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**Transnational Urban Associations and the State in Contemporary Europe:
A Rebirth of the Hanseatic League?**

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In an era when transnational organizations, networks and communication increasingly carry authority and influence beyond that of national states in Europe, forms of political organization from the era before the rise of nation-states have received growing attention. Several contemporary observers suggest that leagues of cities on the model of the Hansa hold the prospect of ultimately undermining and replacing national states as the main territorial building blocks of politics.¹ Others portray a process of this sort as already under way. As some point to the “end of the nation-state” or the rise of “city-states” as urban regions undertake initiatives on their own,² others characterize the emerging configuration of political authority more broadly as a “post-modern state”³ or as a “consortio” or “confederatio”.⁴ Such arguments raise a crucial comparative historical question, one that may shed further light on the recent historical findings about arrangements among the cities of the medieval and early modern eras. To what degree and in what ways did the Hanse and other Leagues of cities during this era in fact resemble the emerging networks of cities in contemporary Europe, and how do the arrangements among European cities of the two eras differ?

Such a juxtaposition of two distinct, very different eras may seem at first glance to pose a profoundly ahistorical question. Yet, if posed about the main differences as well as the resemblances between a broadly similar phenomenon common to both epochs, this question can illuminate the conditions of each era through comparison with the other. In this essay, I compare the activities and the context of the Hansa League, surely one of the most powerful and successful associations of cities in the late medieval era, with those of several of the most significant associations in which European city governments have participated during the late twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. My analysis will focus on how, with the development of the modern state, the activities of associations among city governments have been transformed. The contemporary literature cited above often either implies or explicitly asserts that such associations have emerged as a force independent of states, and ultimately pose a challenge to the position of states in the international order. Comparison of these contemporary associations with an association from the era before nation-states came to dominate casts the role of the state in relation to these associations in sharp relief. In doing so, this comparison ultimately underscores national states and their politics have not only defined the agendas of contemporary European associations among cities, but have laid much of the foundations for growing contemporary international municipal movements.

Following a brief outline of the design and definitions, my analysis will begin with an

¹ *Heinrich Spruyt*, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*, Princeton NJ, 1994; *Angelo Pichierri*, *Die Hanse – Staat der Städte*, Opladen, 2000.

² *Keichi Ohmae*, *The End of the Nation-State: The Rise of Regional Economies*, New York, 1996; *William Barnes and Larry Lebedur*, *The New Regional Economies*, Thousand Oaks, CA, 1998; *Charles Sabel*, *Flexible Specialization and the Re-Emergence of Regional Economies*, in: Paul Hirst and Jonathan Zeitlin (eds.), *Reversing Industrial Decline?*, New York, 1989, pp. 17-70.

³ *James Caparaso*, *The European Union and Forms of State: Westphalian, Regulatory or Post-modern*, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 39, 1996, pp. 29-52.

⁴ *Philippe Schmitter*, *Imagining the Future of the Euro-Polity with the Help of New Concepts*, in: Gary Marks, Fritz Scharpf, Philippe Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), *Governance in the The European Union*, Thousand Oaks, CA, 1996, pp. 121-150.

outline of emerging international associations among cities in Europe, and of some broad resemblances and differences between these associations and the Hansa League. Building on this comparison, I then analyze how the development of nation-states has limited the capabilities and incentives of contemporary associations to pursue the ends of the Hansa, but has given rise to new bases for international associations among cities.

I. The Comparative Historical Question: Has the Modern State Limited or Empowered Associations of Cities?

Especially since the analysis here will proceed by means of broadly sketched ideal types, it is important to define precisely the main terms, the analytic focus of the comparison, and the empirical scope.

The comparison starts from the basic parallel between the city governments that have organized and joined transnational urban associations in the contemporary era, and the urban principalities that grouped together to form the Hanseatic League. In both cases, governments representing cities have exercised parallel independent authorities to meet and join together in this fashion. If contemporary European cities do so as one element within the constitutional orders of nation-states, this is precisely the type of contextual element that the transhistorical comparison can test; indeed, many of the Hanseatic cities also had to negotiate partly analogous ties to the Holy Roman Empire or other territorial authorities.⁵ The term “state” or “nation-state” will refer to the hierarchical organizations embedded in national political processes and cultures that have dominated European political organization over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although this analysis generally takes the state as an influence that defines the independence of cities, and in that sense remains sovereign, contemporary cities nested in such an organization still retain capacities to act autonomously and even to influence a state in their favor.⁶

To focus a comparison of urban associations in these two eras on the difference the emergence of nation-states has made requires an account of association in both eras that penetrates beyond a mere mapping of networks. In the hands of such recent analysts as Picherri, Selzer and Ewert, an increasingly extensive account has emerged of how social, familial and market ties, technological and institutional innovation, communication and a collective identity sustained the markets and political relations of the Hanseatic League⁷. Although some of the same elements are also clearly at work in contemporary associations of cities, comparison ultimately directs the analysis to underlying motivations not just for cities as actors, but for the persons and groups who shape the actions of cities in urban associations. The wider context, and in particular the presence of modern states, will be analyzed as a source of the incentives for

⁵ See *Albrecht Cordes* Die Rechtsnatur der Hanse. Politische, juristische und historische Diskurse, *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 2001, pp. 49-62.

