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*Maritime Networks and Premodern Conflict Management on Multiple Levels.  
The Example of Danzig and the Giese Family*

The enchanting town of Prato was the home to one of the most recognizable faces of merchants in medieval commercial networks in southern and western Europe: Francesco Datini. Several of the presented papers have at least touched upon the activities, background or heritage of our patron host and maritime networks in the Mediterranean. In my contribution, I would like to direct you northwards, to the Baltic and North Sea areas, to analyse some aspects of the networks there and make a closer acquaintance with the people who were part of them. In the medieval and early modern period, these areas were the stronghold of the Hanse, an organization of traders and cities that was in many respects a unique and paradoxical phenomenon. To highlight some of its features: it relied on small-scale business partnerships, a high degree of trust and cooperation between traders and their home cities; it operated as a political power without a legal status; there was no formal head of the organization, but regular meetings of members (Hanseatic diets) were organized, and there was shared supervision over Hanseatic settlements abroad, the largest being the so-called *Kontore* in London, Bruges, Bergen and Novgorod; it was a medieval phenomenon, but it survived well into the early modern era; it was based in cities where Low (northern) German was spoken and northern German law applied, yet through its overland and maritime connections it extended well into the Novgorod hinterland and into the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> And finally, there is the paradox of networks: while the personal and urban Hanseatic networks were of vital importance to the traders enjoying the privileges of the Hanse, if one asked them directly how they would describe themselves, they would not identify themselves solely or even primarily as Hanseatic traders. They also operated within the frameworks of their cities, regions and states. My main point in this paper is that maritime networks should be considered together with these frameworks, as they all provided the merchants valuable experience and knowledge necessary for their operations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See R. HAMMEL-KIESOW, *Die Hanse*, 2nd ed., Munich 2002; S. SELZER, *Die mittelalterliche Hanse*, Darmstadt 2010; C. JAHNKE, *Die Hanse*, Stuttgart 2014; J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, *The Hanse in medieval Europe: an introduction*, in *The Hanse and late medieval Europe*, J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, S. JENKS eds., Leiden 2013, pp. 1-35; J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, *The late medieval and early modern Hanse as an institution of conflict management*, in "Continuity and Change", 32, 2017, n. 1, pp. 59-84.

<sup>2</sup> See the contributions in VOLKER HENN AND JÜRGEN SARNOWSKY eds., *Das Bild der Hanse in der städtischen Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, *Hansische Studien* 20, Trier 2010.

How can we unravel all these networks? The key is to take specific cities, and, whenever possible, also specific traders in them, as starting points and examine them with a research question in hand. Here, I will tackle the topic of maritime networks of cities and traders, and zoom in on the role they played in dealing with conflicts in the medieval and early modern era. In particular, I will focus on my findings related to the city of Danzig (Gdańsk), which was simultaneously a member of the Hanse, a highly autonomous urban hub in the province of Royal Prussia, and a major port under the Polish Crown.<sup>3</sup> I will use one specific mercantile family that operated in large parts of the Baltic and North sea areas as a recurrent illustration to discuss some aspects of conflict management occurring at these levels. This paper is one of the first exploratory presentations of a new research project, which I will briefly outline below.

#### CONFLICT MANAGERS AND THE PREMISES OF A NEW PROJECT

Let us begin by taking a closer look at another face, the likely familiar image of Georg Giese, who was a burgher of Danzig in the sixteenth century. His portrait by Hans Holbein, which was painted in the 1530s while Giese resided in the *Kontor* in London, is one of the most often reproduced images of a northern European merchant. To many, Giese has come to be seen as the epitome of a Hanseatic trader. This is due, on the one hand, to the numerous details and symbols of mercantile life that appear in the portrait, such as letters, scales, a seal with a merchant mark as well as an account book, all depicted in the setting of a trader's office. On the other hand, the fame of the image comes from the masterful quality of the painting itself, which Holbein wanted to use to attract new customers among the Hansards who did their business and stayed in the *Kontor*.

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<sup>3</sup> I use the name Danzig for the late medieval and early modern period, following the use in the primary sources of the inhabitants of the city. For the modern city and the seat of the archive and library, Gdańsk is used. On the huge historiography of Prussia and Poland, see the overviews and references in J. MALLEK, *Opera selecta. Polen und Preussen von 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Toruń 2011; E. KIZIK, *Prusy Królewskie. Społeczeństwo, kultura, gospodarka 1454-1772*, Gdańsk 2012; R.I. FROST, *The Oxford History of Poland-Lithuania: Vol. I: The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, 1385-1569*, Oxford 2015.

Fig. 1. Georg Giese, Gemäldegalerie Berlin, nr. 586

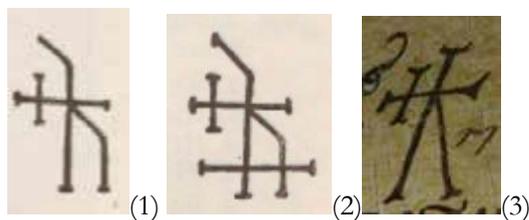


Art historical analyses have provided many insights into the artistic and technical aspects of the painting and, to some extent, into the life of Georg Giese himself. Attention has been drawn to the fact that he holds a letter in his hands which was probably sent by his brother, a bishop and friend of Nicolaus Copernicus and Erasmus of Rotterdam.<sup>4</sup> With the topic of our conference as a backdrop, and with my focus on conflict management in particular, several additional observations can be made: this elder brother Tiedemann was not only a learned clergyman with legal experience from the Roman Rota, but also a diplomat on behalf of both the city of Danzig and the Polish king (its sovereign). When we zoom in on the letter in the painting, we read the words ‘to hande’, which meant

<sup>4</sup> ARCHIWUM PAŃSTWOWE W GDANSKU (State Archive in Gdańsk), henceforth APG, 300 R/LI 28; T. BORAWSKA, *Rodzina Giesów w Gdańsku w XV i na początku XVI wieku*. Toruń 1973, here pp. 133-144; EADEM, *Tiedemann Giese (1480-1550) w życiu wewnętrznym Warmii i Prus Królewskich [Tiedemann Giese (1480-1550) in the Internal Affairs of Warmia and Royal Prussia]*, Olsztyn 1984; W. SZCZUCZKO, *Giese (Gyse) Jerzy (1497-1562), kupiec i burgrabia gd.*, in *Słownik biograficzny Pomorza Nadwiślańskiego*, vol. 2, Gdańsk 1994, p. 53; T.S. HOLMAN, *Holbein's Portraits of the Steelyard Merchants: An Investigation*, in “Metropolitan Museum Journal”, 14, 1979, pp. 139-158; S. BUCK et al., *Hans Holbein the Younger, 1497/98-1543: Portraitist of the Renaissance*, The Hague 2003; H. FREYTAG, *Das Bildnis eines Danzigers, von Hans Holbein gemalt*, in: “Zeitschrift des West-preussisches Geschichtsvereins”, 40, 1899, pp. 107-115.

