

Revolts as Communicative Events in Early-Modern Europe

Circulation of Knowledge and the Development of Political Grammars

Abstract

Early-modern revolts were cathartic events marked by communicative dynamism. Central questions of social justice and order that remained latent under ordinary circumstances were negotiated verbally and symbolically. Especially during bigger revolts and civil wars, threats and measures of deterrence could easily lose their impact on subjects or even backfire. Authorities were now compelled to demonstrate the legitimacy of their rule and justify existing social relations and hierarchies in terms of their contribution to a common good. Consequently, revolts represented moments of catharsis in the development of Early Modern political grammars. As fundamental and complex constructions of legitimacy, these grammars were spelled out in many ways, engaging a range of disciplines that accordingly call for study by an interdisciplinary team of researchers. But however cathartic the moments of revolt were, after repression governments tried even harder to obliterate the memory of the actual events (damnatio memoriae), thus pushing away the intriguing questions of legitimacy of rule they had raised. For this reason, Early Modern authors, commentators, analysts, and political advisers referred almost exclusively to revolts having taken place abroad (sometimes in 'oriental tyrannies,' for instance Muscovy or the Ottoman Empire, that seemed particularly innocuous), or alternatively in a distant historical past. Such displacements and constructions of otherness or alterity (my terms for this is dissimulation) could be a means of criticizing despotic authorities and arguing in favor of a right to resist. Within the Gutenberg Galaxy, commemoration was a complex process working through entangled communication across state borders and involving various (political) cultures and both arcane and public channels of communication. Taking a cross-border perspective, our research group will explore these transmissions of knowledge about revolts and the subsequent learned and public debates on the legitimacy of rule and hierarchies. Our aim will be to follow Early Modern circumventions of damnatio memoriae policies imposed by governments, and to closely examine the emergence and development of political grammars in a heterogeneous but discursively integrating European space.

Early Modern revolts in previous research

In the decades of the Cold War, much research was carried out on social unrest, with a focus on the revolts and civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century in particular. Global questions concerning the nature and causes of these revolts, and the motivations and ideologies of their agents, were raised by Marxist historians, who focused in dichotomist fashion on class-struggle. In response, Western researchers such as R. Mousnier and Ch. Tilly pointed to the state as a crucial independent actor in a triangular relationship of forces: 'reactive' subjects, both from the upper and the lower strata (the first and second angles), were trying to resist the 'proactive' state (the third angle) and its efforts at modernization.¹

The emergence of a perspective more broadly grounded in cultural history considerably diversified this picture. However, although detailed studies have been published of several individual uprisings,² historians have generally ceased to 'think big.' The reactions of authorities to revolts and the phenomenon of commemoration have indeed been addressed in the research to date; but comparative syntheses based on these new, highly significant points of focus largely remain a lacuna. W. Schulze's "big" hypothesis that governments developed their legal systems (a process of 'juridicization')³ as a consequence of revolts has

¹ For the Marxist interpretative pattern see B.F. Porshnev's work, which triggered the debate with Western historiography. R. Mousnier, *Fureurs paysannes. Les paysans dans les révoltes du XVIIe siècle (France, Russie, Chine)* (Paris 1967).

² See for instance A. Suter, *Der schweizerische Bauernkrieg von 1653. Politische Sozialgeschichte - Sozialgeschichte eines politischen Ereignisses* (Tübingen 1997); A. Hugon, *Naples insurgée. De l'événement à la mémoire, 1647-1648* (Rennes 2011).

³ W. Schulze, "'Geben Aufstand und Aufruhr Anlaß zu neuen, heilsamen Gesetzen?" Beobachtungen über die Wirkungen bäuerlichen Widerstands in der frühen Neuzeit,' in idem (ed.), *Aufstände, Revolten, Prozesse. Beiträge zu bäuerlichen Widerstandsbewegungen im frühneuzeitlichen Europa* (Stuttgart 1983) has coined the German term *Verrechtlichung*

hardly been explored; more broadly speaking, the authorities' perspective has also tended to be neglected in the older 'big' comparative debates. In the short run, juridicization meant criminalization and was a transparent measure of deterrence.⁴ But when governments were trying to implement a 'milder regiment' and 'new salutary laws' (neue heilsame Gesetze, Neumair v. Ramsla, 1633), they would not relate such measures to the experience of revolt, fearing this would encourage their subjects to further uprisings. Under no circumstance whatsoever was revolt to be presented as successful.

