



**HAL**  
open science

## Taking Up the Bet on Connections : a Municipal Contribution

Pierre-Yves Saunier

► **To cite this version:**

Pierre-Yves Saunier. Taking Up the Bet on Connections: a Municipal Contribution. Contemporary European History, 2001, Vol.11, N.4, pp.507-527. halshs-00002770

**HAL Id: halshs-00002770**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00002770>**

Submitted on 3 Sep 2004

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

---

# Taking Up the Bet on Connections: a Municipal Contribution

---

PIERRE-YVES SAUNIER

The theme of globalisation, with all its attendant definitions, derivations, propositions, variations and slogans – and likewise with its weight of blood, sweat and tears – began to invade the social scene, and the social science scene, about ten years ago. The (GATT) Uruguay Round and the birth of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the astonishing career of Subcomandante Marcos, the Seattle and Genoa summits and the social forums known as Porto Alegre I and II, and the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 have thrust this theme into the public gaze in the form of urgent problems of politics, economics, society and security. The academic world has both monitored and contributed to this growing visibility. Anthony Giddens, Arjun Appadurai, Saskia Sassen and Manuel Castells come to mind as examples of scholars who have focused on ‘spatio-temporal’ globalisation in the fields of culture, economics and politics. Some have built their empires around such themes through a combination of research, teaching and consultation, oscillating constantly between different social and geographical areas, demonstrating afresh how practice and analysis can be made to merge. Intellectuals who have involved themselves in globalisation see themselves as global, or even ubiquitous – giving a new twist to the idea of the universal intellectual. These recent tendencies may legitimately be seen as a cause for astonishment or even consternation. We may well question the relevance of ‘globalisation’ as an analytical tool,<sup>1</sup> but it does offer a way of approaching a long list of themes: cultural diffusion; political domination; concepts of space and time, the nature of such concepts and their possible variations; the interaction of the global with the local or the universal with the particular; the dialectic of universalisation and territorialisation; the changes in the political ideology of the world order as the power of the state contends with world governance; the problematic interaction of fluxes and structures; the chronology of global phenomena. Studies of ‘globalisation’ often end with a series of prophecies or somewhat hasty conclusions relating to such points. But the prophets do not all agree on the nature of the revealed truth, and the debate in the academic world is as

<sup>1</sup> For some ideas on the analytical value of the concept see Frederick Cooper, ‘What is the concept of globalization good for? An African historian’s perspective’, *African Affairs* 100 (2001), 189–213; compare the more critical, and more ironic, approach of Justin Rosenberg in *The Follies of Globalisation Theory* (London: Verso, 2001).

riven with contradictions as the debate in society at large. Witness the endless arguments as to the effect globalisation is having on the 'nation', or the nation state: strengthening it or killing it off? transfiguring it or reducing it to an ectoplasmic ghost of its former self?<sup>2</sup>

I should like to depart from these theoretical discussions, which often turn into prescriptions for what globalisation ought to be, or can or cannot be, and espouse the more modest aim of contributing to a more precise contextualisation of the ways in which cultural models are diffused, markets extended and relationships organised between governments, and among institutions and non-governmental groups, and how relationships among individuals, groups and institutions are multiplying on a global or macro-regional scale. This may lead to an answer to some of the current questions. The historian Frederick Cooper, an African specialist, recently focused on long-distance, long-term connections as a way of avoiding some of the conceptual difficulties of research into globalisation.<sup>3</sup> He sees this study of connections as a way of refining the chronology of the generalised trend towards interconnection which has been brought out in a large number of studies on globalisation, while avoiding a hierarchical opposition between the global and the local; a way to relate structures to fluxes and clarify approaches to the history of territorial processes, not forgetting that there may be hiccups in the continuous linear progress towards integration, and that any relationship thus defined may turn out to be discontinuous. His approach is an attractive one, especially since, while it may not be easy to keep track of all the components in a single connection, it does seem feasible to apply the procedure to an empirical analysis of how links are created between places, groups and individuals.

There are those who have already taken up the bet on connections, and the results they have obtained are worth noting. 'There are gains to be made starting with connections', writes Daniel Rodgers, drawing attention to the transatlantic nexus of personal contacts and sociopolitical discourses which existed in the first half of the twentieth century – a 'world in between' which cannot be reduced to a set of intergovernmental relationships and cannot be grasped from a purely comparative viewpoint, but emerges from studies of the individuals and structures that helped import European schemas into the United States.<sup>4</sup> Rodgers sets out to develop this 'transnational' approach to American history as a challenge to the American 'exceptionalist' trend,<sup>5</sup> but I think his work can usefully be linked with various efforts to understand the general organisation of fluxes, discourses and structures

<sup>2</sup> For an example see the third part of Henri Goverde, Philip G. Cerny, Mark Haugaard and Howard Lentner, eds., *Power in Contemporary Politics. Theories, Practices, Globalization* (London: Sage, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Cooper 'Networks, moral discourses and history', in Thomas Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir and Robert Latham, eds., *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23–46.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings. Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1998), 5.

<sup>5</sup> For an introduction to this debate see Ian Tyrell, 'American Exceptionalism in an Age of Inter-

which went 'beyond' nation states (but could also, of course, go with, without or against) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – just when those states were putting themselves on a really solid footing. A number of historians of the period have investigated the construction of 'cross-border' pronouncements and practices. One example is Wade Jacoby's study of the United States' rather confused efforts to make sense of occupied Germany, and of how West Germany attempted to revamp the former Democratic Republic after reunification. Others are Allan Mitchell's study of French attitudes to Germany in the 1870s; Michel Espagne's account of cultural transfer between France and Germany; and Eleanor Westney's research on Meiji Japan.<sup>6</sup> Also of interest are studies on American outreach, whether philanthropic<sup>7</sup> or diplomatic (through the State Department).<sup>8</sup> In my opinion there are two areas which, without having a monopoly on useful contributions to this debate, are of major importance: the history of transnational issue networks – social reform, feminism, temperance<sup>9</sup> – and the substantial corpus of studies on 'international relations'. The latter depends heavily on studies of intergovernmental diplomacy, since it so evidently interacts with non-governmental connections. But some more circumscribed areas are also highly relevant to my present theme. Two belong to the troubled sphere of the history of international relations *per se* – diplomatic history. One group of studies focuses on the social history of international institutions, from nineteenth-century international technical unions via organisations created by the Treaty of Versailles to the worldwide institutions set up after

national History', *American Historical Review*, 96 (1991), 1031–72, and the forum on 'transnational' history in the same issue.

