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Urban Conflict, Rent Seeking, and Corruption

Economic and Political Institutions in a Historical Perspective

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Abstract

This paper is an empirical analysis to explore the relationships between urban conflict and both rent seeking and corruption. It examines social disturbances in medieval France through a sample of twelve towns examined over the period 1270-1399 in a real context of informational asymmetries, commitment problems, and issues indivisibilities. As regards the economic corruption class, it is found that townspeople rebel more often and more intensely against the extortion of funds carried out by policy makers than against the embezzlement of a part of these funds. As to the political corruption class, the findings highlight that abuse of power against municipalities is identified in more social unrest than influence peddling against these local institutions. Furthermore, it is shown that rent-seeking-related policies (like arbitrary actions limiting property rights, economic rules-based policies, and targeted political measures) have less influence on urban conflict than corrupt policies do. These findings produce insights that apply beyond the historical context and analysis of the paper. Situations presenting over-indebted towns despite overtaxed people disturb also modern democracies.

Keywords: Corruption, Institutions, Rent seeking, Urban conflict

1. Introduction and Literature Overview

Modern urban conflicts are diverse and complex. Some of them may come from the gradual dismantlement of the Welfare State, the deterioration of living conditions, and the rise of slums in European cities. Others seem more ideological and political and may stem from mistrust towards governments, even from defiance, leading to increasing authority from democratic institutions faced to growing and simultaneous violence in many towns and preoccupied with avoiding civil war.

The subject of civil confrontation has generated a large literature on theoretical models and empirical studies. These contributions have delivered a significant amount of knowledge on causal factors of political conflict. However, they target distinct causes and even for the same cause they are not all consensual on the sign of causality. Firstly, some authors have shown that civil movements may be generated by asymmetric information (Fearon, 1995; Powell, 2002), commitment problems (Fearon, 1995; Walter, 1997; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2001, 2006; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Powell, 2006) or issues indivisibilities (Fearon, 1995). Secondly, another option to address source of conflict was to consider the role of wealth distribution, inequality or fractionalization indexes. However, due to model specification and data problems, economic and political scientists have delivered positive or no conclusive findings (see the review by Lichbach, 1989). In this respect, while some studies have posited inequality appears connected to the outburst of civil turmoil (Sen, 1973; Muller & Seligson, 1987; Brockett, 1992; Biswanger et al., 1993; Alesina & Perotti, 1996; Perotti, 1996; Schock, 1996; Midlarsky, 1988, 1999; Hegre & Sambanis, 2006; among others), other relevant papers did not find a clear link between inequality and conflict (e.g., Keefer & Knack, 2002; Cramer, 2002, 2003; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Collier et al., 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Miguel et al., 2004; Alexander & Harding, 2005; Ostby, 2008; Thaize Challier, 2010). Civil disorder onset has nevertheless been linked to relative economic deprivation within populations (Baten & Mumme, 2013). Thirdly, other contributors, pioneered by Alesina and Rodrick (1994) have focused to another measure of inequality: the polarization index. They have indicated that a polarized population with a two-spike distribution may be more conflict-ridden than a uniformly distributed population (Foster & Wolfson, 1992; Esteban & Ray, 1994, 2008, 2011; Wolfson, 1997; Quah, 1996; Wang & Tsui, 2000; and the survey of Esteban & Schneider, 2008). Ethnic polarization has also been perceived as a predictor of civil disturbances (Montalvo & Reynal-Queyrol, 2005; Esteban et al., 2012). Fourthly, the "greed versus grievance" theory has given opposite arguments on the cause of civil war (for a survey see

Blattman & Miguel, 2010) and then it has been emphasized that the interaction between greed and political grievances underlies conflict (Keen, 2000, 2008). Fifthly, an additional set of motivations for civil unrest has given attention to complex relationships intermingling economic, social and psychological determinants (Cramer, 2003) as well as sociological elements such as social divisions with regard to ethnicity (Fearon & Laitin, 2003), geographic location (Aguirre, 2016), and political representation and participation (Tilly, 1978, 1992; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2000, 2006; Besley & Persson, 2009).

This paper examines urban social conflict by drawing on a historical perspective.[i] It investigates historical learning on the origins of strife in twelve municipalities of medieval France between 1270 and 1399. Evidence based on historical analyses has the advantage of both source criticism as evaluation of an information source quality and historical reasoning in the sense of successful argument to the best explanation. The main motives of social unrest identified by historians in reliable data are in fact mainly related to rent seeking and corruption. More explicitly, historical facts and narratives have enabled us to identify factor of conflict and then to classify them. When assessing social disorders occurring for more than a century in those municipalities, we have found that rent seeking and corruption are appropriate elements to explain the onset of urban violence. Krueger (1974) coined the term rent seeking from Tullock's (1967) idea. Rent seeking is usually known as the unproductive behavior aiming to obtain existing wealth or privileged benefits by means of influence over policy (Congleton & Hillman, 2015). These gains could be possible by governmental decisions and policies given that a government can empower certain groups in society and disadvantage others (McChesney, 1987; Hillman, 2015). For instance, protectionist constraints on trade first create rents, then rent seeking through income transfer or influence peddling, and lastly rent extraction or sharing of rents between those who created the rent (Hillman, 2013; Long & Vousden, 1987). (For general overviews of rent seeking and contestable rents, see Congleton et al., 2008; Hillman, 2013; Long, 2013). Another way to extract rents is corruption. Common definitions state that corruption is "sale by government officials of government property for private gain" (Shleifer & Vishny, 1993) — i.e., use of authority by public agents for unlawful personal benefits (see e.g., Shleifer & Vishny, 1993, 1998; Rose-Ackerman, 1999) — or corresponds to situations where "the power of public office is used for personal gain in a manner that contravenes the rules of the game" (Jain, 2001). (For a discussion, see Aidt, 2016, pp. 144-145). Corruption can pervade all the levels of government or bureaucracy (Abed & Gupta, 2002; Aidt et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2000) in particular given three conditions: discretionary power, economic rents, and weak institutions (Aidt, 2003, p. 633).

In most academic treatments of rent seeking and corruption, the literature has mainly focused on their role on efficiency, growth, institutions, and organizations (see for example the literature surveyed by Aidt, 2003, and Hillman, 2013). However, the relationships between rent seeking or corruption on the one hand and urban conflict on the other hand have been little explored and leave us with unresolved questions. Less is known about these links partly because of the difficulty to collect data. Measuring and analyzing this issue require that we possess a comprehensive representation of rent seeking, corruption and social tension in time and space. This was possible first using a collection of data on medieval urban unrest that we have built from historical facts and narratives. Second, observation of these historical elements allowed us to define rent seeking and corruption through various items. With regard to this, we have characterized: (i) the economic rent seeking class by arbitrary policies and rules-based policies; (ii) the economic corruption class by extortion of funds from policy makers, embezzlement of a part of these collected revenue, and extortion of real estate values; (iii) the political rent-seeking class by arbitrary policies and targeted policies; (iv) and the political corruption class by abuse of power and influence peddling against municipalities from superior rulers.[ii] The objective of the paper is therefore to assess the relationships between urban social movements and the diverse items making up the rent seeking and corruption classes.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a brief presentation of historical evidence that helps for the understanding of the rest of the research. Section 3 gives the methodology and introduces both the analytical framework and the empirics on social urban unrest. Section 4 presents the findings related to the relationships between conflict and the actions implemented by rulers engaged in rent seeking and corruption. Section 5 concludes.

2. Historical Context

Many forms of medieval urban governments emerged throughout Western European areas (Table A in the Appendix A for this movement in France). To investigate urban rebelliousness we focus on a sample of twelve medieval French towns that experienced a redistribution of political property rights initiated by the creation of the first emancipated municipalities. In this regard, as in many parts of the late 11th- to the early 12th-century Europe, some towns succeeded in obtaining a fairly high degree of autonomy towards local feudal lords who had to bestow privileges regarding legal, social, economic, and political aspects (e.g., Le Goff, 1998; Chédeville, 1980, pp. 171-174; Fossier, 1992, pp. 247-249, Reynolds, 1977; Pounds, 1994, pp. 244-248). These towns were known as "sworn communes" (*conjuratio*) because at their creation only householders and other property holders (generally less than half of the town-dwellers) had to swear a collective oath to foster mutual solidarity. Inhabitants had the right to participate in the election of the town administrators (sworn jurors,

jurés) headed by a mayor often appointed by the territorial ruler (king or overlord); later, from the second half of the 12th century, the success of European trade and banking promoted the integration of the upper bourgeois in the ruling class, and the mayor was often co-opted (see e.g., Chédeville, 1980, pp. 175-176). Sworn municipalities emerged with the required consent of the king who was extending his authority by this licensing of communes. Benefits and responsibilities of actors were carefully encapsulated in municipal charters that delimited the privileges ("liberties") granted by overlords, after being accepted by the king; nevertheless, whereas the secular lords renounced wholly or partially to their sovereign rights in exchange for money, it was not the same for non-lay institutions outraged by these charters. The charter specified the objectives of the sworn municipality, mainly: (i) promote mutual aid that its members give each others, guarantee civil relations among townspeople, and regulate relations between its ordinary members and powerful lords; (ii) ensure efficient prevention of breach of the law by unlawful demands of lords and foresee punishment to prevent crimes (Dow, 1903, pp. 654-655); (iii) gain political liberty as the right to govern itself by selecting their own municipal rulers, the local power being collective, delegate, and dismissible; (iv) and further economic exchanges by codifying taxes, lowering tolls (reducing sales taxes as well as taxes on traveling merchants), and facilitating inter-towns trade. Within hanses, and sometimes between guilds, economic transactions could be marked with "social networks", reciprocity, trust, and cooperation. Overall, weak institutions, low social capital (e.g. low-shared norms, rules, information, and values), and non-polarized population (Thaize Challier, 2016) nonetheless characterize the studied period.