In my previous research I have stressed that 'salutary' (long-term) juridicization (i.e. basically the creation of institutions of appeal) aimed first and foremost at preventing uncontrollable horizontal extensions of communicative spaces, a movement highly characteristic of revolts. Systematic attempts to redirect subjects' interchange into vertical channels corresponded to a primary preoccupation by governments with maintaining a monopoly on communication rather than a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Accordingly, I consider Early Modern revolt to have been an organizational achievement that involved an overcoming of geographical and social distances; this was easier in populated areas, especially for social groups such as peasants, whose mobility was strongly limited. It is thus no mere coincidence that I have been able to observe a certain correlation between demographic density on the one hand, frequency and ferocity of revolts on the other hand.⁵

Furthermore, I argue that once a domestic revolt subdued, governments tried to obliterate its memory (the process of *damnatio memoriae*), at least from public discourse. This has led me to place special emphasis on cross-border representations of revolt, which seem to have been the central mediators for public debate and long-term adaptation or learning effects on the authorities' part. I interpret the pronounced tendencies to juridicization in the politically fragmented Holy Roman Empire in this light. My central thesis is that such tendencies were prepared, in the first place, by the particularly smooth cross-border circulation of revolt-knowledge. Rulers could suppress publication of accounts of revolt within their borders; but they were unable to prevent them from being published outside. The accounts circulated quite freely, unhindered by linguistic barriers. In the German-speaking lands, as well as in parts of Italy that was politically divided in a similar way, [yes?] the authorities were forcefully drawn into public debates about preventive policies. The situation in large territorial states such as France and Russia was significantly different. Here the cross-border flow of revolt-representation was far more complicated. Authorities were more successful in suppressing or keeping at a distance (competing) representations of revolts. Legal instances of appeal remained less developed; instead recourse to large-scale repression was frequent.

A close examination of the situation in Sweden suggests that governments could also use their (arcane) diplomatic networks to analyze revolts abroad, for the sake of drawing practical consequences for domestic policy.⁶ Such findings show clearly that the research involved here requires "fine tuning"—a weighing of the complex interplay of arcane and public representations of revolt. For contemporaries, the breakthrough signified by the Gutenberg Galaxy was not dissimilar to what we have experienced in our time as a digital revolution. This "media revolution" had an impact on both representations of revolt and the very course of the events themselves. The novelty of the situation was appreciated in the Early Modern period in a manner very similar to our appreciation of the "Twitter revolution," in respect for instance to the so-called Arab (juridicization).

⁴ P. Blickle, 'The Criminalization of Peasant Resistance in the Holy Roman Empire. Toward a History of the Emergence of High Treason in Germany,' *Journal of Modern History* 58, December (suppl.) (1986).

⁵ M. Griesse, 'Warum es im Rußland der Frühen Neuzeit keinen Bauernkrieg gab. Komparatistische Vorüberlegungen zu einer kommunikationsgeschichtlichen Revision eines alten Paradigmas,' in G. Hausmann, A. Rustemeyer (eds), *Imperienvergleich. Beispiele und Ansätze aus osteuropäischer Perspektive* (2009).

⁶ See M. Roberts, 'Queen Christina and the General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century.' *Past and Present* 22 (1962); M. Griesse, 'Aufstandsprävention in der Frühen Neuzeit. Länderübergreifende Wahrnehmungen von Revolten und Verrechtlichungsprozesse,' in A. de Benedictis and K. Härter (eds), *Revolten und politische Verbrechen vom 12.-19. Jahrhundert. Reaktionen der Rechtssysteme und juristisch-politische Diskurse/ Rivolte e crimini politici tra XII e XIX secolo: Reazioni del sistema giuridico e discorso giuridico-politico* (Frankfurt am Main, in press).