that it was to be delivered to Georg personally and was thus confidential. The implication is that this is sensitive information from home, which could be family, city or even large-scale political news. Georg presented himself as a typical Hanseatic trader, spending years abroad to build up trade networks and wealth, and thus operating in a foreign political context. At the same time, he was well aware that he would be returning to Danzig to get married to a daughter of a patrician from another Hanseatic town in Prussia, Thorn (Toruń): hence the carnations in the picture, which were a symbol of his engagement. While continuing to do business from Danzig, Giese would eventually become a city councillor, judge and arbitrator, as well as envoy to Prussian regional meetings and Hanseatic regional meetings. There, commerce and politics were intertwined to uphold the autonomy of cities and the region itself under the Polish Crown. Georg would have probably been pleased to know that one of his sons would become secretary to the Polish king and a champion of Danzig's commercial and political interests, while another would become a burgomaster in Thorn. In any case, Georg saw a nephew become a frequent envoy to the Danish king, a cousin represent the city in Hanse matters and Crown affairs, and another family member negotiate privileges in Portugal.<sup>5</sup>

A highly significant point that has to be made in the context of this paper is that all members of the family were performing urban diplomacy as side jobs, next to sitting on the urban council or conducting trade. You could call them a family of multitaskers, as the collective number of roles and linkages is quite striking. Family ties were obviously very important to Georg: apart from his brother's letter in the painting, merchant marks tell a story here. We know from other sources what the merchants mark of his deceased father (1) and of his other elder brother, Albrecht (2), looked like. Georg's mark in the painting (3) is a variant of his kin's.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> T. BORAWSKA, *Rodzina Giesów*, cit.; A. GIESE, *Die Danziger Patrizier familie Giese*, in "Danziger familiengeschichtliche Beiträge", 2, Danzig 1934, pp. 111-121 and 3, 1938, p. 6; K. MIKULSKI, *Adel und Patriziat im Königlichen Preußen vom 15. bis 18. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer Bestimmung ihrer Beziehungen zueinander*, in "Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung/Journal of East Central European Studies", 49, 2000, n. 1, pp.38-51.

<sup>6</sup> The merchant marks of Georg's father and brother are from Giese, *Die Danziger Patrizier familie Giese*, and Biblioteka Gdańska PAN Ms 807. It was usual that merchant marks within families resembled each other, see T. HIRSCH, *Handels- und Gewerbegeschichte Danzigs unter der Herrschaft des Deutschen Ordens*, Leipzig 1858, p. 224.

Apart from continuity and importance of family ties, this choice also suggested the continuation of the mercantile – and maritime – connections. Specifically, it could refer to the business connections his father had established between Danzig and London, as well as to many places in the North Sea and Baltic Sea.

In short, the painting and the example of the Giese family demonstrates two themes which are of interest in this paper concerning networks and actors. First of all, the networks in which Georg operated existed at the family, city, regional, Hanseatic and state level, spanning the Baltic and North Seas. This translated into both opportunities and the calculated possibility of having to deal with conflicts at these levels. Secondly, Georg and his family members (i.e. ancestors, contemporaries and successors) all combined various roles in their lives. These roles ranged from business, city administration, pastoral care and legal and humanist science to urban and state diplomacy. Juggling roles also occurred on the female side of the family: Georg's widowed mother combined raising ten children and running the family business, while his wife probably maintained valuable political and commercial links with Thorn, her hometown. Exposure to various contexts and the performance of various roles made them well equipped to manage all kinds of conflicts. It has to be underlined here that, in both aspects, Georg and his family should be seen as an illustration, not an exception or a stand-alone case study.<sup>7</sup> The patriciate in Danzig consisted in the sixteenth century of 23 families, but for instance councillors were recruited from 72 families which were in various ways also involved in regional and overseas trade.<sup>8</sup> The interlacing of networks has been discussed extensively for various traders and cities in the Baltic and North Sea areas. To date, the multiplicity of roles in conflict management tied in to all these networks has not been a subject of a thorough analysis.

This second theme constitutes the very core of my 2018-2023 NWO VIDI (Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research) project, in which three team members will analyse conflict management in commercial cities in northern Europe, at the intertwined micro-, meso- and macro-scales. The framework of commercial cities has been chosen because it allows the discussion of mobility and migration, as well as economic, political, legal, social and cultural complexities. The concept of conflict is thus broader than what is usual in socio-economic history, or discussions of commercial cities. I have presented the research agenda of this project in detail elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Here, I would like to put forward three points which

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, the network and actions of the Ferber family in Danzig has been studied extensively, see E. BOJARUNIEC, *Social advancement among patrician Families in Gdańsk in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period as exemplified by the Ferber family*, Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, 29, 2015, 150-170; H. ZINS, *Ród Ferberów i jego rola w dziejach Gdańska w XV i XVI w.*, Lublin 1951. Also, Jan von Hoefen (Dantyszek) or Georg Klefeld and their networks could be good examples. The networks were interrelated, see H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Geografia powiązań rodzinnych patrycjatu gdańskiego w średniowieczu. in Venerabiles, in Nobiles et Honesti. Studia z dziejów społeczeństwa Polski średniowiecznej*, A. RADZIWIŃSKI et al eds., Toruń 1997, s. 319–325 and P. SIMSON, *Geschichte der Stadt Danzig*, Danzig 1903, 363.

<sup>8</sup> *Historia Gdańska II*, 1454-1655, Gdańsk 1982, pp. 208-215.

<sup>9</sup> J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, *Conflict management and interdisciplinary history: Presentation of a new project and an analytical model*, in “The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History”, 15, 2018, n. 1, 89-

will inform the analyses in the overall project, and which are of relevance to this paper.

1) In order to tackle the dynamic of multi-level conflicts taking place in various spheres of premodern urban life, a more comprehensive concept than ‘conflict resolution’ is needed. While this is the dominant term in social sciences and social-economic history, it does not take enough into account that conflicts were not only resolved. Consequently, I propose a model of historical conflict *management* consisting of prevention, provocation, maintenance of the status quo, escalation and de-escalation, in addition to resolution. These should be seen as elements, not stages in conflict management.<sup>10</sup>

2) Economic, and also commercial history, has in recent years put much emphasis on institutions, including those handling conflicts. The people behind these institutions, i.e. the faces of conflict management like Georg Giese and his family members, have not received such attention. Yet in order to understand the functioning of institutions, the actors behind it have to become more visible. And, in the case of commercial cities engaged in maritime trade, it is important to underline that these people were part of various networks at the same time. Within these networks, they could exchange both mercantile and conflict management know-how.

3) To date, separate roles like lawyers, councillors or diplomats have been scrutinized in the context of the overall changes occurring in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in particular the rise or transformation of states with strong sovereigns. But, as the example of the Giese family demonstrates, these roles at the urban level were not ascribed as exclusive to one person. They could be stages in a career, or co-exist alongside other roles. My point is that these interconnections of networks and flexibility of roles in conflict management were the strength of Hanseatic commercial cities. Specifically, they allowed flexibility, exchange of information in the very well-developed culture of written communication and frequent face-to-face meetings (the aforementioned Hanse and regional diets), and the growth of versatile experience. The lack of one specialization was not seen as hindrance, but an advantage in the Hanse in the late Middle Ages and the sixteenth century.

