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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Schenk, G. J. (2010). "Human security" in the renaissance? Securitas, infrastructure, collective goods and natural hazards in Tuscany and the Upper Rhine Valley. *Historical Social Research*, 35(4), 209-233. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.35.2010.4.209-233>

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Human Security in the Renaissance? *Securitas*, Infrastructure, Collective Goods and Natural Hazards in Tuscany and the Upper Rhine Valley

Gerrit Jasper Schenk *

Abstract: »*Human Security in der Renaissance? Securitas, Infrastruktur, Gemeinschaftsgüter und Naturgefahren in der Toskana und im Oberrheintal*«. This article investigates the character of collective perceptions of security in the Renaissance. In addition to the findings of conceptual history, an picture analysis will be used. Besides the concern for salvation and protection from violence and injustice, public welfare was the task of a good government in material terms as well (provision of food, infrastructure). It also comprised the prevention of natural hazards. Legitimation strategies of those who governed and the needs of those who were governed had – according to the region – an impact on the development of specific ways of dealing with natural hazards. “Human security” thus played a part in state-building processes.

Keywords: security, infrastructure, collective goods, natural hazards, disasters, Lorenzetti, Tuscany, Florence, Alsace, Strasbourg, Arno, Rhine.

Point of Departure

In this article, several considerations of a systematic type are developed concerning the concept of security and its sociopolitical provision in the Renaissance. A working hypothesis is the consideration that the height of the Western Modern Age, in which the state functioned principally as a guarantor for “human security”, represents an occurrence that is extremely rich in historical conditions. In fact, with respect to postmodern privatisation even of state security, the Western Modern state is perhaps even an exception.¹ The first step therefore deals with the reconstruction of a stage in the development of – perhaps typically European – perceptions of “human security” and several early conditions for their current establishment as, depending on the standpoint, a post-colonial instrument of power or a cosmopolitan ideal. Using two regions as an example, a second step will be to consider which role the understanding of what security is, or should be, played with respect to collective goods and to the threat that natural risks pose for these goods. The regions chosen – Tuscany

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¹ See MacFarlane and Khong 2006, 11-14 on questions of definition.

and the Upper Rhine Valley – of course cannot stand for the whole of Europe. Their differences, from geomorphology to the sociopolitical structure, can, however, in terms of comparative heuristics, reveal similarities and differences when handling natural risks.²

Several researchers, from Kingreen to MacFarlane/Foong Khong, view the European Middle Ages as a chaotic phase of competing powers which, at best, knew fragmented forms of “human security”.³ It makes sense to broach the issue of safety from violence for the Middle Ages too, in particular safety within or among communities, as has been carried out many times for other eras.⁴ However, a second topic area is also closely connected to the question of security of the people. In this area, prospective answers are also possible for the question of the origin and path dependency⁵ in the development of the concept and reality of modern “human security”. The reference here is to the descriptively portrayed, sociopolitical “public services” and “infrastructure”⁶, and the threat which is posed to these by natural occurrences such as, for example, floods and earthquakes along with all of their consequences, including the destruction of streets, interruptions to trade, crop failures, hunger, migration and social insecurity. Here it can namely be shown that, firstly, towards the end of the Middle Ages there were highly pragmatic perceptions of “security” in connection with perceptions of the common good and the fair use of collective goods.⁷ In addition, it can be demonstrated how a close sociopolitical connection between security perceptions and security requirements on the one hand, and the institutional methods of dealing with the threat to this security on the other, developed. This development, which resulted from the interests of a social “above” and “below” which to a certain extent stood in contrast to one another, converged in the culmination of “the state”.

Securitas in the Renaissance – a Different Conceptual History

Around 1338/1339, Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted frescoes that conveyed a highly political meaning in the governmental hall of the ruling administration, the *Nove*, in the town hall of the Republic of Siena.⁸ Until the 18th century,

² With respect to the methodical functions of the comparison and heuristical, descriptive, analytical and paradigmatic aspects cf. Haupt and Kocka 1996, 12-15.

³ Kingreen 2003, 28; MacFarlane and Foong Khong 2006, 29-36.

⁴ Cf. the articles in this volume, in addition e.g. Härter 2010; Lüdtke and Wildt 2008; Tomuschat 2008, 73-74.

⁵ Werle 2007.

⁶ On this somewhat problematic concept cf. Vec 2008. On (modern) infrastructure cf. Laak 2004.

⁷ Cf. Moss et al. 2009; Gailing et al. 2009.

⁸ Cf. Starn 1994, 12-20. The dating is attested by accounts.

peace and war were identified as the topic of the opposing frescoes; in 1792, Luigi Lanzi interpreted them as a moralising instruction about good and bad government and the effects of these on town and country: a perspective that served as a model, that helped the frescoes to be characterised as *Buon Governo* und *Malgoverno*, and that still shapes art historical discussion about this masterpiece by Lorenzetti today.⁹

An extremely complex allegory of good government or social peace is indeed portrayed on the northern wall of the governmental hall. Peace, or *Buon Governo*, is suggestively characterised by nine virtues: *fides*, *charitas*, *spes*, *pax*, *fortitudo*, *prudentia*, *magnanimitas*, *temperantia*, *iustitia*. Added to these are *sapientia*, *iustitia comutativa* and *distributiva* as well as *concordia*. The eastern wall, joining on to this, shows the peaceful and benedictory effects on town and country, which discernibly represent Siena and its *contado*.¹⁰ On the western wall and dialectically connected with the latter, one finds the portrayal of *Malgoverno*, or war, together with the effects on town and country, above which fear (*timor*) hovers, akin to a dark angel.¹¹

Image 1: Securitas



⁹ Cf. Southard 1980, 361-365; Rowley 1958; Rubinstein 1958; Feldges-Henning 1972; Frugoni 1979a; and Frugoni 1979b; Skinner 2009; Starn 1994, 12-20. Gibbs 1999 presumes that Lorenzetti, in the allegory of good government, originally gave *Iustitia* a positioning as prominent as *Pax*; this does not affect my interpretation.

