



# Introduction

## New State, New Citizens? Political Change and Civic Continuities in the Low Countries, 1780-1830<sup>1</sup>

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For half a century, historians of the Low Countries have studied the decades around 1800 as a period of radical transition. By way of historiographical introduction to this special issue, this article surveys both the national and international origins of this approach, assesses its consequences for our understanding of citizenship in the period, and argues for the need to add another perspective, that of continuity.

In de afgelopen vijftig jaar hebben historici van de Lage Landen de decennia rond 1800 vooral bestudeerd als een periode van radicale transitie. Bij wijze van historiografische inleiding op dit themanummer, geeft dit artikel een overzicht van de nationale en internationale ontwikkeling van deze benadering, en bekijkt welke consequenties die heeft gehad voor ons begrip van burgerschap in deze periode. Het betoogt dat er behoefte is een nieuw perspectief toe te voegen, dat van continuïteit.

For half a century, historians of the Low Countries have studied the decades around 1800 as a period of radical transition. By way of historiographical introduction to this special issue, this article proposes to survey both the national and international origins of this approach, assess its consequences for our understanding of the period, and argue for the need to add another perspective, that of continuity. As an outcome of new approaches to the period, two new types of citizenship have been proposed: a modern, national and political citizenship as the result of the invention of modern (ideological) politics and a modern, enlightened and also national citizenship of participation in new cultural societies. We will add a third form of local and sometimes supra-local citizenship that was based on older traditions of

deliberation, civic engagement and regional affinities, and that did not change radically during the period. The perspective of continuity will help to assess this form of citizenship, the traces of which can still be found today.

The traditional society of orders in the Netherlands, particularist and founded on local privileges, had developed over a period of almost eight centuries. That tradition was abandoned and in one fell swoop, so to speak, replaced by a system that was new altogether: that of the modern central state. The speed at which this could happen [...] plus the fact that there was never since any consensus to ask for its restoration, show quite how desiccated the old system had become. Or rather: an awareness had emerged that this system was no longer an appropriate way to wield power. In a period of forty years [...] a whole new system was consolidated.<sup>2</sup>

This passage was written by the incisive journalist and historian Marc Reynebeau with reference to the Southern Netherlands around 1800, yet passages like it can be found in studies of many other parts of Europe. Since at least the early 1960s, historians in the West have come to identify the decades around 1800 as a period of rupture that transformed not only Europe and the Americas, but brought lasting changes far beyond. As Eric Hobsbawm put it in 1962, the Age of Revolution ‘forms the greatest transformation in human history since the remote times when men invented agriculture and metallurgy, writing, the city and the state. This revolution has transformed, and continues to transform, the entire world’.<sup>3</sup>

By emphasizing rupture and transformation as the hallmark of this period, Hobsbawm was not only able to bring economic developments in Britain and political developments on the European continent into analytical alignment, but he also adopted a much more comparative approach than had been customary, especially among political historians. How such a political comparison might work outside a Marxist context had also just been shown in Robert Palmer’s *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (1959-1964).<sup>4</sup> Placing the Netherlandish revolutions in their European and Atlantic revolutionary contexts, Palmer’s

1 This article was written in the context of the nwo-funded *Vrije Competitie* project ‘The persistence of civic identities in the Netherlands, 1747-1848’ that the authors direct at Leiden University. We want to thank the members of our research team and the anonymous peer reviewers for their useful comments on earlier drafts.

2 Marc Reynebeau, *Het klauwen van de leeuw. De Vlaamse identiteit van de 12de tot de 21ste eeuw* (Leuven 1995) 75.

3 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (1962; London n.d.) 1.

4 Robert Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution. A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton 1959 and 1964).

work is remembered not only for its thesis that the Atlantic Revolutions in the Americas and Europe should be analyzed in tandem, but also for its liberation of the study of politics around 1800 from its national shackles. Such alternatives to the narrowly national approaches that had characterized most political history so far proved hugely influential and attractive not only because they allowed for comparisons, but also because they had potential for alignment with the social sciences and discussions about modernity, and with the internationalization of the historical discipline. As such, it helped political historians to respond to critics who thought of political history as overly focused on the contingent, the *evenementiel* and the narrative.

Although the intense interest in ‘revolutions’ per se began to wane at the end of the 1970s, the notion of rupture was retained in the sudden turn around 1980 to the study of nationalism, another theme that could now be studied comparatively.<sup>5</sup> An additional attraction was that this allowed for the integration of the methods of the new cultural history. Helped along by the wave of historical reflection generated by the bicentennial of the French Revolution, in Dutch historiography, too, the period around 1800 suddenly became a major topic of interest. Even more than its Belgian counterpart, which we will discuss further on, the Dutch reassessment of the period was also in line with the international literature on nationalism and nation building, that presented the French Revolution as the starting point of the ‘modern’ nation. This was exactly what the Dutch revisionists needed to rehabilitate the decades around 1800.

## Dutch historiography

Traditionally, Dutch historians have paid much more attention to the Dutch Golden Age than the period around 1800, which was seen as a historical low point of internal disunity, decline, foreign domination and, eventually, loss of independence.<sup>6</sup> Since the political experiments of the 1780s and 1790s had been short-lived, moreover, their importance was easy to ignore. Even though after World War II, historians had already abandoned the moralizing tone that previously dominated the literature on the period, it proved difficult to reassess the age of democratic revolutions for the Netherlands. In 1965 Cor

5 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge 1990).

*naar buitenlandse bescheiden*, 3 vols. (The Hague 1897-1899); cf. Piet Blaas, ‘De patriottenbeweging als epiloog. Rond Colenbranders *Patriottentijd*’, in: Idem, *Geschiedenis en nostalgie. De historiografie van een kleine natie met een groot verleden* (Hilversum 2000) 82-99.