The project will explore these issues in depth, and thus the current paper should be seen as a starting point of discussion.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, I do want to present some initial results and show how these multitasking conflict managers operated in the networks of the Baltic and North Sea areas. As mentioned earlier,

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107. Compare also F. MIRANDA, J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ eds. *Merchants and Commercial Conflicts in Europe, 1250-1600*, special issue of “Continuity and Change”, 32, 2017, n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Different than in for instance the hourglass model in O. RAMSBOTHAM, T. WOODHOUSE, H. MIALL, *Contemporary conflict resolution*, Malden 2016, 4th updated edition.

<sup>11</sup> As the paper was written in the first months of the project, I make primarily use of secondary literature, published sources and only some archival sources. The references to my own articles are signposts to more extensive primary source discussions.

the empirical foundation is to a large extent derived from the activities and interests of the citizens of the Hanseatic city of Danzig.<sup>12</sup>

In the following, I will briefly discuss the various levels at which these versatile northern European conflict managers operated. From the point of view of citizens of a Hanseatic city, there were five levels: the urban, regional, Hanseatic, state level (i.e. the interaction with the sovereign and officials acting on his behalf), as well as the 'inter' level of politics (i.e. the interurban, interregional and interstate dealings with non-Hanseatic city councils, foreign overlords and rulers).

## THE CITY

Within the city of Danzig in the second half of the fifteenth and in the sixteenth centuries, the most important institution was the great (broad) municipal council. Until 1526, the power was in the hands of the council proper, with four (rotating) burgomasters and a total of nineteen councillors drawn mainly from the mercantile patriciate (the First Order). There was also a Bench of twelve aldermen with a judge (Second Order), which at first had only judicial functions. After the Third Order of lesser merchants and craftsmen joined in 1526, the broad council of the three orders governed the city. This broad council combined administrative, legislative, political and judicial functions.<sup>13</sup> As is well known, in this period there was no division of power similar to our modern *trias politica* – or apparently, no need to divide it. There was, however, a division of competences. For example, the Bench of aldermen adjudicated as a rule in the first instance and rendered arbitration, while the council proper functioned in the second instance. In practice, however, there could be exceptions to this rule. The proclaimed aim was to handle matters – often framed as conflicts – in an efficient way. Recurring examples are commercial conflicts, shipwreck issues, bankruptcies or inheritance matters.<sup>14</sup> This

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<sup>12</sup> The model of conflict management, and the project altogether, were conceived on the basis of my previous research done on conflict *resolution* in Danzig and the Hanse, and were prompted by the conceptual gap in the analyses of premodern conflicts. See J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, *The Hanse as an institution of conflict management*, cit., pp. 59-84.

<sup>13</sup> C. BIERNAT, *Recesy gdańskich ordynków, 1545-1814*, Gdańsk 1958.

<sup>14</sup> H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Wer traf die Entscheidungen in den selbstverwalteten Städten des mittelalterlichen Polen?*, in *Rechtstadtgründungen im mittelalterlichen Polen*, ed. E. MÜHLE, Cologne 2011, p. 383; R. CZAJA, *Grupy rządzące w miastach nadbałtyckich w średniowieczu [The governing groups in the Baltic towns in the Middle Ages]*, Toruń 2008; J. TANDECKI, *Aufbau der Verwaltung und der Gerichtsbarkeit in den preussischen Grosstädten im Mittelalter*, in *Preussische Landesgeschichte: Festschrift für Bernhart Jähmig zum 60. Geburtstag*, U. ARNOLD, M. GLAUERT, J. SARNOWSKY eds., Marburg 2001, pp. 247-252; C. BIERNAT, *Recesy*, cit.; D. KACZOR, *City constitution, municipal laws and public order in sixteenth-century Gdańsk*, in *New Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Gdańsk, Poland and Prussia*, ed. B. MOŻEJKO, London 2017, pp. 127-141. On the municipal organization of cities using Saxon law, see E. ISENMANN, *Die deutsche Stadt im Mittelalter 1150-1550. Stadtgestalt, Recht, Verfassung, Stadtregiment, Kirche, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft*, Köln 2010. On the historical records of the Danzig council, see M. GRULKOWSKI, *Gdańsk chancellery and registers in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries*, in *New Studies*, pp. 47-59 and P. OLIŃSKI, *Die Danziger Stadtbücher im 14. und der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, in *Verwaltung und Schriftlichkeit in den Hansestädten*, ed. J. SARNOWSKY, Trier 2006.

means that people who were active in these bodies gained insight and experience with respect to handling a variety of matters.

The most visible part of the activities of the members of these institutions is conflict resolution. It takes up the most space in the sources, and has received the most attention from researchers – both due to the topics they have investigated (commercial and social relations), and the conceptual apparatus used, where ‘resolution’ is the established term. However, also on this city level, one can speak of prevention (drawing up laws and regulations), provocation and escalation (in many cases opting for costly, exhausting and relation-damaging litigation), maintenance of the status quo (when matters were adjourned endlessly), and de-escalation (by means of trying to find a solution and taking measures to prevent a re-eruption of conflict, for instance by having the parties take an oath of peace or, conversely, by expelling someone from the city to be rid of the problem). These activities, in addition to the traditional category of resolution, should therefore be given more space and extra attention in the project.

Overall, the principle of overlapping jurisdictions, competences and functions existed in Danzig, just like elsewhere in Europe at the time. There were also other institutions – and thus individuals – who were part of this overlap. Starting in the second half of the fifteenth century, that is, from when Danzig became part of the Polish Crown, a representative of the king was present in the city (*Burggraf*). He was also a member of the mercantile patriciate, i.e. coming from one of the several families involved in trade, administration and politics at the highest level, many of whom became ennobled.<sup>15</sup> In the sixteenth century, the burgomaster and his deputy had their own judicial competences, and another organ – the *Wette* – gained power and prominence in dealing with criminal matters. Based on a previous administrative urban division, there was also a separate Bench of alderman for matters concerning the Old City, previously an autonomous entity and as of the mid-fifteenth century a neighbourhood in the Main City of Danzig. Also, while secretaries and the so-called syndics were not full members of the council, they took part in the sessions (and as we shall see, performed tasks outside of the city) and brought in learned expertise: after all, they were the only ones with legal degrees, obtained in Cracow, Leipzig, Rostock or further abroad.<sup>16</sup> Finally, there was an economic institution that supervised the collection of mooring fees, the so-called *Pfahlkammer*. Although it was not primarily a judicial body, conflicts could occur within their sphere of competences. And, perhaps even more significantly, it was led by two councillors from the magistrate, again according to the principle of rotation.<sup>17</sup> The extent of the group in Danzig, their embeddedness in the networks

<sup>15</sup> BIBLIOTEKA GDAŃSKA PAN, henceforth BG PAN, Ms. 616; M. BISKUP, *Starostowie-Burgrabiowie gdańscy w latach 1455-1506*, in “Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne”, 6, 1954, n. 1, pp. 42-59; K. MIKULSKI, *Patryzjat*, cit., p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> *Hanserecesse/Hanserezesse*, 4 series, 26 volumes Hanserecesse/Hanserezesse, Leipzig 1870–1970, henceforth HR 2:3 nr. 288§49; HR 3:1 nr. 334§§23–24; HR 3:3 nr. 352§§23, 114, 116–119; HR 3:7 nr. 39§§14–22; HR 3:7 nr. 40§§4-5; HR 3:7 nr. 45§§14–18.