A sworn municipality eventually became a "multiple political unit and base of organization … in which political relations were often multi-faceted and shifting" (Lantschner, 2015, p. 22). The political property rights redistribution changed the economic property rights so that finally sworn communes "were doubtless acting less for the town than for the private interests of a greater or less number of their members" (Dow, 1903, p. 656). Bargains and arrangements took place between new local and territorial rulers as well as wealthy merchants to conserve their persons, possessions, and business (Dow, 1903, pp. 655-656). Sworn municipalities, created and protected by the kings, were initially "peace institutions". Before the second third of the 13th century, international trade and fairs, guilds, and hanses developed and thrived thanks to the growth of land routes, waterways, and seaways; meanwhile the artisans specialized in the process of creation of the same product gathered in the towns within a district or street.[iii] In these sworn communes, often called "good towns of the king" (*bonnes villes du roi*) (Chevalier, 1982), the monarchs relied on the bourgeois, took them for trusted advisors, and gave them high offices. They strengthened both their authority and security of the kingdom by supporting existing towns – and by creating new ones especially on the border of their domain. They demanded high fees from the towns that sought their protection. High taxes were also a way of curbing municipal power.

In the course of time, the sworn municipalities sometimes suffered brigands, communal militias, and a merchant aristocracy who took over the municipal offices and was violent towards inhabitants and nobles themselves. Faced with this, the middle- and low-ranks of urban society disrupted and challenged the political order. Sworn local governments also fought against the lay and non-lay landlocked lordships in the city. Furthermore, many municipalities became indebted due to both mismanagement of municipal administrators in some towns and expenses bound to trials against very hostile (lay and) non-lay institutions. In other words, over time, hostility of superior rulers grew up while municipalities were subject to numerous attacks, accusations, and disfavours. From the 1270s and over the course of the fourteenth century it ensued that, in spite of new political property rights, urban population aspiration was frequently stymied by the local ruling group and/or central governing units, sparking off urban civil turmoil. Protesting groups rebelled against rulers' practices such as economic excesses (heavy or undue taxes but not the taxes themselves), misgovernment in the form of arbitrary policies, misuse of a part of taxes, and diverse other forms of corruption. Protesters demanded either the creation of new rights or the recovery of the earlier ones.[iv] The communal movement declined (either under the will of the king often influenced by overlords or when some municipalities themselves asked for the suppression of their written communal charter) at a time of middle and lower groups discontent throughout Western Europe. Before the middle of the 14th century the French sworn municipalities became mainly "bourgeois towns" (*villes de bourgeoisie, villes de franchises*) or "provostal towns" (*villes de prévôté*) (Table A in the Appendix A), i.e., towns governed by royal or seigniorial rulers. However, despite this evolution, some municipalities still knew social grumbling. We will examine urban conflicts in the twelve towns over a period of one hundred and thirty years, the period stretching from 1270 (at that time all sampled towns were sworn municipalities) to 1399.[v] These dates are of course somewhat arbitrary but considering all that has just been specified, there is justification for this choice.

The urban medieval life was teeming with agency problems. For example, as is well known, the long-term contracts (here the collective oath between townspeople in sworn municipalities, or the municipal charter ratified between the king, the potential future representatives of the city council, and sometimes the territorial overlord) provided possibilities of shirking whereas the short-term contracts (like the one- or two-year contract of the local rulers' mandates) enabled opportunies of pretending. Asymmetries of information, commitment problems, and issue indivisibilities contributed to spark conflict (Fearon, 1995, Fearon & Laitin, 2003, Blattman & Miguel, 2010). A first source of inefficiency and urban

troubles was obviously due to informational asymmetries such as those related to uncertainty on rulers themselves (adverse selection) or their policies (moral hazard). In the real context of the paper, adverse selection occurred when, before the charter was written / re-examined or before the municipal rulers were elected, the uninformed party (e.g. homeowners swearing the communal oath) ignored the morality of the municipal rulers they elected as well as their capability to drive a good governance. Moreover, moral hazard arose when, once the charter was signed or when the municipal elections were over, the informed policymakers engaged in untoward activities for the other party, which led to the opportunistic and corrupt activities analyzed in this paper. Second, besides asymmetries of information, commitment problems and incomplete contracting seem also significant. For example, credible commitments to social peace have not always been upheld, the commitment difficulty sometimes coming from the inability to deal without a third-party enforcer. The kings were however not always reliable third-party enforcers: after having favoured the creation and maintenance of municipalities, they sometimes reneged and supported their abolition. Additionally there were also issues indivisibilities. For example, there could be no compromise due to the enduring hostility against the communal movement from non-lay institutions or other territorial entities. In the end, besides the limits to the enforcement of municipal charters, there were also limits to conflict resolution due to weak institutions and few checks and balances on powerful leaders, economic and political property rights being neither well defined nor protected.

3. Methodology

As for the analytical framework, several methods have been experienced in the literature concerning the construction of conflict index. Some scholars identify societal violence with civil war or with a number of deaths above a fixed level (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Others capture the number of disorders in a given period (Svensson, 1998). Another part of the literature defines an aggregate index that projects diverse variables (like dispute, riot, rebellion, revolt, and so on) into one dimension (Hibbs, 1973; Venieris & Gupta, 1986). In the current paper, for each town we define the mass of civil conflict m by the sum of the intensity violence υ of each conflict:

$$m = \sum \upsilon . \tag{1}$$

For each town, the mean intensity violence $\bar{\upsilon}$ is given by: $\bar{\upsilon} = m/\rho$ where ρ is the occurrence of conflict. Put differently, the mass of civil conflict is also given by:

$$m = \bar{\upsilon} \times \rho . \tag{2}$$

To analyze urban civil violence we explore consensual historical studies identified as very good evidence coming from original sources (e.g., municipal accounts and registers, tax rolls, communal charters, town ordinances, royal and seigniorial documents, court cases, inquiries, condemnations, and local chronicles, among others). The sample selection process is as follows. Firstly, we construct a reduced sample of communes that both experienced at least one social uproar over the period and offered sufficient data on: (i) the identity of the protesters and their opponents and (ii) economic and political/administrative rent seeking and corruption. The field of investigation is therefore reduced to the following French 12 towns whose date of creation of their sworn commune is indicated in parentheses: Amiens (1113), Beauvais (c. 1108), Compiègne (1153), Laon (c.1107-c.1111), Noyon (c. 1108), Poitiers (1138), Provins (1230), Senlis (1173), Sens (1246), Soissons (c.1116), St-Quentin (c.1080-c.1102), and Valenciennes (1114). Moreover, these communes offer a wide array of economic specialization, administrative operations, and political situations and are distinct from a geographical perspective, although mostly covering the north and northeast of France. Over the period 1270-1399, we control for each town time persistent traits as well as change. Secondly, as to the collect of data, we identify each urban conflict by 28 observations regarding its intensity, nature, and identity of the protagonists. Then, we pinpoint each conflict by 108 observations regarding its origins (the economic ones are captured by 66 observations and the political/administrative ones by 42 observations). This leaves us with 136 observations for each social unrest. Given that we observe 51 conflicts for the 12 cities, the final sample consists of 6,936 observations.

Then, with regard to the concrete evaluation of the mass of societal conflict m for each town, we classify the conflict intensity and determine its corresponding *quantitative* scale by means of notional values (see Table B1 in the Appendix B for the definition of the five quintiles assessing the *very low*, *low*, *medium*, *high*, and *very high* conflict). Afterwards we collect the evidence by means of the textual data method (see Lebart and Salem, 1994; Guérin-Pace, 1997) that is made possible through an excellent documentary reference offered by a large number of authors as said above. Afterwards, due both to the theoretical framework and the empirical research, we collect the pieces of evidence on the occurrence and intensity of the civil disturbances. We lastly compute the average mass of conflict m for each town. (See Equations (1) and (2) and Tables B2 and B3 in the Appendix B).