¹⁰ Cf. Feldges-Henning 1972, 159-162; Frugoni 1979a, 24.

¹¹ Cf. Starn 1994, 42-43; Frugoni 1979a, 24.

The personification of security takes an unmistakably central position in the fresco of peace with respect to the portrayal of *Buon Governo* and its effects on town and country. The angel-like winged *securitas* hovers above the city gate at the city limits, facing towards the peaceful cultural landscape, wrapped in filigree white fabric, holding a banner in her right hand, and in her left, gallows with a person hanging from them (see image 1). In terms of her form, she visibly corresponds to an important figure in the allegory of *Buon Governo: pax*. In Lorenzetti's fresco, *pax* is striking due to her leaning position in comparison with the other virtues. The way in which she is portrayed is also comparatively unusual: her feet rest on pieces of armour. She is dressed in white clothing, which traces the shape of her body in classical folds, and holds a large olive branch in her left hand. According to Chiara Frugoni, who interprets the frescoes as political propaganda of the ruling *Nove*, the figure of *pax* corresponds to that of *securitas*: “*Securitas* and *pax* form the binominal of *concordia* ... The picture even suggests a yet subtler differentiation: Security in the city rests upon peace among its inhabitants...”.¹²

Lorenzetti's frescoes have inspired a multitude of art historical and historical interpretations, from Nicolai Rubinstein to Quentin Skinner.¹³ They are interpreted, for example, as a theological argumentation for the government of the *Nove*, drawing on the biblical Book of Wisdom; as a portrayal of Siena as the divine Jerusalem (or Babylon); as a pre-humanistic rediscovery of ancient Roman ideals; as a depiction of the secular ideal of a republican society in the wake of a rediscovery of Aristotelian politics, whether inspired by Thomas Aquinas, or conveyed by Brunetto Latini's encyclopaedic *Li livres dou tresor*; as praise of the bourgeois work ethic and industriousness, owing to, for example, the portrayal of the *artes mechanicae* in town and country; or as a depiction of astrological concepts concerning the ways in which the planets influence life on earth (the concept of planet children) – the embodiments of planets are indeed located above the frescoes.

Each interpretation can be supported by strong arguments, but two things are clear among the variety of interpretations: Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes provide information – maybe exceptionally – about late medieval perceptions of *salus publicua*, which can be described as public welfare or good social “configuration of order”.¹⁴ *Securitas* plays an important part in this configuration of order. The frescoes convey messages almost propagandistically, such as, for example, the statement that security in the Middle Ages is primarily

¹² Frugoni 1979b, 76: “*Securitas* e *Pax* costituiscono un binomio nella concordia ... L'immagine suggerisce una distinzione ancora più sottile: nella città la sicurezza è nella pace dei suoi abitanti...”. Following the reconstruction by Gibbs 1999 *securitas* also corresponds iconographically to *iustitia*.

¹³ Differentiated survey by Schmidt 2002, 84-137.

¹⁴ On *salus publicus* and its relation to *securitas* since antiquity see Eberhard 1986, 244. On the concept of configuration of order see Schneidmüller and Weinfurter 2006.

connected with peace and justice, which are guaranteed internally by good jurisdiction and government, and that this security is based on the models of the above-mentioned virtues. However, there are even subtler traces of contemporary concepts of security, which Lorenzetti perhaps did not consciously aim to portray. The frescoes must hence be examined not for perceptible intentions, but rather for implicit perceptions and collective attitudes.¹⁵

In the research it is discussed whether the images of *pax* and *securitas* have Roman templates, e.g. coin designs. From Nero to Constantine, coins personified the *Securitas Augusti* as an objective of the ruling powers within the *Imperium Romanum* and aimed at legitimising the policies of the emperor.¹⁶ If Lorenzetti was really making a reference to this iconographic tradition, then he did so loosely – his *pax* is holding an olive branch instead of (like the Roman *securitas*) a spear in her hands, and the grim attribute of his *securitas* is nowhere to be found on Roman coins. Robert Gibbs recently called attention to the fact that Lorenzetti is more likely to have been referring back to illustrations in contemporary Bolognese law manuscripts of the *Decretum Gratiani* and in the Digest. Here the man hanging from the gallows can be found as an illustration for the second book of the Digest (*de iurisdictione*), harvest scenes as illustrations for texts about usufruct, pictures of cultural landscapes for texts about border and access rights, and scenes of building activity very similar to those that shape Lorenzetti's cycle of frescoes.¹⁷ Following Gibbs' line of reasoning, the juristic emblems refer to the everyday administration of justice as a guarantor of social *securitas*. This much more direct connection to contemporary images strikingly accentuates the public dimension of *securitas*¹⁸ and emphasises the concern of the ruling parties for public welfare. In terms of the history of ideas, a long line can therefore be drawn, with the help of either ancient coins or the contemporary illustrations of the *Institutiones* of Justinianus, from the legitimisation strategies of the Roman emperors to those of the governments of Italian city states during the Renaissance.¹⁹

¹⁵ The intention is to interpret the frescoes not only as a 'source of tradition' but also as a 'remainder'.

