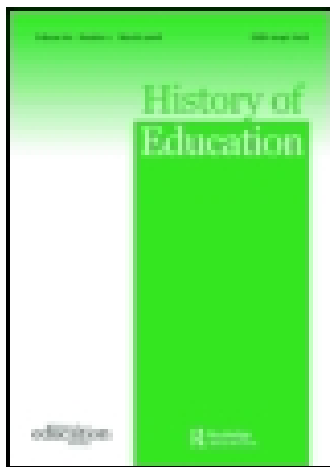


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University of Utrecht 1636–1676: *res ecclesia, res publica and ... res pecunia*

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The early history of Utrecht University (founded 1636) reflects an emerging public sphere (Habermas's 'bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit') of a major town in the Netherlands. This public sphere was a contested field among the different groups establishing and administering the university: university professors, town magistrates and representatives of the newly established Reformed Church and the former dominant Catholic Church. The factionalised magistrates developed a public sphere, while also trying to limit the passionate but destabilising debate concerning the new philosophy of Descartes. They supported the Calvinistic anti-Descartes movement while permitting, and even advocating, the establishment of the new philosophy at the university. They ambivalently protected the academy from the consistory's control while simultaneously trying to safeguard their own (financial) position. It is concluded that the Habermasian framework has to be fleshed out in local histories, such as this case study of Utrecht University, to demonstrate the 'messy' complexities in reality.

Keywords: university; Utrecht; Descartes; Habermas; magistrates

Introduction

This article deals with the early history of the University of Utrecht (founded in 1636), which reflects an emerging public sphere of a major town in the Netherlands. However, this public sphere was a contested field among the different groups establishing and administering the university: university professors, town magistrates and representatives of the newly established Reformed Church and the formerly dominant Catholic Church.

Prior to the establishment of the University of Utrecht, the University of Leiden (1575), the University of Franeker (1585), and the University of Groningen (1614) were founded. The University of Franeker was closed down in 1811. As Frijhoff indicated, these universities were established with the involvement of the town authorities who wanted to have a university as a *civil organisation* educating ministers, lawyers and medical doctors. However, more than the other universities,

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the University of Utrecht was a result of the direct action and control of the town magistrates.¹ This is one of the reasons why we concentrate on the microhistory of town and gown in Utrecht.

What we wish to do is to connect the microhistory of town and gown in Utrecht with the macrohistory of a developing public sphere. In this way, the macro level of processes of social development is fleshed out while the micro level is put into a larger social framework, meaningfully integrating the study of history with social theory. We argue that the concept of the public sphere – as developed by the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas – provides valuable insights into understanding the position of town and gown in Utrecht.

This article is divided into four sections. The first introduces and discusses the concept of the public sphere. The second explores the early history of the university in Utrecht – a history that can only be appreciated in the light of the necessary contextual data concerning the position of the city and the history of the process of reformation preceding its establishment. The third section focuses on the policy of the city magistrates in two case studies: the Descartes affair and the Malecote discussion with the consistory. This section shows that the magistrates wished to strengthen ‘locations of knowledge’ in town and to give room to public debate. However, they also seem to have had another somewhat veiled agenda that related to safeguarding the wealth of the former Catholic Church. In the fourth and concluding section, Utrecht and the emerging public sphere are placed in a broader perspective.

The public sphere

According to the historian James van Horn Melton, the central issue in Habermas’s work is to identify ‘what are the conditions under which rational, critical, and genuinely open discussion of public issues becomes possible’.² In 1962, Habermas published *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*.³ In this publication, Habermas analysed the rise of the public sphere at the end of the seventeenth century.

‘Public’ has two meanings. The first relates to the state and its body of citizens. In this respect, we talk about a public office. However, public can also be thought of as an audience consisting of private individuals who meet and discuss matters of government, and who keep themselves informed through newspapers and other forms of media. Habermas focused on the bourgeois public sphere and located its development in that of the modern nation-state, in which a society – the space of private individuals – was separated from the formal apparatus of the state with a monopoly on the use of force.

The public space between private people and the state was considered the realm of critical and rational debate. After all, it was reason – and not the identity of the speaker or writer as such – that was decisive in this critical debate. In principle,

¹Willem T. M. Frijhoff, ‘Hoger onderwijs als inzet van stedelijke naijver in de vroegmoderne’, in *Stedelijke naijver: De betekenis van interstedelijke conflicten in de geschiedenis: Enige beschouwingen en case-studie*, ed. P. B. M. Blaas and J. van Herwaarden (’s-Gravenhage: VUGA, 1986), 99 and 110.

²James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.

³The English translation was only published in 1989, entitled *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989).

there was no limit to what was discussed in the public sphere; and people could participate irrespective of their wealth, birth or position in society. According to Habermas, the public sphere developed at the end of the seventeenth century and grew stronger in the eighteenth century. It began in the coffee houses and salons of England and spread first to France and then later to Germany.

Although Habermas's model inspired many people – including historians – it has always been subject to severe criticism. This criticism has three main elements. The first concerns Habermas's proposed chronology. He asserted that the first part of the public sphere development took place in the apolitical literary public sphere, which was later politicised. Many historians point out that this distinction is not valid, citing an early rich culture of political pamphlets, for example in the early Dutch republic. Already in the fifteenth and certainly the sixteenth century, there were elements of a public debate, such as in the chambers of rhetoric.⁴

The second element of criticism is the use of the marker *bürgerlich* (translated in English as *bourgeois*). Habermas connected the adjective *bürgerlich* with the socio-economic development of an early mercantile capitalism. However, as Van Horn Melton and others have countered, it is inadequate to regard the propertied as equal to *bürgerlich*; this early public sphere included a substantial number of nobles and magistrates themselves, and many participants in the early public sphere had a professional background. Van Horn Melton prefers the term 'enlightened' to the 'bourgeois' public sphere, and argues that the bourgeois and nobles fused into a new elite 'by creating new criteria of social distinction and exclusion based on education and taste'.⁵ It is these nobles and magistrates that we will meet in Utrecht further on in this article.