<sup>17</sup> Z. ZDRENKA, *Rats- und Gerichtspatryzjat der Rechten Stadt Danzig, Teil II:1526–1792*, Hamburg 1989; IDEM, *Glówne, Stare i Młode Miasto Gdańsk i ich patryzjat w latach 1342–1525* [Gdańsk’s Main, Old and Young Towns and their patricians: 1342-1525, Toruń 1992; D. KACZOR, *Herrschaft und Verbrecher*.

of the Hanse and the region and the way they juggled their roles will be the subject of investigation in the project.

However, it can already be pointed out that movement between the various bodies was the very feature of these institutions. It can be seen as motion in two directions: ascension in career steps towards more advanced positions, and rotation between the functions. To take the Giese family as an example, Georg and his cousin Tiedemann started as aldermen on the Bench at the ages of 38 and 34, respectively, after gaining experience as merchants. After 9-14 years, they became judges there, which meant that they were presiding over the meetings. The next step on the ladder was to become councillor, 2-3 years later. Some of these councillors would eventually become burgomasters, the highest position in the city, for example, the aforementioned cousin or Georg's son Konstantin. This climbing of the ladder meant that they were familiar with various types of conflict and ways of handling them, as well as with the increase of scale and complexity. At the same time, the rotating of functions was just as important: as councillors, they would become acquainted with spheres of urban life and hold responsibilities connected to upholding and expanding the infrastructure of the harbour, for instance. Some councillors and burgomasters would become representatives of the king in the city, *Burggraf*: this included our Georg, when he was in his late fifties, and a couple other members of his family. While this was seen as an honourable function, it was a career or function option, not the highest attainable role. An important note about this mobile system has to be made: even though the members of these institutions may seem to have been partly limited to the patriciate, as the same names keep occurring in the historical record, no direct kin were in fact allowed to sit on the council at the same time (a rule that was probably frustrating to large families, like the Giese). Moreover, the introduction of the Third Order in 1526 gave other city dwellers a voice in decisions concerning changes of laws and regulations, for instance, and expanded the pool of know-how, as the new members brought concrete examples – such as conflicts between butchers or bakers – with them to the council table. This Third Order strove for the formalization of arbitration performed in various parts of the city by its members from 1545 on; this could be seen as an upward legal mobility of the whole group of craftsmen. Some of the members of the Third Order would become members of the council proper.<sup>18</sup>

This Third Order constituted a bridge to the rest of the city, and it draws our attention to the fact that not all matters were dealt with on the council or before the *Wette* or *Burggraf*. It was also common for 'good men' to perform (informal) arbitration and mediation in the neighbourhoods, which would then be registered in the books of the Bench of aldermen. The rules of conduct that were developed in these neighbourhoods were used in discussions on the revisions of the law governing in Danzig and in Prussia. Similarly, priests could play such a role in the

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*Der Danziger Strafvollzug in der Frühen Neuzeit*, in *Kulturgeschichte Preußens königlich polnischen Anteils in der Frühen Neuzeit*, S. BECKMANN, K. GARBER eds., Tübingen 2005; J. KAUFMANN, *Studien zur Geschichte der Altstadt Danzig*, in "Zeitschrift des Westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins", 55, 1913; E. KEYSER, *Die Gerichtsbücher der Altstadt Danzig*, in "Mitteilungen des Westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins", 23, 1924, pp. 31-32.

<sup>18</sup> C. BIERNAT, *Recesy*, cit.

parishes, as part of their pastoral care. In the sixteenth century, many of the provosts were educated in universities, also in (canonical) law, and they too engaged in revisions of the law and regulations.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, while the skippers of ships calling at Danzig and elsewhere had no formal judiciary competences, there were no obstacles to them performing the role of an arbiter if their reputation and the situation allowed it. As we will see in the following sections, it was also possible and apparently normal for the city council to draw from this pool of burghers for tasks abroad. All of this means that the category of Danzigers who were tasked with managing conflicts at various levels should be seen as broader than just the city council.

However, the crux of this discussion – even though it is divided for analytical purposes into the urban, regional, Hanse and state levels – is that this urban environment, with its exposure to various issues and internal mobility, was not a closed urban system if we look at it from the point of view of maritime networks and conflict management. These varied urban conflict managers were active at all levels, and moved between them in a similar way as they did within the city.

## THE REGION

From the point of view of the participation of Danzigers in conflict management in multiple roles and guises, the regional level can be seen in a twofold way: the meetings of the Prussian Council and the Prussian Estates, on the one hand, and the regional meetings of the representatives of the Prussian Hanseatic cities Danzig, Elbing and Thorn, on the other. In all these contexts, Georg Giese and other members of his family were clearly very active.

The Prussian Council was a political body in Royal Prussia whose main task was to safeguard the autonomy of the region. It had developed from the Prussian Confederation (a cooperation of nobility and cities, founded in 1440), which opposed the policy of its then-sovereign, the Teutonic Order. It was comprised of voivods, castellans, chamberlains, bishops of Warmia and Kulm as ecclesiastical and secular overlords, as well as two or three representatives from each of the cities of Danzig, Thorn and Elbing. In the sixteenth century, the council was presided over by the Warmia bishop, which shows the importance of the post (Georg's brother Tiedemann was first bishop of Kulm, then of Warmia). It was a body with no external political power, i.e. it was not supposed to carry on international politics. Yet it was the highest echelon of power in Prussia when it came to internal affairs like taxation, the minting of coins or legislation.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Historia Gdańska II*, 1454-1655, Gdańsk 1982, pp. 266-288; T. BORAWSKA, *Życie umysłowe na Warmii w czasach Mikołaja Kopernika*, Toruń 1996.

<sup>20</sup> B. ŚLIWIŃSKI, B. MOŹEJKO, *The political history of Gdańsk from the town beginnings to the sixteenth century*, in *New Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Gdańsk, Poland and Prussia*, ed. B. MOŹEJKO, London 2017, 37; R. CZAJA, *Miasta pruskie a Zakon krzyżacki. Studia nad stosunkami między miastem a władzą terytorialną w późnym średniowieczu* [Prussian towns and the Teutonic Order. Studies on the relationship between towns and territorial authorities in the late medieval period], Toruń 1999.

In these matters, however, the Council had to consult the representative body in Prussia, the Estates (created already in the fourteenth century). The Estates met on average four times a year, and consisted of officials from the cities as well as members of the nobility. The meetings were usually held in Marienburg (Malbork) and Graudenz (Grudziądz), and here, also external affairs like foreign policy or overseas commerce were discussed. What appears then as an inland body was at the same time very much a forum for discussions on the maritime interests and networks of the cities of Danzig, Elbing and Thorn, as well as of the nobility engaged in the profitable grain trade from the Baltic region.<sup>21</sup> Matters regarding these cities were high on the agenda, including private warfare going on in the region and affecting commerce, or matters of legislation (Kulm law) which then had an impact on the urban law and regulations. The meetings were partly geared towards the resolution of problems, but even more towards preventing them or channelling them towards other bodies. This part of the activities of the Estates will be to the focus of close examination during the project, as the forum is a very good example of how urban, regional, state and also overseas interests were intertwined, and how conflict managers operated at a group and personal level.

