

# Meeting, negotiating, petitioning: towards a conceptual model for communication in early modern parliamentary systems

**Abstract - Data for History 2021**

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In the early modern period, the Imperial Diet (or *Reichstag*) played a central role in the constitutional structure of the Holy Roman Empire and had a significant impact on European politics. The Imperial Diets were usually held at intervals of several years in different places and over several weeks, and a great amount of written documentation, which has been continuously edited by the Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (HiKo) since the 19th century, survived until today (Wolgast, 2005).

With the edition and pilot project *The Regensburg Reichstag of 1576*, the Historical Commission, in cooperation with the Centre for Information Modelling at the University of Graz (ZIM) is breaking new ground. For the first time a database with an archival documentation of surviving manuscripts and transcriptions of the central documents of an Imperial Diet will be made available as a digital edition. Furthermore, the editorial focus will be on a central aspect of the Imperial Diets, communication and interaction of the various political agents upfront and during the event.<sup>1</sup>

From June to October 1576, Emperor Maximilian II and more than 200 representatives of the imperial estates (*Reichsstände*) met in Regensburg to discuss and decide on the political fate of (Eastern) Central Europe. On this occasion, envoys from (almost) all over Europe came to Regensburg too, making the Imperial Diet a central place of European politics. The various records from this event include negotiations (*Verhandlungsakten*), minutes (*Protokolle*), supplement reports, and directives, for the topics on the official agenda and side issues (*Nebenhandlungen*). Additionally, numerous subjects presented their individual cases to the emperor and the empire via petitions (*Supplikationen*).<sup>2</sup>

Recent historical research has demonstrated that the multitude of communication at the Reichstag is of particular interest for research:<sup>3</sup> The symbolic and instrumental dimension of the negotiations at the Reichstag has to be located in the field of tension between the (old-fashioned) “Hoftag” (as the place where imperial privileges were granted and fief were given) and the early-modern Reichstag, which is gaining in institutional autonomy in the 16th century (with institution-specific roles, spaces and times). The Reichstag, in particular that of 1576, was a communicative focal point of European politics with several subplots: Polish

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the project, project team and goals see the projects information website *Der Regensburger Reichstag von 1576*: <https://reichstagsakten-1576.uni-graz.at/de>.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed description of the sources and the traditional editing approach see the introduction to the edition of the Imperial Diet in Speyer in 1570 (Lanzinner, 1988, 65-80). For a very brief description see Wolgast (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger has extensively published on this subject. For instance, Stollberg-Rilinger (2004 and 2013).

royal election, war in the Netherlands, Moscow legation. Finally, in 1576, for the first time, parts of the Protestant Estates (Electoral Palatinate, Hesse, Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel) linked their approval to the taxes for the war against the Ottoman empire with their own confessional political concerns in a compensatory manner.<sup>4</sup> This can be seen by the increasing negotiations on religious matters (*Religionsverhandlungen*). Concerning the topics of negotiations, the Imperial Diet of 1576 marks a turning point in the history of this institution in the period between the Augsburg Religious Peace and the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, and, therefore, it is an excellent case study for the exploration of the attitudes and modes of deliberation based on modern institution theory (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Schäfer, 2017). To apply this theoretical approach, it is crucial to encode not only the text reporting the arguments and decisions but also the communication itself. The edition will add this layer to the TEI-encoded texts with the help of controlled vocabularies in the @ana-attribute and will process this annotation as RDF-data.<sup>5</sup> The RDF data follows a conceptual model of communication that was developed by the project team in the past year. It aims at documenting who communicates with whom, when and where about which topic and in which way. This will allow later queries about communication partners, time, place, topic and type of communication. In doing so, an attempt was made to develop a model that not only represents communication on the Reichstag of 1576, but can also be applied to other Imperial Diets or early modern parliamentary systems and be used for further research questions.