The third element of criticism relates to the importance of religion. The sixteenth century marked the beginning of reformation in Europe. Habermas considered religion to be part of the private world, but this assertion was criticised by scholars, who cited the importance of religion in the developing public sphere. A term that was used in this respect was the *reformatorische Öffentlichkeit* (Reformation public sphere). Initially coined by Jürgen Schutte,⁶ the term was reworked in a contribution by Rainer Wohlfeil.⁷ According to Wohlfeil, there was a *frühe reformatorischen Kommunikationssituation* (an early reformed situation of communication) in which different forms of media – including oral media, such as preaching the gospel and singing – were used to convince the people of the *wahre Wahrheit* (real truth) as opposed to the *gültige Wahrheit* (prevailing truth). Wohlfeil argues that it makes sense to speak of an *Öffentlichkeit* in that potentially many people can be involved. However, it is not the specific Habermasian interpretation of a *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*, but rather only a particular phase in the development. This *reformatorische Öffentlichkeit* took place in Germany from 1517 to 1525, and was carried further by:

vor allem Prädikanten ... später u.a. städtische 'Intellektuelle', die infolge ihrer beruflichen Tätigkeit als Prediger, Drucker and bildende Künstler, als Stadtschreiber und

⁴See, for example, Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten. Rederijers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

⁵Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, 12.

⁶Jürgen Schutte, *Schymppf Red: Frühformen bürgerlicher agitation in Thomas Murners 'Grossem Lutherischen Narren' (1522)* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1973).

⁷Rainer Wohlfeil, 'Reformatorische Öffentlichkeit', in *Literatur und Laienbildung im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit*, ed. Ludger Grenzmann and Karl Stackmann (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984), 41–52.

Ratskonsulenten zu den verschiedenen sozialen Gruppen und Schichten Verbindungen fanden.⁸ (at first ministers ... later on town intellectuals, who in their capacity of ministers, printers, artists, clerks and councillors in town were connected to different social groups and classes [Translation by the authors].)

We refer to this phase because – as we shall show – the microhistory of Utrecht, town and gown, its intellectuals, theologians and magistrates, exhibits remarkable elements of the earlier *reformatrische Öffentlichkeit* in Germany. Religion was indeed an incentive and, simultaneously, a divisive element in the very early phase of the university and, as such, connected to a developing *Öffentlichkeit* in town.

Habermas was remarkably silent on the role of universities in the development of the early public sphere in Europe. However, the authors of this article agree with those scholars who perceive the academic world and its concomitant discourse of criticism to be a significant domain that contributed to the public sphere's development. Andreas Gestrich wrote that '[a]fter Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* of 1637, public discourse and open criticism within the academic community was seen as an important element on the path to the truth'.⁹ Gestrich adds that academics were involved in developing the public sphere owing to their involvement in the political domain as learned councillors and their resultant access to political information. Scholars, including Paul Wood, Thomas Broman and Jan Rupp, argued that men connected to universities played a crucial role in the development of the public sphere.¹⁰ In the same vein, this article will show how an urban proto-intelligentsia initiated developments that fostered the growth of a public sphere.

History of the university in Utrecht

In this section, we analyse the foundation of the University of Utrecht from the perspective of the development of a public sphere in Utrecht, and examine whether the university – including both the professionals (that is, the professors) and the university's authorities (that is, the town magistrates) – played an active part in this development.

Early history of Utrecht

As part of the province of Utrecht, the city of Utrecht was known originally by its Roman name, *Ultrajectum*. For many centuries, bishops governed the city and its surrounding area. The city was known for its many churches, including five chapter churches governed by the canons. Part of the city fell under the jurisdiction of the chapters. Utrecht was the major city of the northern provinces during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and was home to many families of the gentry. Being landowning gentry, their income came from their seigniorial rights and privileges.

⁸Ibid., 49.

⁹Andreas Gestrich, 'The Public Sphere and the Habermas Debate', *German History* 24, no. 3 (2006): 426.

¹⁰Paul Wood, 'Science, the Universities and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *History of Universities* 13 (1994): 99–135; Thomas H. Broman, 'The Habermasian Public Sphere and "Science in the Enlightenment"', *History of Science* 36 (1998): 123–49; and Jan C. C. Rupp, 'The New Science and the Public Sphere in the Premodern Era', *Science in Context* 8 (1995): 487–507.

City magistrates were recruited mostly from this rich, propertied class, but there was a growing influence of members of the town guilds.

The presence of many wealthy landowners in town encouraged the establishment of small-scale industries producing luxury goods (many goldsmiths were to be found in Utrecht). Textile and especially metal industries also flourished, and printing was an important local industry. This gave rise to a class of craftsmen organised into guilds. The influence of the guilds prevented large-scale capitalist development from taking place. The lower socio-economic sector was characterised by poor, semi-skilled or unskilled wage-earners; below this there was the *grauw* (mob). Some, including Vijlbrief, argue that the history of the *governance* of the city was a battle between the elites of the city – consisting mainly of the landowners and rentiers – and the representatives of the guilds.¹¹ As Kaplan said:

[G]overnance was an important business in this capital city, and those who governed formed a large and prominent group within Utrecht society.... The presence of large numbers of clergy and gentry, and the prominence of persons living directly or indirectly off government, were peculiar, then, to Utrecht's socio-economic structure.¹²

Utrecht continued to be a Catholic clerical hotspot. The canons who governed the chapter churches were of noble origin and lived a wealthy – and, according to many critics, a very secular – life. The canons formed the intellectual city elite for many years. The chapters were major landholders in the province. The Catholics were moderately minded and resisted the centralising policy of the Spanish King Philip II, who wanted more bishops with more power.

However, a growing number of people in this episcopal city became spellbound by the reformation teachings. Hedge sermons were held in the town's surroundings, attended by adherents of the Calvinist teachings. Owing to the harsh measures imposed by the Spanish king's representative, the city authorities became increasingly estranged from the Spanish king and his representatives. In addition, although they continued to form the majority denomination in the city of Utrecht and were still relatively moderate, the Catholics were increasingly threatened in their position by the growing power of radical Calvinists (consistorials).

Calvinists and libertines in Utrecht until 1636

After 1580, a reformation process of the magistrates, chapters and schools took place. The chapters remained in town but lost their religious positions, leading to a discussion regarding the use of the former religious goods and resources that – according to the Calvinists – should be used for developing the Calvinist parishes (*ad pios usus*).