<sup>6</sup> Wade Jacoby, *Imitation and Politics: Redesigning Modern Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Allan Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870: the Formation of the French République* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1979); Michel Espagne, *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999); Eleanor Westney, *Imitation and Invention. The Transfer of Western Organizational Patterns to Meiji Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Some examples of varying approaches: Volker R. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe. Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy and Diplomacy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); Robert Arno, *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism. The Foundations at Home and Abroad* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982); Yves Dezalay and Bryan Garth, 'Le Washington consensus. Contribution à une sociologie de l'hégémonie du néolibéralisme', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 121–2 (1998), 3–22; Giuliana Gemelli, ed., *American Foundations and Large Scale Research: Construction and Transfer of Knowledge* (Bologna: Clueb, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion 1890–1945* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982); Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: US Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations 1938–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> See, respectively, Christian Topalov, *Naissance du chômeur 1880–1910* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994); Kathryn Kish Sklar, Anja Schüler and Susan Strasser, eds., *Social Justice Feminists in the United States and Germany: A Dialogue in Documents, 1885–1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Ian Tyrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: the Women's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1991). For an up-to-date overview of issue networks see Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). At the time of writing, Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker and Kathryn Sikkink, *Restructuring World Politics. Transnational Social Movements, Networks and Norms* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) was still forthcoming.

the Second World War.<sup>10</sup> The notion of ‘transnational politics’, as proposed by Karl Kaiser and amplified by Robert Keohane, and Harold Jakobson’s investigation of the constructive effects of international organisation, have yet to inspire a substantial body of historical research,<sup>11</sup> but this particular approach to international institutes does provide a way into their functional and technical, as well as diplomatic, workings and so supports the ‘connections’ approach. A second group of studies, focusing on the notion of ‘epistemic community’, are also worth attention precisely because they pay attention to transboundary connections between individuals who have certain rules, principles and/or concepts in common, together with a degree of technical knowledge.<sup>12</sup> So far, it is true, this concept has been applied mostly to the contemporary situation, to such themes as Third World debt and environmental policy, but it is surely worth considering as an approach to history.<sup>13</sup> Third, there are studies relating to the ‘cultural turn’ postulated by some American foreign relations scholars who set out to explore systematically cultural diplomacy, policies of exchange and all kinds of institutional connections in the cultural sphere and how they interact with non-governmental connections, assuming a cultural transfer context.<sup>14</sup> If we are interested in connections we shall also take account of studies of other areas in which such phenomena are particularly prominent. The recent collection of studies edited by Thomas Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir and Robert Latham is a good example of how worthwhile it can be thus to sally forth from one’s own specialist field.<sup>15</sup> Their analytical approach, that of ‘transboundary formations’, should find a place in the toolbox of anyone studying connections. Their definition of the notion focuses on empirical groupings of individuals actively involved at different levels of spatial or social organisation (local, regional, national,

<sup>10</sup> For international unions and offices set up under international conventions see Brigitte Schroeder-Gudehus, *Les scientifiques et la paix. La communauté scientifique internationale au cours des années vingt* (Montréal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 1978), 18–62. Recent work in French on the social history of international institutions includes Jean-Jacques Renoliet, *L’UNESCO oubliée. La Société des Nations et la coopération intellectuelle (1919–1946)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999) and Marta Aleksandra Balinska, *Une vie pour l’humanitaire. Ludwik Rajchmann, 1881–1965* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995). For an approach to the history of functional co-operation see Victor-Yves Ghebali, ‘Aux origines de l’ECOSOC: l’évolution des commissions et organisations techniques de la Société des Nations’, *Annuaire Français de Droit International*, 18 (1972), 469–511, and ‘The League of Nations and Functionalism’, in A. J. R. Groom and Paul Taylor, eds., *Functionalism: Theory and Practice in International Relations* (London: University of London Press, 1975), 141–61.

<sup>11</sup> For instance, the enormous ‘United Nations Intellectual History Project’ being edited by Thomas Weiss at the City University of New York has yet to show any great interest in the nature and workings of the UN’s administrative machinery.

<sup>12</sup> A good place to start is Peter Haas, ‘Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination’, *International Organization*, 46, 1 (1992), 1–35.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas M. Callaghy, ‘Networks and governance in Africa: innovation in the debt regime’, in Callaghy, Kassimir and Latham, *Intervention and Transnationalism*, 115–48.

<sup>14</sup> Frank A. Ninkovich and Liping Bu, eds., *The Cultural Turn: Essays in the History of US foreign Relations* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, forthcoming). A good example of this approach is the work of Jessica Gienow-Hecht, beginning with *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany 1945–1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999). The journal *Diplomatic History* seems particularly hospitable to articles of this type.

<sup>15</sup> Callaghy, Kassimir and Latham, *Intervention and Transnationalism*.

global) and on how they create intersections between levels – intersections important enough to blur the distinctions, and the hierarchy between them. Such transboundary formations may draw their strength and shape from territories, institutions, issues, networks, discourse or structures, mingling the legal with the non-legal, the governmental with the non-governmental, things which appertain to the state with things that do not. However that may be, such formations wield a degree of authority within their own territories and contribute to the production of order. Each article in the volume covers a different terrain, highlighting connections, relationships, circuits, places and areas where that authority and that order circulate, become the subject of discussion and become established. This group of studies, while appertaining to the sphere of international relations, also relates to the history of non-governmental organisations. Whether or not one accepts the ‘world polity regime’ idea developed by John Meyer, William Thomas and John Boli, the research directed by Thomas and Boli into the expansion and fields of activity of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) since the nineteenth century are, I think, worthy of the closest attention for their meticulous study of how INGOs wield the authority which enables them to order, or help to set in order, such spheres as environmental action, technological standardisation and humanitarian action at various levels – local, national and global.<sup>16</sup> Historians may be able to complement their generic approach to international associations, and their efforts to put their ‘world polity regime’ theory on a firm footing, by studying INGOs at work through exchanges among individuals, associations, conferences and journals, and tracking the logic and the individuals which inspire and found them.<sup>17</sup> It needs to be said that this approach has been applied with particular success to scientific organisations, and the results are essential reading for students of connections.<sup>18</sup>

These studies, taken together, pose a series of problems relating to the definition of the universal, the structures (some of them also structuring agents) which carry transnational exchanges and in particular the differing uses of the universal – phenomena relating to domination, cross-fertilisation, or transfers which are involved in the construction of the universal while the universal is postulated by generic discourse on globalisation. All in all they encourage us to restore ‘globalisation’ as part of the history of the ‘construction of the universal’ – as one form of, or one moment in, that construction.

<sup>16</sup> John Boli and George M. Thomas, eds., *Constructing World Culture. International Nongovernmental Organizations since 1875* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> At the time of writing, Akira Iriye’s *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), was not yet published.

<sup>18</sup> There is a large literature on this subject, of which the following is a small selection: Anne Rasmussen, ‘L’Internationale scientifique 1890–1914’, doctoral dissertation in history (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales de Paris, 1995); Karl D. Erdmann, *Die Okumene der Historiker* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); Elisabeth Crawford, Terry Shinn and Sverker Sörlin, eds., *Denationalizing Science. The Contexts of International Scientific Practice, Yearbook of the Sociology of Sciences*, 16 (1992).

The articles in this issue do not constitute a chorus – either of approval or of lamentation – for the scientific operations of globalisation. Nor do they set out to make any generic pronouncements about globalisation. But we do think that our research can add to those empirical studies which analyse various relationships, or orders of relationships, which can serve as a basis for the historical analysis of globalisation – and will determine whether such analysis rests on a firm or a shaky foundation. Our particular field is municipal connections.<sup>19</sup> We use ‘connections’ to refer to a series of linkages – formal and informal, permanent or ephemeral – which bind together entities that are geographically far apart, either in a single country or across boundaries. By ‘municipal’ we mean not only municipalities as such but also the idea of ‘the municipal’ as a field of research – the populations, policies, and administrative methods to be found in municipalities. Thus we are interested in the world of organisations, and in the world of associations of municipalities, their meetings, their internal regulations, their recurrent activities – but also the more flexible circle of relationships embracing such things as the correspondence between two scholars interested in the functioning of municipal government or the activities of specialist journals, not forgetting the eagerness of a particular municipality to consult with its opposite numbers elsewhere about some particular subject or other. This issue offers analyses of the history of these connections: the way they facilitated exchanges, their impact on the thinking and activities of the principal actors on the municipal scene – councillors, employees, scholars.<sup>20</sup> While our authors have published elsewhere on municipal connections in single countries,<sup>21</sup> an angle which is illustrated in this issue by Hanna Kozińska-