Georg Giese was a frequent envoy of Danzig to the meetings of the Prussian Estates. He had close connections to Thorn, with his wife originating from there and his son eventually becoming a burgomaster in the city. His fraternal tie with the bishopric in Kulm and later Warmia must have also been seen as an asset. He managed his brother's commercial affairs, and that gave him social and political capital in matters concerning the city of Danzig. Furthermore, his branch of the Giese family became ennobled in the sixteenth century, which might have enabled closer contact with the nobility in the Prussian Council and the Estates.<sup>22</sup>

He was also sent by Danzig to the meetings of the Prussian Hanseatic cities, where the affairs of this part of the Hanse were discussed and the shared position for the general meetings was prepared and discussed. These meetings could at times overlap with the meetings of the Estates, and it is clear that the same representatives were sent to both meetings, which suggests that cohesion was sought. The Hanseatic regional meeting was also a very important forum for the exchange of information related to Hanse trade and privileges, and if internal tensions arose between traders from the Prussian Hanseatic cities, it was also a forum of conflict management. The policy was to resolve the matters through arbitration and mediation rather than litigation. At the same time, the fact that these meetings were held regularly (the envoys knew each other well and could communicate decisions to their hometowns as well as keep the overall regional and state context in mind) functioned as a mechanism of conflict prevention and again, if needed, of delegation of further conflict management to appropriate bodies. Stalling conflict resolution in such a way could be at times an effective tool in letting tempers cool down.

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<sup>21</sup> H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Rola Gdańska w życiu stanowym Prus Królewskich i w życiu politycznym Rzeczypospolitej* [The role of Gdańsk in the administrative life of Royal Prussia and the political life of the Republic] in *Historia Gdańska II, 1454-1655*, ed. E. CIEŚLAK, Gdańsk 1982, pp. 260–288.

<sup>22</sup> T. BORAWSKA, *Rodzina*, cit., p. 143.

## THE HANSE

The general Hanse level can be split equally into two parts, though both parts were very much interconnected: the Hanse diets and the way in which the *Kontore* were run. Envoys from Hanseatic cities also met regularly: in some periods every year, in other periods every couple of years. Most diets were held in Lübeck, but there were also meetings in Bremen, Cologne, Lüneburg, etc. These meetings lasted for weeks, and included their own rituals and ways of demonstrating both unity and status differences within the Hanse. They involved the presence of dozens of prominent men in the host city, who stayed in taverns and met in the city hall.<sup>23</sup> A variety of matters were discussed, including shared privileges and regulations, foreign policy, the shipment of goods, prices, quality of goods, reaction to or imposing blockades, the organization of settlements abroad, breaches of rules and expulsion of individual traders and cities from the Hanse (a last-resort measure, which was rarely implemented). In other words, all aspects of the functioning of the Hanse as a maritime and, more generally, commercial and political network were scrutinised and shaped there.<sup>24</sup> Conflicts at the individual level, between Hanseatic cities or with non-Hansards, as well as large-scale political and economic clashes, were debated in detail to reach common decisions or decide on further procedure. The envoys brought specific matters to the table. For instance, in 1535, representatives of Danzig produced claims by our Georg Giese and other citizens on past damages committed by Hollanders which had not yet been repaid.<sup>25</sup> Concerning matters within the Hanse, there was a strong drive to find consensus or, if this was not possible, to stall a matter. A good example of this is the almost 80 year long ‘sitting order’ conflict between envoys from Danzig and Königsberg at the Hanse diets, which ostensibly was about status at the meeting table, and in fact reflected the changed political sovereignty of both cities. As such, it was intractable, but ways were found to maintain the status quo and keep negotiations about other matters going.<sup>26</sup> Also, there were many mechanisms to prevent internal conflicts that kept each other very well informed. On the other hand, shared decisions could also be reached to escalate a conflict with foreigners, by imposing trade bans during a war, for instance. In all these matters, the Hanse diet could thus function as a forum for conflict management for the envoys and the cities they represented.

The representatives of cities usually did not have full plenipotence of their councils: they were to take the Hanseatic decisions (*recessè*) home for ratification, and thus a mechanism of control, autonomy and, if needed, postponement was

<sup>23</sup> T. BEHRMANN, *Über Zeichen, Zeremoniell und Hansebegriff auf hansischen Tagfahrten*, in *Die hansischen Tagfahrten zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, ed. V. HENN, Trier 2001, 109-124

<sup>24</sup> *Die hansischen Tagfahrten zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, ed. V. HENN, Trier 2001; *Flandrischer Copiar Nr. 9. See- und Schifffrechtsbestimmungen*, C. JAHNKE ed. and trans., Lübeck 2003.

<sup>25</sup> HR 2:2 nr. 494; *Niederländische Akten und Urkunden zur Geschichte der Hanse und zur deutschen Seegeschichte*, RUDOLF HÄPKE ed., I-II, Munich, 1913 (henceforth NAU) 1 nr. 256.

<sup>26</sup> J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, *Mercantile conflict resolution in practice: connecting diplomatic and legal sources from Danzig c. 1460-1580*, in *Understanding the Sources of Early Modern and Modern Commercial Law: Courts, Statutes, Contracts, and Legal Scholarship*, H. PIHLAJAMÄKI, A. CORDES, S. DAUCHY eds., Leiden 2018, pp. 7-31.

employed by the cities. Still, this does not mean the envoys were powerless. Quite the contrary, we find mostly burgomasters and prominent councillors on the list of attendees, among them members of the Giese family. Secretaries and syndics could also come, but they were not always as welcome because the cities limited their voting rights even further.<sup>27</sup> On the whole, envoys from Danzig, for instance, had detailed instructions on what to promote and what to resist, but the idea was that they should try to reach those goals in a flexible manner. In other words, they were to negotiate with the other participants and, if necessary, yield to demands for the greater common good.

It is striking that, for a long time, little research had been done into the background of the Hanse envoys. Recently, this has changed and the findings are fascinating.<sup>28</sup> It appears that there was a far-reaching stability in the pool of attendees, i.e. the same people went to meeting after meeting. Consequently, they knew each other quite well, which could help in negotiations and facilitated the flow of information. Secondly, many of them were migrants from one Hanseatic city to another, or married to daughters of the patriciate from another city. This meant that they functioned as a network at the level of the Hanseatic diets: a maritime kinship and mobility network, as many came from Baltic and North Sea cities directly involved in maritime trade. When it comes to our Giese family, we see marital connections with Thorn (Georg's wife) and Zwolle (his sister). A position has been put forward that envoys were selected by the city councils precisely on the basis of their personal extensive networks.<sup>29</sup> This would mean that there was a very pragmatic policy of employing networks on various levels. An argument for this position is that internal political changes on the city council do not seem to have significantly affected the choice of who was sent.

