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Burgomasters of Stockholm as Agents of the Crown and Self-Interest (1590–1640)

During the late sixteenth and the first decades of the seventeenth century, Sweden's urban administration was in turmoil. Appointments were – especially in Stockholm – under constant surveillance and the agency of office-holders was tied to the Crown in ways it had never been before. Not only were candidates assessed in novel ways, but some of them were also given powers that exceeded the traditional roles and scope of agency. Political circumstances had always been a crucial factor in determining urban administration, but this was especially so during this period, which was witnessing administrative, political and economic reforms that aimed not only to tighten the royal grip on authority but also to cement Sweden's status as a great power.¹

The highest governmental and judicial administrative body in Stockholm was the magistrates' court (or magistrates' council) (*rådstugurätt*).² Traditionally, burgomasters (*borgmästare*) and magistrates (*rådmän*) represented bourgeois values and had similar interests to the burghers of the town. However, from the 1620s on, the royal mayors increasingly directed the magistrates' court to assume the governance of the town and emphasised the Burghers' subservience to them. The burgomasters and magistrates began to emphasise their own paternalistic rule in the belief that they knew what was best for the townsfolk.³ This chapter sets out to study to what extent this is reflected in the changing agency of office-holders between 1590 and 1640, as this is the period in which the most significant changes in urban administration occurred. As the roles within it became gradually more formalised and bureaucratic, it also became more common for burgomasters and magistrates to be professionally trained for their duties⁴.

However, these changes did not just happen by themselves; they were instigated by individuals, the context of whose agency exists in a certain political, economic and cultural space. In any prevailing social culture – now and in the past – there is a cultural model with a shared system of meanings that provides individuals with the means to act within society. As a part of their continuous interaction with their surroundings, individuals interpret and modify their conception of the real world so as to be able to better control their life and environment. Both individual and communal

experiences of this interaction are organised within a shared culture that creates a foundation for meaningful action.⁵ In terms of the agency of early modern office-holders, this means that individuals and communities had their own sense of commonly accepted administrative behaviour based on their own and their ancestors' experiences. Transforming social and organizational structures showed the functional limits of this agency and whether new modes of action could be practised within them or not.

This chapter deals with early modern office-holding in Stockholm. It concentrates on the official ethos that guided this administrative and judicial work as well as the practical duties and responsibilities of the office-holders. I use "ethos" not so much in its rhetorical sense but more generally to refer to the ethical and moral stance of the office-holders – two aspects that are closely connected. For example, what kind of ethical principles, values and norms guided burgomasters, and how did this affect their agency during this period? It is self-evident that a modern understanding of office as a kind of 'job' (with a salary and norms and regulations determining one's agency) cannot be applied to the early modern era. The office-holders in question here must be interpreted within their own temporal and spatial context.

Many answers to these questions can be found in the extensive court record books of Stockholm.⁶ I also use the sporadically preserved correspondence between the Stockholm magistrates and the Crown. These sources, with ethos and morality as methodological key concepts, will be analysed in detail to see what more we can learn about the agency of office-holders. Another source will be Stockholm's register of office-holders,⁷ which, as a database, will allow me not only to create a wider picture of the burgomasters as a group but to also make comparisons. It is quite obvious that the educated office-holders of the seventeenth century were creating a new practice of office-holding at the local level. This database contains the basic personal information about both burgomasters and scribes and details of their careers and responsibilities,⁸ though the focus will be mainly on burgomasters as their agency is more visible than that of magistrates or scribes.

Burgomasters were essentially the leaders of the town, even though royal mayors came to constitute a further, higher, level in the urban hierarchy. Even if most of the agency of office-holders happened behind the scenes and cannot be traced via the sources, there were some striking conflicts that highlight the generally accepted norms of agency for these offices. One burgomaster who stretched his agency to the limits was an innkeeper called Hans Nilsson Benick (–1639), who was appointed a royal mayor in 1624⁹. He was either an exception among Stockholm office-holders – in unscrupulously exploiting his position and connections with the Crown – or else he was just unlucky to have his deeds revealed. Either way, he presents us with a unique perspective on early modern agency and so is often used as an example in this chapter.

Stockholm's history has been studied in detail ever since the 19th century, not only because of its central role in Swedish history as the capital city but also because of its rich and well-preserved source material. In particular, studies by Lars Ericson, Robert Sandberg, Åke Sandström, Arne

Jansson in the “Stockholm blir huvudstad” (Stockholm becomes a capital) project, and later by Marko Lamberg, give us a varied and thorough picture of the town and its administration during the Middle Ages and the early modern period.¹⁰ However, there are few researchers who refer to office-holding in this context with an emphasis on ethics and morality.¹¹ This is surprising when one considers that during the formalization of these institutions and organizations, there was plenty of room for individual agency. The normative framework was too general to specifically guide the conduct of office-holders, so actors had a crucial role in interpreting and redefining political and administrative values and the arguments and modes of action that were based on these values. An administration is rarely just a faceless organization – it gets its specific form from the actual behaviour of individuals and groups.¹²

Another point is that the practical problems of the state-building process have remained largely unstudied, with most researchers focusing on the visible structures and legislation of emerging nation states.¹³ In this chapter, I understand state-building not so much as a straightforward and systematic process but rather as the Crown’s general effort to establish organizations and mechanisms that were more goal-oriented than those of previous times. It was in the Crown’s interest to institutionalise the state as a political and social construction, and there were certain political conventions that guided the work. Different towns and other local communities had their own political cultures, and in this sense state-building meant also unifying different opinions on jurisdiction, administration and the role and status of office-holders.

The urban administrators and the burghers were acting under pressure from the growing authority of an emerging centralised nation state. This process began during the reign of Gustavus Vasa in the sixteenth century and reached completion in the first half of the seventeenth. Its central architects were King Gustavus Adolphus (1594–1632) and his chancellor Axel Oxenstierna (1583–1654).¹⁴ To function properly, the new state needed a centralised administration, and Stockholm became increasingly important as many of the new organisations the state required were based in the capital. Because of the city’s physical proximity to the organs of central power, it enabled close communication between the city and state authorities on both formal and informal levels, which meant that Stockholm differed from other towns in the realm as its administration and jurisdiction could be more directly influenced by the central government and personal interaction with its officers.¹⁵

Stockholm proved to be the test bed for administrative reforms, and those that worked there were then adopted in other cities in Sweden. The gradual bureaucratization of governmental and judicial processes had already begun at the start of the seventeenth century. Lars Ericson has – according to Max Weber – named five characteristics of bureaucratization: a hierarchy of offices, a written culture of administration, full-time employment, clearly outlined fields of operation, and regulations guiding agency. Bureaucratization is regarded as including professionalization, in which education and training

are emphasized.¹⁶

The beginning of the seventeenth century was exceptional in many ways, and the 1620s and 1630s were especially turbulent. The growing burden of taxation arising from the mounting expenses of Gustavus Adolphus's various wars were duly felt by the realm's subjects, and growing discontent was channelled into various kinds of resistance. The year 1623 was particularly unsettled due to riots and their aftermath, but also because it alerted the burghers to fact that control and authority in Stockholm were about to shift to the Crown and its local representatives for good.¹⁷

Bureaucratization and agency in urban context

In the bourgeois tradition of administration, the urban office-holders – the burgomasters and magistrates – were the representatives of the burghers regardless of how they had been elected. For this reason, the interaction between the town administration and the burghers was tantamount to a discourse between equals. Whereas experience in trade and local government had previously been valued in choosing new magistrates, a gradual process of bureaucratization starting in the 1620s brought changes to this relationship as office-holders increasingly became elected on the basis of their academic merits. The Crown had always taken an interest in Stockholm's burgomaster elections, and now the strengthening central power created an opportunity for a more systematic control of the realm's most important town with the creation of the new office of royal mayors.¹⁸

At the same time as royal mayors were appearing in the courthouse, two other trends were discernible: the endeavour of both the Crown and the magistrates' courts to emphasise the administrative hierarchy and their joint efforts to discipline the burghers into obedient subjects. These ideas were not novel, but they were formalised and made more explicit in the 1620s and 1630s. As a result, the political importance of the burghers notably decreased. The whole of Stockholm became, in effect, like the central government's sixth collegial body, run along strict lines by the royal mayors and then, from 1634, by Governor General (*överståthållare*) of Stockholm Claes Fleming (1592–1644). At the local level, the central government's efforts to increase the efficiency of government led to a redefinition of traditional power relations as the new office-holders – the royal mayors and the Governor General – fractured the traditional hierarchies of power in Stockholm. For the burghers, this meant that political activity now had to be channelled into the paths defined by the authorities, and this led to a diminution of possibilities for interaction between the authorities and their subjects and even less influence for the burghers.¹⁹

In fact, the burgomasters and magistrates, too, witnessed a shrinking in their room for agency, as the Crown's grip on urban administration and the magistrates' court grew tighter during this period. In spite of these changes, however, the burgomasters and magistrates still took care of their everyday practical duties in traditional ways. The administrative system, in which

the duties and responsibilities of office holders were not regulated and were largely undefined, meant that they had to assume numerous different roles: they were judges and administrators, negotiators and tax authorities, spokesmen and arbitrators. All of these roles included different kinds of tasks involving different abilities and skills for interaction. The urban administrators mainly worked in collaboration and quite often also under pressure from both the representatives of the Crown and the burghers, which set limits to their agency.

