



SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

SPECIAL ISSUE: CROSSING URBAN LEGAL BOUNDARIES IN NORTHERN EUROPE:  
MERCHANTS AND THE LAW, 1350–1600

# The politics of reciprocity: urban councils and intercity conflict management in Reval (Tallinn) and Lübeck, c. 1470–1570

Christian Manger 

Department of Public Law and Governance, Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands  
Email: [c.manger@tilburguniversity.edu](mailto:c.manger@tilburguniversity.edu)

## Abstract

Ties of trade, credit and family provided the basis for trading networks between Hanseatic towns. They also, however, contained the seed for conflicts over fraud, debt and inheritance. Such disputes between burghers of different Hanseatic cities presented municipal governments with the particular challenge to balance their role as Hanseatic partners with an obligation of externally representing their own burghers. Focusing on relations between the cities of Lübeck and Reval, this article explores the variety of diplomatic strategies and tactics which city councils employed to preserve the political and economic benefits of intercity co-operation.

In the late medieval city, conflict management was among the most prominent duties of the municipal government.<sup>1</sup> Keeping the urban peace was considered crucial to promoting craft and trade, and thus legitimized claims to political authority.<sup>2</sup> However, while the jurisdiction of the council ended at the formal boundaries of the city, its burghers' conflicts did not. On 22 December 1529, for instance, Dirick Scharhar, a merchant from Lübeck, wrote to his magistrates and demanded support in a conflict with his trading partner from Reval, Hinrick Helwich.<sup>3</sup> In particular, he asked the municipality to grant him the arrest of Revalian goods in Lübeck or, otherwise, to release him from his oath as a burgher, so that 'I can seek my justice in other places and by other means.'<sup>4</sup> With this phrase, Scharhar was announcing his

<sup>1</sup>P. Höhn, *Kaufleute in Konflikt. Rechtspluralismus, Kredit und Gewalt im spätmittelalterlichen Lübeck* (Frankfurt and New York, 2020), 115–49; T. Kämpf, *Das Revaler Ratsurteilsbuch. Grundsätze und Regeln des Prozessverfahrens in der frühneuzeitlichen Hansestadt* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2013).

<sup>2</sup>J. Rogge, 'Pax urbana. The use of law for the achievement of political goals', in J.W. Armstrong and E. Frankot (eds.), *Cultures of Law in Urban Northern Europe. Scotland and Its Neighbours, c. 1350 – c. 1650* (Abingdon, 2021), 139–53, at 140; E. Isenmann, 'Gesetzgebung und Gesetzgebungsrecht spätmittelalterlicher deutscher Städte: 1. Teil', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 28 (2001), 1–94.

<sup>3</sup>Tallinna Linnaarhiiv (Tallinn City Archives) (TLA), 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fols. 104r–105v.

<sup>4</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 105v: 'vmme myn recht Jn anderen orden vnde wegen tho soken'.

willingness to seek the help of territorial lords and mercenaries and to escalate the conflict by means of force, if necessary. He justified his requests with the partial and uncooperative stance of Reval's council, which not only had dismissed his accusations of embezzlement without consulting any evidence, but also refused to force Helwich to settle the partnership's accounts in Lübeck according to Hanseatic ordinances. On 1 January 1530, the magistrates of Lübeck copied Scharhar's supplication (*Supplicationsschrifft*) and attached it to a letter of their own in which they validated their burgher's claims and requested the co-operation of their peers in Reval.<sup>5</sup> To avoid a potential escalation of the conflict, they hoped for a written answer as soon as possible so that they and Scharhar would know how to proceed.

The dispute sketched out above is one of legal boundaries. Trade had produced close ties between the inhabitants of the Hanseatic towns of Lübeck and Reval and relations of family, credit and trade led to conflicts around inheritance, debt and fraud.<sup>6</sup> And although the council of Reval administered justice according to the laws of Lübeck and accepted the latter city as its court of appeal, it possessed autonomous jurisdiction.<sup>7</sup> Economic historians have long considered the competing legal orders of medieval Europe as a challenge to premodern long-distance merchants and, in two opposing ways, have tried to explain how traders solved their conflict abroad. One side considers merchants as a driving force behind state formation in an attempt to overcome the fragmentation of law through centralized, sovereign power.<sup>8</sup> The other side ascribes to them a preference for extrajudicial settlements as a means of avoiding costly and slow court cases.<sup>9</sup> Both positions, as Albrecht Cordes and Philipp Höhn have noted, view merchants through the lens of modern economic theory and place them outside of their contemporary cultural and social norms.<sup>10</sup> Rather than settling for one legal forum, they argue, premodern disputants utilized the full scale of legal pluralism to direct the way of conflict in their favour.

Dirick Scharhar's conflict illustrates how individuals employed such different legal forums but also points to another potential cause for frictions: how did urban councils reconcile their burghers' choices with their own claims to managing conflict? Altercations between citizens of different Hanseatic towns, this article argues,

<sup>5</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 106r.

<sup>6</sup>On the networks of family and trade, see C. Jahnke, 'Netzwerke in Handel und Kommunikation an der Wende vom 15. zum 16. Jahrhundert am Beispiel zweier Revaler Kaufleute', University of Kiel habilitation thesis, 2003. On inheritances as a cause for conflict in Baltic cities, see J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'Conflicts about property: ships and inheritances in Danzig and in the Hanse area (15th–16th centuries)', in Armstrong and Frankot (eds.), *Cultures of Law in Urban Northern Europe*, 192–205.

<sup>7</sup>T. Kala, 'Das Geschriebene und das Mündliche: das lübische Recht und die alltägliche Rechtspflege im mittelalterlichen Reval', in A. Cordes (ed.), *Hansisches und hansestädtisches Recht* (Trier, 2008), 91–112.

<sup>8</sup>D.C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>9</sup>A. Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy. Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge, 2006). Representative of the vast amount of literature concerned with mercantile contract enforcement, see O. Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce. The Institutional Foundations of International Trade in the Low Countries, 1250–1650* (Princeton, 2013), 102–40, and the contributions in *Merchants and Commercial Conflicts in Europe, 1250–1600*, special issue of *Continuity and Change*, 32/1 (2017). On the special category of maritime law, see E. Frankot, 'Of Laws of Ships and Shipmen'. *Medieval Maritime Law and Its Practice in Urban Northern Europe* (Edinburgh, 2012).