6 The classic interpretation by Herman Colenbrander, *De patriottentijd. Hoofdzakelijk*

de Wit was the first to try – the subtitle of his book called it a ‘reappraisal’ – but his rather polemical and schematic account of the transition from ‘an oligarchic confederacy into a democratic unitary state’ and ‘the fight between aristocracy and democracy’ encountered much scepticism.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Simon Schama followed in his footsteps and befriended him: ‘he made me feel at home in Dutch history.’ By combining it with Palmer’s framework, Schama put De Wit’s story into an international context. Although Schama was interested in ‘change rather than continuity’, and critical of the Dutch ‘nostalgia for the “Golden Century”’, he concentrated on the chronology of events and still framed his story as ‘the transition from the first national state to the second’.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile Ernst Kossmann had completely rejected the nationalist assumptions of the older historiography in his synthetic *The Low Countries* and treated nations and historical continuities as a construct. However, he still found it difficult to take the political excitement and ambitions of the late eighteenth century and the Batavian Republic seriously, while his ironical mode of writing was not very suitable for meting out praise anyway.<sup>9</sup>

It was thus left to a new generation of historians to argue that these years were not a deplorable nadir, but the beginning of a new national culture and national politics.<sup>10</sup> New notions of national identity emerged that

7 Cor de Wit, *De strijd tussen aristocratie en democratie in Nederland 1780-1848. Kritisch onderzoek van een historisch beeld en herwaardering van een periode* (Heerlen 1965) 30 and passim.

8 Simon Schama, *Patriots and liberators. Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (London 1977) XII, 3-4, 21-22.

9 Ernst Kossmann, ‘Nabeschouwing’, in: Hans Bots and Wijnand Mijnhardt (eds.), *De droom van de revolutie. Nieuwe benaderingen van het patriotisme* (Amsterdam 1988) 135-143; Id., *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford 1978).

10 See for the historiographical revolution Eco Haitsma Mulier, ‘De geschiedschrijving over de Patriottentijd en de Bataafse Tijd’, in: Wijnand Mijnhardt (ed.), *Kantelend geschiedbeeld*. (Utrecht and Antwerp 1983) 206-227; Wayne Ph. te Brake, ‘How Much in how Little. Dutch Revolution in Comparative Perspective’, *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 16:4 (1990) 349-363; Willem Frijhoff and Joost Rosendaal, ‘La révolution régénérée. Nouvelles approches et nouvelles images de la Révolution néerlandaise’, in: Michel Vovelle (ed.),

*L’image de la Révolution française* 1 (Paris etc. 1990) 543-561; Niek van Sas, ‘The Patriot Revolution. New Perspectives’, in: Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century. Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca 1992) 91-119; Niek van Sas, ‘De Nederlandse revolutie van de achttiende eeuw’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 100:4 (1985) 636-646; Annie Jourdan and Joost Rosendaal, ‘Introduction. La Révolution batave à l’entrée du troisième millénaire. Nouveaux problèmes, nouvelles approches, nouveaux objets’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution Française* 73:4 (2001) 2-23; a recent overview of events and historiography in English, from the perspective of the introduction of a Kingdom and the eventual incorporation into the Napoleonic Empire is Martijn van der Burg, ‘Transforming the Dutch Republic into the Kingdom of Holland: The Netherlands between Republicanism and Monarchy (1795-1815)’, *European Review of History* 17:2 (2010) 151-170; some key publications: Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt,

created new ways for citizens to ‘belong’ to their countries. The Netherlands were no exception. This century saw ‘the emergence of a modern Dutch national identity’ and ‘the invention of modern politics’ in the Netherlands.<sup>11</sup> Nineteenth-century political developments were incomprehensible if one ignored the contributions of the period to a new national state, to nation building and the development of a national culture. The famous re-evaluation of nationalism by Anderson, Hobsbawm and Gellner highlighted the rupture between the early modern and modern conceptions of the nation.<sup>12</sup> Modern nationalism was something radically new, and certainly not an organic continuation of older practices. By adopting this perspective, Dutch historians reinforced their revision of the period around 1800 and analyzed how the modern nation state had been imagined and invented. New methods were used for doing so. During the bicentennial of the French Revolution the international focus of attention had shifted to the role of the revolution in creating a new and modern political culture, with its own rituals, strategies of mobilization and long-term effects on how people experienced ‘politics’, which had now become ideological.<sup>13</sup> This new approach to the meaning of the revolution suggested ways of studying and interpreting both the politics of the Patriot revolution of the 1780s and the culture of the post-1795 Batavian Republic as meaningful contributions to the invention of modern politics and the modern state in the Dutch case.

According to this new scholarly consensus, between the social and political upheaval of 1748 and the liberal revision of the constitution in 1848 a Dutch national state was constructed. New learned and other societies and a periodical press, which from the 1730s flourished everywhere, created a national ‘public sphere’.<sup>14</sup> From the 1770s a politicized press started to

1800. *Blueprints for a National Community. Dutch Culture in a European Perspective* (Houndmills and Assen 2004); Niek van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750-1900* (Amsterdam 2004) – contains the series of important revisionist essays he wrote over the years and which give a good impression of the whole process of revision; more recently Niek van Sas, Frans Grijzenhout, and Wyger Velema (eds.), *Het Bataafs experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800* (Nijmegen 2013).

11 Kloek and Mijnhardt, *Blueprints*, 191 ff; Van Sas, *Metamorfose*, 175-194.

12 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*.

13 E.g. Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge MA. 1988) – French original from 1976; Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Oakland 1984); Keith Michael Baker (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, 4 vols. (Oxford 1987-1994); early historiographical overview in Dutch by Wyger Velema, ‘Post-revisionistische perspectieven. De Franse revolutie als transformatie van de politieke cultuur?’, *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 16 (1989) 75-96.

