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CHAPTER 11

Conclusion.

The case studies presented here certainly do not exhaust the wide range of topics warranting investigation concerning the reception of core legal models and social forms of urban life on the peripheries of Latin Europe, as embodied by the chartered town. They comprise only an attempt to substantiate an important hypothesis of comparative urban research, namely, that the modification and implementation of core models and forms on the peripheries of Europe resulted in the creation of unique societies, not simply the imperfect replication of core urban communities. To this end, this research has focused on selected comparable elements of the social and political order of the chartered town, which have here been analysed within the framework of the three constituent themes.

The first goal was to compare phenomena relating to processes of the formation of urban communities on the periphery. Our findings demonstrate that social differentiation, one of the typical features of the medieval town, gained a unique intensity in the regions under study due to the presence of different and numerically superior ethnic groups outside the colonial urban space. Comparative analyses concerning Prussia, Wales and Ireland indicate that the municipal town provided a framework for the social and economic activity of the incoming

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settlers (colonists) and the local population. The consequences of the long-term cohabitation of these groups included both processes of assimilation and the development of the notion of an ethnically conditioned alienness (not to be confused with the alienness of genuine unfamiliarity). This conditioned alienness manifested in the social coding of urban space (e.g., named ethnic enclaves), social interactions and legal systems becoming embedded in, rather than inhibiting, the formation of the community of townspeople. The social and economic capital provided by individuals and groups, especially the ethnic ‘other’ in colonial settlements, was crucial to their acceptance within the urban community. It should be emphasised that instances of ethnic discrimination were determined not only by the social and economic conditions of individual towns, but also the influence of the territorial authority. The first comparative analysis presented on this theme shows that three periods of ethnical integration and discrimination (initial native participation, top-down discrimination and bottom-up discrimination) materialised in a similar pattern in Wales and Prussia. However, due to different types of territorial authority and governance, and differing local conditions, the chronological framework of these processes varied across the regions. Significantly, the municipalities in the examined territories dealt with women’s legal rights and disabilities in different ways. The case studies of Caernarfon and Marienburg indicate, however, that social networks within the municipalities, as in the European core, enabled women nevertheless to play active roles in the urban economy.

Second, analyses of the activities of municipal authorities, in terms of the normalisation and disciplining of social and political life, demonstrate, in towns on the European periphery, manifestations of phenomena that also appear in cities of the European core. Their shared conceptual bases were a perceived need for the participation of the commons in municipal governance and the idea that the common good formed the foundation of the urban political,

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social and economic order. These ideas, or values, were implemented mostly by means of diverse legal instruments, such as town charters, municipal regulations and the laws of the territorial overlord. A comparative analysis of Prussian and Irish urban legislation shows that urban ordinances served to protect not only the interests of the community as a whole, but also the position of dominant groups of citizens. A phenomenon common to Ireland and Prussia was the legislative protection of local merchants benefiting from long-distance trade. The differences between Prussian and Irish towns in this regard resulted from the chronology of the implementation of particular ordinances and their different political and legal contexts, as determined by local conditions rather than the substantive scope of the ordinances. Another chapter, focusing on Dublin and Danzig, indicates that, in both regions, the legal norms that were adopted served to secure the free use of urban public spaces by community members. This development of the concept of public space is a fundamental sign of a cultural turn caused by the reception, on the periphery of Europe, of the chartered town as something that belonged to the whole community of inhabitants. As in the urban culture of the ‘occidental city’ more generally, the progressive intensification and professionalisation of activities of urban governance, aimed at the protection of public space, is noticeable in Danzig and Dublin. Observable differences in the choice of municipal restrictions implemented, aiming at the protection of public space, is of secondary importance, as they resulted from local geographic and spatial conditions as well as site-specific economic and demographic determinants. The comparative study of municipal governance in Stockholm and Marienburg indicates the use of two different patterns of burgher participation in communal decision-making, through large councils and through craft guilds. The growing social distance between the ruling groups and the commons, however, did not undermine the idea of citizen participation in urban governance, as a basic rule, for legitimising decisions concerning the whole urban community in European chartered towns.

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Third, of fundamental importance for the functioning of communal towns were the instruments of peace making and peace keeping, which are the focus of the final three studies presented. The evidence considered here suggests that it was due to the real or perceived threat of attack or longer-term military conflict that townspeople and town authorities, located on the edges of Latin Europe, decided to develop or strengthen elements of civic involvement in military affairs. A comparative analysis of military affairs shows that in each Prussia, Livonia and Ireland, at one point or another, the personal obligations of urban inhabitants for the defence of their town or city, and the maintenance of its internal peace, became a fundamental element of citizenship. However, what should be emphasised is the substantial chronological variation that occurred between the development of different elements of military affairs in the Baltic region versus Ireland, as a result of each area's different political and military situation and each area's differing local relations between cities and their territorial authority. The peacekeeping tools of chartered towns also included the system of quarters, which likewise played an important role in the organisation of urban military affairs. The comparative study of quarters demonstrates the different political significance of quarters in the towns of Prussia as opposed to those of central Europe. Quarters and quartermasters in Prussian towns remained primarily an instrument of control of the urban community, employed by town councils. The dominant social and political position of the merchant ruling group, and the close relationship between oligarchic town councils and the town lord, caused quarters not to become an element of 'ascending' communal authority in Prussian towns, unlike in Franconian towns. The influence of the relationship between the town and the territorial lord, on communal peace-making, has also been considered through the study of petitions to the English king and parliament from Irish and Welsh towns. In this instance, a significant difference is visible in comparison to Prussia and Livonia where petitioning

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remained a sporadic instrument for the establishment of the municipal political and social order. In contrast, the regular and systematic use of Irish and Welsh municipal petitions served, among other purposes, to support the prosperity of colonial urban communities through the provision of justice – especially with regard to corrupt officials – and their defence against the native population.

In all of the regions studied here, one can observe the reception of fundamental elements of core urban models and forms: the idea of the common good, citizen participation in decision-making, public space, regulating the social and economic activities of women, and the integration and cohabitation of different social and ethnic groups. The differences resulting from local conditions mainly relate to the chronological framework and intensity of the development of the elements investigated. The comparative studies presented here demonstrate that the transfer of core urban models and forms to the periphery, and their modification to suit to local conditions, resulted in a narrowing of their core significance and function. Key examples of this include core-periphery differences in the implementation of quarters and in the shaping of citizen participation in municipal governance. This narrowing may have been caused by the greater intensification of oligarchic municipal authority on the edges of Latin Europe, when compared to core areas. Our research shows that the transfer of new urban models and forms to the periphery took place, in conquered territories, within a framework of cooperation between the new territorial authority and the urban settlers. The essence of the unique political and cultural communities that emerged on the peripheries under study is to be found in their incorporation of the chartered town, and its community, into structures of territorial authority. Therefore, any analysis of the development of various elements of urbanity, as represented by their manifestation in the diverse communities that develop in different areas of Europe, must take into account both the relationship between

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municipal communities and their rulers, and the role of the town in the political system of the territory.