¹⁶ Cf. Rowley 1958, 95. A Neroic Dupondius, Lugdunum, 64 AD is particularly close to the way *securitas* is portrayed, cf. Cohen 1880, 300-301, nos. 321-25; Mattingly 1923, 267-268, for example nos. 344-349; Mattingly and Sydenham 1923, 164-165, nos. 284-297.

¹⁷ Gibbs 1996-1997, 210-212 with Fig. 6; Gibbs 2002, 174; L'Engle 2002, 229-230 with Fig. 4.

¹⁸ Cf. also Ebel et al. 1988, 162-163, 196.

¹⁹ More probably in terms of a perception of ancient conceptions than in terms of a continuous tradition.

Image 2: Landscape



The art historian Max Seidel goes even further and sees a depiction of the security, agricultural, trade and traffic policies of the Republic of Siena in the magnificent panoramic picture of the cultural landscape before the gates of the well-governed city (see image 2). On three levels, he claims, one can discern firstly a very clear depiction of Siennese politics in town and *contado*, secondly a symbolic depiction of the underlying state theory and thirdly the mythological-astrological superelevation of a political doctrine of security by means of peace and harmony.²⁰ In my opinion, Seidel convincingly shows that one can find very specific, material connections to the governmental politics of the *Nove* in the first third of the 14th century in the picture. For this purpose, he consults council minutes on crop policies, statutes of the Siennese road construction authorities, land and tax registers as well as chronicles of that period.²¹ The scenes of grain cultivation and of harvesting could therefore be understood, for example, as an illustration of the reactions of the *Nove* to the climate-related crop failures and years of famine in the first third of the 14th century.²² In order to prevent the imminent danger of social unrest and strife due to a lack of corn, the council minutes state, the *Nove* levied a forced loan of 15,000 florins in 1330 for the purchase of grain and in 1340 they even imported grain for 40,000 florins.²³ The argument used here is hence a type of social emergency situation, which justifies the impingement of ownership rights for the higher aim of ensuring “state” security. While the reason for tax collection is explained in the council minutes as the preservation of public security and the concern for pub-

²⁰ Seidel 1999, 7.

²¹ Seidel 1999.

²² Seidel 1999, 49. On the famines from 1315-1317 in (mainly Northern) Europe and a possible climate impact cf. Dodds 2007.

²³ Seidel 1999, 51.

lic welfare, the frescoes, with their portrayal of a secure, rich harvest can also be understood as a subtle depiction of the government's legitimisation strategy.

According to Seidel, the policies of the republic concerning infrastructure are depicted even more concretely. Although the responsibility for maintaining land and water routes theoretically fell under the regalia of the emperor, from the High Middle Ages onwards the related rights and duties had in fact mostly been handed over to various rulers depending on the region.²⁴ Residents were often called upon to maintain the routes, but in the Italian city states the local council usually organised the construction and maintenance of public roads itself.²⁵ The street in the foreground of the picture displaying the effects of *Buon Governo* on the countryside is, according to Seidel, a classic example of a *strata magistra*. It has a plastered surface, as stipulated by the Sienese *Statuto dei Viarî*, is well lit and traverses the country in a clear manner, as laid down by the security measures of the *Nove* against highwaymen.²⁶ In terms of its building technique, the bridge visible in the background also provides a reference to the contemporary measures of the *Nove*, who replaced the old wooden and stone bridges in the valley of the Arbia River and thereby enabled the transport of heavy materials such as millstones as well as roof beams for the construction of cathedrals.²⁷ Moreover, it is indubitably no coincidence that the cultural landscape in the background displays a mill, as a rich harvest and the transport of crops into the town were closely connected with the concern for milling grain.²⁸ Here too, the regiment of the *Nove* is celebrated in the picture as a guarantor of security and economic prosperity, or, read inversely, the controlling, possibly expropriating involvement of the "state" is discernible here. The Republic of Siena, in fact, not only operated an active policy of street construction, but in the area of water supply even ensured the well-being of the city inhabitants as early as the 14th century with miles of subterranean aqueducts.²⁹

What the banner of *securitas* demands is thus made visible in the cultural landscape: "That each person may go on his way freely without fear and everyone may cultivate his field by means of work, as long as the local authorities keep this lady in power, for she has taken all strength away from the wrongdoers".³⁰ The allegory of *Buon Governo* repeats this on an abstract level, in con-

²⁴ Szabó 2007, 107.

²⁵ Cf. Duvia 2007, 212-213; Stopani 1993, 28-29.

²⁶ Seidel 1999, 53-54; 55-58.

²⁷ Seidel 1999, 54-55.

²⁸ Cf. Balestracci 2003.

²⁹ Cf. Balestracci 2003.

³⁰ "SENZA PAURA OGN UOM FRANCO CAMINI/ E LAVORANDO SEMINI CIASCUNO/ MENTRE CHE TAL COMUNE/ MANTERRÀ QUESTA DON[N]A I[N] SIGNORIA/ CH'EL À LEVATA A' REI OGNI BALIA". In historical scholarship the lady (*donna*) is generally considered to be *Iustitia*, but the inscription on the board seems to refer

nection with state theory. The equivalent is ultimately also found in macrocosmic congruence on the medallions above the fresco by means of the portrayal of the planet Mercury and the moon, which are understood to be the cause of, or at least a beneficial factor in, the human activities shown on the fresco – something that is disputed by contemporaries. The embodiment of astrology in the medallion under the fresco supports this interpretation.³¹ Lorenzetti's frescoes can be read on several levels and from different perspectives. *Securitas* is portrayed, among other things, as a worldly governmental aim to be striven for in a sociopolitical sense and is brought into connection with very pragmatic, material concerns: security of the roads, agricultural well-being and livelihood, trade and exchange, peace and legal security.

