controls, including their interaction with treatment period. Graph (c) only includes towns that could be matched based on the controls (the specific procedure was coarsened exact matching; see Iacus et al. 2012). Controls are based on Article 1_{clu}.

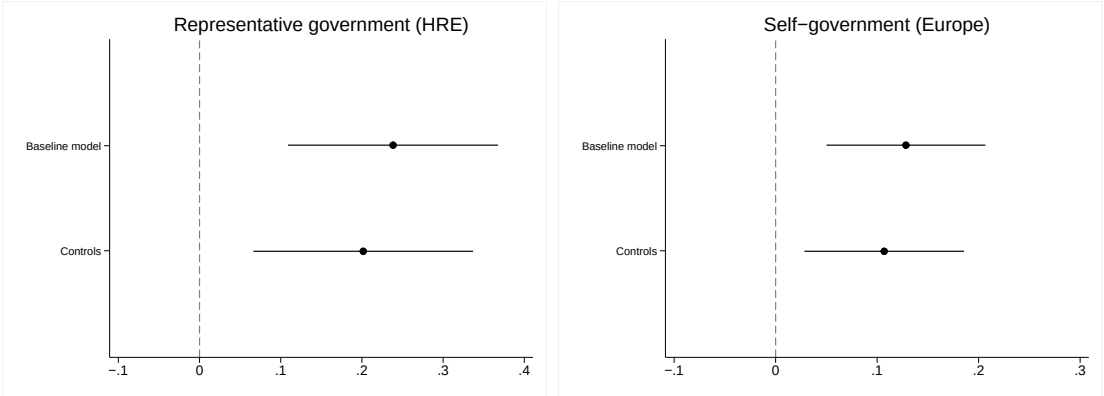
These findings demonstrate that the Catholic Church is a key explanatory factor if we want to understand why self-governing towns

began to appear in Western Europe around the eleventh century. They also provide insight into why the break-up of the Carolingian Empire gave the impetus to urban self-government in Europe, while the earlier division of the Merovingian kingdom after Clovis' death in 511 AD and the collapse of Ashikaga rule in Japan (1467-1568 AD) had no such effects. On a more general level, the findings illustrate how religious campaigns can motivate citizens to fight for lay political change.

Findings II: The Dominican order

After the Cluniac reform movement ended, self-government spread from its initial clusters in northern Italy, France, and Spain to modern-day Germany, Switzerland, and the Benelux countries (at the time, they were all part of the Holy Roman Empire). Moreover, towns began developing practices of representation which were more advanced than similar contemporary institutions at the realm level (Stasavage 2016, 147). Article 2_{dom} argues that the Dominican order, which appeared in 1216 AD, was instrumental in this development due to its demonstration of rule through representatives to townsmen.

Figure 23: The Dominican order and town government



Note: Estimated using OLS. Lines are 95% confidence intervals. The controlled model includes all covariates, their interaction with time, and country-time trends. Town-century level of analysis. For additional details, see Article 2_{dom}.

Figure 23 reports the effect of having a Dominican monastery between 1216 AD and 1400 AD (i.e. when it was governed via representatives) on the likelihood of instigating a town regime change. The left graph shows that Dominican towns are around 20 percentage points more likely to introduce government via representatives in the Holy Roman Empire. This constitutes a 125% increase compared to towns without a Dominican monastery. The right graph examines the effect of having a Dominican monastery on the probability of transitioning to self-government across Europe. It finds that Dominican towns are approximately 10 percentage points more likely to introduce self-government after 1216 AD (and before 1400 AD). This is equal to a 151% increase compared to non-Dominican towns. Reassuringly, both estimates are relatively invariant to the inclusion of controls. Confirming hypothesis 2, the order seems to have a substantial effect on both the spread of self-government and the use of representatives in town government.[15]

This contributes to explaining the diffusion of urban autonomy across Europe, and it also accounts for the widespread familiarity with representative government in Europe compared to other regions (see Stasavage 2016). On a more abstract level, the findings show that societal actors can inspire institutional change by providing an example that can be imitated. Together with the results from Article 1_{clu}, the article provides an overall answer to why urban self-government emerged, and why it did so in Europe in particular. To provide a more fine-grained explanation of the spatial and temporal pattern of self-government in Europe, I now turn to the findings from articles 3_{agr} and 4_{suc}.

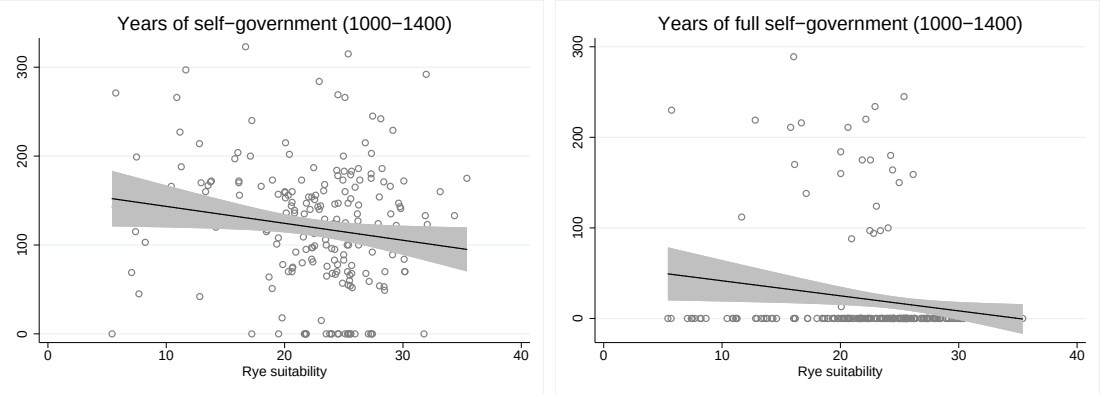
Findings III: Agriculture

As forcefully argued in the economic endowments literature, towns are unlikely to be successful in wresting power from their overlords unless they possess a number of strong economic actors. Article 3_{agr}

[15]Figure 32 in Appendix C reports a similar relationship when using my own dataset of 680 towns.

proposes that such actors primarily emerge in towns whose hinterlands have poor agricultural potential as this incentivizes settlers to engage in proto-manufacturing rather than agriculture.

Figure 24: Rye suitability and self-government



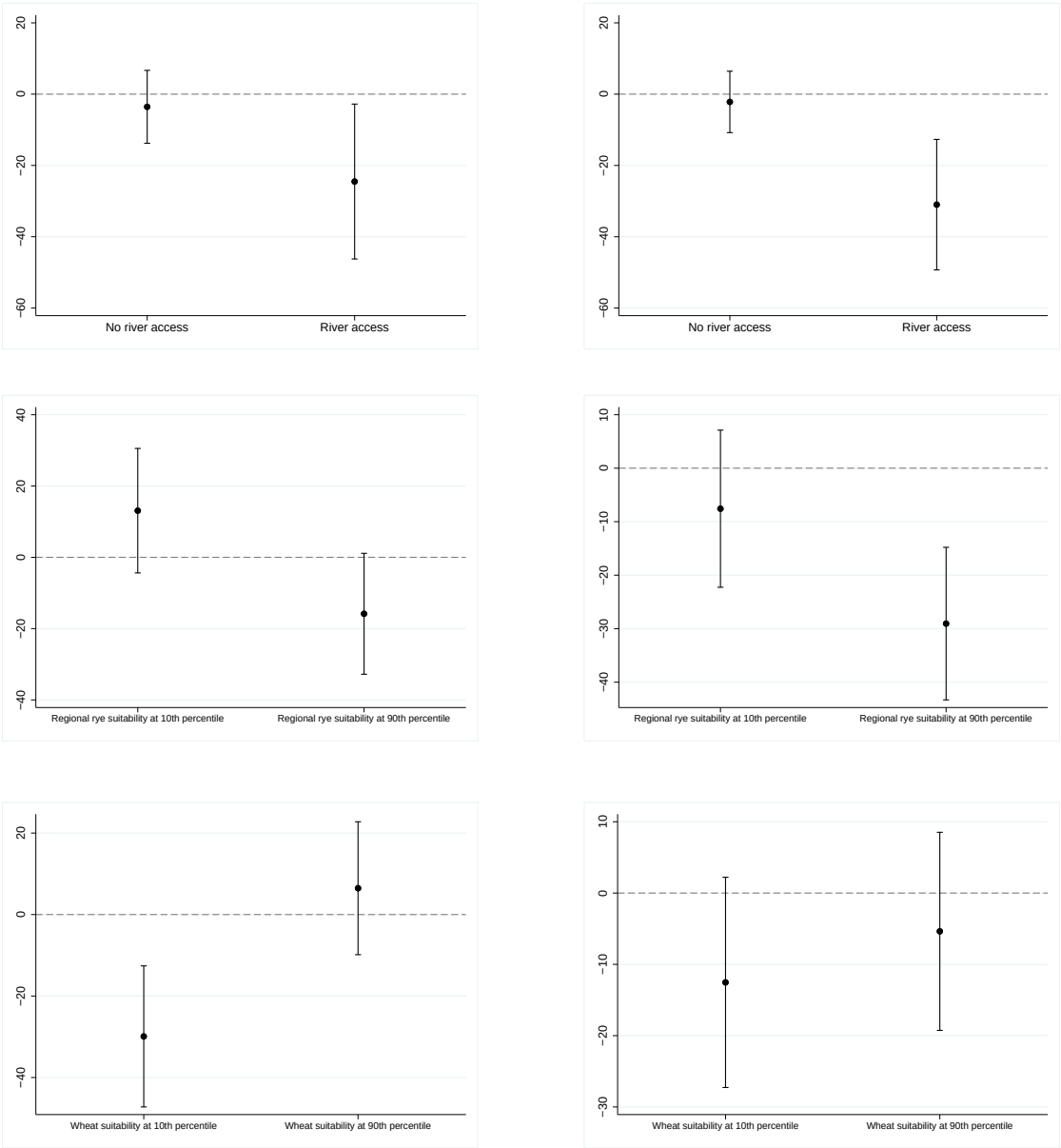
Note: Estimated using OLS. Town level of analysis. Hollow dots represent towns in the dataset that were established prior to 800 AD. Gray areas are 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 24 reports the relationship between agricultural potential and urban self-government. Improving a town's rye suitability by a standard deviation (σ =22.4) is estimated to decrease the number of years it has self-government between 1000 AD and 1400 AD by 43 years (0.57σ) and the number of years it has complete self-government by 37 years (1.76σ). A good agricultural endowment can, thus, have substantial negative consequences for a town's likelihood of attaining self-government and an even stronger impact on its probability of gaining full self-government. In Appendix C, I show that these results hold when using an alternative dataset. This supports hypothesis 3.

