

Workshop:

Republicanism in Western Europe and Russia, the Case of Comparative Studies of Medieval City Communes

Venice International University, San Servolo island, November 8, 2013

The workshop is intended as a meeting place for researchers of city communes in Russia and Western Europe. By “republicanism,” we understand the classical tradition of thinking about Res Publica, which – after the works of Skinner, Pettit, Pocock, van Gelderen etc. – has become in political theory the main (but also freedom-asserting) alternative to liberalism. The workshop will concentrate, however, on comparisons between two clearly “republican” cases of Russian medieval city communes – those of Novgorod and Pskov – and will try to use them as a mirror to illuminate the general European dynamics of city- and state-building at the time.

If one looks at Novgorod and Pskov, one understands that traditional opposition of Western European and Russian political cultures may seem quite superficial. Of course, mainstream interpretations in political and historical thought take Russia as embodying a steady and long tendency towards absolute vertical power, towards crushing individuals’ right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. However, Russia has also known examples of genuine republican spirit at various times and in various stages of its development.

The role of the urban commune in the formation of early modern societies has been well studied. The political institutions of Northern Italian and German cities, their systems of checks and balances, horizontal relations between their citizens and their direct participation in political life, and more – all this is an important chapter in the history of European republicanism. But in medieval Novgorod and Pskov during the period before their subordination to Muscovite rule (late 15th- early 16th c.) - as in Western European communes - inhabitants also participated actively in political life, developed republican institutions, codified rights. The image of “rebellious” Novgorod always remained in Russian culture as an alternative, albeit unrealized, to Muscovite authoritarianism.

We see the primary objective of this workshop as the ambitious attempt to understand to what extent manifestations of republicanism in Russia and Western Europe are comparable, where their similarities and differences lie, and which features can be explained by mutual influence, common destiny, and cultural proximity. Approaches to answering the above questions may be split into two categories of research:

1. The medieval city commune and its institutions. Can we take Weber’s model of the Occidental city as adequately representing the Italian, Hanseatic and Russian communes, or are there different models of city communes? Can we treat Novgorod and Pskov as a variety of Western European city communes? What new details of republican or communal life can a scholar of West European communes notice while looking at the Russian city communes?
2. Unlike Europe, Russia produced virtually no political theory or political theology until the end of the 18th century. However, this absence does not indicate lack of

political thought or republican practice. How then did it manifest itself, to what extent it was characterized by republican ideas, can it be compared to its European counterparts?

The workshop will aim at comparing the two sets of political institutions – Novgorod and Italian republics like Venice, on the one hand, and Pskov and a broader European context, on the other. Two articles (by Pavel Lukin and Alexei Vovin) on respectively Novgorod and Pskov will be pre-circulated as a background reading. It is expected that workshop participants will help Pavel and Alexei in their research and work on the forthcoming books, giving advice on archival and other sources.

Preliminary Program

10:00 Pavel Lukin (Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow),
The “Liberty” of Novgorod

11:00 Alexei Vovin (European University at St. Petersburg),
14th and 15th Century Pskov and the European City of the Early Communal Period: A Comparative Typological Analysis

12:00-12:30 coffee break

12:30 Francesco Borri, Institut für Mittelalterforschung, University of Vienna
Power and Identity on the Adriatic fringe of the Empire (VI - XI c.)

13:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 15:00 Sergei Troianovsky (Novgorod Archeological Expedition)
Did the Novgorodians and the Venetians Meet? Looking for Republican Ideas Using Sources on Medieval Trade

15:00- 15:30 Paola Lanaro (University Ca’ Foscari, Venice),
Foreigners and the labour market in Venice (pre-modern age).

15:30-16:00 Elena Svalduz (University of Padua),
Republic Palaces and Spaces in the Venetian Territory. Under the sign of the lion

16:00-16:30 Coffee break

16:30-17:00 Alexandra Shapovalova, EU St. Petersburg
What is *Res*, when it is *Publica* or not? Aspects of artistic patronage in different periods of Novgorodian history.

17:00-17:30 Alessandra Pattanaro (University of Padua).
"Picta manent": the State image of Venice, between myths and half-truths in Medieval and Renaissance age.

