From Early Modern Deliberation to the Semantic Web: Annotating Communications in the Records of the Imperial Diet of 1576

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Abstract

In the early modern period, the Imperial Diet (or *Reichstag*) played a central role in the constitutional structure of the Holy Roman Empire and had a significant impact on European politics. This is documented by the variety of handed down source material, including negotiation files (*Verhandlungsakten*), minutes (*Protokolle*), reports of individual envoys to their princes (*Berichte*), and petitions (*Supplikationen*). The DFG and FWF funded project *The Imperial Diet of Regensburg of 1576 – a Pilot Project on the Digital Edition of Sources on the Early Modern Era* is breaking new ground and adds a new chapter to the editorial history of the Imperial Diet records which have been edited by the Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences since the 19th century. For the first time a database with an archival documentation of surviving manuscripts and edited texts will be made available as a digital edition. Furthermore, the editorial focus will be on a central aspect of the Imperial Diets, communication and interaction of the various political agents upfront and during the event. The resulting ontology described in this paper will be the basis for search operations and the integration of the edition´s RDF data into the Semantic Web.

Keywords

Digital scholarly edition, history, communication, deliberation, Imperial Diet, early modern, semantic web

1. Introduction

Between June and October of 1576, Emperor Maximilian II and more than 200 representatives of the imperial estates (*Reichsstände*) of the Holy Roman Empire met in Regensburg for a so-called Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*), to discuss and decide the political fate of Central Europe. In the Early Modern Period, the Imperial Diet played a central role in the constitutional structure of the empire. As a representative assembly it can be understood as a kind of pre-modern 'parliament'. In the late 15th and the 16th century it developed from a gathering of the powerful at the Emperor's court to an assembly of representatives of the imperial estates officially advising the Holy Roman Emperor, deliberating and negotiating matters relevant to the empire [11]. Since the mid-16th century, the participants of the Imperial Diet deliberated in three bodies (*curiae*): The archbishops of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier, and the dukes of Saxony, Brandenburg, and the Palatinate were a functionally distinct group and the institutionally most powerful estates as they were allowed to elect the King of the Romans, head and trustee of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The princes (both ecclesiastical and secular), who outnumbered the electors, formed the Council of Princes. The imperial cities formed the Council of Cities [19]. Each curia had both Catholic and Protestant members. The rulers (including the Emperor)

might appear in person with their councilors or send envoys, e.g. officials or lawyers; in 1576, according to the subscription list of the recess, there 29 rulers were present alongside 191 envoys [35]. The Imperial Diets were usually held at intervals of several years in a different place each time and lasted for several weeks each.

Voluminous written documentation from these Imperial Diets survives to the present day [1]. The records include negotiation files of the curiae and the emperor for the topics on the official agenda (*Verhandlungsakten*) and side issues (*Nebenhandlungen*), minutes of the curiae and other bodies such as the Catholic and Protestant estates (*Protokolle*), supplementary reports of the envoys to their rulers at home (*Berichte*), and directives of the rulers to their envoys (*Weisungen*). Additionally, numerous subjects of the Empire presented their individual cases to the emperor and the imperial estates via petitions characterised by a certain submissive quality (*Supplikationen*) [1, 3]. Since the 19th century, the Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (= HiKo) has committed itself to the publication of these materials.

The records show that in 1576 the representatives of the imperial estates deliberated and negotiated on issues of imperial policy (taxation, religion, and justice) and foreign policy (France, Poland, and Russia). On this occasion, envoys from foreign European powers came to Regensburg, situating the Imperial Diet at the center of European politics. Additionally, in 1576, for the first time,[2] parts of the Protestant estates (e.g. the Palatinate, Hesse, and Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel) linked their approval of taxes for border security (and protection against Ottoman attacks) with their own confessional political concerns [3, 7]. This appears in the records as an increase in special negotiations on religious matters (*Religionsverhandlungen*). Due to these negotiations, the Imperial Diet of 1576 marks a turning point in the history of the institution in the period between the Augsburg Peace of 1555 and the beginning of the Thirty Years' War (1618). Accordingly, it is an excellent case study for exploring the attitudes to and modes of deliberation in early modern parliamentary assemblies. We chose it to demonstrate how digital scholarly editing methods could support this kind of study.

2. Research Context

The deliberations at the *Reichstag* and their similarity to other pre-modern parliamentary assemblies is a young area of research [2, 38, 39]. Until very recently only a small number of hand-selected primary sources have generally been available. Research is based on scholarly editions and editorial interest has largely focused on the three curiae and the 'official' contents and results of their deliberations, ignoring vast quantities of documentation of activities accompanying these deliberations. The introduction to the edition of the Imperial Diet in Speyer in 1570, for instance, describes this traditional approach [1, 3]. Due to this restrictive editorial policy, the editions are of only limited use to historians increasingly interested in interaction, communication, and procedure [37, 38, 39], as it has been observed in recent years particularly by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger [5, 6] and her students. With only a series of texts of formal statements by the official bodies, you cannot evaluate how people present at the diet interacted, what style of communication they expected and executed, how they brought political capital into play, and which roles they assigned to the agents. The interactive and symbolic dimensions of the negotiations are out of scope for the editions, and therefore not queryable, despite the actual practices of the assembly changing significantly during this period. The Diet of 1576 exists in a period of transition between the old-fashioned medieval *Hoftag* (as the place where imperial privileges were granted and fiefs were handed out) and the early modern *Reichstag*, which gains significant institutional autonomy in the 16th century (with institution-specific roles, spaces and times) [2]. Unlike modern parliaments, the pre-modern Imperial Diet had no precisely regulated, written rules of procedure [2, 8]. How did the estates

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[2] During the negotiations for the Augsburg Peace in 1555, the secular, Protestant electors made the consultation of the public peace and "*Türkenhilfe*" dependent on the official deliberation and resolution of the confessional question [23]. However, the contemporaries were aware of the novelty of their action. Already on June 27, 1576, the Electoral Palatine envoys said with regard to the conjunction: "*wiewol sie sich nit zuerinnern, das hiebevor dergleichen sonderbare beratschlagungen in religions sachen gehalten worden, jedoch uß gehorten ursachen heten sie es inen dißmaln nit mißfalln lassen.*", Religionsprotokoll Kurpfalz, fol.109v; at September 6, the Electoral Saxon envoys said: "*Heten irn herrn bericht, wes allenhalben vorgelauffen und was sich cesar erclert. Daruf sie bevelh empfangen, andere zuerinnern, warumb sie bedenkens gehabt, ferner der condition anzuhengen [= conjunction]. Konnen auch nit sehen, was bei hivorigen Reichs tagen dergleiche contributiones[!, probably misspelled for: "conditiones".] gefruchtet, wie auch nit rathsam, das gemein werck der contribution ufhalten zulaßen, so dem Reich leichtlich zu nachteil gereichen möcht.*" [22].

assembly know how to function? Participants in the Imperial Diet followed, if not written rules, at least implicitly unwritten ones. It was through these interactions, performances, rituals, and ceremonies that the imperial constitution and official consensus were presented and produced [2, 6]. Only step-by-step did the Imperial Diet become (more) formalised; because of this, it can be studied in terms of organisational theory as an organisation in the process of becoming [2].

