Co-opetition and urban worlds, c. AD 1050 – 1150: archaeological and textual case studies from northwestern Europe

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Abstract

This article explores the complex combinations of collaborative and competitive social relations that catalyzed the development of towns and urban societies in northwestern Europe, during the century between c. AD 1050 and 1150. It aims to evaluate the initiative or agency of different social groups in the formation of different urban social fabrics. Case studies are considered from major port cities and centres of regional (and sometimes state) government, to small ports and even rural villages that carried the judicial status of towns. Both archaeological and textual evidence is utilized to try to shed light on the nature of different urban societies and how they developed. The regional scope of the case studies encompasses examples principally from England, France and Flanders, with some additional comparative material from Wales and northern Iberia.

Introduction: Urban societies, collaboration and competition, c. AD 1050 - 1150

This article explores the complex combinations of collaborative and competitive social relations that catalyzed the development of towns and urban societies in northwestern Europe, during the century between c. AD 1050 and 1150. It aims to evaluate the initiative or agency of different social groups in the formation of different urban social fabrics. Case studies are considered from major port cities and centres of regional (and sometimes state) government, to small ports and even rural villages that carried the judicial status of towns. Both archaeological and textual evidence is utilized to try to shed light on the nature of different urban societies and how they developed. The regional scope of the case studies encompasses examples principally from England, France and Flanders, with some additional comparative material from Wales and northern Iberia.

In terms of chronological and social context, the period between the mid eleventh and mid twelfth centuries saw very significant collaboration between urban elites of major towns and governmental powers of consolidating states, whether kingdoms or principalities, and their landed aristocracies. The urban elites of the major towns of this era, often port cities, had developed mainly through the tenth and first half of the eleventh centuries, from a combination of mercantile backgrounds as merchants and artisans. A significant proportion of the elites of these cities were also secular aristocrats and ecclesiastical institutions, who were given or purchased urban estates and residences, built churches or procured rights to tithes over churches

and parishes (in the case of ecclesiastical institutions). Many of the latter landed elites had a greater interest in their rural estates and were resident in towns only intermittently but their officers did play a daily role in urban life. Furthermore, in certain key cities of northwest Europe, notably those of Ghent and Bruges, in the County of Flanders, and perhaps London and Winchester in England, Rouen in Normandy and Paris in France, the dynamism of these urban centres or their roles as hubs of state government encouraged landed aristocrats to become increasingly resident in these cities.

The patronage of landed elites and the commercial enterprise of the mercantile populations of the largest cities had, by the eleventh century, established an urban-'patrician' elite that was increasingly indistinguishable from the lower levels of the aristocracy. From the mid tenth century, textual sources show that merchants and specialist artisans were given or purchased rural estates, some larger than the notional threshold for qualification for the lowest level of aristocracy (a *thegn*) in England[1]. And archaeological evidence from urban merchant-artisan contexts shows that by the mid to late tenth and early eleventh centuries, hunting falcons were housed and discarded in urban residences, for example at Coppergate, in York, possibly reflecting possession of a rural estate by at least one of those artisan households, or at least emulation of landed elite social practices in the vicinity of the town by town citizens[2]. Textual sources also show that the amassing of wealth by town-dwelling merchant artisans was also directly linked to holding of royal/state offices or patronage by major secular or ecclesiastical magnates in some instances, although the proportion of rising urban patrician families that rose on a combination of commerce and office-holding, as opposed to commerce alone is unknown[3].

At the other end of the emerging urban hierarchy, collaborative actions between state authorities, aristocracies and peasantries in the rural world resulted in the creation of towns and urban-citizens in the judicial sense that comprised rural villages and often farming communities, in the sense of the archaeological 'signatures' of these settlements[4]. By the mid to late eleventh century, the legal status of 'town-dweller' – *burgensus*, first used at the turn of the eleventh century, in the Book of Saint Faith of Conques, had become an aspiration for rural peasants, free or tenants, due to the greater social freedom that accompanied urban citizenship[5]. Kings and aristocrats increasingly exploited that aspiration to populate new ports and hold newly conquered territories and border regions, in England, Wales, Ireland, Normandy and Atlantic France and Iberia, between the later eleventh and mid twelfth centuries.

These collaborative ventures were also tempered by socio-economic and, increasingly, political competition between the urban patricians of port cities, and state powers and rural aristocracies, in the period c. AD 1050 and 1150. This competition was manifested materially in the townscapes and lifestyles of social display in the major cities: in the built environment of palaces, cathedrals, churches, urban castles and townhouses; and the lifestyles of consumption of foodstuffs, clothes, other portable luxury goods, and public action, such as hunting, sports and

other leisure pursuits. Such social competition also became violent and political, with increasing regularity in this era, although town societies acting collectively, or as divided factions, usually provided armed support for rivals within the royal families or highest aristocracies of western Europe. They were never opposed to the principle of state government by Kings, Dukes or Counts in the modern-day entities of Britain, France, northern Spain or Portugal. For example, the provision of rival fleets by London merchants in the 1050s, supporting both King Edward the Confessor of England, and his rival Earl Harold Godwinson (later Harold II of England) was a reflection of the support of rival aristocratic interests, not a desire to replace them[6]. The revolt of some of the citizens of Rouen in 1090, against Duke Robert Curthose of Normandy in favour of his brother, King William II of England, was similarly motivated by rivalries within the established order of Ducal/royal government, rather than any aspiration to change the nature of that authority[7].

Only in the County of Flanders, by 1127, was there any political challenge to the authority of a state ruler from the collective representatives of the cities of that socio-political entity. In that instance, the cities of Flanders, most notably Ghent and Bruges, exercised their collective political authority (based on their economic wealth) to veto the French King's nominee as Count of Flanders[8]. Even in this context, however, the Flemish cities were not inventing a new ruling structure; but rather supporting their own candidate within the existing ruling structure of the County. In this sense, the developments in the political self-awareness of the urban-patrician elites of northwestern Europe (Britain, Ireland, France, Flanders and Iberia), and their government of their towns, were different from the communes of northern and central Italy in this era, recently explored by Chris Wickham, where consular and communal authority was exercised independently of overarching royal/state government, in most cases[9]. What is clear is that between the mid eleventh and mid twelfth centuries, state rulers and aristocrats of northwestern Europe needed towns and urban societies of different types for different purposes, whether for tax revenues, bullion, trade goods, holding territories or military support; and the quid pro quo that emerged was increasing wealth, independence and political self-awareness on the part of the urban mercantile patricians of the major cities, and rulers had to be careful to cater for the interests of those urban elites.