<sup>19</sup> This issue was planned by members of the working group on ‘The international municipal movement 1900–1960’, which was able to work from 1998 to 2001 thanks to grants from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS, France), and the NWO (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research). We should like to offer our thanks to all those who attended our meetings and whose comments enriched the articles published here: Uwe Kühn, Jean Joana, Patrick le Lidec, Ingo Bautz, Elena Cogato-Lanza, Viviane Claude, Jefferey Sellers, Cristina Mehrtens, Rosemary Kiss, Salvatore Adorno, Paolo Capuzzo, Renato Camurri, Federico Lucarini, Pim Kooij, Nico Randerad and Dirk-Jan Wolffram. We are also very grateful for the hospitality shown to us by the Institut des Sciences de L’Homme and the Archives Municipales (Lyon, France), the Istituto Gramsci di Bologna and the Università di Forlì (Italy), the Fondation Brailart and the UN Archives (Geneva, Switzerland), the Nederlands centrum voor contemporaine Geschiedenis (Groningen) and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (The Hague).

<sup>20</sup> It must be pointed out here that municipal connections are an essential aspect of ‘circulations’ around the idea of the ‘urban’ which began to increase at the end of the nineteenth century; but they are not the be-all and end-all of the mass of fluxes, exchanges and transfers which also affected areas that could be considered to appertain to municipal policy, such as housing, town planning, social assistance or service networks (gas, electricity, water), as well as to themes that are not directly, or strictly speaking, ‘municipal’, but are particularly important in towns, such as migration, population management, education and artistic activity. This circulation around the idea of the urban, which varies in nature over time and space, assumes the existence of undertakings, concerned individuals and procedures linked to national government; and they may involve specialists whose outlook is not fundamentally municipal. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that municipal connections are virtually confined to urban areas, leaving the promising terrain of rural areas quite uncultivated.

<sup>21</sup> An overview of municipal associationism in modern Europe will soon be available in Patrizia Dogliani and Oscar Gaspari, eds., *L’Europa dei comuni. Origini e sviluppo del movimento comunale europeo dalla fine dell’ottocento all’Unione Europea* (Rome: Donzelli, forthcoming).

Witt's essay, here they have agreed mainly to focus on connections above, beyond or across national frontiers, contributing to the current debate about trans-, cross- or supra-national approaches to history. Studies of this kind are still few and far between, and our field of research has something of a jigsaw puzzle quality with many pieces missing. Marjatta Hietala is one of the few historians to have produced a systematic study of inter-municipal connections.<sup>22</sup> There are several reasons for this, I think, of which three are outstanding. Social science research is often 'stato-centric', sidelining municipalities as a subject; the history of 'social reform' is usually recounted on a national scale, although municipalities made a decisive contribution to it;<sup>23</sup> and 'smaller' countries tend to be despised as subjects for research.

### Some pros and cons of a 'small subject'

On the first point it is important to realise the pejorative connotation of the word 'local' in certain countries: it implies archaism and resistance to any modernisation, which could then only be fostered by governments or centralised agencies. This applies particularly to France, where state-building has involved an increasingly concentrated monopoly over legitimacy and the 'common good', in all their forms, while academic writing (sociology, history, political science) has often stigmatised local interests and municipal leaders as foci of resistance to the modernisation of political activity and public action.<sup>24</sup> But the same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to countries such as Italy, in which cities are still recognised dynamic and powerful structures in competition with the state. Here the state has tended to grow like a vampire, sucking in men and institutional innovations from the cities; liberal elites have come to regard communal autonomy and local loyalty as a continual attempt to undermine Italian unity, again devaluing municipal action.<sup>25</sup> Although not every nation can be said to fit either of these rather brief historical assessments, which see the state as the 'only political and institutional subject truly worthy of consideration',<sup>26</sup> the study of municipal government, its practice and organisation, is often dismissed as of secondary importance.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See Marjatta Hietala, *Services and Urbanization at the Turn of the Century. The Diffusion of Innovations* (Helsinki: SHS, 1987). Besides the contributors to this volume we can also point to William B. Cohen, *Urban Government and the Rise of the French City. Five Municipalities in the 19th Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Bernard Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia: Glasgow and the United States 1820–1920* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984), ch. 5; Pierre-Yves Saunier, 'Changing the city: urban international information and the Lyon municipality, 1900–1940', *Planning Perspectives* 14, 1 (1999), 19–48.

<sup>23</sup> The point is clearly discernible in Christian Topalov, ed., *Laboratoires du nouveau siècle. La nébuleuse réformatrice et ses réseaux en France, 1880–1914* (Paris: Editions de l'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> On this see Jean Joana, 'L'action publique municipale sous la IIIe République 1884–1939', *Politix*, 42, 2 (1998), 151–78.

<sup>25</sup> Oscar Gaspari, *L'Italia dei municipi. Il movimento comunale in età liberale 1879–1906* (Rome: Donzelli, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the point made by Michèle Dagenais and Pierre-Yves Saunier in 'Tales of the periphery: an outline survey of municipal employees and services in the modern city', in Michele Dagenais, Irene



Second, the nation has tended to predominate in studies of ‘social reform’, although municipal connections played a particularly important part at that particular juncture in the contemporary history of Western societies. This attitude is not, of course, unique to our field of research. In most countries the social sciences are organised on a state or national basis, whether one is talking of job descriptions, the way information and research results are circulated, or the pathways to individual recognition. As a result, the subjects we choose for our teaching and research ‘naturally’ fall within the same framework. Comparisons, from the disquisitions of Marc Bloch to the flourishing of comparative history around such protagonists as Jürgen Kocka, are one response to the intellectual dissatisfaction produced by such strait-jacketing; but comparative history has itself helped to perpetuate the causes of that dissatisfaction by continuing to compare situations at national level.<sup>28</sup> This may be essential when approaching some problems, but it has led to the theme of circulation – of individuals, writings and methods – being neglected. If circulation is mentioned at all it tends to be instrumentally, as an illustration or with reference to the rather lazy concept of ‘foreign influence’. If illustration is required, various national manifestations of the same theme will be mentioned in order to emphasise or bring out the importance of the subject. If reference is to be made to foreign influences, they will appear as *dei ex machina* or as sources for national developments. In neither case is the transnational or ‘in-between’ dimension seen as a ‘problem’ in its own right, or as an opportunity to discuss definitions or compare concepts without simply comparing nations. But the transnational component, like the municipal dimension, is of major importance in the history of social reform: first, because the same questions of urbanisation and industrialisation have frequently been raised, albeit in different terms, in many countries, but mainly because reform movements have existed in symbiosis with similar developments in other countries, in a subtle rhetoric of differences and references (to the ‘backwardness’ of certain nations, for example), sometimes going as far as to deny any foreign inspirations, as in the United States in the late 1930s.<sup>29</sup>

The tendency to rather despise the history of ‘small countries’ has also contributed to the relative scarcity of studies on municipal connections. Our hierarchy of ‘good subjects’ encourages us to look down on such places as Finland, Portugal, Switzerland, Belgium or the Netherlands. How many universities, outside those same countries, have faculties or research centres devoted to studying them? How many articles on them do we find in journals of the human and social sciences? How many theses are devoted to them? Our idea of a ‘good’ subject is often a subject located in a ‘big’ country. This is directly relevant to our present theme. What Anne Rasmussen has demonstrated for the great international scientific associations<sup>30</sup> is also true of organisations in many international municipal move-

Maver and Pierre-Yves Saunier, eds., *Municipal Services and Employees in the Modern City: New Historic Approaches* (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming).