The mechanism was hypothesized to work primarily in towns that had access to agricultural surpluses via trade. Figure 25 therefore presents the conditional effect of rye suitability across different levels of trade access. The upper row examines the differential effect in towns located near rivers because waterways were a significantly cheaper way of transporting goods in medieval times. As expected, the effect is strongest in towns with river access. The middle row looks at the moderating effect of regional agricultural potential and finds that rye suitability only has an effect in fertile regions. This suggests that the availability of tradeable foodstuff is crucial. Finally, the lower row examines the presence of substitute crops. If, for instance, a town has poor rye suitability but great potential for growing wheat, then the hypothesized mechanisms are unlikely to work. These results confirm that this is the case.

Article 3_{agr} thus contributes by providing a better explanation for the intra-regional patterns of self-government. These results highlight the need for a conditional understanding of the effects of initial economic endowments which compare local agricultural conditions with regional conditions. This argument can help us account for the spatial pattern of urban self-government. Additionally, in a broader global context, it can help us make sense of intra-regional differences in urban development.

Figure 25: The conditional effect of rye suitability on years of self-government

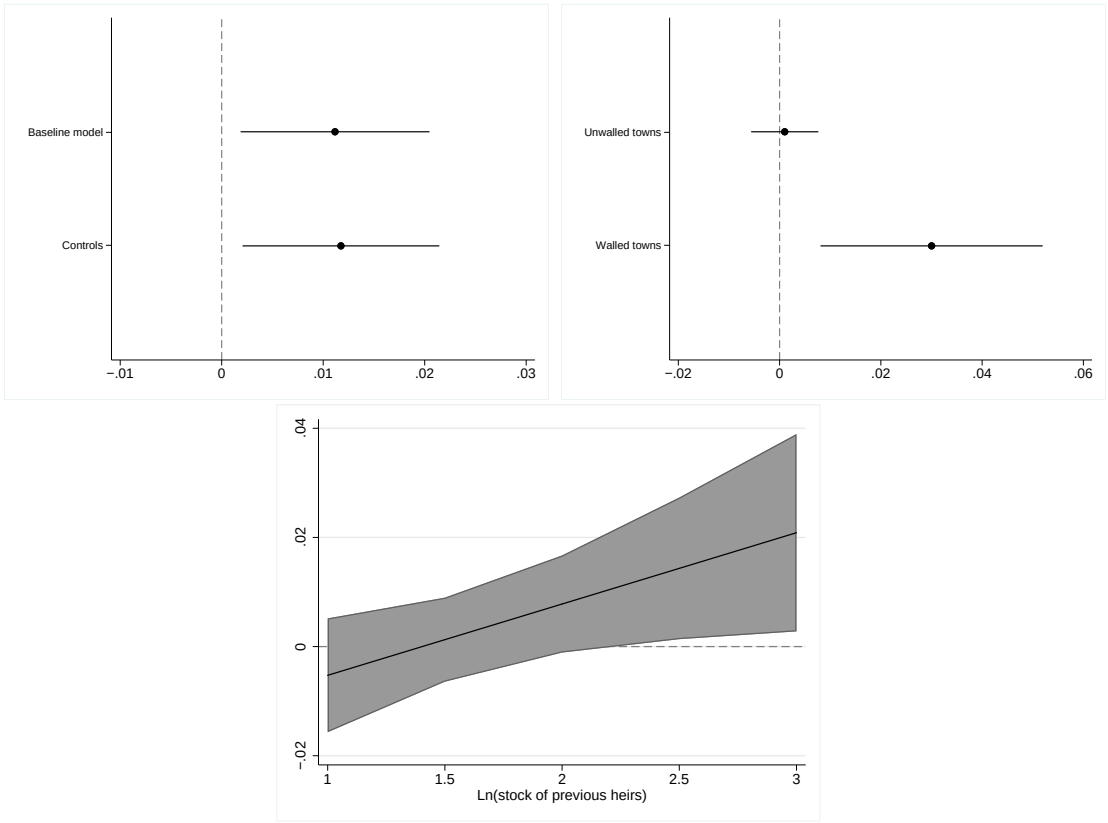


Note: Estimated using OLS. Town level of analysis. The left column has years of any self-government as outcome, while the right column has years of full self-government as outcome. All graphs depict the marginal effect of increasing local rye suitability by a standard deviation.

Findings IV: Successions

Finally, as argued previously, towns are likely to use opportune moments wherein their overlords are in a weakened bargaining position, to try and establish self-government. Article 4_{suc} contends that successions were just such moments. In addition, the effect of successions was expected to be stronger in towns with higher subjugation costs (i.e. towns with walls) and in lordships with a history of producing many eligible heirs.

Figure 26: Succession and self-government



Note: In the upper graphs, dots are coefficients for the effect of a natural death in the previous year. In the lower graph, I depict the estimated effect of a natural death in the previous year across different values of prior heir supply. Estimated using OLS. Town-year level of analysis. Lines are 95% confidence intervals based on town-level clustering. Models (except the baseline model) includes all covariates and lordship fixed effects and trends.

According to the upper left graph in Figure 26, the natural death of a ruler increases the likelihood that a town introduces self-government by around 1.1 percentage points. This is qualitatively important when compared to the likelihood that a town transitions to self-government in non-succession years which is 0.6 percentage points. Note also that the estimate is practically unchanged when controls are included. The upper right graph provides evidence that this effect is partly driven by changes in bargaining position, as only towns that could make a credible threat of defection due to their walls could make use of successions. This is not picking up a general effect of walls, as their estimated effect is practically zero in non-succession years (β=0.0007, SE=0.0023). The lower graph shows that the effect of successions is concentrated in lordships with a history of producing many heirs, which indicates that highly fertile lords, who practice partible inheritance may weaken the lordship down the line, thus confirming both hypotheses 4, 4a, and 4b. In Figure 35 in Appendix C, I show that the main relationship holds when using an alternative dataset.

These findings provide leverage in explaining the timing of self-government. Moreover, they can help us understand when the effect of previous factors, such as Cluniac reforms or Dominican representative practices, is translated into urban autonomy. Generally, it illustrates when autocratic succession can lead to increases in political fragmentation (see Kokkonen and Møller 2020b) by pointing to the importance of subjugation costs and succession customs in determining the readiness of autocrats to grant concessions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The roots of urban self-government

Modern social science was born by scholars trying to explain the development of the modern market economy, the modern state, and modern democracy in Western Europe - also sometimes phrased as the "Why Europe?" question (Skocpol 1984; Møller 2017c). The answer to this question is not unequivocal. However, a majority of scholars point to the emergence of urban self-governing units that could balance rulers as a key factor, either as a cause in and of itself or as a moderator (see e.g. de Tocqueville 1835; Hall 1985; Ertman 1997; Fukuyama 2011; Møller 2015; Greif and Tabellini 2010; Downing 1989; Hui 2005). This, of course, begs the questions: why did urban self-government emerge, and how did it spread?

In this dissertation, I argue and show that two developments within the Catholic Church played a key role in this process. First, the Cluniac reform movement initiated an attack on irresponsible clerical government and organized townsmen in an attempt to combat the problem. The primary solution was argued to be ecclesiastical independence from lay affairs. Combining this idea with urban associationalism sparked the first wave of transition to town self-government. Pope Gregory took up the ideas of the Cluniac reform movement around 1075 AD and used them to launch a campaign against lay investiture of bishops in particular. He also encouraged urban associationalism and instructed townsmen to organize against lay investiture, which further spurred the push for self-government in episcopal towns in particular. Second, the Dominicans, a Catholic monastic order which appeared in 1216 AD, demonstrated the usefulness of representation as a governing principle. This helped spread town self-government (based on representatives) from its initial clusters in France and Italy across Central Europe.

Prior literature has slighted the role of religious motivation for understanding the development of urban self-government. This dissertation has shown that only by factoring in religious conflicts and

ecclesiastical-lay interactions can we make sense of this development. Future research on medieval political change would do well to take the role of religious motivation for political action into account (Grzymala-Busse 2019; Møller 2019).

Furthermore, the dissertation examines two additional triggers that help elucidate the intra-Europe pattern of self-government. First, to account for the spatial distribution of urban self-government, I show that the conditional relationship between local agricultural endowments and access to regional agricultural surpluses is crucial. In towns that had access to crops via trade, greater local suitability for agriculture hampered the development of the urban economy, thus reducing the likelihood of self-government. Second, to explain the temporal development of self-government, I document that autocratic successions had a positive effect on self-government. I show that the positive effect is conditional on the presence of town walls, which increased the cost of subjugating a town, and on a history of producing heirs that divided a lordship's territory between them.

The documented interaction between local agricultural endowments and access to regional agricultural surpluses provides an important addition to prior work on the significance of endowments for urban development (e.g. Andersen et al. 2016; Bosker and Buringh 2017; Abramson and Boix 2019). Specifically, the interaction explains within-region differences in development that can not be understood by simply looking at regional soil quality and climatic conditions. Prior work has looked at the consequences of ruler successions at the level of realms, such as Aragon or Denmark, for premodern institutional change and conflict (e.g. Kokkonen and Møller 2020b; Kokkonen and Sundell 2019). However, if we want to understand differences in urban developments, we need to factor in local lords and their control over the urban landscape.

Relevance beyond medieval Europe

The main aim of this dissertation has been to contribute to our understanding of why Europe first saw the emergence of the modern

market economy, the modern state, and modern democracy. At first glance, this may not seem particularly relevant for contemporary economic growth, state building, and regime change. However, I believe that there are several insights from the dissertation that could help inform us about modern-day developments. Yet, it should be stressed that these insights should be viewed as tentative theoretical propositions in need of further empirical interrogation.