In the discussion below, an attempt is made to analyze the extent of collaboration and competition between the different functional and hierarchical groups within selected case studies from the diversity of towns and urban societies of northwestern Europe, between c. AD 1050 and 1150. A key component in this analysis is the examination of the use of the concept of 'co-opetition' developed from Game Theory, most notably by Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff in trying to explain the range of collaborative and competitive actions that influenced the development of the urban societies studied[10]. Key to the exploration of the use of this paradigm will be the intentionality of the social groups or individual actors. The concept of co-opetition comprises the collaboration of different social groups with a view to promoting the

growth of a whole entity for the purpose of mutual gain, and to the detriment of competitors. However, the collaborating groups could also be competitors at the same time, and much depends on the perception of the collaborating participants in terms of what they might gain, and what the consequences of their collaboration might be[11]. The theory was originally expounded to promote and explain strategies of business development and competition but its allowance of multiple strategies of collaboration and competition between social groups simultaneously has potential for explaining at least some of the phenomena of urban societies in the era covered by this paper.

However, questions of intentionality are critical to understanding the collaborative and competitive actions witnessed in the textual and archaeological records. Chris Wickham's key question posed in relation to the development of communes and consular elites in Italy is equally valid here: what did the actors think they were doing when acting collaboratively, and what was their aim?[12] And, more importantly in relation to co-opetition in northwestern Europe, did the different groups of social actors get what they expected among the diversity of urban societies that resulted, or were there unintended consequences for certain parties? The case studies that follow explore these dynamics and their results within the different social settings of the various urban societies of the era.

Port Cities

The great port cities of northwestern Europe were located primarily in the estuarine zones or lower reaches of major rivers, between the mid eleventh and mid twelfth centuries, located to exploit both maritime and fluvial communications and trade. London, York, Rouen and Bruges provide good examples of this spatial location, although Dublin provides an example located on the coast, and Ghent, Paris and Mainz provide examples of port cities sited in the middle and upper reaches of major rivers. All these city-societies seem to have developed on the basis of multiple layers of collaboration between different individuals, groups and institutions that ultimately also led to competition between them. They comprised state rulers, bishops, monasteries, and various secular aristocratic and smaller urban landowners and their representatives, in addition to the mercantile elite 'patricians'. The latter comprised artisans and merchants who had become urban (and often rural) landowners themselves by the later tenth century, and some of them (often the most prominent) also held offices for state, ecclesiastical and aristocratic powers. During the period between 1050 and 1150, evidence of collective action by the representatives of major port societies also emerges into the textual record. From the mid to late eleventh century, such collective action is made manifest by citizens of towns, variously described as *burgenses*, *cives* or *burgarii* (see below), entering into political conflicts against state, episcopal and aristocratic powers who were landowners or had rights in their towns, or there were grievances against the rulers of the wider polities in which towns were situated.

The period between the 1150s and 1190s saw the ratification of earlier rights and privileges held by the citizenry and representative collective bodies of major port cities like Rouen and London, and the resulting documents have often been described as the foundation of the *communes* of London and Rouen, using the same nomenclature as northern and central Italy. In both the case of London and Rouen, however, the ratifications of privileges and jurisdictions confirmed earlier existing rights that have been suggested to date from sometime in the eleventh century, and certainly from the early twelfth century[13]. The likelihood is that the rights and privileges of the representative bodies of these cities, with mayors and rudimentary councils, were probably granted before or after the very periods that witnessed violent conflicts between ruling and landowning powers and urban collective authorities. The relative balance between collaborative and competitive relations between the social actors, or 'players', in the port-cityscapes changed over time, depending on socio-economic and political circumstances. Ghent, London, York and Rouen provide the principal case studies through which to chart these developments below.

The complex poly-focal settlement that became the city of Ghent developed from four key settlement nodes situated upon and between the Rivers Leie and Scheldt. Two monasteries had been founded in close proximity, on the banks of the two rivers in the mid seventh century: St Bavo's abbey located within a settlement described as *Ganda*, and St. Peter's abbey at the settlement of *Blandinium* to the south of Ganda. A port, known as *portus Ganda*, is mentioned in texts from c. AD 865, situated on a meander of the Scheldt, with the Scheldt to the west and Leie to the east, and between Ganda and Blandinium. The initiative for the founding of the portus is unknown. It was initially surrounded by a D-shaped enclosure or moat, with the Scheldt on its western side. By the later ninth century a church existed in the portus – St John-in-the-Portus', now renamed as St.Bavo's cathedral. By the early tenth century, the Counts of Flanders had established an estate, with its centre located 400 metres to the northeast of the portus. As a consequence of the three nodes of patronage and their own commercial dynamism, the confines of the D-shaped enclosure had become too limited for the merchant-artisan community of the portus, and the ditch/moat had been filled in by the mid tenth century, amid large-scale development of residential and mercantile tenements along both the Scheldt and the Leie[14].

Between the early and middle decades of the eleventh century, the major cult buildings of the abbeys and the Count's hall were replaced in stone, in the Romanesque style, signaling their leading status in their zones of the evolving townscape (and regional power in the case of the Count). However, by the mid eleventh century the mercantile dominated the town, both institutionally and in terms of space. They had combined trading roles, to generate portable wealth, with official and civic positions. The leading men of the merchant families were described as *viri probi* and *viri hereditarii*, indicating a role both in internal justice and some sort of hereditary position of authority within the town for some merchant families[15]. By 1060, the

Counts had granted a corporate body – assembly or council – representing the merchant town of Ghent a charter or corporation document, which provided for the self-government of the town by its self-appointed officials, from the leading families. Hence from this time the mercantile town governed its own affairs, albeit providing large taxation revenues for the Count, adjacent to the count's palace and urban estate and the properties of the two abbeys.