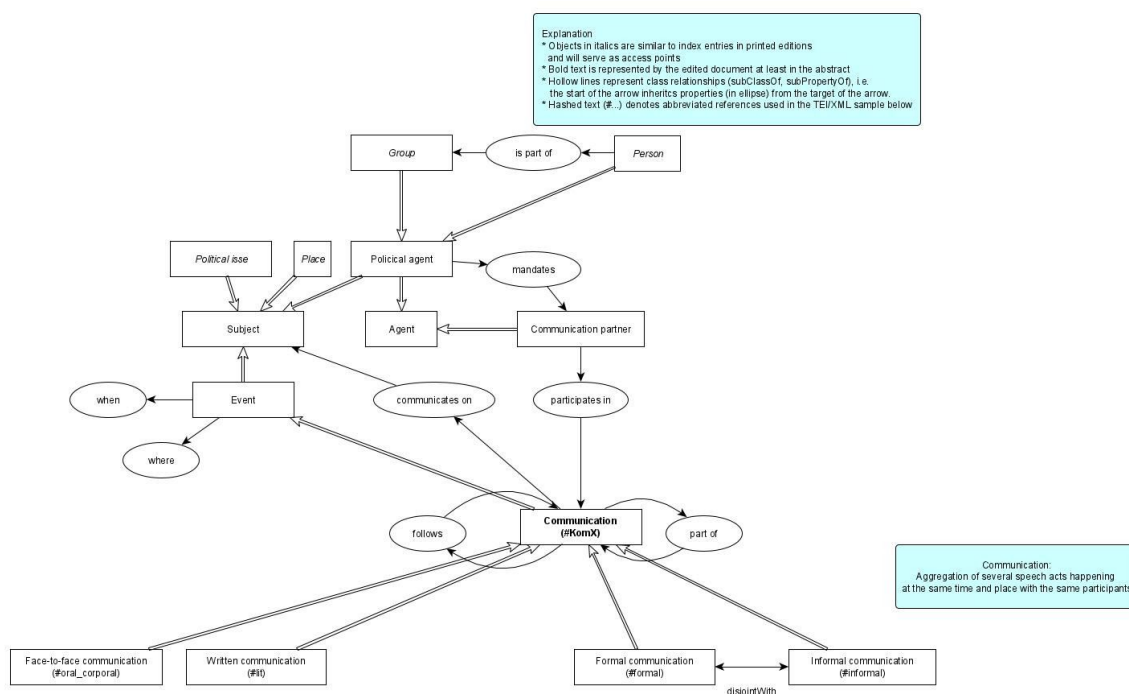


Fig.1: visual representation of the conceptual model of communication at the Imperial Diet

<sup>4</sup> See Gotthard (2004, 385); Lanzinner (1993, 499-504).

<sup>5</sup> This approach is already used in several digital editions developed by the ZIM. See, for instance, DEPCHA - The Digital Edition Publishing Cooperative for Historical Accounts: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/context:depcha>; Pollin (2019); *Jahrrechnungen der Stadt Basel 1535 bis 1610 – digital*: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/context:srbas>. *Urfehdebücher der Stadt Basel – digitale Edition*: <https://gams.uni-graz.at/context:ufbas>; Pollin and Vogeler (2014).

The model currently includes the following basic types of communications: Communication can be verbal or non-verbal, face-to-face or written, formal or informal. The model identifies the groups and individuals, including imperial states and their representatives, participating in communication. A single communication deals with one or more subjects. Communication can be part of other communication (e.g. considering a ceremony consisting of several communicative parts, or a meeting interrupted to allow partial negotiations) or can be the subject of another communication, in which one actor tells another about a conversation or negotiations at a meeting. The single communication can be located as an event in space and time, making the conceptual model easily connectable to the event-based CIDOC-CRM model (E2),<sup>6</sup> which acts as a top-level ontology.

This conceptual model of communication was developed by the project team, which include editors, historians, and digital humanists, and takes also the wider european dimension of parliamentary communication in the early modern era into consideration (Haug-Moritz, 2021). The paper will report on the current state of the conceptual model, modelling challenges and provide an outlook for its implementation into a digital scholarly edition.

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<sup>6</sup> CIDOC's Conceptual Reference Model, <http://www.cidoc-crm.org>.

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