As the variety of roles suggests, the agency of burgomasters and magistrates was shaped by several factors. Generally in early modern society, an individual's origin and estate was important in defining his scope for action, and this also applied to office-holders. Individual agency did not consist in some kind of unchangeable condition but was the result of a continuous process created in interaction with other agents. An individual's past influenced the construction of his agency as his background and origin were valued differently in different roles. A person's social, political and economic networks and his urban status as a burgher thus had an effect on agency, but these are rarely visible in the source material. Probably the way in which he was elected and status of his office in the urban hierarchy were also significant in defining the possibilities for an individual's agency.

Urban office-holding and agency in the whirlpool of politics

In spite of the centralizing reforms, the practices of administration and jurisdiction remained largely the same during this period. However, the authority of the magistrates' court was determined by those elected to office. Burgomasters and magistrates had traditionally been chosen to take care of administrative and judicial duties on behalf of the bourgeoisie, their office more a position of trust than a full-time occupation, as the compensation they received for the time spent administrating and judging was not sufficient to provide them with a living. In practice, this meant that only the wealthier burghers could afford the time for such a position. For craftsmen, for example, it would have been inconceivable for them to spend days in the courthouse.²⁰ Perhaps for this reason, only two burgomasters, Matthias Trost (1582–1648) and Jakob Grundell (1590–1663), were originally craftsmen, but evidently they were both exceptionally wealthy. Only one craftsman was appointed a magistrate, but he resigned the office after two years because he could not afford to execute it. Although from the 1620s on more burgomasters came to be appointed for their academic merits and experience in the service of the Crown, the majority of magistrates were still merchants. They were not necessarily the richest ones but those who represented the group directly below them in the social hierarchy.²¹

Although state-building is often portrayed as a carefully thought-out process, in reality the practical decisions like recruiting office-holders for central government were often ad hoc and made according to the current situation. Recruiting competent officers for the central government was

a challenging task since at the same time Stockholm's local government also needed men of the same ilk. As a result, many office-holders (especially burgomasters) had worked for the Crown before serving Stockholm or were promoted to such offices after their urban administrative careers.²²

Thus urban office-holding was largely manned by an urban elite; this could create an ethical and moral problem since King Magnus Eriksson's (1316–1374) medieval Town Law stipulated that every group of residents be represented in Stockholm's administration.²³ There was also a clause against nepotism in the code, but there were no exact regulations defining which familial relationships were too close in this respect.²⁴ As there is no evidence of specific problems connected with family relationships among the office-holders or complaints about the somewhat elitist nature of the administration, it would seem that the people of the time were content with the situation.

The practical agency of office-holders was also restricted and guided by an oath of office that they were required to swear before assuming their posts. The Swedish oath formula was defined in the Town Law of King Magnus Eriksson. In their oath, burgomasters and magistrates pledged to treat everybody fairly and impartially and to be loyal to the Crown. So, if the fairness or honour of a burgomaster or magistrate was questioned, it basically meant that he was being accused of breaking his oath.²⁵ In early modern society, oaths were crucial in defining power relations, loyalties and responsibilities, and thus they were also a significant factor in determining agency.

Urban office-holders had to work within a complex network of political, social and economic circumstances that often determined how they could act. This was especially the case during the 1590s, when both aspirants to the throne (Sigismund III of Poland (1566–1632) and Duke Charles (1550–1611)) were trying to use Stockholm's administrators as pawns in their struggle for succession. One of the key administrative positions was the office of town scribe, and the fluctuating status of its incumbents seems to reflect the on-going turbulent power struggles, but for the period in focus the source material reveals surprisingly little about the agency of these office-holders. When a scribe called Lars Henriksson died in 1592, for instance, he was succeeded by a magistrate, Berent Jönsson (d. 1597), for only a few months before the latter was replaced by Hans Hansson Bilefelt. Bilefelt was then arrested for being a supporter of Sigismund in 1598. He spent 31 weeks in jail, and afterwards he left Sweden, taking with him the city's court records and account books, which are still missing to this day. He had tried to resign in 1596 but was asked to stay on.²⁶ He gave no reason for his desire to resign, but we can suppose that it was to do with the ongoing political turmoil. On the other hand, it is obvious that as a former law-reader with experience of working in the Council of the Realm, he could not be replaced easily. However, Duke Charles did not see replacing him as a problem.

Hans Hansson Bilefelt lived in Poland after leaving Sweden, as did the scribe Sven Jönsson, who ran off in 1617 after only two years in office, leaving the city archives in disarray behind him.²⁷ His predecessor, Karl Månsson Bure, had been ordered to resign in the spring of 1615 as he had

been negligent in his duties.²⁸ This shows that there were certain duties that scribes were required to perform, but it is not known exactly what derelictions incurred dismissal. Minor lapses were almost certainly overlooked, but not if they continued for a longer period. Scribes of this period had no formal education, but they evidently had good opportunities for advancement. Out of six ordinary scribes of this period, one later became a magistrate and two were appointed burgomasters, while the other three gained important positions of trust as representatives of both the burghers and the Crown.²⁹ Even though the above mentioned malpractices suggest that scribes sometimes might not meet the requirements of their office, as happened in other towns of the realm as well,³⁰ many of Stockholm's scribes, in particular, eventually made successful careers for themselves, which testifies to their competence as administrators. In an unofficial ordinance of 1619, the administrative duties of the scribe were further emphasised especially in Stockholm, and it is clear from these new guidelines that some education was required of them.³¹ But what eventually happened to the majority of these scribes suggests that it was not so much their competence, education or agency but their political loyalty that was crucial in determining their careers.

The office of scribe was highly esteemed and its demanding nature recognised. In a petition to the Crown in 1616, the burghers of Stockholm complained about the town's scribe's low "maintenance". They stated that he was paid only what his predecessors had received – "*så wääl som hans antecessores*", which was not much, and they petitioned that he might also receive a maintenance allowance like other scribes before him. They argued that the office was arduous, and without decent remuneration no scribe would stay in Stockholm, and they referred to the Crown's previous practice of the paying the scribe an extra tithe allowance.³² This suggests that the agency of scribes was prominent in the wider urban context and the office seen as a labour-intensive one. Whereas burgomasters and magistrates had offices that were traditionally considered to be positions of trust, scribes had a job that was very much full-time. It seems that administrative offices were not regarded as altogether a separate sphere of urban life: rather, the agency of burgomasters, magistrates and scribes was visibly present in the everyday life of the city. Probably one reason for this was that many office-holders were native burghers: local merchants or perhaps craftsmen. However, this period witnessed a significant change in that office-holders were increasingly recruited from outside the urban community, and administrative organs were developed into a machinery extending from the Council of the Realm to local courts.