⁶ The analysis here thus partly breaks down the concept of sovereignty in order to enable a more nuanced analysis of multilevel authority and its politics (cf. *James Caporaso*, Changes in the Westphalian Order: Territory, Public Authority and Sovereignty, in: *James Caporaso* (ed.), xxxx, 2000, pp. 1-30.

⁷ *Picherri*, idem.; *Stephan Selzer and Ulf Christian Ewert*, Verhandeln und Verkaufen, Vernetzen und Vertrauen. Über die Netzwerkstruktur des hansischen Handels, in: *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 119, 2001, pp. 135-162.

individuals representing cities to engage in the network building, communication and travel that membership in urban associations entails.

Rather than encompass market as well as social ties among cities, as Picherri and other analysts have done, my account will focus solely on political relations; rather than speculate about informal ties for which little comparative evidence is currently available, I will confine the comparison to participation in formal collective associations or documented collective actions. The long life of the Hanse also provides researchers with a much longer period about which to generalize than contemporary transnational urban associations allow. The comparison will generally consider this body in the form it took during its most active period, from the late thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth century; for contemporary associations I rely on evidence from the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, but also from accumulating research on how municipal movements have developed over the previous hundred years.

II. Contemporary European Urban Associations and the Hanseatic League: A Comparative Overview

Since the founding of the International Union of Cities in 1913, formal international associations among cities have spread throughout Europe and around the world. In several basic respects these associations bear a broad resemblance to the Hanse. Yet a closer look demonstrates that the scope, the type of participants and ultimately the uses of these networks differ considerably from those of the Hansa League.

One need only search on the internet, which has increasingly emerged as a medium of communication for such networks, to find a plethora of criss-crossing webs of formal affiliation among municipal governments, especially those of larger cities. Although some draw support directly or indirectly from such international organizations as the European Union, the United Nations or the World Bank (for instance, the World Association of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination or the Best Practices Program of the E.U.), many of the most important associations do not. The several types include: (1) Networks built around international agency activity, such as the regular summits of the United Nations conference on Human Settlements; (2) General-purpose international networks composed of member associations of local governments within each of the constituent countries, most notably the International Union of Local Authorities; (3) General-purpose international networks composed of local governments that participate directly in governance alongside a central office, such as the Federation of United Cities; (4) Special-purpose international networks maintained with the support and website of a central office, such as the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives, and (5) Special-purpose networks organized and maintained by initiatives from the constituent localities, such as the Bonn Charter for local employment initiatives.

All of these associations share basic formal characteristics that are well recognized as features of the Hanseatic League. These parallels establish the basis for transhistorical comparison.

1. Like the Hanse, each is composed of a set of governments for cities and undertakes collective action of some sort on their behalf.
2. Each also depends on the voluntary adhesion that was a hallmark of the Hanseatic

League, and those with central administrative offices charge substantial dues analogous to the contributions required of Hanse member cities.⁸

3. Each has considerable spatial scope as an organization, but like the Hanse makes no claim to territorial sovereignty or even control over the territory in between the member cities.
4. Like the Hansa and the multiple smaller regional alliances among cities that strengthened and supplemented it,⁹ contemporary urban associations nest within other formal associations of cities at various scales, including each other. The International Union of Local Authorities, for instance, grew out of and still depends upon national associations of local governments; the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign as well as the Local Government Session of the Johannesburg Summit, for instance, drew on resources and staff from the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives.
5. Analogous to the Hanse, albeit to various degrees, contemporary associations carry out two related functions for their member cities. On the one hand they serve as a means of collective political representation, either directly within national and international bodies or as a public presence in the international media; on the other as a means of communication, both for purposes of deliberation and for the transmission of knowledge among member cities.¹⁰
6. Further, as the subsequent analysis will show, the initiatives and ultimately the incentives of crucial agents within member cities have helped sustain both the Hanse and contemporary transnational urban associations. For the Hanse, most research has ascribed this role to the merchant elites who established the market ties that led the foundations for the league, and who dominated local governments in the member cities. In contemporary cities, local politicians, bureaucrats, professionals and activists have taken on similarly crucial roles.

These broad parallels serve to highlight the striking differences between the Hanse and associations among cities in the contemporary era. The political powers contemporary associations exercise, the territorial scope they span, the types of people who represent cities, and in domains that the associations address all contrast markedly with those of the Hanse.

One decisive difference stands out. Despite their absence of a permanent central staff, the Hanseatic Diets functioned primarily as a means for the cities to act collectively as a political actor in relations with territorial and other political authorities. In a tabulation by Wernicke of the 205 questions considered at six Diets from 1265 through 1418, fully 37 percent concerned relations with feudal lords or with foreign powers, and another 31 percent the internal

⁸ On this aspect of the Hanse see *Philippe Dollinger*, *Die Hanse*, 5th ed., Stuttgart, 1998, pp. 120-123; *Horst Wernicke*, *Die Stadthanse 1280-1418: Genesis – Strukturen – Funktionen*, Weimar, 1983, pp. 84-138.