While the source of the authority of the citizens of Ghent was its legal privileges, the foundation of the individual and collective power of the citizens was its mercantile wealth based on the trade of cloth, traded across Europe by the mid eleventh century, from England and Scandinavian in the north; to the principalities of West Francia and the German empire to west and east; and to Iberia and Italy to the south[16]. To emphasize their individual family status merchants and other urban landowners in the incorporated town had large stone townhouses constructed in the Romanesque style, with multiple floors, and some possessed towers. Over fifty of these stone town houses, dating from the end of the eleventh to twelfth centuries are known, displaying the status, wealth and aspirations of the urban patrician elite[17]. In Ghent, collaborative relations in wealth generation resulted in greater social freedom and independence of action for the citizens of Ghent's incorporated urban society, although equivalent freedoms did not exist for the inhabitants of the urban estates of the Count and the abbeys, even though physically they were part of the townscape too, and interacted as part of it on a daily basis.

Evidence on the nature and activities of the citizens of the English port cities of London and York also indicates a combination of collaborative and competitive relations between economic and political actors in their urban societies. Archaeological remains from both London and York show that merchant-artisans of an equivalent wealth to the *viri probi* of Ghent had emerged in these port cities, between the mid tenth and mid eleventh centuries. The families of metalworkers and moneyers at Coppergate, York, had access to silk clothes, weapons, ornate riding gear and hunting falcons[18]. They were integrated within the Scandinavian maritime and river networks to Central Asia and Byzantium, and were possibly both urban and rural landowners. The archaeological evidence from London reflects a similar array of networks and lifestyles of consumption for its merchant-artisan patricians, with the addition of contacts with Iberia and Mediterranean Europe. The inhabitants of Milk Street, possessed garments and offcuts of silk cloth in their wooden cellared houses of the later tenth and eleventh centuries – replaced in stone by the early twelfth century[19]. They were also eating grapes and figs, probably as dried fruits imported from the Mediterranean[20].

Recent publication of the archaeological evidence of buildings, wharfs and material from the Bull Wharf –Queenhithe waterfront also amply illustrates the growing geographical scope of London's trade and communications networks. By the mid to late eleventh century, Byzantine copper-alloy coins – *folles* - were discarded at Queenhithe, as was one of nine Byzantine lead seals, found in London, of the *genikon* finance department in Constantinople. This suggests

official Byzantine trading links operating via London. And fragments of a walnut-wood sea-chest from Queenhithe probably reflect further maritime contacts with southern Europe[21]. Continental pottery sherds also reflect importation of goods from the Meuse-Rhine mouths region, from the presence of Andenne-ware and Rhineland pottery wares[22]. Yet, their numbers are not great and are probably not representative of the quantities of goods that were imported from these regions, in the form of perishable commodities, perhaps better reflected from textual sources from the early eleventh century onwards[23]. Other evidence for exchange at the waterfront was provided by silver pennies of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and fragments of balances and lead weights[24].

In addition to the archaeological evidence for the underpinning of the wealth of the London mercantile citizenry, textual sources and the street place-name topography show that the region of London from the Queenhithe waterfront through Cheapside to Milk Street and Laurence Lane, to the Guildhall was the commercial heart of London. This zone within the central area of the old Roman walled circuit of Londinium, was left undamaged physically by both the Danish and Norman Conquests of England in 1016 and 1066 respectively, although Cnut of Denmark raised a particularly heavy *Hergeld* tax on the Londoners in 1018, and William of Normandy placed castles to the east and west of the commercial district – a west castle near St Paul's cathedral and the Tower of London to its east[25]. Neither the Danish-, nor the West Saxon-, nor the Norman Kings of the eleventh to mid twelfth centuries wished to damage the revenue generating capacity of the mercantile population of London. During this period the relationships between the commercial population of London and royal and episcopal authorities involved considerable collaboration for mutual benefit to 'grow' the wealth of both the state and merchant interests.

Pamela Nightingale drew attention, in the 1980s and 1990s, to the key symbiosis of office-holding and commercial activities in her studies of the moneyers of London, especially the Deorman family, between the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. She observed that moneyers like the Deorman family combined, and perhaps even owed their state/royal offices to, bullion and spice trading and striking coinage, between the reigns of Edward the Confessor and Henry I – they survived the Norman Conquest[26]. Goldsmiths also combined trading bullion and manufacturing precious items with royal offices, such as moneyer. Indeed, moneyers and goldsmiths/metalworkers were also regular recipients or purchasers of urban and rural landholdings from the 970s onwards[27]. The goldsmiths retained privileged status in London into the era of the Norman King, Henry I, and the Angevin period[28]. Moneyers and goldsmiths also paid for the construction of urban stone churches in the eleventh-century townscape. The church of the Deorman family, dedicated to St Antonin, became the church of the Grocers' (pepperers')' guild[29]. Further fulfilment of specialist artisan and commercial roles alongside holding of royal commissions by London *burgenses* can be observed in regard to the building of Westminster abbey. Edward the Confessor put the management of the construction of the abbey, his principal

display of regal and spiritual identity, in the hands of his church-wright (*artifex*), Teinfrith, and London citizens of mercantile background. The latter held the rank of *thegn*, the lowest rank of the aristocracy, and all were also rural landowners, in addition to their specialist and mercantile professions[30].