A former scribe, Olof Pedersson Humbla (1572–1621), was the first academically qualified burgomaster in the period we are looking at. Later on, the first royal mayor, Olaus Bureus (1578–1655), was a doctor of medicine, but otherwise few burgomasters had academic qualifications. However, education became more important as the bureaucratization of urban administration increased, and for example Erik Eriksson Tranevardius (1587–1657, appointed as burgomaster in 1630 and subsequently ennobled as Geete) and Peter Gavelius (1601–1645, appointed in 1637) had academic

backgrounds.³³ It seems that it was an academic education in itself that was valued rather than the discipline it involved: it seems hard to imagine how a medical training would benefit an urban administrator in his duties – even though Bureus did also have some expertise in town planning. This indicates the undefined nature of administrative offices: there were no specific guidelines for functioning in an office, and hence there was no training that would meet the requirements of urban administration. Certainly, judicial expertise was useful, but there were numerous other duties that needed to be performed.³⁴ Olaus Bureus was later appointed to the Court of Appeal in Turku, so his administrative experience and activities must have been decisive factors in furthering his career. The fact that he was by training a doctor but made his career in urban administration indicates a lack of bureaucratization in the town's administration rather than an increase in professionalization.

During this period, and especially after 1608, the career path of burgomasters was clearly changing. Over the decades new burgomasters had acquired administrative experience mainly by following a traditional urban career path in which they started as treasurers and worked later as magistrates before being appointed burgomasters. This pattern was broken in the early seventeenth century, when a growing number of the new burgomasters had no previous experience of urban administration.³⁵ The most extreme examples of this were royal mayors who came from outside the urban society and had no practical experience of administration even though they had often served with merit as judges. A certain degree of 'outsiderness' was common among royal mayors in general and was one of the reasons for their unpopularity.³⁶ It is clear that their appointment was seen to break with the tradition of self-governing urban societies, even though burgomaster appointments in Stockholm had been controlled by the Crown ever since the reign of Gustavus Vasa. Royal mayors were thus an example of professionalization and bureaucratization, although for the burghers these developments only led to the alienation of the administrators.

Burgomasters were on average in their 40s when they were appointed, and they would be in office for an average of ten years. So from their age alone we can speculate that they were experienced administrators, as a 60-year-old man was already considered old – with only a few witnessing their seventieth birthday, and even fewer their eightieth, as Olof Nilsson (1570–1650) did. Some of them held other subsequent offices, some died during their period in office, and some also just retired because of old age and/or infirmity.³⁷ Unlike the scribes, there are no references suggesting that burgomasters were negligent in their duties, or at least none were found to be so. On the other hand, there are some remarks which show that not everyone was satisfied with the prevailing practices. However, these remarks concern only formal administrative details. Otherwise there is no evidence of criticism of the actual administrators themselves or their agency – either among the burghers or other members of the administration. The only exception, which I will examine more closely in the next section, seems to have been burgomaster Hans Nilsson Benick.

Challenging tradition – the new royal mayors

The Crown intended to extend the state-building process into the urban sphere by replacing burgomasters, who represented mainly the Burgher estate, with candidates who had an academic background or men who had proven their skills serving the Crown elsewhere.³⁸ Their task was to oversee the development of their respective towns. However, while they succeeded in this, implementing a number of new administrative reforms and increasing efficiency, their high-handed approach gave rise to difficulties in their relations both with other officials and with the burghers. And although their actions, judging from historical research on the matter, suggest little reason why they should have acquired quite such a bad reputation as they did, it seems that in Stockholm, at least, they created conflict with the burghers and in the magistrates' court.³⁹

The first royal mayor in the realm was Olaus Bureus, who was appointed in 1621 as a kind of chief burgomaster (*överborgmästare*) to reorganise the administration of Stockholm, with which the Crown was not satisfied.⁴⁰ According to the court records, he tried to regularise the duties of office-holders, by checking on the presence and absence of burgomasters and magistrates. This was a clear step in the direction of making the system more bureaucratic and professionalised, but its efficacy is questionable as office-holders did not adhere to these tighter regulations. It cannot have helped either that Bureus could not take criticism very well. He would sometimes go straight from the city court to the Council of the Realm in the nearby royal castle to lodge a complaint against burgomasters and magistrates who were not complying with his wishes.⁴¹ He seems to have been well aware of his task as a reformer and also of the fact that the royal mandate was the basis for his status and thus his agency. It is also interesting that Bureus' role in bringing in reforms to urban administration is emphasised in the court records, although not described in detail. He was an active agent in the courthouse, but there is little surviving evidence of his achievements.

In 1624, a couple of years after Bureus, Hans Nilsson Benick received his royal mandate. Benick can be regarded as a typical royal mayor, who acquired his position probably as a reward for his work in the royal customs house and as a tax-renter of small duties. He did not hesitate to blatantly exploit his position and contacts with the Crown, and his agency was particularly characterised by high-handedness.⁴² He also became known as the man who had introduced the hated tax on consumables.⁴³

Before his career as a burgomaster, Hans Nilsson Benick had been, at least in the opinion of the burghers, a key figure in the imposition of a new tax on different kinds of consumables. This tax was especially hated because it meant extra costs for the burghers and restricted their freedom for manoeuvre as Stockholm, like other towns in the realm from the 1620s on, was surrounded by a tax fence. Because Benick was the one who announced the introduction of the tax, he personified it for the burghers. According to witnesses, he also acted in an offensive and challenging manner when making the proclamation by standing in front of and above the burgomasters. Agency was tightly connected to hierarchies of power

and their spatial performance, and therefore such behaviour was considered insulting⁴⁴. The result of the ensuing protests against the new tax and its 'representative' was a riot in which furious burghers attacked and kidnapped Benick. The situation calmed down gradually, and eventually Hans Nilsson Benick was released uninjured, but the hatred towards him continued to grow. His arrogant behaviour was also explicitly mentioned in letters to the King from Governor Gabriel Gustafsson Oxenstierna, and it was thought to be one of the main reasons for the riot.⁴⁵

The archives reveal that the Crown was aware of just how much the Burghers hated Benick, which indicates the ambivalent nature of some office-holders' agency. Benick was probably given the job as a scapegoat so that the King could escape blame. In letters, the King was several times assured that he need not fear a conspiracy as the reasons for the unrest were purely due to Hans Nilsson Benick's behaviour.⁴⁶ Perhaps his appointment as a burgomaster was thus a reward for taking the flak for this unpopular tax, or maybe his expertise in tax collection was actually needed in the administration of the town. Whatever the reason was, it is still somewhat puzzling why he was appointed; not only did he have no experience of everyday administration, but his brother, Valentin Nilsson (-1638), was already a magistrate, and thus it was suspicious both should be members of the magistrate's court since his appointment could easily have been construed as nepotism, the prescription of which was one of the few legal regulations concerning office-holding. Probably it was not a problem as he was a burgomaster and his brother a magistrate, but as if to compound matters, the Council of the Realm then suggested, in 1633, that Valentin Nilsson should be appointed a burgomaster. Olaus Bureus reminded the Council that Hans Nilsson Benick was already a burgomaster, but this was not seen as a problem.⁴⁷ This concentration of power in the hands of a single family was presumably yet another reason for Benick's unpopularity among the burghers.

Thus, while Hans Nilsson Benick's background was unusual for a royal mayor, it would have been unusual even for a burgomaster representing the burghers since he was not qualified for the latter position: he had not followed the traditional path of being a magistrate before gaining burgomaster status. On the other hand, another important prerequisite for becoming a burgomaster was to have held a position of trust – and this Benick had done. Not only had he been elected one of the 48 Elders, like some other burgomasters, but he had also been Keeper of the Town Keys.⁴⁸ Although there is no evidence of the exact motives for the Crown appointing him burgomaster, holding these positions must have certainly worked in his favour.

Hans Nilsson Benick fits the general picture of royal mayors because his merits were in line with the Crown's project of state-building. From the perspective of traditional town administrators and burghers, however, his achievements were viewed as a discredit to him, since he was associated with unpopular and burdensome taxes, small duties and excises. Nonetheless, his appointment strengthened the Crown's control in Stockholm.

Agency in collision with ethical and moral norms?