14 Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750-1815* (Amsterdam 1987); Marleen de Vries, *Beschaven! Letterkundige genootschappen in Nederland 1750-1800* (Nijmegen 2001); cf. Jürgen

preach patriotic and nationalist ideals.<sup>15</sup> This gave rise to a national ‘imagined community’: hitherto locally oriented citizens began more and more to conceive of themselves as ‘Dutch’ patriots. Acting on a patriotic agenda that was reinforced with French revolutionary ideology, the Batavian Republic (1795-1801) dismantled the institutions of the Dutch Republic – the stadholderly regime, but also the culture of particularism, privileges and corporatism. An elected National Assembly (1796) and a national constitution (1798) turned the federal Dutch Republic into a unitary state.<sup>16</sup> Increasingly aggressive French interventions and eventual annexation (1810-1813) put an end to bitter political strife among the Dutch themselves and reinforced cultural nationalism.<sup>17</sup> Yet the political zeal of the Dutch turned into apathy when the French departed, and the new king William I (1813-1840) took up the process of state- and nation-building in a centralist and authoritarian style. In 1830, the Belgians forged a breakaway state. In the Kingdom of the Netherlands, constitutional stability set in only after the liberal revision of 1848.<sup>18</sup> Since the 1980s we have learned much about the intellectual and cultural infrastructure that, from the mid-eighteenth century, encouraged the circulation of new ideas. We have gained a more sophisticated appreciation of the political developments from the 1780s until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and of the emergence and nationalization of modern politics. With regard to the Netherlands, this has completely transformed our view of the period 1780-1813. It has become clear that the political innovations were not just watered-down imitations of those in France, but laid the foundation for the modern Dutch state: national finance, taxation, and foreign affairs, as well as the army. A new constitution, monarchy and parliament were created. In this sense, the formation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, between 1813 and 1815, was really just a finishing touch, a final

Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Darmstadt 1962).

- 15 Stephan Klein, *Patriots republikanisme. Politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787)* (Amsterdam 1995); Pieter van Wissing, *Stokebrand Janus 1787. Opkomst en ondergang van een achttiende-eeuws satirisch politiek-literair weekblad* (Nijmegen 2003).
- 16 Joost Rosendaal, *De Nederlandse revolutie. Vrijheid, volk en vaderland 1783-1779* (Nijmegen 2005); Joris Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796-1798* (Nijmegen 2012).

17 Niek van Sas, *Metamorfose*; Van Sas et al. (eds.), *Bataafse experiment*; Lotte Jensen, *Verzet tegen Napoleon* (Nijmegen 2013).

- 18 Coen Tamse and Els Witte (eds.), *Staats- en natievorming in Willem I's koninkrijk* (Brussels 1992); Ido de Haan, Paul den Hoed, and Henk te Velde (eds.), *Een nieuwe staat. Het begin van het koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam 2013); Remieg Aerts and Gita Deneckere (eds.), *Het (on)verenigd Koninkrijk 1815-1830-2015. Een politiek experiment in de Lage Landen* (Rekkem 2015).

jewel in the crown. In this way, the importance of the new enlightened civic culture of societies and the political rupture at the national level could become apparent. There was some debate about the relevance of the new forms of politics and the long-term cultural effects<sup>19</sup>, but hardly anyone today doubts the truly revolutionary effects of what had happened during the period.

### The Southern Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the period around 1800 has received more attention than it has in Belgium, where scholars have focused more both on the Brabant Revolution of 1789-1790 and its challenge to the Austrian Habsburg regime, and, of course, on the Belgian Revolution of 1830, as the self-evident starting points for the history of the modern nation. Nevertheless, major themes in the historical debate on the Netherlands also emerge in Belgium, especially in the work on nationalism. The literature about the roots of the Belgian state, its political culture, and the origins of the Flemish movement has led to a quite similar emphasis on the gradual emergence of a modern nationalism. As in the North, the importance of local and regional levels is acknowledged, but has seemed of lesser interest than the national in a story that charted the slow but seemingly irreversible path towards the ‘modern’ nation. As early as the 1960s, the admittedly controversial and extremist supporter of the Flemish cause Hendrik Elias argued that nationalism as a modern phenomenon emerged in the Southern Netherlands around 1800. In this process, Brabant took the lead because, there, ‘provincialism was more than regionalism, and there it was on the cusp of a political consciousness (*staatsbewustzijn*) of a national kind’. Elias assumed that the groundwork for the emergence of a national consciousness had been laid, because ‘the elements [of a distinctive national culture], such as the language, had been granted by nature for many centuries’.<sup>20</sup>

Such romantic ideas no longer found favour with Ernst Kossmann, but he adopted a dramatic tone when contrasting the world of before and after the great transition, and before and after modernization. The Southern Netherlands before 1800 got short shrift. ‘Passing from the Republic to the Austrian Netherlands around 1750 was like stepping from modern times into an earlier period,’ Kossmann argued. Things got no better in the French period: ‘The history of French domination in Belgium is a story of strange errors, great misery, and total failure.’ Even so, Kossmann argued, at the end of

19 Cf. Inter alia Niek van Sas, ‘De burger als eunuch’, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, ‘“1800” ter discussie. Een repliek’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 117:4 (2002) 495-518.

20 Hendrik Elias, *Geschiedenis van de Vlaamse gedachte I* (Antwerp 1963) 6, 27.

the eighteenth century North and South were quite similar in certain respects. Because of ‘the forces of federalism and particularism which both states had in common’, there were great resemblances between the revolutions they experienced in the 1780s, which also referred to similar political traditions. The Brabant revolution of those years was legitimized with a text that in large parts cited the document with which the States General of the rebellious Netherlandish provinces in 1581 had abjured King Philip II. The difference between North and South was, according to Kossmann, that ‘there were many more people in the Northern Netherlands interested in politics and culture generally than there were in the South’. He wanted to distinguish between the political class in the Northern provinces, who through the States General had jointly ruled the Dutch Republic, and their peers in the Southern provinces who confined ‘their attention to parochial affairs’ instead of ‘matters of national and international importance’, and thus were apparently not interested in ‘politics’.<sup>21</sup>

In this analysis, however, Kossmann ignored other possible meanings of ‘politics’ that were being highlighted in Belgian historiography. True enough, Belgian scholars had traditionally concurred that the Austrian Netherlands, with their commitment to Roman Catholicism, their love of privileges and their regional pride, were a pool of intellectual backwardness. Yet starting from the late 1950s, and especially between 1970 and 1990, Belgian scholars successfully demonstrated that the eighteenth-century Austrian Netherlands were not at all backward, and that the ideas of the Enlightenment and economic innovations had struck deep roots there.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the emphasis on historical local and provincial privileges had made clear political sense when it came to resisting high-handed reform plans of Emperor Joseph II.<sup>23</sup> People in the Austrian Netherlands did not think of their prince as an all-powerful absolute ruler, but as the ruler of a composite state who had the duty to legitimize and respect regional privileges and rights.<sup>24</sup> This was exactly what the Southern provinces and

21 Ernst Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford 1978) 47, 52, 59, 65-67.

22 Jan Craeybeckx, ‘The Brabant Revolution. A conservative revolt in a backward country?’ *Acta Historica Neerlandica* IV (1970) 50-83; see for an overview of this rehabilitation also Tom Verschaffel, *De hoed en de hond. Geschiedschrijving in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1714-1794* (Hilversum 1998) 15-19.