The extent of co-operation between London citizens and royal/state authority could be limited, however, and proved volatile in periods of political instability. Five years before Edward the Confessor was working in alliance with London citizens on Westminster abbey, his supporters amongst the London merchant-seafaring community were providing a fleet to fight other Londoners, who were providing ships for Harold Godwinson in the civil war of the 1050s[31]. When royal power seemed insecure, the citizens of mid eleventh- to mid-twelfth-century London chose to act in their own political self-interest: hence, the unsuccessful support for Edgar the Ætheling against William the Conqueror in 1066, immediately after the battle of Hastings; and the expulsion of William's granddaughter, the Empress Mathilda, in 1141 by the citizens acting on the will of a representative body, called a 'commune', pre-figuring by fifty years the formal establishment of the commune of London in 1191[32]. Indeed, after the expulsion of Mathilda, the Londoners continued fighting for the imprisoned king Stephen, apparently providing troops equipped in mail coats and helmets for Stephen's queen, Mathilda of Boulogne, to rescue the besieged Bishop of Winchester, Stephen's brother[33]. Only strong royal military power kept in check the growing tendency of Londoners to act in the political sphere. The same tendency to act in the political and perceived economic interest of the collective urban society can also be seen in York, in the mid eleventh century, when the citizens of York (with their Scandinavian heritage) came to terms with King Harald Hardrada of Norway, during his bid for the English throne in 1066. They subsequently allied themselves with Edgar the Ætheling and Earls Edwin and Morcar, in the northern rebellion against William of Normandy in 1068, in which York became a principal battleground[34]. Despite their unsuccessful participation in this rebellion, the tenements on Coppergate and Ousegate, close to the Pavement market were still the residential zones of the wealthiest merchants in York in the twelfth century – perhaps the descendants of some of the moneyers and goldsmiths of the tenth century[35].

The same tendencies toward collaboration and occasional violent competition in support of rival political factions within ruling lineages are also seen in the case of Rouen in Normandy. Gauthiez's recent analysis of the spatial development of Rouen, based on topographical, archaeological and textual sources indicates that there was a 25-hectare expansion of the urban area at Rouen by the early eleventh century. This expansion occurred to the west of the walled area of Late Roman Rouen, encompassing the portus settlement and old market place that already existed in that zone, with newly occupied and utilized areas extending to the north and west of these pre-existing features. Gauthiez has suggested that this growth of the urban area was a planned Ducal initiative because three of the principal east-west streets within the Roman walled area are continued into the western expansion, albeit circumventing the market place[36].

Such a planned expansion around c. AD 1000 would mirror the earlier replanning of the street plan within the Roman walled area that took place under Duke William Longsword in the 930s-940s[37]. Sometime between 1067 and 1090, during the Ducal reign of William the Conqueror, a stone wall was built to enclose the 25 hectares of this western urban expansion. The archaeological excavations in the newly occupied streets in the western extension indicate that the whole space was occupied from the early eleventh century and by the later eleventh century, a stone Romanesque townhouse had already been built to the west of the portus area in the rue de Béguines[38].

It is unclear whether the western expansion of Rouen was all undertaken under the direction of the Norman Dukes. The organic expansion of the pre-existing port area and construction of buildings around the market could have resulted as much from merchant-artisan dynamism and expansion of existing street systems need not all have been driven by political elites. Significant collaboration between mercantile and Ducal interests is most likely for mutual benefit. This mutual gain through collaboration is witnessed in the Charter of Liberties to the citizens of Rouen, confirmed by Henry Plantagenet (later Henry II of England) in 1150-51. Gauthiez has suggested that the the character of the charter of liberties reflects an early- to mid-eleventh-century origin. In it the Roman walled area of Rouen is referred to as the *civitas*, and the western extension is referred to as the *burgus*. The charter confirms rights of administration of justice within the city by a council made up of five representatives from the civitas and five from the burgus. References to the *burgarii* citizens of Rouen are also known in documents from the late 1030s, and from the mid eleventh century all citizens of Rouen as a whole are often simply described as c*ives*[39]. While the Norman Dukes allowed some rights of justice and self-government for the citizens, they benefitted from taxation as commerce developed further, and they also granted new parish churches and parish tithes to various ecclesiastical institutions in the burgus from the 1020s, thus spreading the financial benefits of commercial and demographic growth to ecclesiastical institutions, in particular.

The specific trades and merchant-artisan lifestyles of the citizens of Rouen can be glimpsed, at present, mainly through archaeological evidence of later eleventh and twelfth-century buildings and from twelfth-century textual evidence. The character of certain commercial professions can be surmised, and seafaring commerce with Britain, Flanders and the seaboard of Atlantic Europe is indicated. Probably from the mid to late tenth century, Rouen housed a Jewish merchant community within the Roman walled area under the protection of the Dukes. They were involved in moneylending, bullion exchange and probably slave- and spice- and other trading activities with Iberia. Their community is attested archaeologically to date by two Romanesque buildings, one interpreted as a synagogue and another, a Yeshiva[40]. Of the Christian citizens, recent studies of the families and activities of *burgenses* also indicate the importance of money-changers/bullion dealers, probably analogous to the importance of known moneyers and goldsmiths from London in the same era. By 1185, some Rouen merchant families

(for example, one of the sons of Emma 'the Vicomtesse') arranged payment of rent in gold and pepper[41], and this may be a reflection of documentary survival rather than the inception of such practices in the late twelfth century. Paying of rents in pepper is known from the 1140s in England, in London and also Winchester, reflecting the use of pepper as currency at a time when silver coin supplies were falling[42]. They occurred mostly in port cities where pepper was imported. Other Rouen merchants were heavily involved in the export of wine, and the products of Atlantic activities, such as whaling, to destinations such as London, reflected in their landing rights at Dowgate before and after 1066, and the early eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon descriptions of their trade-goods, in the Billingsgate statutes of king Æthelred the Unready (d. 1016)[43]. The archaeological evidence of pottery from the Rouen region in later eleventh- and twelfth-century Southampton, and in London, mostly from the later twelfth century onwards, also reflects, at least partially, the wine trade funneled through the port of Rouen[44].