Hans Nilsson Benick's period in office was filled with suspicion and disputes. From the Burghers' point of view, he lacked the proper competence for the post, and his twofold role – as an appointed burgomaster and an agent of the Crown – was not a good starting point for a new office-holder as he obviously continued to be a renter of small duties. In his position he was supposed to administer the town and be a father of the local community, but at the same time he continued his activities as a tax farmer collecting taxes and customs duties. Benick's unpopularity among the burghers was possibly due to his role as a tax-farmer. This new system of collecting payments for the Crown by renting out the whole collection system to individual agents was introduced in the 1620s, and it was criticised by the burghers – as well as by other subjects throughout the realm. All kinds of payments both in money and in kind (in the form of lodgings and provisions for example) were seen as a burden, and both tax collectors and tax-farmers were unpopular, and often the discontent with these dues was targeted on them. In Stockholm, Benick, together with Christian Welshuisen, played a key role in implementing this system, and this inevitably affected his agency as a burgomaster.⁴⁹

The early 1620s were anyway an economically burdensome time as payments for the ongoing wars and military remittances increased. Moreover, there were rumours of a Polish invasion, disorderly soldiers lodging in Stockholm, and the plague was rampant in the town. This overall restlessness combined with economic distress led the burghers to protest, and Benick was an easy and visible target.⁵⁰ Unlike Benick, Bureus was clearly more involved with the Crown and that side of the administration than with the burghers.⁵¹ In this respect, being a complete outsider with no known past perhaps stood him in better stead and offered him wider options for agency. Benick, on the other hand, despite his achievements could not avoid being known for his previous 'mistakes', and they followed him everywhere in his career and had an effect on his agency.

This was amply shown when the situation about the imposition of small duties flared up again in November 1625 after an altercation between a burgher and a tax-collector on the quayside. The situation appeared to be getting increasingly menacing as the crowd got louder and more restless. The incident resulted in complaints in the courthouse about tax-collectors attacking burghers and vice versa.⁵² The magistrate, Anders Henriksson (–1651), warned the burghers against such behaviour, but at the same time he also demanded that Benick put an end to the tax-collectors' violent conduct and chastise them. According to the magistrate, tax collectors should not cause revolt or unrest (*tumult och perlemente*), and Hans Nilsson Benick should punish his employees rather than condone their illegal measures. After hearing these reprimands, Benick answered, "God help the King home; but a thousand devils will plague you, Anders Henriksson!"⁵³ The burghers reacted noisily to this, at which then they were threatened with being thrown out of the courthouse into the market place, but then the situation seemed to calm down, and no further disciplinary actions were taken.⁵⁴

During this incident, Hans Nilsson Benick was not officially appearing in the courthouse in his role as royal mayor as the Council of the Realm had (just three days previously) exempted him from all duties in the magistrates' court until the King's return. This was warranted by his connection with the unpopular small duties and taxes,⁵⁵ but it was probably also prompted by the Burghers' growing discontent with the situation – for which Hans Nilsson Benick was still the perfect scapegoat.⁵⁶ Perhaps it was the threat of a riot breaking out that compelled the Crown to adopt this solution. Benick's reply to Henriksson in the court may have been a reference to the Kings' absence, but it was also a boastful allusion to his close contacts with the Crown.

Benick was also criticised by his colleagues. In 1634 the magistrate Anders Henriksson again spoke against him, telling the courthouse how he had been reprimanded by the Council of the Realm for the poor management of buildings and fire-fighting equipment in Stockholm since this was supposed to be Benick's responsibility as Inspector of Buildings. According to Henriksson, Benick was a man who was paid to be a burgomaster but was not doing his job.⁵⁷ As office-holding was not yet properly formalised, it was difficult for magistrates and burgomasters to vindicate themselves, and so to prevent further troubles urban office-holders would often ask the magistrates' court to document everything – as Anders Henriksson did in 1625.⁵⁸

One way to regain lost trust was to resign. In 1628, Hans Nilsson Benick complained that not only the burghers but also his colleagues were indolent.⁵⁹ He found that anything he did with the assent of a few burgomasters or magistrates was rejected by the others if they were not involved in the decision (*the inthet få wara med i rådh*). This indicates the existence not only of internal quarrels in the magistrates' court but also of a pre-existing understanding of what a “representative” decision meant, i.e. as binding only on those who had been involved in making that decision. Benick reacted to this obvious lack of confidence in him by offering his resignation.⁶⁰ This was a traditional course of action in urban political culture at the time; it was understood as merely a rhetorical ploy to regain trust, not as an actual desire to resign. At this point, the office-holder's colleagues were supposed to persuade him to remain and assure him of their loyalty and obedience. As the authority of the office-holders was created mainly through the office itself together with the honour and social prestige that surrounded it, rebuilding it required these ritual resignations and responsive assurances.⁶¹

However, according to the court record book, Benick did not receive the usual rhetorical phrases of support he was hoping for. He had obviously offered his resignation merely as a means to confirm his status although in reality he felt no responsibility for the legality of his actions, and his time in office continued to be characterised by various accusations of malpractice and arrogant behaviour. At the local level he was an exception among the office-holders of Stockholm. On the other hand, it is also possible that he may have been the only burgomaster whose illegal actions came to light. Nevertheless, the sources would seem to indicate that it is more likely that other burgomasters and magistrates played more regularly by the rules – or their malpractice was not so patent. Evidently, it was clear that office-holding

was taking on a new shape that was in line with the aims of state-building, and the foremost representative of this was Olaus Bureus, whose attitude towards office-holding was characterised by excessive legality, formality, and high moral standards. Unlike Benick, who might not even bother to follow the royal orders, he emphasised the importance of formal procedures. For instance, Benick gave permission for a Catholic woman to be buried in the city in 1629 even though this was prohibited and caused a disturbance.⁶² Whether Benick really did not know about the regulation, or whether he was wilfully ignoring it, the incident nevertheless shows his confidence in his own power as an agent. It also bears witness to a certain flexibility, which from the administrative viewpoint was more likely to be seen as arbitrary behaviour and an agency that exceeded normative limits.

Some other examples suggest that even though urban administration was managed collectively, single burgomasters could act independently on some questions. Olaus Bureus, for example, could speak for the whole magistrates' court when in 1624 he promised that Stockholm would pay its share of contributions in kind to the Crown. Only afterwards did he ask for approval from the magistrates and the Council of the Elders. He said that he had personally acted correctly and done what he could to deal with the issue, and that he feared that others might well do nothing.⁶³ This case demonstrates that at least some burgomasters had broader possibilities for agency than others – or, as in the case of Benick – they considered themselves free to act as they wished. Bureus' comment regarding his personal activities was significant in the sense that he was calling into question the whole collective system of administration. This kind of behaviour would not have been possible for other members of the magistrates' court.

The next thorny issue for office-holders to confront the burghers with, after the trouble with small duties and new taxes, concerned the ship company established in the late 1620s to build the royal fleet. Stockholm and Norra Förstaden were obliged to raise the money for four ships, and this brought protests from the burghers. The directors of the company complained to the magistrates' court about defaults on payments. The one office-holder who again was on the tip of everyone's tongues was Hans Nilsson Benick. It seemed he had overstepped the limits of his agency again by playing a major role in the imposition of this burden and had thereby caused bad blood in Norra Förstaden. The main argument was that he had no authorization to act as he had done in the negotiations with the King. Norra Förstaden's representative stated that Benick was not their superior, and they would not consider him "good" (competent) as such and even less competent to assess their property for payments. According to Burgomaster Mattias Trost, Stockholm's representatives and Hans Nilsson Benick had betrayed the burghers of Norra Förstaden shamefully for "a favour".⁶⁴ This is not explained in detail but probably the favour referred to Benick seeking the good graces of the King at any cost. Certainly, Hans Nilsson Benick may have acted in a way that he thought was in the best interests of Stockholm, but again his agency was interpreted as high-handed and obstinate.