<sup>10</sup>Höhn, *Kaufleute in Konflikt*, 31–46; A. Cordes and P. Höhn, 'Extra-legal and legal conflict management among long-distance traders (1250–1650)', in H. Pihlajamäki, M.D. Dubber and M. Godfrey (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of European Legal History* (Oxford, 2018), 509–27.

presented a unique challenge to urban councils, as they exposed a discrepancy between the magistrates' different political identities.<sup>11</sup> As urban governments, the councils of Lübeck and Reval legitimized their claims to authority through representing their burghers' interests.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, they were members of the Hanse, and at the core of Hanseatic economic and political thought lay the safeguarding of trade and the preservation of the cities' autonomy through inter-urban collaboration.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while Lübeck's council considered itself obligated to support the claims of its burgher Dirick Scharhar, his request for the confiscation of his opponent's goods could strain relations with Reval. Even worse, his intention to seek help beyond the city's walls threatened to endanger trade in the forms of reprisal and the involvement of princes and nobles.

This article examines how the councils of Lübeck and Reval provided support to burghers involved in conflicts that crossed the two towns' legal boundaries while at the same time maintaining amicable relations with each other. Altercations between the inhabitants of Hanseatic cities, I argue, required magistrates to engage in a particular form of intercity diplomacy due to the shared notion of a Hanseatic common good. Since this undertaking requires analysing the *process* of conflicts, I will draw on the application of conflict management as a concept introduced to Hanseatic legal and economic history by Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz. Rather than uniquely focusing on *how* and *whether* conflicts were resolved, she suggests, it is also fruitful to pay attention to tactics of prevention, escalation, de-escalation or the maintenance of the status quo.<sup>14</sup> This approach corresponds well with the findings of several recent studies of late medieval urban conflict in England, the Low Countries and Italy which have demonstrated that peace as understood by municipalities and citizens did not imply the absence of conflict, but rather its containment to avoid a

<sup>11</sup>Recent discussion has focused predominantly on merchants handling conflicts in foreign regions and non-Hanseatic towns; see K. Baur, *Freunde und Feinde: Niederdeutsche, Dänen und die Hanse im Spätmittelalter (1376–1513)* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2018); A. Wijffels, 'Krieg, Diplomatie und Recht: Die englisch-hansischen Konflikte 1468–1603', in A. Cordes and A.M. Auer (eds.), *Mit Freundschaft oder mit Recht? Inner- und außergerichtliche Alternativen zur kontroversen Streitentscheidung im 15.–19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2015), 85–100; A. Cordes, 'Die Erwartungen mittelalterlicher Kaufleute an Gerichtsverfahren: hansische Privilegien als Indikator', in A. Cordes and S. Dauchy (eds.), *Eine Grenze in Bewegung: Private und öffentliche Konfliktlösung im Handels- und Seerecht* (Munich, 2013), 39–64; J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, *Traders, Ties and Tensions. The Interaction of Lübeckers, Overijsslers and Hollanders in Late Medieval Bergen* (Hilversum, 2008).

<sup>12</sup>E. Pitz, *Bürgerreinigung und Städteeinung. Studien zur Verfassungsgeschichte der Hansestädte und der deutschen Hanse* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2001), 312–13; E. Isenmann, 'The notion of the common good, the concept of politics, and practical policies in late medieval and early modern German cities', in E. Lecuppre-Desjardin and A.-L. Van Bruaene (eds.), *De bono communi. The Discourse and Practice of the Common Good in the European City (13th–16th c.)* (Turnhout, 2010), 107–48, at 130–45.

<sup>13</sup>R. Hammel-Kiesow, 'Die Politik des Hansetags. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen gemeinsamer Politik am Beispiel des Nordatlantikhandels', in R. Hammel-Kiesow and S. Selzer (eds.), *Hansischer Handel im Strukturwandel* (Trier, 2016), 183–208; S. Jenks, 'Friedensvorstellungen der Hanse (1356–1474)', in J. Fried (ed.), *Träger und Instrumentarien des Friedens im hohen und späten Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1996), 405–39. On the Hanse in general, see R. Hammel-Kiesow, *Die Hanse. Fünfte aktualisierte Auflage* (Munich, 2014); J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'The Hanse in medieval and early modern Europe: an introduction', in J. Wubs-Mrozewicz and S. Jenks (eds.), *The Hanse in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2013), 1–35.

<sup>14</sup>J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'Conflict management and interdisciplinary history. Presentation of a new project and an analytical model', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*, 15 (2018), 89–107, at 102–3.

major disruption of the political order.<sup>15</sup> As the article will show, Hanseatic city councils were indeed much more concerned with preventing, containing and de-escalating conflict than in finding quick resolutions. To bridge legal boundaries, they employed practices of intercity diplomacy which were based on common political thought, specifically the notion of reciprocity.

As a first step, I will explain how practices of arrest and reprisal in the Baltic in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries influenced the decision-making of urban councils, as these posed a constant danger not only to the security of trade but also to the autonomy of urban jurisdiction.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, as the second section will demonstrate, councils developed different tactics of conflict management, mainly aimed at limiting or at least controlling altercations between their burghers. To reconcile their responsibilities as an urban government with their duties towards their Hanseatic peers, the magistrates of Lübeck and Reval employed measures of law and intercity diplomacy. In the final section, I will suggest that these measures rested on a common ideological basis. Concentrating on a specific form of diplomatic correspondence – intercessions and supplications (*vorbede/vorsprake* and *supplication*) – I argue that the councils' conflict management was based on a common Hanseatic notion of political reciprocity. Due to the significance of intercity diplomacy in crossing legal boundaries, the main source base for this article is not provided by legal records but by the correspondence between the councils of Reval and Lübeck, mainly in the form of the collected incoming letters in the City Archive of Tallinn for the years c. 1470–1570.<sup>17</sup> The number of letters preserved in this collection is unusually high in comparison to other urban archives in the Baltic and can thus provide insight into a broader urban culture of writing and conflict management.

## The dynamics of conflict

For medieval merchants, options of conflict management included seizures and the – often carefully dosed – use of violence. Conflicting parties in Hanseatic cities thus requested that their town council arrest their opponent's goods or enforce their interests on their own by means of reprisal.<sup>18</sup> Both options entailed a considerable risk of collateral damage and larger-scale escalation. The council's permission to arrest the goods of one of the disputants could, in an act of collective liability, lead to

<sup>15</sup>L. Caravaggi, 'Keeping the peace in a late-medieval polity. Conflict and collaboration in Bologna in the age of Dante (13th–14th centuries)', University of Oxford Ph.D. thesis, 2020; C.D. Liddy, *Contesting the City. The Politics of Citizenship in English Towns, 1250–1350* (Oxford, 2017), 7–17; P. Lantschner, *The Logic of Political Conflict in Medieval Cities. Italy and the Southern Low Countries, 1370–1440* (Oxford, 2015), 1–10.