Again, like prominent London citizens, the established merchant-artisan patricians of Rouen possessed urban properties and rural estates in the region around Rouen, and also watermills on the city's margins by twelfth century, at latest. The wealth of the urban citizenry also allowed significant ownership of land by women, not of aristocratic rank. For example, Emma 'the Vicomtesse', came from a wealthy Rouen merchant family, probably involved in bullion and spice trading as one of its activities. She was responsible for collection of revenues for Henry II of England, in both Rouen and Southampton[45]. Women of the Deorman moneyer-family in London also owned and donated land to Westminster abbey within London[46]. The combination of commercial activities and holding of state offices again comes to the fore as vehicles of social mobility. As in London, however, the growing wealth and influence of the leading citizenry of Rouen led a proportion of them to try to intervene in political affairs in Normandy in 1090, when a faction of the citizenry supported a rebellion against Duke Robert Curthose, in favour of his brother William II of England. The rebellion in Rouen was put down by the future Henry I of England, and its leader, the rich merchant Conan Pilatus, whose family may originally have been river or sea-pilots, was executed[47]. Perhaps the most important observation from this urban revolt is not its defeat but rather the realization that at least some of the citizens of Rouen thought they had a chance of successfully intervening in the rivalries of William the Conqueror's sons. By the succession of Henry Plantagenet as Duke, in c. 1150, the need for the financial and political support of the citizens of Rouen was recognized by the charter of liberties, and increasingly by loans from the citizens (Jewish and Christian) to the Anglo-Norman state, to finance warfare by the late twelfth century[48].

In summary, it can be observed that the mercantile patrician-elites of port cities established a series of arenas of social, economic and political influence within their urban societies through collaborative and competitive actions, acting individually and collectively between c 1050 and 1150. Most port cities possessed some form of collective identity and judicial rights by the mid to late eleventh century. Most urban elites had established independent

commercial wealth, generated through maritime and river-trade of commodities; most also owned urban and rural property; and some (often the most successful) held state offices. This led to an increasing self-awareness by patricians of port cities of their importance to their respective states for revenue generation, and resulted in significant interventions or attempted interventions in political affairs beyond their city bounds.

A**dministrative Towns**

When major administrative towns without large sea or river ports are examined, their societies present a different balance of collaborative and competitive relations from the larger port cities, even though some of these administrative towns could be regarded as capital-cities of states in some respects. Winchester, in Hampshire, southern England, is the best illustration of such a case. The fortified Roman circuit of Roman Winchester (Venta Belgarum) had housed a palace of the West Saxon Kings and a large monastery, the Old Minster and ancillary settlement, already by the mid seventh century. Through the eighth and ninth centuries it had become an increasingly favoured residence of the West Saxon dynasty and it was made one of king Alfred the Great's *burhs* at the end of the ninth century. Its defences were renovated and a new street layout was established, not respecting the late Roman street pattern. By the 920s most significant burhs administered linked rural territories, called *shires*, which are still the foundation of most of the counties of England. However, Winchester was not given a shire territory, and nor were key port-city burhs like London, Thetford or Norwich[49]. It is possible that they were already functioning urban entities with developed functions that negated the addition of further administrative roles for territories on the creation of the shire system. Winchester continued to grow in importance until by the mid tenth century, especially by the reign of Edgar, in the 960s, it had become the fiscal capital of the West Saxon kingdom of England, and the favoured centre of royal government. In essence, it did not have a shire because it was the place that housed the royal court most often, and much of the taxation of the kingdom.

Following the Danish and Norman conquests of England, in 1016 and 1066 respectively, both the Danish kings and the Norman kings maintained Winchester as the fiscal and governmental capital city of England, despite the fact that London had clearly become the commercial capital of England by c. AD 1000 and generated the most taxation, but London's merchant-citizen population was harder to control. The citizens of Winchester by contrast were characterized by long-term collaboration with the royal/state government of England without armed insurrection. As the focus of royal government and patronage, merchant-artisans, officials and ecclesiastical and secular aristocrats sought properties in the city. Two royal surveys of all the landowners and tenement plots in the city, undertaken in 1057 for Edward the Confessor, and in 1148 in the reign of Stephen, show that most of the urban property tenements in Winchester were owned either by the king, the bishop of Winchester, the Cathedral priory, Hyde abbey, and

the nunneries of St Mary's Winchester, Wherwell and Romsey. Biddle demonstrated that the smaller tenements observable in the 1148 survey were produced from the subdivision of earlier larger properties, while the original major owners still retained their overall ownership[50]. Few plots were owned by mercantile elements in the city's population. The impact of the Norman Conquest was immediately felt by the demolition of part of the town (at least two complete streets and their tenement plots) for the construction of the royal castle, something avoided in London by William of Normandy[51].

The excavations by Martin Biddle in the 1960s, and recent excavations conducted between 2002 and 2007, have provided archaeological evidence of the Cathedral and Anglo-Saxon and Norman palace zones, and *burgess*-mercantile tenements. The recently excavated tenements in the northwest corner of the walled city have shown that merchant-artisan tenants were involved in a range of specialist and zoned activities in that area between the mid tenth and mid twelfth centuries. These included spinning, dying and weaving, iron-smithing, and copper alloy working[52]. The occupants of some of those tenements seem to have been more prosperous than others, and also more heavily involved in trade in the period between c. 1050 to 1150. There is an association between the occurrence of balances for weighing silver coinage and the recovery of imported pottery of Beauvais-type, Pingsdorf-type, northern French grey ware and Normandy gritty ware in certain plots, which seem to reflect the presence of merchant households. Balances were necessary in this period to allow valuation of different coinages from different regions, with different weights and silver content. Some of these likely merchant-households also contained styli for accounting. One of the latter household plots (SE 1) also yielded a silver brooch pin, a chess-piece, and showed signs of greater meat consumption and access to seasonings such as fennel, and imported fruits such as grapes and peaches (fresh or dried), suggesting an affluent lifestyle. Bones of a sturgeon fish, normally only found on aristocratic sites (both secular and ecclesiastical) in the early Middle Ages, especially in northern France, also mark the wealth of the household in SE 1 in the later twelfth century[53].