23 Jan Roegiers, ‘Tussen vrijheid en trouw. Het identiteitsbesef in de Oostenrijkse Nederlanden’, in: Kas Deprez and Louis Vos (eds.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000*

(Antwerp and Baarn 1999) 29-42 (a small example among his many publications); Janet Polasky, ‘The Brabant Revolution. A Revolution in Historiographical Perception’, *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis* 25 (2005) 435-455.

24 Roegiers, ‘Tussen vrijheid en trouw’; Klaas Van Gelder, ‘The Investiture of Emperor Charles VI in Brabant and Flanders: A Test Case for the Authority of the New Austrian Government’, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 18:14 (2011) 443-463.



Joseph II had clashed about in the build-up to the Brabant Revolution.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, in the more recent historiography on the South, too, there has been little doubt that the political outlook of the Ancien Régime had no future in a world in which ‘modern’ politics, that is ‘national’ politics, made its appearance. Because such a politics did not exist before the 1790s, its emergence, as in the Northern Netherlands, can be considered a major shift and a break with the past. Recent historians of Belgian nationalism may have reinforced this way of seeing things; Jean Stengers declared 1789 the beginning of a solid Belgian national identity.<sup>26</sup>

Both in the Dutch and in the Belgian case, the new historiographical consensus has, often unintentionally, underlined the gap between the early modern age and the modern era, which was itself reinforced by the growing division of labour in the historical disciplines. Once historians had come to see themselves as ‘early modernists’ or ‘modernists’, there was little incentive to look across the boundaries, let alone question them. The new type of interest in nationalism and national developments among modernists suggested a clear hierarchy of perspectives and topics. Local and regional developments and points of view tended to be consigned to a category of less important, if not outdated, matters. While Dutch historians in the past thought of 1813 as a moment of renationalization after the years since 1795 that had been spoiled by the Batavians and the French, the revisionists have taught us to think of the whole era as one of the invention of modern nationalism. From the late eighteenth century, they argue, there first emerged a sense of national community. The local obviously did not disappear, but was increasingly part of a national community that had the future on its side, and was therefore also most deserving of scholarly attention. Niek van Sas, for one, speaks of the ‘nationalization of the revolution’ from around 1800 and argues that ‘state and nation found one another in a new national unity and a new sense of patriotism (*een nieuw vaderlands gevoel*)’.<sup>27</sup> Even though it has not been unusual to argue that ‘old traditions and respect for the past were of prime importance to eighteenth-century revolutionaries’<sup>28</sup>, in this reading there was

25 Fernand Vanhemelryck, ‘De Brabantse Revolutie. Het verhaal van een mislukking’, in: Idem (ed.), *Revolutie in Brabant 1787-1793* (Brussels 1990) 9-82. Geert Van den Bossche, *Enlightened Innovation and the Ancient Constitution. The Intellectual Justifications of the Revolution in Brabant* (Brussels 2001).

26 Johannes Koll, *Die belgische Nation. Patriotismus und Nationalbewusstsein in den Südlichen Niederlanden im späten 18. Jahrhundert* (Münster 2003); Idem (ed.), *Nationale Bewegungen in Belgien. Ein historischer Überblick* (Münster 2005);

Jean Stengers, *Histoire du sentiment national en Belgique des origines à 1918. I Les racines de la Belgique jusqu’à la Révolution de 1830* (Brussels 2000).

27 Niek van Sas, ‘Perspectief’, in: Idem, *De metamorfose van Nederland*, 31.

28 Most recently Jane Judge, ‘Nation and State in the Belgian Revolution, 1787-1790’ (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh 2015) 16 (<https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/10652>).

little incentive to ask what happened to existing, traditional and non-modern ways of doing politics after the 1790s. Yet in an epilogue to a recent collection of essays on the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Els Witte has suggested that ‘historians in the past may have focused too much on the strict process of unification, and have not done enough to highlight the pragmatic approach which took the differences [between different parts of the Kingdom] into account’. These differences persisted not just between but also within the Northern and Southern parts of the new kingdom, and had roots in the Ancien Régime as well as in the events of the previous decades.<sup>29</sup> This special issue shifts the focus of attention from the discontinuity in national political institutions to continuities both in political practices and traditional forms of thought, at the national level but especially at the levels beyond the nation: the personal, the local and the regional levels. By looking beyond the emphasis on rupture and discontinuity, which has dominated recent literature, the essays in this issue offer a first attempt to rethink politics and governance in the Low Countries around 1800 from the perspective of individual citizens and the environment in which they interacted with authority, that is to say, first and foremost, in local and regional contexts. What did government mean at this level, how had these expectations come about, and in what ways did these expectations change under the influence of the institutional transformations?

### Exploring continuities

A famous 1954 school chart by Johan Herman Isings depicts the landing of the future King William I at the village of Scheveningen near The Hague in November 1813, when the Napoleonic armies were fleeing the Netherlands.<sup>30</sup> We see people rejoicing on the beach where the Prince of Orange-Nassau returned from his exile. Celebrating the liberation from French rule and the restoration of the House of Orange, the chart shows a slightly embellished version of the events that happened, and a version that since 1813 has been reenacted in Scheveningen every 25 years. Rather than the much grander reception of the future king in Amsterdam that took place a few days later, which was also much more of a popular event, it is this moment at Scheveningen that gained national and canonical significance. Yet the reasons why it did so were not national but local. First, it was in the interest

29 Els Witte, ‘Epiloog’, in: Frank Judo and Stijn van de Perre (eds.), *Belg en Bataaf. De wording van het Verenigd Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Antwerp 2015) 325-326.