The imposition of taxes to finance the ship company was also criticised. Benick had already been charged for malpractice during his period as

chief of the customs station on the island of Vaxholm in the Stockholm archipelago.⁶⁵ Even though this could not be proved, his later practices during his time in office suggest that he had probably been acting in a similar manner earlier as well. A burgher called Wellam Lehusen (1599–1667/1674, Wilhelm Leuhusen), later a magistrate and burgomaster, accused Benick of abusing his position by imposing taxes and taxing himself as little as he wished. However, taxation was usually carried out under the surveillance of the city court and the Elders, who were supposed to be responsible for these matters, and thus it is hard to believe that he had been able to behave in this way. Nevertheless, there were probably some shady elements in Benick's tax levying, and the burghers were trying to nail him for this.⁶⁶ Benick was under constant surveillance, which confirms the view that legality and equality were key values in the agency of office-holders, as they were in political culture generally.⁶⁷

The urban reality was not as egalitarian as the political arguments would have us believe. Even if burghers nominally shared the same status, in practice their economic and social standing varied significantly. Craftsmen were usually the lowest group in the social and economic hierarchy with merchants above them and the wealthiest merchants on top. The latter dominated foreign trade and were often treated with special consideration because of their economic importance and networks. For instance, in 1635 Hans Nilsson Benick warned his brother Valentin Nilsson that a case concerning a merchant who had taken two ships from him could end up harming the town as such accusations offended the wealthiest merchants.⁶⁸ Benick was concerned for the city's best interests, or at least used this politically acceptable formulation to mask his own interests. Whatever the real motivation, it is clear that office-holders had to constantly interact with the burghers, and this constrained their agency.

Benick's agency was probably also influenced by the deeds of his employees. His scribe was indicted for stealing a tankard in 1623, and a little later his maid was accused of stealing from another (deceased) maid of his and from Benick himself. As she gave everything back, there is no mention of any punishment, and she was released. However, she was probably dismissed from her job as she was referred to as a former maid in connection with another theft only a few weeks later.⁶⁹ The early modern household was a unity consisting of both family and servants, and thus the misdeeds of every member harmed its reputation and impaired its social and economic reliability. As the master was responsible for his household, accusations of crime questioned his ability to control the members of his household.⁷⁰ It could be asked whether such man could take care of wider responsibilities and govern the town? Again these cases could be also interpreted as proof of the intense scrutiny that Benick and his household were under.

Despite his unpopularity among his colleagues and the burghers, Hans Nilsson Benick was Stockholm's representative in the Riksdag. Traditionally, the burgomaster representing Stockholm was a central figure as he was also the leader of the whole Burgher estate. In 1632, when Benick was appointed, we know that the Burghers were asked who they wanted to represent them. Obviously they could only exert any influence on the nomination of the

representative of their own estate, namely Casper Norten. The other two representatives, chosen by the magistrates' court, were the magistrate Mickel Abrahamsson (–1655) and burgomaster Hans Nilsson Benick. As leading figures of the urban community, burgomasters were often evident choices for the Riksdag as they were well informed and represented the urban community as a whole. Benick's eventual appointment by the members of the court strongly suggests that he was favoured by the King, but he may also have been seen as an influential candidate who could represent Stockholm in other ways too.⁷¹ Benick's good relationship with the Crown is revealed in a couple of letters, which also uncover administrative practices behind the scenes. In 1626 Benick was in Uppsala trying to get an audience with the King, and he reported his diligent pursuit to the Magistrates' Court of Stockholm. As he could not get a royal audience, he had discussed matters concerning Stockholm with the Chancellor, and they had agreed that he would write down the relevant issues and the Chancellor would then discuss these with the King at the latest on their journey back to Stockholm. The town would then receive a response from the King. While Benick was in Uppsala, he was also charged with finding a new treasurer from among the students of the university. He reported that he had discussed this with one possible candidate, but he also reminded the other members of the magistrates courts that Jacob Grundell had wanted to be a treasurer and that he should be consulted first.⁷² This shows that, in spite of his faults, Benick had influence, ability and trust in his colleagues, and was prepared to balance traditional forms of appointment with efforts to get better educated office-holders. It also shows that the true extent of agency was often revealed in informal interaction and that burgomasters were active agents behind the scenes.

Perhaps it was only after his retirement in 1636 due to his advanced age and senility (he died three years later) that a clearer picture of Benick's years as an office-holder emerges.⁷³ This might have been because, as a burgomaster, he had wielded a certain power that made him practically untouchable; but this ended upon retirement and the termination of his royal mandate. Only two days after his announcement of retirement, Wellam Lehusen was demanding that Benick should take an oath – which was the traditional way of purging oneself against accusations – and that he should hand over the customs records. Other activities connected with Benick's discharge of his duties were taken under scrutiny, and he was accused of having abused his position for years and, for instance, of trading plots of land owned by the town as if they were his own. This was an especially severe accusation as Benick had been Inspector of Buildings from 1631 to 1633. He was accused of buying up land on the cheap and selling it on at a substantial profit. Additionally, the court record books in 1628 already refer to some ambiguities connected with customs records, and these were brought up again after his retirement. While Benick's malpractice was being investigated he delayed matters by staying in his country home, arguing that he was too frail to make the journey to court, and so the magistrates failed to charge him.⁷⁴ Owing to his incapacity, and because other members of the magistracy were involved in the case, it was decided in 1636 that

the accusations against Benick should be investigated in another court of justice.⁷⁵

When Hans Nilsson Benick did finally present himself in court, he was asked to give evidence that he had lawfully acquired the town's plots that he had sold on, but he could not convince others with the document he produced. Though the seal was authentic, the scribe had not actually checked inside because Benick had told him it had been approved by the magistrates' court. Benick had also taken the original documents from the town archives – even though he had then returned them immediately – which was suspicious. As a compromise solution, the court ordered Benick to give back the extra plots he still possessed as he was too old to build on them. Then the dispute was referred to the Svea Court of Appeal. The buyers of the plots were given the legal deeds only if they had paid a price deemed reasonable by the court. The other purchasers were instructed to ask for restitution from Benick (or his inheritors as he died in 1639) of the payments they had earlier made. Benick's widow was also given some reimbursement as some plot transactions were reversed.⁷⁶ Since the buyers were forced to pay for the plots again, the city had evidently taken them back and contested Benick's ownership.

It seems that accusations of malpractice did not harm the reputation of Benick's household as his son, Gustaf Hansson (–1674), actually succeeded in his career and was later ennobled.⁷⁷ Hans Nilsson Benick's position as the Crown's confidant was strong enough to carry him through the conflicts. It seems that the Crown maintained its trust in him, and in fact he might well have been acting precisely as the King would have wished him to. Moreover, his discharge would have been a major setback for the system of royal mayors in general, which needed both reliability and legitimacy. To ensure these, a persevering appointments policy was required.

Reforming administration – forming agency

Early modern office-holding was not a particularly formalised sphere of life – it was more the case that personal, informal and formal power and agency were all closely intertwined. Even if the medieval Town Law and unwritten norms guided their scope for action, and to some degree their duties (however slightly), the agency of office-holders was defined and redefined through an interaction between the magistrates' court, the Crown and the city's burghers. The pressure from below was palpable, even though the burghers' opportunities for criticizing malpractice were in reality quite limited. Evidently the town court itself watched over – or at least tried to do so – the actions and morality of its members, albeit not especially eagerly. This lack of normative guidelines emphasises the role of morality and ethics that constrained the agency of office-holders.

Traditional power relations were redefined when new office-holders, such as royal mayors and the Governor General, fractured the traditional hierarchies of power in Stockholm. Even though, from the 1520s on, the Crown had been involved in the appointment of burgomasters in Stockholm,

royal mayors like Benick were a new phenomenon in the 1620s and, as the title implies, they were clearly servants of the king. It was intended that the introduction of royal mayors would gradually replace most of the burgomasters of burgher backgrounds with men who possessed academic qualifications. Their task in this period was to regenerate the administration of the towns, but their high-handed behaviour and new practices often overshadowed their achievements in local government.

Benick was serving in a high local office during a period when the bureaucratization of Stockholm was only just beginning, and office-holders still had almost unlimited scope for acting independently. It is obvious that he was not considered a competent burgomaster by the Burghers, having started originally as an unschooled innkeeper with no governmental experience. Usually burgomasters started their career as judges in a treasurer's court followed by a period as a magistrate. Only educated men or those with some other qualifications could be exempted from these requirements. In this respect, Benick was an upstart who did not fit into the traditional pattern. This was certainly one of the reasons why the burghers did not see him as a suitable candidate for royal mayor. The scant evidence of interaction between the urban administration and the Crown suggests that Benick was closely connected with the King, and possibly his previous experience and career as an unpopular customs official qualified him as the reformer that the latter needed.