17:30-18:00 Donatella Calabi (IUAV University, Venice)
The Stock Exchange: an Innovative Commercial Structure in the Republican System.

18:00-19:00 General discussion and wrap-up

Other participants/discussants: Oleg Kharkhordin, Mikhail Krom, Vadim Bass – all from EU St. Petersburg

ABSTRACTS

Francesco Borri (University of Vienna)

Power and identity on the Adriatic fringe of the empire (VI - XI c.)

The Adriatic arc (the region of Dalmatia, Istria and the North eastern Italian coasts) was, from the sixth to eleventh century, the northernmost region of the Eastern Roman Empire, the successor of the Roman Empire in the Adriatic. The towns of this region, laying on the Dalmatian archipelago, the Istrian coasts and the Venetian lagoons, became a far periphery of Constantinople being connected with the imperial center through the Adriatic Sea.

The Byzantine Empire deeply impacted the fabric of local societies, influencing institutions and identities. Well into the ninth century, we are able to track the existence of urban rituals still resembling late Roman ones (like a triumphus or an adventus). Also the elites' dignities, like tribune (tribunus), lieutenant (lociservator) or master of soldiers (magister militum), were echoing the titles of the late Roman army, bringing us to an imperial context. The Byzantine rule influenced also the self-perception of the communities: the role of the civitas (city/town) or administrative province played a major role in this process of (self-)identification. Local elites were called after it, like in the case of Ravennati, Histrienses or Dalmatini. All these habits made a clear difference with the neighbouring domains of the Croats, the Lombards or the Franks (kingdoms, empires and other policies) gathered behind kings, and whose identities recurred to an ethnic discourse.

This look to the broader Adriatic context and to the role of the empire in an age a dramatic changes and shifting balances, will help to understand the rise of Venice and the roots of its success.

Foreigners and the labour market in Venice (pre-modern age)

Paola Lanaro (Università "Ca' Foscari" di Venezia)

Today all the historians agree with the great mobility among the biggest European cities in pre-modern age. The Venetian case is extremely interesting; Venice is described by the French Ambassador Philippe de Comynnes at the end of the 15th as a city inhabited by foreigners. Girolamo Priuli observed that only an elite of nobles and few "citizens" governed the city of Venice, while all the other inhabitants were foreigners and there were only few Venetians. During the period of economic expansion the society was very inclusive, following the statement of Acemoglou and Robinson, and therefore open to foreigners. In this paper I will analyze on the contrary what happened during a period of economic decline. The urban policy was very contradictory; step by step the city became less welcoming to foreigners. If the Venetian guilds were open to non-Venetians, at the end of the 16th century this behaviour changed and some guilds (for example, sausage-makers guild, whose great part of member was coming from Swiss) approved norms that excluded foreigners. When the Venice became an "extractive society", gradually the Venetian capitalistic merchants tried to close also the brotherhood of foreigners (for example the fraternity of German bakers was abolished in 1543). At the end of this process in the 18th century the guilds reformation approved by Paolo Querini imposed

that technologically-unskilled guilds were reserved only to Venetians; in the same time there are examples of technologically-skilled guilds excluding foreigners.

Republic Palaces and Spaces in the Venetian Territory.

Under the sign of the lion

Elena Svalduz (University of Padua)

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The aim of this contribution is to introduce some aspects regarding the main characteristics of the Public Palaces built in the cities dominated by the Venetian Republic, starting from the beginning of 15th Century (when Venice acquired a large territory in the Northeast of the Italian peninsula, called “Stato da Terra” or “Terraferma”).

Through an overview of the most important cases, it will be possible to illustrate some results of a research which was undertaken some years ago, and which is still in progress¹. Recent studies have shown that most of these buildings in Early Modern Europe were not considered “public” but “private”. Selecting many case studies, Nikolaus Pevsner, one of the pioneers of contemporary research on public buildings² (other than religious and residential architecture) influenced the following studies in the way of approaching this topic, through the eyes of a man of 20th Century.

The analysis of the Venetian case can help to re-interpret the matter.

A well-known question is that the public spaces of the Venetian mainland towns are very similar: there is a certain internal logic behind the approaches adopted for the areas of public gathering, made up of elements which continually reappear in the urban structure. First of all the Communal palace (Town Hall), the one of the “Ragione” (Justice palace), of the Rettore, of the Podestà (the civil and justice authority), the Council lodge, the pawnshop, the column and the St. Mark flag or lion. No other Renaissance state used its patron Saint to political purpose so much.