Kaplan argues that the majority of the magistrates were libertines, whereas guild members were more attracted to the radical Calvinist party (consistorials). The anti-clericalist magistrates feared the consistorial organisation, including consistories and synods (with a flavour of theocracy), as a threat to their position in town governance. The magistrates, whether the libertine majority or the moderate Calvinist minority, favoured a religious consensus, thereby attracting the moderate elements

¹¹Izaak Vijlbrief, *Van anti-aristocratie tot democratie: Een bijdrage tot de politieke en sociale geschiedenis der stad Utrecht* (Amsterdam: E. Querido, 1950).

¹²Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht 1578–1620* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 119.

from both sides. Kaplan notes that the city magistrates were determined not to be 'ruled by new monks' (as noted in a letter by the burgomaster Canter to the Utrecht Secretary of State, Floris Thin).¹³ However, the party of the more radical consistorials still retained an effective leadership of elders in the consistory. Calvinist ministers maintained contact with their Calvinist colleagues in the other provinces, especially in Holland. Gradually, the representatives of the Calvinist party won ground, and the Calvinist church began to adhere to the regulations of the churches in other provinces.

Utrecht was increasingly drawn into the conflict between Prince Maurits, stadtholder of Holland and Utrecht, and Van Oldenbarnevelt, the powerful Advocate of the States of the Province Holland. The roots of this conflict were religious, and the opposing sides were the Remonstrants (more liberal minded), supported by Van Oldenbarnevelt, and the Contra-Remonstrants (more Calvinist), supported by Maurits. In Utrecht, the Contra-Remonstrant party became the dominant party, although there was still a considerable presence of Catholics in town. However, although many magistrates were now Contra-Remonstrants and willing to support Maurits, the old order of magistrates had not altered fundamentally. Libertine magistrates had the opportunity to attend the French services of the Wallonian church, a formally reformed but moderate church. The private sphere of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience and of faith was supported by the public sphere of the Reformed Church and of public worship. *Schuilkerken* (conventicles) were permitted, where people of different denominations could gather to worship in churches that looked like private houses from the outside. Generally speaking, the Catholics enjoyed relative freedom in Utrecht; and social bonds, including family, the patriciate and guilds, mitigated inter-confessional divisions.

The city magistrates and early history of the university

The educational system in the city of Utrecht was rooted firmly in the Catholic infrastructure until the Reformation stage. Chapter schools as well as the municipal Latin School, the Hieronymus School, prepared pupils for further education at university. The Hieronymus School was established in 1474, four years after the city council envisioned the possibility of having its own university. In March 1470, the council adopted a resolution to implement a feasibility study for establishing a university.¹⁴ The results of this study are unknown, but in the same year Bishop David of Burgundy tightened his hold on the city. Although Bishop David was sympathetic to the arts, political rivalry may have prevented the establishment of a university. Higher ecclesiastical circles in town, which initially were opposed to Bishop David, feared competition with the school in town, which may also have contributed to the failure to establish a university.

It took more than 100 years, and a different political and religious scene in the city of Utrecht, before the idea of a university was considered again. In August 1580, the council held consultations with the churches and province about the

¹³Ibid., 199.

¹⁴Gerhard W. Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta Senatus. Vroedschapsresolutiën en andere bescheiden betreffende de Utrechtsche academie* (Utrecht: Broekhoff N.V. v/h Kemink en Zoon, 1936–1940), 1.

possibility of establishing a university.¹⁵ City magistrates confidently tried to substantiate the position of the city in the province, and the reformation process was unfolding. However, magistrates were mainly libertine minded. Utrecht was a hot-spot for magistrates and administration, and required greater numbers of trained clerks with sufficient judicial knowledge. It was not only the *res ecclesia* (although now Calvinist) but also the *res publica* (the cause of the civil society of both town and province) that were to be served by a university.¹⁶ In this respect, Frijhoff quoted the *considerans* of Prince William of 1574, pleading for the establishment of a university in Leiden that would serve government ‘*niet alleen in zaeken der relegie, maer oock in tgene den gemeynen borglicken welstandt belangt*’ (not only in matters related to religion but also the common well-being of burghers).¹⁷ The city of Utrecht’s council stressed the importance of a university for the *welstant* (well-being) of the republic and the church as well as the *nutticheit* (benefits) for the town and its inhabitants.¹⁸

Prior to the actual establishment of the university in 1636, other developments took place in the city relating to the notion of ‘locations of knowledge’ that were publicly available and, as such, instrumental in the development of a public sphere. One of these ‘locations of knowledge’ was a library. As early as November 1581, and later on in August 1582, members of the council were commissioned to ask the chapels, cloisters and others to collect their books in order to establish a library in St Catharine’s Church that would be accessible to everyone.¹⁹ A city library, which also served as the university library, was finally established and housed in the choir of the Sint Janskerk. Kaplan noted that:

[i]ndeed, Utrecht’s public library, founded in 1582, made available to burghers an astounding wide variety of religious literature: canon law, Tridentine decrees, missals, works by Erasmus, Sebastian Frank, Caspar Schwenkfeld, Dirck Coornhert, and almost every important reformer.²⁰

At first, the collection comprised mainly theological works, but the city fathers pursued an active policy to buy other works. Major donations enabled further development of the library at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and in 1608 a first catalogue was printed. Cornelis Booth, a city magistrate, was appointed as the first librarian in 1640. The city fathers decided to sell double copies of the books and to use the income derived from this to purchase other books in different faculties.²¹ In 1640, the city fathers reported the confiscation of books belonging to the Catholic Philippus Rovenius. These books were stored in the city library and made available for the *publijcq gerieff* (public convenience).²²

Another remarkable ‘location of knowledge’ was the anatomy theatre. Jan Rupp argues that anatomy theatres are crucial elements in the development of a public

¹⁵Ibid., 2.

¹⁶See, for example, Marc Wingens, ‘The Motives for Creating Institutions of Higher Education in the Dutch Republic During its Formative Years (1574–1648)’, *Paedagogica Historica* 34, no. 2 (1998): 443–56.

¹⁷Frijhoff, ‘Hoger onderwijs’, 95.

¹⁸Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 63.