⁹ *Dollinger*, *idem.*, pp. 124-131; *Wernicke*, *idem.*, pp. 40-51.

¹⁰ Only recently has the communicative dimension of the Hanse emerged as an explicit object of research. See *Volker Henn*, *Innerhansische Kommunikations- und Raumstrukturen: Umrisse einer neuen Forschungsaufgabe?*, in: *Stuart Jenks and Michael North (eds.), Quellen und Darstellungen zur Hansischen Geschichte*, Cologne, 1993, pp. 255-268.

organization of the League.¹¹ Of the remaining decisions, twenty percent involved economic issues, six percent of these in particular relations with the territories around the cities, and another ten percent political issues in individual cities. The Hanse waged war, signed treaties and engaged in negotiations like a current-day nation-state. By contrast, contemporary international associations of cities have shown much less collective resolve to speak as collective political actors, and have steered clear of collective challenges to the foreign policy powers of nation-states. As the names of the associations themselves suggest (The International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, the Bonn Charter for Local Employment Initiatives), these associations have focused on initiatives at the level of cities. In doing so, however, these associations have engaged in a type of collective action that in many respects far exceeds what the Hanse were able to accomplish.

The territorial scope of the webs of cities involved in these associations far outstrips that of the Hanseatic League. For the Hanse, formal ties among cities clearly built upon a well defined, if expansive territorial web of market routes from England to the Baltic Sea. In contemporary European urban networks, territory sets few obvious limits on the extent of formal members. A sampling of most of the major types for which data on individual city participation are available demonstrates this clearly. Table 2 details the geographic distribution of participation in one global meeting linked to an international organization (the Johannesburg Summit), one global general-purpose urban association (the Federation of United Cities), one global special-purpose association (the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)), and one general purpose (Eurocities) as well as two special-purpose associations confined to the European Region (the Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign and the Bonn Charter for Local Employment Initiatives). Although all three global initiatives include a larger contingent from Europe than from any other Continent, in each instance the overall distribution extends in significant measure to the developing as well as the developed world. All told, neither Africa nor the Middle East but North America can claim the smallest overall number of affiliations. Even within Europe, the three networks show only very broad territorial biases. Most of the biggest countries register significant numbers of memberships, in different proportions in different associations.

The internet and other forms of communication and transport technology have clearly helped make the vast scope of contemporary associations possible. Yet the contrast with the Hanse ultimately stems not just from different technological means but from the different types of people who now predominate in these associations, a contrast related to the difference in their uses and formal authorities.

First, with only one exception, the regular participants in Diets (*Hansetage*) and other activities of the League consisted solely of representatives from the League itself, and not the Holy Roman Empire or the territorial lords who made claims to many of the territories

¹¹ Wernicke, *idem.*, p. 37.

surrounding Hanseatic member cities.¹² Within the Diets and in other forms of diplomacy, representatives of member cities consisted predominantly of city council members elected by local elites. Especially in the early years of the Hanse, these representatives often came from the same merchants who engaged in trade and dominated local elites. Klaus Wriedt offers the example of Johann von Douai of Lübeck, a merchant and city council member pressed into service on behalf of the city in frequent negotiations.¹³ As Wriedt has documented, the growth of specialized bureaucratic roles and the spread of universities led over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to a growing place for administrative and diplomatic officials within the activities of the League as well as individual cities. But the specialists that emerged generally claimed only a general juristic expertise and training, in many earlier instances without full university degrees. And even for Cologne, the biggest of the Hansa cities, Deeters found twice as many political representatives as professional specialists (*Fachleute*) of this sort at Imperial and Hanseatic Diets between 1396 and 1604.¹⁴

The participation of organizations beyond the scope of individual city governments and the much greater presence of professional specialization also set contemporary transnational urban associations apart. For purposes of comparison, Table 3 compiles entries from the roll of the Local Government Session at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in August 2002, and the Eurocities meeting from December 1999. As the presence of national and international bodies at the former meeting suggests, national and international local government associations and their staff have reinforced local participation in ways that no central organization stood ready to do for the Hanseatic League. At the same time, as both sets of figures demonstrate, representatives of cities themselves still make up the largest proportion of participants, including thirty-nine percent of the participants in Johannesburg and fully eighty-nine percent in the Eurocities meeting. In both meetings, in contrast to meetings of the League, a group two to three times the size of those listed as mayors and council members holds administrative appointments or positions in local and provincial bureaucracies.¹⁵

These contrasts in participation remain inextricable from the different powers of the League and contemporary international associations to represent cities. In the world of the Hanse, local leaders exercised collective authority through the association to the exclusion of states; in contemporary international society, the exercise of similar authority depends on the activities of officials at the higher tiers of national states as well as international organizations.

¹² The presence of the High Master of German Order among Hanse members was linked to the role the Order had played in the eastern colonization that imposed an initial foundation for Hanseatic domination in Prussia and territories further east (*Dollinger, idem.*, p. 123).

¹³ *Klaus Wriedt*, *Das gelehrte Personal in der Verwaltung und Diplomatie der Hansestädte*, *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 96, 1978, pp. 15-16.