<sup>28</sup> Espagne, *Les transferts culturels*, introduction.

<sup>29</sup> Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*.

<sup>30</sup> Rasmussen, ‘L’Internationale scientifique’.

ments: their historical origins are to be sought in the Netherlands and Belgium. The Union Internationale des Villes/International Union of Local Authorities (UIV/IULA), founded in Ghent in 1913, had its headquarters successively in Brussels, Amsterdam and The Hague. Many of its leaders, not to mention its rank and file, were natives of those countries, from Emile Vinck to Nicolas Arkema and Florentinus Martinus Wibaut. It is also worth remembering that the Belgian and Dutch municipal movements were among the best structured in Europe, and that exchanges between, or from, Scandinavian municipalities were particularly frequent. Lack of interest in these countries has contributed to a similar lack of interest in the international municipal movement and the associations that helped to structure it.

Just as the detailed study of 'globalisation' requires some attention to the moments in human history which bear witness to the existence of large-scale connections – such as the systems of power and exchange under the Mongol empire, or religious and scholarly interchange between the medieval Muslim and Christian worlds – so for our purposes we need to examine how connections between the governments of medieval cities, or between the councils of large cities in the modern world, have acted as frameworks or supports for connections among modern towns. Some cities were bound together by powerful diplomatic, political and/or commercial links; the Hanseatic League was probably the most highly institutionalised of such connections. Exchanges among individuals are highly possible, while many studies of the modern era witness the circulation of legal rules, administrators, town councillors or regulations.<sup>31</sup> More than seventy years ago Paul Bonenfant outlined the richness and the impact of exchanges, enquiries and visits relating to poor relief in the Spanish Netherlands.<sup>32</sup> Any broader investigation of connections between and about municipal governments would of course have to take account of these previous endeavours.<sup>33</sup> While this issue is exploratory, we must emphasise that it would be anachronistic to assume any direct link between the history of municipal connections as they developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and connections among towns from the Middle Ages onwards. The eighteenth century saw the beginning of a trend – arising in a number of kingdoms, refined in the nineteenth century in the crucible of the nation state and firmly established by the twentieth-century welfare state – to subject cities to a collection of rules, controls and hierarchies which radically transformed municipal sovereignty and reallocated its powers to central government. This does not mean that municipal government simply became a decentralised outgrowth of central government. On

<sup>31</sup> On the towns of Flanders and Hainault in the modern era see Philippe Guignet, *Le pouvoir dans la ville au XVIIIème siècle. Pratiques politiques, notabilité et éthique sociale de part et d'autre de la frontière franco-belge* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1990). On policing in particular see Catherine Denys, *Police et sécurité au XVIIIème siècle dans les villes de la frontière franco-belge* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Paul Bonenfant, 'Le problème du paupérisme en Belgique à la fin de l'Ancien Régime', doctoral dissertation, University of Brussels (1934), mentioned in Guignet, *Le pouvoir dans la ville*.

<sup>33</sup> A first attempt at such an approach will be the forthcoming fifteenth (2003) issue of the *Jahrbuch für europäische Verwaltungsgeschichte*, ed. by Nico Randeraad and devoted to 'The administrative knowledge of cities'.

the contrary, a number of studies has shown that rules, policies and practices were developed at municipal level before being applied nationwide under the aegis of central government.<sup>34</sup> This ‘great transformation’ turned cities into municipalities, firmly enmeshed in the administrative, juridical and political structure of the nation state; accordingly, the creation of links between municipal governments – links relating to the activities of those governments – belongs in a completely different context. The same applies to other dimensions of the identity of ‘towns’ or ‘cities’ at various times in history. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a massive urbanisation of European societies, and people involved in municipal connections were most keenly aware of sharing in this common evolution. The development of the social sciences, which were concerned *inter alia* with urban phenomena, created a sphere of knowledge and know-how about towns, including the best way to govern the things and people in them.<sup>35</sup> The international context in which such contacts developed is also radically different, of course. For one thing, its individual cells are the nation states, or territorial states – although not everyone would accept the date of the Treaty of Westphalia, an icon in the field of international relations, as the beginning of this way of organising an international system.<sup>36</sup> For another, this organised and structured international system later took an unexpected multilateral turn which was institutionalised in the League of Nations. Nor should it be forgotten that the concrete, real-world manifestation of exchanges and relations, of which municipal connections are but a part, was altogether disrupted in the mid-nineteenth century by the coming of the steam engine, the telegraph and new technologies for reproducing pictures and text.

It was against this background, which I have merely sketched here, that municipal connections developed so quickly in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Complex systems were set up for the circulation of information and individuals, not only in Europe, but between Europe and the United States, and Europe and her colonial empires. Municipal connections, drawing on scientific or utopian discourse, are part of the debate on the European and world order – strands in the historical approach to the phenomena which constitute universalisation.

The articles in this volume represent an introduction to those systems, their vectors, actors and structures. Patrizia Dogliani and Oscar Gaspari examine how

<sup>34</sup> The evolution of a wide range of public policies was the outcome of close co-operation between national governments and local authorities, including municipalities. The need for co-operation could arise from conflict, and central–local relationships took many forms, from domination via subsidiarity through to autonomy. Some relevant publications: Anne Hardy, *The Epidemic Streets: Infectious Disease and the Rise of Preventive Medicine, 1856–1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Gilles Pollet, ‘La construction de l’état social à la française: entre local et national aux XIXe et XXe siècles’, *Lien social et politique-RIAC*, 33 (1995), 115–31; Oscar Gaspari, ‘Ugo Giusti (1873–1953)’, *Economia Pubblica*, 1 (1999), 79–116; Bénédicte Zimmermann, *La constitution du chômage en Allemagne. Entre professions et territoires* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 2001); Jonathan Kahn, *Budgeting Democracy: State Building and Citizenship in America, 1890–1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Bernard Lepetit and Christian Topalov, eds., *La ville des sciences sociales* (Paris: Belin, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, ‘Westphalia and all that’, in Judith Goldstein and Robert O’Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 235–64.

some of these municipal connections based themselves on pre-existing networks – the socialist international and the co-operative movement – drawing on the vitality and continuity of their predecessors while striving to outgrow them. They introduce us to some of the organs and individuals who created and maintained those connections: journals such as the *Annales de la Régie Directe*; organisations such as the UIV/IULA; letter-writers and networkers such as Edgard Milhaud and Alessandro Schiavi. Renaud Payre takes us deeper into the subject matter of the connections, showing how some of the French protagonists took their stance in the international debates on the definition and content of ‘communal’ or ‘municipal science’ in order to further their own aims of reforming the theory and practice of municipal government in France. Hanna Kozłowska-Witt, while showing how much national municipal associations were at the centre of the debate on self-government in their respective countries, uses the case of Poland to demonstrate how this debate builds on borrowings and heritages from foreign contexts. Antoine Vion rounds off the ‘European’ series initiated by Dogliani and Gaspari, taking as his subject the development of town twinning in postwar Europe. He shows that the systematising of official links between municipalities was, for some groups, a springboard for political success and for a vision of the building of Europe. This gives us a key to understanding the international ‘municipal diplomacy’ which has increasingly involved municipalities in educational, cultural, economic and diplomatic exchanges to the point where, as now, they have felt able to demand recognition as a global institution.<sup>37</sup> Vion, like the other contributors, offers us a reading of how the city, quintessentially singular and ‘local’, can be part of a much broader, ‘universal’ or ‘global’ frame of reference.