¹⁹Ibid., 3–4.

²⁰Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 271.

²¹See Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 30.

²²Ibid., 138.

sphere.²³ In August 1621, the council commissioned some of its members to find housing to implement *lectiones anathomie* with *publijcke demonstratie* (lectures in anatomy with public demonstration).²⁴ St Peter's Church had room available and, in March 1623, the council reported the establishment of an amphitheatre in the choir of St Peter's Church to teach and exercise the art of anatomy at the service of the *Chirurgijns* (surgeons), their servants, students and other *lieffhebbers* (interested people) of this art.²⁵

Another 'location of knowledge' was the Bolwerck Sonnenburch, which was appropriated by the city to serve as a *hortus academicus* (botanical garden) and to plant herbs for medical students.²⁶ Such a botanical garden was deemed necessary for practice in the study of medicine.²⁷ In addition, the Smeetoorn was designed to be used *tot Astronomische speculatiën* (for astronomical speculations).²⁸ These developments were an integral part of a deliberate policy of the city council to create 'locations of knowledge' that would be made available for the town burghers. The developments supported the concept of a university with a central position in a public space.

Then, in 1632, the city magistrates decided to establish the Illustere School (Illustrious School) to teach theology, law, philosophy and other sciences *publicquelyck* (in public) and to prepare the children of the city's burghers for service in the church and republic.²⁹ In 1634, the town magistrates established the Illustrious School, financed by income from ecclesiastical sources. They appointed professors and, in June 1634, the lectures began. The audience included '*niet alleen veel jonge studenten, maer oock verscheydcn bejaerde edele, geleerde ende andere gequalificeerde luyden, die daer veel binnen dese Stadt sijn*' (not only many young students, but also some older gentry, learned people and other qualified people, many of them living in town).³⁰

Only in 1636 did the Province of Utrecht acknowledge the Illustrious School as a university that was entitled to confer degrees. The city fathers decided to hold monthly consultations with the newly appointed professors and to make the necessary decisions concerning the academy. They also decided on the *series lectionum*. Bernardus Schotanus was appointed as the university's first rector. University housing proved a delicate issue to tackle in terms of whether to make use of ecclesiastical properties. The city fathers wanted to appropriate the big Chapter House of the Dom for this purpose, but were met with resistance from the Dom deacon. After lengthy deliberations and ultimately an intervention by the province's magistrates, a decision was reached to open the Chapter House for the university.

The concept of the University of Utrecht in its early phase, however, was ambiguous. To some, it was the *res ecclesia* (that is, the ecclesia of the Calvinists) that was the main motive for having a university in town. The adherents of this

²³See Rupp, 'The New Science and the Public', 481–91.

²⁴See Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 5.

²⁵Ibid., 9.

²⁶See Johan A. Wijnne, *Resolutiën van de vroedschap van Utrecht betreffende de academie*, (Utrecht: Kemink en zoon, uitgegeven door Dr. J. A. Wijnne en Lucie Miedema, 1900), 40.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸See Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 142.

²⁹G. J. Loncq, *Historische schets der Utrechtsche hoogeschool tot hare verheffing in 1815* (Utrecht: J. L. Beijers en J. van Boekhoven, 1886), 6.

³⁰Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 62.

concept were Calvinists, some moderate and others more dogmatic. To others, it was the *res publica* (that is, town and province). Some wanted a university in Utrecht as ‘a civic enterprise for the explicit purpose of promoting civic culture and not merely to educate the youth’³¹ The adherents of this concept were mainly well-educated members of the class of magistrates in town who wanted to have a university ‘more closely linked to the realities of public life, the new ideas of a commercial society and the service of the modern state’.³²

One is tempted to interpret the early history of the University of Utrecht as place of tension and contestation between the magistrates and the consistory in Utrecht. However, one should be cautious in viewing these two bodies as monolithic and in opposition to each other. Local history seems to be more complicated, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

Magistrates and the liberty of the academy

This section concentrates on the local political and ideological ambiguities. First, the so-called ‘Utrecht quarrel’, or Descartes affair, will be analysed emphasising the position of the magistrates. Second, the power structure behind the quarrel will be elucidated. Third, another quarrel, the Malecoot affair, will be analysed. In certain respects, this Malecoot affair is in contrast to the Descartes affair. Fourth and finally, the self-interest of the magistrates will be analysed.

The Descartes affair

An interesting episode in the position of the magistrates was the ‘Utrecht quarrel’, as it became known.³³ Baillet, an early biographer of Descartes, said of Utrecht University that it ‘*sembloit être née Cartésienne*’ (appeared to be Cartesian born).³⁴ When Rene Descartes lived in Deventer he befriended Professor Renerius.³⁵ Descartes stayed for some time in Utrecht following Renerius’s appointment as professor, where he finalised his *Discours de la Méthode*. During his stay, Descartes came to know some of the magistrates, including Gijsbert van der Hoolck, one of the burgomasters and founding fathers of the university, who was also receptive to new ideas.³⁶

Renerius was married to Anna van Velthuysen, who was related to another burgomaster in 1636, Dirk van Velthuysen. Anna van Velthuysen was also an aunt

³¹Willem Frijhoff, ‘What is an Early Modern University? The Conflict between Leiden and Amsterdam in 1631’, in *European Universities in the Age of Reformation and Counter Reformation*, ed. Helga Robinson-Hammerstein (Dublin: Four Courts, 1998), 160.

³²*Ibid.*, 161.

³³See Willem Koops, Leen Dorsman and Theo Verbeek, *Née Cartésienne -Cartesiaansch gebooren; Descartes en de Utrechtse academie 1636–2005* (Assen: Koninklijke van Gorcum, 2005).

³⁴Adrien Baillet, *La vie de monsieur Des-Cartes* (Paris, 1691), 4: 2 (*Réimpression de l’édition de Paris*, 1970, Genève: Slatkine Reprints).

³⁵Recently an extensive dissertation was published on the relationship between Renerius and Descartes: Robin Onno Buning, *Henricus Reneri (1593–1639) Descartes’ Quartermaster in Aristotelian Territory* (Zutphen: Wohrmann Printing Service, 2013).