Recent studies have identified various relationships with the strategies of power. But to what extent do these recurrent elements represent formal analogies, once we have set aside the purpose for which they were built? How did the Venetian or the local rulers think this kind of “environmental unity”?

In order to answer this query, the analysis will point out the physical features of public sites, palaces and the specific buildings used for civil governments and administration of justice.

In Venetian territories, the remaking or the adding of some buildings (the multifunctional Town halls in the center of the most important subject cities), such as a column, became instruments of a necessary definition of the Re-public image of Venice. The usual praxis was to begin from the objects, with a totally empirical approach when they had to deal with the entire shape of the surrounding urban spaces (Tafari-Foscari). The decisive factor seems to be a new consciousness of the political significance of urban decorum (Calabi).

¹ As a first step: *Fabbriche, piazze, mercati. La città italiana nel Rinascimento*, edited by D. Calabi, Roma, Officina, 1997; as last, but not least: *Palazzi pubblici: i luoghi di governo e le sedi dell'amministrazione cittadina*, in *Il Rinascimento italiano e l'Europa*, vol. VI, *Luoghi, spazi, architetture*, a cura di D. Calabi, E. Svalduz, Treviso-Costabissara, Angelo Colla editore, 2010. In the same year: *Public buildings in Early Modern Europe*, edited by K. Ottenheim, K. De Jonge and M. Chatenet, Turnhout, Breposal, 2010.

² *A History of Building Types*, London 1976.

However, we have to underline that there also existed in the Italian peninsula a radically different approach to the significance of the renewal process (fast-built monumental complexes). In a comparative perspective, the analysis will also focus on a series of cases outside the borders of the Venetian “Stato da terra”. We will quote many cases where the individual Lords aimed at transforming their place of residence (or place of birth) into an organized space according to the parameters which characterized full-scale cities. In relation to the different kind of power structure, these absolute rulers built their palaces by conceiving them as Royal Palaces (“regge”).

We shall illustrate the richness and diversity of this “type” of buildings: there were great differences between the various Italian and European countries in the division of power within the cities between a sovereign ruler or his representatives and the civic population. In some cities the Town Hall is a representation of the central government; in other situations it is regarded as the palace of an independent republic. “Differences in political system, economic situations, cultural tradition as well as differences in the sense of decorum, all that must be recognized in order to try to understand the rich variety in architecture”³. Although during the 16th Century there was not one “Italy”, but several different ones, and the networks of exchanges across Europe was very complex, some cases can demonstrate the circulation of patterns (the “new” Ducal Palace of Venice and the “Domus Senatoria Antwerpiensis” is one of the most interesting cases).

During this talk, iconography material from historical archives, maps of places and public spaces, projects and modifications of public buildings will be discussed.

What is *Res*, when it is *Publica* or not? Aspects of artistic patronage in different periods of Novgorodian history.

Alexandra Shapovalova

European University at St. Petersburg

When investigating the history of Republicanism in Russia it is difficult to avoid the case of Novgorod the Great, one of the few Medieval Russian republics. Novgorod was called a republic in later sources, but medieval documents (or, considerable lack thereof) give us less evidence and proof, which makes it a challenge for historians to understand what exactly Novgorodian Republic was like. On the other hand, the problem of the lack of written sources can be solved by exploring other material documents – firstly, pieces of art. As Michael Baxandall said, “painting is a deposit of a social relationship” and “paintings are among other things fossils of economic life”⁴. And since *Res Publica* is, from an ancient point of view, “a common thing” or “a public thing”, we can try to see what exactly this “public thing” in Novgorod was like, how it operated and what it meant in the life of the city and of its citizens. Within the workshop framework I would like to present a short outline of the history of art in Novgorod the Great in order to see how this kind of *Res Publica* developed during the medieval period of its history.

³ Ottenheim 2010.

⁴ Baxandall, Michael. *Painting and experience in fifteenth century Italy. A primer in the social history of pictorial style.* Oxford University Press. 1988. P. 1.