Spring. Early-Modern authorities were as frightened at the possibilities of written pamphlets and circulating libel as authoritarian and sometimes even other regimes are of the Internet today. Both the extent to which knowledge circulated and the involvement of public spheres were crucial for the articulation, challenging, and development of existing political grammars and constructions of the common good. Principles of what could be perceived as just and equitable were spelled out not only in legal systems and political philosophies, but also in analogies and metaphors, particularly so in widespread organic metaphors comparing society, with its different estates and social groups, to a human body, with its organs and members. There was thus a close nexus between theories of human anatomy and political conceptions of social relations, illnesses of the body being equated either with revolts or with the corruption of rulers that provoked them.⁷

In the area of visual representations of revolt (especially in respect to ensuing punishment) my examination of transcultural contact zones ('intervisuality') has opened up what appear to be promising research avenues—for instance the considerable conflict potential between Western and Orthodox visual cultures and 'representabilities'.⁸

Central focus of the research group

Building on my previous research, especially on *damnatio memoriae* and its impact, the research group approaches cross-border representations and interpretations of revolt as a crucial commemorative factor, one that played a large role in fuelling contemporary public and learned debates on justification of rule (and sometimes on resistance), as well as accompanying recommendations concerning preventive domestic policy. In traditional historiography, such 'foreign' accounts have been considered (if at all) only as sources for reconstructing the actual events they depicted. I wish to consider them, to the contrary, from a multi-dimensional perspective, which is to say as bridges between different political cultures. At work here was a process of steady cultural 'translation,' a transformation of knowledge from one context into another.⁹ Comparison is inherent in such accounts: describers, commentators, and analysts of foreign revolts implicitly compared their objects of inquiry to actual or potential revolts or apprehensions of revolt at home, that is, to issues official taboos prevented them from addressing explicitly.¹⁰ While clinging to these taboos, governments were nevertheless interested in preventive policies that would avert large-scale resistance. For this reason, revolts were instrumental in shaping new conceptualizations of society and territory involving, for example, (proto-) statistical aggregates and cartography. These instruments in turn compelled the authorities to undertake structural transformations in their organization, in order to confront simultaneously 'internal' and 'external' threats. This further strengthened processes of state formation and the development of policing institutions and bureaucracies.¹¹

⁷ On the correlation between the paradigm shift from humeral theory (the Galen heritage) to germ theory (Paracelsus) and a reconceptualization of revolts as being provoked by social pathogens see J.G. Harris, *Foreign bodies and the body politic. Discourses of social pathology in early modern England* (Cambridge 1998).

⁸ M. Griesse, 'State-Arcanum and European Public Spheres. Paradigm Shifts in Muscovite Policy towards Foreign Representations of Russian Revolts,' in idem (ed), *Early-Modern Revolts in their Transnational Representation* (Bielefeld, in press).

⁹ In a workshop at the Bielefeld Center for interdisciplinary Studies (ZiF) in June 2009, I took first steps toward adopting and arguing for this perspective. See M. Griesse (ed), *Early-Modern Revolts in their Transnational Representation* (Bielefeld in press).

¹⁰ This is a particularly well-known and broadly discussed feature of discourse on despotism in eighteenth century France, which often focuses on the Ottoman Empire as a projection surface for dealing with excesses of power and abuses within the French monarchy. For examples from literature and drama see A. Koschorke, *Der fiktive Staat. Konstruktionen des politischen Körpers in der Geschichte Europas* (Frankfurt am Main 2007).

¹¹ For censuses in the Spanish colonial Empire as early as Philipp II see A. Brendecke, *Imperium und Empirie. Funktionen des Wissens in der spanischen Kolonialherrschaft* (Cologne 2009). For the Reich the shift to governmental accounting can be observed starting in the early seventeenth century, see H. Schulz, *Das System und die Prinzipien der Einkünfte im werdenden Staat der Neuzeit* (Berlin, Tübingen 1982). For a new, competing view of 'cameralist' objectives in the German Reich and the

This focus on representations is not meant to suggest that the revolts themselves are of no central interest to the project. To the contrary: the research agenda conflates approaches grounded in both social and intellectual history. Whereas (written) discourse on revolts conveys conceptions held by elites, the revolts themselves, as reflecting situations of acute social and/or political conflict, have encouraged more humble social actors to foreground and elaborate ideas of justice that otherwise remain latent or merely inexistent. These utterings presented a challenge to the elites who subsequently wrote on the events. We will thus juxtapose and integrate different ways of invoking concepts of the common good; these will extend, from performative action in the course of popular resistance-movements to sophisticated philosophical elaborations of an ideal and equitable order by more or less highly placed intellectuals in the face of a social reality marked by revolts.