³⁶Theo Verbeek, *Une université pas encore corrompue; Descartes et les premières années de l’université d’Utrecht; Descartes en de eerste jaren van de Utrechtse Universiteit* (Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, 1993), 29.

of the Cartesian philosopher and magistrate, Lambert van Veldhuysen. Through Renerius, another professor, Regius, was appointed by the city fathers in the disciplines of *medicae theoreticae* (medicine) and botany. Regius – a somewhat unruly personality – was captivated by Descartes’s new philosophy that enabled him to cross the boundaries of the existing classical Aristotelian scholasticism, which at that time was taught at universities, including Utrecht.

When Renerius died in 1639, his colleague, Aemilius, spoke at his funeral. Surprisingly, the oration proved to be an ode of praise to Descartes and his new philosophy. Although Renerius and Regius were not Cartesian in the strict sense of the word, they did advocate methods of acquiring new knowledge. In his inaugural lecture in 1634, Renerius advocated using observations and experiments.³⁷ Alarm bells started to ring for the group of Calvinists headed by the reformed theologian, Gisbertus Voetius. As Thijssen-Schoute said, Utrecht University offered the first adherents of the new philosophy of Descartes, but also its most arduous opponents.³⁸ Voetius regarded philosophy, that is, philosophy in the neo-scholastic Aristotelian mould, to be the handmaiden of the reformed theology. Philosophy as an autonomous discipline, confirming an autonomously thinking person, was deemed dangerous to the Calvinist theological system. Only a few months later, disputations *de atheismo* were defended under the chairmanship of Voetius. Although not mentioned by name in the disputations, Descartes felt treated discourteously and reacted vehemently. In 1641, Voetius was elected rector of the university, and further disputations under the chairmanship of Regius continued. Regius, assisted by Descartes, published his *Responsio* arguing, among other points, that it was precisely the old Aristotelian philosophy that would lead to atheism. In his capacity as rector, Voetius brought this case to the city fathers. They suspended publications by Regius and asked the senate to formulate its judgement. This judgement, which was supported by a majority of the professors,³⁹ was known as the *Judicium senatus academici inclutae academiae Ultrajectinae* and officially renounced the new philosophy. The city fathers formally approved the *Judicium* and the professors were allowed to publish the text. However, the quarrel continued through a letter by Descartes, *Epistola ad Dinetum*, in which he portrayed Voetius as a malicious person. Voetius staged a counter-attack through a piece of writing by one of his pupils, Martinus Schoock, a professor of philosophy at the University of Groningen. Descartes again reacted by publishing his *Epistola Renati Des-Cartes ad celeberrimum virum D. Gisbertum Voetium*.⁴⁰ Descartes believed that he had the support of members of the magistrates, who wished to curb the influence of Voetius. Although Descartes had supporters in higher circles, including the burgomaster, Van der Hoolck, the quarrel had gone too far and would be detrimental to both church and academy in the eyes of the magistrates. Descartes soon realised the strength of Voetius’s position. On 13 September 1643, the city fathers decided to prohibit the

³⁷Ibid., 27.

³⁸Caroline Louise Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme, avec sommaire et table des matières en Français. Bezorgd en van aanvullende bibliografie voorzien door Th. Verbeek* (Utrecht: Hes Uitgevers BV, 1989), 19.

³⁹Only Regius himself, Aemilius, and Regneri ab Oosterga opposed the *judicium*.

⁴⁰Theo Verbeek, Erik-Jan Bos, and Jeroen van der Ven, *The Correspondence of Rene Descartes 1643* (Utrecht: Zeno Institute for Philosophy Quaestiones Infnitae; Publications of the Department of Philosophy Utrecht University, XLV, 2003). More, in particular, may be found in Appendix 1: ‘The Utrecht Crisis’.

publication, printing and selling within the city of the *Epistola ad Dinetum* and the *Epistola Renati Des-cartes*, citing both as ‘*diffamatoire schriften ende fameuse libellen*’ (defamatory libel).⁴¹ Descartes was summoned to Utrecht to present his case in court. Wisely, he chose not to attend and remained out of town. Although discussions continued, the city fathers wanted to end the quarrel. On 2 June 1645 the city fathers rather half-heartedly forbade town book printers and sellers from printing and selling writing *pro ofte contra* Descartes.⁴² The enforcement of this ban was not very strict and was sometimes altogether lacking.⁴³ One year earlier the *Leges et Statuta Academiae Ultraiectinae* (Laws and Charter of the Academy of Utrecht) were passed by the States of Utrecht. Article XVIII of the statutes stated that:

*Philosophi ab Aristotelis philosophia non recedunto, neque publice neque privatim propugnatores absurdorum, paradoxorum, novorum dogmatum ab Aristotelis doctrina discrepantium non feruntur; profanae opiniones aut damnatae propositiones non defenduntur....*⁴⁴ (Philosophers should not divert from Aristotle’s philosophy either in public or in private circles. They should not be known as champions of absurd argumentations, paradoxes or new doctrines that divert from Aristotle’s doctrine; profane opinions or hypotheses that are denounced cannot be defended ... [Translation by the authors].)

After the decision of the city fathers of Utrecht of 1645, the curators and mayors of Leiden adopted a resolution in 1647 in which they ordered their professors not to mention the name of Descartes in printed material, theses or even public disputations.⁴⁵ However, this was not the end of Cartesian teaching in Utrecht. Neither Voetius nor the consistory was able to prevent the seed of Cartesian philosophy from germinating further in Utrecht and in other universities in the Netherlands.

As we have seen, Voetius used the writing of his former pupil, Martinus Schoock, for a vicious attack on Descartes. Schoock had been professor in philosophy at the University of Groningen since 1640. In this way, the ‘Utrecht quarrel’ also affected the University of Groningen. The Senate of the University of Groningen rebuked Schoock because of his complicity in putting Descartes in a bad light. This decision was perhaps primarily motivated more by the fact that the Rector at that time, Maresius, was an opponent of Voetius and not so much because of support for the new philosophy.⁴⁶ In Groningen, however, there were also followers of Descartes, including Tobias Andreae, despite the fact that, as in Utrecht, the academic laws started with ‘*Philosophi ab Aristotelis philosophia non recedunto*’ (Philosophers should not divert from Aristotle’s philosophy [Translation by the authors]).⁴⁷

⁴¹Cited in Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 185.