Table B1 clearly shows that we voluntarily exclude some violence like external conflict between towns and outside actors, struggles between duchies or counties, civil wars, the Hundred Years War and other fights against the foreign occupier, as well as environmental causes (bad harvests, high foodstuffs prices and the subsequent famines). The paper hence focuses on a myriad of social movements ranging from tumults over specific issues to full-scale urban revolts intending to the

reorganization of the local political life. Tables B2 and B3 present the descriptive statistics of the 51 conflicts that took place in the sample of the twelve towns throughout the period under study. Some revolts were isolated facts whereas others were linked to earlier ones via events distributed across time and space. Others were collective actions (Tilly, 1978) like riots — defined by irrational angry crowd, ordinary people protesting in an uncontrolled way — or rebellions — organized resistance to any authority and based on carefully structured solidarity through topographical unities (e.g., quarters or streets), vocational relations (in craft guilds), or voluntary associations (e.g., brotherhoods) (see e.g., Vincent, 1994; Dumolyn & Haemers, 2005). The baseline findings presented in Tables B2 and B3 show that one town (Provins) underwent 13 conflicts with a quasi-high average intensity. At the other end, two towns (respectively Noyon and Poitiers) knew only one conflict whose intensity mean is respectively very high and very low; the town of Senlis experienced two social disturbances (high mean of intensity). Between these extremes, two towns (Amiens and Laon) endured six societal movements with a high mean of intensity. Two other towns (St-Quentin and Valenciennes) suffered five conflicts with the same quasi-high mean of intensity. Finally, three towns (Compiègne, Sens, and Soissons) experienced three social protests with a quasi-moderate average intensity while one town (Beauvais) underwent three revolts with a high mean of intensity. To simplify reading and bring out essential facts, an additional presentation given in Table B4 also displays two large categories of conflict intensity: the one of 'weak' intensities (corresponding to the sum of *very low*, *low*, and *medium* intensities) and the one of 'strong' intensities (collecting *high* and *very high* intensities).

Depending on usual definitions of rent seeking and corruption, it is possible to have rent seeking without corruption and vice versa; however it is right that these two phenomena are not entirely different (Aidt, 2016, p. 145). To untangle as clearly as possible originally intertwined real historical situations, we classify unlawful or illegal actions or policies in the corruption class and sort the lawful or legal ones in the rent seeking class. Our empirical evidence on urban protest gives thus rise to the following typology according to the nature of property rights concerned (see Table 1 for a synoptic view). First, we identify economic rent seeking by arbitrary policies — i.e. the arbitrary labour policies on wages and working hours as well as the arbitrary policies limiting other economic property rights — and by rules-based policies — mainly the monopolization of economic market and the encroachment on economic rights. Second, we define political / administrative rent seeking both by arbitrary policies limiting political / administrative rights and by targeted policies via the encroachment on municipal charges. Third, we examine economic corruption through three types of notions concerning crimes and offenses against economic property rights as: the extortion of funds by policy makers, the embezzlement of public funds, and the extortion of real estate values. Fourth, we assess political / administrative corruption by examining crimes and offenses against public institutions committed by political leaders. We measure corrupt behaviors by the abuse of power and the influence peddling against sworn municipalities.

Table 1. Taxonomy of rent seeking and corruption (10 items)

Economic property rights
Economic rent seeking class
1. Rules-based policies: monopolization of economic markets, infringement of banal rights, and other misdoings.
2. Arbitrary labour policies: labour rent extraction on wages and /or on working hours.
3. Arbitrary policies limiting other economic rights.
Creation of *new* taxes (poll taxes, taxes on consumption).
Unpredictable changes related to diverse economic rights.
Economic corruption class
4. Extortion of funds by policy makers.
Within the jurisdiction: levy of not justified taxes or taxes exceeding the amount due.
Outside the jurisdiction: usurpation of economic rights by levying of taxes.
Currency manipulation by the king.
5. Extortion of real estate values.
6. Embezzlement of public funds by policy makers.
Political/administrative property rights
Political or administrative rent seeking class
7. Arbitrary policies limiting political or administrative rights:

Unpredictable municipal policies.

Arbitrary reorganization of municipalities.

8. Targeted policies via encroachment on municipal charges:

Trespassing of superior authorities to limit or remove municipal rights.

Encroachment in the municipal affairs of powerful guilds to their own gain.

Political or administrative corruption class

9. Abuse of power against municipalities:

Abusive supervision and policies.

Despotism such as intimidating acts and relentless hostility.

10. Influence peddling against municipalities:

Bribes paid to the king by certain municipalities to continue to exist.

Bribes paid to the king by non-lay institutions in exchange for the overthrow of municipalities.

Bribes paid to legal institutions by non-lay institutions in return for the overthrow of municipalities.

Table 2. Number of conflicts according to their origins, N_o [(a)]

Origins of conflicts	N_o and (N_o / 51)	
ECONOMIC PROPERTY RIGHTS		
Economic rent seeking class		
Rules-based policies	12	(23.5)
Arbitrary labour policies	6	(11.7)
Arbitrary policies limiting economic rights	6	(11.7)
Subtotal :	**24**	**(47)**
Economic corruption class		
Extortion of funds by policy makers	26	(50.9)
Extortion of real estate values	5	(9.8)
Embezzlement of public funds by policy makers	8	(15.7)
Subtotal :	**39**	**(76.4)**
POLITICAL PROPERTY RIGHTS		
Political or administrative rent seeking class		
Arbitrary policies limiting political or administrative rights	12	(23.5)
Targeted policies *via* encroachment on municipal charges	15	(29.4)
Subtotal :	**27**	**(52.9)**
Political or administrative corruption class		
Abuse of power against municipalities	20	(39.2)
Influence peddling against municipalities	11	(21.6)
Subtotal :	**31**	**(60.8)**

Note: (a) N_o, the total number of conflicts according to their origins, is greater than the total number of conflicts (51) because some conflicts are due to several motives.

Table 3. Number of conflicts according to their intensities and origins

Origins of conflicts	Number of conflicts according to their intensities and origins [(a)]					
	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Total: N_o
Economic rent seeking class						
Rules-based policies	-	1 (8.3)	5 (41.7)	3 (25)	3 (25)	12
Arbitrary labour policies	-	-	3 (50)	1 (16.7)	2 (33.3)	6
Arbitrary policies limiting economic rights	-	-	2 (33.3)	2 (33.3)	2 (33.3)	6
Subtotal : n and (n / N_o)	-	**1** (4.1)	**10** (41.7)	**6** (25)	**7** (29.2)	**24**
Economic corruption class						
Extortion of funds by policy makers	-	-	6 (23.0)	10 (38.5)	10 (38.5)	26
Extortion of real estate values	-	-	1 (20)	-	4 (80)	5
Embezzlement of public funds by policy makers	-	-	3 (37.5)	2 (25)	3 (37.5)	8
Subtotal : n and (n / N_o)	-	-	**10** (25.6)	**12** (30.8)	**17** (43.6)	**39**
Political or administrative rent seeking class						
Arbitrary policies limiting political or administrative rights	-	-	7 (58.3)	3 (25)	2 (16.7)	12
Targeted policies *via* encroachment on municipal charges	-	1 (6.7)	7 (46.7)	5 (33.3)	2 (13.3)	15
Subtotal : n and (n / N_o)	-	**1** (3.7)	**14** (51.9)	**8** (29.6)	**4** (14.8)	**27**
Political or administrative corruption class						
Abuse of power against municipalities	-	-	10 (50)	6 (30)	4 (20)	20
Influence peddling against municipalities	-	1 (9.1)	3 (27.3)	3 (27.3)	4 (36.3)	11
Subtotal : n and (n / N_o)	-	**1** (3.2)	**13** (41.9)	**9** (29)	**8** (25.8)	**31**

Note: (a) The total number of conflicts according to their origins is greater than the total number of conflicts (51) because some conflicts are due to several motives.

Table 4. Number of times a social group is involved in the origins of conflicts (for each class and its items) [(a)]

Origins of conflicts	Municipal rulers	Rich merchants / corporation masters	Kings, relatives, royal agents (state-centred officials)	Non-lay institutions / organizations	Lay overlords	**Total** N_{SG}
Economic rent seeking class						
Rules-based policies						
Arbitrary labour policies	8 (40) [(b)]	8 (40)	-	4 (20)	-	20
Arbitrary policies limiting economic	6 (50)	6 (50)	-	-	-	12
rights	1 (14.3)	1 (14.3)	2 (28.6)	3 (42.8)	-	7
Subtotal n and (n/N_{SG})	**15 (38.5)**	**15 (38.5)**	**2 (5.1)**	**7 (17.9)**	**-**	**39**
Economic corruption class						
Extortion of funds by policy makers	5 (17.9)	-	18 (64.3)	4 (14.3)	1 (3.5)	28
Extortion of real estate values	-	-	-	5 (100)	-	5
Embezzlement of public funds by	7 (87.5)	-	1 (12.5)	-	-	8
policy makers	**12 (29.3)**	-	**19 (46.3)**	**9 (22)**	**1 (2.4)**	**41**
Subtotal n and (n/N_{SG})						
Political or administrative rent seeking class						
Arbitrary policies limiting political or administrative rights	-	-	7 (46.7)	5 (33.3)	3 (20.0)	15
Targeted policies via encroachment on municipal charges	1 (6.2)	3 (18.7)	6 (37.5)	3 (18.7)	3 (18.7)	16
Subtotal n and (n/N_{SG})	**1 (3.2)**	**3 (9.7)**	**13 (41.9)**	**8 (25.8)**	**6 (19.4)**	**31**
Political or administrative corruption class						
Abuse of power against municipalities	-	-	8 (33.3)	13 (54.2)	3 (12.5)	24
Influence peddling against	5 (23.8)	-	10 (47.6)	6 (28.6)	-	21
municipalities						
Subtotal n and (n/N_{SG})	**5 (11.1)**	**-**	**18 (40)**	**19 (42.2)**	**3 (6.7)**	**45**

Notes: (a) For each town, the number of social groups N_{SG} at the origin of conflicts can be higher than the number of conflicts because a same conflict can involve several social groups. (b) Parenthesis: For a number of conflicts observed in a given item and a given social group, the number in brackets is the share of that number in the total number of conflicts in the item.