First, the dissertation illustrates that it is important to consider the contemporary supply of viable institutions when studying regime change. When this supply is not taken into account, it becomes impossible to know why societal actors demand one set of institutions and not another when they push for regime change (e.g. Geddes et al. 2014, 316). Second, Article 1_{clu} highlights the role that religious organizations can play in fostering regime change by urging their followers to denounce irresponsible government. Article 2_{dom} further shows that such organizations can supply new political organizational principles by demonstrating their usefulness. This contributes to the literature on regime diffusion, which, for the most part, has not thought hard about the specific actors spreading ideas or institutions (e.g. Wejnert 2005; Weyland 2010; Elkink 2011; although see Woodberry 2011 for an example). It also highlights a possible avenue for further research on the effects of civil society as the literature has not explored the role of differences in organizational make-up among societal actors (e.g. Hadenius and Uggla 1996; Beichelt et al. 2014).

Churches around the world still attempt to influence political developments directly. Yet, many of the works that bring religion into the study of politics continue to treat religion as primarily a matter of doctrine (e.g. Gorski 2003; Armstrong 2014). As shown in this dissertation, the effects of religion cannot be understood without considering the relationship between secular and religious actors (see also Grzymala-Busse 2012). It would, for example, be unlikely to expect a similar effect of the Cluniac and Gregorian reforms if bishops had not been involved in the governing of medieval towns.

In addition, Article 3_{agr} can help account for within-country differences in urban development in otherwise fertile countries. Moreover, Article 4_{suc} points to a new conditional factor, subjugation costs, worth exploring in the burgeoning literature that examines the effects of autocratic succession (e.g. Kokkonen and Sundell 2019; Frantz and Stein 2017; Acharya and Lee 2019; Kokkonen and Møller 2020b).

Short summary

The social sciences started as an attempt to understand why Europe saw the emergence of both the modern state, the modern market economy, and democracy. Self-governing towns are seen as a key factor in explaining this development. However, we lack a good answer as to why medieval Europe was characterized by a plethora of self-governing towns while the rest of the world was not.

On the basis of four articles, this dissertation provides an answer to this puzzle. It demonstrates that reform movements within the Catholic Church, which sought to eliminate irresponsible clerical government, sparked the first wave of urban self-government. The Dominican monastic order furthered this by showcasing the effectiveness of government via representatives for townsmen across Europe. Spatial patterns of self-government can be understood by looking at differences in agricultural potential and ease of trading across towns. Finally, the dissertation shows that the timing of self-government is related to autocratic successions, which provide an opening for establishing urban autonomy.

The articles in the dissertation go to great lengths to ensure that the above findings can be given a causal interpretation. The dissertation uses a series of designs to approximate an as-if random assignment of treatment: difference-in-difference, IV estimation, and two natural experiments. Moreover, it scrutinizes the empirical implications of each argument, and assesses whether they support the mechanisms.

Dansk resumé

Lokalt selvstyre har en lang historie i Danmark. Allerede i middelalderen var de danske købstæder i vid udstrækning selvstyrende enheder med eget byråd. Dette var ikke unikt for Danmark, men tværtimod et fænomen, der var udbredt i Europa. Tilstedeværelsen af autonome byer er blevet udpeget som en af hovedårsagerne til, at Europa var det område (sammen med dets kolonier i Nordamerika), der var arnested for den moderne stat og det moderne demokrati.

Men hvorfor var selvstyrende byer allestedsnærværende i Europa og ikke i andre regioner? Dette spørgsmål danner baggrund for afhandlingen, som i fire artikler belyser årsagerne til lokalt selvstyre i middelalderens Europa. Afhandlingen tager udgangspunkt i tre forklaringer fra den tidligere litteratur: statskollaps, velstand, og krig. Ingen af disse bud kan dog redegøre for fraværet af selvstyrende byer andre steder i verden, såsom Kina og Mellemøsten. Desuden har faktorerne problemer med at redegøre for timingen af den første bølge af selvstyre. I de første to artikler viser jeg, at det regionale og temporale mønster kan forklares af en overset faktor – nemlig den katolske kirke.

I det 11. århundrede igangsatte de såkaldte Cluny-klostre en kampagne, som skulle bekæmpe uansvarlig regeringsførelse blandt gejstlige. Kampagnen vakte stor genklang hos byboerne, der tog dens primære budskab – at bedre gejstelig regeringsførelse kun kunne opnås gennem selvstyre – til sig. Som resultat begyndte de første byer i Europa at indføre styre via eget byråd. Effekten var især koncentreret i byer der tidligere havde været styret af en biskop. Denne proces blev forstærket i det 13. århundrede, da den Dominikanske munkeorden gjorde sit indtog. Dominikanerne demonstrerede hvor effektiv den repræsentative styreform var, hvilket yderligere fremskyndede spredningen af lokalt selvstyre (nu med repræsentanter).

I de sidste to artikler undersøges årsagerne til henholdsvis den geografiske spredning af selvstyre og den tidslige variation i deres fremkomst. Afhandlingen viser, at byer med et dårligt potentiale for afgrøder har en større sandsynlighed for at udvikle selvstyre, så

længe de kan importere mad udefra. Dette kan forklare forskelle i selvstyre blandt byer, der er lokaliserede i fertile regioner. Timingen af selvstyre er i højere grad knyttet til den lokale fyrste. Den sidste artikel demonstrerer, at byerne udnytter fyrstearvefølger til at indføre selvstyre, da potentielle nye arvtagere har brug for byernes opbakning.

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Appendix A: Sources for town dataset

Note that all online sources have been saved as PDFs in case of removal. These are available upon request if a site goes offline.

Italy, Spain, and Portugal

121 central and northern Italian cities (Belloc et al. 2016). 18 Italian cities (Stasavage 2014). 4 Portuguese cities (Stasavage 2014). 31 Spanish cities (Stasavage 2014).

The United Kingdom, Ireland, and France

86 cities from the United Kingdom and Ireland based on the sample from Bosker et al. (2013). Coding based on Tait (1968). 88 French cities based on the sample from Bosker et al. (2013). 33 of these cities coded based on Stasavage (2014). Additional sources used for coding are: Moulins (Chisholm 1911a); Montpellier (Combes 1990); Montauban (Chisholm 1911b); Saint-Jean d'Angely (de Saintonge 2018, Dutallis 1978); Abbeville, Angouleme, Bourdeux, Bayonne, Cambrai, Dijon, La Rochelle, Orleans, Le Mans, Poiters, Reims, St Quentin, Troyes, and Chalons-en-Marne (Dutallis 1978); Chalon sur Saone (Chisholm 1911c); Carcassonne (Barber 2000); Cahors (Bisson 1964); Beziers (Friedlander 2017); Beauvais (NCE 2019); Auxerre (Jodra 2018); Albi (Gould 2017); and Agen (Bisson 1961)

Germany, Switzerland, Poland, the Netherlands, Hungary, Belgium, and Austria

Sample of 325 cities based on Wahl (2016). Sources used for coding are: Soest (Gleba 1996); Munster (Ehbrecht 1996); Wetzlar (Jung 2010; Hahn 1984); Gelnhausen (Ackerman 2006; Euler 1874); Paderborn (Ehbrecht 1999); Xanten (Runde 2003); Frankenberg (Becker 1983); Halberstadt and Quedlingen (Militzer and Przybilla 1980); Winterthur (Suter 2015); Nördlingen (von Bayern 1974); Ulm (Specker 2017); Uberlingen (UMT 2018); Unna (Olmer 2018); Steyr (Ebner

1984); Minden (Schulte 2018a); Gottingen (Schroer 2018); Reutlingen (Reutlingen-Stadtarchiv 2018); Kassel (Presche 2013); Jena (Klossek 2018); Harford (Hansestadt-Herford 2018); Goslar (Potschke 2002); Hannover (Mlynek and Rohrbein 2018); Hameln (Schulte 2018b); Leipzig (Leipzig-Stadtarchiv 2018); Wroclaw (Krzysztof 2018); Koblenz (Koblenz-Stadtarchiv 2018); Middelburg (Cox 2012); Strasbourg (Standford 2005), Altenburg (Stadt-Altenburg 2018); Amberg (Stadt-Amberg 2018); Basel (Guggisberg 1982); Bern (Zahnd 2016); Bielefeld (Grundler 1832, Bielefeld-Stadtarchiv 2014); Bonn (Gengler 1863, Scheffler 1973); Breisach am Rhein (Baer 1878, am Rhein-Stadtarchiv 2018); Bruchsal (Bischoff 2005); Chemnitz (Chemnitz-Stadtarchiv 2018); Coesfeld (Stadtverwaltung- Coesfeld 2018); Deventer (Deventer-Stadsarchief 2018, Cox 2012); Dinkelsbuehl (Kreisstadt-Dinkelsbuehl 2018); Dortmund (Levy 2006); Einbeck (Dorries 1925); Emmerich am Rhein (Emmerich-Stadtinformation 2008); Erfurt (Erfurt-Stadt 2018); Essen (Essen-Stadtarchiv 2018); Esslingen (Bernd 2014); Frankfurt am Main (Frankfurt-Stadt 2018); Freiburg (Kalchthaler 2006); Wien (of Vienna 2018); Regensburg (Janner 1884); Nurnberg (Diefenbacher 2018); Freiburg (Guex 2018); Schwerin (Stadtarchiv-Schwerin 2018); Landau (Regionalgeschichte 2018); Wuerzburg (Pitz 2018); and Worms (Stadt-Worms 2018).

Table A1: References for town dataset

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Appendix B: Revisiting the causes of corporate self-government

Recently a number of scholars have proposed a series of explanations for the development of corporate self-government. In this section, I consider if they provide leverage in accounting for the emergence of self-government at the urban level.