The *Kontore* were special bodies within the Hanse: they *did* function as legal units with their own seals, coat of arms and treasury. They could, on the one hand, be seen as places where Hanseatic traders from various cities stayed together (though this could take various forms: from closed compounds in Novgorod to scattered lodgings in Bruges), but also as congregations of people. Surely, their primary objective was to conduct trade on foreign ground, within the protected framework of privileges. But the *Kontore* were also very important information hubs on matters which could range from the best prices for woollen cloth to political news on uncooperative kings or the ramifications of the introduction of Lutheranism. Also, the members of the *Kontor* were governed and adjudicated by a selected group of aldermen, who at the same time played an active and prominent role in international politics (see the last section). We will focus on the information

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<sup>27</sup> HR 2:3 nr. 288§49; HR 3:1 nr. 334§§23–24; HR 3:3 nr. 352§§23, 114, 116–119; HR 3:7 nr. 39§§14–22; HR 3:7 nr. 40§§4–5; HR 3:7 nr. 45§§14–18; BEHRMANN, *Zeichen*, p. 116.

<sup>28</sup> D.W. POECK, *Die Herren der Hanse. Delegierte und Netzwerke*, Frankfurt am Main 2010. Compare M. PUHLE, *Hansische Ratssendeboten und ihr sozialer und politischer Hintergrund. Braunschweig und Magdeburg im Vergleich*, in *Die hansischen Tagfahrten*, Henne ed., pp. 65–73.

<sup>29</sup> D.W. POECK, *Die Herren*, cit., p. 270.

and internal conflict management aspects here, as they tie in with the Hanse diet and urban levels.<sup>30</sup>

The dissemination of information was a very important function of the *Kontore*. They had their own administration, sending out and receiving letters and copies of letters and privileges. Both on the private and collective level, even very specific mercantile writs were usually accompanied by at least a few lines regarding the current political situation, changes in the legal regulations in the host country or on weather conditions, which were vital for shipping. This information was sent to the hometowns of the merchants residing in the *Kontore*, to the Hanse diet and, if appropriate, to the other *Kontore*. A lot of these writings were dispatched by sea, with the merchants ships, so this is a very good example of a maritime *information* network. Recent research both on the Hanse and medieval economy in general has underlined that it was not capital as such that lay behind advances of commerce and economy, but the access to and spread of information. This well-oiled communication machine, one of the Hanse's trump cards, made it possible to evaluate options in all spheres of the life of merchants, and thus push the ubiquitous limits of risk and uncertainty somewhat further.<sup>31</sup> This was also of importance to conflict management: information coming from several sources could help reveal rising tensions even in distant maritime connections, and thus prevent conflicts in a timely way or de-escalate them. On the other hand, news of goods scarcity on European markets, for instance, could be a useful tool to escalate conflicts and thereby achieve the aim of securing a better deal with the rulers of the Low Countries, England, Norway or Novgorod, as will be discussed below. Danzigers were present in all four large *Kontore*, but the most significant group was in Bruges and London. Georg Giese had his portrait taken while in London, but he was also active in the Low Countries. Administrators were merchants with yearlong experience which went beyond commercial know-how. There are several examples of *Kontor* administrators in Bruges (later moved to Antwerp) who came from Danzig, and who thus combined commercial activities with keeping unity and peace within the settlement. Much effort was put into preventing and de-escalating both internal and external conflicts, as in the Portinari case in the 1470s when a ship was captured by Danzigers on its way from Bruges to Italy. There, *Kontor* diplomacy included dealing with the pope.<sup>32</sup> Some of these Hanseatic diplomats and administrators later became councillors in a city. A man by the name of Hinrik Castorp from Dortmund, for instance, was an administrator in Bruges who later became Lübeck burgomaster. He hammered on the importance of good diplomacy

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<sup>30</sup> N. JÖRN, *Die Herausbildung der Kontorordnungen in Novgorod, Bergen, London und Brügge im Vergleich 12-17. Jahrhundert, in Prozesse der Normbildung und Normveränderung im mittelalterlichen Europa*, D. RUHE, K.-H. SPIESS eds., Stuttgart 2000, pp. 217-235; M. BURKHARDT, *Kontors and Outposts*, in *A Companion to the Hanseatic League*, ed. D.J. HARRELD, Leiden 2015, pp. 127-161. See also the matter of the Bruges *Kontor* alderman from Danzig in J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, *Connecting diplomatic and legal sources*, cit., pp. 7-31.

<sup>31</sup> S. JENKS, *Capturing opportunity, financing trade, The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade around Europe 1300-1600*, W. BLOCKMANS, M. KROM, J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, London 2017, pp. 56-76.

<sup>32</sup> B. MOZEJKO, *Maritime Gdańsk in the second half of the fourteenth and the fifteenth century: The phenomenon of privateer Paul Beneke and the great caravel Peter von Danzig*, in *New Studies*, pp. 102-113.; J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ, *Connecting legal and diplomatic sources*, cit.

and conflict prevention, and his favourite saying was 'It's easy to start war, but it costs a lot to stop it in an honourable way'.<sup>33</sup> This means that at a city level, *Kontor* administrators brought with them a combination of very international experience of trade, maintaining complex maritime networks and dealing with conflicts.

## THE STATE

Danzigers operated not only in the Hanse network, but were also subject to a sovereign, the Polish king. Until the middle of the fifteenth century, Danzig and Prussia were under the Teutonic knights, but due to a string of conflicts regarding, among other things, commercial and tax matters, Danzigers turned to the Polish king. After a lengthy war, they attained far-reaching autonomy within the rising state of the Polish Crown.<sup>34</sup> This move had several consequences: political, economic and legal-social. Politically, it entailed protection of the Polish sovereign and it was a clear signal that the city was not part of the Holy Roman Empire (though the emperor kept 'forgetting' this well into the sixteenth century). At the same time, it placed the city (along with Thorn and Elbing) in the political and regional context of Royal Prussia. Consequently, it was on the other side of the border from (also Hanseatic) Königsberg, which was under the Teutonic Order and, from 1526, Ducal Prussia – hence the 'sitting order' dispute mentioned above. From the economic point of view, it gave Danzig access to a huge hinterland producing grain, i.e. the main export product of Danzig merchants to western Europe. For the Polish Crown, the harbour and granary infrastructure of Danzig meant access to the economic networks of the Hanse and the maritime connections of the city in general, including the Low Countries, England and Scandinavia. It is clear that the harbour in the Baltic became very important to the King. The legal and social consequences were that the city was now under Magdeburg (Kulm) law, with inheritance rules stemming from Flemish law and at the same time the Polish king as a supreme instance of appeal, in carefully circumscribed cases. Danzig and Royal Prussia were to be governed by people born in the region (the so-called 'indygenat'), i.e. of German origin with the explicit argument that they knew the local circumstances best, in addition to the established rights. In the sixteenth century at least part of this elite was fluent in Polish and very knowledgeable of the Polish political and economic affairs, since they had studied in Cracow, served the King and went on missions to negotiate the range of the autonomy of the region with the sovereign.<sup>35</sup> Again, all these spheres were arenas of conflict management, which was conducted by specific people.

If we look at the Danzig example, such tasks were given to city councillors, syndics and burgomasters, often in a combination of 2-3 people. The sources from

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<sup>33</sup> G. NEUMANN, *Hinrich Castorp: ein Lübecker Bürgermeister aus der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Lübeck 1932.