Several digital scholarly editions provide records of European assemblies of estates, including, the English Parliament [29], the Scottish Parliament [30], and the States General of the Netherlands [31]. The latter edition provides full-text transcription, a calendar, and indexes of persons and their functions, institutions, places, ship names, and books. While combined searches, e.g. of persons and places, are possible, searches for communication acts are not. But as of December 31, 2021, the advanced searches are still a work-in-progress and raw data is neither accessible nor adequately documented. Digitised editions of Reichstag records drawn from the printed versions exist, implementing some search functions superior to print: partially retro-digitised printed editions [32, 33], partially digitised editions which have indexes linked to the full texts, thus enabling search queries [34]. However, none of these editions is based on a particular conceptual model or ontology tailored to pre-modern parliamentary deliberation.

Editing the records from the Imperial Diet according to current research standards is a challenge taken up by the pilot project *The Regensburg Reichstag of 1576*, a collaboration between the Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (= HiKo) and the Centre for Information Modelling at the University of Graz (= ZIM). After a brief description of the digital scholarly edition project (section 3), this paper will present the annotations and the historiographic conceptual and technical aspects of its data model (section 4). The conceptual model of Pre-modern Parliamentary Communication (= PPAC) developed in the project makes it possible to explore the communication and interaction of the participating political agents mentioned in the sources, as well as exposing the data created in the project in a meaningful way via Linked Open Data practices to the Semantic Web. The theoretical underpinnings of the model were recently discussed in the context of other early modern European assemblies by Gabriele Haug-Moritz [2]. Detailed practical examples of the model's function and usability follow (section 5).

3. Digital Edition
3.1. The GAMS Infrastructure

The pilot project takes up the editorial strategies of previous editions and extends them to a digital scholarly edition combining established edition principles with TEI encoding methods. It utilises an *assertive edition* approach [25] layering metadata, textual-criticism, and semantic annotation/enrichment holistically over an edition of the sources. Publication is accomplished through the *GAMS*, a FEDORA Commons-based digital asset management system of the University of Graz, developed and maintained by the ZIM [9]. GAMS has a largely XML-based content strategy and supports the XML/TEI format natively. Additionally, the data model implements a conceptual model (ontology) of communication which enables specific search functions in the underlying database, in the case of GAMS a Blazegraph triplestore [10]. This is achieved in the following way: During ingest, XSLT stylesheets extract semantic triples from the TEI documents of the edition, using the @ana attribute (see section 4.2. for details). The result is RDF data, which is ingested into and made available for reuse by a Blazegraph triplestore. Consequently, each TEI document in the edition has its own RDF representation that is available for internal operations (e.g. search functionalities) and exposed to the user via the GAMS API.

3.2. Three Pillars of the Edition

The content of the edition rests on three pillars: Firstly, a database of all the archival documentation to be considered for the study of the *Reichstag* (= AD) has been created in XML/TEI with EAD-based annotations. It lists the central inventories of archival records at document level and makes the selection of sources for edited texts transparent. As of February 2022, we have added about 10,000 documents

from 34 archives to our AD. Secondly, a full digital scholarly edition is being created from a selection of the documents. It offers transcriptions and collations in XML/TEI of the texts in a way previously unseen, with indexing, comments and cross-referencing. This full-text transcription is not limited by economic considerations as has been the case with the print editions of the past. The edited texts include formal decisions, official communications between the Emperor and the bodies of the estates and—for the first time in the history of editing *Reichstagsakten*—the reports of individual envoys to their principals. The minutes are annotated by individual sessions each day. The edition will contain a total of around 4,000 transcribed pages of source material. Thirdly, both data sets are promulgated as Linked Open Data through a triplestore database on the basis of the project-specific ontology. The RDF will represent the communication acts extracted from annotations in the transcriptions and the descriptions of the archival records.

4. A Conceptual Model of Pre-modern PArliamentary Communication (PPAC)
4.1. Attempting a Definition

We can develop a raw model of the communication in the pre-modern parliamentary assembly from an example: The minutes of the Council of Princes describe the deliberations in this Council on September 5, 1576, in which Austria, according to the established session order of the estates, spoke first and discussed the type of taxation [24]. Thus, the sources document the place, time, communication partners and topic of a communication act. These can be considered the parameters describing an individual *communication act* (or abbreviated *communication)*. We focus on the constellation of communication partners and topics of communication and, therefore, consider this usually as an aggregation of single utterances. It is easy to map metadata in the AD and edited texts to these elements (communication act, communication partners, place, time, and topic): every record in the AD represents a communication act, described by communication partners, ie. sender and recipient, a date of issue. Every edited text represents a *communication act* where the author and addressee of the text are the communication partners and the writing and public reading of the text represent the date and place of communication. In the case of minutes, the report of each single daily meeting is considered a communication act with corresponding data. Our case study (see below) goes even deeper and identifies communication acts at the Imperial Diet mentioned in one of the edited documents.