This observation therefore expands findings from conceptual history relating to contemporary intellectual discourses, which were usually shaped by clergymen and sometimes by lawyers, and clearly differentiates them. The conceptual history of the semantic field of *securitas* (and related terms) is unfortunately not sufficiently elaborated for the Medieval millenium.³² On the one hand, a theological discourse which opposed *securitas* and *certitudo* to each other can be traced from late antiquity to the period of the Protestant Reformation (strongly simplified): Augustine sees *securitas* as a negative standpoint in contrast to *certitudo*, certainty of faith, and Martin Luther still describes *securitas* as the standpoint of those who do not trust God. The term *certitudo* underwent a differentiation in the course of the Middle Ages, which can ideally be divided along three lines: theological 'salvation certainty', philosophical 'knowledge certainty' and political 'operation certainty', whereas in the Late Middle Ages, the term *securitas*, in terms of ancient perceptions, still seems to have been experiencing a kind of Renaissance.³³ This ancient perception of *securitas publica*, which referred to the pragmatic aspects mentioned above (security of the streets, etc.) had been taken up again since the High Middle Ages, at the latest in the context of the discussion of the ruler's concern for *utilitas publica* (John of Salisbury, Thomas Aquinas).³⁴

Lorenzetti's frescoes therefore show conceptual facets of *securitas* which only at first glance have little to do with the high-brow discourse of the theolo-

to the personification who holds her and who is labeled as SECVRITAS; see Delumeau 1989, 22. The differentiation between *iustitia* and *securitas* is actually not clear here, either iconographically or conceptually.

³¹ Starn 1994, 96; Greenstein 1988, 498-500. On the planet children see Blume 2000. There was no agreement on the impact of stars on human life among contemporaries since the determination of man by stars was not in line with the religiously motivated postulate of human autonomy. The majority of contemporaries, however, assumed at least a certain impact of stars on human action, cf. Kunze, 1986, 183-185.

³² Cf. for this passage Arends 2008; Liesner 2002; Conze 1984; Makropoulos 1995; Schrimm-Heins 1990; Kingreen 2003, 27-28.

³³ Liesner 2002, 80-81.

³⁴ See below note 37; Eberhard 1985, 196-198.

gians. They tie in with the ancient tradition, but are conceptually broadened by transcendent cosmological references and are interspersed with Christian ideals: ideal concepts such as peace and justice, material goods as well as income, livelihood and advancement. These very practical, material concepts shaped the social order and the material housing of the people, namely city and nature, as shown by the cultural landscape in front of the gates of the city. Microcosm and macrocosm, city and country, rulers and ruled are analogously related to one another. The astrological interdependence of macrocosm and microcosm was compatible with Christian perceptions, since in the book of nature it was possible to recognise the will of God, who at the same time, using Aristotelian logic, was also thought to move the stars as a *prima causa*.³⁵ Hence, in descriptive terminology, the unmistakable aims of Renaissance security can be identified as public welfare and services. Christian ideals (*caritas, misericordia*) not only obligated individuals but also governances to care for public welfare.³⁶ The public services stretched to collective goods such as the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, but also the provision of food and protection from violence and injustice. Classic areas of what is today understood as “human security”, which it was in the interest of the government to provide owing to the benefit of it for trade and exchange, are thereby covered.³⁷ A *Buon governo* that saw a threat to this security thus had to seek counter-measures, preventively protect its citizens, organise help in emergencies and rebuild what was destroyed.

Using Siena as an example, it has already been seen how these kinds of counter-measures might have looked in the case of crop failures, imminent price increases and famine in 1330 and 1340. It was possible to supplement measures such as forced loans and the import of grain with regulations against price increases and the construction and maintenance of city corn houses as storage facilities to ensure against supply shortages.³⁸ They were intended to guarantee the security of the community, but were also necessary for the military, and were part of city politics. However, not only the city as an enclosed space, but also the infrastructure built in the *contado* provided security against the threat from hostile nations and from nature. This infrastructure included roads and bridges, ditches, dams, fountains and roadhouses. These had to be constructed and maintained, and not only in Siena, but also in Florence, the

³⁵ Cf. North 1986, 55-56, 74-75; Weltecke 2003, 188-189; Schenk 2010, 508-509.

³⁶ Levin 2004, 22-24.

³⁷ Cf. note 1; on the duty of the ruler see Ptolemaeus, book 2, chapter 12, 553: “Ut autem stratae in sua communitate sint liberae, et transeuntibus forent securae, iura principibus permittunt pedagia. [...] amplius autem, et viarum securitas in regimine regni principibus est fructuosa, quia illuc magis confluunt mercatores cum mercibus, unde et regnum in divitiis crescit [...]” Cf. also Conze 1984.

³⁸ For Florence cf. Pinto 1978, 22-23, 107-120. For examples from the 15th century north of the Alps cf. Jörg 2008, 178-318.

whole of Tuscany, and generally throughout Europe, albeit with strong regional differences in quality, quantity and day-to-day administration.³⁹

Securitas, Infrastructure and Averting Danger

A second aspect of the topic now comes into focus: Natural hazards and disasters also represent a threat to societal security owing to the destruction of infrastructure. In fact, an extreme natural occurrence by definition only becomes a disaster if society is affected. Disasters are always the result of complex, historically-induced and process-driven causalities at the intersections between nature and culture.⁴⁰ The sociopolitical dimension plays a large part in the reaction to or prevention of disasters by societies. Political power thereby consists not only of forms of causal power such as, for example, the ability to assert one's own wishes in a social relationship, even in the face of adversity.⁴¹ In the sense of Hannah Arendt, it can also include modal forms of political power, for example, the self-empowerment of groups by means of common perceptions, attitudes and specific actions.⁴²