<sup>34</sup> B. ŚLIWIŃSKI, B. MOŻEJKO, *The Political history*, cit.

<sup>35</sup> E. KIZIK, *Prusy*, cit.; A. SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, *Zygmunt August Król Polski i Wielki Książę Litewski, 1520-1562*, Kraków 2010; JUSTYNA WUBS-MROZEWICZ, *Danzig (Gdańsk): seeking stability and autonomy*, in *Maritime Trade*, W. BLOCKMANS, M. KROM, J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ eds., cit., pp. 248-272.

the sixteenth century show that this combination encompassed not only mercantile-administrative aspects, but also learned expertise of civil as well as sometimes ecclesiastical law. The meetings had a ceremonial nature where the mutual relations were confirmed, but where first and foremost concrete matters were discussed. The envoys also received lengthy instructions from the city council, and sent back regular reports, which at times showed the frustrations of the Danzigers with the futility of their efforts.<sup>36</sup> Such meetings could also be risky: for instance, in 1569, a nephew of Georg, councillor Albrecht Giese, as well as three other prominent Danzig burghers (burgomasters and syndic), were incarcerated under the pretext of having offended the Polish king, while the general matter was the extent of the Prussian and Danzig autonomy.<sup>37</sup> All in all, however, their tasks were usually to prevent conflicts or de-escalate, pointing towards the economic interests which benefitted from a lack of conflicts, or convincing the king to maintain the status quo rather than take a rash decision. The overall aim of Danzigers was to maintain autonomy and stability, and conflict management was a prime tool for achieving this aim.

Clergy, like the bishops of Kulm or the archbishop of Warmia, could also play a vital role in this process. While the archbishopric was part of Royal Prussia, it was also a special, autonomous entity within this framework. Still, the connections were very close: its ecclesiastical and simultaneously secular overlords, the archbishops, were often burghers of Danzig and had often embarked on their careers as provosts for one of the Danzig churches. The family, political and even business ties were very close, as the example of Georg Giese shows: as mentioned earlier, his brother Tiedemann (whose letter is probably depicted in the painting,) would become bishop of Kulm and archbishop of Warmia. Several times, Tiedemann championed the autonomy of Royal Prussia and Danzig. He took special pains to explain to the new king what 'indigenat', i.e. the right to have 'indigenous' office holders, entailed for the royal policy (to no avail, as would become clear in the course of the sixteenth century). Here, we see a conflict manager at work: preventing clashes which could – and would – ensue if outsiders started to mingle directly in Prussian affairs.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, at this royal and state level, it is noteworthy that the king drew directly from the pool of knowledgeable, educated sons of Danzig patricians to fill his administration. A good example here is the son of Georg, also named Tiedemann, who, thanks to his legal expertise, diplomatic skills and probably also the family connections, became one of the secretaries of the Polish king.<sup>39</sup> The close intellectual and diplomatic connection between Danzig and the capital of the Crown was probably enhanced by the existence of the university in Cracow, which many Danzigers attended. But it also shows the appreciation of the personal, commercial networks and the access to information which Danzigers brought to

<sup>36</sup> A part of such sources was lost during WW II, but there are copies and summaries.

<sup>37</sup> BG PAN Ms. Uph. fol. 31; *Historia Gdańska II*, p. 303.

<sup>38</sup> APG 300,29/452 fol. 45; BG PAN Ms. 1804; BORAWSKA, *Giese*, pp. 275-8.

<sup>39</sup> *Danziger Inventar, 1531-1591: Mit einem Akten-Anhang*, ed. P. SIMSON, Cologne 1913, henceforth DI, nr. 7668; P. SIMSON, *Geschichte II*, cit., p. 275.

the court. These individuals played a double role, probably to the full knowledge of the king: they translated the interests and wishes of the king in the relations with Prussia and Danzig, but at the same time actively furthered the interests of the region. This bridge function was apparently appreciated from both sides, and grew from an informal arrangement to a permanent position, because it proved effective in soothing ruffled feathers at the court (e.g. by providing gifts to strategically chosen nobles). Such translators, whether in the literal sense of the word or political-economic, were valuable regulators of conflicts such as the monopoly of Danzig traders in exporting grain from the city. It is interesting to see that the king did not confine himself to official titles like ‘lawyer’ or ‘administrator’, but chose his representatives on the basis of their capacity and connections. An illustration of this is his personal doctor, Johann Liberhant, who doubled as diplomat on the international scene: he was sent on secret missions.<sup>40</sup> Hereby, we move to the level of:

#### ‘INTER’ POLITICS: INTERURBAN, INTERREGIONAL, INTERSTATE<sup>41</sup>

The king made frequent use of Danzigers to pursue his diplomatic goals in large-scale politics.<sup>42</sup> Several members of the Giese family were sent to Scandinavia or England, sometimes together with a representative of the Polish or Prussian nobility. Sources show that this owed itself to the former’s knowledge of the macro and micro commercial interests of the Polish Crown, in the sixteenth century paired for at least some of them with legal education, probably also their language skills (part of the education of many Hanseatic merchants) and also political savvy. Danzigers, who regularly attended the Hanse and Prussian Estates meetings, were well familiar with negotiations. If we take a look at the instructions they received from the king for missions to Denmark, for instance, or when they asked for his support, it is clear that their primary task was to contain conflicts; not so much resolve them – that was often impossible within a single mission or with solely diplomatic means – but to push them in a certain direction, de-escalate them or, conversely, make diplomatic threats coated with promises of commercial advantages.<sup>43</sup>

Danzigers also participated in large-scale politics as representatives of the Hanse, though always with the hometown as a backdrop. The Hanseatic interests

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>41</sup> Just as ‘national’ or ‘transnational’ are not appropriate for the late Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, so does in fact ‘international’, as research for this article made me realise. I plead guilty for having used it myself in past publications.

<sup>42</sup> Traditional diplomatic or political history usually does not include such diplomats, see J. WATKINS, *Toward a new diplomatic history of medieval and early modern Europe*, in “Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies”, 38, 2008, n. 1, pp. 1-14; M. EBBEN, L. SICKING, *New diplomatic history in the premodern age. An Introduction*, in “Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis”, 127, 2014, n. 4, pp. 541-552. Compare here *Historia dyplomacji polskiej vol. I*, Warszawa 1982, where urban diplomats are not considered.