The historical importance of communication in pre-modern parliamentary assemblies is more complicated than this raw model. For instance, communication at the Imperial Diet (excluding incoming instructions, outgoing reports, etc.) could have different forms: it took place in official consultations (e.g. about taxation), special negotiations (e.g. about religious matters) or in meetings "*ad partem*". These forms have different political and institutional impacts. Thus, one has to be precise in the interpretation of the "communication act". As mentioned above, we follow a theoretical framework, as discussed by Haug-Moritz, which refers less to communication models in linguistics or psychology than to conceptualisations of deliberation as a communicative practice in a political body. As previously mentioned, a pre-modern parliamentary assembly like the *Reichstag* can be considered in terms of organisational theory [2]. The process of institutionalisation, which in the case of the Imperial Diet gains momentum around 1500, goes hand in hand with the fact that ideas of order and assertions of validity are repeatedly expressed and generated in the procedures of repetition. In other words: The political elite acted obeying "logics of appropriateness" [11], even if their practices were not yet standardised in formal written rules of procedure. Following institutional theory, the Imperial Diet as an organisation was capable of functioning only by repetition of previous practices and by following implicit rules. The logic of appropriateness as an expression of institutionalised normative expectations of behavior produced practices that "ran" in a regular way by forming action patterns and, indissolubly connected to them, role assignments that in turn produced interaction routines. Therefore, the "communication act" in our conceptual model is not a linguistic utterance, but an action taken in the practice of deliberation. To apply this theoretical approach, it is crucial to encode not only the texts reporting decisions but also the arguments and the communication acts during the Imperial Diet itself.

The established communication practices of the assemblies and their deliberations were described in empirically oriented treatises, which took implicit rules and made them explicit. They created something similar to modern parliamentary rules of procedure. However, it is not statutory right, but

the authors of these texts recognised something that modern research calls a "formal structure" [2] which "*is the self-description of the social system of the organisation*" [12]. For example, the treatise *Ausführlicher Bericht wie es auf den Reichstagen pflegt gehalten zu werden* (in the following abbreviated as *Bericht*) of 1569 or 1577 describes (but not, as modern rules of procedure: prescribes) the Imperial Diet's proceedings in detail from the perspective of a member of the Council of Electors. The *Bericht* dates from the time of the *Reichstag* of 1576. Its author is unclear, but thought to originate from those associated with the archchancellery of Mainz, i.e. from persons directly involved in the practice of the *Reichstag* [2, 4].

According to the *Bericht*, we can identify the following formal elements of interaction at the *Reichstag* within the edited texts: It had to be ensured that the corresponding estates or their envoys participate in the diet (= "engage themselves"). The assembly had to open with particular performative acts and the setting had to be framed (= "begin"). The *curiae* met, ordered according to estate structures, separately and then, after separate consultation, together (= "consult and agree upon a common position", according to Michel Hébert, the characteristic of estates assemblies [13]), the estates exchanged ideas and documents with the monarch whom they advised and who answered them (= "exchange"). In addition, there were supplications of Protestant estates to the Emperor and of individual parties to the imperial estates or the Imperial Aulic Council (= "ask"), and, finally, everything came to an end (= "decide and end"). At the Diet, we also find protestation as a form of communication (famously, that of 1529) and the negotiations of foreign envoys with the Emperor and/or the estates [4, 13].

The formal communication constellation of consulting and agreeing in a *curia* can be further subdivided in particular communication acts. In formal minutes of the Electoral, Princely and City Councils, 'normal' days of consultation are characterised by their typical form of consultation: a single estate proposes a topic to the respective *curia* ("proposition"), the representatives of the other estates represented in the *curia* comment on the propositioned topic in a fixed order ("vote"), then the representative of the estate that made the proposition summarises the result of the votes. This procedure is meticulously described in the *Bericht* - here using the example of the Electoral Council: *"Wann dann im Raht die Churfürsten gesessen, so lest Meyntz erstlich durch seinen Cantzler proponiren, welchs mann die ander proposition nennet, von wegen der ersten, so durch die Key. May. geschehen [...]. Allsbald uff die Proposition fragt der Churfürst zu Mayntz Trier, danach Cölln, Pfaltz, Sachsen, Brandenburg ihres Voti, einen nach dem andern, letzlich fragt der Churfürst zu Sachsen Mayntz, deren jeder durch seinen Cantzler oder andern, dem sie es bevolen und gegenwärtig, sein Votum und Meinung in seiner Ordnung eröffnen läst."* [4]. In the Council of Princes, Salzburg and Austria proposed [4]. We can add these modes of communication to our ontology via a TEI-encoded taxonomy that describes the formal structure, i.e. the nine communication constellations and the individual communication acts. This XML/TEI file provides the @xml:id attribute for referencing individual concrete communications.

Summarizing the above, the conceptual model of pre-modern parliamentary assemblies' communication (= PPAC) is based on the following axiomatic statements:

- *Communication is performed in a regular-formal or irregular-informal mode.* It is brought into existence by present and/or absent communication partners.
- *There are agents participating in communications.* Most of them are political agents, as they are part of the process of making decisions binding a larger group of persons. They can be individual persons (e.g. the emperor or individual envoys). Individual persons can gather in groups (e.g. the group of Austrian envoys). Groups are considered in generic terms including organisations (e.g. the Imperial Diet), institutions (e.g. the Imperial Chamber Court), and corporations (e.g. Imperial Cities) as well as informal social aggregations (e.g. the Protestant Estates). The participants in the communication can be mandated by political agents absent.
- *Communication is an event that happens at a geographic place (where) and at a time (when). Each single communication act deals with at least one specific topic (what).* The topic can be a political issue, a political agent, an event or a place.
- *Communication can be part of other communications*, and they can follow each other (act-sequences).