Economic development

The most sophisticated analysis of the endowments argument comes from Abramson and Boix (2019). They show that initial urban density (measured in 1200 AD) is a strong predictor of subsequent corporate self-government at both the realm and local level. In contrast, they show that self-government is not robustly correlated with urban growth. However, their outcome variable includes both realm and urban-level institutions. As a result, it is impossible to know if this relationship holds for both types of institutions or if it is driven by one of them. Furthermore, their results are based on a grid-century unit of analysis, which muddles the sequence of dependent and independent variable to some degree. Finally, and most importantly, their indicator of endowments is measured a good 150 years after the wave of transitions to self-government in Europe began.

To accommodate these issues, I revisit the relationship between economic development and local self-government using my dataset of 459 Northwestern European towns. Specifically, I use *Die Urbanen Zentren des Hohen und Späteren Mittelalters* to code three indicators of economic development (Escher and Hirschmann 2005). The first measures the number of markets present in each year for all settlements. Cantoni and Yuchtman (2014) argue that markets served as important focal points for medieval trade. They further show that the number of markets is robustly correlated with urban population size and growth. My second measure is a proxy for the development of proto-manufacturing in a settlement: the number of guilds that had been established by each year. Apprenticeships within guilds

were the primary way of becoming an artisan in medieval Europe. The establishment of a guild thus suggests that a craft had grown large enough to warrant an institution that could protect its interest, and help systematize the transfer of craft knowledge (Epstein and Prak 2008, 7-15). As a result, the number of guilds is a fair reflection of the different types of manufacturing in a settlement. Finally, the third measure is an indicator equal to 1 in years where a settlement is engaged in long-distance trade (approximately more than 50km), and 0 otherwise.

As economic development may have varying effects on different degrees of self-government, I use two dependent variables. The first is equal to 1 in the year a settlement establishes a local self-governing body with at least one prerogative, and 0 otherwise. After a town achieves self-government, it drops out of the sample. This variable is used to test the effect of development on having no self-government versus any self-government. The second is equal to 1 in the year a settlement becomes either a *reichstadt* or an *imperial* town, and 0 otherwise. When a town achieves either status, it drops out of the sample. This is used to test the effect of development on the ability of a town to become fully self-governing.

As Abramson and Boix (2019) find a different impact of urban growth and initial urban development, I run two types of models. In the first, I examine the relationship between urban growth and self-government. I regress the level of development in the previous year on transitioning to self-government in the following year. In addition, I include controls for city and decade fixed effects, thus looking at the impact of changes in the level of development. Following Aramson and Boix (2019), the second type investigates the impact of initial economic development in 1200 AD on self-government in 1400.[16] In both types of models, I also add a series of control variables to account for predictors of both development and self-government. Castles served as basis for lordly territorial claims and their exercise

[16]As a few settlements establish self-government before 1200 AD, I also include a dummy equal to 1 if this is the case in these models.

Table 4: Economic growth and self-government, 1000-1400 AD

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Outcome	Any SG	Any SG	Any SG	Fully SG	Fully SG	Fully SG
Markets_{t-1}	0.00368***			0.000109		
	(0.000843)			(0.000100)		
Guilds_{t-1}		0.00127			0.000123	
		(0.00138)			(0.0000920)	
Long dist. trade_{t-1}			0.0181***			0.000379
			(0.00366)			(0.000275)
Town and decade FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls × decade FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	113140	113140	113140	157883	157883	157883

Estimated using OLS. Standard errors clustered by city in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

of authority over cities (Lyon 2017, 17, 20). Consequently, I control for the presence of a castle in a city-year (based on the same source book). To account for general geographic characteristics, I control for the latitude and longitude of a settlement. Waterways are likely to have made trade easier, and I therefore also include an indicator for whether a settlement is located within 10km of a navigable river (EEA 2018). In the first type of model, all control variables are interacted with decade dummies to allow for a flexible impact over time. As I have good reasons to expect that the causality also runs from self-government to economic development, I rerun all models exchanging outcome and explanatory variable. The first three columns in Table 4 shows that change in economic development over time is robustly associated with the transition to some degree of self-government. Settlements that establish more markets and engage in long-distance trade are more likely to transition. Nevertheless, it seems that guilds are not related to institutional change. This result is somewhat at odds with previous findings. Columns (4)-(6) show that changes in urban economic development are not related to the attainment of full self-government.

Table 5 looks at the reverse relationship. Column (1) finds a posi-

Table 5: Self-government and economic growth, 1000-1400 AD

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Outcome	Markets	Guilds	Long-dist. trade	Markets	Guilds	Long-dist. trade
Any SG_{t-1}	0.282***	-0.0382	0.120***			
	(0.0500)	(0.107)	(0.0170)			
Fully SG_{t-1}				0.669**	1.065*	0.136*
				(0.202)	(0.484)	(0.0571)
Town and decade FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls × decade FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	163710	163710	163710	163710	163710	163710

Estimated using OLS. Standard errors clustered by city in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

tive correlation between self-government and having more markets in a town. Column (2) suggests that some autonomy has no relation to guilds, while column (3) finds that it greatly increases the likelihood that a town has long distance trade. Columns (1)-(3) show that full town autonomy has a stronger positive relationship with all three measures of economic development. Thus, there also seems to be a robust reverse relationship between self-government and growth.

Table 6 examines the role of initial economic conditions for self-government. Compared to Table 4, the picture has been reversed. Economic conditions in 1200 AD are not consistent predictors of attaining some degree of self-government. In fact, the coefficient for the number of markets in 1200 AD has turned negative. Conversely, all three indicators of economic conditions have a strong positive correlation with being fully self-governing by 1400 AD. Thus, it seems that positive economic change can improve the likelihood that a town can establish some degree of self-government. However, achieving full self-government is unlikely unless a settlement has good economic conditions at an early time.

Table 7 investigates the role of initial levels of self-government and later economic development. Overall, there seems to be a positive association between initial levels of self-government and later economic development. The relationship is most robust for guilds

Table 6: Economic conditions in 1200 AD and self-government in 1400 AD

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Outcome in 1400 AD	Any SG	Any SG	Any SG	Fully SG	Fully SG	Fully SG
Markets in 1200 AD	-0.00213			0.0616**		
	(0.0208)			(0.0221)		
Guilds in 1200 AD		0.0000856			0.0695***	
		(0.00872)			(0.0106)	
Long-dist. trade in 1200 AD			0.102**			0.269***
			(0.0332)			(0.0736)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	459	459	459	459	459	459

Estimated using OLS. Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7: Self-government in 1200 AD and economic conditions in 1400 AD

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Outcome in 1400 AD	Markets	Guilds	Long-dist. trade	Markets	Guilds	Long-dist. trade
Any SG in 1200 AD	1.043*	2.464**	0.0531			
	(0.429)	(0.890)	(0.0723)			
Full SG in 1200 AD				1.507	3.230*	0.236
				(0.815)	(1.616)	(0.121)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	459	459	459	459	459	459

Estimated using OLS. Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

and least for long-distance trade. To summarize the evidence, there seems to be an endogenous relationship between economic development and town self-government. Early development helps foster later self-government, but attaining self-government also seems to increase later growth.

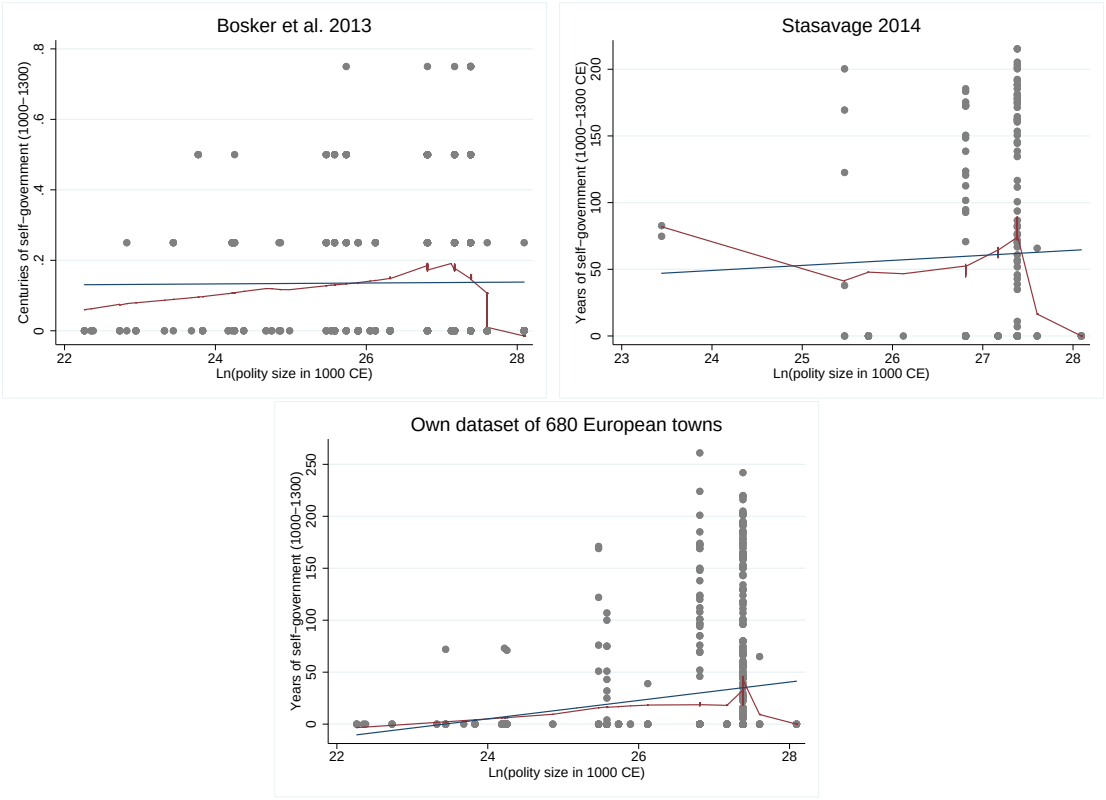
Polity size

Stasavage (2010, 628) argues that the high cost of travel in medieval Europe made it difficult to sustain self-governing institutions as it made frequent meetings between representatives impractical. This meant that small polities where travel time was shorter tended to meet with a much higher frequency than larger polities. Because the within-town distance to the local council meeting place was negligible, this explanation is unlikely to account for across-town differences in self-government. However, one could contend that the geographical scale of the polity a town is located within might matter for a town's likelihood of attaining self-government. A ruler's cost of monitoring the actions of individual towns are likely to have been much larger within large polities compared to small polities. As a result, it can be expected that towns within larger polities are more likely to gain self-government. To prod if this expectation can be corroborated by data, I examine the relationship between polity size in 1000 AD[17] and the number of years/centuries a town has self-government between 1000 AD and 1300 AD in Figure 27.