This becomes particularly perceptible in the case of disasters that are not connected with an everyday threat from natural forces, but instead shake a community suddenly and perturbingly, such as earthquakes, for example. These occurrences were often understood as God's reaction to sinful behaviour of the community and as a warning sign encouraging people to return to God and repent – a demonstration of *certitudo* in belief was therefore desired in order to regain the *securitas* of the community. Common practices of this kind were masses and Rogation processions for the purpose of re-establishing unity, strength of belief and solidarity, and to protect the community from future danger.⁴³ When in 1466 Siena was shaken by an earthquake on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary (15th August), the day of the city's patron saint, of all days, the people reacted with a procession – quite typical behaviour, as will be seen.⁴⁴

However, besides tradition-bound forms of behaviour, the ways of dealing with recurring dangers could also lead to specific formalised behavioural patterns and sociopolitical order configurations, e.g. rule-governed behaviour as well as the formation of cooperatives and administrations that were responsible

³⁹ Cf. e.g. Seidel 1999, 139-140; Casali 1995, 53-91.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hewitt 1997; Oliver-Smith 2002, 25-26 ("multidimensionality of disaster"), 43-45; García-Acosta 2002, 60-62.

⁴¹ Weber 2005, 38.

⁴² Arendt 1970, 45; Krause and Rölli 2008, 7-18.

⁴³ Delumeau 1989, 90-176; Schenk 2009a, 73-74.

⁴⁴ Morandi 1964, 98-99; the earthquake is not registered by Guidoboni and Comastri 2005 and would deserve a detailed investigation.

for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. These types of reaction to and the prevention of disasters were often oriented towards public welfare, which, however, was defined in different ways and could become the subject of dispute. Conflicts concerning what brings security to the community are particularly illuminating for the question of competing agents, beneficiaries, winners and losers and their argumentation and legitimisation strategies when providing security.⁴⁵ In the following, a few examples of these kinds of conflicts and of how they were handled administratively beyond the Republic of Siena will be presented.

Case Studies: Florence and Strasbourg

The commune of Florence, which established itself as a republic in the 12th century and constructed an extensive network of roads and bridges throughout its *contado* in a phase of expansion in the 13th and 14th centuries, serves as the first example.⁴⁶ During the years 1360-1370, the plain from *San Salvi* and *Ricorvoli* to the east of the gates of Florence faced the threat of floods due to the meandering Arno. After a catastrophic flood that claimed hundreds of lives in November 1333, the commune passed a strict ban on obstructing the course of the river in this zone with weirs for mills, for example.⁴⁷ However, the security of the city faced a different threat as a result, because no mills for the production of flour would have been available in the case of a siege.⁴⁸ Soon the commune allowed mills to be operated precisely in the aforementioned zone, which increased the danger of floods due to backwater, but also generated jobs and tax revenues.⁴⁹ In 1371, the republic decided by way of precaution to protect the northern banks with a wall at the residents' expense, because a vital street to Bologna traversed this area.⁵⁰ No lasting success seems to have been achieved, however, because in 1380/81 a commission of the responsible administrative body, the *Ufficio di Torre*, inspected the locality and decided on extensive building measures.⁵¹ A short time later, one of the local mill operators was sued for damages by a neighbour, because the backwater had damaged his private property. In 1383, the defendant fought back with an expert's report based on Roman law about ownership rights and liability laws in connection

⁴⁵ Schenk 2009b, 18

⁴⁶ Cf. for general issues Luzzati 1986; La Roncière 2005, 27-100.

⁴⁷ Cf. Schenk 2007, 367, 373-374; La Roncière 2005, 130-133.

⁴⁸ Cf. on the communal mills Muendel 1991, 375; Papaccio 2008, 76-79.

⁴⁹ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Provvisioni Reg. 55, fol. 135r+v (February 1368).

⁵⁰ Cantini 1800, 118.

⁵¹ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Capitani di Parte guelfa, numeri rossi 105, fol. 33r; *ibid.*, Provvisioni Reg. 70, fol. 65r+v; *ibid.*, Provvisioni Dupl. 37, fol. 145v-157v. On the complex history of the multifunctional *Ufficio di Torre* and its different elements and names see Guidi 1981, 283-293; Casali 1995, 53-72; La Roncière 2005, 57-73.

with the private usage of public goods, which was compiled by the Florentine lawyer Donato Ricchi de Aldighieri. The expert was a pupil of the famous jurist Bartolo de Sassoferrato (1313/14-1357), in his time the author of the first large medieval treatise about usage rights, property rights and liability law in the context of meandering rivers.⁵² The legal situation was complicated, because the mill operator's private usage led to damages for the commune, whose costs were transferred to the general public by means of taxes. Nevertheless, the expert acquitted the mill operator of indemnity claims.⁵³ However, the flooding problem remained virulent and at intervals it caused severe, sometimes catastrophic damage to the course of the Arno. During the course of the next two centuries, institutions specialising in building infrastructure, such as the above-mentioned *Ufficio di Torre*, among others, worked to combat the consequences of flooding. Although the term "security" is not explicitly used in the sources here, we can talk about a kind of "security policy" in the Florentine republic. Just as Lorenzetti's allegory of *securitas* implicitly addresses the responsibility of the *Buon Governo* of the *Nove* for the infrastructure in Siena, the responsibility of the republic of Florence for the *bonum commune* in the city and *Contado* becomes perceptible.