We would not claim that the issue covers the whole field. Contacts among individual municipalities are not represented here, for example. As well as the previously cited publications by Hietala and Cohen, work by Irene Maver suggests how important those contacts were using as her example Glasgow, that holy grail for municipal reform crusaders between 1890 and 1920.<sup>38</sup> Following the journeyings of municipal technicians, the enquiries of enlightened amateurs, the official delegations of town councillors, she also stresses that the geography of these connections was not bound by a simple centre–periphery relationship. While all eyes turned to the city on the Clyde as the magnet for those involved in municipal connections throughout the Western world, between 1890 and 1914 Glaswegian councillors and municipal servants continued to search that same world for experiments which

<sup>37</sup> For international municipal diplomacy see esp. William E. Hewitt, ‘Municipalities and the “new” internationalism. Cautionary notes from Canada’, *Cities*, 16, 6 (1999), 435–44; Heidi Hobbs, *City Hall Goes Abroad. The Foreign Policy of Local Authorities* (Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994); Michael Shuman, *Towards a Global Village. International Community Development Initiatives* (Boulder: Pluto Press, 1994); Earl Fry, Lee H. Radebaugh and Panayotis Soldatos, eds., *The New International Cities Era: The Global Activities of North American Municipal Government* (Provo: David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, 1989).

<sup>38</sup> See also Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia*, 151–84. For a first taste of Maver’s work, see her ‘A (North) British end-view: the comparative experience of municipal employees and services in Glasgow, 1800–1950’, in Dagenais, Maver and Saunier, *Municipal Employees*.

could be adapted for home use. This goes to show that municipalities did not simply divide into importers and exporters; there were certain lines of force in the geography of their connections, but relevant information was generally sought *in situ*<sup>39</sup> – a tribute to the flexibility and relative autonomy of those connections. Nonetheless they were restricted by geographical proximity, common language, political affiliations,<sup>40</sup> personal or organisation links among councillors and municipal servants, national political contexts and diplomatic relations.

### The discourses of municipal connections

Throughout their recent history, municipal connections have defined, intersected with, nourished or undergone a series of would-be universalist ‘transboundary formations’. These formations are shifting combinations of values, collective actions, practices, rules, organisations and individuals – all of which are advanced as possible futures for mankind. By examining some of them and the way they combine with municipal connections, we hope to produce the ‘municipal contribution’ mentioned in my title. Any historically based discussion of the processes of diffusion, interconnection or circulation must engage in some way with the universal – with the debate over what is, or ought to be, the conduct or value system appropriate to the whole of humanity. Our suggestions are offered as a contribution to that debate, from the field of municipal matters.

Municipal connections are, in themselves, transboundary formations. The network of individual exchanges, visits, writings and their circulation, whether as part of an external structure (a political party, trade union or academic conference) or as activity within an association in the municipal world itself, has gradually built up a continuum of experience in, and knowledge of, municipal government. The location and extent of this shared space may of course shift as some of its constituents – groups, countries, municipalities – leave it, or are ejected, for a shorter or longer time. The means whereby it is ordered and constituted may also vary, and the broad paradigms directing action by its various components may change. What is remarkable, however, is how long this formation has actually lasted, how quickly it was built up and how open its circuits are to change. Particularly striking is the fact that despite the lines of force guiding the flows of individuals and information, and the power play within it – between individuals, political persuasions or nations – and the unevenness of its texture over space and time, the vivifying flood of

<sup>39</sup> The Scandinavian towns studied by Marjatta Hietala were particularly good at assessing the needs of each enquiry and seeking experiments and information *in situ*, whether in a large or small country, a nearby or distant town. See in particular her analysis of connections developed by the municipality of Helsinki: Marjatta Hietala, ‘La diffusion des innovations: Helsinki 1875–1917’, *Genèses*, 10 (January 1993), 74–89, esp. the table on p. 85.

<sup>40</sup> Switzerland is an interesting example because it differs from the classic examples taken from ‘big’ countries. Cf. Elena Gogato-Lanza, ‘L’urbanisme en devenir: réseaux et matériaux de l’aménagement urbain à Genève dans les années 1930’, doctoral dissertation (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, 1999), 117–29. Postwar relationships among communist municipalities, particularly where twinning is concerned, witness to the constructive force of political orientation.

municipal experience does seem to have washed over most European municipalities, from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the very beginning of the twentieth century. Sometimes (and here further research is needed) this was a continuation of previous experience – in the Low Countries, for example. The denser the flood, the greater the level of municipal innovation; both together seem to have declined after the Second World War, although we do not have enough studies of municipal ‘modernisation’ to gauge the extent or even the reality of that decline.<sup>41</sup> The argument advanced in this volume, and elsewhere in other works, by Antoine Vion and Renaud Payre – that municipalism in the 1950s was increasingly drawn upon as an international resource whereas beforehand the reverse was true – certainly merits further examination. The slowdown in the role and intensity of these connections seems to have been interrupted in the 1980s, a fact which may confirm the hypothesis that the establishment, and subsequent disestablishment, of the welfare state was a key factor influencing municipal connections. But we must avoid jumping to conclusions on this point: more research into the nature and impact of these renewed connections is required. The mere fact that such connections exist or existed does not prove that they had an impact, or show what that impact was.

This is something that has not yet been fully explained, since the inter-municipal dimension of innovations in public policies is often neglected when they are viewed solely as a product of nationalisation – of politics, rules and activities – pushed forward by the state. However, the scanty evidence available to us seems to indicate a broad and varied use of the information and experience springing from municipal connections. Whether these connections remained exclusively municipal or spilled over into the civic, professional or academic worlds, they seem to have contributed decisively to the municipalities’ ability to design and implement policies in various areas of the ‘social domain’ which attracted the attention of both local and national governments from the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Whether by imitation, reappropriation or adaptation – all possible ways of putting external references to practical use – European municipalities set up new policies or new administrative apparatus, or made changes to existing ones. The things which they had in common, in many areas, were not solely due to an enforced convergence in response to common constraints. The spread of the ‘Elberfeld system’ of poor relief in Germany and in continental northern Europe in the nineteenth century; the success of the ‘Ghent system’ for the unemployed;<sup>43</sup> the creation of regulations for

<sup>41</sup> Urban historians are just beginning to focus on towns between 1950 and 1960. This may give us a chance to shake off an approach to ‘modernisation’ which automatically considers everything to do with municipalism as archaic and focuses instead on the larger forces set in motion by national governments or big business. Two recent articles on European cities after the Second World War are Rosemary Wakeman, *Modernizing the Provincial City. Toulouse 1945–1975* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), and John Foot, *Milan Since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001)

<sup>42</sup> See n. 29 above.

