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A city in the world of cities: Lyon, France. Municipal associations as political resources in the twentieth century

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While contemporary gatherings of city mayors and municipal associations attract media interest, they are usually presented as a “new phenomenon” of the globalization era, even though they are a century old. City networks and associations’ past and present activities are, in fact, far from well known. Too often, the existence of these groups is taken as a proxy for their substance, or a token of urban “response” to internationalization, but their operational machineries, functions and effects have only just begun to be explored.<sup>1</sup> It is true that such an investigation is not easy: historical records are fragmentary and scattered, while contemporary networks’ leaders and staff are not inclined to speak freely about their activities, and tend to repeat the baseline of their mottoes. This chapter will attempt to observe the constraints and cleavages faced by cities’ organizations, through the place and role that a single city has made for itself in their midst. Lyon, France’s “second city”, offers both archival, direct observation and oral interview opportunities to bridge a century of intermunicipal activities, because of its presence in several organizations across different generations.<sup>2</sup> Amongst those we

have selected is the oldest transnational association of municipalities, the Union Internationale des Villes, created in 1913, and the more contemporary Eurocities, founded in Barcelona in 1989. We believe the comparison between the role of Lyon within these two groups can help us to understand both the nature of the city's protagonism beyond the national sphere, and the basis on which such municipal associations operate, as well as how these change, or exhibit continuities, across time and space.

### **Sisters in arms**

The Union Internationale des Villes (UIV) was created during the First International Congress of Cities at the Ghent World Fair of 1913.<sup>3</sup> The Congress and the Union developed out of a dual matrix. Firstly, they were the formalisation of hitherto informal networks between European socialist municipal councilors, which the Second Socialist International had been eager to crystallize since its 1900 Congress.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, they were shaped by the methods and project of internationalists Henri Lafontaine and Paul Otlet, who had made it their agenda to organize, support and coordinate a number of scientifically oriented conferences and associations during the early 1900s.<sup>5</sup> The effects of this mixed origin strongly shaped the form and direction of the UIV up to the late 1940s. A centralised body, according to the organizational framework imagined by

Lafontaine and Otlet, the Union gravitated around a central headquarters in Brussels, whose mission it was to organise the life and work of the association.

While it was launched as a voluntary association of individual cities, after World War I the Union became an international association wherein members were national associations of municipal stakeholders, comprised of municipalities, municipal officers, scholars and national government representatives. Under the leadership of the Belgian socialist senator and municipal councilor Emile Vinck, the Union lived by the rhythms of its congresses and conferences, which were held in Europe every two to three years, even though the association had expanded towards the Americas and, more marginally, Africa and Asia by the 1930s. Now renamed the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the group's rhetoric was very much soaked within a universalist veneer, an aspiration to establish mutual understanding through municipal cooperation. This same rhetoric was also imbued through its routine agendas, and through the dissemination of a discourse of scientific knowledge. Documentation was the touchstone of the secretariat's activities, and the circulation of periodicals and bibliographies dedicated to municipal policies and the techniques of municipal action demanded most of the staff's energy. Conference agendas were highly technical, created by lengthy pre-circulated questionnaires asking for facts and figures from the different member cities. It was often scientists, engineers, political scientists, law

scholars and other specialists who were invited to sketch, administer and report these questionnaires. The prospect to define, spread, expand and update a 'municipal science' was, in fact, a central creed for the organization. It was also an effective device to neutralize the tensions that were inherited from the cleavages of World War I, or the mounting ideological frontlines of the 1920s and 1930s.

Eurocities is younger and its history still blurred. The organization has generated its own official narrative, and often identifies the 1986 Rotterdam meeting of founding cities as its origins. In fact, Eurocities was born in 1989, triggered by the initiative of Barcelona's municipal leaders in their pursuit of visibility and momentum in post-franquist Spain, while simultaneously preparing for their country's entrance into the European Common Market and the lucrative pay-offs from their victorious bid for the Olympics. A meeting did indeed take place in Rotterdam in 1986, attended by delegations from Barcelona, Birmingham, Milan, Rotterdam, Lyon and Frankfurt, on the subject of "Cities as engines of economic recovery". This was one among many occasions where the leaders and technicians of these cities met to exchange ideas and foster common interests during the 1980s. However, it was not before the summer of 1988 that Barcelona's mayor, Pasqual Maragall, and the vice-president of its metropolitan authority, Jordi Borja, convened a special meeting of "Euro-cities" to discuss "The role of cities in European construction".<sup>6</sup> The

invitation was accompanied with a questionnaire that attempted to map “second cities’” relationships with the European Economic Community, as well as their expectations and preparations for the Single Market. On the basis of the answers provided by the Lyonese municipality, it appears that many of these cities shared similar anxieties, not least in finding a collective voice in the new European regime. Others also undoubtedly wished for a permanent structure of “second cities” to liaise with the European Commission.<sup>7</sup> Prompted by Borja and Maragall, those towns in attendance established an organization of large European cities, which they named Eurocities. The conference also marked Barcelona’s emergence as a beacon in urban policies, metropolitan management and municipal leadership, the Latin American extent of which has been explored elsewhere in this volume.<sup>8</sup>