<sup>16</sup>Ester Zoomer's contribution to this special issue examines similar frictions between the Hanseatic *Kontor's* ambition to contain and control conflicts and the tactics employed by Hanseatic merchants in non-Hanseatic cities.

<sup>17</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/II–XIV. The respective but less substantial collection of letters from Reval to Lübeck is stored in the Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck (Lübeck City Archives) (AHL), ASA Externa, Livonica.

<sup>18</sup>On the dynamics of maritime violence in the Baltic, see G. Rohmann, 'Jenseits von Piraterie und Kaperfahrt. Für einen Paradigmenwechsel in der Geschichte der Gewalt im maritimen Spätmittelalter', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 304 (2017), 1–49. A European perspective is provided by the contributions in T. Heebøll-Holm, P. Höhn and G. Rohmann (eds.), *Merchants, Pirates and Smugglers. Criminalization, Economics, and the Transformation of the Maritime World (1200–1600)* (Frankfurt and New York, 2019).

the indiscriminate confiscation of merchandise from the opponent's town.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the confiscation of each party's wares might only amplify the mutual contempt as, for instance, in the dispute around the inheritance of Reval's burgher Jasper Bomhower in 1536.<sup>20</sup> While such measures strained intercity relations, they at least to some extent took place under the control of the council. However, when parties announced their intention to 'seek justice in other places and by other means', they threatened to obviate this control and find allies outside the city walls.<sup>21</sup> Burghers turned to kings, princes and local gentry who provided support in the form of letters of reprisal and allowed them to recruit mercenaries and sell prizes in their harbours.<sup>22</sup> As the ships captured in these conflicts usually carried the goods of multiple merchants and towns, collateral damage was a common occurrence. 'Hostile ship shall make hostile goods', a privateering order from Bremen in 1446 declared, and the phrase was still referred to as 'maritime law of old custom' in Lübeck as late as 1539.<sup>23</sup> Especially when the burghers' disputes became intertwined with large-scale conflicts, the fallout could seriously disrupt trade in the Baltic. In the 1480s, for example, the political ambitions of the bailiff of Gotland made him a popular enforcer of private interests in conflicts between Hanseatic burghers. Not only did he capture several merchant ships, but the constant threat caused traders in Lübeck and Reval to hire expensive security for their merchandise and ships.<sup>24</sup>

Councils were highly aware of the potential fallout of confiscations and reprisal. 'Thus, it usually happens that when your goods are confiscated...those of our [burghers] not long after go missing', Lübeck's council complained about arrests

<sup>19</sup>On the mechanisms of confiscation, see Cordes and Höhn, 'Extra-legal and legal conflict management', 525; G. Rohmann, 'Wegnehmen, Verhandeln, Erstaten. Politischer Alltag im Hanseraum um 1400', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 9 (2014), 574–85, at 583. A similar conflict between protecting its burghers' property rights and the city's economy was faced by the town council of fourteenth-century Marseilles which chose to suspend letters of marque against foreigners when the risk of having their goods confiscated discouraged merchants from entering the city. See C. Beck, 'Common good and private justice: letters of marque and the *utilitas publica* in fourteenth-century Marseilles', *Journal of Medieval History*, 41 (2015), 88–106.

<sup>20</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/X, fols. 40v and 42r. For a similar case between Reval and Danzig, see TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 9r.

<sup>21</sup>See n. 4. Similar announcements can be found in AHL, ASA Externa, Livonia 104; TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IV, fols. 14r, 16r and 32r; VI, fol. 62r; VIII, fol. 105v; IX, fols. 40r and 69r; XI, fol. 29r–v; XII, fols. 8r–9r, 11r–12r, 40r–43r.

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, the letter of reprisal issued by the duke of Mecklenburg for Gottschalck Remlingrad in 1538: AHL, ASA, Externa, Anglicana, 702, fols. 21r–22v. Letters of marque were, however, far less established in the Baltic than in the Mediterranean and Western Europe; see Rohmann, 'Jenseits von Piraterie', 25. For the development in the European north-west, see L. Sicking and J. Wink, 'Reprisal and diplomacy: conflict resolution within the context of Anglo-Dutch commercial relations c. 1300 – c. 1415', *Comparative Legal History*, 5 (2017), 53–71.

<sup>23</sup>A.E. Hofmeister and A. Röpcke (eds.), *Bremisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. VII (Bremen, 1993), no. 389, p. 397, 'Ok scal vigende bodeme vigende gud maken.' AHL, ASA Externa, Anglicana, 702, fol. 28, 'alt herbracht Seerecht'. On the concept of neutrality, see J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'Neutrality before Grotius: a city, a state and seven salt ships in the Baltic (1564–1567)', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 22 (2018), 446–74.

<sup>24</sup>*Hansisches Urkundenbuch (HUB)*, vol. X, ed. W. Stein (Leipzig, 1907), nos. 23 and 1224; TLA.230–1, B.B.40/III, fols. 36r, 81r and 82r.

between their burghers in a letter to Reval in 1492.<sup>25</sup> Magistrates could refuse to approve confiscations but, as Dirick Scharhar's letter has shown, in doing so they risked conflicting parties seeking support outside the city, undermining their authority and escalating the conflict beyond their control.<sup>26</sup> To limit their burghers' choices, Hanseatic town councils sought to criminalize reprisal as piracy – an approach shared with political authorities all over late medieval Europe.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the library of Lübeck's council contained a copy of Bartolus de Saxoferrato's *De Represaliis* which designed clear conditions for the legitimacy of reprisal. Only when plaintiffs had suffered protraction or denial of justice (*justitia denegata*) and had exhausted the full course of appeal, might they request reprisal from the proper authority.<sup>28</sup> In the sixteenth century, burghers of Lübeck and Reval appear to have been familiar with this concept to some degree since they justified the involvement of outside forces with claims of refused justice.<sup>29</sup> In practice, however, the legitimacy of reprisal remained something to be negotiated in each individual case. Claims to have suffered denial of justice were difficult to disprove and rulers like Swedish King Gustav Vasa (1523–60) considered it a limitation of their sovereign power when an urban council contested their right to intervene on behalf of a petitioner.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, urban magistrates themselves acted far from consistently, branding opponents as pirates while granting their own burghers arrests and reprisals. Still in 1539, for instance, Lübeck's syndic Johan Rudel defended the legitimacy of prize-taking based on customary practice against a legal opinion by Leipzig's faculty of law.<sup>31</sup> We have to keep in mind that councillors themselves were merchants and were thus probably not too keen to limit their own options of conflict management. In 1544, for example, Bodt Schroder was burgo-master of Reval when he threatened to give his case 'into other people's hands', exemplifying the potential conflict between self-interest and common good faced by the members of the municipal government.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IV, fol. 19r, 'So gerbort id gemeynliken dat der Juwen gudern werden beslagen dat der vnsen dar nicht verne plegen afftowesende des de vnse denne ock schaden nemen.'