¹⁴ *Joachim Deeters*, *Köln auf Reichs- und Hansetagen 1396 bis 1604: Ein Vergleich*, *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 114, 2001, pp. 102, 113.

¹⁵ Even the elected local officials such as mayors and local councilors, who make up larger contingents than any of their national or international governmental counterparts, derive their positions from different sources than Hanseatic counterparts. Selection on the basis of mass suffrage and organized electoral political competition, I will argue, also makes for different conditions that the officials of Hanseatic cities faced.

The contrasts with the Hanse, however, extend beyond such dimensions to the substantive domains of associational activities. Although the decision-making of the Hanse as a collective body beyond matters of external relations extended almost entirely to economic questions, the representative associations listed in Table 2 clearly reflect a variety of substantive concerns. As the ICLEI and the European Sustainable Cities and Towns campaign have organized around environmental issues, the network of signatories to the Bonn Charter has focused on local employment initiatives. The variations in attendance by local officials in different areas with the substantive emphasis of international meetings (Table 3) confirms the importance of substantive local policy concerns to the presence of these networks. While the Sustainable Development Summit attracted larger numbers of local environmental officials, the Eurocities meeting drew more local experts in international relations. The local activities pursued under the auspices of contemporary associations reflect this same orientation toward specific local policies. The extensive examples listed on the ICLEI of local environmental initiatives in developed world cities vary from a Police Bicycle patrol cited by Dayton, Ohio in the United States to the extensive program in Singapore to limit automobile use through fees and other regulatory measures.¹⁶ With the Bonn Charter, city governments have committed both to lobby at the national level for more local flexibility to address unemployment, and to engage businesses, unions and others within local economies to provide training and open up employment opportunities.¹⁷

Seen this way, the comparison between these contemporary urban associations and the Hanse presents a seeming paradox. Even as contemporary associations lack the political authority the Hanse exercised, they have expanded their influence far beyond the geographic limits of the Hanse, and into more domains of society. The reasons for this, I will argue, go beyond the greater capacities that technologies of communication and transport have obviously brought. The same contemporary nation-states that other observers hold to be endangered have played a pervasive role in this result.

III. The Hanse, Contemporary Urban Associations and the Development of States

As a result of the long-term trends in modern political development, contemporary states have taken over the powers of the Hanse not only as an actor in foreign policy, but in the economic sphere where this association undertook its most systematic collective efforts. Similarly, another set of long-term trends has transformed states into sites of organized political contestation, institutions for the pursuit of collective societal objectives through policy, and vehicles for the institutionalization and application of expertise. As a result of these last developments, contemporary international urban associations have grown largely out of transformations in states. The empowerment of these associations furthers objectives inscribed in the policies and institutions of these same states.

¹⁶ See <http://www3.iclei.org/iclei/casestud.htm> (October 1, 2002).

¹⁷ See http://www.ccre.org/emp_x_al.html (September 29, 2002).

A. Markets, the Hansa League, and the Contemporary State

As the outgrowth of networks among merchants who plied the trade routes of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, the Hanseatic League as a union of cities acted primarily to protect market routes and local market conditions.¹⁸ As a means for the spread of innovations in administration or governance, as Picherri notes, the Hanse was most successful in this same area.¹⁹ Since that era national states, and in recent years transnational bodies such as the European Union, have taken over these tasks that the Hanseatic League undertook among themselves.

Parallel legal norms, long since provided by nation-states, played a crucial role in these institutions. A large proportion of Hansa cities explicitly adopted all or part of the law of Lübeck for their own codes. In the event of a challenge to the interpretation of Lübeck law, so long as other authorities did not forbid extraterritorial appeals, a matter could be referred for a court in Lübeck itself to resolve.²⁰ At the same time, beyond the Diets of the Hanse and of smaller regional groupings of its constituent cities, institutional representation within cities helped to implement these norms. The Kontor and similar installations of the Hansa within member cities as well as in other trading centers along the Atlantic and North Sea Coasts consisted of local offices, warehouses and other facilities of the League. Endowed with a juridically recognized authority to act that the Hanseatic League as an entity lacked, each Kontor possessed an official representative, a court, an official seal, and a cashier.²¹

In the absence of territorial sovereignty that national states now ensure outside the boundaries of cities, the Hanse needed to protect their trade routes from war, banditry or other obstructions. Such efforts were a regular and inescapable accompaniment to the existence of the League. Most took the form either of alliances (*Landfriedsbündnisse*) among Hansa cities located in the same territory, or of alliances with Bishops and territorial lords in surrounding the regions surrounding cities. In Saxony, for instance, several Hansa cities came together in an alliance, then sought the protection of the Bishop in Halberstadt, the Count (*Landgraf*) of Hessen and the Dukes of Brunswick-Lüneberg.²²

Money exchange and measurement standards and posed further problems for the trade of the Hanse that that contemporary European states have essentially solved.²³ Repeated

¹⁸ This purpose set the Hansa apart even from other medieval unions among cities that it otherwise resembled, such as the Swiss Confederation. See *Tamar Münger*, *Hansa und Eidgenossenschaft - zwei mittelalterliche Gemeinschaften im Vergleich*, *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 2001, pp. 5-48.