The ontology and the reference to the *Bericht* allows us to study the tension between how the *Reichstag* appears in models and what actually appears in the sources. For instance, our communication model contains more elements than the sources mention for particular communications. These missing references can be either filled in by external knowledge (i.e. an editor reconstructing the location of a communication) or used as indicators for the interpretation of the single communication act in the source. Comparing communications acts with the patterns in the ontology and the *Bericht* can in turn help us to understand how far they adhere to the formal structure.
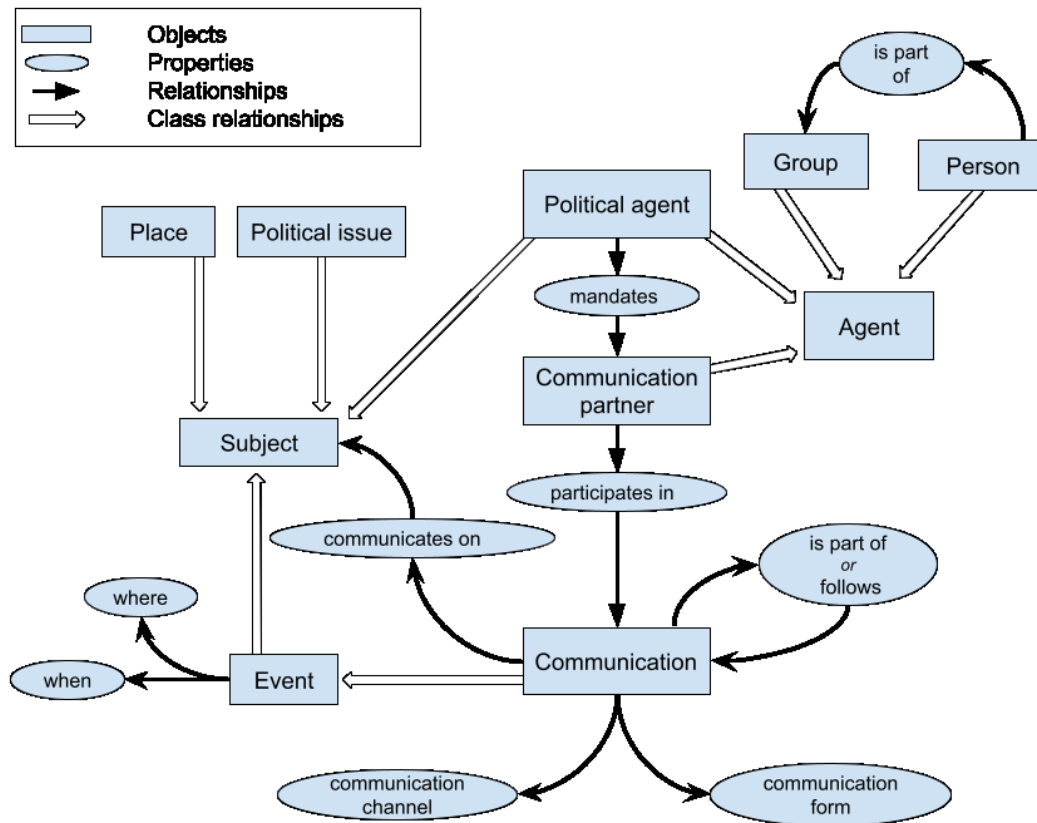

Figure 1: The PPAC conceptual model

4.2.   Implementation

The ontology itself is expressed via RDFS. The implementation in the AD and the edition follows an established practice used by other edition projects at the University of Graz [14, 15]. The AD contains primarily metadata about individual documents and consequently makes use of the TEI msdescription module [16] to represent individual documents. Where appropriate, elements have a reference to some other model, such as EAD or PPAC. These references are attached using the TEI attribute @ana. Each piece recorded in the AD is considered a *communication* corresponding to the PPAC data model that is represented with an @ana value of ppac:Communication on the element <msDesc>. Where applicable, sender and addressees are identified as communication partners and the place and time of the document's creation as communication place and time.

For the edited texts the already existing editorial rules established by the *Reichstag*'s editions were translated into XML/TEI. In addition to the TEI core elements, the transcr module (Representation of Primary Sources) was used for the transcriptions, and for collated texts additionally the critical apparatus module [16]. Depending on the textual genre, an entire edited document (or, for the minutes (*Protokolle*), individual days) can be considered a communication. Frequently, smaller entities can also

be identified as communications. As a proof of concept, we annotated a small selection of edited texts using this "deep encoding" of communication. We will discuss the results of this in the case study in the following section.

Compared to the AD, the edited texts provide more data that can be mapped to the PPAC ontology. Besides communication partners, place, and time, the editors identified topics of communication as a series of XML/TEI <term> elements referring to an entry in the subject index of the edition. In the edited texts with "deeper encoding", other communication aspects have also been recorded such as the *communication form* (formal communication based on the *Bericht´*s formal structure or informal communication which differs from it) and, if informal and therefore not standardised, the *communication channel* (*verbal* or *non-verbal*, *written* or *non-written*).
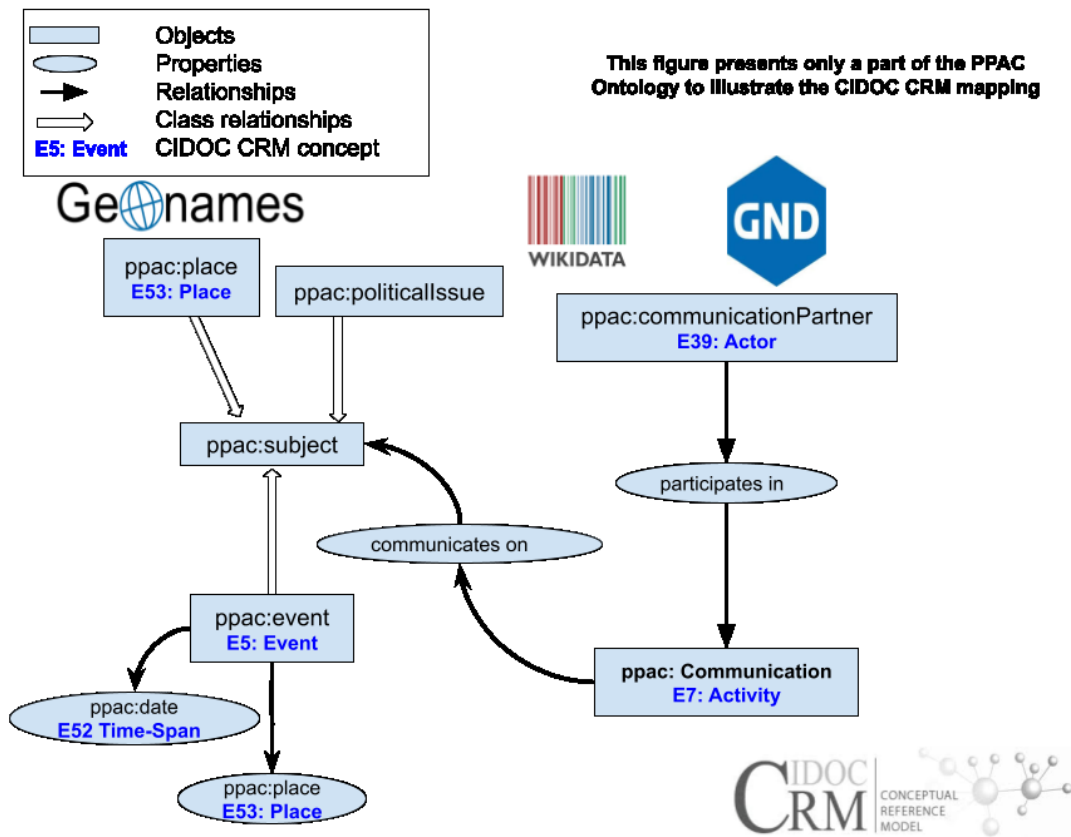