<sup>26</sup>For a refusal of arrest, see TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VI, fol. 37r.

<sup>27</sup>Rohmann, 'Jenseits von Piraterie', 32–3; T. Heebøll-Holm, P. Höhn and G. Rohmann, 'Introduction', in Heebøll-Holm, Höhn and Rohmann (eds.), *Merchants, Pirates and Smugglers*, 9–30.

<sup>28</sup>P.C. Van den Brande, "Remedium repraesalium": the medieval and early modern practice and theory of reprisal within the just war doctrine', *Grotiana*, 41 (2020), 305–29, at 313. On the terminology and the fluid borders between denial and protraction of justice in the Holy Roman Empire, see P. Oestmann, 'Rechtsverweigerung im Alten Reich', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abteilung*, 127 (2010), 51–141, at 57–60. For the inventory of Lübeck's library, see U. Simon and R. Schweitzer, 'Boeke, gude unde böse...'. Die Bibliothek des Lübecker Syndikus Simon Batz von Homburg. Rekonstruktionsversuch anhand seines Testaments und der Nachweis aus dem Bestand der ehemaligen Ratsbibliothek in der Stadtbibliothek Lübeck', in R. Hammel-Kiesow and M. Hundt (eds.), *Das Gedächtnis der Hansestadt Lübeck. Festschrift für Antjekathrin Graßmann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Lübeck, 2005), 127–58, at 143.

<sup>29</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IV, fol. 14r; VI, fol. 15r; VIII, fols. 63r–64v; IX, fols. 3r–4r; TLA 230–1, A.a.21, fol. 139r–v. A Hanseatic diet in 1489 explicitly prohibited burghers to involve nobles and lords in conflicts with other Hansards as long as they had 'not been denied justice'. *Hanserecesse* (HR), ser. 2, vol. III, ed. G. von der Ropp (Leipzig, 1881), no. 160 §344, 'in deme rechtes is nicht geweygert'.

<sup>30</sup>*Konung Gustaf den förstes registratur (1546–1547)*, vol. XVIII, ed. V. Granlund (Stockholm, 1900), 160–2. For Reval's claims to jurisdiction, see TLA 230–1, A.a.21, fols. 155r and 237v.

<sup>31</sup>AHL, ASA Externa, Anglicana 702, fol. 26r.

<sup>32</sup>AHL, ASA Externa, Livonica 104, 'Damith ich obgedachten vorsegelden kopbreff in frombde hande tho bringende nicht vororsacht werde.'

To the council, inter-urban disputes remained a regular threat to the judicial autonomy of the city but also to trade and shipping far into the sixteenth century. Even if only a small number of conflicts actually escalated to the extent of a transregional crisis, each individual dispute contained the *possibility* of such an escalation and councils thus reminded each other of the 'further hinderance, work and unnecessary costs' that could arise from them if left disregarded.<sup>33</sup> Since law alone did not provide a reliable prevention of escalation, councils instead focused on prevention, de-escalation and protraction of conflicts through other means.

### Managing conflicts

One way of preventing the spread of conflict was to confine it to a single city. It speaks to the shared awareness of this issue that urban municipalities addressed it on a Hanseatic level. When an influential diet of towns in 1447 collected ordinances to design a set of common rules for the Hanse, the list included paragraphs on inter-urban conflicts.<sup>34</sup> These articles stated that debts should only be claimed before urban courts, and debtors were prohibited from resettling in another city.<sup>35</sup> If a merchant died abroad, the respective city council was to collect the deceased's possessions and safeguard them in order to first hear and verify all claims and thus avoid later demands and lawsuits.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the ordinances instructed merchants to dissolve their partnerships in the same city in which they had begun them.<sup>37</sup> Since Hanseatic trading partnerships were intended to last over months and years, the *rekenshop*, the settlement of accounts in which partners were supposed to compare ledgers, provided a common cause for conflict.<sup>38</sup> The fact that this paragraph proved to be one of the very few Hanseatic regulations referred to by individual merchants in practice attests to the centrality of the issue.<sup>39</sup> In sum, the diet's rulings addressed the inter-urban character of conflicts: disputes should be made the responsibility of a single council or at least be contained to a single location. Hanseatic norm and merchant practice, however, could differ substantially, as Ester Zoomer in this issue also demonstrates for conflicts in non-Hanseatic cities. The legislative and executive powers of Hanseatic diets were limited and decisions about appliance and enforcement rested with the individual city.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IV, fol. 14r, 'dar vth forder kroth arbeitd vnde vnnute koste mochten erwassen'. For other examples, see TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IV, fols. 14r, 33r and 83r; VI, fol. 10r; VIII, fol. 106r. For conflicts escalating on a large scale, see G.A. Donner, *Striden om arvet efter köpmannen Jakob Frese, 1455–1510* (Helsingfors, 1930); Höhn, 'Pluralismus statt Homogenität', 277–82; C. Manger, 'Behind the scenes: urban secretaries as managers of legal and diplomatic conflicts in the Baltic region, c. 1470–1540', *Journal of Medieval History*, 48 (2022), 571–86, at 575–9.

<sup>34</sup> HR, ser. 2, vol. III, no. 288 §21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, §§39 and 48.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, §66.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, §41.

<sup>38</sup> On the practices of Hanseatic trade, see A. Cordes, *Spätmittelalterlicher Gesellschaftshandel im Hanse-raum* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> TLA 230–1, B.B.40/V, fols. 4r–5r; VI, fol. 15r; VII, fol. 24r; VIII, fol. 89r; IX, fols. 3r–4r, 9r–10r; XI, fol. 11v; XII, fols. 4r–7r.