4. In-Depth Study of Conflict and Pertaining Findings

Table 2 reports the findings of our investigation on the number of social protests according to their origins, N_o. (Remember that some protests being due to several factors, the total number of conflicts counted by factor is greater than the total number of conflicts, i.e., 51). With this in mind, Table 2 shows that the class corresponding to the economic corruption is the most important source of discontent as it affects 39 conflicts on the total of 51 (that is to say, 76.4%). Come next the political / administrative corruption class (60.8%), then the class of political / administrative rent seeking (52.9%), and lastly the economic rent seeking class (47%). In what follows, we dwell on each class according to the intensities of urban conflict and their specific sources.

4.1 The Economic Rent-Seeking Class

In our context, economic rent seeking encompasses rules-based policies (mainly monopolization of economic markets), arbitrary policies including labour policies (i.e., labour rent extraction despite earlier codified rules) as well as other arbitrary policies on markets or institutions. We now examine the respective effects of arbitrary and rules-based policies on the occurrence and intensity of urban conflict (Table 2). The item 'rules-based policies' is the most significant constituent of this class (23.5% among the 51 conflicts of the sample), surpassing the motives bound to 'arbitrary labour policies' (11.7%) and to 'arbitrary policies limiting other economic rights' (11.7%) (Table 2). By adding the last two items, it nevertheless results that both arbitrary and rules-based policies engender the same number of conflict. Furthermore, 54.2% of the societal unrest intensities linked to this economic rent-seeking class appears 'strong' (i.e., 25% high and 29.2% very high) while 45.8% are proving to be 'weak' (i.e., 4.1% low and 41.7% medium) (Tables 3 and B4). Finally, social groups involved in this economic rent seeking class are the ones of the municipal rulers and wealthy merchants (both together: 76.8%), non-lay institutions (17.9%), and royal administration (5.1%) (Table 4).[vi] The respective effects of arbitrary and rules-based policies on the occurrence and intensity of urban protests are as follows.

Rules-based policies. The item 'rules-based policies' refers to two elements. (i) It firstly concerns the monopolization of economic markets, i.e. the exclusive rights and domination of markets. In northern Europe, hanses and guilds were sworn communities of traders and merchants established in networks in several places where international fairs took place, or near these fairs. For instance, regarding the textile industry, five towns of our sample (Amiens, Beauvais, Provins, St-Quentin, and Valenciennes) were members of the *Hanse of the Seventeen Towns* that was a guild of cloth merchants gathering a number of Flemish and French textile-producing towns from the 1230s to the 14th century.[vii] The aim of this professional organization was not only to foster the sale of the textile production but also to protect the economic interests and privileges of the merchants and corporation masters living in the affiliated towns. In the other towns under review, artisans were also organized in (major and minor) guilds establishing a monopoly for their members within the urban area.[viii] Whether the professions were regulated or sworn,[ix] each guild held the trade monopoly in its craft within the town where it was located. The professions were not considered of equal weight but ranked according to their social and economic importance, themselves defined by the urban institutional rules and/or the tax system (Fossier, 1994, p. 327; Roux 2004, p. 75). In most cases, greater guilds (mainly those of judges, notaries, moneychangers, moneylenders, or artisans working in the wool, fur, or silk areas) constituted the major part of the municipal electoral colleges. Craft guilds thus influenced the urban governments regarding mainly craft regulation — tax rules, prices and quality of products, training prerequisites, other standards, working hours, and so on. Guilds gradually wielded important economic power in the urban domain (Ogilvie, 2008; 2011). For example, most of the mayors were drawn from the narrow circle of well off merchants and corporation masters, i.e. in oligarchic families sharing lucrative and honorary functions. (In other contexts, see Ekelund & Tollison, 1981; Wintrobe, 1998; Congleton & Lee, 2009, p. 113). Guilds redistributed resources to politically influential traders, their main goal being to develop their rent seeking activities (for economic studies, see e.g., Hillman & Katz, 1987; Shleifer & Vishny, 1993). This eventually entailed disgruntlement and urban upheavals. (ii) Secondly, rules-based policies also concern royal and non-lay institutions engaged either in trespassing on municipal jurisdiction for the sole purpose to recover taxpayers or sometimes in infringing banal rights despite the granting of municipal charters, which generated grievances from the bulk of the population and eventually social tension.

The findings show that conflict intensities are low (8.3%), medium (41.7%), high (25%), and very high (25%), which gives a perfect balance between 'strong' and 'weak' intensities (Table 3). These 'strong' disturbances indicate how the guilds were monopolistic and exclusive institutions using many means to dominate the market and keep the competing artisans away, which would confirm the point of view of Ogilvie's (2011). Three social groups are involved in rules-based policies: municipal rulers (40%), rich merchants/corporation masters (40%), and non-lay institutions (20%) (Table 4). In the end, the findings suggest that urban confrontations appear fuelled by deadweight losses imposed because of various encroachments carried out by local oligarchs as well as through protectionist policies and their subsequent monopoly pricing and distortions of markets.

Arbitrary labour policies. These arbitrary labour policies concerned two types of workers. (i) Regarding the increasing

category of semi-skilled and skilled labourers (apprentices, journeymen) working in the guilds, rent seeking refers to labour rent extraction on wages and/or working hours in spite of earlier fixed rules. Actually, although guilds promoted vocational identity via social codes and legal statuses, they were unable to promote general social capital and welfare (Ogilvie, 2011). For example, in some towns, the ruling merchant oligarchy played off workers paid by the day and those paid by the piece, and set greater guilds against lesser artisanal ones to extract more labour rents. In other cases (mainly Amiens, Beauvais and Provins), employees rebelled against the length of the working day or its lengthening. (ii) Rent seeking also concerns self-employed unskilled or semi-skilled workers (mainly small artisans, temporary workers, migrant workers) without regular earnings, paid either on a daily basis, or for a specific task, or for short-term contracts, who also revolted against inappropriate wages. (Among the abundant historical literature, see e.g., Halphen, 1964; Le Goff, 1964, 1991; Mollat & Wolff, 1973; Hilton, 1995; Richardson, 2004; Ogilvie, 2011; Boissonnade, 2013; Cohn, 2012; Firnhaber-Baker & Schoenaers, 2016).

The findings clearly highlight that conflict intensities concerned by arbitrary labour policies are medium (50%), high (16.7%), and very high (33.3%) (Table 3), which represents a strict balance between 'strong' and 'weak' intensities. Moreover, these revolts broke out obviously against rich merchants / corporation masters but also against municipal rulers belonging to the oligarchic families in the guild-based urban government (Table 4); it was the case of the towns of Amiens (1335 and 1351), Beauvais (1390), and Provins (1280, 1324, and 1348).[x]

Arbitrary policies limiting economic rights. These other arbitrary policies refer to decisions or actions aiming at a mercantile accumulation without regard to economic rules or facts. They were supported by unforeseeable or random decisions without consideration for the collective well-being. In our context, they gather: (i) levying of taxes whose amount is constantly changed; (ii) seeking new sources of taxation on individuals (poll taxes), products (e.g., taxes on grain, wool and other raw materials, and manufactured goods,) and consumption, rulers thereby funding territory's defense or strengthening their position or wealth; and (iii) unpredictable changes implemented by lay or non-lay overlords regarding banal rights and other coveted economic rights (e.g. Burg, 2004; Skoda, 2013).

The findings point out that conflict intensities are identically distributed (33.3%) in three levels (medium, high, and very high intensities) (Table 3), which gives a summarized 'strong' level (66.6%) indicating a significant opposition to this type of rent seeking. The change from non-contestable to contestable rents (Aidt and Hillman, 2008) due to the excess burden in taxation (Kahana & Klunover, 2014) thus ignited huge protests. Moreover, rent-seeking groups involved in these arbitrary policies are mainly the ones of non-lay institutions (42.8%), then royal administration (28.6%), the ones of rich merchants/corporation masters (14.3%), and municipal councilors (14.3%) (Table 4). Rent seeking appears here based on arbitrariness coming from this alliance of entities (corporations, city council and superior political decision makers) in quest of a common private gain by often modifying tax laws and common rights.