Figure 2: PPAC conceptual model mapping to CIDOC CRM

4.3.   Linked Data

With his "5 Star" model, Tim Berners-Lee provided a benchmark for Linked Open Data resources [17]. The data provided by the Imperial Diet edition can be considered 5 Star Linked Data for the following reasons: Each entry in the AD and each edited text (or each day in the minutes) can be referenced using a URI. In the AD and the edited texts, persons, locations, groups of persons, corporations, and institutions are marked up using XML/TEI and disambiguated by reference (using a URI) to an entry in the index. Each entry in the index provides a stable URI for reference and, where available, a pointer to an external authority file. In case of the person index, entries are linked to the GND and partly (in the case of courtiers) to the prosopographic database *Kaiser und Höfe* [26, 28], locations to Geonames.

Furthermore, the ontology used in the project (Fig. 1) attempts to describe pre-modern parliamentary deliberation in general and provides mappings to external resources and the CIDOC CRM [27] (Fig. 2).

We believe that the conceptual model developed in this project is generic enough to support profitable comparisons and, therefore, will enable future work into understanding how interaction and communication worked not only at the German Imperial Diets, but in pre-modern parliamentary assemblies in general.

5. Case Study: Protestant Negotiations on Religious Matters

The Austrian vote recorded in the minutes of the Council of Princes, as above, is an example of regular communications in the *curiae*. However, the official deliberations were not the only documented communications at the Imperial Diet. In the current pilot project, two smaller sets of records have been selected for more precise annotation of communication:
   1. the minutes of the special religious negotiations recorded by the representatives of the Palatinate and
   2. the reports of the Saxon envoys to their master, Prince-Elector August of Saxony.

Minutes and reports are central classes of sources for communication and interaction at the Imperial Diet [18]. The selection allows the comparison of minutes and reports from two different Protestant participants in the same negotiations, written for different audiences. Furthermore, we can observe the interplay between procedures based on formal schemes (and so regulated) and the informal conversations that took place alongside. The following example compares one report of September 11, and the corresponding passages in the religious minutes of September 6, 8 and 9, i.e. the negotiations that took place between this and the previous report.

Our annotations in both genres focus on the course of the Protestant negotiations on religious matters. At both the Electors' Diet in 1575 and the Imperial Diet in 1576, the Protestants sought confirmation of the *Declaratio Ferdinandea* of September 24, 1555, which guaranteed the right to keep the Protestant confession ("*Freistellung*") to knights and towns in Catholic territories. This confirmation had not been included in the imperial recess or circulated only rarely in print. After 1555, unlike the Augsburg Peace, it had been forgotten, but with the post-Tridentine Catholic reforms, this concession became crucial to Protestants. Catholics suspected the *Declaratio* to be forged [7, 19, 20]. Protestants, however, did not completely band together. Saxony, whose territory was previously the heartland of the Reformation, felt confessionally saturated and behaved loyal to the emperor [7, 20], and supported the emperor's imperial policy; the Palatinate, on the other hand, launched an active confessional policy [19]. The directive of the Elector, which arrived on September 4, 1576, meant the withdrawal of the Saxons from the Protestant demands. No further appeals would be made to the emperor for *Freistellung*, the *Declaratio* and religious complaints (*gravamina*). If the other Protestant estates decided otherwise and even submitted a written request, the Saxon envoys were to "separate" from them [18]. Thus, after the other Protestant estates could not be persuaded to change their minds, the Saxon envoys followed this instruction on September 4 and stayed away from the meeting of the Palatinate and Brandenburg; in the deliberations of September 6 and 8 they were present again and made their position clear. On September 9, a committee of Protestants without Saxony exchanged with the Emperor and his Privy Council. Figure 3 shows the first lines to the minutes entry of September 8 and the markup for tagging the contained communication act, Figure 4 the corresponding RDF.

```xml
<p ana="ppac:Communication">
   <date ana="ppac:date" when="1576-09-08"/>
   <rs ana="ppac:place" ref="listplace:o1362882r117t116"/>
   <term ana="ppac:subject" ref="listterm:sd1e784"/>
   <term ana="ppac:communicationForm" ref="listform:f536he"/>

   Praesentibus <rs  type="group" ana="ppac:communicationPartner"
      ref="listgroup:g5875182r104e101">aller augspurgischen confession verwandter
      stende gesanndten</rs> (usserhalb der
   <rs type="group" ref="listgroup:g1913883s102e101">kfl. saxischen</rs>,
   welche geschefft halben nit erschinen.
   <rs type="group" ref="listgroup:g1545880p95e101" ana="ppac:communicationPartner">
      Kf. Pfaltz</rs>: Was maßen <rs type="person" ref="listperson:p3772277m73s115">cesar</rs>
   sich neulich uf der <rs type="group" ana="ppac:communicationPartner"
      ref="listgroup:g5875182r104e101">stend</rs> schriften resolvirt,
   das wurden sie vernommen und bewogen haben
</p>
```

Figure 3: TEI-XML of a sample communication act

```xml
<ppac:Communication rdf:about="rta:edd1e7w152270#d1e15733t57d0919c">
   <ppac:date>1576-09-08</ppac:date>
   <ppac:place rdf:resource="rta:listplace#o1362882r117t116"/>
   <ppac:subject rdf:resource="rta:listterm#sd1e784"/>
   <ppac:communicationForm rdf:resource="rta:listform#f536he"/>
   <ppac:communicationPartner rdf:resource="rta:listgroup#g1545880p95e101"/>
   <ppac:communicationPartner rdf:resource="rta:listgroup#g5875182r104e101"/>
   <ppac:documentedIn rdf:resource="rta:edd1e7w152270#d1e15733t57d0919"/>
</ppac:Communication>
```

Figure 4: RDF-XML of a sample communication act

The following rules allow the application of the generic communication model to the case study. An XSLT stylesheet generates an RDF representation of the communication in the TEI data (Fig. 4), this RDF is then stored in the triplestore.