Social historians often deplore the fact that available sources such as court records and chronicles (which generally remained unpublished due to *damnatio memoriae*) convey the insurgents' viewpoint only through the authorities' distorting mirror. In the framework of a primary focus on the side of those who were rebelling, this problem is especially salient. When I speak of revolts as communicative events, I wish to imply different levels of communication, both within the events (subjects to subjects, subjects to authorities, and authorities from center to province or between provinces, etc.) and concerning the events (representations rendered by firsthand, secondhand, thirdhand and so forth observers). Whereas (internal) chroniclers were writing on uprisings that challenged their own authorities, inevitably finding themselves in conflicts of loyalty (even when the rebelling subjects did not identify them with these authorities), foreign observers were much freer to envision the insurgents' motives and explore the causes of revolt, notwithstanding distance to the depicted political culture and ensuing—sometimes highly interesting—misunderstandings of regional specificities.

But how can we characterize a revolt as communicative event? Subjects who under ordinary circumstances had nothing to do with each other now came together and coordinated their actions. This extension of communicative space generally emerged from both highly pragmatic concerns and defensive purposes. E.P. Thompson has focused on the underlying "moral economy" of such reactions—thus rebutting the idea that subalterns were responding mechanically, in "spasmodic riots," to external (economic, political, etc.) stimuli.¹² Thompson understands moral economy as a rather stable set of ethical values framing the insurgents' political actions. But like many other historians, he neglects the potential of revolts to modify these sets of values, which is probably due in his case to his focus on rather short-lasting 'food riots'.

In fact, the more a revolt has time to develop, the more it leads to an intensification of exchange. This communicative dynamism often has cathartic effects on the formation of opinions among those engaged in the exchange. Particular issues and grievances are put into a broader context, opening up new political perspectives. Realities that were normally taken for granted, such as hierarchies in social relations and the legitimacy of rule, are now questioned, at least partially. For instance, in the well-studied case of the German Peasant War (1525), coordination and networking came first: social actors created trans-regional and trans-territorial alliances (*Bünde*), initially for quite pragmatic defensive reasons. Starting from these new networks, constituted mainly by peasants and city-dwellers who found themselves confronting existing authorities, new concepts of social justice emerged: a focus on 'divine' instead of 'old' law, and noteworthy attempts at developing constitutions, in this context the famous Twelve Articles in particular.¹³

Authorities dreaded such uncontrollable and non-calculable horizontal extensions of communicative space. In line with what has been said, they feared communication much more than mere acts of violence. Subjects

cameralist pursuit of particular interests by subverting its own theoretical claims, premised on long-term accountability as pursuit of the common good, see A. Wakefield, *The disordered police state: German cameralism as science and practice*. (Chicago 2009). On cartography and similar models for visualizing and operationalizing territory see A. Bürgi, M. Cavelti Hammer, *Relief der Urschweiz. Entstehung und Bedeutung des Landschaftsmodells von Franz Ludwig Pflyffer* (Zürich 2007).

¹² E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century,' *Past and Present* 50 (1971).

¹³ See P. Blickle, *Der Bauernkrieg. Die Revolution des Gemeinen Mannes* (Munich 1998), who stresses the 'revolutionary' communalistic dimension of this large-scale revolt.

organizing themselves beyond conventional horizons and thus assuming organizational power, and, even more so, debating politics and engaging in questions regarding the common good, were perceived as an enormous threat. But at the same time, the authorities were obliged to justify their rule and demonstrate how it served the common good, especially in the face of bigger revolts that contemporary taxonomies often labeled as civil (or intestine) wars. In this context, communicative resources (the media, propaganda, etc.) became increasingly diversified, even sometimes attaining a certain equilibrium between contending forces. Without propagandistic justification, governments risked losing more and more subjects to those in revolt. Revolts were thus moments of intensified propaganda and 'dialogue' between subjects and authorities, where fundamental questions concerning the legitimacy of rule and hierarchies were at stake, questions that were sometimes explicitly debated. Insofar as they offer insight into 'political grammars' that otherwise remain latent, revolts have the potential to produce shifts in the social imaginary concerning certain ideas of justice, and even to generate changes of 'political grammar.'