To summarize this subsection 4.1, both arbitrary and rules-based policies entail the same number of urban protests (Table 2) and barely more than half of them (54.2%) are of 'strong' intensity (Table B4).

4.2 The Economic Corruption Class

Economic corruption here gathers extortion of funds by policy leaders, extortion of real estate values, and embezzlement of public funds (Table 1). Urban dwellers reacted strongly to economic corruption since very-high intensity protests are the most represented (43.6%), followed by high-intensity ones (30.8%), so that 74.4% of the agitation in which this class is involved are outbreaks (Tables 3 and B4). They faced adverse selection and moral hazard given that they were poorly informed on local rulers' types and behaviours. Extortion of funds by local and territorial political leaders is the most important factor of economic corruption (50.9 % of the total number of conflicts), outdistancing the embezzlement of a part of these public funds (15.7 %) and the extortion of real estate values by non-lay institutions (9.8%) (Table 2). The findings on these first two elements mean that citizens revolt more against the extortion of funds (unjustified taxes and diverse economic usurpations) than against the misuse that was made of a portion of these public receipts. Put differently, upstream extortion of tax revenue obviously sparks more large-scale popular revolts than the downstream embezzlement. The details by item are as follows.

Extortion of funds by policy makers. The extortion of funds by royal leaders (kings, bailiffs, provosts, and other tax collectors) and local agents working for municipalities or non-lay institutions captures a form of bureaucratic corruption gathering at least two main misconducts: undue taxation and usurpation of economic rights.[xi] (i) Extortion of funds took place when local and royal governments levied not justified taxes or taxes exceeding the amount due (Mollat, 1986, 2006; Hilton, 1989; Cohn, 2012), or when local rulers distorted the tax base for their own benefits (Duby, 1968, p. 144). (ii) Some decision makers usurped economic rights given their political influence, by acting beyond their powers (*ultra vires*) or by levying funds outside their authority or jurisdiction, through ruse, fraud, or violence.

Extortion of a part of personal earnings was chiefly the work of out-of-control royal agents (64.3% of the cases), but also sometimes of municipal rulers (17.9%) and non-lay institutions (14.3%) (Table 4). These findings first imply that, in some

towns, short-lived municipal leaders responsible for tax collection may be fairly honest either because they internalized moral costs or feared being pinpointed by planned or random institutional controls and subject to legal punishments (for a theoretical analysis see Rose-Ackerman, 1975). Second, in contrast, excessive taxes suggest the non-benevolence of kings and the predatory of some affiliate officials (on predatory state, see Besley & Persson, 2011), all this being accentuated by some corrupt representatives of non-lay institutions. Due to the growing size of the government, it seems that the heavy-spending royal administration was unable to curtail its power to tax. (For a theoretical review on this topic, see Besley, 2006). That led to inefficient policies and corrupt opportunities (Shleifer & Vishny, 1998). Not only the preferences of local citizens were not aligned with the ones of their local representatives but also the latter were unable to discipline their members due largely to the electoral system and informational asymmetries. Overall, extortion of money inflamed the crowds ending with both very high- and high-intensity urban popular rebellions (38.5% of the total conflicts for each of them, therefore 77% of 'strong' intensities) whereas medium-intensity ones were less present (23% of all conflicts under study) (Table 3).

*Embezzlement of public funds***.** Misuse of tax receipts is another form of bureaucratic corruption characterized by the fraudulent misappropriation of public assets by policy leaders because of lack of civic virtue and excessive class-based interests. Embezzlement against people and public institutions left few resources to fund common services[xii], which may explain the subsequent increasing levy of arbitrary and huge taxes. Given that collective property rights were ill defined and /or unprotected, sanctions against the embezzlers could not be decided by the administrative side itself but rather by popular revolts.

The findings show that 37.5% of the social tensions involved in these breaches against the duty of probity are of medium intensity whereas other 37.5% are of very high intensity and 25% of high intensity (i.e., 62.5% for the two latter intensities) (Table 3). Faced with unsanctioned misappropriation of public money, the injured party began to have doubts about the legitimacy of the system and then revolted with enough force. Regarding the social groups involved in the embezzlement of public revenue, it appears that 87.5% of this peculation was due to power- and revenue-maximizing municipal rulers. Local peculators were hence careful not to change the rules. However, these misconducts justified tax audits by royal investigators. Yet, despite audit reports, embezzlement ended up starting again. Selfishness and misuse of municipal receipts consequently maintained vulnerable property rights (Table 4). This suggests a self-reinforced corruption pointing out the role of history as a determinant of corruption (Acemoglu et al., 2001, 2002; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Aidt, 2003 pp. 647-648; La Porta et al., 2008; Di Liberto & Sideri, 2015).

In sum, both items 'extortion of funds' and 'embezzlement of public funds' highlight prominent relationships between economic corruption and urban conflict. Indeed, the factors listed in the economic corruption class are observed in three-quarters of the total number of conflicts. However, these elements do not have the same weight: the extortion of funds by political leaders is observed in fifty percent (50.9%) of the overall number of conflicts in the sample whereas the embezzlement of tax revenue is only identified in fifteen percent (15.7%) of these urban movements (Table 2). In addition, *mutatis mutandis*, the extortion of funds carried out by policy makers through excessive taxes and unfair changes in taxation generates more social unrest (76.9%) than the embezzlement of a portion of these funds does (62.5%).

Extortion of real estate values. At this time of urban emancipation, the possession of land was a real basis of power. Historical evidence has disclosed that non-lay institutions sometimes practiced the extortion of real estate values to the detriment of municipalities (Saint-Denis, 1994, 2000). For example, in bishoprics, several agents (e.g., vidames and vicars) performed functions such as protecting the temporal holdings of the bishopric and, accordingly they enlarged the ecclesiastical enclosed plots. To do this, they misappropriated inheritances and aroused donations, bartering or purchases using figureheads or other subterfuges. Because of these slow encroachments, municipal jurisdictions lost a significant part of the private urban land.[xiii] The aim was to extend the bishop's jurisdiction to gain more power and in some cases to recover more taxpayers. Later, the prelates themselves purchased the rights of jurisdiction that still belonged to their delegates (Saint-Denis, 1994, 2000).[xiv] Shady land appropriation was at the origin of violent revolts and their flare-up. Actually, 80% of the disturbances related to this form of unremitting appropriation of land were of very high intensity and 20% of medium intensity (Table 3).

4.3 The Political/Administrative Rent-Seeking Class

The political / administrative rent-seeking class incorporates both arbitrary and targeted policies (Table 1). In this class, social unrest characterized by 'weak' intensity (55.6%) predominates slightly over the 'strong' intensity one (44.4%) (Table B4). More specifically, the item called targeted policies via encroachment on municipal charges by higher authorities represents 29.4% of the 51 social movements, followed closely (23.5%) by the one of the arbitrary policies limiting political / administrative rights from local and higher rulers (Table 2).

*Arbitrary policies limiting political / administrative rights***.** These arbitrary policies group together: (i) unpredictable policies triggered by the multiplication of sudden by-laws or local ordinances. In fact, a myriad of executive bodies of

performing municipal officials acted for different objectives such as collecting taxes, holding guild assemblies and court meetings, auditing counts, advising town councilors, and so on. However, there were also policies subjectively decided from non-performing local rulers; these empowered protagonists did not refrain from opportunism to get extra payments. The fact that some entrenched oligarchic families did not justify their privileges by major talents nor even by a scrupulous administration eventually prompted the inhabitants to demand the dissolution of their communes (Landes, 1995, p. 245; Le Goff, 1998); and (ii) arbitrary reorganization of the municipalities after the exclusion of some town councillors or brotherhoods' heads (the chiefs of the "little bourgeoisie") — when they presented their grievances to the Parliament of Paris and finally endured setbacks (Petit-Dutaillis, 2012).

The findings reveal that 58.3% of disturbances connected to arbitrary policies curbing political / administrative rights are of medium intensity, 25% of high intensity, and 16.7% of very high intensity (Table 3). Social groups involved are the one of the state-centred leaders (46.7%), non-lay institutions (33.3%), and lay overlords (20%) (Table 4). In sum, these institutions used resources to unjustifiably modify pre-existing activities and organizations rather than to engage in more productive and efficient ones. (For this form of rent-seeking mechanism, see Congleton et al., 2008).

Targeted policies via encroachment on municipal charges by superior authorities. These targeted policies encompass two elements: (i) the interference with the town councils' affairs by higher decision makers. On the one hand, the meddling of royal agents in the local administrations seems to have been intended to limit communal rights. However, in the discharge of royal elites, the encroachments come from the inability of municipal councilors to lead good urban governance, the latter being sometimes chosen because of defective electoral systems (Petit-Dutaillis, 2012, p. 281). In contrast, the trespassing of non-lay institutions aimed to eliminate communal rights (see e.g., Leroux, 1839); and (ii) the growing intrusion in the municipal affairs of powerful guild masters to the detriment of artisanal ones. The objective of this form of lobbying was to constantly preserve the reputation of both town and guild itself subordinated to fairs and export of products.