Initially, organizational arrangements were purposively loose, and mainly left to thematic working groups led by a single municipality.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, *ad hoc* visits by mayoral delegations from various member cities fulfilled the organisation’s desire for a visible proximity to the main European institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. It was not until the 1991 Birmingham conference, where that city’s municipal leaders advocated the establishment of a permanent bureau in Brussels, that the decision was taken to build up as an organization, though. Although Birmingham’s proposal was fiercely resisted by cities from southern Europe, who feared higher fees, pared down lobbying activities and an

excessively bureaucratic structure, it was ultimately agreed that a central secretariat was crucial for the organization's visibility and efficiency. The resulting consensus shaped the organizational framework of Eurocities: the member cities would take public center stage, initiate working groups, organize the annual conferences and hold executive responsibilities, while the Brussels secretariat would pull the administrative ropes and circulate information inside the network.<sup>10</sup>

As the self-acclaimed "network of major European cities", Eurocities is, above all, a pressure group that represents the interests of large cities in and around the European Union's institutions. Its birth was simultaneous to the formulation of a European urban agenda, with the European Commission publishing its long delayed *Green Paper on the Urban Environment* in 1990.<sup>11</sup> Germinated in Jacques Delors' will to connect European institutions with local authorities and other non-governmental partners, the agenda was devised within the Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG XVI), headed by Commissioner Bruce Millan.<sup>12</sup> As such, Eurocities sought the Directorate's ears from the outset, albeit ineffectively since none of its favored projects were adopted in the first urban European program in 1991, Regions and Cities for Europe (RECITE).<sup>13</sup> This desire to more effectively lobby the Directorate was cited as another reason to create a secretariat in Brussels, which helped formalize and strengthen Eurocities' relationship with DG XVI. Consequently, between 1994 and 1999 Eurocities was consulted by DG

XVI over the design of the Community Initiative, URBAN, which was the first European program to subsidize actions to improve the environment and infrastructure of selected urban areas.<sup>14</sup>

From this brief portrait, it should be clear that these two associations shared certain values and experiences despite their obvious temporal and contextual distance. For instance, discourses about the need and value of home rule and municipal autonomy are strikingly similar. The two bodies also have a very direct relationship: when Eurocities came into being, it explicitly looked for its place within a landscape where the UIV/IULA and its European branch, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), loomed large.<sup>15</sup> When Eurocities decided to create a secretariat in 1991, it also served as a way to emancipate itself from the tutelage of the CEMR, and carve a niche for large cities' collective protagonism.<sup>16</sup> Any new organisation thus had to face, and work within, the existing structures and cultures of European associational municipalism.

### **Opting in, opting out: why cities join municipal associations ?**

A city historically joins a municipal association, or adjusts its involvement in such organizations, according to a combination of local, national and international pressures, opportunities and resource constraints. The political affiliations and worldviews of mayors and councilors, the



existence of knowledge-based transnational networks amongst municipal technicians, and the adaptation or resistance to changes in the urban world order have all been important mitigating factors for municipal authorities in deciding to join or leave a municipal association. We argue here that it was the expectation of political and policy resources from such involvement that triggered Lyon's municipal authorities to join the UIV and Eurocities. During some specific 'policy windows', those moments when incentives for the design, proposal and implementation of new policies were especially high, Lyonese municipal leaders behaved as policy entrepreneurs and embarked on intermunicipal activities to meet specific goals and find new supporters.<sup>17</sup>

Municipal internationalization strategies have taken multifarious forms, from the *ad hoc*, such as dropping a reference to a foreign experiment into discussions about a municipal project, or developing a public image strategy, to undertaking systematic documentation and study tours, through the more formalized creation of a network of municipalities. All have provided varying quantities of political, intellectual and practical resources to enable a given municipality to adjust its presence on the inter-municipal map, develop its agency within national politics and fulfill its search for local support. According to scholars of political reform, the development of public policy takes its cue from the intertwinement of three streams: those of problems (why policymakers pay attention to

some problems and not to others), policies (ideas generated to answer those problems), and politics (such as elections, and the shifting worldviews of political actors).<sup>18</sup> Most of the time, these streams take their own trajectory, and each of them can trigger re-orientations of public policy. But there are some “policy windows” where these three streams merge and provide strong incentives for policy change. These ideas apply as much to historical cases as contemporary ones: at critical points during the twentieth-century, Lyon’s municipal leaders embarked on transnational journeys into municipal associationalism in order to capture new resources, public support and legitimacy. This detour through the rhetorical and practical realms of municipal international activism provided legitimacy, as well as guidance, for Lyon’s leaders, particularly during shortages of political resources, or where the governance regime was fragile. Conversely, municipal associationalism was much less appealing to those municipal leaders with an established status, or even to those who reaped similar resources through other, less institutionalized, channels, such as study trips, regular documentary activities or political and technological networks.<sup>19</sup>

It was a policy window opened out of necessity that sent Edouard Herriot, Lyon’s mayor, with his municipal team, on a tour of Europe in the early 1900s. Trained as a literary professor, Herriot (1872–1957) arrived in Lyon in 1896, where he soon became the great hope of the local center-

left, mostly through his marriage to the daughter of a local political leader. Invited to join the municipal election campaign of the socialist mayor, Victor Augagneur, in 1904, Herriot accepted. Within eighteen months of becoming a councilor, he had been selected as Augagneur's successor, at the age of thirty-three.

Owing to his rapid rise to power, the new mayor initially lacked the resources to steer or drive the municipal policy machine, not least the political legitimacy, experience, and social capital of his predecessor. As an outsider, Herriot found the intellectual, political and practical resources he needed through his systematic use of expert knowledge as the compass of decision making. Through this he launched a practical program of evidence-based urban modernization. Expanding on his predecessor's sketches, he leaned on specialists of public works, hygiene and social reform to shape the municipality's decisions and win public approval, hiring many of them to run municipal services. Although not himself an expert layman, one of those legal or medical specialists who had gradually taken over municipal responsibilities in Third Republic France, Herriot built a team comprised of such individuals who helped him secure political legitimacy and authority.