There seems to be some support for a positive relationship between polity size and urban self-government, at least when looking at my own dataset and the data from Stasavage (2014) which primarily covers Western and Central Europe. However, when using the Bosker et al. (2013) dataset that also includes a number of additional Eastern European towns, the relationship disappears. Moreover, even within Western and Central Europe, the relationship appears to be

[17]Note that the results do not change significantly if polity size is measured in 1100 AD or 1200 AD.

Figure 27: Polity size and urban self-government



Note: The red line is a locally weighted regression (lowess), the blue line is a linear fit. Data on polity size in 1000 AD from Nüesseli and Nüsseli (2008).

mainly driven by the inclusion of the Holy Roman Empire, which was the scene of both the investiture conflict (see Article 1_{clu}), and a collapse of central power in the thirteenth century. Overall, there is thus little evidence to support that polity size in itself is an important factor with regard to urban self-government.

State collapse

A fourth perspective emphasizes state collapse as the reason for the emergence of corporate self-government (Jones 1981; Blockmans 1989; Dutallis 1978; Hilton 2011; Stasavage 2011, 48). The first mechanism goes through the initiative of local elites that exploit the

weakness of rulers to demand representation. The second is grounded in the initiative of the ruler in proposing representation in return for help in conducting his or her foreign policy.

To test this potential explanation of urban self-government, I exploit an important historical event: the lack of a viable successor at the death of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II in 1250 AD. In the resulting absence of centralized authority, ecclesiastical actors, princes, towns, and peasant communities quickly sought to establish local control and autonomy (Stadler 2007; Haverkamp 1992, Chap. 3; Besslar 2010, Chap. 11).

Evidence on state collapse from the Holy Roman Empire

> "*Rejoice the heavens, rejoice the earth, the terrible thunderstorm, at the unspeakable mercy of the Lord, appears to have transformed itself into a mild wind, after the Emperor has been removed from this world.*"
>
> - Pope Innocent IV in a letter to the Sicilian after the death of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, 25 January 1251 AD.[18]

Frederick II, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, died in 1250 AD. His death created a power vacuum, which necessitated action from towns to secure themselves from the warring princes (Prak 2018, 228-229; Wilson 2016b, 572). Rudolf, from the House of Habsburg, managed to be crowned king of Germany in 1273 AD. Yet, in practice, he never established central authority in the Empire (Ertman 1997, 229-235; Chisholm 1911c). As a result, the power vacuum would endure for the rest of the thirteenth century. At the same time, other European kingdoms, such as France and England, were expanding and becoming more powerful (Wickham 2016, 142-144).

[18]Source (Engel and Holtz 1989). Translated from German.

For additional information on the context, see the "The Holy Roman Empire, 911-1250 AD" section in Appendix D.

Thus, while 1250 AD marked a great dissolution of royal power in the Holy Roman Empire, this was not so for other contemporary monarchies. If the state weakness argument holds, it can be expected that towns located within the Empire are more likely to establish self-government during this period in comparison to towns located within other kingdoms, such as France or England.

To test this expectation, I employ a difference-in-difference approach. Specifically, I begin by linking the towns from my European dataset to sovereign territories in 1200 AD using the *Euratlas* (Nüssli and Nüssli 2008). A total of 391 towns in my sample are located within the Holy Roman Empire (HRE), while 289 towns are located within other European monarchies. The idea is that towns within the empire were treated with a sharp increase in royal weakness after 1250 AD, while towns in other monarchies were not. As an additional test, I also compare towns that were part of Hoehenstaufen land (that is, in the possession of Frederick prior to 1250 AD) to non-Staufen towns within the Holy Roman Empire (based on Schlunk 1988). Within the Holy Roman Empire, 29 towns out of 391 were listed as staufern in 1250 AD. This test relies on the intuition that the dissolution of royal power was felt most acutely in these territories as other parts of empire were still under the authority of local princes. My dependent variable is equal to 1 in the year a town establishes a local self-governing body with multiple prerogatives, and 0 otherwise. After a town achieves self-government, it drops out of the sample. To account for possible geographical characteristics, I control for latitude, longitude, and river and sea access. I also include indicators for the presence of a bishop (based on Chow 2018), being a former Roman town (from Hanson 2016), and logged population size (from Bosker et al. 2013b) to control for pre-dissolution urban development. All control variables are interacted with decade dummies to allow for a flexible impact over time.

Table 8: Royal weakness and self-government, 1000-1300 AD

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
After 1250 AD	-0.0063	-0.00063	-0.00059	-0.00037
	(0.00198)	(0.00194)	(0.00343)	(0.00358)
HRE in 1200 AD × After 1250 AD	0.00198***	0.00205**		
	(0.00054)	(0.00062)		
Staufen in 1250 AD × After 1250 AD			0.00912*	0.00874*
			(0.00363)	(0.00358)
Town and decade FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls × decade FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	184567	184567	105043	105043

Estimated using OLS. Standard errors clustered by city in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 8 displays the results. Consistent with the expectation, I find that towns situated in the Holy Roman Empire were more likely to attain self-government after the death of Frederick II in 1250 AD. Furthermore, it seems that the towns that were under Frederick's control within the empire were also more likely to become self-governing after his death. The average likelihood of transitioning to self-government in a town-year was 0.1 percentage points for both the whole of Europe and in the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, the dissolution of royal power doubles this probability in comparison with towns outside the empire, and it is more than 8 times as large for Staufen towns in comparison to non-Staufen towns within the empire. Royal weakness therefore has a substantial positive effect on local self-government.

Yet, one could worry that the results are driven by a general differential development within the Holy Roman Empire, particularly in the Staufen territories. To alleviate this concern, I instrument Hohenstaufen control with the distance to the family's ancestral home, the Staufen Castle. The House collected a number of holdings in the areas surrounding the castle. However, the castle did not become the seat of any permanent imperial court, nor was it an important

Table 9: IV - Hohenstaufen and self-government, 1000-1300 CE

	(1)	(2)
Outcome	Self-government 1000-1250	Self-government 1251-1300
Distance to Hohenstaufen Castle	0.00026	
	(0.00013)	
Staufen in 1250		0.94218**
		(0.32434)
First stage F statistic		10.5
Latitude & longitude	Yes	Yes
Observations	391	304

Estimated using OLS. Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

trading centre (Chisholm 1911b). Thus, its location is likely to be unrelated to other characteristics that may predict the transition to town self-government. To prod this assumption, I examine, first, the relationship between the distance to the Staufen castle and town self-government within the Holy Roman Empire before 1250 AD. Here, I expect there to be no relationship. Second, I examine the relationship between being a Staufen town and transitioning to self-government after 1250. I control for latitude and longitude to account for general correlates of location.

Column (1) in Table 9 indicates that there is no relationship between the instrument and pre-dissolution self-government, thus supporting that distance to Hohenstaufen Castle is a valid instrument. Column (2) finds that towns that were under the control of the Staufers before the death of Frederick II have a 94 percentage points higher likelihood of attaining self-government after his death, thereby confirming the previous findings.

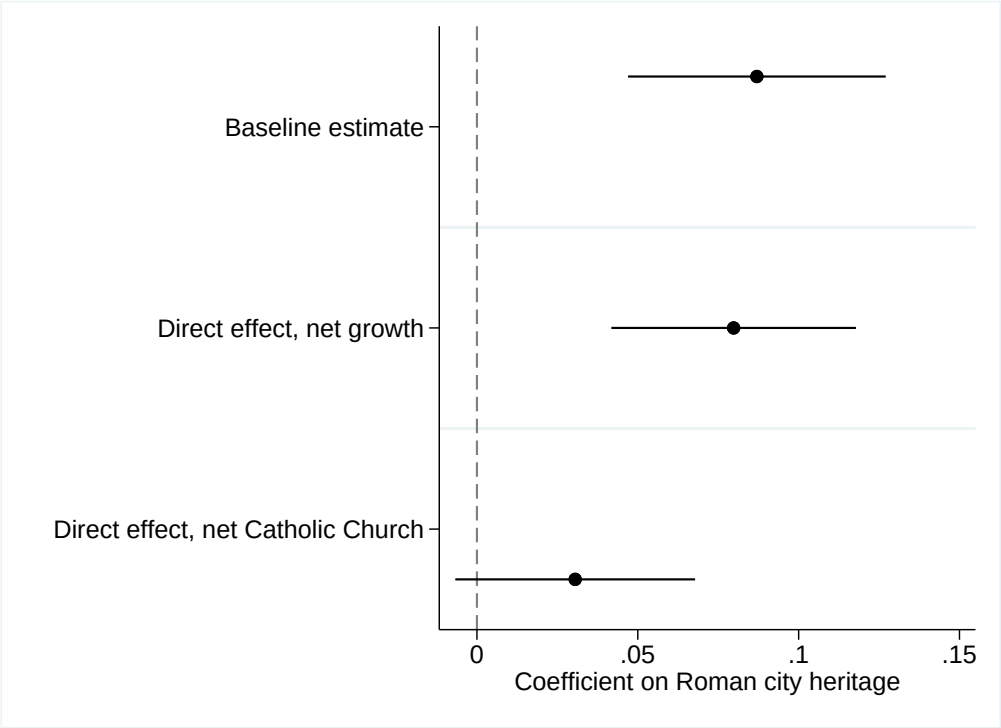
Overall, moments of state weakness seem to have promoted urban self-government in medieval Europe. Despite the Middle East and Eastern Asia also experiencing periods of prolonged conflict and state weakness (Finer 1997; Farooqui 2011; Roy 2015; Stasavage 2016), there is no similar outgrowth of urban self-government during times of state distress in these regions. This indicates that the positive

effect of weakness on urban self-government is conditional on some other factor that is specific to Europe.