<sup>43</sup> For a study of how parts of it were imported, and of the complex interplay it engendered among municipalities, trade unions, *Länder* and central government, see Zimmerman, *Constitution du chômage*, 126–35.

municipal employees in France;<sup>44</sup> municipal initiatives in housing and town planning;<sup>45</sup> cultural policy in the Paris region;<sup>46</sup> and the whole history of urban services, including water, sewerage, electricity, gas and public transport, and of services under local authority control: all these bear witness to the importance of municipal connections. Everywhere, debate and discussion were shaped and coloured by experiments in other towns, from technical proposals to ambitious paradigms for the role of local authorities. Connections not only supplied the practical tools – designs, formulas, regulations – but also furnished a rhetorical armoury for use by contributors to the debate.<sup>47</sup> In every town and every country, stories and lessons drawn from experiments elsewhere became a precious resource which could help equally to subvert the status quo or to strengthen it: either way, the comparison with how things were done somewhere else was a profitable counter in local discussion.<sup>48</sup>

If these external references were used in municipal debate and practice – if there was seen to be an empirical relationship between different dimensions (local, regional, national and international) – it was because all the contributors to municipal connections subscribed – though not without disagreements – to certain would-be universalist postulates. The first was that the future of the world was essentially an urban one. This assumption underlies the whole idea of developing municipal connections, whether within a country or internationally. If towns are the planet's future, if contemporary urbanisation faces political and technical authorities in every city with the same problems, then the exchange of experience becomes a meaningful activity and its results can transcend frontiers. This was the message of the first congress of the Union Internationale des Villes in 1913 – and of the Transatlantic Summit of mayors in 2000. Clearly, urbanisation is taken as a fact of life: it is not a process which might conceivably be changed or controlled. It is, in a way, the *sine qua non* of municipal connections, since it gives them grandeur and legitimacy. At the same time, the connections themselves confirm the feeling of those involved that urbanisation and its problems are universal, and *ipso facto* confirm the necessity of those connections. This does not mean that those involved in the connections invent the questions they have to face in their own municipalities. Population growth, increased circulation of goods and people in city streets,

<sup>44</sup> Bruno Dumons, Gilles Pollet and Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Les élites municipales sous la Troisième République. Des villes du sud-est de la France* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1998).

<sup>45</sup> Anthony Sutcliffe, *Towards the Planned City. Germany, Britain, the United States and France 1780–1914* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1981); Donatella Calabi, *Storia dell'urbanistica europea* (Turin: Paravia, 2000); 'Architectures et politiques sociales 1900–1940', special number of *Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale*, 15–17, 1st quarter, (1985).

<sup>46</sup> Sylvie Rab, 'Culture et banlieue. Les politiques culturelles dans les municipalités de la Seine (1935–1939)', history thesis (Université Paris VII, 1994).

<sup>47</sup> The discussion on municipal trading is the most obvious example of a debate that crosses national boundaries. See Patrizia Dogliani, *Un laboratorio di socialismo municipale: la Francia, 1870–1920* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1992), 163–93, and her contribution here; Hietala, *Services*, 155–67.

<sup>48</sup> Renaud Payre shows in his article in this volume how important was the use of foreign references by French municipal 'reformers'. See also his article 'Une république des communes. Henri Sellier et la réforme municipale en avril 1942', *Genèses*, 41 (Dec. 2000), 143–63.

housing shortages or problems with sewerage, electricity or water supply are not invented or forced on the attention of local authorities by ‘social constructs’, whether emanating from inter-municipal connections or from some other source. Nonetheless it is true that in earlier periods rapid urban growth, sometimes more rapid than at present (e.g. in the mid-nineteenth century), did not lead to any profound theorising about ‘urbanisation’ or what some Frenchmen then called ‘urbanisme’.<sup>49</sup> Nor did it generate a specifically ‘municipal’ response to perceived challenges, as happened from 1890 to 1910 and afterwards. However, the process of bringing these diverse elements together so as to extract meaning from them, posing them as ‘issues’, anticipating a continual linear development of urbanisation – in short, interpreting urban data – seems to me to be closely linked to the existence of inter-municipal connections. And the link is not merely causal, or consequential.

The second postulate which structures, or is used as a basis for structuring, connections is the municipality itself. It is striking how far the existence of municipalities and all their works has been taken as read by contributors to international discussions and exchanges for close on a century. Not only do they all more or less agree that the municipality is the basic cell of any political structure in any human culture or civilisation, but they agree that all municipalities face the same problems. ‘A mayor is a mayor, wherever his/her city is located. The only differences lie in the structure in which they operate.’<sup>50</sup> This statement, from a delegate attending the Transatlantic Summit of Mayors in Lyon in March 2000, echoes many which had sustained the convictions, and filled the discourse, of participants in municipal connections over the last century. It was all part of the tendency of almost all such participants to see municipalities as an integral part of society, at all times and in all places: hence their unflagging enthusiasm for the theme of ‘municipal autonomy’. Over the long history of connections, this universalist wishful thinking has come up against numerous obstacles: diversity of institutions; the differing role of municipalism and municipalities in various countries, leading to misunderstandings; translation problems; and the nature of the political, social and economic contexts of local government. The very nature of the municipality was disputed in the course of official and interpersonal debates over the ‘best’ or ‘truest’ approach to local government. UIV/IULA congresses in the 1920s were particularly full of such ‘accepted misunderstandings’, as different factions disagreed without engaging in genuine debate, and listened to each other without understanding, coping with the use of terms which just did not mean the same to all the participants (‘local government’ being a particular stumbling block for many continental participants, while the English and Americans had equal difficulty with

<sup>49</sup> See Adna F. Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century. A Study in Statistics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899); Pierre Clerget, ‘L’urbanisme, étude historique, géographique et économique’, *Bulletin de la Société Neuchâtoise de Géographie*, XX (1909–1910), 213–31. On the history of urban social statistics in France (Legoyt, Levasseur, Meuriot), see Gilles Montigny, *De la ville à l’urbanisation. Essai sur la genèse des études urbaines françaises en géographie, sociologie et statistique sociale* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1992).

<sup>50</sup> First Transatlantic Summit of Mayors, *Les villes à l’ère de la mondialisation*, Lyon, 6–8 April 2000, Institut Aspen France, roneo, 27.



the French word *commune*). Connections, even close ones, can exist, and differences can be discerned and acknowledged, without preventing the development of a universalist discourse whose very terminology may not always be universally understood or accepted.

The third postulate founded on, and founding, connections is that municipalism and municipalities are apolitical. Local government is seen as essentially technical, a pursuit of the common good with no allegiance other than to the 'Municipal Party' whose task is 'to advance the welfare and happiness of the whole nation', to quote the English conservative A. K. Rollit, president of the Association of Municipal Corporations in 1902.<sup>51</sup> The same attitude recurs strikingly across the whole range of individuals and organisations involved in municipal connections, including the socialists who fathered many of the journals and organisations which helped form the connecting web. This last point clearly shows that the distinction between politics and administration can be a convenience: hence its use in many contexts, particularly the municipal one.<sup>52</sup> And it is, for various reasons, intrinsic to the practice of connections. First, it facilitates contacts between councillors, academics and organisations with differing persuasions; second, it moves municipal practice into the realms of reason and science and establishes it as an activity that can be improved by experiment, by innovation that draws freely on the achievements of other municipalities. The theme of 'communal science', of which the French and international dimensions are studied in this volume by Renaud Payre, is the final but unattainable outcome of municipal connections, seeking to turn the know-how derived from 'experimental policies' into a formalised body of knowledge which can be passed on and taught.