⁴²See Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 218.

⁴³See A. W. E. Daniëls, ‘Het toezicht op de publicatie van drukwerk in de stad Utrecht, 1597–1749’ (unpublished Master’s thesis, Universiteit Utrecht, 1997).

⁴⁴Loncq, *Historische schets der Utrechtsche hoogeschool*, 50.

⁴⁵Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme*, 102.

⁴⁶See Klaas van Berkel, *Universiteit van het Noorden: vier eeuwen academisch leven in Groningen Deel 1 De oude universiteit, 1614–1876* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 167–89.

⁴⁷Klaas van Berkel, ‘De Groningse Universiteit in de tijd van de Republiek: Een kwestie van bloei of verval’ [The University of Groningen in the Republic: A Matter of Prosperity or Decline], in *Om niet aan onwetenschap en barbarij te bezwijken: Groningse geleerden 1614–1989* [Not to succumb to ignorance and barbarism: academics in Groningen 1614–1989], ed. G. A. van Gemert, J. Schuller tot Peursum-Meijer and A.J. Vanderjagt (Hilversum: Verloren, 1989), 56.

Magistrates, Calvinists and the academy in Utrecht: a struggle for power

The case of Descartes represented a struggle for power of the jurisdiction and authority of the *vroedschap* (town council) and consistory with regard to the university's direction, including the important subject of the appointment of professors. After all, the profiles of the professors were an essential asset of the university. In 1634, representatives of the consistory visited the city fathers, both to congratulate them on the establishment of the Illustrious School and to urge them to appoint a professor of theology. The city fathers did as requested. However, shortly after the appointment of Voetius, the national synod asked the city fathers to consider seriously what had been formulated by the national synod of Dordrecht concerning the appointment of teachers and professors at schools, illustrious schools and academies.⁴⁸ Article III of the *Post Acta* of the national synod said that, in addition to the political persons (*polityke personen*) in their capacity as curators, one or two ministers would be needed to supervise the theological faculty.⁴⁹ This supervision was extended to the other chairs and faculties – including Hebrew and Greek languages and also philosophy – in order to ensure the appointment of high-performing professors who would also adhere to the rules of the reformed theology. The city fathers again responded half-heartedly by confirming that they had heeded these articles and would follow them in their actions. However, they continued to appoint professors as they wished.

Church leaders later referred to Article LV of the national synod – as confirmed by the provincial states – to substantiate the view that provincial church bodies were entitled to approve the books of persons of the reformed religion, including publications by the academy professors.⁵⁰ In 1637, one of the classes in the province, Rhenen en Wijck, wished to use this article to examine a publication of Martinus Schoock, a friend of Voetius, entitled *Remonstranto-Libertinus*. The university senate, including Voetius, reacted vehemently and asked the city fathers to intervene, stating that '*sodane visitatie ofte censure der boecken*' (such inspection and censorship of books) should be under the authority of the professors of the respective faculties, as was the case in the academies of other provinces.⁵¹ The professors declared that they would rather '*haer ampten te willen reliqueren*' (leave their positions) than accept the objections of the church leaders.⁵² The city fathers put pressure on the classis Rhenen en Wijck and the objections were brushed aside. The relative freedom of the city fathers to appoint professors, including professors in the theology faculty, without even formally consulting the consistory became normal practice. It is likely that the consistory trusted Voetius with the informal supervision of this process.

In 1650, the stadtholder in Holland and Utrecht, William II, died. His son, William III, was only born a week after his father died. The States of Holland, by far the most powerful province, decided not to appoint a new stadtholder, as they feared that the dominant power of a stadtholder would combine civil and military power. The province of Utrecht followed Holland's example. This decision

⁴⁸See P. de Jong, *De strijd voor de vrijheid der Academie gedurende de eerste vijftig jaren van haar bestaan, door de stedelijke regeering tegen de Kerk gevoerd. Redevoering uitgesproken op den jaardag der Universiteit, den 26sten maart 1881, door den Rector Magnificus Dr. P. De Jong* (Utrecht, 1881), 8.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 8–9.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 10.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 12.

⁵²*Ibid.*

strengthened the position of the libertine magistrates in Utrecht and the anti-clerical sentiment. In 1650, Johannes de Bruin was appointed professor of mathematics and, in 1660, Regnerus van Mansveld was appointed as successor to Daniël Voet, son of Gisbertus Voetius. Regnerus van Mansveld was a nephew of one of the burgomasters of Utrecht, Johan van Mansveld. In 1662, Frans Burman was appointed professor of theology.⁵³ Frans Burman headed the *Collegie der Scavanten*, an informal group of Cartesian ‘soulmates’, including the professors Graevius, Johannes de Bruin and Regnerus van Mansveld; the minister in the Walloon congregation, Lodewijk Wolzogen; and Lambert van Velthuysen, a scholar, local politician and member of the Walloon congregation in Utrecht. Burman was the son-in-law of Abraham Heidanus, the leading Cartesian professor in Leiden.⁵⁴ According to a political pamphlet, ‘*De Cartesianen hadden het oor van de meeste Heeren*’ (The Cartesians had most of the magistrates’ ear).⁵⁵

Malecoot: Liberteyt of the academy 1666–1667

The changing relationship between the *vroedschap* and consistory became manifest in the so-called Malecoot affair. In 1666, a theology student, Absalom Malecotius, defended a libertine position with regard to the observance of Sunday under the supervision of the Cartesian professor, Frans Burman. As a consequence of this defence, the consistory refused to admit this student to the ministry. A majority of the senate protested against this violation of academic freedom. The senate composition had changed and Voetius was no longer one of its champions. The senate majority drafted a memorandum to the city fathers, which argued that the consistory had neither the right nor the expertise to judge on academic matters. The memorandum also made an almost malicious reference to the events of 1637, when the professors, including Voetius, had vehemently defended academic freedom. The majority of the Senate confirmed that ‘*de gewoonte van disputeren in de Academie liberteyt geeft om vrijmoedigh te seggen tegens sijn partije: dit is valsch, ongerijmt en wat dies meer is, welck in den burgerlicken ommeganck onbeleeft mochte schijnen*’ (the habit of disputation in the Academy gives liberty to speak candidly against his party: this is false, absurd, and the like; which seems to be impolite in civil contact).⁵⁶ In 1667, the city fathers ultimately decided that the consistory was unauthorised to interfere in the academy’s affairs and to censor professors and students or refuse church attestation in order to safeguard the academy’s *behoorlijcke liberteyt* (normal liberty).⁵⁷

The city fathers acknowledged the Acts of the Dordrecht Synod regarding the consistory’s authority, but insisted that the latter should consult the city fathers before making irrevocable decisions of censure. After repeated refusal by the consistory to withdraw their ruling on Malecoot, the secretary of the city fathers

⁵³See Frits G. M. Broeyer, ‘Franciscus Burman, een collega met verdachte denkbeelden’, in *Vier eeuwen theologie in Utrecht*, ed. Aart de Groot and Otto J. de Jong (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001), 109–19.