This is particularly so in phases of revolt-cluster, as in the mid-seventeenth century crisis unfolding in most European countries (as well as elsewhere in the world): a crisis often regarded as a watershed in a new 'struggle for stability in Early Modern Europe.'¹⁴ In the context of large-scale revolts, civil wars, and coup d'états, contemporaries were particularly aware of the turmoil's ubiquity; they attentively observed, described, and interpreted what was going on in other countries as well. The awareness was not limited to 'neutral' observers. Sometimes insurgents in one country would model themselves on those in another country (rebels in Southern Italy thus citing the precedent of Portuguese and Dutch rebels contesting Spanish rule). Or else, to the contrary, they delimited their own 'legitimate' objectives from the 'unlawful' conduct of rebels abroad (the case with many Frondeurs vis-à-vis the partisans of Parliament in the English Civil War).¹⁵ The mid-17th century crisis could thus serve as a focal point for the project on a synchronic level. We here find a culmination of the process of mutual perception and interdependency between simultaneously unfolding revolts. From this vantage point, the research group could track a diachronic level involving longue durée processes: changing political grammars and conceptualizations of revolt extending back to the Reformation and the German Peasant War and forward into the Enlightenment. In the 18th century, "the people" became a focus for concepts of state care and civilizational efforts, thus reversing the former paradigm of the population as an elementary force to be contained (in emblematic metaphors often evoking a stormy sea through which the ship of state has to be steered).

The importance of cultural translation both for synchronic mutual impact and diachronic processes of commemoration—processes shaping conceptualizations of rule and hierarchy—calls for a joining of various regional and linguistic competences and the provisional adoption of a European perspective. Possible subprojects can here focus on the following: England and the Netherlands/United Provinces as examples of at least temporarily victorious revolts; Venetia, with its prolific diplomatic activity and the Incogniti as a major interface of contemporary cross-border perception; the Spanish Empire with Southern Italy, Portugal, and Catalonia; the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, where preventive policies seem to have been rather successful; Poland/Ukraine and the Ottoman Empire, which were often perceived as particularly far away and different and could therefore serve as a projection surface for criticism of established rule; France and Muscovy/ Russia, where governments were particularly successful in containing cross-border flows of information on revolts and took increasing recourse to domestic state violence in the face of social protest in their own realm; and the Holy Roman Empire, where processes of juridicization were preeminent.

As it can be seen from diplomatic records, a source that has hardly been systematically studied with regard to revolts, governments were particularly alert towards what was happening abroad, either a) because they were trying to take advantage of events in the domain of foreign policy or b) in order to draw lessons from experience abroad (as in the case of Sweden), or c) because they feared 'contagion,' i.e. dissemination of revolt across borders through the circulation of information, rumors, and knowledge. Cross-border perceptions of revolts have to be studied in their complex interplay of identification and dissociation, or what

¹⁴ T.K. Rabb, *The struggle for stability in early modern Europe* (New York 1975); P. Benedict, M.P. Gutmann, *Early modern Europe. From crisis to stability* (Newark 2005).

¹⁵ See F. Benigno, *Mirrors of revolution. Conflict and political identity in early modern Europe* (Turnhout 2010).

we might call 'assimilation' (comparison) and 'dissimilation' ("othering"), all of these patterns being perceptual constructions, of course. Especially when singling out 'tyrannical' rule as a trigger of revolt, commentators referred to what was sometimes (but certainly not always) labeled particularly distant and 'different,' 'barbarian' Russia; or else to other oriental 'despotisms,' especially that of the Ottoman Empire (for instance as presented in Daniel Casper von Lohenstein's drama *Ibrahim Sultan*).¹⁶

Channels, mediators, and (medial) means of communication will need to be explored in close cooperation within the research group. In order to allow for quantification, the group must establish and constantly update a common database mapping communication within and about revolts by combining prosopographic and geographical factors. Our principal challenge will be to explore the qualitative dimension of cultural translation, more precisely the transmission and transformation of knowledge, rumors and interpretations between different political contexts, and to retrace the concrete impact of various chains of revolt-receptions on both domestic policy and the formation of institutions.