<sup>40</sup> A. Huang and U. Kypta, 'Ein neues Haus auf altem Fundament. Neue Trends in der Hanseforschung und die Nutzbarkeit der Rezessionen', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 129 (2011), 213–29, at 218–21; U. Schäfer, 'Hanserezeesse als Quelle hansischen Recht', in Cordes (ed.), *Hansisches und hansestädtisches Recht*, 1–14. At

Efforts aimed at prevention and containment, therefore, also marked the co-operation between the magistrates of Reval and Lübeck independently of Hanseatic institutions. Councils provided burghers with letters of procuration which verified their claims to inheritances and debts and invested their carriers with the right to collect the respective goods and money abroad.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in so-called *toversichtsbrefen* (letters of expectation), councils gave guarantees to not support any rivalling or additional demands to their burghers' claims.<sup>42</sup> This guarantee was particularly significant as contesting claims of families, trading partners and creditors were a source of intricate conflict, especially when merchants died abroad.<sup>43</sup> On the one hand, the significance of these documents can be inferred from the council's decision not only to record them in town books but also to preserve the original letters in their archives, even after matters had apparently been settled.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, individual cases can give us insight into the importance councils attached to these guarantees. For example, after the death of Jacob Vrese, a wealthy merchant and councillor of Reval, in 1455, the city's council safeguarded his inheritance and led a 55-year-long conflict against the different heirs in the cities of Stockholm and Åbo (Turku) over the lack of 'guarantees against additional claims'.<sup>45</sup> This conflict was an extreme case, but it illustrates the lengths a city's governing body was willing to go to secure themselves against dangerous precedents and the contingency of future claims.

While these measures show an attempt by councils to monopolize the conflict management of their burghers, in practice parties attempted to resolve their disagreements on their own before turning to official institutions. In their reports to the council, burghers explained having attempted to resolve disputes 'orally through my friends but also by way of my letters sent', or having sent their apprentices and trading partners to negotiate a resolution.<sup>46</sup> Councils accepted these practices, but over the course of the fifteenth century they began to institutionalize and control mediation and arbitration as well. In Lübeck and Reval, magistrates assigned their members as arbiters and mediators, and the cities' courts urged conflicting parties to agree to an

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least for the cities of Lübeck and Reval, the ordinances of 1447 mostly put into writing already existing customs or adopted paragraphs of the town law of Lübeck, W. Ebel, *Lübisches Recht. Erster Band* (Lübeck, 1971), 403.

<sup>41</sup>Just for the years 1515–20, see TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VI, fols. 57r, 60r, 65r, 74r; VII, fols. 3r, 5r, 6r, 7r, 8r, 11r, 42r, 45r, 46r, 54r, 59r, 60r, 72r, 75r, 84r and 87r. On letters of procuration, see Ulla Kypta's contribution in this special issue.

<sup>42</sup>H. von Seggern, *Quellenkunde als Methode: Zum Aussagewert der Lübecker Niederstadtbücher des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2016), 172–81.

<sup>43</sup>Such conflict, for instance, stemmed from the deaths of Hans Krusebecker (1516) and Hans Karell (1532). TLA 230–1, B.B.40/ VII, fol. 7r; IX, fol. 34r.

<sup>44</sup>For the archive as the result of conscious decision-making, see M. Mostert and A. Adamska, 'Introduction', in M. Mostert and A. Adamska (eds.), *Writing and the Administration of Medieval Towns: Medieval Urban Literacy I* (Turnhout, 2014), 1–10, at 6; R.C. Head, *Making Archives in Early Modern Europe. Proof, Information, and Political Record-Keeping, 1400–1700* (Cambridge, 2019), 10–11.

<sup>45</sup>HUB, vol. X, no. 1224, p. 736, 'soverne de unsen van der stad Stoxholme ofte Abo vorsekeringe vor namaninge irlangen mogen'; *Finlands medeltidsurkunder*, vol. V, ed. R. Hausen (Helsingfors, 1928), no. 3958.

<sup>46</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 59v, 'durch myne frunde munthlick vnnd sust vormyddelst mynenn thogeschicktenn breven'. See also J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'The late medieval and early modern Hanse as an institution of conflict management', *Continuity and Change*, 32 (2017), 59–84, at 67; Baur, *Freunde und Feinde*, 139.

amicable settlement before filing a suit.<sup>47</sup> These provisions strengthened the council as an institution of conflict management and decreased the potential for escalation. Ultimately, however, they did not solve the issues of jurisdiction and enforcement. Like court cases, mediation and arbitration required both parties to be present in the same location – in person or represented by a *procurator* – as well as willing to make concessions.<sup>48</sup> However, burghers like Hinrick Helwich refused to make the long journey between Lübeck and Reval because of the costs and dangers, sickness or simply because they did not consider themselves accountable.<sup>49</sup>

When conflicts stalled and communication between parties stopped or became deadlocked, burghers finally requested their council's intervention in their opponent's city. In March 1526, Hans Wegener, a merchant from Lübeck, complained that his former apprentice had become a burgher of Reval and after repeated requests over a period of three years still had not paid him out according to their contract.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Laurens Isermann in 1538 lamented that his partner Herman Boleman had stalled his representative in Reval for nearly a year, while Boleman's own 'servant who daily walks the streets of Lübeck in the open, does not bother at all to finally give me notice from his master' as regards his open debts.<sup>51</sup> Around 1500, the councils of Lübeck and Reval developed a particular form of correspondence to address such demands for intervention in other towns. As a first step, a party in dispute handed in a written supplication to his or her own council which usually encompassed a request for support and intervention as well as an account of the conflict's history. At times, conflicting parties also directed their accusations against their opponent's council itself, when they considered it acting in a biased way or denying them justice in favour of its own burghers.<sup>52</sup> Supplications were not meant for internal use but to be copied and forwarded to the opponent's municipality, attached to a letter of intercession (*vorbede/vorsprake*).<sup>53</sup> These missives usually did not aim to immediately resolve disputes but to break the deadlock between parties by renewing a dialogue, or to facilitate a solution mediated by their council. The stress lay on swift communication

<sup>47</sup>Kämpf, *Ratsurteilsbuch*, 96–9; Höhn, *Kaufleute in Konflikt*, 137–43.

<sup>48</sup>H. von Seggern, 'Zur Tätigkeit der Prokuratoren vor dem Lübecker Rat gegen Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 131 (2013), 195–227. See also the contribution by Ulla Kypta in this special issue.

<sup>49</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/V, fol. 81; XI, fols. 98r–99r; B.B.48/VII, fol. 301v.

<sup>50</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 59v.

<sup>51</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/XI, fol. 9v, 'synenn dener hir bynnen lubeck dagelichs apennbar vp der strathen gande, de sick mith alle nichts befittet, my vann sines herenn wegenn entlick boschedt tho doende'.

<sup>52</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/X, fol. 46r.