This evidence of trading contacts with the Rhine mouth, northeastern France, Flanders, Normandy and possibly Iberia (in relation to the consumption of peaches and raisins), both before and after the Norman Conquest, is augmented by the evidence from the palace zone of the city for further contacts with Mediterranean Europe, in the form of Byzantine coins, a lead seal of a military official, named John Raphael, who had possibly been recruiting English troops before the Norman Conquest, in the 1030s-1040s, and a lead seal of Patriach Sophronius II of Jerusalem, dating from 1036-1076/83[54]. The previously cited occurrence of payment of some rents in pepper at Winchester, noted in the 1148 survey of the town, also demonstrates significant access to spices, most of which were probably being imported via Spain by the mid twelfth century[55]. All the evidence from Winchester points to an ordered political and fiscal capital, where political, ecclesiastical and mercantile social actors worked together for the mutual benefit of all. This collaborative prosperity was only disrupted at times of invasion and civil war:

for example, part of Winchester, including the royal palace, was burned between 1139 and 1141, during the war between King Stephen and the Empress Mathilda. The importance of royal governmental presence is also made manifest by the fact that with the gradual movement of governmental functions to London by Henry II, between 1154 and 1189, the city no longer grew and its wealth declined[56].

At some other burh shire-towns in England, the symbiotic relationships between state, ecclesiastical, aristocratic and mercantile groups were not as enduring as those seen at Winchester. For example, Oxford had been founded in c. AD 900, with a wood and earth rampart and a street system, located adjacent to an important bridge crossing of the River Thames[57]. It had become the centre for the administration of a shire by the 920s and was also a mint by that time. Its street system was expanded through the course of the tenth century, and by the later tenth to early eleventh century, permanent occupation of most of the street frontages can be shown archaeologically; and it is probably from the later tenth century that it can be regarded as a town with a large and diverse population, comprising merchant-artisan tenants and landowners, and the urban residences of aristocrats from the wider region[58]. In the early eleventh century, its wooden ramparts were replaced in mortared stone, incorporating certain church towers within it[59]. Following the Norman conquest of 1066, a significant number of the urban tenements have been shown to have been abandoned through archaeological excavation, only to have been reoccupied in the late eleventh to early twelfth centuries[60]. This may well reflect the disruption to urban and rural estates following the Conquest, when estates were broken up following dispossession of Anglo-Saxon landowners, with disruption to patronage and economic networks within the town as a consequence. In other cases, however, William the Conqueror seems to have tried to maintain existing urban traditions and symbols of alliance between shire towns and the state. This is clearly illustrated by the Domesday obligation of the leading burgess-citizens of Shrewsbury, Shropshire, to escort the King around their town and shire, armed and mounted in the manner of mid-eleventh-century *milites*[61].

Even at the burh-shire towns, however, there were instances when the collaborative relations of merchant-artisan citizens switched to openly hostile and competitive actions by the mid eleventh century. Sometimes, as in the case when the citizens of Exeter supported the sons of Harold Godwinson in a rebellion against William the Conqueror, in 1067, they supported rival political contenders from an established ruling social stratum – in this instance Anglo-Saxon against Norman[62]. In one instance, however, citizens of a shire town actually rose up against what they saw as the injustice of the state. This urban revolt took place at the shire-town of Worcester during the reign of the Danish king of England, Hardacnut, in 1041, and is recorded in both the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and in the account of the monk, John (formerly known as Florence) of Worcester. The revolt resulted from the killing of two royal officials sent to Worcester to collect taxes. The officials concerned may have been deemed to have acted corruptly and the citizens of Worcester (and the shire) withheld their annual tax. In response,

Hardacnut sent his household troops (*huscarls*) and the Earls of Mercia, 'the Midlands', Wessex, Northumbria, and the *Magonsæte* (Hereford) with their household troops, and all attacked the town of Worcester and its citizens and ravaged the shire. John recounts that the citizens retreated to an island in the River Severn, flowing through Worcester, and defended it successfully against the royal army, while the town was pillaged. Apparently, the citizens came to an agreement with the royal army, and the revolt and its suppression ended with the burning of much of the physical infrastructure of the town, and probably collection of taxation as booty[63].

The revolt and the measures to suppress the urban rising at Worcester are instructive at a number of levels because it shows that not only the more commercially independent citizens of major port cities thought that they might resort to violence against state authorities, and have a chance of winning concessions. In this case the town citizens were not supporting one rival against another from a ruling family. There was no sign of the imminent death of Hardacnut (in 1042) at the point when Worcester rebelled; and the growing difficulty of kingdoms and principalities in controlling (what in their context were) large urban population concentrations is evident by the need to mobilize not only the royal household troops but also those of most of the earls of the kingdom, in order to come to a negotiated peace. The elements of the population of Worcester in revolt appear to have been the town citizens – the burgesses. The dominant political force in the town was the Bishop of Worcester, and his involvement in the revolt is not mentioned, and unlikely. The social fabric of Worcester by the later tenth to eleventh century certainly included specialists – moneyers, working for the royal mint; artificers and goldsmiths, some of whom were patronized by the Bishops, and also owned urban and rural properties. Other urban landowners included local thegns and, by the eleventh century, regional Earls such as Leofric of Mercia[64]. Despite the recorded damage to the town in 1041, the excavated tenements from the eleventh century, for example at Deansway, do not at present provide any indication of damage due to violent destruction in the mid eleventh century[65].

The administrative towns of Dioceses or principalities that were located in modern-day northern France present less evidence of violent friction between the social strata within the urban societies themselves between circa 1050 and 1150, although this may be a reflection of lack of documentary survival. The collaborative and competitive relations that are observable tend to relate to contests for the possession of entire towns and their societies, within the context of warfare between principalities. So, for example, once the Counts of Anjou had secured control of Tours (Indre-et-Loire) from the Counts of Blois-Champagne in the early eleventh century, a stone donjon and urban castle was constructed within a corner of the Roman walled enceinte by Count Geoffrey Martel[66]. This added a secular pole of power to join the existing ecclesiastical poles provided by the Bishop of Tours and the abbey of St Martin, with their respective burgus and portus artisan and merchant populations. The prestige of these social actors was made manifest in the townscape by reconstruction of the abbey of St Martin in the Romanesque style, and the Cathedral to match the new Romanesque display architecture of the comital donjon. The

presence of the three poles of patronage and river networks along the Loire also resulted in the increasing commercial wealth on the part of merchant-artisans and the purchase of urban properties by rural landholders and institutions. This commercial wealth and landed status was converted into urban display as Romanesque stone townhouses from the early twelfth century onwards, especially in the district of Châteauneuf, between the abbey of St Martin and the Count's donjon[67]. Hence, while there may well have been antagonism between the new power of the Counts of Anjou within Tours, and the established authorities of the Bishops and Abbots, this did not play out in the built urban fabric of those who serviced the political and religious elite within the town.