It seems that Benick's activities in office were often self-seeking and exceeded all moral considerations and responsibilities. He used his agency to stretch rules and interpret orders for his own benefit, and he neglected his official duties. The bureaucratization and professionalization of administration was taking its first steps in Stockholm during this period, and so there was still plenty of room for individual agency before these processes were eventually duly formalised. It might be possible to interpret the repeated accusations of malpractice as a result of the central administration tightening its grip, but this cannot be verified as there are no other cases that Benick's career can really be compared with. It is clear, however, that office-holders' agency was gradually constrained as urban bureaucratization increased. This narrowing happened (internally) as a result of the office-holders' growing sense of the ethos required for the position, and (externally) through the strengthening grip of the central government. Benick's career was seen to be in such stark contrast to the accepted notions of justice and 'bourgeois equality' of his time that it would have been unacceptable in anyone but particularly in an administrator, who it was thought should set a moral example for others. Perhaps his career is an example of the Crown's endeavour to impose increased centralization in that he was able to challenge the accepted notions of agency for his position and yet remain in office practically up to the day he died.

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NOTES

- 1 See for example Petri Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta. Ruotsi ja Suomi 1521–1809* (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2014), pp. 262–267; Piia Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat. Tukholman porvaristo vallan käyttäjänä ja vallankäytön kohteena n. 1592–1644*. Bibliotheca Historica 94 (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2005), p. 46, and passim.
- 2 The magistrates' court (or magistrates' council) refers to the Swedish urban administrative body which took care of both administration and judicature. The treasurers' court (*kämmärsrätt*) was a lower court where petty crimes were handled. For more on this, see Petri Karonen, *Kämnerinoikeudet Suomen kaupungeissa suurvalta-ajan alkupuolella (noin 1620–1660)*. Studia Historica Jyväskylän 48 (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 1994); Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 58.
- 3 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 61–75, 88–92.
- 4 See Lars Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater. Omvandlingen av Stockholms stadsförvaltning 1599–1637*. Stockholmsmonografier utgivna av Stockholms stad 84 (Stockholm: Town of Stockholm, 1988), pp. 140–141, 151–156; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 61–65, 68.
- 5 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 9–10, 271, 300; see also Margaret S. Archer, *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 3, 14–15.
- 6 Both printed versions and original documents have been used. These are specified in the footnotes and bibliography. Generally STb refers to printed court record books.
- 7 *Stockholms rådhus och råd. Festskrift utgiven till minne af nya rådhusets invigning hösten 1915*. Del II. Matrikel öfver borgmästare och rådmän samt stads- och magistratssekreterare i Stockholms stad och Norra förstaden. Af Frans de Brun, Gustaf Elgenstierna, Ivar Simonsson, Nils Östman (Stockholm, 1915–1918) (hereafter *Matrikel 1915–1918*).
- 8 The database was compiled by Lauri Karvonen and revised by Henri Kaunismäki. Magistrates were eventually left out as they were a more heterogeneous group and less is known about their office-holding activities. Often they are presented as a somewhat faceless group. On Stockholm's burgomasters in the period studied, of see *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*: notes, where only Olaus Bureus (Olof Bure) is mentioned. For more, see E. Vennberg, "Olof Bure", *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* (SBL) <http://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/17159> (accessed April 10, 2015).
- 9 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 117; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 63. See also Petri Karonen's chapter on royal mayors in this volume.
- 10 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*; Åke Sandström, *Mellan Torneå och Amsterdam. En undersökning av Stockholms roll som förmedlare av varor i regional- och utrikes-handel 1600–1650*. Stockholmsmonografier utgivna av Stockholms stad 102 (Stockholm: Town of Stockholm, 1990); Arne Jansson, *Bördor och bärkraft: borgare och kronotjänare i Stockholm 1644–1672*. Stockholmsmonografier utgivna av Stockholms stad 103 (Stockholm: Town of Stockholm, 1991); Robert Sandberg, *I slottets skugga. Stockholm och kronan 1599–1620*. Stockholmsmonografier utgivna av Stockholms stad 105 (Stockholm: Town of Stockholm, 1991); Marko Lamberg, *Dannemännen i stadens råd. Rådmanškretsen i nordiska köpstäder under senmedeltiden*. Monografier utgivna av Stockholms stad 155 (Stockholm: Town of Stockholm, 2001). Einonen (in *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*) deals with

- Stockholm's administration in terms of political culture and concentrates mainly on the interaction between the burghers and the urban administration.
- 11 See for example Lamberg, *Dannemännen i stadens råd*, pp. 237–244; Marie Lennersand, *Rättvisans och allmogens beskyddare. Den absoluta staten, kommissionerna och tjänstemännen, ca 1680–1730*. Studia Historica Upsaliensia 190 (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1999), pp. 41–42; Mats Hallenberg, *Kungen, fogdarna och riket. Lokalförvaltningen och statbyggande under tidigt Vasatid* (Stockholm: Symposium, 2001), pp. 351–401. Hallenberg discusses similar questions but does not explicitly address ethics or morality. Niklas Ericsson for his part deals with the criminal cases brought to the courthouse; see Niklas Ericsson, *Rätt eller fel? Moraluppfattningar i Stockholm under medeltid och vasatid*. Stockholm studies in history 68 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003).
 - 12 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 14, 28, 59, 69–72.
 - 13 R. W. Scribner, “Police and the Territorial State in the Sixteenth-century Württemberg”. In: Kouri, E. I., Scott, Tom (ed.), *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p. 103.
 - 14 See for example Harald Gustafsson, *Gamla riken, nya stater. Statsbildning, politisk kultur och identiteter under Kalmarunionens upplösningsskede 1512–1541* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2000), pp. 21–31; Hallenberg, *Kungen, fogdarna och riket*, pp. 35–36; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 13, 19–20; Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, pp. 47, 182–186.
 - 15 Stockholm was the largest city in the realm, and it was growing fast in spite of constant recurring plagues. In the late 1620s the population was about 14,000 and steadily increasing. The privileges of the estate society defined the burghers as the ordinary residents of Stockholm and as the only group that had the right to act as merchants or craftsmen – trade was only permitted in towns. There were also numerous other groups below and above the burghers in the urban social hierarchy, like servants, nobles, clergy and officials of the Crown. Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 43; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 40, 72, 273, 302.
 - 16 Petri Karonen, “Raastuvassa tavataan”. *Suomen kaupunkien hallinto- ja oikeuslaitoksen toimintaa ja virkamiehiä suurvalta-aikana*. Studia Historica Jyväskylänensia 51 (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 1995), pp. 61, 126; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 53–54; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 61, 69–72; cf. Carl-Fredrik Corin, “Överståhållaren Klas Fleming och Stockholms expansion 1634–1644”. In: Staf, Nils (red.), *Studier och handlingar rörande Stockholms historia III* (Stockholm: Stockholms stadsarkiv, 1966), p. 74. See also Aimo Halila, *Suomen kaupunkien kunnallishallinto 1600-luvulla I*. Historiallisia tutkimuksia 28, 1 (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1942), pp. 136–138.
 - 17 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 166–270. See also Jansson, *Bördor och bärkraft* on later protests.
 - 18 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 111–116. During the succession struggle in the 1590s, both King Sigismund and Duke Charles – later Charles IX – tried to dominate Stockholm by manipulating the nominations for offices and discharging members of the urban administration from their duties (see Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 112–114; Lars Ericson, “Mellan två eldar. Stockholms borgmästare och råd i kampen mellan Sigismund och hertig Karl, 1594–1599”. In: *Studier och handlingar rörande Stockholms historia VII* (Stockholm: Stockholms stadsarkiv, 1994), passim.).
 - 19 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 72, 88–92.
 - 20 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 121–140, 156–161; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 59–60; Karonen, “Raastuvassa tavataan”, pp. 38–39.
 - 21 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 122–123; see also Nils Östman, “Stockholms