¹⁹ *Picherri*, *idem.*, p. 81. For parallel assessment see *Walter Stark*, *Über Techniken und Organisationsformen des hansischen Handels im Spätmittelalter*, in: Stuart Jenks and Michael North, *Der hansische Sonderweg? Beiträge zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Hanse*, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, Böhlau, 1993, pp. 191-201.

²⁰ *Münger*, *idem.*, p. 23.

²¹ *Philippe Dollinger*, *Die Hanse*, 5th ed., Stuttgart, 1998, pp. 132-142.

²² *Matthias Puhle*, *Der Sächsische Städtebund im späten Mittelalter*, in: *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 112, 1994, p. 129, quoted in *Münger*, *idem.*, p.16 n.40.

²³ On efforts to settle on common coinage see *Dollinger*, *idem.*, pp. 272-274; on the parallel problems of varying standards of weight and other measurements, *Harald Witthöft*, *Zeichen, Verpackung, Mass/Gewicht und*

negotiations and agreements among the Hanseatic cities or groups of them only partly succeeded in overcoming these obstacles. In the absence of even the banking systems that began to influence trade among the Italian city-states of the time, credit posed yet another problem to be overcome. Among the Hanse various forms of legal partnerships and mutual legal obligations enabled creditors to loan money to finance trade, and providers of different goods to impose obligations sufficient to sustain trade.²⁴ To reinforce the often informal solutions to such problems, the Hansa relied to a considerable degree on networks of extended family members and friendships to consolidate credit and other business relationships.²⁵

Other conditions within contemporary nation-states that make trade among cities considerably easier could also only partly be approximated under the Hanse. National states, or firms within national markets, have provided much of the communications and transportation infrastructures that have increasingly linked cities and laid the foundations for trade. The Hanse could also only partly approximate the national cultures that would emerge with linguistic and other forms of unification,²⁶ and would establish common terms of reference and communication for trade within countries. Although the bulk of the Hanseatic League cities drew on a generally shared Lower German language and culture, the cities and above all the trading activities of the League extended well beyond German-speaking territories of Europe. Over the course of the fifteenth century, to maintain the common interests of the League in the face of rising competition, the Hansetag passed a series of restrictions on membership: a restriction of trading privileges to citizens of the Hanseatic cities; a ban on officeholding by non-Hanse citizens; a prohibition on membership in a Hanseatic and another city at the same time; and ultimately the limitation of trading privileges to citizens who had inherited them by birth.²⁷

In all these aspects of market-making, the Hanse as an association of cities pursued projects that the policies and institutions of modern nation-states have general spared contemporary cities or their associations. Although contemporary cities have mobilized around the pursuit of benefits from markets, the aims of the Bonn Charter as well as individual municipal initiatives remain limited to capitalizing on and maximizing the opportunities that states have helped to create. If nation-states impose obstacles of language, culture, and laws that the Hanse did not face for cities pursuing trade beyond national boundaries, the system of states has at the same time brought advantages for this trade. Benefits that modern states have already furnished for domestic cities, such as civil peace, local market institutions, and physical infrastructures of trade and communication, can easily be extended to traders from beyond national borders. Even the recent shift of significant aspects of market-making to the transnational level in Europe only partly alters the longer-term trend away from the Hanse as a

Kommunikation im hansischen Handel, in: Stuart Jenks and Michael North, *Der hansische Sonderweg? Beiträge zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Hanse*, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, Böhlau, 1993, pp. 203-223..

²⁴ *Albrecht Cordes*, *Spätmittelalterlicher Gesellschaftshandel im Hanseraum (Quellen und Darstellungen zur hansischen Geschichte 45)*, Cologne, 1998.

²⁵ *Stephan Selzer and Ulf Christian Ewert*, *Verhandeln und Verkaufen, Vernetzen und Vertrauen: Über die Netzwerkstruktur des hansischen Handels*, in: *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 119, 2001, pp. 135-161.

²⁶ *Benedict Anderson*, *Imagined Communities*, Ithaca, 1986.

²⁷ *Dollinger*, *idem.*, pp. 262-263.

model. Efforts since the Treaty of Rome to harmonize national markets build on the stable institutions and cultures that nation-states have already developed.

B. The Development of the State and Transnational City Associations

The development of the modern state helps to account for much of what contemporary international associations of European cities pursue as well as what they do not, and in part for the form these associations have taken. In this respect as well, the contrast with the Hanse throws the distinctive nature and activities of contemporary urban associations into sharp relief. To account for the contrasts between the associations of these two eras ultimately requires an understanding of the long-term transformations that democratic institutions, policymaking, professional expertise have brought to the government of cities and ultimately to the incentives of local leaders.