To inform and legitimize his modernization program, Herriot also launched an unprecedented campaign to learn from the experience of other cities abroad. Between 1906 and 1914, Lyonese delegations of aldermen, councilors, municipal technicians and experts traveled to many European

corners to study the variety of institutions ranging from hospitals to slaughter houses, discuss the myriad of questions concerning public health, primary education and the like, and to inspect a plethora of practical schemes, including housing estates and water abduction schemes.<sup>20</sup> This knowledge of foreign experiences was crucial for Herriot to conceive and gain support for his most ambitious and contested projects. It also posited him as a man of vast knowledge who grounded his policy decisions in empirical evidence-based findings. All in, this growing international profile – marked by legitimacy through transnational learning – secured Herriot re-election in 1908.

It was upon the occasion of Lyon's Modern City Exhibition, held in 1914, that Herriot won, for himself, personal fame as a "great European mayor" and, for Lyon, the image of a modern metropolis. Modeled on the Dresden Städteausstellung of 1911, which he personally visited, the occasion enshrined Herriot's successful revamping of local politics, as evident in his introduction to the official guide to the Exhibition:

The editors asked what was our leading idea. Here it is: the era of verbose politics, Florentine factions and passionate showdowns is over. Time has come to build our ideas upon the observation of facts; and if this conception cannot yet be applied to the State, let it be that the material, intellectual and moral life of the City be based upon thoughtful and careful study.<sup>21</sup>

It was also during the organization of the 1914 Exhibition that the Lyonese municipal leaders first met with initiatives to formalize these nascent inter-municipal relationships into more structured, associative forms. In 1913, the city was invited to exhibit its accomplishments in municipal child welfare within a special urban exhibition of the “Congrès International et exposition de l’art de construire les villes et de l’organisation de la vie municipale”, which was held under the auspices of the Ghent World Fair. Deeming it “very useful” to showcase these achievements to a broad audience, Herriot immediately suggested to his Belgian hosts the idea of holding a second congress, as an additional garnish to Lyon’s forthcoming exhibition.<sup>22</sup> To sell the event to potential delegates and exhibitors, the municipal council sent a delegation of six persons to Ghent, mostly councilors.

In addition to delegate diplomacy, Herriot was appointed to the UIV’s embryonic governing body. As part payment for this gesture, the UIV’s secretary, Emile Vinck, suggested that the Lyon exhibition might well offer his new council an opportunity to meet for a second time. Hoping that Lyon’s association with the UIV would help the fledgling association mature and attract a larger membership, Vinck desired to use the Lyon exhibition to mobilize the various national and international municipal associations under the UIV’s wings. For Herriot, though, the UIV’s expectations were misguided: membership of the UIV served no other purpose than attracting an additional congress to adorn Lyon’s exhibition

and brighten its visibility around the municipal globe. Forced to organize its Lyon show by itself, the UIV worked out a program that was cancelled by the outbreak of the War in August 1914. All that remained visibly intact from this fleeting encounter was Herriot's official reputation as a "founder" and early supporter of the Union.

Although, then, a 'policy window' had opened, through which Lyon's municipal leaders joined the main road of transnational inter-municipal relations, the creation of the UIV came too late for it to provide the resources that Herriot had previously harnessed from *ad hoc* study tours and documentation. The window had (temporarily) closed, and, for Herriot, participation within this fledgling inter-municipal associational network was little more than dressing. Lyon's municipal leadership had already found the appropriate resources and, for Herriot, it was of little consequence that the UIV had not.

The decision to join Eurocities, but especially to actively participate in its thematic networks, resulted from another critical historical moment: at the heart of the municipal elections in 1989 was Lyon's international status.<sup>23</sup> In a bitter contest between the long-standing center-right mayor, Francisque Collomb (1976–89), and his former deputy mayor, the young Gaullist, Michel Noir, the absence of an international strategy was leveled as a symbol of the outgoing mayors' archaism. This attack met with the approval of entrepreneurial groups, which had pushed for a

proactive municipal internationalization policy for some years. For instance, the Agence pour le Développement de la Région Lyonnaise (ADERLY), a public-private partnership between business groups and local authorities, had published in 1988 a report on the city's international assets, which ranked the city as only 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> among the 12 largest European non-capital cities. ADERLY duly lobbied for a stronger contribution by the municipal government to improve this standing before the arrival of the European Single Market. Sharing ADERLY's concern, the mayoral challenger, Michael Noir, asked its treasurer, Christian Boiron, who was also president of a large pharmaceutical firm, to join his team and coordinate international affairs and development matters.

Noir was elected to the mayoralty in March 1989, a major break in the political history of a city that had resisted Gaullist onslaughts since 1947. Within this new political regime, strong representation for entrepreneurial groups was provided by Boiron, who was appointed deputy mayor with responsibility for economic and international development affairs. Boiron duly revamped his field, recruiting a host of contractual workers to develop activities. The eagerness of the new team to develop a business-friendly international strategy quickly materialised with the formation of the Lyon International Council, in which local authority executives throughout the region met face-to-face with entrepreneurs, deputies of formal business groups and academics. As early as May 1989, the new mayor circulated his guidelines for action:

The development of Lyon's European profile is one of my major priorities. This is why I have suggested the founding of a Conseil International de Lyon, whose mission is to conceive an international strategy and to push for the European dimension to be present in every project of the metropolitan authority.<sup>24</sup>

The Council was mainly a think-tank in which stake-holders discussed mechanisms for transforming Lyon into a European metropolis. The public relations aspect was especially successful, as suggested by the list of guests, among which was the European Commission President, Jacques Delors, who attended a session that focused on the activities of the fledgling Eurocities network in 1991. The real challenge lay in putting the new mayor's vision into practice, though.