<sup>43</sup> APG 300,29/249 fol. 160-171, 261; APG 300,R/Ii,5 HR 3:8 nr. 257; HR 3:8 nr. 356; HR 3:8 nr. 452; HR 3:8 nr. 505; HR 3:8 nr. 577; HR 3:9 nr. 116.

vs. hometown interests balancing act was part and parcel of how the Hanse operated. As representatives of the Hanse, they visited coronation ceremonies, peace talks and perhaps most important to them, negotiations for trade privileges.<sup>44</sup> It is astounding with how much ease they moved from issue to issue, and from location to location, given the dire travelling conditions at that time, both by land and sea. Being part of and maintaining a maritime network was so self-evident that it was hardly talked about in such terms in the sources. Symptomatically, Hansards on the whole rarely used it as a term of self-description in internal communication. It was in contacts with others that it was employed, discussed and sometimes explained in circumspect terms. As Hansards, Danzigers like Georg Klefeld had the task of negotiating the best conditions possible for all Hanse privilege holders or for a specific group within the Hanse. Klefeld (1522-1576), a syndic and later burgomaster with a legal training, proved to be an effective negotiator with the English (and a very effective PhD candidate: he obtained the degree in Orleans, having passing through there on the way back from negotiations in England, as was not unusual in the sixteenth century).<sup>45</sup>

Peace was more profitable than war for traders, so prevention and de-escalation often had priority, but the Hanseatic conflict managers did not shy away from provoking or escalating conflicts either. This included the imposition of trade blockades, the moving of their settlement elsewhere (for instance, the Bruges Kontor was temporarily moved many times to Aardenburg, Utrecht, Deventer and eventually Antwerp) in order to exert pressure, or the outright declaration of war.<sup>46</sup> In all these situations, the Hanseatic diplomats also served as councillors, burgomasters or secretaries in their home cities, where they had tasks which included the management of small-scale conflicts, like inheritance cases, before one of the courts.

These urban diplomats operated not only on behalf of a sovereign or the Hanse, but also on behalf of the city proper. In the sources, we can see Danzigers like the councillor Albrecht Giese (nephew of Georg) being sent to Copenhagen, Stockholm or London, for instance, to deal with matters like arrested ships or goods, privileges for this specific city, or negotiations which would allow the city to stay out of a large-scale conflict.<sup>47</sup> The boundary between Hanse interests and the interests of a particular city could be flexible and changeable, depending on how the situation developed. It is striking that the Danzig city council sent not only people involved in the urban magistrate, but also merchants who were *not* sitting on the council, but who had gathered large commercial expertise or combined trade with legal studies. An example of this was Jakob von Barthen, a wealthy cloth trader with some legal university experience and a reputation of a 'good man' and tough negotiator. After being sent on several missions, von Barthen apparently

<sup>44</sup> For instance HR 2:5 nr. 255–258, HR 4:1 nr. 102, HR 4:2 nr. 611 § 29; HR 4:2 nr. 625.

<sup>45</sup> P. SIMSON, *Geschichte II*, cit., pp. 27, 22, 321-22.

<sup>46</sup> V. HENN, *Der 'dudesche kopman' zu Brügge und seine Beziehungen zu den 'nationes' der übrigen Fremden im späten Mittelalter*, in *Kopet uns werk by tyden': Beiträge zur hansischen und preussischen Geschichte. Walter Stark zum 75 Geburtstag*, N. JÖRN, D. KATTINGER, H. WERNICKE eds., *Schwerin* 1999, cit., pp. 131-142.

<sup>47</sup> DI nr. 4676.

developed a taste for the legal and diplomatic profession and returned to university to get a doctorate in law.<sup>48</sup>

The bottom line here is that there was pragmatic openness as to who could function as a conflict manager, and the important aspect was the right experience and proven skills. Looking at it from a collective perspective, conflict managers in Danzig had a vast know-how on dealing with all kind of conflicts: individual, group and large-scale, and they were able to accumulate this know-how in the context of their own city, the Hanse and with the backing or orders of their king. Consequently, they had a very large tool box of conflict management at their disposal. In my opinion, this variety and flexibility of roles of conflict managers, and hence skilful conflict management, was a very important aspect of the working of the Hanse.

## EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSIONS

Conflict management was seen for a couple of centuries as a flexible affair, conducted by a group of people in various capacities. The striking point is that these individuals almost always did so while also working in other occupations, primarily as merchants, clergy or doctors. Even lawyers had other tasks on the side, such as business or medicine. In 1556, representatives of the Hanse cities found it was time for there to be a permanent figure who would be the face of the organization and who would perform many of the high-profile conflict management tasks. They chose Heinrich Sudermann (1520-1591), an experienced *Reichskammergericht* (imperial court) lawyer and a syndic (i.e. diplomat trained in law and experienced in commercial affairs) from Cologne who would thereafter obtain the title of Hanse syndic. His task portfolio included diplomacy on behalf of the Hanse, attending Hanse meetings, visiting the *Kontore* and supervising the building of a new *Kontor* seat in Antwerp. Later, a request was added that he write the history of the Hanse and draw up sea law (both of which came to naught).<sup>49</sup> The increasingly exasperated and exhausted Sudermann stated that he was no expert of sea law, but to stall matters, he stated that he would make an attempt. In 1575, Sudermann had issued a lengthy writ lamenting that he was fed up with all the travelling on behalf of the Hanse, with his personal business and family life suffering tremendously under this burden, and voiced his general unhappiness with his full-time job. In other words, he thought it was much better that many people combined these tasks with their proper business or occupation. Conflict

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<sup>48</sup> P. SIMSON, *Geschichte II*, cit., p. 178.

<sup>49</sup> DI, Anhang nr. 13, 33, 37; J.P. WURM, *Die Korrespondenz des Hansesyndikus Heinrich Sudermann mit dem königlichen Statthalter in Schleswig und Holstein Heinrich Rantzau 1579-1591*, in *Das Gedächtnis der Hansestadt Lübeck*, M. HUNDT, R. HAMMEL-KIESOW eds., Lübeck 2005, pp. 491-515; L. ENNEN, *Der hansische Syndikus Heinrich Sudermann aus Köln*, in "Hansische Geschichtsblätter", 6, 1876, pp. 1-58; K. FRIEDLAND, *Der Plan des Dr. Heinrich Sudermann zur Wiederherstellung der Hanse. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hansisch-englischen Beziehungen im 16. Jahrhundert*, in *Mensch und See-fahrt zur Hansezeit*, ed. A. GRABMANN, Cologne 1995, pp. 37-102.

management, apparently, worked at best collectively in the Hanseatic north: too much pressure on one individual brought him to the brink of a burnout.<sup>50</sup>

Returning to the image of Georg Giese, I would like to draw your attention to a finding art historians have made. Something is wrong here. The angle of the room is not correct, the corner of the table protrudes toward the viewer in a rather weird way, and both his seal dangling at the back and lopsided scales next to it are tilted in a way that is physically impossible. They hang next to Giese's motto: 'No joy without sorrow'. The off-balance presentation of elements of mercantile life is not a token of a lack of skill of Holbein: quite the contrary, he did it on purpose and his visual tricks are also known from another famous painting. The huge 'The Ambassadors' in the National Gallery of London, where a French ambassador and a bishop are depicted with an anamorphic skull at the bottom, is a reminder of the finality of life.<sup>51</sup> In the case of the Giese portrait, these irregularities draw the viewer to the painting, stir an interest and impart a feeling of movement and possible lack of balance under the veneered, still image. I would add that this search for balance, so central in medieval thought, and the realization that it was a result of constant movement and change and was therefore fragile, was very fitting to the mindscape of merchants at the time. They were involved in several balancing acts between various levels of activities, various networks to which they belonged, and the various roles they performed. Not least of which in their capacity as conflict managers.

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<sup>50</sup> DI, Anhang nr. 38 (1575).

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-holbein-the-younger-the-ambassadors>.