Many disciplines were involved in the entangled Early Modern discourses on revolts, and they significantly contributed to the emergence and development of political grammars. A range of political and political-philosophical writings can only be understood adequately as responses to the complex chain of successive cross-border representations of revolt. Hobbes' *Leviathan*, written in French exile during the English Civil War, is only one of the most famous examples. Although Hobbes' long-term impact on political thinking has been enormous, his ideas were repudiated by most of his contemporaries; many other authors who are much less well-known and studied today had a considerably bigger impact at the time.¹⁷ Theologians and jurists were particularly engaged in this debate, writing prolifically on phenomena involving resistance to established rule. Initially dependent on the authorities, sometimes even actively participating in the repression of revolts, they achieved limited autonomy within the universities that in turn led to a change of perspective in their writings. Of course, jurists rarely became dissidents, but at least they envisioned the very possibility of a right to resist tyrannical rule.¹⁸ Visual culture was particularly important for the representation of revolts. Often woodcuts were directly commissioned by the authorities and printed on broadsheets. They were accompanied by basic textual explanations, frequently in verse form and sometimes meant to be sung by a crowd present at an execution.¹⁹ The woodcuts reveal an entire grammar of punishments mirroring corresponding crimes. In contrast to texts, they immediately addressed the illiterate. Medical literature also played an important part in the representation of revolts, and in the treatment of the central question of legitimacy. Even after the advent of social contract-theories in political philosophy, body-metaphorical thinking was commonplace, with concepts of human and political anatomy influencing each other. Within the Galenic humoral paradigm, revolt was understood as, similar to illness, a more or less endogenous phenomenon borne by the body politic itself. But with the advent of Paracelsian iatrochemistry, revolt was increasingly conceptualized as exogenous, that is, as the result of infiltrating 'foreign bodies.' This was related to ever closer inter-state communication, but also to the media revolution and the interconnected accelerated circulation and multiplication of news. In this context the tongue, situated at the most dangerous orifice of the body (politic), acquired new meaning as principal instigator of revolt, similar to the figure of Fama. Francis Bacon for example acknowledged that Fama, like a multi-headed hydra, could hardly be repressed by force, but only contained by Fama herself. We find the same observation in the vast Early Modern moralistic and rhetorical literature on the tongue. We will thus need to analyze the emergence of both the idea of propaganda and the growing valorization of (public) opinion as a major source, or even

¹⁶ See Koschorke, *Der fiktive Staat*, and Christiane Ackermann's ongoing work on the reception of the Ottoman Empire and the Turks in German drama.

¹⁷ See for instance J. R. Collins, *The allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford, New York 2005).

¹⁸ See Fabrizio dal Vera's ongoing dissertation, as well as F. Dal Vera, 'Quietis publicae perturbatio. Revolts in the Political and Legal Treatises of the sixteenth and seventeenth Centuries,' in M. Griesse (ed), *Early-Modern Revolts in their Transnational Representation* (Bielefeld, in press).

¹⁹ A. Würigler, 'Revolts in Print. Media and Communication in Early Modern Urban Conflicts,' in R. Schlögl (ed), *Urban elections and decision-making in early modern Europe, 1500 - 1800* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2009); D. Erben, 'Bildnis, Denkmal und Historie beim Masaniello-Aufstand 1647-1648 in Neapel,' *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* (1999).

the source, of power and legitimacy (from Machiavelli, Montaigne, and Bacon to Hobbes and Hume)—a problem field located at the crossroads of various disciplines.²⁰ Of course, imaginative literature played a major role in the representation of revolts, especially in Early Modern drama and in opera librettos. Even if common people were often not immediately shown, in dramatic representations they generally occupied the background, where they served as a sustaining force for palace revolts, conspiracies, and other challenges to existing governments.²¹

All these discourses were mainly produced by elites. But since they developed from real conflicts, they cannot be dissociated from the larger population. Oral tradition consistently challenged government attempts at *damnatio memoriae*. Ordinary people commemorated revolts, and leaders of uprisings were often held in great esteem in popular culture – a thorn in the flesh of authorities concerned about *damnatio memoriae*. But elite and popular representations were often closely related. Investigating entanglements between the two thus represents a major potential challenge for anthropological research.²²

