

The burgess and the military state:  
The political culture of the early modern state.

The investigation of the establishment of the naval base in Karlskrona in the years 1682 to 1693 serves as a case study of how Swedish burgesses' confronted representatives of the Swedish military state. It demonstrates how despite limited numbers the citizens of Karlskrona nonetheless had a strong position in their negotiations with the state because of their integration in a Baltic and Dutch network of cities and citizens.

This network of cities and citizens had developed a communicative practice characterized by openness, rationality and the faith in, and use of, written documents. The Swedish military state needed access to this network in order to develop and maintain the navy and therefore could not adopt too authoritative measures to alter its practice of communication.

But the state also negotiated from a position of strength. A dialogical order was established on the basis of a configuration of power. This meant that the state could influence and displace power relations in the sphere of the burgesses to its advantage. The discourse on private and public was displaced and the public exercise of power pushed back conceptions of the private. The investigation invites discussion about the roots of the modern in an early modern political culture where the interaction between the burgesses and an authoritative state was important.

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