<sup>53</sup>The first forwarded supplication preserved in the archive of Tallinn dates from 1489 (TLA 230–1, B.B.40/III, fol. 102r–v), but only from 1501 on do we observe these documents becoming a regular part of the correspondence. TLA 230–1, B.B.40/V (1501–10), fols. 4r–6r, 66r–v/76r, 68r–69r, 72r–73r, 81r–82r; VI (1511–15), fols. 7r–8r, 20r/23r, 48r/54r, 61r–62r, 66r–68r; VII (1516–20), fols. 9r–10v, 30r/34r, 47r–50r, 62r–64r; VIII (1521–30), fols. 4r, 26r–27r, 31r–v/34r, 32r–33v, 59r–62r, 63r–65r, 79r–80v, 99r–101r, 104r–106r; IX (1531–4), fols. 2r–4r, 8r–9v, 22r–24r, 27r–28r, 33r–34v, 39r–40v, 44r–46v, 56r–58r, 66r–67v, 68r–70r, 77r–78v, 79r–80r; X (1535–7), fols. 36r/40r–42v, 45r–v/61r, 48r–50r; XI (1538–41), fols. 1r–3r, 4r–6r, 9r–13r, 15r–17v, 29r–31r, 34r–36r, 39r–41r, 52r–v/55r, 57r–59r, 78r–80r, 98r–100r; XII (1542–5), fols. 4r–7r, 8r–10r, 11r–13r, 19r–21r, 36r–38r, 40r–44r, 53r–56r, 58r–61r, 62r–64r/68r, 76r–78r, 90r–92r; XIII (1546–50), fols. 22r–24v, 28r–30r, 34r–35v, 65r–66v; XIV (1551–60), fols. 22r–25v, 48r–49v, 114r–116r, 129r–132r, 156r–158v, 168r–171r, 174r–177r, 179r–181v, 184r/189r–190r, 205r–208r. Some intercessions referred to supplications which are now lost, pointing at the incompleteness of the collection. TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 42r; IX, fol. 41r; X, fol. 70r; XII, fol. 45r; XIII, fols. 39r, 74r; XIV, fols. 6r, 40r, 100r, 133r–136r, 186r, 203r–204r.

so that the conflict would not cause further damage or escalation and, thus, in their letters councillors and burgomasters urged their peers to ‘answer us on behalf of our [burghers]...with the first [ships]’ or admonish their respective burgher earnestly to appear before the court to settle accounts as quickly as possible.<sup>54</sup>

The terminology of intercessions and supplications evokes associations with the petitions of the same name, in which subjects requested mercy from authorities all over Europe.<sup>55</sup> Other than these bottom-up pleas, however, the cities’ practice did not imply a hierarchy but remained a communication between equals. And although intercessions could refer to the legal grounds for the supplicants’ claims, they were themselves neither based on law nor did they solve the aforementioned issues of conflicting jurisdiction.<sup>56</sup> Still, supplicants like Lübeck’s burgher Magnus Bruns asked explicitly to forward their writings and in the council’s ‘attached letter amicably request [Reval’s councillors] to act accordingly in this matter as they undoubtedly will do’.<sup>57</sup> Burghers consciously made use of supplications and – aware of the procedure – invested trust in the intervention of their magistrates. This use of intercessions and supplications, I will argue in the following section, relied on urban political thought and a shared notion of Hanseatic reciprocity.

### A politics of reciprocity

When the Hanse over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had turned into a political association of towns, the urban elites who constituted its formal political echelon had transferred elements of urban political thought to the Hanse as a whole. At its centre stood the shared notion of a Hanseatic common good (*ghemene beste*), which encompassed the maintenance of the cities’ privileges abroad, the safety of the travelling merchant and the autonomy of the cities.<sup>58</sup> Just like the common good of the city, the

<sup>54</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fol. 39r, ‘Darumme bidden wy fruntlikes vlites Jwe Er W willen vnns tho behoff der vnsenn Wo sie Jn orer Jnliggenden schrifft bidden mit den ersten wedderumme beantworden.’

<sup>55</sup>A. Würgler, ‘Bitten und Begehren: Suppliken und Gravamina in der deutschsprachigen Frühneuzeitforschung’, in C. Nubola and A. Würgler (eds.), *Bittschriften und Gravamina. Politik, Verwaltung und Justiz in Europa (14.–18. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin, 2005), 17–52; G. Dodd and S. Petit-Renaud, ‘Grace and favour: the petition and its mechanisms’, in C.D. Fletcher, J.-P. Genet and J.L. Watts (eds.), *Government and Political Life in England and France, c. 1300 – c. 1500* (Cambridge, 2015), 240–78.

<sup>56</sup>Intercessions referred to Hanseatic ordinances or the law of Lübeck when arguing for the legitimacy of the supplicants’ cases. TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VI, fol. 15r; VII, fol. 50r; XI, fols. 55r, 59r and 80r.

<sup>57</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/V, fols. 4v–5r, ‘vnde durch Juwer Ersamheyt bischryffte fruntlick bidden sick in dusser sake so se doch vngetwivelt woll don werden geborlick ertogen’.

<sup>58</sup>For a similar approach to a Hanseatic common good in conflict management, see the contribution by Ester Zoomer in this special issue. Despite its ubiquity in Hanseatic communication, the common good in the political language and thought of the Hanse has been neglected by historians. For an important first step, see P. Höhn, ‘Entscheidungsfindung und Entscheidungsvermeidung in der Hanse. Das Beispiel der Sunddurchfahrt um 1440’, in W.E. Wagner (ed.), *Entscheidungsfindung in spätmittelalterlichen Gemeinschaften* (Göttingen, 2022), 91–137; and P. Höhn, ‘La “lutte contre les pirates” comme paradigme. Conflit, concurrence et criminalisation à Lübeck et dans le commerce nord-européen aux XVe et XVIe siècles’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 77 (2022), 293–327. On the origins of Hanseatic political thought and terminology, see also T. Boestad, *Pour le profit du commun marchand. La genèse de la Hanse (XIIe siècle – milieu du XIVe siècle)* (Geneva, 2022), in particular 319–69. On the common good in political associative culture, see D. Hardy, *Associative Political Culture in the Holy Roman Empire. Upper Germany, 1346–1521* (Oxford, 2018), 150–3. On the centrality of the common good for political thought in premodernity, see the contributions collected in Lecuppre-Desjardin and Van Bruaene (eds.), *De bono communi*; H. Münkler and H. Blum (eds.), *Gemeinwohl und Gemeinnutz. Historische Semantiken politischer Leitbegriffe* (Berlin, 2001).

common good of the Hanse was an object of constant negotiation, as in practice the interests of individual towns proved hardly compatible.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, as an overarching ideal, it provided Hanseatic city councils with a familiar common language of diplomacy and a constant reminder of the need to co-operate if they wanted to compete with kings, princes and states. Even though intercessions hardly included any direct references to the Hanse, they were infused with this idea of intercity co-operation.