After the Medici came to power in 1530, taxes were regularly levied on draught cattle in order to finance the costs of building infrastructure.⁵⁴ This was justified with reference to the economic benefits of using streets and bridges for trade, and the duty of the Medici government to the *felice stato*.⁵⁵ *Stato* is not to be understood as the modern state; the term has an overtone here that can perhaps be expressed in English as "state" in the sense of "situation, circumstances", or as "public welfare" – the rulers were under obligation to create a state of contentment within the community. This wording should not hide the fact that the cattle tax primarily affected not the traders in the city, but the regional farmers. However, land owners also benefitted from repair and adjustment measures. After a flood in September 1557, for example, the property belonging to the heir of Ottaviano de' Medici on the river *Marina*, just before it joins the *Bisenzio*, was damaged. The commune of Florence examined and

⁵² Significant edition: Cavallar 2004.

⁵³ Edition of the expert opinion in Cantini 1800, 119-122.

⁵⁴ Cf. for general issues Mannori 2005, 59-90; on the history of administration of infrastructures under the Medici cf. Spini 1976; Pratilli 1998; Vivoli 1998.

⁵⁵ Cf. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Capitani di parte guelfa, numeri rossi 105, fol. 299v (1533), fol. 311v (1545); *ibid.*, Senato dei quarantotto, 14, fol. 56r (23 July 1549), *Volendo l'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo s(ign)or il s(ign)or Duca di Fiorenza per remedio all'infiniti danni che fanno et farebbono e fiumi del suo amplissimo et felice stato se e' non vi si obviassi et advertendo che di tal suo desiderio e non se ne può vedere facilmente l'effecto senza qualche buono et certo assegnamento di denari [...]*. The republic had charged fees as well but in most cases limited in duration or location.

repaired the damages in this zone.⁵⁶ From the middle of the 13th century onwards, the Republic of Florence, later the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, at first reacted to the threat posed by floods to security, infrastructure and prosperity with commissions that were formed ad hoc, then in the course of time, due to the expansion of the territories and the growing complexity of the state system, with specialised administrative units.⁵⁷ Despite certain tendencies towards centralisation, the actions of the Florentine administration were mostly just reactions. Private economic interests, political-military expansions, natural hazards and security requirements drove this development. The interplay of local requirements and the reaction from Florence had a formative effect on administration and ‘state’.⁵⁸ In line with recent research, one can speak here of “empowering interactions” between the sociopolitical “below” and “above”.⁵⁹ It was only in the period of the Medici that this trend towards a type of re-feudalisation was broken.⁶⁰

However, the provision of security could also take place on other levels, which are discussed in more detail in historical research due to their (reputedly) typical “Medieval” character. For example, from the middle of the 14th until the 17th century, the commune of Florence was accustomed to ask for divine help in the case of bad weather, earthquakes, epidemics, war, religious or political unrest, or for intercession and mercy in view of these afflictions, by carrying out processions in honour of and with a picture of the Madonna from nearby Impruneta.⁶¹ Moral wrongdoing was namely seen as a cause of threats to security, even those posed by natural hazards. This was supported by a widespread school of thought based on the theological concept of punishment, which saw analogies with the biblical Flood in the sense of a “peccatogenic cause study”: God was cautioning or punishing the sinful world by means of a disaster.⁶²

Soon after a devastating earthquake turned thousands of houses into rubble in the Mugello valley north of Florence in the night of 12th to 13th June 1542, the senate forbade sodomy and blasphemy in unusually clear language, seem-

⁵⁶ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Capitani di parte guelfa, numeri neri 960, no. 87 and the drawing between nos. 248 and 249: Report by Domenico di Zanobi on damage to the property of Filippo Arrighetti and Carlo Strozzi. It probably refers to the former property of Ottaviano de’ Medici (1484-1546), father of the later Pope Leo XI (1605).

⁵⁷ See comments above, notes 51 and 54 and Guarini 2000, passage 2.

⁵⁸ Nicholas 1997, 156 even characterises the late medieval Italian city administration as “overgoverned”.

⁵⁹ On this concept see Blockmans et al. 2009.

⁶⁰ Cf. Rombai 1994, 4.

⁶¹ Casotti 1714; Trexler 1972; Processions might be a kind of ritual to calm God’s anger.

⁶² Groh et al. 2003, 20, mentions “peccatogene(n) Ursachenforschung”.

ingly owing to this sign of God's wrath.⁶³ The Florentine senate was under the control of the Medici family, who originally came from the Mugello valley. Even though Duke Cosimo I de' Medici himself seems to have rejected an interpretation of the occurrence along the lines of the theological concept of punishment, as a letter reveals, nevertheless the government of Florence clearly held itself responsible for the moral "state" (*stato*) of the community.⁶⁴ Thus, processions, moral obligations and bans on luxury items could be understood as contemporary security policies.

This was not only the case in Florence. When the earth moved in Strasbourg in 1357, but without causing much damage, the Strasbourg City Council forbade its citizens from wearing gold jewellery not befitting their social status. In addition, the City Council specially decreed an annual procession of penitents, which had the explicit purpose of pacifying God's wrath and can therefore be understood as a type of appeasement ritual.⁶⁵ This procession was to be repeated yearly and was connected with a sacrifice in honour of Mary, the patron saint of the city, and with alms given to the city's poor. This so-called "Saint Lucas procession" was in fact continued until the first third of the 16th century as a type of admonitory *memoria* of the earthquake. The decree of alms additionally represents a demonstration of Christian virtues such as *caritas* and *misericordia*.⁶⁶ The aim of this was evidently to spell out the duty of the rich to take care of the poor. As was the case with the ban on gold jewellery, the correct social order, i.e. the relationship between the social upper and lower class that prevailed despite all differences, is thereby choreographed. The objective of the portrayal is thus the establishment of the order willed by God as a condition for the security of the whole community.