The final postulate is that municipalities throughout Europe – not to mention across the Atlantic and across the world – are comparable:<sup>53</sup> they belong to a shared universe of rules and values in which they can compare themselves to, or rival, others. The areas in which, and the criteria according to which, such comparisons are made has varied over the long history of municipal connections. From the end of the nineteenth century up to the 1940s, municipalities rivalled one another in their efforts to become the ideal 'modern' city, lavish in its contributions to the wellbeing of its citizens, aesthetically pleasing, comfortable, convenient and alive with varied activities. In their determination to belong to this 'class', to take their place in the great assembly of cities (as nations strive for their places in the assembly of nations), the great cities took care to learn what was happening elsewhere, took

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Hietala, *Services*, 163.

<sup>52</sup> This distinction between politics and administration, if examined in various historical contexts where it has been put to use (e.g. American progressivism, European municipalities), can be seen as a useful strategy for those seeking to deny their affiliations by invoking the ideas of rationality and neutrality conveyed by 'administration'. But any such attempt will itself be political in a way: it may propose a different concept of 'politics', but does not really deny it.

<sup>53</sup> The idea that all great cities belong to a common area representing 'the advance of civilisation' is particularly prominent in South America, with regard to facilities and town planning as well as to cultural life. For an example see Arturo Almandoz Marte, *Urbanismo europeo en Caracas (1870–1940)* (Caracas: Fundarte/Equinoccio, 1997).

space at exhibitions to show off their own successes, organised their own exhibitions, and joined international organisations. ‘Co-operation’ stands out as a favourite word at this period, although competition among towns, in all its forms – regional rivalries, conflict with the capital, competition among nations, particularly in frontier areas – was ever-present.<sup>54</sup> In the world of post-1970 connections the new buzzword seems to have been ‘comparition’, thus putting competition on a very different footing, with cities fighting for a share of the market through the building of infrastructures and advertising campaigns.

Thus municipal connections are part of a specific formation whose discourse, while aspiring to universality, remains bound to municipalities and municipalism: improvements in local government, the circulation of knowledge and techniques, and so on. But these connections do include proposals which transcend municipalism per se, in two ways, First, the municipal version of ‘transboundary formations’ formulates explicit, though not always identical, models of social and political organisation which aspire to the universal. The idea that municipalities have an indispensable part to play in the structuring of both national and global space was a particular favourite with various late nineteenth-century socialist groups building on Proudhon’s ideas; it was espoused for example by the Belgian César De Paepe, the Frenchmen Brousse and Malon and the Italian Costa.<sup>55</sup> This impulse is perceptible among socialists in individual nations; it also emerges in centre-right catholic circles<sup>56</sup> and in the writings of thinkers such as Patrick Geddes;<sup>57</sup> it is distantly echoed by a number of liberal jurists with ‘communocentric’ visions of sovereignty and law,<sup>58</sup> and is discernible in the UIV/IULA. But it was swept away by the growth in the power of the nation state and the conversion of the European socialists to that ideal.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless this specific juxtaposition of the local and the international, postulating the municipality as the basic cell in a worldwide organisation, draws our attention to the potential global significance of municipalism. The same significance can be attached to the way in which municipal connections chime in with some of the most ambitious discourse on the organisation of the world and of society, on the organisations which express them and the networks that convey them.

There are indeed many complex links between municipal connections, the principles behind them, the individuals who enact them, their structure, and a number of would-be universal social and political programmes, including the

<sup>54</sup> E.g. Strasbourg’s showcase role between France and Germany. See Viviane Claude, ‘Le travail de la différence. Expériences comparatives dans le champ municipal à Strasbourg (1900–1930)’, *Genèses*, 37 (Dec. 1999), 114–34.

<sup>55</sup> See Patrizia Dogliani, *Laboratorio*, 17–32.

<sup>56</sup> See Oscar Gaspari’s comments on the role of Catholics, particularly Luigi Sturzo, in the municipal association movement, in his *Italia dei municipi*.

<sup>57</sup> Patrick Geddes and Gilbert Salter, *Ideas at War* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1915).

<sup>58</sup> E.g. the German Hugo Preuss, according to the portrait by Fabio Rugge in *Il governo delle città prussiane tra ’800 e ’900* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1989), 34–9.

<sup>59</sup> Madeleine Rebérioux noticeably does not examine the ‘municipal path’ in her study of anti-statist trends in French socialism: ‘Les tendances hostiles à l’état dans la SFIO (1905–1914)’, in Madeleine Rebérioux, *Parcours engagés dans la France contemporaine* (Paris: Belin, 2000), 39–59.

'planetary utopian' ideas recently examined by Armand Mattelart.<sup>60</sup> An exhaustive list would make dull reading. As an example, the milieux, support mechanisms, organisations and some of the ideas and values behind municipal connections intersect with elements in the Catholic movement, as shown here in Antoine Vion's article on town twinning and its ritual, or with Freemasonry, as suggested by Oscar Gaspari. But there is a particularly close link and interaction with what, for my present purpose, can be described as two broad types of discourse. The distinction which I am going to draw between the discourses of 'social order' and 'world order' is artificial. Visions of 'world order' build, at least implicitly, on plans for society, and most great social designs fit in with some vision of the future of all humanity. I trust the reader will accept the distinction for the sake of practicality.

This applies in particular to the three great ideologies developed and broadcast by the contemporary West: socialism, reform and democratic liberalism. Municipal connections interlink closely with all three. Socialism and municipal connections share not only the same individuals, the same networks linking those individuals, the same channels of dissemination and the same organisations, but also a number of themes and values. A great many socialist movements, or elements within them, moved into the municipal field at the end of the nineteenth century, producing long-term effects which did not run out until the 1950s, with the disappearance of a generation whose history is traced in this volume by Patrizia Dogliani. The links with the reform movement were equally strong and sometimes shared the same ground, since certain socialists deliberately sought alliances with reformers: the Frenchman Albert Thomas is one example, the Belgian Henri La Fontaine and the Dutch Florentinus Wibaut are others.<sup>61</sup> The clearest common element must be the people involved. It is interesting to find that many of those whom Christian Topalov has identified in worldwide discussions of the 'unemployment problem' at the beginning of the twentieth century were also involved in municipal connections at various times and in various capacities. Bruggeman and Varlez in Belgium and Gibbon in England entered the municipal scene on the same ubiquitous reforming principles as Sellier, Milhaud, Beveridge and a host of others, because the urban, and therefore the municipal, scene was where the 'social issue' was being formulated at that time.<sup>62</sup> But they also shared certain principles of action, vision – and division. Some of these shared elements emerge clearly from the work of Christian Topalov.<sup>63</sup> The stress on lack of rigid political affiliation, the emphasis on professionalisation, specialisation and synthesis, the sharing of experience both nation-

<sup>60</sup> *Histoire de l'utopie planétaire. De la cité prophétique à la société globale* (Paris: La Découverte, 2000).

<sup>61</sup> On Thomas, see esp. Martin Fine, 'Toward corporatism, the movement for capital-labor collaboration in France 1914–1936', Ph.D. thesis (University of Wisconsin, 1971) and 'Un instrument pour la réforme: l'Association française pour le progrès social (1927–1929)', *Le Mouvement Social*, 94 (Jan.–March 1976), 3–29; Madeleine Rebérioux, 'Albert Thomas, pivot du réformisme français', in Rebérioux, *Parcours*, 61–76.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Topalov, *Naissance du chômeur* and 'From the 'social question' to 'urban problems': reformers and the working classes at the turn of the twentieth century', *International Social Sciences Journal*, 125 (August 1990), 319–36.

