

Citizens without Nations

Citizenship is at the heart of our contemporary world, but it is a particular vision of national citizenship forged in the French Revolution. In *Citizens without Nations*, Maarten Prak recovers the much longer tradition of urban citizenship across the medieval and early modern world. Ranging from Europe and the American colonies to China and the Middle East, he reveals how the role of ‘ordinary people’ in urban politics has been systematically underestimated and how civic institutions such as neighbourhood associations, craft guilds, confraternities and civic militias helped shape local and state politics. By destroying this local form of citizenship, the French Revolution initially made Europe less, rather than more, democratic. Understanding citizenship’s longer-term history allows us to change the way we conceive of its future, to rethink what it is that makes some societies more successful than others and to examine whether there are fundamental differences between European and non-European societies.

Maarten Prak is Professor of Social and Economic History at the Department of History and Art History at Utrecht University. He is on the Board of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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Citizens without Nations

Urban Citizenship in Europe and the
World, c.1000–1789

Maarten Prak
Utrecht University



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For Jan Luiten van Zanden.

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Acknowledgements

Looking back across the arc of my career, I can detect the seeds for this book in my PhD thesis and the book I researched as a postdoc, both during the 1980s. Those were detailed studies of the social history of two Dutch towns in the eighteenth century. The topics I encountered then have continued to fascinate me and inspired subsequent work on European and global history. In this sense, this book has been in the making for more than twenty-five years. That is a long time, but I think it is fair to say that it is also a big topic. In the process I accumulated numerous intellectual and other debts, which cannot be properly settled in a brief acknowledgement. Nevertheless, I want to express my gratitude to a number of people who, willingly or not, have made a contribution to this project.

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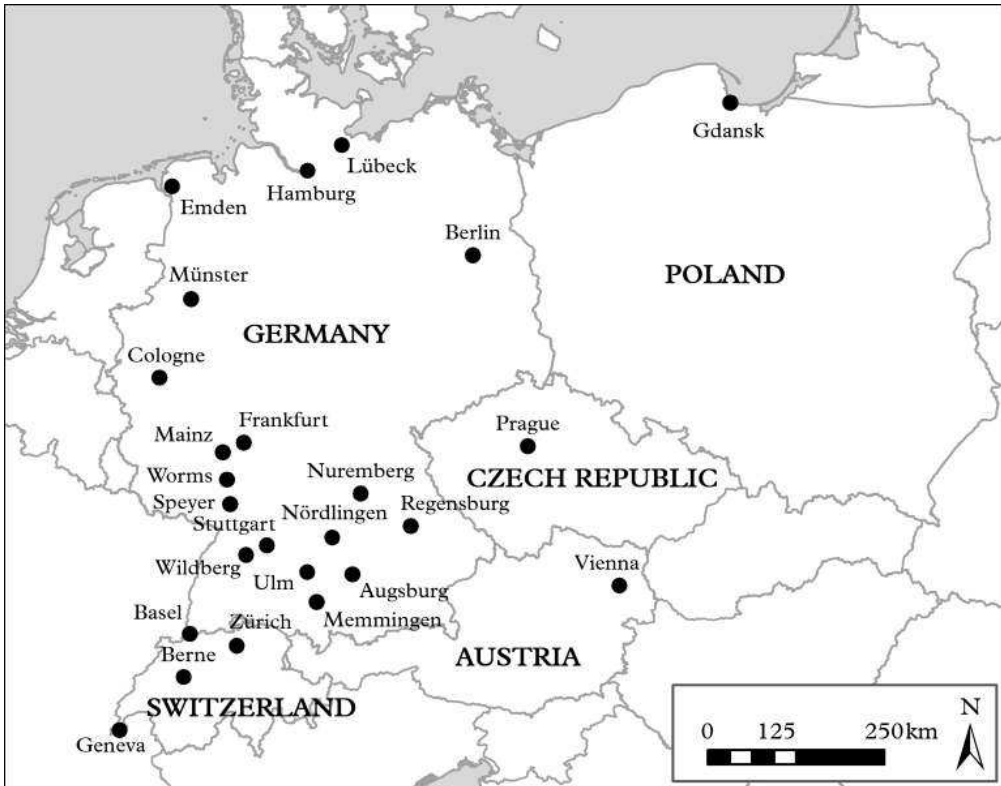
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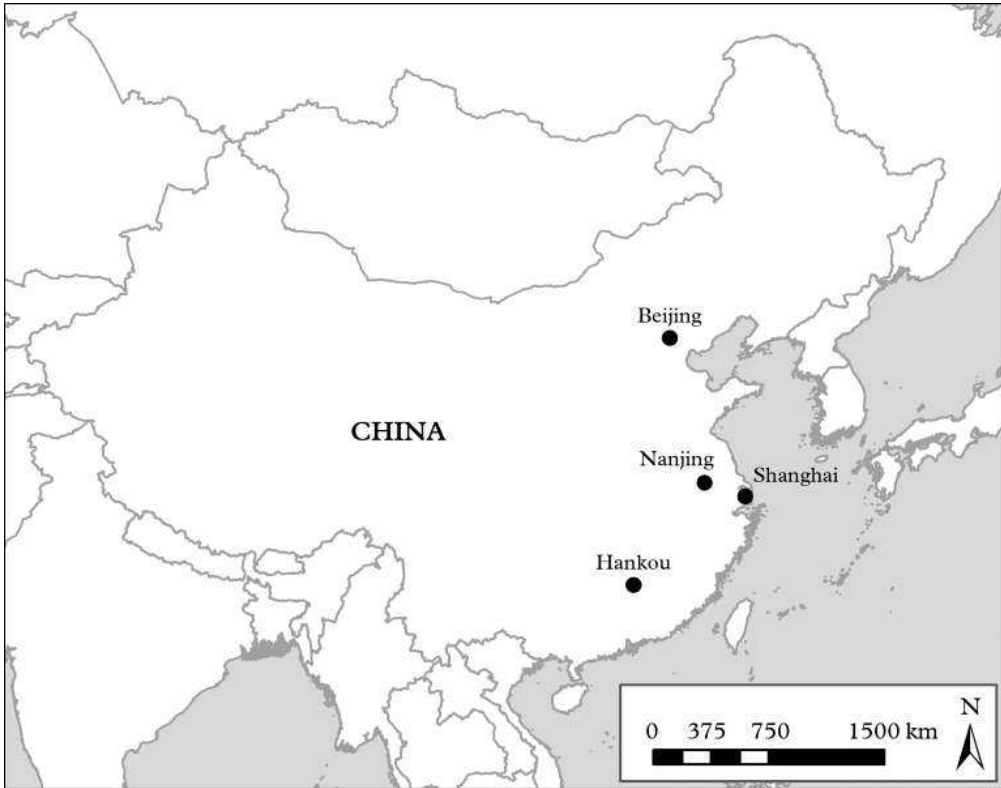
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