Nevertheless, this provision of security by means of actions was by no means socially inclusive, but rather the opposite. For one thing, it aimed only symbolically, not materially, at a social balance. For another, it also allowed communities to react to the actual or perceived threat to their security by searching for scapegoats. In historical scholarship, this is discussed using the example of the Jewish pogroms of 1348 as a reaction to the plague (Jews as well-poisoners) and the witch-hunting as a reaction to the worsening of the climate and the crop failures of the Little Ice Age.⁶⁷ Both examples are not without their problems, however: The Jewish pogroms very often had other

⁶³ Cf. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Senato dei Quarantotto 5, fol. 7v-9v, 33r+v; *ibid.*, Senato dei Quarantotto 14, fol. 56r; on the earthquake Bellandi and Rhodes 1987, 1 and the *Catalogo dei forti terremoti d'Italia*, dated June 13, 1542.

⁶⁴ Letter: Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, Filza 4299, fol. 253r. On the theology of punishment cf. Ildefonso 1785, 251-253 with regard to bad weather in 1511.

⁶⁵ Cf. Schenk 2010, 516-517.

⁶⁶ For the presence of the virtues in daily life cf. Nari 1991.

⁶⁷ Cf. with differences in detail Graus 1988, 335-340, 377-389; Behringer 1999.

causes – for example, economic, political, or religious.⁶⁸ There are also arguments against drawing parallels between the worsening climate and witch hunts: The accusations of weather-related magic were frequently rooted in, for example, familial, neighbourly or sociopolitical conflicts and only had serious effects when a particularly zealous inquisitor was in the area.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, there are connections between catastrophic weather events, the increase in the number of accusations of weather-related magic and witch hunts. A causal connection between strong precipitation, a landslide and the persecution of Jews can even be attested to in at least one case (Ravensburg 1430).⁷⁰ This form of social security provision by means of persecuting “guilty” fringe groups thus had an extremely excluding character. With the cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas, one can suspect that a common cultural model underlies both the moral obligations and the search for scapegoats, namely a culture-specific perception of purity that is threatened by sin in the form of deviant behaviour or maladjusted groups.⁷¹ It is still to be clarified to what extent this search for culpability and culprits after a disaster is rooted more in cultural than religious conditions and to what extent it is culture- and epoch-specific.

Caritas as a kind of elementary care for the members of a society who were in need was more widespread in the Middle Ages than it appears at first glance. Survival was part of human security, while the securing of this survival was a duty of the government, even if all too often the means did not suffice for this purpose. This was also the case in connection with disasters. In the summer of 1529, the Upper Rhine Plain was struck by a flood disaster. Hundreds, perhaps even thousands of refugees made their way to Strasbourg and found acceptance. The city brought them to a *Barfüsserkloster* and other religious establishments, fed them, and let those fit for employment work on the city fortifications.⁷² Contemporaries suspected that not only the weather, but also flaws in the water engineering of the smaller rivers Ill, Bruche, Zems and Brunnwasser had caused the flood disaster. The Strasbourg bishop, Wilhelm (III) von Hohnstein (1506-1541) formulated this very clearly, as a letter from 28th September 1529 reveals.⁷³ He was a member of a cooperative which since the start of the 15th century had been dealing with improvements to watercourses as

⁶⁸ Cf. the overview of previous research in Toch 2003, 59-67, 110-120.

⁶⁹ Cf. especially with regard to Alsace Behringer and Jerouschek 2000, 9-97.

⁷⁰ Cf. Wolff 2008, 486-487. I owe this evidence to Karel Hruza.

⁷¹ See Douglas 1992, 3-121.

⁷² Cf. Winkelmann 1922, 150; Jütte 2005, 231-233; Jörg 2008, 264, 340.

⁷³ Strasbourg, Archives de ville, série VI 209 (33), No. 4: “Ersamen wÿsen lieben getruwen und besondern gut frundt, wir stehend jnn dheinen zwÿfel, euch sÿge unverborgen unnd jnn gutem wissen, wie die gröÙe unnd uberfluß der wassern des Rheins, Ýll, Zems unnd Brunnwasser disß vergangnen summer den gemeinen man, dern lantz ort von Colmar oben herab bisß gein Straßburg ein mercklichen schweren unnd verderblichen schaden zugefügt hatt ... dwil wir dann vernemen, das sollichs die groß mercklich nodturfft erfordert, domit unuberbringlicher verderblicher schad verhütet blibe”.

transport routes, the regulation of competing rights of use (fishing, mills, irrigation) and preventive measures against floods: the so-called *Illsassen*.⁷⁴ The earliest still existing contract between residents and persons holding rights in the watercourses, with a duration of 10 years, dates from the year 1404. The residents subsequently formed a cooperative and established an official river regiment dealing with rights and duties, the construction of dams and canals, bank reinforcement, inspections, penalty clauses, arbitration processes in the case of conflicts, etc. As stated in an Ill regulation of 1459, the union took place with the purpose of *gemeines nutzes und notdurfft* (common usage and emergency aid).⁷⁵ In other words: The Ill cooperative, with public welfare and the elimination of hardship as its objectives, represents a further type of institutionalised security provision in the Late Middle Ages.