⁵⁴See Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme*, 443.

⁵⁵W.P.C. Knuttel, *Catalogus van de pamfletten-verzameling berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek*, 9 dln (Den Haag 1889–1920), number 10974, *Rehabeams Raedt van Utrecht. Behelsende de redenen der goede mannen van Utrecht, ende patriotten des Vaderlandts, waerom sy een Request hebben overgelevert aen sijn excell. De Grave van Horne* (1673).

⁵⁶Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 441.

⁵⁷Wijnne, *Resolutiën van de Vroedschap*, 95–8; Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta*, 455.

summoned the consistory to dissolve the sentence. As a result, in April 1667, the minutes of July 1666 relating to this case were deleted. The incident clearly marks a period in which the magistrates wanted to limit the power of the local reformed church. It is part of a broader development of the growth of republicanism combined with politically inspired anti-clericalism.⁵⁸

Magistrates: anti-clericalism or ‘res pecunia’

The anti-clerical sentiment had a typically Utrecht-local flavour. A dormant dispute between the *vroedschap* and consistory had once again flared up, and the magistrates were now determined to put a permanent end to the conflict. The conflict related to the delicate issue of the secularised ecclesiastical benefices. The chapters in Utrecht had had substantial wealth prior to the reformation, and the central question during the reformation concerned the use of these ecclesiastical benefices. The successors of the canons, who normally profited from the wealth of the chapters, were mainly members of the clan of magistrates in Utrecht. Only parts of the benefices were used to finance the ministries in the province (*ad pios usus*). The Calvinists, including Voetius, perceived this as a grave insult. This issue of the use of the ecclesiastical wealth provoked angry discussions among the town’s church, government and academy. The issue of the use of the ecclesiastical benefices had already been brought up by Descartes himself during the Descartes affair, probably following suggestions by some of his magistrate friends. The issue gave rise to furious attacks on the magistrates by some of the Calvinist ministers in Utrecht, including Abraham van de Velde and Johannes Teellinck, and by one of their own professors, Mathias Nethenus.

Once the magistrates in Utrecht were sure of the support of the magistrates in Holland, they expelled Van de Velde and Teellinck in July 1660. Johan de Witt, leader of the libertine magistrates in Holland, would have preferred to have gone one step further. He wrote to a member of the States of Utrecht: ‘*Ydereen alhier is van gevoelen, dat vooreerst den abt ende daernevens mede wel eenige munnikken hadden behooren aengetast geweest te sijn*’ (Everybody here thought that first of all the abbot [Voetius] and some of his monks [colleagues of Van de Velde and Teellinck] should have been seized).⁵⁹

One way of trying to control the consistory was by the appointment of two *commissarissen-politiek* (political commissioners on behalf of the *vroedschap*). One of these commissioners was the Cartesian philosopher, medical doctor and local politician, Lambert Veldhuysen, who himself was a member of the Wallonian church, and, as we have seen, one of the Cartesian soulmates in Utrecht. In 1661, the city fathers warned the professors of the Utrecht academy to refrain from attacking each other. In April 1662, the majority of the *vroedschap* took an even tougher step by dismissing Professor Nethenus. However, the agenda of the magistrates was dominated not only by the concept of the university but also by the manner in which they could preserve major parts of the ecclesiastical wealth for their own benefit.

⁵⁸Rienk Vermij, *The Calvinist Copernicans: The Reception of the New Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575–1750* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2002), 276.

⁵⁹Cited by Arnoldus Cornelius Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius* (Leiden: Groen en Zoon, 1989), 3: 78.

The political scene changed dramatically in June 1672, when French troops invaded the city and occupied it until November 1673. During this period, the Dom church was even reopened for the Catholics. In 1674, troops of the province of Holland headed by the new stadtholder, William III, invaded the city. The majority of the libertine city fathers were removed from office. William III appointed new members who supported him and were mainly orthodox Calvinists. However, as before, the magistrates – although recruited from Calvinist circles – soon enjoyed the privileges of the office and opposed their own consistory when they argued for the return of Van de Velde and Teellinck. Forty years after the formal establishment of the university in 1636, the champion of the early radical Calvinists, Voetius, died, marking the beginning of a new era.

Conclusion

In this article, we aimed to connect the microhistory of Utrecht, town and gown, with the macrohistory of social development. We argue that Habermas's concept of the 'public sphere', with some (critical) modifications, is a fruitful framework for analysing local history. Some conclusions with respect to this theoretical framework will now be made.

In considering the concept of *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*, there is a tendency to think in terms of a transition of one form of *Öffentlichkeit* to another, that is, the *repräsentative* to the *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*. We argue that it is not 'either/or', but rather intermittent transitions containing ambiguities and paradoxes in which elements of both forms live together and sometimes conflict. The concept of *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* is a challenging one to analyse in the context of the early history of Utrecht University. However, a unifying concept, such as *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*, must be handled cautiously. As Kaplan said: 'general agreement exists that the centuries between the Reformation and French Revolution saw the sundering of a once-undifferentiated communal sphere into separate public and private spheres'.⁶⁰ An encompassing theoretical framework, such as the development of a *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*, needs to be fleshed out in local histories, which is what we envisaged in recounting the history of the early university in the city of Utrecht.