While Francisque Collomb's municipal team had agreed to participate in the Barcelona Eurocities conference scheduled for April 1989, it failed to attend the preparatory meeting in the Fall of 1988 and was a late signatory to the resulting manifesto.<sup>25</sup> On taking office, the new Mayor transmogrified this lip service participation. Recognising the potential of the 1989 conference, Noir personally attended, where he spoke on two occasions and presented himself as a leader of the emerging network. A member of Noir's cabinet wrote the mayor's speeches after having met with ADERLY executive officers and other local business interests in Barcelona. Echoing Maragall and Borja's call to arms, his script insisted on



the central role to be played by cities in the exchanges and circulations that would make the new Europe, and emphasized the European institutions' duty to listen to the collective voice of large cities.

Less than two months after his election, Barcelona provided Noir with the opportunity to demonstrate to the Lyonese public that his international strategy was moving forward at an unprecedented pace. The icing on the cake was provided by the announcement, shortly before Noir's closing speech, that Lyon would host the second Eurocities conference in 1990. The local press, whose representatives had traveled as part of Lyon's delegation (at fourteen persons, this was the largest by far of any participant cities), celebrated it as Noir's personal success.<sup>26</sup>

After Michel Noir left City Hall in 1995, stained by corruption, his successor, the former Prime Minister Raymond Barre, campaigned to rescue the right-wing majority. As such, the city's internationalization strategy was pared down, which included a deliberately lower-key involvement in Eurocities. By 2001, though, a new policy window had re-activated its resource potential for Barre's successor, the socialist Gerard Collomb. This was a major victory in a town dominated for decades by right-wing coalitions, but meant that, in its search for support and legitimacy, the new municipal team was forced to re-ignite links with the business community, the majority of which was not among the left's traditional supporters. This Collomb's team did with aplomb, anchoring it to an ambitious internationalization strategy.<sup>27</sup>

While Raymond Barre had relied on his distinguished address book to attract international events or institutions to Lyon (including the G7 summit, which came in 1996), the new team endorsed the substance of a similarly high profile internationalization policy, but dressed it in a very different garb. Mayor Collomb and his deputy mayor for international affairs, the former CEO of an advertising company, Jean Michel Daclin, bet on municipal associations and networks to increase Lyon's visibility and attraction. As they explained it, membership of transnational networks provided the best outlet for the development and dissemination of the Lyon brand. Crafting a policy of active participation in several European and global associations of cities, Collomb and Daclin eyed the chairmanship of Eurocities as their main target. During a period when the cutting edge of municipal government was increasingly simplified into buzzwords – “networks”, “governance”, “partnership”, “benchmarking”, and so on – it was not only important to be a member of municipal associations that endorsed this style of slogan politics, but also to be at their helm. With leadership would come notoriety; the Lyon brand was being built on visibility.

### **Networking the networks: what good are municipal associations to municipal leaders?**

Whatever the initial expectations in joining an association of municipalities, a network's value does not automatically subside. This is

because membership does not denote a significant degree of involvement. Some municipalities merely pay their subscription fee, happy to derive benefits by association. Others try to harness the resources provided by the organization, joining a number of thematic working groups, while a few municipalities attempt to drive the whole show. Levels of engagement and participation, as we saw in earlier sections, are clearly dependent on individual, as well as municipal, strategies, and are fuelled by what the organization has to offer incumbents at any particular time. How the different Lyonese municipalities historically adjusted their participation in these networks – focusing on the IULA/UIV during the interwar years and Eurocities from 1989–2007 – sheds light on the historic value of intermunicipal associations, and also the continuities and discontinuities in participant engagement.

In the first place, there is the question of the organization's function and resources. The IULA/UIV's life and work took two trajectories during the inter-war years. One headed towards the gathering and circulation of specialized knowledge about municipal government and policies. This was written in stone after the Ghent Congress, and took shape in 1921, when the Brussels secretariat published the first issue of the *Tablettes Documentaires*, a bibliographic bulletin that collated information from 100 periodicals in 12 countries, through which Union members were provided with the highlights of the most recent research and practice in municipal

administration, welfare, electricity, housing, transportation, waste management and so on. As an inter-municipal clearing house, the IULA/UIV spread its wings further through conferences and congresses, which explored a myriad of subjects ranging from municipal hygiene to unemployment policies. The Brussels secretariat, beyond co-ordinating this conference agenda, also answered specific information requests from members, the horizon of which went beyond the mutualization of specialized knowledge. In line with streams of thought that harked back to the late nineteenth century, the IULA/UIV wanted to preside over the establishment of a fully fledged new body of knowledge, a “municipal science”, whose content would be the *vade me cum* of municipal employees and leaders all over the world.<sup>28</sup> Such a universal aspiration was coherent with the other side of the IULA/UIV’s rationale, that is its loose but constant political discourse for a world in which home-ruled cities would be the basic cells of a democratic order more amenable to peace, mutual understanding and the resolution of social problems across national borders.<sup>29</sup>