A Roman legacy?

Was medieval European urban self-government simply a resurgence of earlier Roman urban government? To test if this is true, I use Hanson's (2016) compilation of all Roman cities that possessed urban rights and construct an indicator that is equal to 1 if a town had Roman city rights, and 0 otherwise. As the Roman Empire included towns in North Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, I use the Bosker et al. (2013b) dataset. My dependent variable is the average number of centuries between 800 AD and 1800 AD that a town had self-government (based on the *commune* variable). I control for latitude, longitude, sea and river access, and crop suitability.

Figure 28: A Roman legacy



A Roman legacy can increase the likelihood that a town intro-

duces self-government in two ways: first, by leaving behind larger urban agglomerations which are better able to resist lordly control (Wahl 2017); and second, via its ideas concerning government (Stasavage 2016, 149-151). As I argued in the "Previous explanations for self-government" section, ideas from Roman law primarily had an influence because they were repurposed for corporations. The repurposing was primarily done by the Catholic Church (Møller 2018) who, as I contend in Article 2_{dom}, spread representation to medieval towns. To check if a Roman legacy had any effect on urban self-government beyond its correlation with urban agglomeration and the presence of the Catholic Church, I use the sequential g-estimation approach outlined by Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016). It allows me to identify the effect of a Roman legacy holding post-treatment developments - urban agglomeration and Catholic institutions[19] - fixed at the same level for all towns.

The first stage of the approach regresses my indicator for urban self-government on the controls outlined above and one of the two post-treatment developments. Subsequently, the variation in self-government that can be explained by either urban agglomeration or the Catholic Church is subtracted. In the second stage, the demediated outcome is regressed on the controls and the indicator for a Roman legacy. Figure 28 presents the results. I find an initial positive effect of a Roman legacy on urban self-government. Holding urban agglomeration fixed does not change this result. Thus, there seems to be an effect of the Romans beyond their economic legacy. However, the third estimate indicates that there is no Roman legacy once you control for the developments in corporate self-government and representation within the Catholic Church that I outlined in articles 1_{clu} and 2_{dom}. Therefore, it seems that Roman town status primarily had en effect on self-government because it made it more likely that a town would later have Catholic institutions.

[19]I measure urban agglomeration as the logged population size in 800 AD, and the growth in population size between 800 AD and 1800 AD. Catholic institutions are measured by an indicator for the presence of a bishop in 1000 AD, an indicator for the presence of a Dominican monastery in 1300 AD, and a measure of the distance to the nearest Cluny monastery in 1109 AD.

Assessment of previously proposed explanations

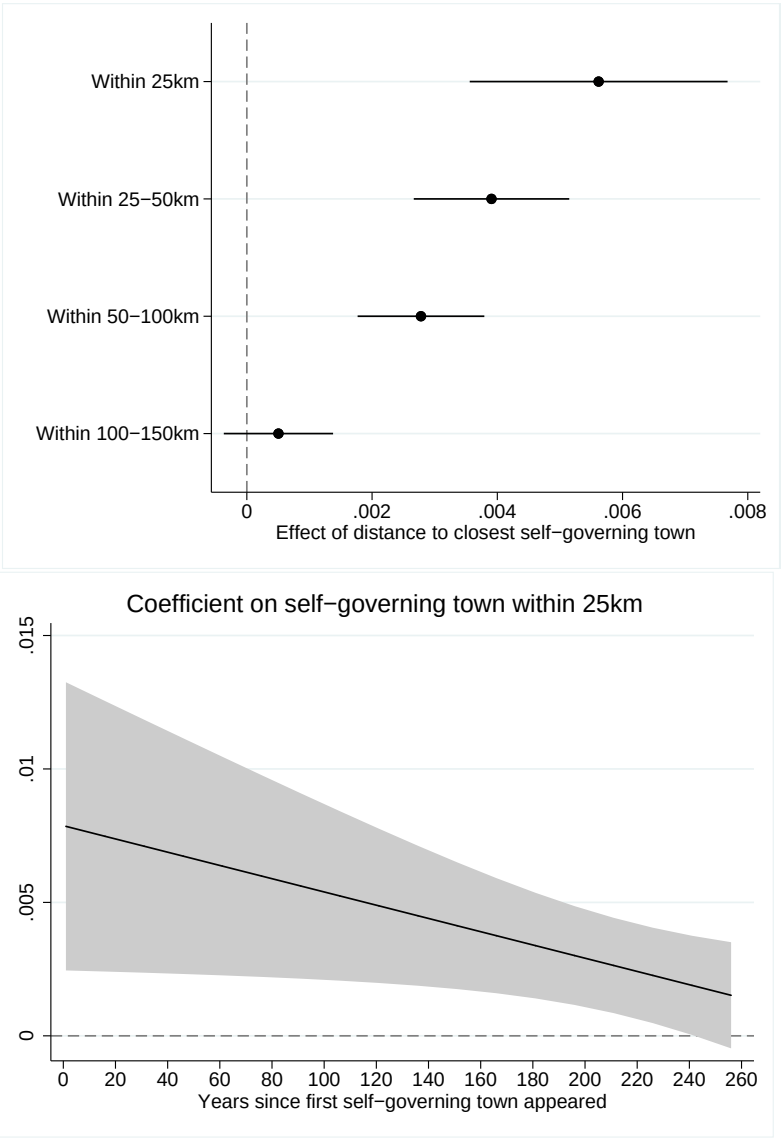
To summarize, the evidence does not support that polity size played any significant part in the emergence of local self-government in Europe. If size matters, it is thus only for corporate self-governing groups at the realm level. Conversely, it seems that favourable economic endowments are important for the likelihood of attaining a strong degree of urban self-government, while urban medieval growth is positively related to establishing some degree of self-government. Furthermore, towns are more likely to become self-governing when states are either engaged in warfare or weakened. These explanations are helpful in accounting for the within-Europe pattern of urban self-government, but they are not sufficient to explain why they appeared in Europe and not in the Middle East or China, nor do they give a good answer to why self-governing towns began appearing in the late eleventh century. A Roman heritage may help explain the regional pattern of self-government as the Roman Empire was the seedbed of the Catholic Church. Yet, a legacy of Roman rule does not provide guidance in elucidating the timing of urban self-government in Europe.

Appendix C: Additional tests

The "baseline model" for results using my own dataset includes city and year fixed effects if the unit is town-year, and geographic controls (latitude, longitude, elevation, crop suitability, and sea and river access) if the unit is town. The "controls" models includes the following covariates (and their interaction with time) in addition to town and year fixed effects: latitude, longitude, elevation, crop suitability, sea and river access, Roman legacy, bishop in 1000 AD, and population size in 1000 AD.

Implications of model for regime change

Figure 29: The diffusion of urban regime change

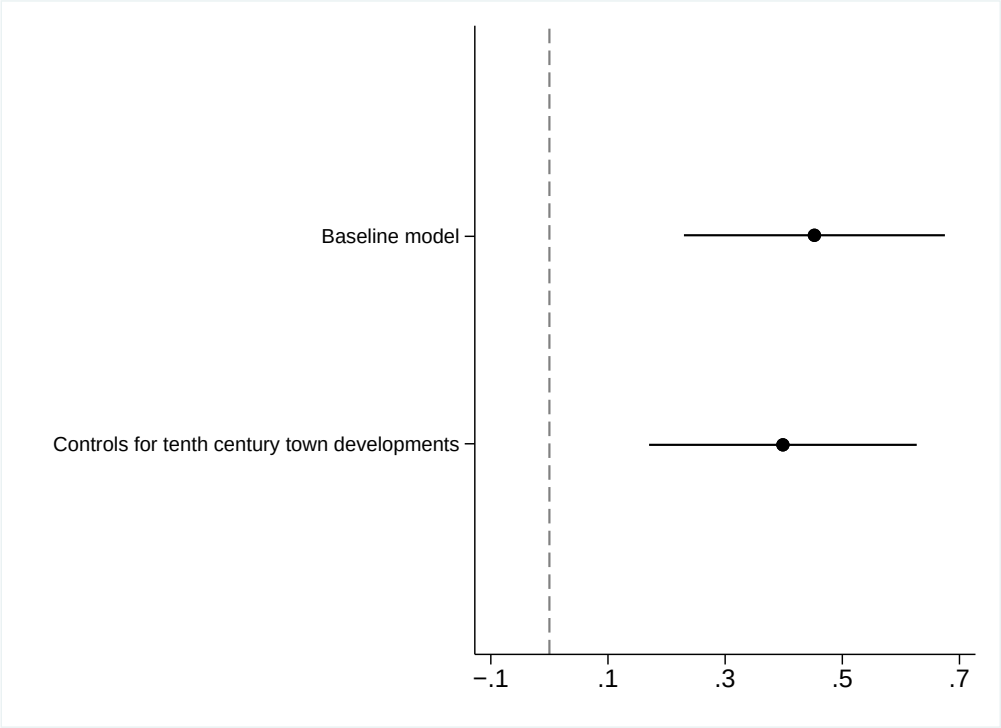


Note: The upper graph interrogates the implication that actors seeking to change the regime are inspired by visible organizations that are close by. It shows that townsmen are more likely to introduce self-government if other towns nearby have done the same. The lower graph examines a second expectation, which posits that townsmen focus on recently demonstrated successes. It shows that the likelihood of institutional diffusion decreases as the time since the first transition to a new regime type increases. Both graphs are based on the baseline model described above.

Article 1: The Cluniac Reform Movement and the Origins of Urban Self-Government in Medieval Europe

The effect of the Cluniac reform movement could, arguably, be expected to be strongest for towns in the immediate vicinity of Cluny monasteries. To test if this is the case, I redo my IV analysis, exchanging my explanatory variable with an indicator that is equal to 1 if a town is within 5km of a Cluny monastery, and 0 otherwise. Figure 30 reports an even stronger positive effect of the Cluniac reform movement.