The first thing we have to keep in mind is that Novgorod was not always a republic. I suggest that we take three separate periods of novgorodian history that were different in terms of the political state of the city. The first one is connected with the rule of princes in Novgorod as in most of the other Russian medieval cities and it dates from between the beginning of novgorodian history and 1136, when citizens expelled prince Vsevolod Mstislavich and started inviting governors to the city. This period saw a big architectural programme initiated by the princes which led to the construction of the main cathedrals of the city. Architects, painters and craftsmen from the Byzantine Empire were invited, and they introduced the most current tendencies in technology and art. Besides this was the only time when depicting portraits of customers or their patron saints in churches was widespread (see portrait of prince Jaroslav in the fresco of the Transfiguration church on Nereditsa hill, which was built slightly later, but developed the same ideas).

The second period – from XII to XIV centuries – is referred to as the high Republican period, when we can see the flourishing of the novgorodian republican state. First of all, this was a time when the role of archbishop in city life was intense. His residence in the Detinets (or, later, Kremlin) was understood to be a sacred place. For example, archbishop Vassily built the church of the Entry to Jerusalem next to the entrance to his residence in the Detinets, showing the border between the sacred and profane territories. The republican period also saw a rise in personal initiatives among the citizens, and one such novgorodian, the merchant Sotko Sytinich, even became a local folk hero under the name of Sadko (he built a church inside Detinets, which was bigger than St. Sophia, the main cathedral of the city, which was against the rules). Other novgorodian aristocrats invited prominent foreign artists and chose specific subject matters for the art, thus expressing their attitude to current events of the city life. We will also see other examples of personal and collective aristocratic initiatives in the art of this period and analyze their specifics.

Finally, the XV century saw the fall of the city under the rule of Moscow and its loss of sovereignty in 1478. The struggle for independence was connected with the development of the city's identity. This was the time when the new cult of local saints was formed. This period also saw the growth of the importance of some feasts (Pokrov, or the Intercession of the Virgin) and historical events (see icon "Battle of the novgorodians with the suzdalians"). The creation of local cultural tradition was part of the political programme of archbishop Euphymius II. Relations with Moscow were also not univocal. Apart from armed conflicts, they included periods of armistice and even collaboration.

The dynamics of the relationship between *Res* and *Publica* in Novgorod during these periods can lead us to a better understanding of the specific city life of Novgorod and of its urban history. Artistic initiatives of political figures – princes, archbishops, boyars etc. – who were also art patrons can reveal some unknown facts about their status in the city.

"Picta manent": the State image of Venice, between myths and half-truths in Medieval and Renaissance age.

Alessandra Pattanaro (University of Padua)

As an art historian, I would like to contribute to the workshop illustrating the special example of myths and «half truths» (Rosand) which the Republic of Venice (the Serenissima) used to visualize its image for the foreigners visitors, for the city noblemen and for guests in general. My aim is to refer on the special role played by some biblical stories such as the *Annunciation of the Virgin*, to be seen in different places like the

Ducal Palace or the Rialto Bridge as a commemoration of the origin of Venice itself. Other interesting figures captured to represent Venice are Salomon, Noah and Adam and Eve hosted in the Ducal Palace.

About the identification of Venice with the Virgin Mary, it is important to remember that the destroyed fresco by Guariento, *The Coronation of the Virgin and Paradise* (now in bad condition), was substituted after the fire of 1577 with another painting with the same subject (but also significant differences, like the red cape of Christ: that means the doge's authority). The presence of the Tintoretto's *Paradise* in the Sala del Consiglio (1579-81) were intended as the good government is in Paradise. The light of the Holy Spirit enlightens the doge sitting below. The link between State and Religion was very strong.

Another of the most interesting topics of its presentation to the world is the way Venice considers some historical facts and uses them. In 1516 the Consiglio dei X said: "La reputation è un de principali fundamenti de cadaun stato", the reputation is one of the main aspects of a Renaissance State. The self-representation is a typical way for a State to survive.

Infact a special attention should be paid to the comparison between the interior decorations of Palazzo Ducale. Among the many, Andrea Vicentino painted very analytically the *Victory of Lepanto* (but nobody painted the loose of Cipro which happened a little bit later). The "historia picta" doesn't accept the defeats and glorifys the triumphs (Benzoni).