The period 1566 to 1636 can be characterised by a transition of a specific, local, 'Utrecht' version of a *reformatorische Öffentlichkeit* – a more-or-less public debate between the Calvinists and libertines in the city about the 'true' religion – to a kind of proto-public sphere through the libertine tradition of the city magistrates. We call this a 'proto-public sphere', owing to the traces of development of a *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* in the city, which is coloured by the specific situation of the long tradition of tension between burghers and magistrates, between *vroedschap* and consistory, and a local economy lacking the economic development of mercantile capitalism that Habermas sketched. As Olaf Mörke said in his '*Konfessionalisierung*' als *politisch-soziales Strukturprinzip*:

... der andauernden Diskussion über das Verhältnis von zentraler und dezentraler politischer Macht, zwischen sogenannter 'Oranier'- und 'regentenpartei', führte in ersten Ansätzen zu einem öffentlichen Diskurs politischer Prinzipien. Ein erster Schritt zur

⁶⁰Benjamin J. Kaplan, 'Fictions of Privacy: House Chapels and the Spatial Accommodation of Religious Dissent in Early Modern Europe', *American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (2002): 1062.

räsonnerden ‘bürgerlichen Öffentlichkeit’ mit direkter Wirkung auf die Gestalt staatlicher Institutionen wurde vollzogen.⁶¹ (The ongoing discussion on the relationship between centralised and decentralised political power, between so-called Orange- and Regents-party has led to a public discourse of political principles. This was a first step in the direction of a public sphere with direct consequences for the form of state institutions [Translation by the authors].)

Traces of the development of a *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* can be found in the way the magistrates made much of the different dimensions of education and ‘locations of knowledge’ being publicly available in town. One may argue that the libertine magistrates followed the footsteps of the Renaissance humanists in building up ‘a culture of “reasonableness” and religious toleration’ with ‘an urbane open-mindedness and sceptical tolerance’, and in opposing an uncompromising rationalism.⁶²

Frijhoff and Spies refer to a culture of discussion in the period around 1650 – a culture that pervaded the different layers of a corporate society, including the council of city fathers, provincial states, the States General and its commissions, the consistory at city level, the provincial synod, the national synod, and the local guild.⁶³ They argue that Dutch society – or better, the loosely coupled societies – lacked an articulated hierarchal system of governance stimulating the development of ‘horizontal’ processes of public opinion through pamphlets and so on. Many participants were able to become involved in these discussions. There was not yet a structure of public opinion between society and government. Frijhoff and Spies conclude that the republic had a neutral public space; neutral in the sense that many were allowed to dwell in this public space but also neutral in the sense that public opinion did not have social consequences. Perhaps one should go a step further and argue that the public space of the local situation in Utrecht was a neutral public space affirming and even consolidating the positions taken by burghers and magistrates as well as Calvinists and libertines.

The element of *reformatorische Öffentlichkeit* and a proto-*bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* returns in the concept of the university that the different players in Utrecht envisaged. Again, these two elements are intermittently present in the early development of the university. On the one hand, it proved to be a true *Academia Voetiana*, that is, a *seminaria ecclesia* headed by ‘abbot’ Voetius. The magistrates accepted this concept in the Descartes case, which was part of the early phase of the university, in which an alliance between the consistory and Voetius proved to be too powerful and in which the autonomous position of the university had not yet been clearly articulated.

⁶¹Olaf Mörke, “‘Konfessionalisierung’ als politisch-soziales Strukturprinzip?, Das Verhältnis von Religion und Staatsbildung in der Republik der Vereinigten Niederlande im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert.’ *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 16 (1990): 49.

⁶²Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 81, 25. Stephen Toulmin argued that modernity had two sources: ‘The first was embodied in the Renaissance humanists, from Erasmus on, who lived in times of relative prosperity, and built up a culture of “reasonableness” and religious toleration. The second beginning was embodied in the 17th-century rationalists, starting with Descartes, who reacted to times of economic crisis – when toleration seemed a failure and religion took to the sword – by giving up the modest skepticism of the humanists, and looking for “rational” proofs to underpin our beliefs with a certainty neutral as between all religious positions’ (Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 81).

⁶³Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, *1650: Bevochten eendracht* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2000), 68.

On the other hand, town magistrates defended the university as an important element in the development of a public space in the sense of a *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* stressing the *liberteijt* – the liberty of the academy in opposition to the ecclesiastical authorities and their theocratic aspirations. The magistrates who accepted the formal regulations of the university banning the teachings of Descartes appointed professors who were known to be sympathetic to the new philosophy. These ‘reasonable’ magistrates strongly disliked the internal dissension of the deadly enemies of the rigorous, decontextualised Cartesian rationality opposing and opposed by a theocratic reformed theology.

However, in addition to the *res ecclesia* and *res publica*, there was another – parochial – element on the agenda of some of the magistrates, namely the *res pecunia* (the matter of money). One may argue that, in the changing patterns of power distribution in Utrecht, there appeared to be one dominant item on the agenda of the majority of the magistrates: how they could safeguard the economic benefices of the former regime for their own benefit. Not without reason, a political pamphlet from 1674 states that many of the regents in Utrecht were not actually interested in modern thinking but rather in safeguarding their own (financial) position:

O Minister, those people that I mentioned to you, knew about Cartesianism, Arminianism or Socinianism slightly less than children who still learn the catechism.... No Minister, these people are not really interested in Arminianism or Socinianism, they are only interested in the round God [*den ronden Godt*]; a position or office, that was the intention.⁶⁴

The Habermasian concept of the public sphere (*bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*) can be used fruitfully to understand the early development of Utrecht University and other Dutch universities during that period in history. However, the local complexities of the development of the *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* are not always totally independent of ‘the round God’ in governing the behaviour of individuals.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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⁶⁴The original text of the political pamphlet, *Raedt der Oudsten*, from 1674: ‘O Domine! Die luyden die ick u daer genoemt hebbe, wisten soo veel van Cartesianerije, Arminianerije of Socinianerije, lichtelijk minder als de kinderen die noch in de catechismus leeren.... Neen Domine, ’t is deze luyden ende meer met haer om geen Arminianerije of Socinianerije te doen geweest, maar alleenlijck om den ronden Godt; een Amptje of Officietje daer uit te strijcken, dat was ’t ooghmerk’, 1674, 4. Translation by the authors.