Figure 30: The Cluniac reform movement and self-government - IV results

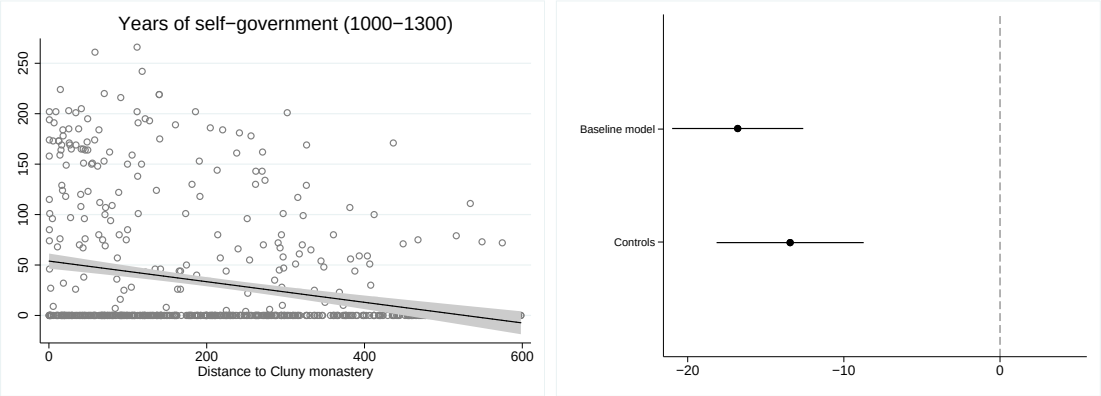


Note: Dots represent the effect of being within 5km of a Cluniac monastery. Lines are 95% confidence intervals. First stage F statistic is 130.

To ensure that my findings are not dependent on dataset, I also

repeat my main analysis using my own dataset of 680 European towns which provide more detailed information on the number of years a town has self-government. Figure 31 confirms the findings presented in the main text.

Figure 31: The Cluny reform movement and years of self-government (1000-1300 AD) using own dataset of 680 towns



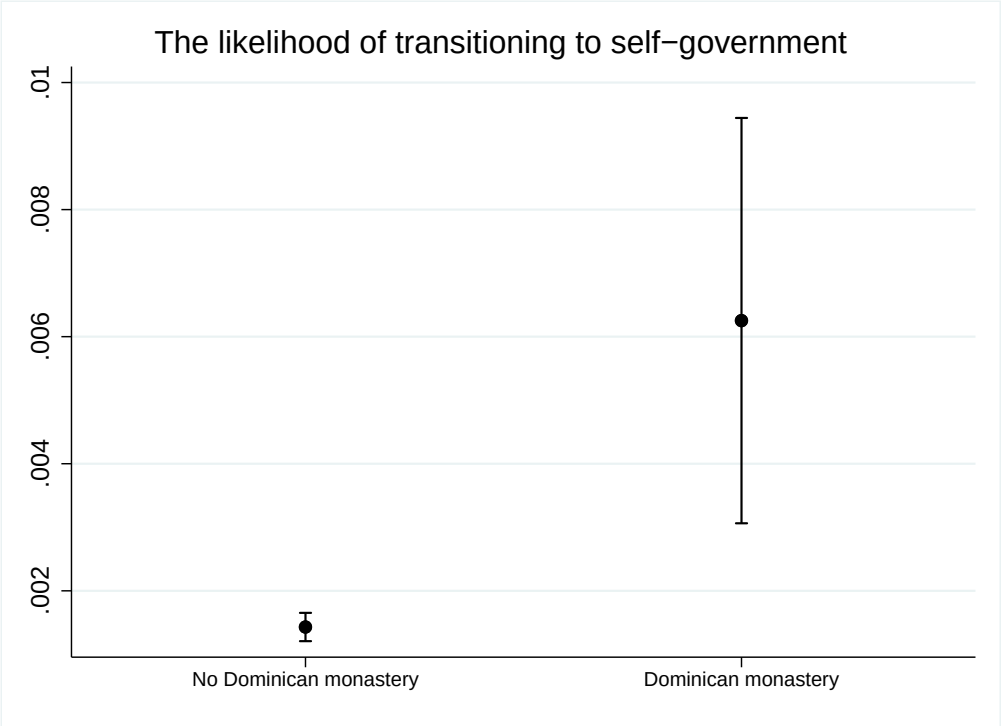
Note: Estimated using OLS and 2SLS (the first stage F statistic is 861). Town level of analysis. Hollow dots in the left graph represent towns in the dataset. Gray areas are 95% confidence intervals. The right graph depicts the estimated effect of increasing distance to the nearest Cluny monastery by a standard deviation. The estimates are based on instrumenting distance with proximity to the original abbey in Cluny.

Article 2: The Diffusion of Urban Medieval Representation: The Dominican Order as an Engine of Regime Change

The results presented in the main text rely on a rough temporal coding (century). To ensure the findings are not reliant on this, I repeat the difference-in-difference design using my own dataset of 680 European towns which tracks the introduction of self-government at the annual level. My data on Dominican monasteries can only tell me if a monastery has been constructed between 1216 AD and 1250 AD. To be conservative, I therefore set my main explanatory variable as 1 in towns with a Dominican monastery after 1250 AD, and 0 otherwise.

Looking at Figure 32, having a Dominican monastery between 1216 AD and 1250 AD has a strong positive effect on the likelihood of establishing self-government after 1250 AD. In fact, the likelihood increases by 450% compared to non-Dominican towns.

Figure 32: The Dominican order and transitioning to self-government (1200-1300 AD) using own dataset of 680 towns

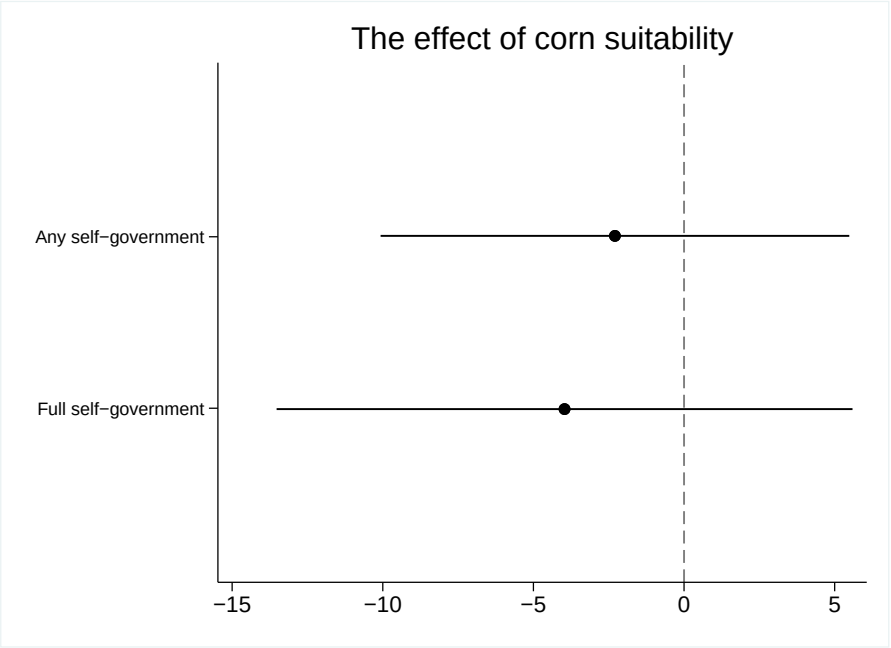


Note: Estimated using OLS. Town-year level of analysis. Lines are 95% confidence intervals based on town-level clustering. Based on model that includes town and year fixed effects, all controls, and their interaction with time.

Article 3: Urban Growth in Northwestern Europe - Evidence from a Natural Experiment

One might object that the relationship between rye suitability and self-government is simply proxying a general association between crop suitability and self-government. To check if this is the case, I examine the relationship between corn suitability (a rarely grown crop) and years of self-government. Figure 33 documents that this worry is unfounded.

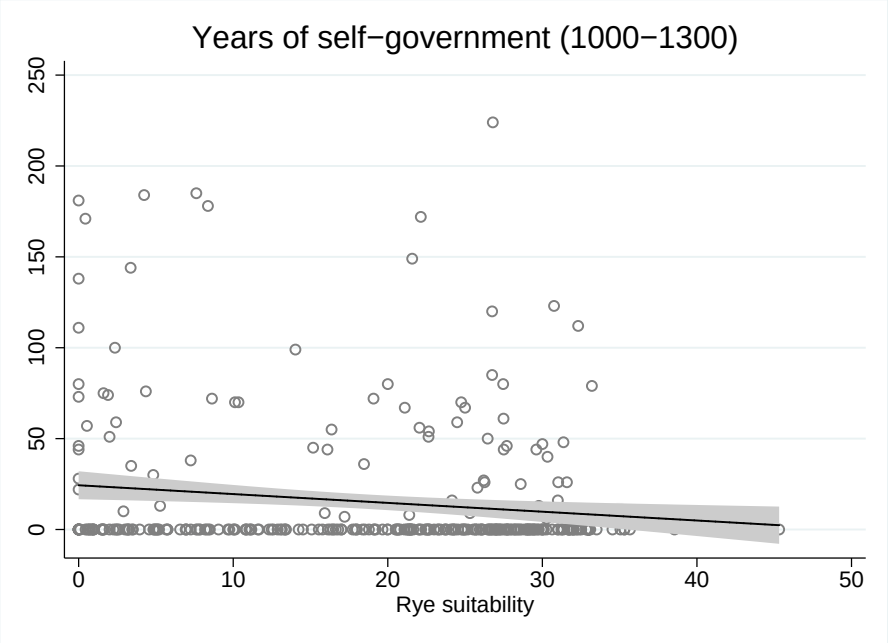
Figure 33: An unpopular crop and self-government



Note: Baseline model with 212 towns. Estimated using OLS. Lines are 95% confidence intervals based on robust standard errors.

To ensure that the results are not dependent on dataset choice, I repeat my analysis using my own dataset of 680 towns. Of these, 330 towns are located in areas that introduced rye cultivation around the eighth century; thus, these are used for the analysis. However, it should be pointed out that I do not know if the towns are founded before 800 AD. Consequently, these results should be given less weight then the ones presented in the main text. Figure 34 confirms the negative relationship between local rye suitability and self-government.