The complex development of the Ill cooperative can only be mentioned briefly here. Besides the bishop and the Strasbourg cathedral chapter, the cities of Strasbourg, Schlettstadt and Kolmar, Ebersmunster Abbey, the Rappoltstein family, the Herrschaft Rathsamhausen and numerous small communes, among others, were involved in the cooperative during its first phase. As early as the 15th century, damage prevention is mentioned as a task of the cooperative in connection with river regulations; finally, in 1531, there are concrete discussions about the “prevention of future ruinous damages”.⁷⁶ In the years of crisis after 1530, the cooperative formed an *einung* (union) with detailed instructions that were summarised in a *wasserordnung* (water regulations). In the long run, this Ill cooperative was to become a political factor, but above all it played an important part in resolving conflicts, and ultimately, at the start of the 17th century, referred to its 29 members (incorrectly according to the law) as “Ill-stände” in the emerging corporative state. The Ill cooperative only came to an end with the French occupation of Alsace, whereby even the French intendant referred to the old rules, which were still to be taken as an approved basis.⁷⁷ In reality, the administration, which on the surface was highly centralised, seems to have been structured in a subsidiary manner.

In contrast to the situation in Florence, a pragmatic culture of adjustment established itself here amid converging and competing interests. The *Illsassen*, organised in a cooperative, carried out their tasks for centuries with some suc-

⁷⁴ Only basically known through Sittler 1952; and Eichenlaub 1990, 189-195. The author is preparing a detailed study on the Ill cooperative.

⁷⁵ Quotation: Strasbourg, Archives de ville, série VI 209 (1, 4); on ‘gemeiner Nutzen’ (common usage) in the friction between authority and cooperative cf. Eberhard 1986.

⁷⁶ Strasbourg, Archives de ville, série VI 209 (33), no. 11: The council of the bishop writes to the councillor of Strasbourg on November 6, 1531 on the extension of tasks to the river: “Zembs sampt anderen nebenflüssen mit besichtigen und nach jren guten gewißen ordnen sollen, wie sie am nutzlichstenn zu furkhemung verrer verderblicher schadenns achtenn mogenn [...]”.

⁷⁷ Cf. Sittler 1952, 145-146; Eichenlaub 1990, 193.

cess. In this context, it is almost certainly possible to speak of a type of state-building from below, which led to characteristic forms of regional politics with a subsidiary character. This political-legal concept of regulating a river for economic reasons is no exception, but is rather the rule in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Southwest of the empire.⁷⁸ In the empire to the north of the Alps, the cooperative organisation of public interests represented a substantial line of tradition in dealing with common goods as well as the political organisation of public welfare and the provision of security in town and country.

Here the term ‘security’ does not appear in the sources either, but can be interpreted descriptively. The differences between Tuscany and the Upper Rhine Valley with regard to the public organisation of security issues can be related to the specific historical development of the communities south and north of the Alps, but can also result from different legal traditions and last but not least, socioeconomic conditions. The differences as well as their reasons would deserve a detailed analysis.

Conclusion and Hypotheses

In Renaissance Europe, the provision of security represented a significant task of many different political communities. This encompassed firstly the concern for individual salvation, meaning that it searched for *certitudo* in faith. On a pragmatic level though, the provision of security was also the concern for protecting citizens from violence, war, injustice, hunger, price increases, disasters such as epidemics; the concern for public welfare (*salus publica*, *gemeiner nutzen* – the common good)⁷⁹ and thus ultimately also the concern for public services, i.e. food and infrastructure. The leaders legitimised their actions by, among other things, at least symbolically taking care of this security. The unique and early allegory of *securitas* in Lorenzetti’s fresco stands at least for this symbolic responsibility of a *Buon Governo*. Evidently only very modest instruments were available for this purpose in comparison to the present day. However, it needs to be stated that already prior to the beginning of the Early Modern period and maybe starting from the Italian town republics in an unique amalgam of ancient and medieval traditions a new, pragmatic concept of “security” began to develop. Without being mentioned explicitly, it represented one of several reasons for the development of specialised institutions which were supposed to take care of e.g. infrastructure, buildings, protection from misery

⁷⁸ Of importance are e.g. the “Runsgenossenschaften” and the “Schuttergenossen” east of the river Rhine, with a “Schutter” court to resolve legal issues and quarrels. Cf. Mone 1852 for the east of the Rhine; Gerlach 1990, 45, for the river Main 125-129.

⁷⁹ Cf. Eberhard 1986.

and violence and the maintenance of law and order.⁸⁰ In the Late Middle Ages, the provision of security itself displays an astonishing plurality of forms. It took place at the most diverse levels, from the emerging *gute policey* and the developing legal system to city statutes and sovereign regulations. Politically, it tended to be organised from above, as was the case in Florence, but in certain sectors there was also interaction between above and below, as the example of the Ill cooperative shows. André Holenstein coined the term “empowering interaction” for this and characterised the related effects as “statebuilding from below”.⁸¹ The question of who provided security in the encompassing sense mentioned, and in what way, has a place at the centre of political debate.

In 1981, the economic historian Eric Lionel Jones identified the specific connection between environment, the capitalist economic system and political structure as a significant basis for the “European miracle”. He especially makes a strong case for the argument that in Europe a particular ability to combat disasters in the form of politically, economically and technologically organised protection of society from the environment was developed as early as the European Middle Ages.⁸² Although this appears questionable in its exclusivity – societies outside of Europe also knew how to protect themselves from disasters – nevertheless, the combination of political legitimisation with institutionalised provision of security as an interrelated strategy of rulers and the ruled could be unique to Europe.

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⁸⁰ The *securitas publica* was only explicitly established in the 17th century as a political key concept; cf. Simon 2004, 221-222.

⁸¹ Cf. Holenstein 2009.

⁸² Cf. Jones 1991, particularly XIV-XXXIX, 3-79.

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