

Monitoring Discontent: The Dutch Countryside. Rural unrest and the problem of national security in the Netherlands, 1830-1848

Supervisor Name	Discipline
Dr. Diederik Smit	History
Dr. Maartje Janse	History
Prof. Dr. Wim Voermans	Constitutional and Administrative Law

Project description

The period 1830-1848 was one of great societal and political upheaval, in which economic, religious, and constitutional unrest threatened the very existence of Dutch nation state. Last year our Research Traineeship project 'Monitoring Discontent' analysed how Dutch authorities managed urban unrest in these years.¹ Although this project has yielded important insights into the dynamics between urban unrest and ideas on national security, to our great surprise it also showed that urban protest was by no means the biggest threat to the authorities. Instead, most of the unrest reported by both provincial administrators and newspapers took place in the periphery of the new state and dealt with rural rather than urban unrest. This fact is overlooked in historiography, and our initial approach was typical of the Hollandocentric approach we need to unlearn and challenge by following the primary sources. If, for instance, we follow the reports of the dragoons that were sent around the Netherlands to suppress (potential) revolts, we suddenly catch a glimpse of a war-like situation: in 1831 a 950-men-strong army was needed to put down a local uprising in Oldenzaal.

In this project we will therefore shift our attention from the city to the countryside and explore the ways in which authorities dealt with riots, protests and strikes in rural communities. By analysing correspondences between local dignitaries (mayors, clergymen etc.), provincial administrators (governors) and government officials (ministers, military commanders etc.) the project will not only identify the different repertoires of rural protest in the 1830s and 1840s, but also the different strategies authorities used to suppress or contain local uprisings. The project will specifically focus on two regions that were considered hotbeds of dissent due to their religious character, socio-economic situation, and location close to the border: Eastern Overijssel (Twente) and Eastern Brabant.

Research Trainee Profile

The Research Trainees will conduct archival research on two local case studies. The provinces of

¹ A selection of the most important results: Expert meeting in Leiden, 27 June 2022; Meeting 'Oproer in de polder', for an interdisciplinary academic and wider non-academic audience (jointly organized with the Centrum voor Nederlandse Politiek en Bestuur, with contributions of students of Maartje Janse's BA3 class 'Oproerige Burgers'), 8 December 2022; Poster Presentation by the research trainees at the final conference of the Research Traineeship Programme, 2 September 2022; 3 articles by the individual research trainees (to be reviewed by *Tijdschrift Holland*); 2 peer-reviewed articles by the supervisors (to be reviewed by *Journal of Modern History* and *Nations and Nationalism*); Dataset 'Oproerige Burgers in Hollandse steden, 1830-1848'. For an interview with our former research trainees, see: [Students complete research traineeship: 'This is a good start for a career as researcher' - Leiden University \(universiteit.leiden.nl\)](https://www.universiteit.leiden.nl/en/students/research-traineeship/)

Overijssel and Brabant have been selected because both provinces were hotbeds of rural unrest in this period.

Research Trainee 1	Overijssel	National Archives, The Hague Historisch Centrum Overijssel, Zwolle
Research Trainee 2	Brabant	National Archives, The Hague, Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum, Den Bosch

Especially the Provincial Archives in Overijssel and Brabant are researched thoroughly in order to select more reported instances of local unrest to the list. In a shared data set information is gathered on

- Type of unrest (religious upheaval, food riot etc.)
- Description of events
- Fears of local and provincial authorities ('scenarios')
- Actions and strategies taken by local and provincial authorities
- Involvement of government officials and the military

This research traineeship is intended for talented and motivated students with a strong interest in the history of the Netherlands. Both BA students and (Res)Ma students who started their degree in September 2022 are eligible to apply. Applicants should preferably have proven experience with archival research. Preliminary knowledge of Dutch politics in the nineteenth century is desired but not required.