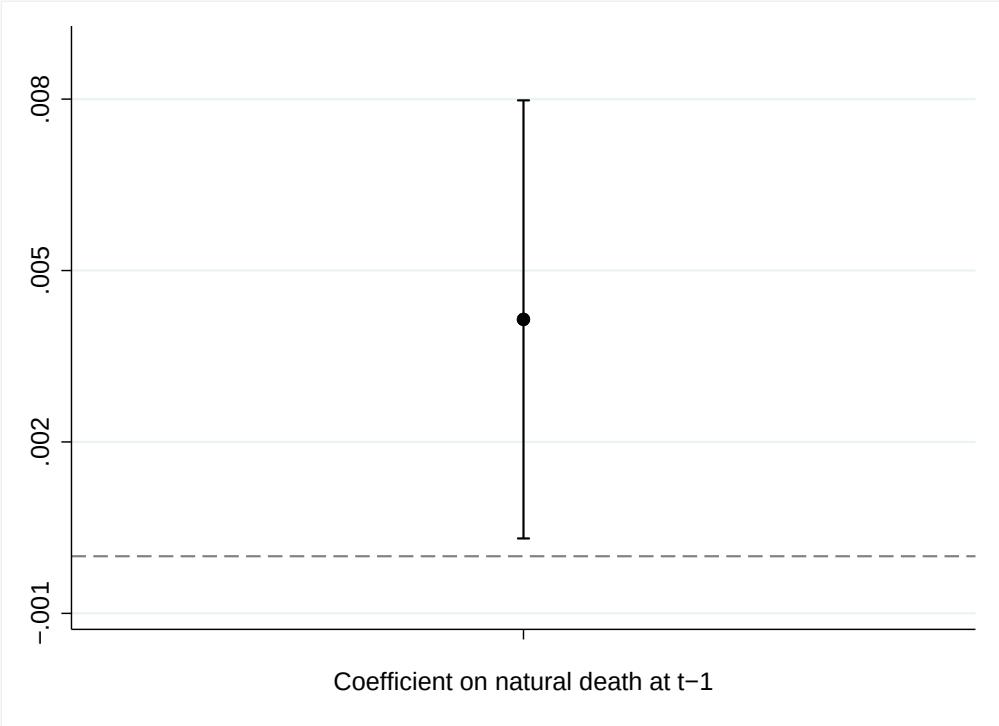
Figure 34: Agricultural suitability and self-government using own dataset of 680 towns



Note: Estimated using OLS. Town level of analysis. Hollow dots represents towns in the dataset that are located within the areas where rye became popular (eastern France, Germany, Switzerland, and the Benelux countries). 330 towns out of 680 in total. Gray areas are 95% confidence intervals.

Article 4: Conquered or Granted? Authoritarian Succession and the Growth of Urban Self-Government in Medieval Europe

Figure 35: Succession and self-government across European NUTS regions



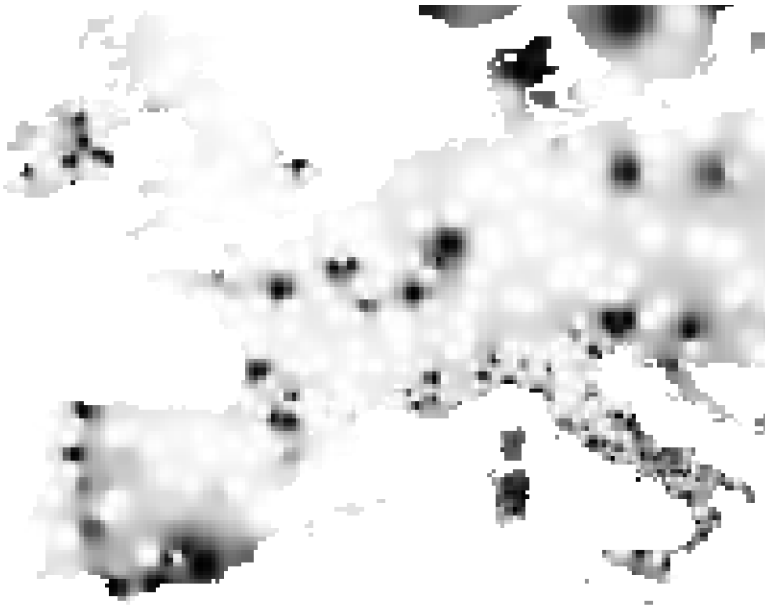
Note: 95% confidence intervals based on town level clustering. Based on model with year and town fixed effects, control for town size, leader tenure, and NUTS region time trends. Towns from Stasavage (2014) are matched to NUTS level data on natural deaths from Acharya and Lee (2019) based on their geographic location. For additional details, see Article 4_{suc}.

Data quality

Figure 36 below depicts the spatial distribution of Catholic record keeping quality across Europe. Note that few data points where

available for Eastern Europe; thus, the scores for this region are very uncertain.

Figure 36: Episcopal data quality in Europe



Note: Darker areas indicates worse data availability between 1000 AD and 1400 AD.

Table 10 presents the results from rerunning my main models in articles 1_{clu} and 2_{dom}, including a control for record keeping quality. The reported coefficients are very close to the ones presented in each article. Thus, differences in data quality do not seem to be significantly influencing my findings.

Table 10: Main results controlling for Catholic data quality

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Design	IV	Dif-in-dif	Dif-in-dif
Distance to Cluny monastery	-0.0427**		
	(0.0136)		
Dominican monastery		0.123**	
		(0.0453)	
Bishop after 1075			0.093***
			(0.0242)
Observations	633	4996	4996

Note: Data from Bosker et al. (2013b). Estimated using OLS and 2SLS. Column (1) is based on model (1) in Table 3 in Article 1_{clu}, with an added control for proportion of missing bishop data between 1000 AD and 1500 AD. Columns (2) and (3) are based on models with town and century fixed effects and an interaction between bishop data quality and time. Standard errors clustered by town in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix D: Historical Background
The Holy Roman Empire, 911-1250 AD

In the following, I give a short overview of the emergence of the Holy Roman Empire from the breakup of the Carolingian Empire in 911 until the reign of Emperor Frederick II. Then, I describe the extent of royal power in the thirteenth century.

The death of the last Carolingian ruler in 911 AD marks the beginning of the kingdom that would later be known as the Holy Roman Empire. From then on, the east Frankish aristocracy decided to appoint their own rulers. Henry of Saxony was elected as ruler of the territory in 919 AD. He would go on to establish the Ottonian dynasty. By imposing its rule over parts of West Francia, Burgundy, Bohemia, and northern and central Italy, the Ottonians became the most powerful regents in the West. When the last Ottonian ruler died without an heir in 1024 AD, the dynasty was replaced by the Salians. Under the Ottonians and the Salians, the Church was utilized as a parallel instrument of rule in order to circumvent local lords. This backfired when the investiture dispute, which began in 1076 AD, challenged the Salian's reliance on Church officials. As a result, Frederick Barbarossa took over the throne in 1137 AD, thereby beginning the Hohenstaufen or Staufer dynasty. Barbarossa managed to secure a significant degree of authority over the Empire. He was acknowledged as suzerain of northern Italy in 1177 AD, and he was able to reject papal claims to suzerainity over Naples. However, after his death in 1191 AD, the Empire descended into civil war. The war lasted until Frederick II regained control of the Holy Roman Empire shortly after being crowned king of Germany in 1212 AD (Ertman 1997, 229-235; Wilson 2016b, 66, 355, 378). Frederick II restarted the process that Barbarossa had begun and reorganized the ecclesiastical and lay fiefs into a united hierarchy. He also managed to recover royal lands, which made the staufer holdings comparable to their pre-civil war status. Furthermore, in his first years, he established thirty-nine towns in southwestern Ger-

Figure 37: A portrait of Frederick II

Note: From Frederick II's own book "On the Art of Hunting with Birds".

many alone. The administration of his realm was primarily done via officials and ministerials under the supervision of local regents, such as the Archbishop of Cologne. He was often away doing battle in Italy, tasking his sons with ruling the German lands while away. This allowed him to maintain authority. After a fifteen-year absence, Frederick returned to Germany in 1235 AD, where he proceeded to

crush a rebellion, depose his eldest son, and instate his younger son as regent. In addition, he seized the assets of his eldest son's ally Duke Friedrich II of Babenberg of Austria and settled a long running dispute with the Welfs. Finally, he introduced the proclamation of the Land Peace of Mainz, which was to be the basic of all future imperial law. He was consequently able to maintain a grip over his empire for most of his reign, with the exception of the already self-governing northern Italian towns, which he, like his predecessors, was unable to subdue(Waley 2018, 53; Kantorowicz 1931, 403-411; Wilson 2016b, 66, 355, 378).

The extent of Frederick II's power is, admittedly, not great by modern standards. However, compared to contemporary monarchs and other emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, he was certainly not weak. In contrast, the would-be emperors that followed him were never able to subjugate the other princes enough to re-establish central authority in the Empire (Ertman 1997, 229-235). Why was this so? First, Frederick II had appointed his second oldest son, Conrad IV, as his successor and regent in Germany. During the last years of Frederick's reign, Conrad had successfully quashed a series of attempts by the Pope to establish an alternative candidate for the kingship of Germany. However, when the news of his fathers death reached him, he was running out of funds. He was also considerably less popular with the princes in comparison with this father. Conrad thus mortgaged or sold many of his German possessions and took off for Sicily, in an attempt to regain the riches his father had used to finance his war efforts. He never sat foot in Germany again, and he got ill and died in 1254 AD (Weber 1920; Kantorowicz 1931, 673; Engel and Holtz 1989, 223-230). His son Conrad the Younger, two years old at the time of Conrad IV's death, was never a serious contender for the throne, and with his death in 1268 AD, the House of Hohenstaufen went extinct in the male line (Chisholm 1911a). The House had overtaxed itself in an attempt regain control of the Italian parts of the realm, and thus, it lost all power when its funds ran out. Second, the reorganization of ecclesiastical and lay fiefs into a united

hierarchy had allowed local rulers to consolidate their position. This process was further strengthened by Frederick II's long absences from Germany (Engel and Holtz 1989, 230).