<sup>63</sup> Topalov, *Laboratoires*.

ally and internationally, the importance of journals, congresses and exhibitions as vehicles for propaganda, education and networking: all this, the common currency of reform, is present in municipal connections. The deliberate confusion between reform and political partisanship, reform and administration, reform and science, that ran deep in individuals and organisations, was essential to the definition of reform as an intellectual endeavour and identified reformers as a group. The same merging of distinctions is evident among those involved in municipal connections.

Turning now to encounters between municipal connections and democratic liberalism, especially as practised by American progressives, we find the same striking similarity of individuals and values. American progressives were drawn into municipal connections, at first by their interest in importing elements of actual municipal practice (from the 1890s to the 1930s), then by their desire to export principles of organisation and action in the municipal field (from the 1930s to the 1950s). They had a great many ideas in common with their European contacts, especially as many of them had studied in German universities or in American universities under academics belonging to the German-trained generation of Ely, James and Patten.<sup>64</sup> The exchange of ideas and visions was greatly facilitated by the existence of a common language drawn from intellectual principles, such as the historicism of the German economists and jurists (relativism, interdependence, creation of the ethical community, creative role of institutions); by the common search for a *via media* between revolutionary socialism and laissez-faire liberalism;<sup>65</sup> and by a shared belief in the ideals of mutual understanding and scientific co-operation. This common language may also have fostered the intense involvement of the great American foundations – encouraged by academics who had assimilated, or at least brushed against, European ways of thinking – in the life of national and international municipal associations from the 1930s onwards. Aspects of the evidence for and effects of this involvement are studied in this volume by Vion, Payre and Gaspari, with particular attention to the 1950s, when the imperatives of the Cold War and the drive to strengthen the Atlantic community were at their height.<sup>66</sup> The fact that this involvement sometimes chimed with the interests of the US State Department (or other governmental agencies) suggests that municipal connections were seen as one of the practice grounds for successive designs to organise the whole world under the aegis of the United States – for testing updated restatements of Theodore Roosevelt's goal of Americanising the world on the twin

<sup>64</sup> On this see Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, and Axel R. Schäfer, *American Progressives and German Social Reform, 1875–1920* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory. Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought 1870–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>66</sup> On the transatlantic contacts and the activities of the great foundations and the American government after World War II, see Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars*. On the long history of the involvement of the American foundations in municipalities and municipalism see Pierre-Yves Saunier, 'Sketches from the Urban Internationale. Voluntary societies, international organizations and US foundations at the city's bedside 1900–1960', *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research*, 25, 2 (2001), 380–403. The Transatlantic Summit of Mayors organised by the Aspen Institute in Lyon in 2000 was another episode in this long history.

principles of free flow and open access, that went along so nicely with promises of peace and prosperity.<sup>67</sup> From the 1930s onwards the great foundations, approved and increasingly closely monitored by the State Department, invested ever more heavily in municipal connections (and other international technical networks) in both Europe and Latin America. It was a continuation of diplomacy by other means, a kind of cultural penetration, disseminating American values and democratic stability; it was also a practical demonstration of the benefits of the free exchange of information and experience.<sup>68</sup> The American perspective on this complex trans-national activity was neither naked (and cynical) imperialism nor pure and disinterested philanthropy. But it marks the integration of municipal connections into the great discourses of world order.

As municipal connections became systematically organised, they were also closely connected with those two great worldwide utopian visions, pacifism and the 'organisational internationalism' detected and described by Anne Rasmussen. The to-ing and fro-ing of municipal diplomacy among British, French and German municipalities reveals that one of the participants' motives – not dissimilar to that of the great American foundations mentioned above – was a desire to use municipalities and their activities as a way of bypassing the nation state and fostering mutual understanding among peoples at grass-roots level.<sup>69</sup> 'Peace through municipalism' was explicitly evoked in a number of statements of principle, in toasts at congresses, in the pronouncements of notable associations such as the UIV/IULA, in solemn declarations during twinning ceremonies – but it was no mere ceremonial clap-trap. It also inspired many committed municipalists both before and after the First World War. This pacifism was one of the impulses that produced the Union Internationale des Villes under the auspices of internationalists with a zest for organisation, such as Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine (who was a pivot of the Interparliamentary Union and the International Peace Bureau and received the Nobel Peace Prize). As Gaspari emphasises in this volume, Otlet's presence at the first Congress, the friendship and collaboration binding Emile Vinck and his two compatriots, the organisational principles adopted by the UIV/IULA (national branches, centralised functions), its stress on producing documentation and making it available, all go to show that municipal connections were part of the drive for what Otlet called '*mondialisation*' or a 'World Federation': a conscious striving towards internationalisation modelled on

<sup>67</sup> For a preliminary overview see Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*.

<sup>68</sup> In Europe, this interest was particularly perceptible in the attempts at 'democratic re-education' brought to bear on German municipal institutions in the aftermath of the Second World War. In both the American and the British-controlled zones, heavy demands were made on German and international municipal organisations. See the article, based on personal experience, by Roger H. Wells (local affairs representative for the US Military Government): 'Foreign government and politics: The revival of German unions of local authorities after World War II', *The American Political Science Review*, 41, 6 (1947), 1182–7.

<sup>69</sup> Gerald Deckart, 'Deutsch-Englische Verständigung. Eine Dartsellung der nicht offiziellen Bemühungen um eine Wiederannäherung der beiden Länder zwischen 1905 und 1914', Ph.D. thesis, University of Munich, 1967; Günter Hollenberg, 'Englisches Interesse am Kaiserreich. Die Attraktivität Preussen-Deutschland für konservative und liberale Kreise in Grossbritannien 1860–1914', Ph.D. thesis, University of Munich, 1971; Hietala, *Services*, 361–81; Saunier, 'Changing the city'.

the success of associations of world leaders in science and culture, under the aegis of a Brussels-based centre from which would come the inspiration and direction of this international civic life.<sup>70</sup> This closeness to the pivots of international organisation, particularly noticeable at a time when municipal connections were becoming more numerous and better organised, emerges again in the attitudes of the UIV/IULA after the Second World War. On the urgings of its American and Dutch members, the Union, along with the great majority of international associations, became an INGO, part of the apparatus of world order. As a consultative element providing expert advice and support to authorities such as the UN, UNESCO, the WHO and other intergovernmental organisations, municipal connections became part of an international sphere of organisation.

The forthcoming unification of the international municipal movement at the Paris 2004 conference (see Gaspari in this issue); the plans and actions of certain European municipalities, or municipal associations, in areas such as the environment or North–South relations;<sup>71</sup> the fact that municipalities were put on a level with national governments at the Habitat II summit in Istanbul in 1996: all these are not just turning-points but part of a lengthy historical development thanks to which municipalities and municipalism have become not a ‘theatre’, subject to the constraints of globalisation, but a constructive element in globalisation: the causal link is not merely ‘top-down’ (the global working on the local) or paradoxical (globalisation existing alongside fragmentation and a resurgence of local interests). That, to me, is what we can gain by taking up the bet on connections, and the articles in this volume are intended to be a contribution towards it.

<sup>70</sup> This centre was to be the *Office Central des Institutions Internationales*, the executive body of the *Union des Associations Internationales* from 1910. On this approach to international organisation, and its rivals, see Rasmussen, *Internationale scientifique*, ch. 5. This stress on world organisation was a major point that drew the attention of the American philanthropic foundations towards the international associations engineered in Brussels and The Hague.

<sup>71</sup> In particular VNG International, a branch of the Union of Dutch Local Authorities which manages, advises on and organises development programmes for Dutch cities, but also works closely with the Dutch Foreign Ministry and the UN.