Collaboration

In an interdisciplinary sense, this project is a collaboration between historians of politics and an expert in the field of constitutional and administrative law. In both disciplines scholars are mostly inclined to discuss national developments, and increasingly research is done into local contexts. However, the provincial level is almost always missing from broader analyses of the development of politics and administration. By highlighting a period in which the provinces were a crucial link between the local and the national, we aim at better understanding the complexities of political and administrative development, especially with regard to the process of national integration of the Netherlands as it took place in the nineteenth century.

Traditionally, Leiden University has been an important centre of research for Dutch political history. However, due to its position within the province of South Holland and its close connections with the central government in The Hague, the focus of its research has been primarily on national institutions and the Randstad region. Unlike the Universities of Groningen en Nijmegen, Leiden has hardly any links with historical institutions in the rural east of the Netherlands. In a time in which there is much debate about the strained relationship between urban and rural regions, and city-dwellers in the west are accused of not taking the rest of the country seriously, Leiden should be prepared to rethink its strategic alignments.² One explicit aim of this project is to challenge the dominant Hollandocentric

² Anne Bos e.a. eds., *Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis 2018. Randstad versus regio* (Amsterdam 2018); Karel Smouter, *Blauw wit rood. De boerenopstand als spiegel voor Nederland* (Amsterdam 2022); René Cuperus en Josse de Voogd, *De Atlas van Afgehaakt Nederland. Over buitenstaanders en gevestigden* (Den Haag 2021).

approach in Dutch History and to write a more inclusive history of the Netherlands in the nineteenth century. For that reason, we intend to organise two local presentations for a broader audience, in cooperation with the Provincial Archives of Brabant and Overijssel and two regional historical societies: Historische Vereniging Brabant and the Vereeniging tot beoefening van Overijsselsch Regt en Geschiedenis.

Deliverables

- Interdisciplinary Conference (1 day), Institute for History, Leiden, with presentations by experts in history and constitutional law.
- A co-authored article by the research trainees to be published in peer-reviewed journal *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* or *Low Countries Historical Review*.
- An article in a peer-reviewed journal (e.g. *European Review of History*, *European History Quarterly*), co-authored by the supervisors.
- Two local presentations for a broader audience, organised in cooperation with Historische Vereniging Brabant and the Vereeniging tot beoefening van Overijsselsch Regt en Geschiedenis
- For Supervisor 1 this project contributes in important ways to a book he is currently writing, working title: *Parts of the Sum. Piecing together the Dutch nation state*; as well as to a VIDI proposal he is working on, which focuses on the the dynamics between region and nation in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century.
- Supervisor 2 considers this a pilot project for a large-scale investigation into the repertoires and policing of social unrest in the Netherlands, on which she is currently preparing a grant proposal for the Vrije Competitie Geesteswetenschappen.
- In preparation for these plans, Supervisor 1 and 2 plan to also apply for a Thorbecke Grant in 2023, on the very topic of this Research Traineeship proposal, together with Prof. Judith Pollmann.

Planning

Phase 1 (February-April)

- Read and discuss relevant literature on historical context and method
- Expert meeting with supervisors, research trainees and Leiden experts on political history and constitutional law to discuss research methods
- Archival research in the Provincial Archives; select and digitize source material
- Start organizing Symposium

Phase 2 (May-June):

- Additional research into selected cases of rural unrest in local and provincial archives
- Additional research into selected cases of rural unrest in press reports (newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals)

Phase 3 (June-Sept):

- prepare to present our findings in Symposium
- write a co-authored article in Dutch to be published in peer-reviewed journal (trainees)
- write an article in a international peer-reviewed journal (supervisors)

- local presentations for a broader audience, organized in cooperation with Historische Vereniging Brabant and the Vereeniging tot beoefening van Overijsselsch Regt en Geschiedenis

Student Application

For further information please contact dr. Diederik Smit (d.e.j.smit@hum.leidenuniv.nl) and/or dr. Maartje Janse (m.j.janse@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

Applications should include the following documents, in one PDF file:

- Motivation letter (Dutch for BA-level, English for ResMa level)
- Academic CV
- Full list of grades