Among contemporary political scientists studying Europe, it has become conventional to look to the construction of transnational political institutions since the Treaty of Rome in 1957 to account for the emergence of cities and regions as transnational actors on the Continent.²⁸ But the accumulating historical evidence, part of it reported in this volume, shows the origins of international associative activities among cities, and even many of the associations themselves, trace back in fact to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁹ Contemporary transnational associations among cities represent only one manifestation of this wider movement. Elements of it have influenced the development of policy and institutions within numerous European states since well before the Treaty of Rome. Among the many factors, including technological change, that helped give rise to these associations, several sets of transformations in states and related institutions have played a crucial role. These transformations help to account for the substantive emphases, the

Democratic elections, ultimately extended to local governments in states across Europe, established new incentives and gave rise to new sources of interests in transnational association unlike those in the Hanse cities. Despite some variations, historians have generally pointed to a stable urban patriciate linked to the Hanseatic merchants as the dominant group in cities throughout the region of the Hanseatic League.³⁰ Mass elections at the local level have not only furnished mechanisms for potential challenges to dominance of this sort, but have helped sustain challenges to existing policies and institutions. Reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, capitalizing on success in local elections, have gained important political footholds at the local level in pursuit of transnational as well as national objectives. In particular, much of recent historical work has established close connections between Social Democratic political movements and the international municipal movement of this period.³¹

²⁸ E.g., *Caporaso*, idem.; *Schmitter*, idem.; *Gary Marks and Lisabeth Hooghe*, *The European Polity*, London, 2000.

²⁹ *Oscar Gaspari*, "Alle origini del movimento comunale europeo: dall'Union Internationale des Villes al Consiglio dei Comuni d'Europa (1913-1953)", *Memoria e ricerca. Rivista semestrale di storia contemporanea*, n.10, 1997.

³⁰ Idem, pp. 176-186; *Münger*, idem., p. 21.

³¹ *Patrizia Dogliani*, *Un laboratorio di socialismo municipale: la Francia, 1870-1920*, Milan, 1992; *Christian Topalov and Suzanna Magri*, *De la cité-jardin à la ville rationalisée: un tournant du projet réformateur. Etude*

Similarly, in the late twentieth century, the growth of the international environmental movement was linked in cities like Freiburg, which emerged as the international headquarters for the ICLEI, to strong local environmental movements and Green parties.

At the same time, partly as a result of such movements, the scope of the policymaking undertaken by states has greatly expanded. If concerns about local employment, public health or the environment were no doubt familiar to the leaders of the Hanse cities, they could hardly have imagined the policies that contemporary cities carry out in these areas. The elaboration of policies in such areas has both followed and contributed to an increasing accumulation of knowledge, both about the economic, social and environmental objects of policy and about the institutional means to pursue them. In this process, local governments have often led the way in developing crucial aspects of the welfare state, and played a critical role in carrying out such programs as public housing.³² The expansion of urban planning and environmental policies over the twentieth century also passed major responsibilities for implementation and policymaking itself to localities.³³ Growing international agendas for local governments to follow in these areas, such as Agenda 21 in the environmental field or the Bonn Charter for local employment policy, build on the increasing responsibilities states have long been assigning to local governments as well as the independent capacities of local governments within national systems.

Alongside the growth of policymaking, knowledge about policy and administration has centered increasing in institutionalized forms of expertise. In the age of the Hanse, as the example of Cologne demonstrates, experts (*Fachleute*) in municipal administration could claim at most juridical expertise. Today, in any of the former Hanseatic cities, trained, credentialed experts in a wide range of disciplines can be found applying specialized knowledge throughout the local government as well as civil society. Constructed in large measure through the expansion of state educational systems as well as state-sanctioned certification, disciplines like public administration, financial accounting, urban planning, environmental engineering, administrative law and public health now pervade much of what local governments do. In the reform movements of the early twentieth century, advocates of municipal reform often also led movements to institutionalize professional knowledge in the social sciences, public management, urban planning and similar fields.³⁴ Not just international organizations, but local administrators participated actively in the transfer and reception of this knowledge.³⁵ In the late twentieth

comparative France, Grande-Bretagne, Italie, Etats-Unis, in : *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 28, Nr. 3, 1987 ; *Daniel Rodgers*, *Atlantic Crossings*, Princeton NJ, 1998 ;

³² *George Steinmetz*, xxx, Princeton, 1999; *Christian Topalov* (ed.), *Laboratoires du nouveau siècle*, Paris, 1998.

³³ *Jefferey M. Sellers*, *Governing from Below*, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 105-110.

³⁴ See, e.g., *Rémi Badouï*, *Raoul Dautry 1880-1951, technocrate de la République*, Paris, 1992 ; ³⁴ *Viviane Claude*, *Sanitary engineering as a path to town planning : the singular role of the Association Générale des Techniciens et Hygiénistes Municipaux in France and the French-speaking countries, 1900-1920*, in: *Planning perspectives*, 4, 1989; *Rodgers*, *idem.*, *James Kloppenburg*, xxx, 1986 ; *Anthony Sutcliffe*, *Towards the Planned City*, London, 1981.

³⁵ See, e.g., *Pierre-Yves Saunier*, *Changing the city: urban international information and the Lyon municipality, 1900-1940*, in: *Planning Perspectives*, 14, 1999. Other powerful international organizations less connected with states, such as private foundations engaged in the funding of research, contributed as well. *Pierre-Yves Saunier*, *Sketches from the Urban Internationale 1910-1950. Voluntary associations, international institutions and US philanthropics at the city's bedside*, *Urban History*, 1999.

century, although the connection of local internationalization to professionalization remains under-researched, it seems likely that those who have taken roles in international organizations or represented cities in international meetings consist predominantly of experts in professionalized fields related to environmental policy or management.