In contrast to Tours, Orléans (Loir-et-Cher) reflects the collaborative efforts to grow the Diocesan city and its urban society by one paramount authority, in the form of the Bishop. It lay within the royal domain of the kingdom of France, and the spatial development of the city between the tenth and twelfth centuries reflects highly planned attempts to sponsor different social groups in specific zones, with limited apparent competition between different elements. By the eleventh century, the town had a distinct bi-polar plan, with the Late Roman walled town at its heart and a merchant river port settlement, known as the *burgus Avenum* to its west, and an extra-mural ecclesiastical zone, including the abbey of Saint-Aignan, and other ecclesiastical foundations to its east. The Bishop's Cathedral and associated churches were located in the northeast of the walled town, and the Bishops also protected and sponsored a Jewish mercantile community (probably founded sometime in the tenth century) in the centre of the walled town to the south of the Cathedral group[68]. The Capetian kings of France also granted privileges to the Bishop and the town, allowing the Bishops to administer the striking of royal silver coinage, and the Kings intervened directly to aid in the reconstruction of the town after a fire in 989[69]. Efforts at controlling potential competitive friction between different communities of social actors may also be reflected by the construction of a small fortification, known as the 'Châtelet', in the southwest corner of the walled circuit that guarded the gate-access to the merchant burgus to the west[70].

Diversities of Small Towns

Beyond the port cities and large administrative towns and their complex social compositions, the landscapes of northwest Europe also witnessed an explosion of small towns between the mid eleventh and mid twelfth centuries, resulting from the initiatives of different social actors and groups. These new urban foundations took a number of forms, ranging from newly founded or sponsored ports on the coast or in estuarine locations, to rural villages that were given the legal status of towns (burgus – borough), often situated in contested frontier locations or newly conquered territories. Each of these categories of town and their societies were created from different balances of collaborative action between state rulers, local lords, and mercantile and

farming populations. They do not seem to have been the foci of significant internal social competition between elite sponsors and town citizens in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Competition came from outside these settlements, in the form of rival political powers, or the competitive focus of the various settlements was directed at external targets.

From the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, new port settlements developed in significant numbers along the Channel coasts of England and France, the Bristol Channel in western Britain, and along the Atlantic coast of France. Bristol, on the River Avon opening into the southern shore of the Severn estuary/Bristol Channel, began as a port foundation within the royal estate of Barton in the late tenth century, on the basis of excavated wooden buildings. By the reign of the Danish king of England, Cnut, Bristol was striking coinage and by 1051 it was recorded as a trading port for ships going to and from Ireland, especially Hiberno-Norse Dublin. It was a principal target for a raid by the sons of Harold Godwinson who arrives with a fleet of Hiberno-Norse allies from Ireland in 1067, which was repulsed by the citizens; and it was still trading slaves with Dublin Ostmen in the 1090s[71]. In the Domesday survey of 1086, it was still mentioned as part of the royal estate of Barton, however, and not a town entity of itself. Yet, the fact that coinage was being struck there by the 1020s suggests that it could have enjoyed borough status by that time. A castle was added after the Norman Conquest, and by the early twelfth century, some of its mercantile elite were building Romanesque stone townhouses[72]. The town was to become the largest port of western England by the later twelfth century. Its rise, however, seems to have been a consequence of merchant activity linked to royal and high aristocratic patronage – by Cnut in the 1020s-30s and by Earl Robert of Gloucester and lord of Glamorgan, in the first half of the twelfth century.

Such patronage by royal and sometimes episcopal authority also seems to have been key to the development of other sea-ports, such as Old Winchelsea (Sussex), on the English Channel coast, also developed within a royal estate by Cnut, and also Sandwich (Kent) which again seems to have developed as a significant settlement only from Cnut's reign, between 1016 and 1035. All the new English Channel ports seem to have developed primarily as fishing ports for herring, and by 1086 the annual royal revenues from Sandwich had been granted to the Archbishops of Canterbury, in the form of fifty pounds of silver and 40,000 herrings[73]. On the north side of the Bristol Channel in south Wales, new ports, such as Cardiff, patronized by the new Norman lords of Glamorgan, also emerged as dynamic, small port towns between the end of the eleventh and mid twelfth century[74]. Further to the west, in the newly established Anglo-Norman earldom of Pembroke, port boroughs were also founded as a vehicle for wealth generation in newly conquered territories at Pembroke and Haverford West. Both Cardiff and Pembroke were striking coinage by the reign of Henry I of England (1100-1135), and sea-pilots from Pembroke and opportunistic burgesses from Cardiff were to play an important part in the Norman invasion and colonization of Ireland, in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries[75]. Key to the

foundation of port-boroughs in newly conquered territories was a mutual alliance between political leadership and commercial mercantile opportunity, to grow and exploit new territories.

It is in the context of growing wealth and holding territory that most rural boroughs – villages whose populations held the status or burgesses – were created, often through royal agency and peasant collaboration. Henry I of England and Duke of Normandy was a notable user of the rural borough to hold and defend frontier territories. For example, he founded the rural borough of Wiston in Pembrokeshire, populating the borough and its surrounding region with Flemish settlers, to create a buffer zone between the Welsh principality of Deheubarth and the Anglo-Norman earldom, in 1109-10[76]. And in the 1120s, Henry founded the rural borough of Verneuil-sur-Avre (Eure) on the southern frontier of Normandy, to help secure the border zone with Anjou[77]. In both the latter cases, the greater social freedom of burgess-status was used as an incentive to attract peasant farming families to frontiers that regularly suffered from the depredation of warfare.