Neither Herriot, who remained mayor of Lyon until 1957, nor his fellow councilors and technicians, made much use of this “municipal science”, though. The *Tablettes Documentaires* were never excerpted or systematically used, while the voluminous conference proceedings were never made available in the Municipal Council Library. The Lyonese delegations to the congresses remained erratic and silent, and no

attempts were made to tap the knowledge-base of the Brussels secretariat. Nor was any sustained attention given to answer the various questionnaires sent by Brussels or its *rapporteurs* for conference preparation or data collection. The inter-war municipality's quest for international experiences, which was considerably less important than it had been before World War I, took place through other channels like study tours, correspondence and the perusal of a limited number of French technical magazines by municipal experts. Though no explicit explanation has ever been given for that, it seems that the costs in time and energy that derived from active participation in, and maintenance of, the IULA/UIV technological resource base were deemed too important for their possible results. This was especially true because of the weakness of the French national branch of the UIV/IULA, which struggled to aggregate data in the way that the Dutch and German municipal associations did. Furthermore, Lyon's municipal leaders easily retrieved information about non-domestic municipal policies from other sources, all the more that its officials held responsibilities in national political and professional organizations.<sup>30</sup> Not only there was no policy window, but routine cross-observation of other municipal policies provided tangible, and economical, results.

The political project of the IULA/UIV does not, on first viewing, seem to have been attractive either. Despite being a long-standing member of its Executive Committee, and an honorary-president, Herriot did not attend a

single meeting, conference, congress or session for around twenty years. Nor were any senior delegates sent in his absence. In all, very little organizational or political support was forthcoming from Lyon. Indeed, when an IULA/UIV conference was held in Lyon in 1934, it took the sanction of special funds by the French Prime Minister for the event to take place.<sup>31</sup> Having played little role in its organization, the apathetic Herriot briefly attended two sessions, and only then to propagate one of his famous aphorisms about the fact that nation-states have diverging interests, while municipalities have converging purposes.<sup>32</sup> The conference nevertheless left a lasting imprint on delegates who attended the banquet, where Herriot flexed his oratory muscles and displayed the spectacular range of the municipality wine cellar.<sup>33</sup>

The weak, but enduring, link between the IULA/UIV and Lyon seems to have been a symbolic transaction only. On the one hand, membership of the Union was a sign that Lyon held its rank among the cities of the world. The IULA/UIV's events and publications provided occasional windows to showcase Herriot's achievements, as at the Lyon Conference in 1934 where the city's new hospital was officially opened.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the Union's leaders were pleased to retain Herriot's patronage. Numerous traces of (unsuccessful) requests for him to chair a session or attend a conference indicate that Herriot's name was, in the words of Senator Vinck himself, held as "a symbol as far as municipal achievements are concerned."<sup>35</sup> Vinck and his associates knew that his

prestige as a national leader and his foreign travels had won him a visibility that no other mayor in Europe, or in the world, could boast.<sup>36</sup> He was an asset to lure in possible members who were acquainted with those local projects that he had deftly popularized across Europe since the early 1910s.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, he brought credentials to risky endeavours as in 1936, when he was asked to be a member of the honorary committee for the controversial Berlin Congress.<sup>38</sup> Both parties thus had some interest in this weak, but relatively costless and effective, link.

Eurocities has also presented itself as a knowledge clearing house, illuminating its rationale to “share knowledge and ideas, exchange experiences, analyze common problems and develop innovative solutions.”<sup>39</sup> This added value, the contribution to knowledge production, is justified to members as the pay-off for playing an active role within the network, either by leading a working group or forum, or testing innovative experiments. Scientific and intellectual support comes from research groups like the European Institute for Comparative Urban Research (EURICUR), a joint research venture created in 1989 between the Erasmus University of Rotterdam and the mayoralities of Rotterdam and Barcelona. A final clue for this commitment to knowledge production comes through its membership of the European Urban Knowledge Network, a research fund in which member states, the European Union and its URBACT program<sup>40</sup> are other major stakeholders. By showcasing its expertise from

the outset – through its commitment to a scientific approach to urban problems – Eurocities asserted its value to the European Commission, which lacked expertise in urban policy-making. This thus transformed Eurocities into a necessary and credible partner for Bruce Millan’s DG XVI. Such bluster masks the meager production of knowledge. Working parties have, according to former participants, operated erratically and ineffectively.<sup>41</sup> The durable mobilization of elected officials and municipal technicians once or twice a year has proved to be a daunting challenge. Although some cities have used such opportunities to evaluate their own policies and winnow foreign experiences, this is far from the sole reason for cities to join, supervise or create a working group. By and large, most working parties have been thematically focused EU lobby groups (such as the high speed trains or urban renewal networks), or have presented windows for members (often working party leaders) to showcase their domestic achievements and boast about their European recognition at home. This was the case when Lyon headed its first working party, the “Child in the city” committee, in 1989. Having campaigned for election on a platform of social inclusion, Noir recognized the benefits back home in chairing this group. Yet the gesture superseded policy substance, since the committee did not even meet before April 1990.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the working parties quickly became stepping stones for cities vying for visibility and dominance within the organisation itself, especially when membership of the Executive Committee was opened to election in 1992.