IV. Conclusion: Urban Associations and the Transnational Order in Historical Perspective

Any comparison between the urban associations of these two fundamentally distinctive eras must of course take a wide range of differences into account. The most obvious differences, however, fail to explain the distinctive aims that contemporary associations pursue. In juridical terms, the Hanse clearly exercised a political authority to act collectively that contemporary cities, as units embedded in the constitutional structures of nation-states, clearly lack. Yet contemporary transnational local government associations have still found the means to pursue agendas through the exercise of their local powers within states, or through lobbying in national and international arenas.

By the same token, it seems clear that the technological possibilities of the contemporary era, along with the presence of international associations and organizations to facilitate contacts, have made possible associations based on very limited personal ties among ever wider circles of cities. To a growing degree, these associations build upon and exploit the sort of “weak ties” that sociologists like Granovetter have found in systems of contacts or coordination.³⁶ The ICLEI website, for instance, lists a wide array of environmental projects with little more additional relation to each other than that member cities have pursued them, from brownfields development in Los Angeles to a pilot project for aluminum can recycling in Gdansk. For Picherri, however, albeit within a more limited geographic area, similarly weak ties among local actions within cities distinguish the Hanse as a political organization.³⁷

Even through the great disruptions of nineteenth and twentieth century European history, these long-term developments of states and related political, policymaking and professional institutions have continued to lay the groundwork for new bases of international city associations. Indeed, the reform movements that arose out of the industrial revolution, and later efforts to prevent further wars on European soil, each gave new impetus to international movements of this sort. Beyond the development of international institutions and associations, however, local political competition, policymaking processes and expertise have given rise to institutionalized local incentives that the elites of the Hanse did not face to participate in international activities. Local politicians, parties and movements can gain legitimation from the prestige of international activities, reinforcement of their own local efforts from outside sources, and ideas and material resources for the pursuit of local goals. Local managers and other professionals can gain standing within local and national hierarchies of public management, planning law or engineering. For local elites and activists in general, international ties can

³⁶ *Mark Granovetter*, The Strength of Weak Ties, in: *American Sociological Review*, 1973.

³⁷ *Picherri*, *idem.*, p. .

establish the means to furnish new services to local businesses and professionals, or even to local school classes. Facilitated by the weak ties that such media as the internet enable, the resulting associations remain even looser and more fragmented than the Hanse as an organization (Table 4). Indeed, the diversity of national governmental, professional and political institutions probably imposes limits on overall collective interests among local governments even beyond what the Hanse faced. But common, specific local challenges, such as Agenda 21 or local employment policy, have clearly mobilized numerous executives or parts of local governments within contemporary international associations.

As the last row of Table 3 recognizes, a full comparison between the two eras also needs to take account of systematic contrasts in the patterns of politics within cities. Only if the groups with incentives to regulate markets also exercise some form of control over decisions within the city government can the city act as a political unit on these incentives to develop markets. In this respect, contemporary European cities also face conditions that also differ decisively from those of the League. In contemporary European cities, however, any among a wide variety of political forces and organizations may dominate local initiatives in transnational arenas at any given time. In accommodating the voices and interests of bureaucracies, professionals, parties, social movements, city governments have also brought different emphases to transnational associations than local elites did to the Hansa. To understand how requires a closer examination of another way that the context of contemporary transnational urban associations has changed. (note Bonn local employment policy)

For historians engaged in the study of past urban networks as well as for social scientists attempting to understand contemporary ones, a rigorous account of these associations and their significance presents immense methodological challenges that to date have only partly been overcome. To be understood fully, international associations need to be analyzed in terms not only of the national and subnational associations and the more informal ties in which they nest, but also in terms of their relation to society and politics at national and ultimately at local levels. On the one hand, this agenda includes their contribution to administrative knowledge, to policy and to politics within cities; on the other, it requires an understanding of why local or national actors have engaged in associational activity. At the same time, administrative knowledge or any other practice may not depend on associations or even personal contacts to spread rapidly among localities. Diffusion could come about solely through independent local initiatives connected through media of communication.

The broad comparison sketched here nonetheless points to two broad conclusions that would more systematic inquiry of this sort to confirm. In each case, comparison with the Hanse highlights the distinctive roots of contemporary international city associations. First, the development of modern states has both shaped the agendas of these associations, and furnished much of the incentives around which they have mobilized. Rather reflect a hollowing out of the state in Europe (including its increasingly supranational as well as its national elements), contemporary associations of cities mirror its pervasive, diverse and multiple influences. At the same time it has removed much of the project of market-making that dominated the agenda of the Hanse, it has contributed to the political competition, the policymaking and the institutionalized expertise that furnish motivations for the city officials engaged in contemporary municipal associations.

Second, this internationalization of associations cannot simply be viewed from the standpoint of national governments, national policies or even national associations of cities. At the most fundamental level, even the influences from national states on internationalization need to be analyzed and understood from the bottom up as well as the top down. The explanation for the rise of international movements among cities lies not just in the formation of international organizations or even joint actions among national associations of cities, but in the motivations of local politicians, of local administrators and of social movements based in local communities.