State-centred rulers (37.5%), non-lay institutions (18.7%), and lay overlords (18.7%) carry out these targeted policies (Table 4). The conflict intensities are medium (46.7%), then high (33.3%), very high (13.3%), and low (6.7%), which gives a quasi balance between 'weak' (53.3%) and 'strong' (46.7%) intensities (Tables 3 and B4). Due to this equilibrium, and despite the mistrust of the governed with regard to the institutions, the former wanted to gradually gain stronger and equity-oriented institutions without threatening revolts. On the other hand, the importance of 'strong' protests underlines the distress of the townspeople who, either by carefully structured solidarity or by irrational angry movement, attempted to jeopardize the institutions.

Finally, to conclude this subsection 4.3, the influence of arbitrary and targeted policies on the occurrence and intensity of conflict does not reveal decisive elements since both policies present almost the same number of social protests (Table 2), a little less than fifty percent being of 'strong' intensity (Table B4).

4.4 The Political or Administrative Corruption Class

As for the political or administrative corruption class, it is shown that the medium-intensity protests represent 41.9% of those involved in this class, the high (29%) and very high (25.8%) intensities amounting together to 54.8% (Table 3). In addition, non-lay institutions are the most implicated (42.2%) in this class, followed by the royal government (40%) (Table 4). Moreover, and interestingly, the findings show that the abuse of power against municipalities represents 39.2% of the total sample of societal strife while the influence peddling against these municipalities accounts for 21.6% (Table 2). Protesters thus reacted more often against the abuse of power from which they were directly victims than to the influence peddling. We now examine the relationships between the components of this class and urban social unrest.

Abuse of power against municipalities from higher leaders. This form of abuse of power occurred wherever political property rights were poorly defined or weak enforced, that is to say when laws or rules collapsed under the will of one individual or a group. It took place wherever absolute non-contestable hereditary and/or non-lay authorities prevailed. Economic literature has examined the influence of protests on policy changes (for a review, see Amenta et al., 2010) and their consequences on public opinion (Branton et al., 2015). However, little attention has been paid to the influence of superior authorities' policies on local municipalities. Abuse of power against municipalities here includes: (i) abusive supervision and policies who overwhelmed the municipalities with political / administrative claims, recriminations, or sabotage. This often impeded the enforcement of municipal rules and frequently led to their over-indebtedness; and (ii) despotism from authoritarian and non-benevolent central government consisting of intimidating acts and relentless hostility. These political or administrative abuses prevented "good" municipalities from achieving their goals and in particular wrecked their local plans to foster more liberties and fairness. This bred unfairness and sometimes sparked social contentions (Turning, 2009, p. 361).[xv]

It turns out that the main perpetrators of disturbances involving this form of domination were primarily superior leaders as non-lay representatives (54.2%) and, in a lesser extent, king or guardians of the royal interests (33.3%), and lay overlords

(12.5%) (Table 4). The findings also indicate that urban disorders resulting from the abuse of power against sworn municipalities have medium (50%), high (30%), and very high (20%) intensities (Table 3), which completely balances the distribution between 'weak' and 'strong' intensities.

Influence peddling against municipalities. Faced with the abovementioned abuse of power, the municipalities thought they could obtain redress by filing complaints. In this process, townspeople often supported local rulers, their joint actions being shaped by legitimacy. The principles of complaint and redress were however frequently flouted by political patronage. Effectively the trials took place in the Parliament of Paris whose members (judges, prosecutors, and lawyers) depended on royal or non-lay power. Historical literature has thereby shown that most of trials were already lost given lobbying and collusion between non-lay institutions and royal magistrates (see e.g., Thierry, 1839 p. 214; Saint-Denis, 2000). Influence peddling, as the practice used by a person or group to influence the policy outcome, was mainly based on bribery (persuasion by favours) [xvi] and judicial misconduct like falsification of facts and/or summary judgment.

Influence peddling here encompasses the following costly activities. (i) The state-centred leaders (including the king) extorted money from municipal rulers for the final purchase of all municipal rights or for his renunciation to impose certain charges to municipalities, therefore to taxpayers; (ii) the king or royal representatives received money promised by powerful organized groups as non-lay organizations in exchange for the suppression of the communes or for maintaining their abolition; (iii) non-lay institutions had also titles established by the king to support their position and win the lawsuits. Furthermore, the clergy may extract money from corrupt members of the Parliament in return for sentences against municipalities; (iv) Guilds also lobbied and bribed rulers to impose their position and eliminate the other guilds or associations who attempted to infringe on their privileges (Ogilvie, 2011); and lastly (v), the district court held by the royal bailiff regularly broke the judgments delivered by the municipalities in return for huge fees. Because of bribery and judgments decided beforehand, municipalities were sentenced to pay fees and heavy fines, which increasingly put them into debt and revolted the taxpayers who had to bear these expenses. These communal institutions were consequently riddled with debts and weakened, defamation tarnishing the reputation of municipal administrators. According to historians (see e.g., Saint-Denis, 2000), unfair judging and unfounded condemnations were the result of combined plans to bring about the decline of these over-indebted municipalities.[xvii]

It is found that 47.6% of the social tensions motivated by the illegitimate rent distributions through influence peddling against municipalities were due to state-centred officials organized around central jurisdictions, 28.6% to non-lay institutions, and 23.8% to municipal rulers who betrayed their initial mission and agreed to get along with corrupt superiors in exchange for money (Table 4). In this regard, according to towns and time, the lack of intrinsic qualities (civic virtue) of some municipal councilors may come from a "manipulation effect" when unreliable superior authorities appointed unskilled (i.e., lacking administrative skills) and subservient persons with the aim of extracting high rents in exchange for services (for a theoretical analysis of this effect see Cerina and Deidda, 2017). Moreover, urban tension engendered by traffic of influence have very high (36.3%), high (27.3%), medium (27.3%) and lastly low (9.1%) intensities; the 'weak' intensity thus amounts to 36.4% whereas the 'strong' one rises to 63.6% (Tables 3 and B4). Influence peddling against town councils wiped out them, evidenced by the disappearance of these sworn municipalities before the end of the period under review.

To summarize the subsection 4.4, the relationships between the political / administrative corruption and the urban disturbances point out meaningful aspects. Abuse of power against municipalities is observed in more conflict than influence peddling against these local institutions (respectively 39.2% against 21.6%) (Table 2). However, *mutatis mutandis*, the proportion of 'strong' intensity discontent is more frequently identified in the traffic of influence case (63.6%) than in the one of abuse of power (50%) (Table B4). Influence activity seems to have more harmful direct economic repercussions on municipal rulers and dwellers －the obligation to pay overwhelming fees and fines － than abuse of power does.

5. Conclusion

When evaluating the patterns of urban conflict that occurred over more than a century in twelve municipalities of medieval France, we found that rent seeking and corruption are suitable concepts for explaining this violence. Indeed rent seeking and corruption gather several components that seem to be major motives of social turmoil as historical facts and narratives present them. Then we analyze the influence of each of these factors on the occurrence and intensity of social urban unrest.

In conducting this research, we have learned lessons about the outbreak of societal tumults, and the findings go beyond the specific context in which they are revealed. The paper highlights that social conflict seem to be connected to rent seeking and corruption from empowered local or superior leaders, which aroused grievances from the urban society. As might be expected, rulers' corruption triggers more conflict than rent seeking does; however, the gap between the two is not very large. More specifically, first, regarding the *economic rent seeking class*, conflicts of strong intensity are barely more

prevalent than weak intensity ones. Moreover, arbitrary policies limiting economic property rights generate as much social agitation as rules-based policies. Second, and likewise, as for the *political / administrative rent seeking class*, strong social conflicts appear to be a little less frequent than the weak ones. In addition, it is found that both arbitrary and targeted policies present almost the same number of social conflict. Third, as to the *economic corruption class*, it is found that strong revolts account for three-quarters of urban social unrest. *Mutatis mutandis*, the extortion of funds －carried out by state-centred policy makers, local rulers, or non-lay jurisdictions － by the way of excessive taxes and unfair changes in taxation results in more social tensions than the embezzlement of a portion of these funds does. In addition, relentless greed and peculation observed in some towns tend to refer to a self-reinforced corruption underlining history dependency. Fourth and lastly, as regards the *political / administrative corruption class*, strong conflicts are a little more frequent than the weak ones. Furthermore, abuse of power against municipalities from superior policy leaders engenders more social unrest than influence peddling against these local institutions does. However, *mutatis mutandis*, the part of strong conflict was higher with traffic of influence than with abuse of power; this may due to dwellers' obligation to pay massive fines and fees as the result of lost court cases because of influence peddling.