30 Cf. Jan A. Niemeijer, *J.H. Isings. Historieschilder en illustrator* (Kampen 2000) 95, 203; Frits van Oostrom (ed.), *Historisch tableau. Geschiedenis*

*opnieuw verbeeld in schoolplaten en essays* (Amsterdam 1998). For this paragraph, see also Henk te Velde, ‘De herdenkingen en betekenis van 1813’, in: Ido de Haan, Paul den Hoed, Henk te Velde (eds.), *Een nieuwe staat. Het begin van het koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam 2013) 363-376.



The landing of Prince William Frederic at Scheveningen on November 30th 1815. School chart by J.S. Isings, 1955.

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of The Hague to associate itself with the restoration of the House of Orange that had been engineered by the aristocratic king-maker Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp and his supporters. The Hague was to commemorate 1813 because it affirmed its status as a centre of government and courtly life, which had paled considerably, even though it had at last been recognized as a town. In later times, Scheveningen had an interest in asserting its role as a village that retained its independence despite its near-absorption by its neighbour The Hague. Amsterdam, for its part, had little reason to commemorate 1813. Although it retained the consolation prize of being the capital city of the Netherlands, which it had to share with Brussels, it never regained the political power it had enjoyed until the end of the Dutch Republic in 1795. The former city hall remained the royal palace it had become under King Louis Bonaparte, the brother of Napoleon.

These local differences are fairly well known but have, in the historiography, been completely overshadowed by another, national story, in which the landing became a national lieu de mémoire. Especially among political historians of the modern period, local history has been seen as a less prestigious field.<sup>31</sup> This is no accident, of course. When the historical discipline professionalized, in the course of the nineteenth century, the writing of national political history was considered to be its primary and most significant task. Among early modernists this attitude began to change in the 1960s, when local studies came to be seen as absolutely essential to capture the diversity that was so characteristic for the early modern Low Countries. This was followed by a new interest in urban republicanism, a topic to which we will return below. Things were quite different among those who studied the world beyond 1800. From time to time, professional historians practised local history, yet political historians rarely did so, and looked upon provincial and local history as the domain of amateurs. The status of local political history among modern historians thus implicitly confirmed what historians of the nation state believed: that after the arrival of the nation, the provincial and local had become less and less important. When, in 1913, a four-volume history was published to celebrate the centenary of the restoration of independence, it discussed the course of events in all regions and cities separately. While this resulted in rather diverse contributions, the explicit aim of this exercise was to celebrate 1813 as a moment of national rebirth and an affirmation of national unity.<sup>32</sup>

Only during the recent second centenary in 2013-2015 has a book by Wilfried Uitterhoeve begun to do justice to the diversity of local and

31 Joris Oddens, 'De Nederlandse revolutie in dorp en stad. Lokale revolutiegeschiedschrijving over de patriots-Bataafse tijd, 1875 tot heden', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 130:4 (2017) 565-591; Tom Verschaffel, *De hoed en de hond*, 445.

32 Gijsbertus Koolemans Beijnen, *Historisch gedenkboek der herstelling van Neêrlands onafhankelijkheid in 1813*, 4 vols. (Haarlem 1912-1914).

provincial experiences of the restoration. At first glance, Uitterhoeve's book, *1813, Haagse bluf*, is a succinct repeat of the 1913 exercise, a chronicle with chapters on different cities, with few theoretical or analytical pretensions. Yet the mosaic of local events which Uitterhoeve presents has a surprising effect on the attentive reader. Reading this book observantly, we can see that November 1813 was not a moment of national rebirth, let alone a celebration of national unity, but a period of chaotic regime change, the eventual outcome of which was neither obvious nor intended.<sup>33</sup>

This is, of course, true for many other instances of regime change.<sup>34</sup> Yet it is highly significant that, in the chaos of the moment, most ordinary citizens and local elites did not immediately imagine national unity as a solution, even though some of them thought of an Orange restoration as a panacea. When daring to stir at all, they opted for a form of local organization, that, more often than not, harked back to the days of local particularism. Militias' and magistrates' key priority was the maintenance of local order and public life, and they deployed local and traditional means to establish it. The central nation state had been in place for twenty years, but in this moment of crisis, among ordinary citizens and local worthies the practical focus of thinking, acting and loyalty was not the nation but the local community.

That this was so had everything to do with pre-revolutionary traditions and with attitudes towards citizenship and authority that belonged to the particularist world that existed before the emergence of the central state. Intellectually, constitutionally and judicially, the revolutions and unitary states had done away with pre-revolutionary citizenship. Yet the contributions to this issue argue that old practices and beliefs did not just disappear. When it came to governance, power and citizenship at local and regional levels and even sometimes at the national level, the ideas and practices of citizens in 1813 were surprisingly similar to those of their predecessors.

### Varieties of continuity

As early as 1856 Alexis de Tocqueville asserted that the centralization of nineteenth-century France was a continuation of practices developed in the Ancien Régime.<sup>35</sup> Historians of the Low Countries have also been aware of some forms of continuity in this period. The most obvious one, is (1)

33 Wilfried Uitterhoeve, *1813 – Haagse bluf. De korte chaos van de vrijwording* (Nijmegen 2013). Slightly more analytical is Wilfried Uitterhoeve, 'De kleuringen van Oranje. Bedenkingen tegen oranjevertoen rond het vertrek van de Fransen eind 1813', *De negentiende eeuw* 38:2 (2014) 113-128.