Table 1
City and Regional Governments in International Urban Associations, 1999-2002

	International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives ¹	Federation of United Cities ²	Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, Local Government Session ³	Eurocities ⁴	European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign ⁵	Bonn Charter (Local Employment Initiatives) ⁶
Europe	169 (Germany: 30, Italy: 15, Finland: 14, Norway: 14)	748 (France: 415, Italy: 128, Russia: 51, Spain: 38)	77 (France: 17, Italy: 9, United Kingdom: 9, Spain: 8)	64 (France: 9, Germany: 9, Italy: 7, United Kingdom: 6)	1644 (Spain: 594, Italy: 533, United Kingdom: 103, Germany: 78)	299 (Italy: 71, Spain: 51, Belgium: 42, Germany: 36)
North America	60	0	17	0	0	0
Asia-Pacific	113	18	57	0	0	0
Latin America	32	51	14	0	0	0
Africa	35	408	49	0	0	0
Middle East	2	127	4	0	0	0
European proportion	41%	55%	35%	100%	100%	100%

¹Full members as listed at <http://www2.iclei.org/iclei/> (October 7, 2002).

²Members list, <http://www.fmcu-uto.org> (October 7, 2002).

³Attendees listed at ICLEI Training site as of August 22, 2002 (<http://www.iclei.org> (October 7, 2002)).

⁴List of attendees at annual general meeting, October 1999 (at <http://www.xxx> (October 7, 2002)).

⁵List as of October 7, 2002 (<http://www.sustainable-cities-share.org/campaign/c.7.html>).

⁶List updated to December 2000 (http://www.igre.de/kommunales_eu_lexikon/bonner_charta/punkt4.htm (October 7, 2002)).

Table 2

Self-Identification of European Representatives at Two International Urban Meetings

	Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, Local Government Session (2002) (percent) ¹	Eurocities Meeting (1999) (percent) ²
International agencies	9 (3%)	
International local government associations	41 (12%)	
European officials, representatives	8 (2%)	
National local government associations	12 (3%)	
National government officials	11 (3%)	
Nongovernmental organizations	16 (5%)	
Academic and other experts	6 (2%)	
Local and provincial officials:		
Mayors/Chief Executives	23 (7%)	13 (9%)
Council members	17 (5%)	20 (14%)
Local or provincial administrative officials	96 (27%)	91 (66%)
(Environment)	27 (8%)	2 (1%)
(Economic Development)	1 (0%)	6 (4%)
(International Relations)	9 (3%)	27 (20%)
All local or provincial officials	136 (39%)	124 (89%)

Note: Since some identifications overlap, totals do not always correspond to component categories.

¹Attendees listed at ICLEI Training site as of August 22, 2002 (<http://www.iclei.org> (October 7, 2002)).

²Draft Minutes for Eurocities Annual General Meeting No. 8 (Helsinki, 1999), pp. 2-4 (on file with author).

Table 3

Means and Incentives for Market-Making Among Cities of the Hanseatic League
in Comparison With Contemporary European Cities

	Hanseatic League	Contemporary Cities
Common market institutions	Shared among cities: Lübeck law, Kontore, Hansetag	State and international law and other norms, culture of nation-states, also personal and organizational networks
Organization of violence to protect trade routes	City alliances with each other, territorial lords	Secured through national states
Credit, media of exchange	Partnership forms, mutual obligations, family and friendship ties	National and transnational markets and rules for credit, money, finance
Ties among local markets, communication	Kontor, market routes among cities, Stapelrecht, German language, rules of social exclusion, family and friendship ties	Maintained by states and firms within and beyond national territory; communication and transport infrastructure; national cultures and citizenship
Interests within local governments in favor of collective market initiatives	(Generally supportive) Hansa merchants, other local merchants, professionals and others dependent on them	(Limited, varied) beyond businesses and related professionals, local administrators, political parties, social movements with other interests

Table 4

Incentives and Other Conditions of Political Association:
The Hanseatic League and Contemporary Transnational Associations Among City Governments

	Hanseatic League	Contemporary transnational associations among cities
Joint political authority	Exercised to regulate and maintain markets	Limited, but includes lobbying on policy within states and in international arenas
Technological enablement	Limited innovations in transportation, limited communication	Communication enables constant access, easy transportation
Ties among city governments	Voluntary, based on physical institutional presence, market ties, personal relations	Voluntary, can be reaffirmed or set aside with little cost; transnational organizations facilitate, some personal relations
Mediation of ties	Other local associations among cities, plus personal and institutionalized links through markets	National local government associations, NGOs, professional institutions, political parties and movements (all at local, national and international levels)
Incentives for actors involved in mediation of ties	Merchant profits, economic advancement, political influence, usually within or through League	Organizational influence, professional, political advancement at multiple levels (local, national, international)
Incentives within cities to cultivate ties	Maintenance of positions in markets among cities, elites within cities	Political, professional, market advancement (at local level)
Diversity of local interests in exercise of joint authority	High, except for maintenance of markets	Generally very high