(1) For our historical analysis, we focus on the communications which took place, and exclude planned or expected communications, i.e., those that are future from the time narrated in the sources, e.g. when the Saxon envoys report on August 21: "*Itzo **seint** die stende der augsburgischen confession im werk, bei der ksl. Mt. schrifftlich oder mundlich derwegen ferner **anzuregen***" [36]. Establishing this status of "real" and erroneously reported alleged communications or communications reported erroneously is part of the editorial activity, so we can exclude this distinction from the conceptual model and stick to communications which took place.

(2) Corresponding text passages are tagged as *communication acts* at the beginning of the text describing them by empty XML elements. These empty elements allow uniformity for all those cases in which the corresponding information is not explicitly mentioned in the text and could not be attached to a certain text passage. *Communication partners*, *time*, and/or *place* are known or can be inferred with high certainty. The communication happens within Regensburg or at least one of the communication partners is located in Regensburg, and includes at least two communication partners, individuals or groups, even if one of them is not explicitly named. There are cases where place and time are missing and only one communication partner is known, so that no communication is annotated, e.g. as the Saxon envoys described in their report of September 11, 1576, from a meeting of the Council of Princes: "***wie wir berichtet werden**, sollen sie sich auf vier und zwantzig monat, zu einer beharlichen hulffe, nach dem anschlagk des einfachen romer zugs zu contribuiren vorglichen haben, in dreien jharen einzubringen*" [21]. Even if place and time remain fuzzy (if the individual communication act remains vague or, if vague, whether it occurred more often and thus repeatedly, or how often it occurred remains vague), the communication act is still tagged. Thus, repeated reporting etc. [36] can be tagged as one act of communication.

(3) For formal communication acts, we do not annotate the communication channel extensively but by referencing the taxonomy of the formal activities extracted from the *Bericht*. However, we add descriptors, whose values may vary (e.g. time). The XML-element enclosing the text passage describing a formal communication act, refers by an @ref attribute to the ID of the respective act in the formal structure.

(4) The keywords for subjects for the entire, higher-level communication (the entire report or the <div> element for single meeting days in the minutes) are their communication topics. For each mentioned communication within the higher-level communication, represented by nested TEI elements carrying the according @ana="ppac:Communication" attribute, single keywords can be assigned to the respective communication. Each keyword of a single communication is necessarily also a keyword of the parent communication.

Here is an example of how we describe concrete individual communication acts: In the report of September 11 the Saxon envoys mentioned the formal deliberations about the taxation for the defence of the Ottoman Empire in the Council of Princes (Figure 5). The communication partners are thus the entire Council of Princes or the relevant committee as well as the mentioned envoys of Austria and Bavaria. In this case, the communication location is the Council of Princes chamber in the Regensburg City Hall, in which the deliberations of the Council took place regularly, and the formal act of communication is "consulting, survey/voting" (proposition and votes). In this case, a single vote was decisive, a phenomenon that is not unknown even today:[3] "*Im fursten rathe hatt der ausschus berurten punct in tractation gehabt. [...] Osterreich ist in seinem voto auf den gemeinen pfennig gangen, Baiern aber und andere auf vorbenente monat; es sol aber allein an einer stimmen gemangelt haben, das die vota nicht gleich worden.*" [21]. In Figure 5 you can see the first lines of the reproduction scan with the marked explicitly mentioned communication parameters as well as with indicated implicit parameters.
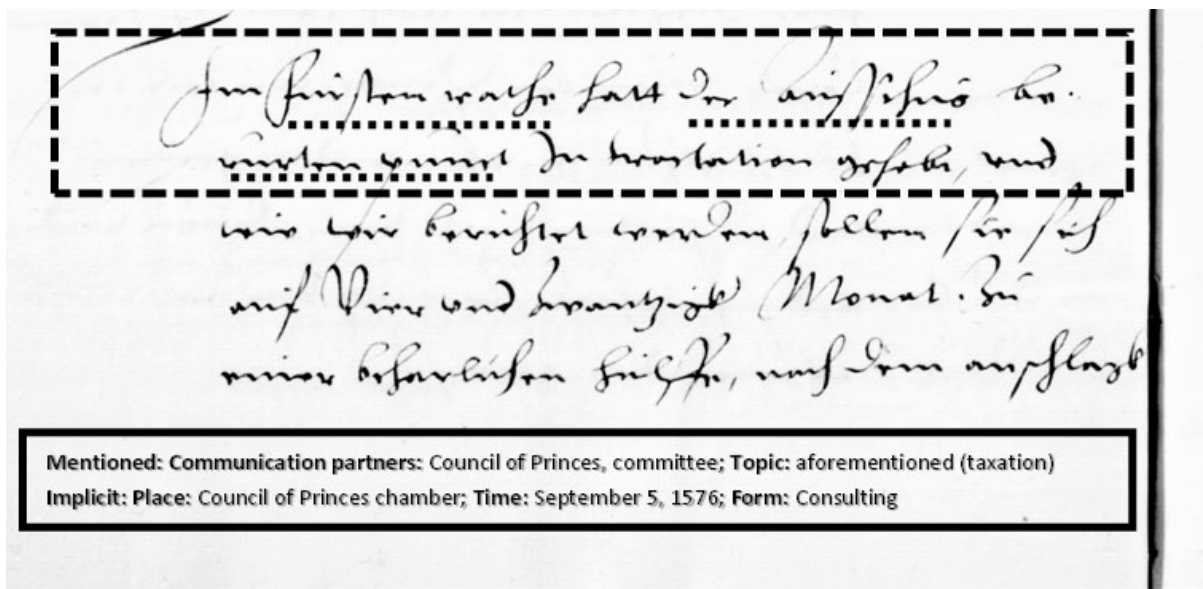

Mentioned: Communication partners: Council of Princes, committee; **Topic:** aforementioned (taxation)
Implicit: Place: Council of Princes chamber; **Time:** September 5, 1576; **Form:** Consulting

Figure 5: First example of annotation of communications in the Electoral Saxon report of September 11, 1576 (fol. 259v)

With this kind of annotation we can extract a RDF dataset representing all communications on September 5-8 concerned with the subject of taxation. This enables SPARQL queries about the consultations in the Council of Princes as well as searches for the participation of the group of Council of Princes members or of the Austrian and Bavarian envoys or for deliberations on the topic of taxation. The deliberations of the Council of Princes described were those of September 5 and are not only recorded in the Council of Princes minutes [24], but also mentioned in the Electoral Saxon reports. The sample query in Figure 6 returns all communications (ppac:Communication) of the

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[3] Most recently, in 2021 a social package could not be passed through the U.S. congress because one democratic senator opposed it. T. Romm: Manchin says he 'cannot vote' for Democrats' $2 trillion spending package, drawing sharp White House rebuke, in: The Washington Post, December 19, 2021, DOI: https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2021/12/19/manchin-build-back-better-biden/.