34 Ido de Haan, *Politieke reconstructie. Een nieuw begin in de politieke geschiedenis. Oratie* (Utrecht 2004).

35 Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la révolution* (Paris 1969 [1856]).

continuity in personnel. While some newcomers, of course, gained and retained prominence in the successive post-revolutionary and restoration regimes, some members of the pre-revolutionary elites were restored to power at the national level. Most of the families that were ennobled by King William I had long track records in local governance in the Dutch Republic. Only half the government ministers and a third of the members of the council of state appointed by William I had played a role in government before 1795, and many of them had been too young at that time to fulfil roles of great importance.<sup>36</sup> Much more impressive, however, was the continuity in local government. In both North and South around 1800, pre-revolutionary elite families began to regain their seats in town governments. Even though the state and its apparatus kept changing during this period, both at village and town level, many Ancien Régime ruling families remained in positions of power throughout the period.<sup>37</sup>

Less well-known is that there was much continuity at the level of (2) the practices and style of politics, too. Hardly any modern historiography about the political position of the provinces in the nineteenth century exists and we know little about what happened to them after the end of the Republic. Although the importance of the provinces of the South has been well-established in accounts of the Brabant Revolution, when surveys of Belgian nationalism begin to discuss the nineteenth century, attention to regional or local agency dwindles.<sup>38</sup>

Yet the organization of the (limited) suffrage system granted a more important position to the provinces in the North than in most other post-revolutionary European states, as Diederik Smit and Brecht Deseure show in this issue. In the South, admittedly, the provinces had different boundaries and often also different names than they had had in the days of Habsburg rule. In the North the provincial structure of the Dutch Republic was restored. Deseure and Smit show that this was quite a conscious strategy in both cases. During the discussions about the new constitutions of 1814 and 1815 the future of the old provinces was extensively debated. The restoration of the provinces in the North served, among other things, as a means to preserve continuity of personnel, that is to say, to maintain or re-

36 Matthijs Lok. *Windvanen. Napoleontische bestuurders in de Nederlandse en Franse Restauratie (1813-1820)* (Amsterdam 2009) 104-111.

37 Renger de Bruin, 'Utrechtse bestuurders tussen ware vrijheid en democratie', in: Ria van der Eerden et al. (eds.), *Wisseling van de wacht? Stichtse bestuurders in een roerige eeuw*, special issue of *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (2011) 286-304. Gerrit Jan Schutte, *Een Hollandse dorpsamenleving in de late achttiende eeuw. De banne Graft, 1770-*

1810 (Franeker 1989); Piet Lenders (ed.), *Het politiek personeel tijdens de overgang van het Ancien Régime naar het nieuwe regiem in België (1780-1830) / Le personnel politique dans la transition de l'Ancien Régime au nouveau régime en Belgique (1780-1830) Anciens pays et assemblées d'états / Standen en landen xcv* (Kortrijk 1993).

38 Lode Wils, 'De twee Belgische revoluties', in: Deprez and Vos (eds.), *Nationalisme in België*, 43-50.

establish the dominant position of aristocratic families. In the South the French Départements were continued, and the old provinces disappeared even though some of their names were restored.

While this type of continuity was deliberate and conscious, other things remained the same in an almost self-evident fashion. Many citizens continued to interact with authorities in the manner they were used to, as demonstrated by the contribution of Joris Oddens and Jane Judge. Although they changed the introductory sentences or the form of address, ordinary citizens simply addressed the new political authorities in the same way and with the same expectations about those in power as they had done of old. As Lauren Lauret shows, even the members of the States General of the post-Napoleonic Kingdom continued to use many forms and customs of their predecessors in the Republic. They were used to certain rules and a certain style of discussion, and in the completely new national institutional environment they continued to behave as they had done in the old days, even though, at first glance, the new and the old ‘States General’ had hardly anything in common, except for their name. Of course, there was the break of the Batavian revolution but it speaks to the power of tradition and habit (more than just a Restoration ideology) that the old ways were resumed in the new post-1813 situation. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, foreigners thought that the Dutch States General operated in the style of a quiet and consensus-seeking business meeting – resembling the style of the old States General – rather than as a noisy modern parliament.<sup>39</sup>

The Southern members of the States General did not really share in the Northern tradition, because their history was so different, and the period of French rule had been much longer and its effect more radical. With the benefit of hindsight, this might explain where their culture of fierce debating came from. Although some contemporaries were keen to stress the continuity between the new order and the ‘ancient constitution’ of the pre-modern Low Countries, so as to avoid the impression that they built on French influence, the Belgian revolution of 1830 was a new beginning.<sup>40</sup> The reason they saw ‘le pouvoir comme l’ennemi’ was not because the Belgians had been ‘asservis pendant des siècles’, as King Leopold II would later put it, and had been the victims of ‘des siècles d’esclavage’ (according to the national anthem, the Brabançonne) under Austria, France and

39 Marnix Beyen and Henk te Velde, ‘Passion and reason. Modern parliaments in the Low Countries’, in: Pasi Ihalainen, Cornelia Ilie and Kari Palonen (eds.), *Parliament and Parliamentarism. A Comparative History of a European Concept* (New York and Oxford 2016) 81-96, also for the following paragraph.

40 Brecht Deseure, ‘From Pragmatic Conservatism to Formal Continuity. Nineteenth-Century Views on the Old Regime Origins of the Belgian Constitution’, *Journal for Constitutional History* 32:2 (2016) 257-277.

Holland.<sup>41</sup> Instead they retained an older, and entirely level-headed, attitude to power, which treated their ruler as the guarantor of existing rights and privileges. As long as the ruler actively supported these privileges, and thus really showed himself to be the father of his people, he would be honoured as such.

A third form of continuity (3) is now being discovered in the way people talked about the rulers or the king. This changed much less than we might expect. It has been argued that King William I adopted his attitude as patronizing and authoritarian *Landesvater* when he ruled over a small German state in the first decade of the nineteenth century. His rule has often been described, in the metaphors his subjects (and he too) used, as a 'father' of his 'family'.<sup>42</sup> Even though these metaphors have often served to characterize the spirit of the Netherlands Restoration, on closer inspection it turns out that they were not new, even in the Netherlands where no official monarch existed before Louis Bonaparte (1806). In the Republic, Dutch regents had seen themselves as the 'fathers' of the citizenry, and in petitions, ordinary citizens had addressed them accordingly. In Belgium, too, this style of address continued to be used even when the King was King William of Orange. It would be a mistake to interpret this deferential attitude as the expression of a servile culture; it was rather the rhetorical confirmation of the nature of the bond between rulers and ruled which morally obliged the rulers to take care of their subjects. This is also clear when we look at expressions of loyalty to the House or even party of Orange in petitions. Many people felt entitled to some sort of reward because they had remained faithful to the Orange family during the revolutionary era. Publicly, an image of harmony was maintained but privately common people as well as the elite expressed these claims, for instance when it came to financial support or the distribution of jobs.<sup>43</sup>

Finally (4) and perhaps most importantly, continuity seems to be in evidence in relation to citizenship. Before the revolutions, to be a citizen was a local judicial privilege that was inherited, bought or acquired by marriage. Citizenship was enjoyed by a minority of town dwellers and gave access to specific rights and obligations.<sup>44</sup> In the course of the Revolutions,

41 Jean Stengers, 'Le mythe des dominations étrangères dans l'historiographie belge', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 59:2 (1981) 382-401, esp. 400. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3406/rbph.1981.3329>.

