

Yannis Skalli-Housseini (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

*Between success and failure: government reform and the rise of the fiscal state in 18th century Flanders*

This paper fits within a broader research project into the rise of the fiscal state in the Austrian Netherlands in the 18th century. By looking at two different case studies with a different social-economic and institutional outlook, the paper intends to contribute to our understanding of the different pathways that existed to becoming a successful fiscal state in Early Modern Europe. More precisely, it will do so by looking at the interaction between ('top down') central government reforms implemented by the Austrian crown, that intended to transform the Southern Netherlands into a successful military-fiscal state, and 'local' social-economic and political factors. On the one hand, this comparison includes the Castellany of Aalst – the fiscally most important district in the province of Flanders – which was characterized by the strong political autonomy on the institutional front and fragmented landownership on the economic. In contrast, on the other hand, the Castellany of Veurne was part of the pays d'imposition of geretrocedeerd Vlaanderen and characterized by early agricultural capitalism and concentrated landownership. The comparison will include an analysis of the differing fiscal regimes, the evolving fiscal capacity, attempts at fiscal reforms and an analysis of debt-restructuring.

---

*This text is an abstract of the paper to be presented by the author at the Posthumus Conference 2023. Please do not cite without prior permission by the author.*