Bavarian envoys (ppac:CommunicationPartner rta:listgroup#g1726166b103e101) about the subject of taxation (ppac:subject rta:listterm#sdle784). The SPARQL query in Figure 6 returns the communication identifiers sorted by date as well as the communication form and date. Such queries allow us to investigate very quickly if and when the discussion about a certain topic took place in a formal or an informal setting.

```
PREFIX ppac: <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:rta1576.ontology#>
PREFIX rta: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:rta1576.>

SELECT DISTINCT ?communication ?communicationForm ?date
WHERE {

    ?communication a ppac:Communication;
        ppac:subject rta:listterm#sd1e784;
        ppac:communicationPartner rta:listgroup#g1726166b103e101.

    OPTIONAL{
        ?communication ppac:communicationForm ?communicationForm.
    }

    OPTIONAL{
        ?communication ppac:date ?date.
    }

} ORDER BY ASC(?date)
```

Figure 6: SPARQL query to retrieve all communications of the Bavarian envoys discussing the subject of taxation, their date and form.

However, modern institution/organisational theory and sociolinguistics show that despite ongoing formalisation neither pre-modern nor modern assemblies make the complete transition from unregulated, informal/implicit, institutionalised notions of order to regulated, formal/explicit organisations [2] - for example, in the case of the special Protestant negotiations: They are not mentioned in the *Bericht*, but they still followed the procedure of propositions and voting in the same way as in the official *curiae*. Such "unofficial" deliberations took place in different arenas following the same patterns as official ones [2]. Even if the agents changed, whoever proposed or voted in special negotiations stepped into the procedural role that the *Bericht* assigns to proponents or voters in official negotiations: e.g. the Palatinate and the Protestant estates acted like the chancellor of Mainz towards the Electors in the "official" Electoral Council or like Salzburg and Austria in the "official" Council of Princes. The formal structure of the *Bericht* does not describe everything that happened at Imperial Diets. Based on it, however, it is possible to identify differences between more formal and less formal procedures in the 1576 diet and in other parliamentary assemblies.

The following example from the report of September 11 documents quasi-formal acts of communication, i.e. communication following formal patterns which the *Bericht* describes for the official *curiae*, within the special Protestant negotiations as well as an informal "*ad partem*" conversation[4]. It shows how quasi-formal consultations and informal conversations interacted. Indeed, informal communication even helped sustain organisational processes and was sometimes explicitly mentioned, for example in the internal Electoral Saxon reports. Here, the Saxons lamented that they have not been able to dissuade other Protestants from their religious *gravamina*, as Prince-Elector August would have liked to, either in "common" official or unofficial talks. Instead, the Protestant imperial estates delivered a petition to imperial Privy Councillor Baron Johann von Trautson. Before this passage, the text refers to the "most recent meeting", as the minutes show: that of September 8, although no location is given in these either [22]: "*[First communication act:] Die andern stende [= envoys of the Protestant estates] aber haben dem hern von Trautson (weil der ksl. Mt. schwacheit halb*

---

[4] Most recently, a certain type of unofficial political collusion was made public by the exposure of chat logs between Austrian Chancellor Kurz and his confidants in 2021.

*itzo zu derselben nicht zukommen) eine suplication nach laut beiliegender copey **übergeben**, [second communication act:] davon, wie wir wol zum liebsten gesehen und in gemein und [third communication act:] ad partem mit inen dovon underredung gehabt, sie gantz und gar nicht ab zu wenden gewesen.*" [21].

The minutes make it clear that the Palatine envoys acted, as it were, as proponents, hence the formal act of communication ("consult, proposing"), and thus assumed a leadership role, as Figure 7 shows: "***Pfaltz**: Was maßen cesar sich neulich uf der stend schriften resolvirt, das wurden sie vernommen und bewogen haben*" [22].
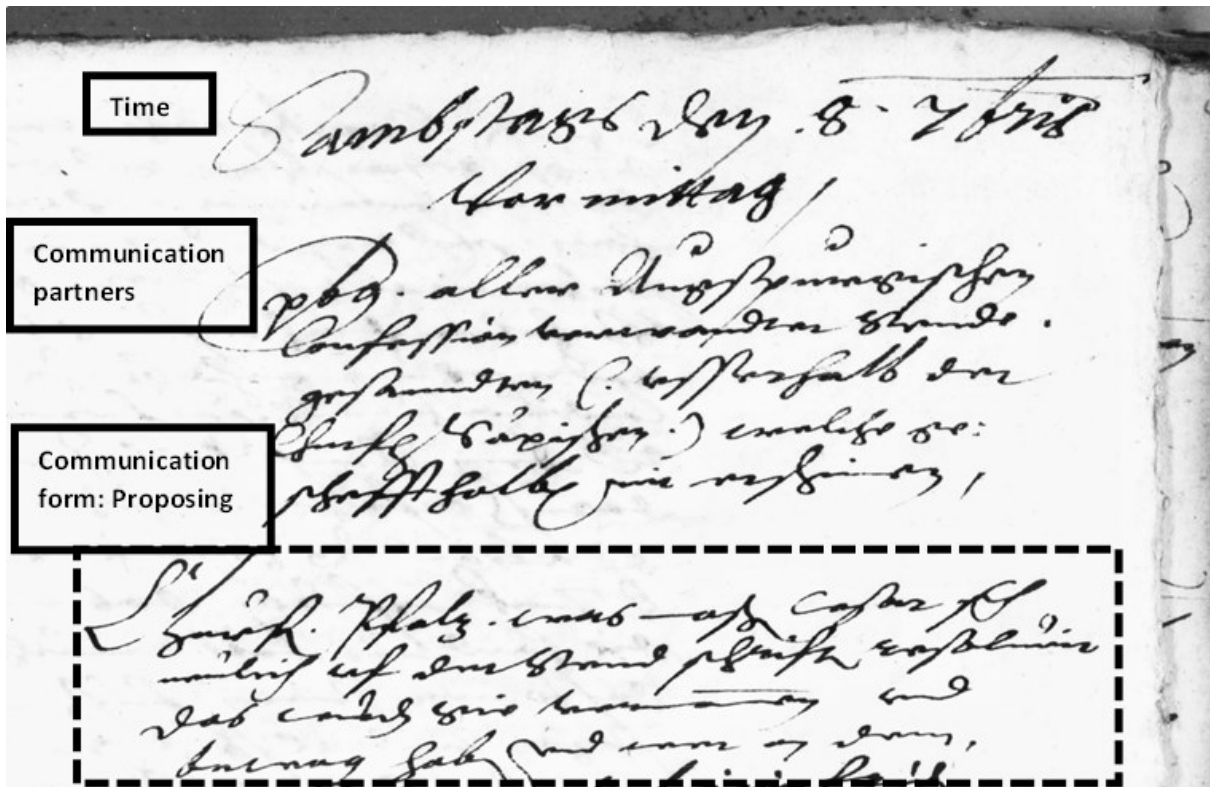