To muster political support from fellow members, chairing a working party became an exercise in demonstrating administrative and leadership capacity, rather than producing and disseminating useful knowledge. What's more, while member cities were asked to contribute to knowledge production, they tended to tweak this activity to their own ends. In so doing, members usually targeted ancillary resources of intangible value for the parent network. Participation in Eurocities and its working groups allowed member cities to play a role within a new configuration of political intermediation, which operated horizontally to facilitate access to a supranational governmental level. For Lyon, the greater a city's visibility in Eurocities, the greater its access to European Union resources, more so once Eurocities had cemented its seat around the DG XVI's table. With access came lucrative European funds, from which Lyon benefited.<sup>43</sup> Whilst this burrowing undoubtedly fitted the initial lobbying bill of creating an organization to attract resources for its members, it represented a deliberate break from Eurocities' early focus as a modern municipal clearing house. In addition, membership has also increased the social capital of municipal leaders, which has facilitated relationships with other European cities to generate bids for collaborative European programs. Eurocities has thus empowered Lyon to move ahead on EU connected projects like the European high-speed train network, especially its Lyon-Turin leg,<sup>44</sup> while enhancing the city's profile in other areas. As a Lyonese staff member in charge of Eurocities recently explained:

... it helps to sit on the Executive Committee. It also helps to have social intercourse at the European level because you meet commissioners, etc. This network helps to influence European policy, to win visibility and to fill your address book. This is what prompted us to enter the Committee.<sup>45</sup>

There were other derivable political resources from a high profile in Eurocities. Individual leaders have used the intermunicipal stage as a stepping-stone for their political careers, as made clear by Michel Noir's annexation of Eurocities. Gerard Collomb's success in this endeavor will be tested in the 2008 election, but it is clear that he has been anxious to build a profile as an intermunicipal leader since 2001. Being a mayor with a voice in the urban affairs of Europe and the world will certainly be presented as one of his main assets during the campaign. Such a quest for status goes beyond the individual: it is clear that the different municipalities of Lyon have always tried to be the leading French city within Eurocities. When, for instance, Lyon ceased to be a member of the Executive Committee in 1997, it created and supervised an informal group of French member cities, in order to retain some driving power while two other French cities (Lille and Bordeaux) sat on the Executive. Mayors Noir and Collomb, their staff, and their deputy mayors were regular participants in delegations to European institutions, conferences and executive committee meetings. The daily activity that resulted from

this involvement was co-ordinated, between 1990 and 2001, by one staff member, who spent half of her time on Eurocities' work, and, since 2001, by a full time collaborator to co-ordinate Lyon's incremental campaign to secure Eurocities' presidency. This person made it very clear in an interview that:

There are short term and long term strategies. It is true we placed a submission for the Eurocities Awards in 2001.<sup>46</sup> Then we proposed ourselves to preside over a Forum. Saragoza did exactly the same thing. Saragoza ran for Awards, they presented their municipal achievements in thematic sessions and meetings (...). It is clear that you have to be visible to be elected to the Executive Committee.<sup>47</sup>

Having observed the Lyon general meeting in 2005, we saw the result of these "long term" and "short term" strategies. Six cities were candidates for the four available Executive Committee seats, and they campaigned the corridors with printed propaganda material. Most of them had some track record in Eurocities: they had led working groups and forums, and had applied for awards long before they ran for the supreme prize. As Lyon had sat on the Committee since 2002 and held a vice presidency, this meant that Lyon would automatically be the next president of the organisation if re-elected. This it was, establishing Gerard Collomb as president of Eurocities until 2008, as he runs for mayor again.

## **Conclusion**

Our comparison of Lyon's role within municipal associations during the twentieth-century has insisted on its political dimension. During the first half of the century, Lyon's involvement in such networks was not highly visible. It was, above all, a consequence of the symbolic status of Edouard Herriot, the only French mayor with an international profile. Lyon's involvement in the Union Internationale des Villes was born out of a political ambiguity, and derived mostly from lobbying by the UIV itself. Membership does not automatically translate into involvement, then. Into the 1990s, membership of municipal associations became a much more serious matter, and captured the attention of Lyon's political leaders for several reasons. Firstly, as the city lost its industrial base and moved into tertiary services, visibility across borders was deemed a vital asset by city entrepreneurs. Secondly, Lyon's municipal leaders tried to escape a center-periphery relationship that bounded their policy into dependent ties with the national government, while the latter was progressively retrenching its activity and handing over some policy areas to local authorities and to the European level. Thirdly, some policy windows were opened by blunt political changes, which provided incentives for city actors to seek new recipes and resources.

In Lyon, as in several European second cities, co-operation with other municipalities was a strategy that was expected to deliver on these three

prongs. In Lyon and elsewhere, it has been used together with other tools for internationalisation that took their cue from the perception that European cities were engaged in a race with many contenders and few winners.<sup>48</sup> The consequences were increased competition among cities, which ranged from the development of strategic planning to the race for conference venues, cultural infrastructure and sporting events or international exhibitions. Municipal associations, despite their front-side of co-operation, were also geared towards competition, as shown by the strategies developed by Lyon and other cities to play a leading role in their midst. Many of these tools, as suggested by the genesis of Eurocities, were initially engineered in Barcelona, whose municipal leaders were among the first to develop a systematic political attention to shunt national dependencies, win over national rival cities and develop a high European visibility that simultaneously embraced municipal associations and other internationalization tools. Lyon, as with many European cities, was significantly “barcelonized” as a consequence of Barcelona’s success, not only in placing the city on the map, but also in defining the methods and frames of the internationalisation game. In the 1990s, membership in a municipal association was one element in the internationalisation toolkit that emerged from the Barcelona workshop.