42 E.g. Marcel Chappin and J.P. de Valk, 'Koning Willem I: een verlicht despoot', *Documentatieblad werkgroep achttiende eeuw* 49/50 (1981) 84-109; Hans Bornewasser, 'Koning Willem I', in: Coen Tamse (ed.), *Nassau en Oranje in de Nederlandse geschiedenis* (Utrecht 1996) 229-277;

cf. the summary in Remieg Aerts in: idem et al., *Land van kleine gebaren. Een politieke geschiedenis van Nederland 1780-2012* (Amsterdam 2013) 80-81.

43 Jeroen van Zanten, *Schielijk, Winzucht en Bedaard. Politieke discussie en oppositievorming 1814-1840* (Amsterdam 2004) 84; and the contribution below by Joris Oddens and Jane Judge.

44 Erika Kuijpers and Maarten Prak, 'Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling. Burgerschap in Amsterdam in de 17de en 18de eeuw', in: Joost Kloek and Karin Tilmans (eds.), *Burger*.



notions of citizenship had, of course, been politicized, and in the new central states they had been nationalized. By 1813 people were therefore no longer privileged citizens of their communities, but citizens who enjoyed the same rights as all other citizens in the unitary states. Yet paradoxically, the politicization of citizenship had also led to tensions between democratization and nationalization, since not the abstract national but the concrete local community was the most natural focus of attention for the new democratic citizens.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, early modern citizenship had not pertained only to legal status. It had carried with it also a much more general meaning that related to civic practices and to notions about community. Authorities were charged with representing the interests not only of the citizens, but of all members of the local community.

Early modernists call this ‘urban republicanism’, a republicanism that since the Renaissance was underpinned with references to classical precedents and urban honour, but that in practice depended strongly on the early modern corporate culture of craft guilds, militia companies, confraternities and chambers of rhetoric. Both citizens and residents participated in this culture, not only because this helped them to defend corporate interests but also because membership contributed to the welfare and honour of the community as a whole. This also gave them the right to call upon the authorities to defend their interests, for instance by presenting petitions. During political protests they did not hesitate to show that they expected their authorities to act for the whole of the commonweal, and not just pursue their own interests. In particular in times of crisis, these protests were also used to draw clear boundaries between insiders and outsiders, and to emphasize differences between communities. It was a type of citizenship that was practised rather than theorized.<sup>46</sup> How it was practised has been researched less intensively for the eighteenth-century Low Countries than for previous centuries, although Karin van Honacker and especially Maarten

*Een Geschiedenis van het begrip ‘burger’ in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21ste eeuw* (Amsterdam 2002) 111-132.

45 Cf. Thomas Poell, ‘The Democratic Paradox: Dutch Revolutionary Struggles over Democratisation and Centralisation (1780-1813)’ (unpublished PhD dissertation, Utrecht University 2007); Pepijn Brandon and Karwan Fatah-Black, ‘“The Supreme Power of the People”: Local Autonomy and Radical Democracy in the Batavian Revolution (1795-1798)’, *Atlantic Studies – Global Currents* 13:3 (2016) 370-388.

46 Heinz Schilling, ‘Gab es im späten Mittelalter und zu Beginn der Neuzeit in Deutschland einestädtische “Republikanismus”? Zur politischen Kultur des alteuropäischen Bürgertums’, in: Helmut Koenigsberger (ed.), *Republiken und Republikanismus im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit* (München 1988) 101-143; Maarten Prak, ‘Individual, Corporation and Society: The Rhetoric of Dutch Guilds’, in Marc Boone and Maarten Prak (eds.), *Statuts individuels, statuts corporatifs et statuts judiciaires dans les villes Européennes (Moyen Âge et temps modernes)* (Louvain 1996).

Prak have done a great deal of work on it.<sup>47</sup> We need to know more about what happened to it around 1800. Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden have argued that the early modern variation of citizenship disappeared with the institutions that embodied it – the guilds, the civic militias, the local rights and privileges, and that this disappearance contributed to an ‘atomization’ of Dutch civic society.<sup>48</sup> This view also matches the depoliticization which Niek van Sas and others have noted from about 1800, when citizens, tired of revolution, lost interest in pamphleteering and political clubs.<sup>49</sup>

Recently, it has been argued that public debate after 1800 remained more animated than previously supposed.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, civic engagement had never been just about politics. It has also been expressed in religious activity, charity, and concern about public space and public honour, in festivals and memory cultures. The need for this sort of engagement had not lessened at all. It is doubtful that the people of the Low Countries could afford atomization. Neither during the French regimes, nor in the United Kingdom, nor indeed subsequently, were national governments powerful, rich and efficient enough to take over all levels of public life. This is one reason to assume that, in practice, this type of civic engagement remained essential and by building on pre-revolutionary traditions, enabled local community life to continue without imploding under the weight of the many transitions at the centre.<sup>51</sup> The article by Carolien Boender and Marjolein Schepers in this issue shows how such continuities manifested themselves when local communities found themselves under pressure. A recent dissertation by Wim van Schaik has shown more extensively that village officials by 1830 were managing both

47 Maarten Prak, ‘Burgers in beweging. Ideaal en werkelijkheid van de onlusten te Leiden in 1748’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 106:3 (1991) 365–393. Karin van Honacker, ‘Résistance locale et émeutes dans les chefs-villes Brabançonnaises aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles’, *Revue d’Histoire moderne et contemporaine* 47:1 (2000) 37–65.