Elite initiative was not the driving force behind the foundation of dynamic small towns in all instances, however. Sometimes, state interests followed merchant dynamism to tax successful merchant communities or provided additional stimuli to urban growth, significantly later than the organic development of towns. This seems to have been particularly prevalent on the Atlantic-Bay of Biscay coast of France and the Cantabrian and northern Atlantic coasts of Iberia. For example, the port of La Rochelle (Charente-Maritime) in the Saintonge, located in the long-important early medieval trade-hub region on the coast, between the estuaries of the Rivers Gironde, Charente and Loire, seems to have emerged sometime in the tenth century. It is first mentioned as a port in a charter of the abbey of Saint-Cyprien of Poitiers, dated 988-1031[78]. Yet, it was not given urban status until 1137, when Duke William X of Aquitaine granted it a charter. By 1180, it was described as an impressive new town, visited by ships of many nations, for the purpose of the wine and salt trades[79]. By the 1130s, the trading settlement of La Rochelle and its merchants had probably existed for well over a century – goods were certainly being traded intensively between Iberia and northern Europe along the Atlantic coast in the later tenth and eleventh centuries. Similarly, the charters (*fueros*) granted between c. 1150 and 1250 by the kings of Aragon, Castille, Léon, Galicia and Portugal, to ports along the Cantabrian, Galician and Atlantic coasts were often confirmations of status upon existing settlement populations and port-landing places, and not the points marking their foundation. In some cases, port-landing places such as Faro-La Corunna, Gijon, Tuy and Avilés were mentioned as landing points and settlements from the mid ninth century, and Tuy and Avilés had charters by 1071 and 1065-1109 respectively[80]. Some ports also had toll/tariff regulations before they had charters, such as Oporto, which had toll regulation by 1120[81]. Hence in these instances, mercantile-maritime agency probably preceded active royal interest and recognition of the growth and importance of these towns.

Conclusions: Co-opetition, intentionality and numbers, c. 1050-1150

The different scales, types and roles of the towns, and the variable compositions of their urban societies discussed in this paper, were all the result of different collaborative relations and, sometimes, competitive antagonisms between social groups. The relative balance between the initiatives of ruling state and ecclesiastical elites and those of merchant-artisan elites, lesser rural landowners and peasants, in search of the status of 'town citizen', produced the different urban worlds of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Two factors seem to have influenced the extent to which both collaboration and competitive friction existed within these urban societies: firstly, numbers of people – population size of towns; and secondly, the extents to which mercantile urban-patricians were collectively self-aware of their importance to state rulers, due to their commercial wealth. The largest cities and those with the greatest concentration of merchant wealth were the major port cities. The creative tension between generation of commercial wealth, collaboration with state authorities and occasional armed insurrection in these cities could be summed up as a policy of co-opetition on the part of mercantile urban actors. However, to say that the increasingly self-administering port cities, with increasing legal privileges, acted out intentionally a policy of co-opetition with state rulers would almost certainly be anachronistic, as it may give them a collective intentionality that did not exist in most cases.

Nevertheless, certain phenomena to which Brandenburger and Nalebuff drew attention within their definition of co-opetition to grow businesses and economies do have resonance with some strategies and actions used by the different social groups within the complex port cities of northwest Europe, between c. 1050 and 1150. There may not have been a concept of 'adding value' to these towns, but there was almost certainly a concept of mutual benefit to both state rulers and merchant-artisan citizens, in collective strategies of enriching all the parties by working together. State powers received the increased tax revenues as urban economies grew, and provided protection for the cities. However, the granting of judicial and self-governing privileges to the leading citizens of these cities by state rulers may not have been an envisaged long-term consequence. It was probably the commercial wealth that merchants generated for themselves and the awareness of their importance in supplying state revenues by both rulers and merchants that resulted in rulers granting legal privileges to maintain the alliance of money-makers and the state.

In addition to the wealth of the urban merchant patricians, and their growing self-awareness of their importance, their numbers in port-cities also led to their entering into political competitions in their wider state settings, to try to influence who ruled in those states and to gain from it. With the exception of the collective power of the cities of Flanders in 1127, and the military actions of the citizens of London in the politics of the kingdom of England in the 1050s and 1140s, all of these attempted political interventions were unsuccessful, between the mid

eleventh and mid twelfth centuries. The perception of critical mass in terms of numbers prepared to revolt in large port cities may have led to the citizens being more optimistic of their chances of success than their military abilities allowed. Yet, they did revolt militarily on occasions, and reprisals against port-city populations, such as London and Rouen, when they unsuccessfully challenged rulers, were never as harsh as might have been expected, especially of William the Conqueror and his sons. Rulers knew the value of the mercantile populations of the port cities, and alliances between leading citizens and state rulers were soon re-established. Indeed, the failure of some urban revolts may in part have been due to divided interests among the town citizens, with state office-holders less likely to rebel.

Beyond the major port cities, collaboration for mutual gain between state rulers, ecclesiastical elites, the secular aristocracy and mercantile populations was the norm in administrative towns, with Winchester in England and Diocesan towns of France perhaps providing reflections of such collaboration of interests in the evidence from their archaeological deposits and built townscapes. Yet, even in some administrative towns tensions could result in violent confrontation, especially when town citizens thought they were the victims of unfair treatment or corruption by state authorities, as in the case of the citizens of Worcester in 1041. The growing difficulties for territorial states to control even smaller administrative towns, like Worcester, which necessitated the dispatch of the household troops of the king, and most of the kingdom's earls, only to eventually come to a negotiated peace, is again a reflection of the impact of concentrated population numbers in towns. Yet, among the new ports and rural boroughs sponsored by state rulers and aristocrats, and those independently developing mercantile settlements granted urban status, the benefits for elites of encouraging the development of towns were soon manifested through revenue generation and military support, especially as the twelfth century progressed.

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