Besides pointing to clear differences in the structure and operation of municipal associations, our comparison also sheds light on the fact that they have relied on different paradigms of municipal government. The

UIV/IULA was borne out of the Socialist Internationale, and it was mostly supported by a coalition of European socialists who had not embraced the state as the matrix of a socialist society. The model of city government proposed by the UIV/IULA was based on a proactive municipal policy that emphasized the provision of health, welfare and utilities by the way of municipal trading enterprises. This "welfare municipality" is no longer the paradigm of *fin de siècle* municipal associationalism. Urban services are now mostly provided through public-private partnerships, and municipalities are clients rather than suppliers of these services; enablers rather than doers. Today's municipal associations, like Eurocities, play an important role in the promotion of this enabling style of "governance": their conference programs showcase such achievements, while they provide opportunities for private firms to approach potential customers. As a clue of this propinquity, the municipality of Lyon negotiated for the Global City trade fair, organised by the Reed Midem group, to be held twice in a row in Lyon during 2006 and 2007. This trade fair of urban services, self-branded as "the international forum for urban decision makers", was deemed an invaluable complement to Lyon strategy to win Eurocities' leadership.<sup>49</sup> Being neither completely different nor the same, transnational municipal associations have been both an agent and a product of changes in the realm of municipal government in Europe since the beginning of the twentieth-century.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the other chapters in this volume, see European surveys by Michael Hebbert and Shane Ewen, “European Cities into a Networked World during the Long 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 25, 2007, 325–340, and Pierre Yves Saunier, “La Toile Municipale aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles : un Panorama Transnational vu d’Europe”, *Urban History Review/Revue d’Histoire Urbaine*, 34, 2, 2006, 163–176.

<sup>2</sup> It has been especially useful for us to attend intermunicipal events in the course of the last three years, especially the Eurocities general assembly of November 2005 in Lyon.

<sup>3</sup> On the UIV/IULA, see the special issue of *Contemporary European History* 11, 4, 2002, dedicated to municipal connections.

<sup>4</sup> Patrizia Dogliani, *Un Laboratorio di Socialismo Municipale: la Francia, 1870–1920*, Milano : Franco Angeli, 1992, chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> See Françoise Levie, *L’homme qui Voulait Classer le Monde: Paul Otlet et le Mundaneum*, Bruxelles: Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Jordi Borja, “Eurocities. A System of Major Urban Centers in Europe”, *Ekistics*, 352–353, 1992, 21–27.

<sup>7</sup> Lyon Municipal Archives (now AML), 1729 WP 001, Moulinier to Borja 27 October 1988.

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<sup>8</sup> See Javier Monclus, “The Barcelona Model: an Original Formula ?”, *Planning Perspectives*, 18, 4, 2003, 399–421, and the chapter by Robin and Velut in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Seven such groups were established in 1989: port cities, urban renewal, culture, coordination of urban research, children in the city, universities and research, economic development and technological cooperation.

<sup>10</sup> It was also in 1991 that an executive committee was established, the six founding partner cities being joined by the chairs of the working groups. This scheme was tweaked to create a more democratically elected governing body during the 1990s. Practical work is accomplished through three main channels: the annual general meeting and its thematic conference; the six thematic forums and their bi or tri annual meetings; and the thirty–six working policy groups.

<sup>11</sup> Commission of the European Community, Green Paper on the Urban Environment COM(1990)218, Brussels: Commission of the European Community, 1990; Michael Parkinson, “Urban Policy in Europe. Where have we been and Where are we going ?” in Eugen Antalovsky, Jens. S Dangschat and Michael Parkinson, eds., *European Metropolitan Governance. Cities in Europe. Europe in the Cities*, 2005 ([http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/EIUA/EIUA\\_Docs/cities\\_in\\_europe.pdf](http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/EIUA/EIUA_Docs/cities_in_europe.pdf) accessed 30 august 2007)



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<sup>12</sup> Bruce Millan is a British socialist. He was elected a Member of Parliament in 1959 and held several ministerial positions. He was European Commissioner for Regional Policy and Cohesion from 1988–95.

<sup>13</sup> RECITE (Regions and cities for Europe) was designed to promote knowledge exchanges among networks of local authorities. Between 1991 and 1995, the sum of 4.2 million ECU was made available to 15 European networks (Eurocities did not bid as such).

<sup>14</sup> On URBAN, see Humbolt Study Team, “The European URBAN Experience Seen from the Academic Perspective”, September 2006 (<http://urbact.eu/fr/projects/the-urban-experience/documents/urban-study-report.html>, accessed 30 August 2007 )

<sup>15</sup> The Council of European Municipalities was created in 1951 as a step towards European federalism and expanded local self-government. It incorporated “Regions” into its title in 1984. After years of feuding and conflict between the two bodies, CEMR became the European branch of the UIV/IULA in 1990. CEMR was a patron of both the Rotterdam and Barcelona meetings, and provided administrative support and lobbying connections to Eurocities until 1991. On the CEMR, see Oscar Gaspari, “Cities against States? Hopes, Dreams and Shortcomings of the European Municipal Movement 1900–1960”, *Contemporary European History*, 11, 4, 2002, 597–621.