- magistrat och rådhusrätt. Kortfattad öfversikt”. In: *Stockholms rådhus och råd I. Festskrift utgifven till minne af nya rådhusets invigning hösten 1915* (Stockholm, 1915), p. 38. Impediment was a basic argument used widely in early modern discourse, see Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, for example pp. 146–147.
- 22 Database; Östman, “Stockholms magistrat och rådhusrätt”, p. 37.
- 23 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 111. Originally it was stipulated that half of the office-holders be Swedish and the other half German, but from 1471 on offices were allocated to Swedes only. Another requirement was that a burgomaster or magistrate should be a holder of real estate in Stockholm.
- 24 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 134. Cf. the case of Hans Nilsson Benick and Valentin Nilsson later in this chapter.
- 25 Lamberg, *Dannemännen i stadens råd*, pp. 218–219; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 59.
- 26 STb, magistrates’ court, fair copy 10th of May, 1596, p. 36; Database; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 112; Ericson, “Mellan två eldar”, p. 50.
- 27 Database.
- 28 Database. There is no further evidence of this in the court record books. The records themselves have been preserved only incidentally during the period 1605–1615 and are exiguous compared with the preceding and succeeding periods; see Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 32.
- 29 As far as we know, Tileman Abraham (d. before 1591), who served as a scribe in the 1570s and 1580s, had studied in Wittenberg, but according to the sources, the next academically educated scribe was Nils Skunck (d. 1676), appointed in 1645. Olof Pedersson Humbla, later a burgomaster, was also enrolled as a student at Wittenberg University. Database: *Matrikel 1915–1918*, 27–28; see also Sandberg, *I slottets skugga*, pp. 237–238.
- 30 See Karonen, “Raastuvassa tavataan”, pp. 86–87.
- 31 For more on the ordinance of 1619, see Karonen, “Raastuvassa tavataan”, pp. 23–37, 174–179.
- 32 SSA (Stockholm City Archives), BRA, vol. 65, 19th of June, 1616 supplication to the King, in which it was mentioned that the burghers had complained to the magistrates’ court and asked it to pass their message to the King. Obviously this process could have been initiated by the office-holders themselves, but not without the consent of the burghers. Sandberg, *I slottets skugga*, p. 238; see also Halila, *Suomen kaupunkien kunnallishallinto*, pp. 148–149.
- 33 Olaus Bureus (ennobled in 1621 as Bure) had been a personal physician to Duke Johan (1537–1592) and later to King Gustavus Adolphus. He had some previous experience of town planning but none of administration. Database; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, pp. 31–32; Vennberg, “Olof Bure”; Sandberg, *I slottets skugga*, p. 237; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 64.
- 34 Database; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, pp. 31–32; Vennberg, “Olof Bure”. See also Östman, “Stockholms magistrat och rådhusrätt”, p. 37.
- 35 Some of the new burgomasters had previously served as royal scribes or had some experience of working in other town administrations, like Olof Andersson (1576–1627) in Köping and Mattias Trost (1582–1648) in Norra Förstaden (which was reunited with Stockholm in 1635). Database; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 143–145; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 63–67.
- 36 Karonen, “Raastuvassa tavataan”, pp. 40–41, 57–61.
- 37 Hans Henriksson (–1638), who resigned in 1630, was granted a yearly allowance of 300 dalers for his maintenance. This seems to be an exception, however, since normally burgomasters were supposed to support themselves. Hans Henriksson had problems with his eyesight, and he was possibly unable to provide for himself, which would explain the payment. Database; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, p. 33. As a result

- of the scanty source material, it is difficult to estimate the average life expectancy of burgomasters, but there were surprisingly many, like Jakob Grundell (1590–1663) and Olaus Bureus, who died in their 70s. See Database; for more on age, see Kustaa H. J. Vilkkuna, *Katse menneisyyden ihmiseen. Valta ja aineettomat elimot 1500–1850*. Historiallisia tutkimuksia 253 (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2010), pp. 37–59.
- 38 STb, magistrates' court, fair copy 23rd of July 1621, p. 169; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, pp. 24–28, 31–33; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 112–116, 144–146; Sandberg, *I slottets skugga*, pp. 20, 224–232; cf. Karonen, “*Raastuvassa tavataan*”, pp. 41–42. There is no evidence of Benick's letter of appointment in the *Riksregistratur* (Swedish National Records), and thus it is not possible to ascertain how his role was defined.
- 39 Karonen, “*Raastuvassa tavataan*”, pp. 40–41, 57–61; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 64–70.
- 40 See for example Riksarkivet (SRA) (Swedish National Archive), SSA, vol. 2, undated letter (probably from the mid-1620s) from Olaus Bureus possibly to the Council of the Realm; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 64. In the letter Bureus stated explicitly that, on the King's orders, he and Benick had tried to organise Stockholm and implement some of the reforms, but many other office-holders considered that they were not empowered to do so. Even when they declared they were acting on behalf of the Crown, the others demanded to see a direct edict signed by the King. This shows how agency was becoming increasingly influenced by written documents.
- 41 See for example SRA SSA, BRA, A, vol. 51, magistrates' court, draft transcript 15th of August, 1629; SSA, BRA, A, vol. 52, magistrates' court, draft transcript 23rd of June, 1630; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, pp. 166, 171; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 64–65.
- 42 Petri Karonen (“*Raastuvassa tavataan*”, pp. 60–83) describes a similar example in Finland.
- 43 These taxes were introduced in 1623 and included excises (*accis*) for baking, brewing and slaughter. Small duties (*lilla tullen*), collected for provisions and consumer goods brought into town, were imposed by the Riksdag in 1622, but probably only collected after 1623. See Sandström, *Mellan Torneå och Amsterdam*, pp. 75, 105.
- 44 For more on spatial order and perceptions, see Piia Einonen, “Roopet mäst hörtt wordett vthi alle huus kring om Torget”. Stadsrummet som protesternas scen vid sekelskiftet 1600”. In: Hallenberg, Mats, Linnarsson, Magnus (ed.), *Politiska rum. Kontroll, konflikt och rörelse i det förmoderna Sverige 1300–1850* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2014), pp. 39–58.
- 45 SRA 1133.07, vol. 20, 14th of February, 1623 and 18th of February, 1623 dated letters from Gabriel Gustafsson Oxenstierna to King Gustavus Adolphus; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 262–266.
- 46 SRA 1133.07, vol. 20, 14th of February, 1623, 18th of February, 1623 and 21st of February, 1623 dated letters from Gabriel Gustafsson Oxenstierna to King Gustavus Adolphus.
- 47 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 134. There was a similar case in Helsinki on the Finnish side of the Swedish realm, but there this was a necessity as the town was so small, and there were only a few suitable candidates for offices (see Sylvi Möller, *Suomen tapulikaupunkien valtoporvaristo ja sen kaupankäyntimenetelmät 1600-luvun alkupuolella*. Historiallisia tutkimuksia 42 (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1954), p. 73). Together with his brother Valentin, Hans Nilsson Benick ran an inn called *Solen* (the Sun) in central Stockholm. Among others, they lodged foreign guests of the Crown and envoys. See Database; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, p. 32; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 274.