48 Maarten Prak, *Republikeinse veelheid, democratisch enkelvoud. Sociale verandering in het Revolutietijdvak, ’s-Hertogenbosch 1770–1820* (Nijmegen 1999); Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden, *Nederland en het poldermodel. Sociaal-economische geschiedenis van Nederland, 1000–2000* (Amsterdam 2013).

49 E.g. Niek van Sas, ‘Vaderlandsliefde, nationalisme en vaderlands gevoel, 1770–1813’, in: Idem, *Metamorfose van Nederland*, 69–96.

50 E.g. Bart Verheijen, *Nederland onder Napoleon. Partijstrijd en natievorming 1801–1813* (Nijmegen, 2017) 27; cf. Jan Postma, *Alexander Gogel (1765–1821). Grondlegger van de Nederlandse staat* (Hilversum 2017).

51 For a similar approach to urban civil society in Germany, see e.g. Katherine Aaslestad, ‘Cities and war. Modern military urbanism in Hamburg and Leipzig during the Napoleonic era’, *German History* 35:3 (2017) 381–402. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghx063>.

their villages and their interaction with provincial and national authorities in ways that were surprisingly similar to the way they had acted in 1780.<sup>52</sup>

While the politics of citizenship have, of course, been transformed, many of the social features of the early modern practices of citizenship actually remain visible to this day. In the Netherlands *burgerschap* (citizenship) usually has been, and still is, conceived of first and foremost in moral and social terms.<sup>53</sup> It is important to note that as a matter of social and local practice, the type of citizenship we discuss here is not the same thing as the enlightened citizenship that has been studied by Wijnand Mijnhardt, which was more of a cultural matter and a prefiguration of national citizenship.<sup>54</sup> Mijnhardt sees a form of continuity between the 1770s and the 1970s; his citizenship is moral, just as was the urban republican version, but it is by definition a modern invention, forward-looking and implicitly progressive. It trickles down from the top, as a quality of a social and cultural elite, to other social classes, partly as the result of a ‘civilizing offensive’ which had the aim of injecting civilized attitudes into the working classes and petty bourgeoisie. The way we define ‘civic engagement’ pays more attention to social and political practices and local engagement, including by ordinary people.<sup>55</sup> This type of citizenship is not necessarily modern nor is it necessarily ‘nice’ or ‘civilized’, because it could behave quite violently against outsiders or insiders who were accused of breaking civic rules. In some of its manifestations, such as some forms of ‘Orangism’<sup>56</sup>, it resembles today’s ‘angry citizens’ (*boze burgers*) and their populism, which calls upon people to protect the integrity of their community against outsiders and idealizes a past in which things were as they ought to be. Yet it is also the sort of citizenship that was essential for the development of types of civic engagement that, in Dutch society at least, are considered very important,

52 Wim van Schaik, *In de maat en uit de pas. Utrechtse dorpsbesturen 1780-1830* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Utrecht University 2018).

53 Cf. Remieg Aerts, ‘Civil Society or Democracy? A Dutch Paradox’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden – Low Countries Historical Review* 125:2/3 (2010) 209-236. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.7120>.

54 E.g. Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt, ‘De verlichte burger’, in: Kloek and Tilmans, *Burger*, 155-171. *Ids.*, *Blueprints*, in particular the concluding pages of the book.

55 The Dutch expression ‘betrokken burgerschap’ suffers less from the confusion between other forms and an exclusively political ‘civic

engagement’ that dominates American literature and thus more easily retains a certain early modern flavour. Cf. Ben Berger, ‘Political Theory, Political Science, and the End of Civic Engagement’, *Perspectives on Politics* 7:2 (2009) 335-350; Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton 1993) was one of the works that started the vogue of ‘civic engagement’.

56 Donald Haks and Henk te Velde (eds.), *Oranje onder. Populair orangisme van Willem van Oranje tot nu* (Amsterdam 2014).

that underpin high levels of participation in voluntary work and charities, support for neighbourhood initiatives and willingness to negotiate and compromise. The awareness that such attitudes may not be self-evident or indestructible, however, is growing. No wonder that the national Dutch social and cultural planning office *Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau* (SCP) is currently showing an interest in the ‘burgerschap’ traditions of the Dutch Republic.<sup>57</sup>

That scholars lost sight of such continuities is perhaps unsurprising. Today, there are few scholars who, like Kossmann, are as well versed in the history of the modern Low Countries as they are in that of the early modern period. Growing specialization has meant that, for some time, scholarly conversations across the 1750-1848 divide have become relatively rare. Yet it is evident that a growing number of scholars are now looking to remedy this situation through collaborative projects. This special issue is a reflection of this trend.<sup>58</sup>

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57 Arjan van Dixhoorn, ‘Goed burgerlijk leven in de Nederlandse Republiek’, in: Paul Dekker and Joep de Hart (eds.), *De goede burger. Tien beschouwingen over een morele categorie* (The Hague 2005) 20-32; Anita Boele, ‘Burgerparticipatie in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden’, in: Pepijn van Houwelingen, Anita Boele and Paul Dekker, *Burgermacht op eigen kracht? Een brede verkenning van ontwikkelingen in burgerparticipatie* (The Hague 2014) 151-166.

58 The authors are directing a NWO Vrije Competitie project entitled *The Persistence of Civic Identities in the Low Countries, 1747-1848*; Hilde Greefs and Marjolijn ‘t Hart are directing a NWO/FWO project

entitled *Managing the Crisis? The Resilience of Local Networks and Institutions within the Low Countries during the Napoleonic Period*, while Alicia Schrikker has just been awarded a VIDI grant to consider the impact of institutional memory on colonial culture in the Dutch colonies, and Lotte Jensen has received a VICI grant to consider the impact of natural disasters on local and national identity between 1480 and 1890. Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden have been pointing the way to such approaches with diachronic studies such as their *Nederland en het poldermodel* (Amsterdam 2013).