When Lübeck's councillors forwarded supplications, they expected their peers' co-operation since they, in return, 'would be willingly indebted to you'.<sup>60</sup> Though varying in length and content, nearly all letters of intercession and *tovorsicht* that arrived in Reval ended with this promise of debt (*boschulden*) and reciprocity. In a missive from 1528, Lübeck's council made the reciprocal relation even clearer: Reval's councillors might act the same 'as you would like us to act and proceed'.<sup>61</sup> While their frequent use makes it tempting to frame the promise of indebtedness as rhetorical ornamentation, Michael Jucker has suggested that we should avoid passing over elements like forms of address in letters as 'empty formulas'. In the diplomatic relations between Swiss cities, he argued, 'the reciprocal offer of service in interstate relationships worked to reduce conflict and to build trust'.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz has pointed out that constant affirmation of mutual trust in the language of Hanseatic communication was a condition for managing conflict between members of the Hanse, be it economic, political or juridical.<sup>63</sup> The language of debt used in the letters of intercession made clear that this was no unconditional trust built on common properties and interests alone but the result of constant practice and fostering.<sup>64</sup> Considering the many conflicts between their burghers, the addressed council had to expect facing a similar situation in the near future.

The mutual assurance of political values or the exchange of intercessions alone, however, could not provide an easy solution to conflicts, as reciprocity also affected the relation between urban governments and their burghers. The former declared that they could not refuse their citizens' requests to intervene in disputes and the latter promised that they were 'obligated, willing and tireless to earn' and repay the intercession on their behalf.<sup>65</sup> In conflicts between burghers of different cities, this

<sup>59</sup>Hammel-Kiesow, 'Politik des Hansetags', 202–6.

<sup>60</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 62r.

<sup>61</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VII, fol. 64r, 'dar Jnne Juwe Er. der gestalt alsz se Jm geliken van vns hebbenn willen, handelen vnnd vortfaren werden'. On the central role of reciprocity in sociation, see O.G. Oexle, 'Konflikt und Konsens. Über gemeinschaftsrelevantes Handeln in der vormodernen Gesellschaft', in Münkler and Blum (eds.), *Gemeinwohl und Gemeinsinn*, 65–83, at 71–2; M. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago, 1972), 219–20.

<sup>62</sup>M. Jucker, 'Trust and mistrust in letters: late medieval diplomacy and its communication practice', in P. Schulte, M. Mostert and I. van Renswoude (eds.), *Strategies of Writing. Studies on Text and Trust in the Middle Ages: Papers from 'Trust in Writing in the Middle Ages'* (Turnhout, 2008), 213–36, at 232–3. See also J. Dumolyn, 'Urban ideologies in later medieval Flanders: towards a grid of analysis', in A. Gamberini, J.-P. Genet and A. Zorzi (eds.), *The Languages of Political Society. Western Europe, 14th–17th Centuries* (Milan, 2011), 69–96, at 81–2.

<sup>63</sup>J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'The concept of language of trust and trustworthiness: (why) history matters', *Journal of Trust Research*, 10 (2020), 91–107, at 96–100.

<sup>64</sup>For criticism on a naive concept of trust, see I. Forrest and A. Haour, 'Trust in long-distance relationships, 1000–1600 CE', *Past & Present*, 238/Suppl. 13 (2018), 190–213.

<sup>65</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 61r, 'Dath bynn yck vmme Jwe Ge: vnnd Erb: W: myt vnderdenigen gehorsam thouordenenn plichtich, wyllich, vnnd vnuordraten.' For further examples, see TLA 230–1, B.B.40/X, fol. 35r; XI, fols. 50r and 59r.

obligation applied to both councils which, therefore, could not just force their subjects to comply with the wishes of the respective opponent. Instead, they answered the incoming supplications and intercessions with counter-intercessions and counter-supplications.<sup>66</sup> While not all of these answers were constructive – some parties used supplication to accuse each other of lies and insults – a dialogue mediated by the magistrates took place.<sup>67</sup> The exchange of intercessions did not resolve the conflicts immediately but maintained the peace and provoked a break of the dead-locked state of non-communication, allowing the council to fulfil the duties of inter-urban co-operation and still represent its own burghers' interests.

If revived communication failed to resolve the conflict and rather extended it, intercessions provided magistrates with an indirect option of enforcement. By choosing to forward supplications which contained threats like that of Dirick Scharhar, a council invested them with an implied institutional backing and took responsibility for their content. To legitimate this provocation and violation of inter-urban solidarity, the councils of Lübeck and Reval accused one another of failing to co-operate or respond to intercession, and thus, of a breach of reciprocity. In 1531 and 1542, for example, the council of Lübeck sent urgent reminders to answer their letters in order to avoid an escalation.<sup>68</sup> The intercession accompanying Dirick Scharhar's supplication in 1530 warned that Reval's council would have to 'consider that it is not on us or in our power to guarantee safety and Your Honourables will, therefore, see to it that such and other troubles in this matter will be prevented'.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, in 1538, the councillors of Lübeck asked their peers in Reval to finally pressure Herman Bolemann to appear before them in order 'to not give our burgher a reason' to make true threats of arrests or reprisal.<sup>70</sup> Only co-operation according to custom would prevent merchants 'to act in other places and with other means to claim their damages from you...hoping Your Honourables will not let it come that far'.<sup>71</sup> Responsibility, according to these intercessions, lay exclusively with Reval's council, which had failed to act according to reciprocity, violating the Hanseatic common good.

Still, choosing the frame of supplication and intercession left open the continuation of communication and lowered the risk of an immediate and irrevocable escalation. Forwarding confrontational supplications at least left the councils some control over the conflict, while burghers who left the city to seek the support of nobles and mercenaries on their own would have presented a potential threat to all trade. Intercessions always contained another offer of dialogue but the accompanying threats signalled the need for

<sup>66</sup>Due to the different states of archival preservation, usually only Lübeck's side of this exchange has survived but several supplications started by thanking the council for having read or shown the letters of their opponent. See, for instance, TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fol. 3r; X, fols. 40r and 70r; XI, fols. 9r and 36r. For examples of supplications and intercessions from Reval preserved in Lübeck's archive, see AHL, ASA Externa, Livonia 104 and 108, nos. 122–3.