- 48 *Matrikel 1915–1918*, p. 32; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 143. During this period, the Elders did not constitute a representative body as such but rather a tool that the town administration could use to consult the sentiments of the burghers. For aspirants to offices it was a way of acquiring administrative experience and merits. For more on the 48 Elders, see Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 145, 225–226, 268–269.
- 49 For more on tax farming and opposition to it, see Veikko Kerkkonen, *Etelä-Suomen kaupunkien kruununverot 1614–1650*. Historiallisia tutkimuksia 30 (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1945), pp. 38, 170–174, 189–191; Kimmo Katajala, “The changing face of peasant unrest in early modern Finland”. In: Katajala, Kimmo (ed.), *Northern Revolts. Medieval and Early Modern Peasant Unrest in the Nordic Countries* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2004), pp. 162, 178–181; Mats Hallenberg, *Statsmakt till salu. Arrendesystemet och privatiseringen av skatteuppbörden i det svenska riket 1618–1635* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2008), passim. On Welshuisen see pp. 101–102.
- 50 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 266–267; for more on rumours, see Piia Einonen “The politics of talk. Rumour and gossip in Stockholm during the struggle for succession (c. 1592–1607)”. *Scandia*, 80 (2014), pp. 9–28.
- 51 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 64–72.
- 52 STb, magistrates’ court, fair copy 12th of November, 1625, p. 418, see also pp. 524–525 (note 318).
- 53 “*Gudh hielpe H. K. M:t heem, du Anders Hend. schall få ett tusend dieflar.*” (STb, magistrates’ court, draft transcript 12th of November 1625, pp. 419–420 (citation on page 419); STb, magistrates’ court, fair copy 7th of November, 1625, pp. 524–526).
- 54 STb magistrates’ court, fair copy 7th of November, 1625, pp. 524–526.
- 55 *Privilegier, resolutioner och förordningar för Sveriges städer VI (1621–1632)*, (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1985), p. 620, 9th of November 1625 letter from the Council of the Realm (only mentioned here, the original document is in the register of the realm).
- 56 See for example STb, magistrates’ court, draft transcript 12th of November 1625, pp. 417–418.
- 57 SSA, BRA, A, vol. 54, magistrates’ court, draft transcript 8th of January 1634. This referred to Benick’s period as inspector of the town’s buildings in 1631–1633 (*Matrikel 1915–1918*, p. 32).
- 58 See for example STb, magistrates’ court, fair copy 7th of November 1625, pp. 524–526.
- 59 This probably refers to burghers who were not implementing proposals that the court had agreed on (...*han förnimer, at de saker som på stadsenns wägna ähre proponerade, inthet giörs till.*). STb, magistrates’ court, draft transcript 26th of June 1628, p. 71.
- 60 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 247.
- 61 See Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 135–136.
- 62 SSA, BRA, A, vol. 52, magistrates’ court, draft transcript 8th of January 1630.
- 63 “*..huadh icke något till saken giörss så protesterer doctaren att han för sin pärsson haffuer giordt huadh han kundhe, och huar må see sigh före, huru han kan och will beståå.*” SSA, SKA, A1B, vol. 1, treasurers’ court 30th of April 1624.
- 64 “*...borgerschapet på Närremallm [sic] äre schäntligenn bedragne af stadsenns utschickade och i sönderheet af Hanns Nillßonn, som för gunst schulld utlofuar det som omöjligit är dem at efterkomma.*” SSA, BRA, A, vol. 51, magistrates’ court, draft transcript 28th of February 1629. See more on the ship company and forms of protests in Per Göran Norenstedt, *Bildandet av det första seglande kompaniet. Skeppskompaniet 1629–1637* (unpublished thesis, University of Stockholm: 1984), passim.; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 169, 241–249; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 216–218.

- 65 Sandström, *Mellan Torneå och Amsterdam*, pp. 105–106. See also for example SSA, SKA, A1B, vol. 1, treasurers' court, draft transcript 14th of April 1623, 20 May 1623, 16 November 1623.
- 66 SSA, BRA, A, vol. 51, magistrates' court, draft transcript 12th of October 1629. "J lijka mätto Hanns Nillßonn: hann skrifuer på sigh huru myki than will, och andre skole bära th[et] up." It is indicative that this episode is entered only in the minutes but not in the fair copy version, and there is no evidence of any further measures taken. The case of Benick is not unique; the burgomaster Nils Eriksson was accused in the early seventeenth century both of imposing new payments on the burghers and also of levying too much tax. Eriksson supported Duke Charles in the ongoing struggle for succession, and this was probably the main reason for discontent among the burghers. Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 132–134. Wellam Lehusen was appointed magistrate in 1635 and trade burgomaster in 1663 (Database; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, pp. 41–42).
- 67 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 193–201.
- 68 SSA, BRA, A, vol. 55, magistrates' court, draft transcript 3rd of October 1635.
- 69 SSA, BRA, A1B, vol. 1, treasurers' court, draft transcript 9th of September 1623, 20th of October 1623, 13th of November 1623.
- 70 See for example Lamberg, *Dannemännen i stadens råd*, pp. 132–134, 242–244; Einonen, "The politics of talk", p. 14.
- 71 SSA, BRA, A, vol. 43, magistrates' court, fair copy 6th of February 1632; Clas Theodor Odhner, *Bidrag till svenska städernas och borgarståndets historia före 1633* (Uppsala: Edquist, 1860), pp. 81–82; Östman, "Stockholms magistrat och rådhusrätt", pp. 27–28; Möller, *Suomen tapulikaupunkien valtaporvaristo*, pp. 77–80; Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, p. 208. The process of nominating representatives is only vaguely described in the court record books, with just the names of the nominees and sometimes the burghers' consent to these. See for example SSA, SMRA, A1a, vol. 3, magistrates' court, fair copy 10th of January 1638. Other court record books are similarly lacking in further information on these matters (see for example Folke Lindberg, *Västerviks historia 1275–1718* (Stockholm, 1933), p. 327).
- 72 SSA, BRA, F, vol. 78, two letters from Hans Nilsson Benick to the magistrates' court dated the 2nd and 5th days of Easter, 1626. Grundell had been a treasurer since 1622, and was appointed a magistrate the following year. Later he followed in Benick's footsteps to become a burgomaster. See Database; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, p. 35.
- 73 It is worth noting that Benick was already maintaining in 1633 that he was too old and sick to take care of his duties as Inspector of Buildings, and he was understandably released from these duties in 1634, when Jöns Henriksson (d. 1665) took over the post. See SSA, BRA, A, vol. 54, magistrates' court, draft transcript 1st of June, 1633; Database; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, pp. 32, 34. The system of collegiums was only introduced in the urban administration in 1636, but documents show that similar arrangements already existed in the 1620s. The Building Collegium would later take care of buildings owned by the town and rents and protect the interests of the whole city with regard to street regulations and private building. See Östman, "Stockholms magistrat och rådhusrätt", pp. 46–47; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 181–187, 195. The former post of inspector of buildings was probably similar, and Benick would have also taken care of Stockholm's land property as well.
- 74 See for example SSA, BRA, A, vol. 52, magistrates' court, draft transcript 19th of April 1630, 28th of April 1630; SSA, BRA, A, vol. 55, magistrates' court, draft transcript 16th of May 1636; SSA, SMRA, A1a, vol. 1, magistrates' court, fair copy 16th of May 1636, 18th of May 1636, 21st of May 1636, 23rd of May 1636, 17th of May 1636, 15th of October 1636, 19th of November 1636; see also SSA SMRA, A9, vol. 1, 3rd of November, 1637; *Matrikel 1915–1918*, p. 32; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 225–228. "Efter Hanns Nilson haf. köpt tåmpten af staden för en ringa pening och nu sållt tåmpten för dubbelt." SSA, BRA, A, vol. 54, magistrates' court, draft

transcript 3rd of November 1634. For example in 1637 (SSA, SMRA, A1a, vol. 2, magistrates' court, fair copy 30th of October 1637) Jakob Allertz represented Benick in the magistrates' court and produced a document concerning five plots that Benick had bought from the town and sold on. Allertz asked that these deals be confirmed, but there was apparently no evidence of such a document in the record books, and Benick was summoned to the court to explain how he had obtained the document.

- 75 SSA, SMRA, A1a, vol. 1, magistrates' court, fair copy 24th of October 1636.
- 76 SSA, SMRA, A1a, vol. 3, magistrates' court, fair copy 25th of August 1638, 27th of August 1638; SSA, SMRA, A1a, vol. 4, magistrates' court, fair copy 6th of March 1639, 11th of May 1640; SSA, SMRA, A1a, vol. 5, magistrates' court, fair copy 13th of March 1641. There is no evidence of this dispute in the records of the Svea Court of Appeal, but it had been involved in the customs dispute in 1629, when Benick was asked to explain if he had increased the size of duties. He explained that he was forgetful, but he may have temporarily raised the duty because of the increased value of money. According to the minutes, the burghers had then complained to the Council of the Realm, and it was declared that everybody who had paid too much would be compensated. See SRA, Svea hovrätts arkiv, A1a1, vol. 2, Svea Court of Appeal 29th of April 1629. Benick's inheritors were subjected to confiscation as late as 1641 (if they refused to pay), so the case was still not solved five years later. See SSA, SKA, A1A, vol. 1, treasurers' court, fair copy 17th of April 1641.
- 77 Valentin Nilsson managed to marry above his class in the social hierarchy, and his son was ennobled. *Matrikel 1915–1918*, pp. 32, 167; Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 124.

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