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<sup>16</sup> In an internal memo dated October 1991, a Lyon representative captured this aspect of the ongoing discussion: “It is clear that the sooner we exist as an independent structure, the better it will be for our relations with the CEMR. This would eliminate any ambiguity.” (AML, 1729 W4, Memo on Eurocities steering committee, Brussels, October 7, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> On policy windows, John D. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, New York: Harper Collins, 1995, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition ; John T. S. Keeler, *Réformer: Les Conditions du Changement Politique*, Paris: PUF, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> See John W. Kingdon, *Agendas*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the reluctance of Scandinavian municipalities to enter into European and transatlantic municipal associations in the 1930s, as they felt able to use their own resources to harness foreign municipal experiments. See Pierre-Yves Saunier, “*Selling the Idea of Cooperation. The US Foundations and the European Components of the Urban Internationale (1920s–1960s)*,” in Giuliana GEMELLI (ed.), *American Foundations and Large Scale Research: Construction and Transfer of Knowledge*, Bologna: Clueb, 2001, 219–246.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre-Yves Saunier, “Changing the City: Urban International Information and the Lyon Municipality, 1900–1940” *Planning Perspectives*, 14, 1, 1999, 19–48.

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- <sup>21</sup> *Exposition internationale de Lyon. Guide général*, Lyon : Editions du Guide Général, 1914, 6.
- <sup>22</sup> AML, 781 WP 005, “Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Gand 1913”, report of 10 January 1913 and Herriot’s letters, 12 and 21 March 1913.
- <sup>23</sup> Jacques Fauret, *Les Relations Internationales de la Ville de Lyon*, mémoire de DEA en administration publique, IEP Lyon, 1990.
- <sup>24</sup> AML 1729W5, Mayor’s letter, 9 May 1989.
- <sup>25</sup> With this signature, Lyon gained its status of “organizer” of the Barcelona conference and “Eurocities founding member” label. AML, Maraguall to Collomb, 25 January 1989 and Collomb to Maraguall 234 February 1989.
- <sup>26</sup> See press clippings in AML, 1729 W001.
- <sup>27</sup> Aisling Healy, “Le Territoire contre la Politique ? L’Impératif Métropolitain d’un Groupe d’entrepreneurs Lyonnais (2001–2004)”, in Lionel Arnaud, Christian Le Bart and Romain Pasquier eds., *Idéologies et Action Publique Territoriale. La Politique Change-t-elle encore les Politiques ?* Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006, 211–227.
- <sup>28</sup> Renaud Payre, “The Science that never Was: Communal Science in France 1913–1949”, *Contemporary European History*, 11, 4, 2002, 529–548, Federico Lucarini, *Scienze comunali e Pratiche di Governo in Italia (1890–1915)*, Milan : Giuffré, 2003 ; Michael Frisch, “Urban Theorists,

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Urban Reform and American Political Culture in the Progressive period”, *Political Science Quarterly*, 97, 2, 1982, 295–315.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> See Saunier, “Changing”, 37.

<sup>31</sup> AML, 1114 WP 005.

<sup>32</sup> *Conférence Internationale de Lyon*, Bruxelles: UIV, 1934, 213.

<sup>33</sup> Louis Brownlow, *The Autobiography of Louis Brownlow. The Second Half*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, 305.

<sup>34</sup> Evidence is also available in Lyon’s correspondence files. See, for example, the enthusiastic letter by the Mayor of Calais after his 1925 visit, AML 1112 WP 001, Léon Vincent to Edouard Herriot, 20 October 1925.

<sup>35</sup> AML, 1112 WP 001, Vinck to Herriot 19 January 1929.

<sup>36</sup> Herriot was twice Prime Minister in the 1920s and a leader of the very important Parti Radical.

<sup>37</sup> Saunier, “Changing the city”, 27–32.

<sup>38</sup> AML, 985 WP 024, Standing Committee minutes, 27 and 28 May 1935. The committee was eventually not created, but the conference did take place amidst widespread pressure from European socialists against

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holding a meeting in Nazi Germany, where municipal autonomy had been crushed.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.eurocities.org/main.php>, accessed June 16<sup>th</sup> 2007.

<sup>40</sup> The "European Network for Exchange of Experience", or "URBACT" was launched in 2002. It funds working groups and studies to "exchange, capitalise and disseminate" best practices in the field of urban policies. The whole set up shares much with Eurocities' knowledge-based rationales. The Greater Lyon municipality is currently leading the URBACT Pilot Fast Track Network, 'The urban, social, economic and cultural regeneration of public housing estates in urban areas'.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with a French observer of the "urban renewal" and "urban research" working groups, 30 March 2007.

<sup>42</sup> AML, 1729 WP 002. An internal memo issued in 1991 established that only two commissions out of a dozen were actually afloat.

<sup>43</sup> In the case of Lyon, the Greater Lyon Authority benefited from an URBAN subsidy in 1996 (192 million francs for a program of urban renewal).

<sup>44</sup> Such projects are long-term ones: Lyon chaired the Eurocities High Speed Trains Cities commission from 1995–97, and, as recently as February 2006, used the opportunity of a Eurocities' delegation meeting with the European Parliament's President to recommend the Lyon–Turin line.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with City Hall staff in charge of Eurocities at Lyon City Hall, 8 December 2005.

<sup>46</sup> The Eurocities Awards were created in 2000 to single out “outstanding achievement by Eurocities members in the delivery of local activities or practices which improve the quality of life for citizens”.

[www.eurocities.org/main.php](http://www.eurocities.org/main.php), accessed 8 August 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with City Hall staff member in charge of Eurocities, 8 December 2005.

<sup>48</sup> The idea that the Single Market would deeply modify the European urban hierarchy became common in the 1980s. It was formalized in the 1990s with the works of Paul Krugman or Ronald Rogowski, who predicted that only a handful of European cities would still be a place on the map after 50 years of European integration. See Patrick Le Galès, *European Cities. Social conflicts and governance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 148–149, and Ewen’s chapter in this collection.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with executive secretary of an international association of municipalities, 1 June 2007.