<sup>67</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fol. 9r.

<sup>68</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fols. 5r and 41r; XII, fol. 14r.

<sup>69</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/VIII, fol. 106r, 'hebben Juwe er. toermeten dat denne nicht by vns, noch in vnser macht, fellichs togewerende vnd werden daromme Juwe er: Jn der sache also sehen dat sollichs vnd mer ander widerunge vorbliuen moghe'. See also TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fols. 5r and 56r.

<sup>70</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/XI, fol. 13r, 'vnd dem vnsernn keyne orsake gegeuenn werde, vp de gearresterdenn gudere wyder ym rechte vorth thofarenn'.

<sup>71</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fol. 39r, 'Darmith se nicht vororsaket wurden anders wor vnd Jnn ander weghe (Welck se ores seggendes wol weten tobekamen:) tho Jnforderinge ores schadens tiegen Jwe Er W tohandelen... Vorhappen Jwe Er W werdent darhenn nicht kamen latenn.'

urgency, and made clear that the council considered the supplicant's threats as legitimate. Parties who attempted to bypass the council's conflict management therefore risked punishment. In 1545, for instance, Lübeck's burgher Hermann Sonnenschein boasted of having 60 men under his command, as well as the backing of the Danish king and the duke of Mecklenburg, to reclaim a debt from a Revalian merchant.<sup>72</sup> After Reval's council had sent copies of his announcements to Lübeck, the city's magistrates threatened Sonnenschein with banishment, hoping that their peers in Reval 'in others and such cases against us will remember this and act accordingly'.<sup>73</sup>

Reciprocity constituted an important factor in the attempts of the magistrates to balance the common good of the Hanse with that of the city, by allowing individual conflicting parties to pursue their interest while at the same time reducing the risk of escalation. It speaks to the significance of practices of reciprocity that they even outlasted major political crises. From the 1530s on, economic conflicts strained the relations between Reval and Lübeck, until, finally, the two towns ended up on different sides in the Northern Seven Years' War (1563–70). Furthermore, in the long run, Reval's subjection to the Swedish king in 1561 severed the city's connection to the Hanse.<sup>74</sup> Still, not only did Lübeck's council intervene in the case of Sonnenschein despite major disagreements about the treatment of Hanseatic merchants in Reval, but preliminary samples of later correspondence also suggest that the two councils took up the exchange of intercessions again in the 1570s.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusions

In January 1531, a full year after his last letter in his conflict with Hinrick Helwich, Dirick Scharhar wrote another supplication. He thanked the council of Lübeck for having shown him his opponent's answer and the intercession attached by Reval's magistrate. The letters' content, however, deeply dissatisfied him. When comparing the two parties' supplications, Scharhar complained, one might notice that Helwich had not answered a single accusation and that his words were nothing but 'clouds without rain through which the matter is obscured but never washed clean'.<sup>76</sup> He therefore renewed his accusations and threats of the previous year. Again, the council of Reval answered and continued to defend Helwich's position, claiming that

<sup>72</sup>The communication in the conflict of Sonnenschein is preserved in AHL, ASA Externa, Livonica 88 and 89.

<sup>73</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/XIII, fol. 7r, 'Der thouorsicht J: Er: w: werdenn sollichenn vnnsen fruntlichenn wyllenn, vnnd thoneginghe Jn anderenn, vnnd derghelickenn fellenn, gegenn vnnse weddervmme Jnghe-denck synn, vnnd dermathen erzeigenn, vp dath wy J: er: w: gelick gesynnt, vnnd gemotet, weddervmme sporenn, vnnd befyndenn moghen.' We learn of the threat of banishment through a supplication of Sonnenschein's wife. AHL, ASA Externa, Livonica 89, letter dated 19–08–1545. While we do not possess many sources on execution of such threats, councils appear to have considered banishment a fitting punishment for involving kings and nobles in urban conflicts, see *HR*, ser. 3, vol. II, no. 160 §344.

<sup>74</sup>J. Kivimäe, 'Zwischen Reval und Lübeck. Die Narva-Frage in der Handelspolitik der späten Hansezeit', in J. Sarnowsky (ed.), *'Hansisch' oder 'nicht hansisch'. Das Beispiel der kleinen Städte und Livlands in der Hanse* (Wismar, 2019), 57–74; N. Angermann, 'Die livländischen Städte und die Hanse', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 113 (1995), 111–25, at 124–5.

<sup>75</sup>For a sample of intercessions and supplications post-1570, see TLA 230–1, B.B.40/XV, fols. 25r–27r, 29r–32r, 38r–42r, 43r–46r.

<sup>76</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fol. 3r, 'wolckenn one regen, darmit de sake vordustert wert, vnnd doch nicht reyne gewasket kann werdenn'.

Scharhar's threats went against the association of the common Hanseatic cities (*gemeyne Anse stede voreyniginge*) and he should be punished for disregarding the council's offers of settling the conflict.<sup>77</sup> Despite these mutual threats, in 1533, the council of Lübeck announced they had convinced Scharhar 'under great difficulties' to bring his case before the magistrate of Reval again.<sup>78</sup> Here, the case fades from the councils' correspondence. While it thus remains unclear if the two merchants ever found a solution, their magistrates had avoided an escalation of the conflict.

For the councils of Reval and Lübeck, crossing legal boundaries was part and parcel of their work. The disputes between their subjects around inheritance, debt and trade added complexity to urban conflict management, but the councillors did not perceive them as a fundamental breach of order. While the two towns' magistrates made some attempts at streamlining conflicts along the principles of learned law, most prominently by criminalizing reprisal as piracy, these efforts mainly served as a tactic to avert interventions by kings and princes rather than aspiring to a monopoly on violence. Instead, councils tried to make themselves the central forum of conflict management through intercity diplomacy and co-operation. The shared concept of reciprocity – expressed in terms of indebtedness – allowed them to balance their political identities as urban governments and as members of the Hanse when bridging legal boundaries on behalf of their burghers. The exchange of intercessions and supplications helped to avoid dangerously deadlocked conflicts because ignoring them would have meant the violation of common norms. This also explains why councils could forward their burghers' threats without defying Hanseatic ideas of inter-urban solidarity. Although the council thus succeeded in extending its control over its subjects' conflicts, cases like that of Dirick Scharhar show that conflict management across legal boundaries remained a negotiation between magistrates, their burghers and their peers in other Hanseatic towns.

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<sup>77</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fols. 57r–58r.

<sup>78</sup>TLA 230–1, B.B.40/IX, fol. 56r, 'wowoll mit groter swerrheit'.

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