While these findings strike us as productive, two aspects deserve special mention. First, the analysis ignores the extension of the voting franchise when rulers faced threat of upheavals (see e.g., Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Aidt & Jensen, 2014); however this phenomenon seem more noticeable in the consulates of the southern France than in the northern communes. Second, we are well aware of the limitations of our findings because of a bare-bones statistical analysis. Regarding the cause-and-effect relationships, although we relied on trustworthy historical explanations, we have been careful in our interpretations because correlation does not imply causation. In addition, for a same conflict, we have sometimes observed several motives. When there may be causality between conflict and several rent seeking and/or corruption items (according to the historical observations and commentaries) it is possible that there is no correlation between the conflict and one of its causes considered in isolation. We have then analyzed the data with statistics allowing us to accurately and simply report on intricate facts.

Despite these limitations, the paper provides an additional way to explain the observed complexity of social unrest by focusing on rent seeking and corruption. This in-depth analysis thus complements the research by measuring societal discord through case studies (twelve towns) examined in a 130-year historical perspective. It substantiates the view that rent seeking and corruption are persisting characteristics of human society determined by political and economic institutions as well as by history. It also underpins the existence of relationships between these features and social unrest.

In an environment of weak institutions, powerful decision makers free to extract rent and practise corruption, and urban conflict involving overtaxed people and over-indebted then overthrown municipalities, the findings spawn insights that apply beyond the historical framework that we have focused on. In this respect, in modern democracies, whether or not they present an expansion or reduction of authority, there are also similar situations in view of social conflict, over-taxation, over-indebtedness of cities and reprehensible economic or political actions. The implications of the paper therefore refer to suitable direction of policy intervention such as changes in the taxation system but also administrative reforms like the field of competence of municipalities in relation to territorial or national entities as well as the moralization of political life. As for future research, the findings must obviously be validated in other settings and particularly in the sense of improving the measurement of the causes of social urban conflict. It is also essential to widen the findings to other institutional contexts.

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Appendix A

Table A. Synopsis of some medieval urban governments in France

Municipalities with high autonomy	**Governance**	**Privileges**	**Areas**
Sworn communes [(a)]	Self-governed towns through (i) collective oath sworn by property holders and (ii) communal charter granted by overlords after being accepted by the king.	Personal freedom, political liberties, economic and political privileges came from the communal charter.	Northeast of France between the Loire and Rhine rivers (mainly *Hauts de France* area: Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardy).
Consulates [(b)]	Self-governed towns by both a college of administrators and a consultative consular council helped by a general assembly of dwellers.	Personal, legal, tax, and political privileges came from seigniorial negotiated grant.	Occitania (mainly Languedoc, Roussillon, and parts of Midi, Aquitaine, and Pyrenees), some towns in Provence and along the Durance valley.
Escartons [(c)]	Self-governed territories (1343-c.1789) grouped into the *Escartons Republic* through a specific charter. Direct democracy: general assembly of the inhabitants who elected their representatives (called "syndics"). Dwellers raised taxes without royal or seigniorial agents, among other tasks. Social and political peace.	Personal liberty, large economic, banal, fiscal, and political privileges: e.g., all inhabitants became "franc-bourgeois" (status between nobles and commoners), freely distributed their own taxation, and organized annual international fair attracting European merchants.	Alps: the bailiwick of the town of Briançon with five *escartons*, two of which were on the current territory of France (*escartons* of Briançon and of Queyras). Much less autonomous *escartons* have existed in other bailiwicks of alpine valleys.
Municipalities with moderate -to-low autonomy			
"Bourgeois towns" [(d)] (or *villes de bourgeoisie, villes de franchises*)	Without sworn associations but close to communes through their municipal charters. Governed by royal officials.	*Sui generis* privileges on personal statutes. More or less the same economic privileges as sworn communes.	Northeast (mainly the Champagne-Ardenne area) and Center of France.
"Syndicat towns" [(e)] (or *villes de syndicat*)	Coexistence of a mayor, his peers, and ordinary inhabitants (called "syndics") elected by the population for specific issues.	Privileges on personal statutes and some economic and administrative aspects.	Occitania: mainly in the Garonne valley, Ardèche, and the Carcassonne area.
"Provostal towns" [(f)] (or *villes de prévôté*)	Towns without municipal councils, and ruled by royal or seigniorial provosts (*praepositi*) who did not hold complete authority.	Some privileges.	North-central France (mainly Burgundy, Loire valley and its drainage basin, Île-de-France).
"Towns batiches" [(g)] (or *villes bâtiches*)	Neither town charter nor town council.	No communal rights *stricto sensu* but some privileges through statements of rights.	Lorraine (Meuse), Normandy, and *Hauts-de-France* (Nord-Pas-de Calais, Picardy).
Imperial towns. [(h)]	No town charter but town council. Allegiance to the emperor.	Commercial network between the ten towns of the Decapolis.	Alsace. (Alsatian Decapolis in the Holy Roman Empire).

Sources: (a) As to the sworn municipalities, see the literature quoted in the text. Remember that this paper is interested in municipalities having only this status of "sworn communes" at the *start* of the reporting period. (b) Regarding the consulates see e.g., Wolff, 1990; Hilton, 1995; Le Goff, 1998; Derville, 2000. (c) As for the *escartons*, see Vivier (2002). (d) On the "bourgeois towns", see e.g. Dupin, 1834, p. 33; Langlois, 1964, p. 68. (e) As for the "syndicat towns", see e.g. Fourquin, 1975, pp. 539-540; Bourin-Derruau, 1987, pp. 152-154. (f) As to the "provostal towns", see e.g. Dupin, 1834, p. 33. (g) Concerning the towns bâtiches, see e.g. Guizot, 1840, p. 320; Fourquin, 1975, p. 541; Fossier, 1992, p. 252; Derville, 2000, p. 72. (h) On the "imperial towns" of the Holy Roman Empire, see e.g. Johanek, 2000, p. 296.

Appendix B

Table B1. Classification of civil urban conflicts

	Conflict between townspeople and local or territorial authority	**Conflict between town rulers and superior authority or political units**	**Conflict within corporations and workshops**
Quintile 2	*Very low* (e.g., very low emotional or ideological outrage)	*Very low* (e.g., very low discord as for jurisdiction or political / administrative conflict)	*Very low* (e.g., very low dispute as to vocational conflict)
Quintile 4	*Low* (e.g., low emotional and/or ideological outrage)	*Low* (e.g., low political or administrative disagreement, difference of opinion, conflict of jurisdiction)	*Low* (e.g., disagreement within corporations and workshops)
Quintile 6	*Medium* (e.g., loud claims, moderate protests against judicial sentences or wrongdoing, moderate civil disobedience or resistance, moderate rumbling against taxation)	*Medium* (e.g., reasonable conflict of jurisdiction, moderate litigation)	*Medium* (e.g., disputes between corporation masters and journeymen / apprentices)
Quintile 8	*High* (e.g., non-violent revolt against economic or political abuse: street protests; uprising against deprivation; insurgency against authority; disobedience to king)	*High* (e.g., non-violent revolt against king or other superior authorities, or against judicial sentences ; riotous assemblies; disobedience to king)	*High* (e.g., non-violent strife within corporations and workshops but high conflict over wages and/or working conditions)
Quintile 10	*Very High* (e.g., violent revolt against economic or political abuse; violent trespass or pillaging; bloodshed; fomented or spontaneous bloody revolt; assassination)	*Very High* (e.g., violent revolt against superior authorities, or king or against judicial sentences)	Very High (e.g., violent strife within corporations and workshops concerning wages and/or working conditions)

Notes: Rating using the literature quoted in the text.

Table B2. Descriptive statistics. Number and intensity of conflicts in each selected town on the studied period

Towns	Number and intensity of conflicts [(a)] (Brackets: number of conflicts in the item compared to the number of conflict in the town itself)					
	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Total
Amiens	0	1 (16.7)	2 (33.3)	1 (16.7)	2 (33.3)	6
Beauvais	0	0	1 (33.3)	0	2 (66.7)	3
Compiègne	0	0	2 (66.7)	1 (33.3)	0	3
Laon	0	0	2 (33.3)	1 (16.7)	3 (50)	6
Noyon	0	0	0	0	1 (100)	1
Poitiers	1 (100)	0	0	0	0	1
Provins	0	0	5 (38.4)	5 (38.4)	3 (23.1)	13
Senlis	0	0	1 (50)	0	1 (50)	2
Sens	0	0	2 (66.7)	1 (33.3)	0	3
Soissons	0	0	2 (66.7)	1 (33.3)	0	3
St-Quentin	0	0	1 (20)	4 (80)	0	5
Valenciennes	0	0	2 (40)	2 (40)	1 (20)	5
TOTAL	1 (1.9)	1 (1.9)	20 (39.2)	16 (31.4)	13 (25.5)	51

Notes: (a) Number of conflicts over the period, whether the conflict is of short or long duration. Each conflict gets the value 1. See Table B1 for the coding of the conflicts.