Political grammars

My concept of political grammars is in debt to French pragmatic sociology and the “economies of worth” elaborated by L. Boltanski and L. Thévenot, whose comprehensive theoretical pluralism is particularly fruitful in analyzing Early Modern conflicts. These sociologists have examined situations of conflict and the criticisms and justifications of the actors involved. Their arguments are not reduced to some underlying (material or other) interest, but related to the different principles of “common good” they appeal to, more or less explicitly. If Bourdieu has highlighted the coexistence of different, rather delimited fields within modern society, each field with its own rules and logic, the pragmatic sociological school is interested in manifold conflict situations where affiliation with a certain field is unclear or contested by social actors. These are the situations in which conceptions of legitimacy are born and negotiated. They can account for changes in the idea of what is considered just and unjust.²³ As moments of intensified communication and argument, revolts are such loci of contestation par excellence, on both horizontal (subject-subject) and vertical (subject-authority) levels. The dynamism they engendered was, as suggested, dreaded by the authorities, who grasped the cathartic potential of their subjects’ engaged deliberations. For these deliberations brought forward generalizations concerning the community’s common good (very often through an intermediary process of identifying ‘common evils’); they addressed the question of the extent to which social differences and hierarchies were justified by reciprocity. For example, the ever-increasing tax-load imposed by the emerging state did not appear to signify a gain in security and thus lacked reciprocity and legitimacy. Thompson’s concept of moral economy is somewhat related to this, although, as argued, it rather fails to conceptualize fundamental change. And particularly in the framework of the mid-seventeenth century European crisis, concepts of justice and equitable order were susceptible to change. If pragmatic sociology

²⁰ On Bacon’s understanding of Fama see M. Dzelzainis, “The Feminine part of every Rebellion.” Francis Bacon on Seditio and Libel, and the Beginning of Ideology,’ *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 69, 1 (2006). On discourse on the tongue in literature and guidebooks on moral behavior (mainly German) see R.G. Bogner, *Die Bezähmung der Zunge. Literatur und Disziplinierung der Alltagskommunikation in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen 1997). On the growing Early Modern appreciation of (public) opinion-within mainly body-metaphorical thinking see M. Griesse, ‘Das Zünglein an der Waage. Revolte und Kommunikation in der frühneuzeitlichen Körpermetaphorik,’ in H. Kümper (ed), *Körpermetaphern in der politischen Semantik der Vormoderne*. (in press).

²¹ A. Beise, *Geschichte, Politik und das Volk im Drama des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin 2010), D. Niefanger, *Geschichtsdrama der Frühen Neuzeit 1495 - 1773* (Tübingen 2005).

²² P. Burke, *Helden, Schurken und Narren. Europäische Volkskultur in der frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 1981), J. C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance. Hidden transcripts* (New Haven 1990).

²³ I have developed this approach in the twentieth century context. M. Griesse, *Communiquer, juger et agir sous Staline. La personne prise entre ses liens avec les proches et son rapport au système politico-idéologique* (Frankfurt am Main 2011).

traces arguments of twentieth and twenty-first century social actors back to principles and ideal-type constructions of equitable order in political philosophy, most of them Early Modern – Bossuet (the domestic context), Hobbes (fame), Smith (the market), and Rousseau (civic equality), with only Augustine (inspiration) and Saint-Simon (efficiency) moving outside that time frame) – an analysis of arguments tied to Early Modern revolt has to be accompanied by an exploration of the social genesis of these constructions, which were still far from being universally accepted.²⁴ It is important to note that the analysis will need to associate verbal arguments with performative and symbolic acts, together with visual and metaphorical representations of just and unjust orders, for instance Early Modern corporeal-metaphorical variations of the Aesopian fable of the rebellion of the body's limbs against the belly. And it will be important to consider this in the framework of cultural flow and translation.²⁵

²⁴ L. Boltanski, L. Thévenot, *On justification. Economies of worth* (Princeton, NJ 2006).

²⁵ Homi Bhabha's *Location of culture* has become a seminal reference for the innumerable subsequent studies on *cultural translation* or, to put it more radically, on the *translation of cultures*. For the mutual entanglement of (political) cultures see also the concept of *histoire croisée*: M. Werner, B. Zimmermann, 'Penser l'histoire croisée. Entre empirie et réflexivité,' *Annales : histoire, sciences sociales* 58 (2003), as well as the vast literature on 'entangled' and 'transnational' history.