Figure 7: Example for the annotating/tagging of communications in the Electoral Palatine minute on the special Protestant negotiations, September 8, 1576 (fol. 143r)

Saxony then voted, referring to earlier deliberations. Thus, in a passage marked as one act of communication, another act of communication is found. Here, earlier communications were, so to say, the current object of communication, reference was made to them, and they were taken as a justification for the present communication and used as a connecting point and argument for further deliberation. The Saxons made it clear that their master was against making consent to taxation dependent upon the settlement of religious issues demanded by the other Protestants, but that they would agree to a mere protest to the emperor: "*[Superordinated communication act:] Ist umbgefragt: Kfl. saxische rethe: Wisten, [referenced communication act:] was jungst beratschlagt und geredt [the end of the referenced communication act]. [...] ob wol ir herr [...] doch anfangs und noch bedenckens gehabt, in die condition zu willigen [...]. Do aber von andern die suchung fur gut angesehen, solten sie an stat der condition ein protestation vorbringen, wenn dadurch in dem Reich ein unrath erfolgte, das di stende entschuldigt sein wolten.*" [22]. Figure 8 shows the superordinated and the referenced communication act using the reproduction scan as an example.
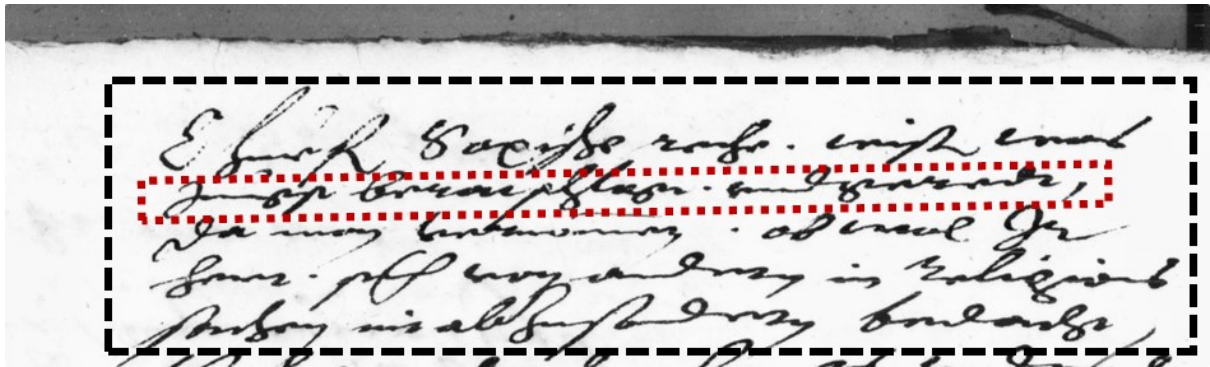
Figure 8: Example of a communication nested in another communication (this refers to that) in the Palatine minute on the special Protestant negotiations, September 8, 1576 (fol. 143v)

However, after failing to convince the other Protestant estates, the Saxons walked away ("*gingen darvon*" [22]) - a demonstrative-symbolic, non-verbal act of communication that indicated the end of their willingness to communicate or the failure of communication.

Neither the *Bericht* nor the practical negotiation records (reports, minutes), which document official negotiations between the imperial estates and the emperor and their results, report all of the recorded communications that led to the Imperial Diet's final decisions. In order to understand them better, special negotiations and informal communications must be taken into account, which is why they are now edited and annotated. Nevertheless, the comparison with the formal structure as described in the *Bericht* shows that special negotiations also followed the pattern of formal negotiations and therefore proceeded in a certain formalised way. The participants ascribed to them corresponding appropriateness, importance and meaningfulness. Being able to search for constellations combining different types of communication helps to understand this better and expands our knowledge about processes of institutionalisation in pre-modern parliamentary assemblies.

6. Conclusion and Outlook

In recent years, interest in deliberations and negotiations at the early modern *Reichstag* have become of significant interest to the research community. However, traditional print editions make researching these matters difficult, since they do not allow the exploration of individual communications and elements of communications. This paper has presented an ongoing project to edit the Imperial Diet records of 1576 using an ontology of pre-modern parliamentary communication. It has been illustrated how the project creates data about deliberations and negotiations happening at the Imperial Diet of 1576 in a Linked Open Data conform format and how the project's PPAC ontology is mapped to CIDOC CRM to integrate the data model into a widely used top-level ontology.

The PPAC ontology is currently only used in this edition; however, the case study presented here demonstrates its potential. It has been developed as a generic ontology that should be applicable to other Imperial Diet records and to early modern pre-parliamentary systems in Europe in general. More extensive tests are planned for the next project phase after the launch of the digital edition in spring 2022. During the next 18 month the conceptual model will be tested using data from two other Imperial Diet records, and the ontology will be discussed with colleagues working with other early modern pre-parliamentary material from other countries. A conference held in April 2022 at the University of Graz will provide a platform for these discussions. All of this will, in the long run, lead to a pool of Linked Open Data enabling researchers to explore above mentioned research questions about deliberations and negotiations across different editions of records of European estate assemblies and different countries.

7. Acknowledgements

8. References

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