Sources: Calculation using the following literature: Béchard, 1862; Benaut, 1975; Blanchet, 1988; Boissonnade, 2013; De Bonnechose and Boisnormand de Bonnechose, 1839; Boone and Stabel, 2000; Bourquelot, 1856; Burg, 2004; Chevalier, 1982; Clauzel, 1996; Cohn, 2008, 2009, 2012; Decrusy et al., 1833; Derville, 2000; Dinaux et al.,1832; Dupin, 1834; Dusevel, 1848; Espinas, 1929; Graves, 1850; Guilbert, 1845, 1853; Guizot, 1840; Hilton, 1989, 1995; Junot, 2009; Kidner, 2007; Labande 1892; Landes, 1995; Le Goff, 1988, 1991, 1998, 2009; Lefranc, 1888; Leroy and Dinaud, 1837; Leroux, 1839; Martin and Jacob, 1837; Mollat, 2006; Davis, 2013; Petit-Dutaillis, 2012; Pirenne, 2014; Rossiaud, 1998.

Table B3. Descriptive statistics for the working sample. Civil urban conflicts (occurrence, intensity, mass, intensity mean) for the studied period

Towns	Occurrence [(a)]	Intensity for each conflict [(b)]	Mass [(c)]	Mean of Intensity
Amiens	6	4;6;10;8;6;10	44	7.333
Beauvais	3	10;10;6	26	8.666
Compiègne	3	6;6;8	20	6.666
Laon	6	10;8;6;10;10;6	50	8.333
Noyon	1	10	10	10
Poitiers	1	2	2	2
Provins	13	8;10;10;6;6;6;8;6;6;8;8;10;8	100	7.692
Senlis	2	6; 10	16	8
Sens	3	6;6;8	20	6.666
Soissons	3	8;6;6	20	6.666
St-Quentin	5	8;8;6;8;8	38	7.6
Valenciennes	5	6;6;8;8;10	38	7.6

Notes: (a) Number of conflicts over the period, whether the conflict is of short or long duration. Each conflict gets the value 1.

(b) See Table B1 for the coding of the conflicts. (c) See Equation (1).

Sources: The same as in Table B2.

Table B4. Number of conflicts according to their 'weak' or 'strong' intensities and origins (sample of 12 towns, 1270-1399)

Origins of conflicts	Number of conflicts according to their weak or strong [(a)] intensities and their origins [(b)]		
	Weak	**Strong**	**Total:** N_o
Economic rent seeking class			
Rules-based policies	6 (50)	6 (50)	12
Arbitrary labour policies	3 (50)	3 (50)	6
Arbitrary policies limiting economic rights	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)	6
Subtotal : n and (n / N_o)	**11** (45.8)	**13** (54.2)	**24**
Economic corruption class			
Extortion of funds by policy makers	6 (23.1)	20 (76.9)	26
Extortion of real estate values	1 (20)	4 (80)	5
Embezzlement of public funds by policy makers	3 (37.5)	5 (62.5)	8
Subtotal : n and (n / N_o)	**10** (25.6)	**29** (74.4)	**39**
Political or administrative rent seeking class			
Arbitrary policies limiting political or administrative rights	7 (58.3)	5 (41.7)	12
Targeted policies *via* encroachment on municipal charges	8 (53.3)	7 (46.7)	15
Subtotal : n and (n / N_o)	**15** (55.6)	**12** (44.4)	**27**
Political or administrative corruption class			
Abuse of power against municipalities	10 (50)	10 (50)	20
Influence peddling against municipalities	4 (36.4)	7 (63.6)	11
Subtotal : n and (n / N_o)	**14** (45.2)	**17** (54.8)	**31**

Notes: See Table 3. (a) 'Weak' intensity includes "very low", "low", and "medium" intensities. 'Strong' intensity encompasses "high" and "very high" intensities. (b) The total number of conflicts according to their motives is greater than the total number of conflicts (that is, 51) because some conflicts are due to several motives.

Source: Calculation using the literature quoted in Table B2 and the text.

End Notes

[i] The border between urban conflict and civil war is narrow since in both cases there may be distrust or defiance against authorities, as well as power and counterpower, the outburst of violence from specific cities provoking eventually generalized uprisings in the country.

[ii] To clarify we call, on the one hand, *economic rent seeking* and *economic corruption* the elements related to economic property rights, and on the other hand, *political rent seeking* and *political corruption* the elements associated with political property rights. These categories are established for the convenience of the analysis because it is obvious that a tax revolt is both an economic protest and a complaint against political representatives (Cohn, 2013, p. 60).

[iii] This era of demographic, economic, and commercial urban expansion was however punctuated by periods of economic instability and urban conflict.

[iv] Historians have shown that some revolts were the responses directed against the fiscal and military demands of state-centred elites organized around central or urban governments (see, e.g., Cohn, 2013) whereas some other protests actively or indirectly supported the political order (see, e.g., Lantschner, 2015; Dumolyn & Haemers, 2005).

[v] In the course of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) some of these towns were subject to the authority of the kingdom of England or to numerous *comtés* before returning to the kingdom of France.

[vi] To examine the social actors we decompose the global term "town oligarchs" or "oligarchic elites" into specific five main social groups: royal government or state-centred elites (kings and royal agents), rich merchants/corporation masters, other lay overlords, non-laymen (or non-lay institutions), and municipal (or local) rulers. It is worthwhile noting that, depending on circumstances, the municipal rulers group were either in the disadvantaged or advantaged categories. The disadvantaged group was thus composed of (i) either only ordinary inhabitants (the sixth social group composed of distinct urban categories: mainly craftsmen, working citizens, and unemployed) who were by definition not involved in the causes of conflict, (ii) or both ordinary townspeole and municipal rulers.

[vii] Despite its name, *the Hanse of the Seventeen Towns* eventually grew to incorporate merchants from other cities. This hanse declined in the fourteenth century and disappeared in the early fifteenth century (Ogilvie, 2011, pp. 27-28). The five examined towns of the Hanse gathered many guilds of the textile activity like weavers, dyers, drapers, finishers, dressers, hatters, haberdashers, tanners, furriers, among others. Note that the town of Provins was both a production and trading center given that it was one of the four towns where the Champagne fairs took place.

[viii] For instance, the trading town of Senlis – greater than the capital Paris in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – sheltered many guilds and specialized covered markets, the two most lucrative activities being cloth merchants and bankers (known as the "Lombards").

[ix] In the Middle Ages, trades were classified into three categories: (i) free craft professions (*métiers libres*) carried out without learning or administrative formalities; (ii) regulated professions (*métiers réglés*) bringing together artisans submitted to royal rules. Through letters patents, they enjoyed privileges issued by the king and generally overseen by local town authorities. This means that the statutes of these guilds were approved or imposed by royal authorities which administer them, either directly or indirectly; and (iii) sworn professions (*métiers jurés*) where the craftsmen of the same trade under a special statute took an oath to respect this status and assist each other. The statute of the guild was approved and guaranteed by a higher authority (often the municipality), gave members a monopoly in the sector of activity, and allowed to regulate the profession. These sworn crafts or trades had legal personality and their members were sanctioned by their disciplinary jurisdiction if they did not observe their commitment. More broadly, these self-enforcing associations gained the exclusive privilege to self administer their business and determined the professions according to rules controlled by the public authority (see e.g., Halphen, 1948; Le Goff, 1998; Richardson, 2004).

[x] In northern Europe, other working-class revolts broke out in towns outside our sample, such as Douai (1245, 1280), Ypres (1280), Rouen (1281), Tournai (1281, 1307), Bruges and Ghent (1301). See e.g., Cohn, 2012; Firnhaber-Baker and Schoenaers 2016.

[xi] Currency manipulation by the kings are another form of extortion of funds; nevertheless, little is know about their

consequences on social conflict.

[xii] In the early development of sworn municipalities, taxes were mainly raised to fund useful projects, in particular public buildings (town belfries and walls), commercial ones (town halls, covered squares, houses for the *octroi* (toll)), and health or charitable institutions (hospitals, almshouses and leper-houses). Increasingly, taxes were mainly raised to pay for wars led by the king or overlords, to cover expenses related to the lifestyle of the king and other rulers, and to fund public works not monitored by the local taxpayers (see e.g., Duby, 1973, p. 229; Derville, 2000, p. 127).

[xiii] For instance, regarding the towns under study, between the end of the 13th century and the early 14th century, the municipality of Beauvais lost more than one hectare which fell into the purse of non-lay institutions; it is unclear if this led to personal enrichment or social contribution. Similarly, the town of Laon lost one third of eastern district area, that is to say, 7.5 hectares; at least 60 houses of value belonging to bourgeois changed hands (Saint-Denis, 1994, 2000).

[xiv] For instance, this occurred in the town of Noyon in the 13th century (Saint-Denis, 1994, 2000).

[xv] Of course, in some cases, abusive supervision and authoritarian decision could also aim to fight against the corruption of local governments.

[xvi] Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016) state that bribes clear the market, act as incentive bonuses, lower costs, and permit criminal activity.

[xvii] In many cases, a municipality that did not comply with the local clergy governance project lost trials, paid large fines, was indebted and discredited. The latter then put in place an expulsion solution of municipal members: public humiliation and excommunication (see e.g., Saint-Denis, 2000). For a recent analysis on evolution and change within religious organizations, see Ferrero, 2017.