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Citizenship and Associative Democracy

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Citizenship revisited

In the seventies and eighties, the debate on citizenship seemed to slowly die out, but the last decade has proven that, to paraphrase Mark Twain, the news about the death of citizenship seems to have been exaggerated. There is again a large flow of new theories of citizenship that are being constructed, developed and reviewed. The reason is that this notion proved to be extremely useful in the current times of fragmentation and individualisation on the one hand, and new group forming and integration on the other, by providing a ground to deal with relations of the individual with the large (national or supranational) political entities. In uniting Europe, it was the introduction of "European citizenship" (or, in fact, citizenship of the European Union) by article 8 of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 which seems to substantially invigorate the debate, because that notion introduced new (potential) theoretical and practical problems (of split loyalties etc.) for a large part of the European population (Balibar 1996, Dekker 1993, Marias 1994, Meehan 1993, O'Leary 1996, Perczynski 1997b, Welsh 1993).
Citizenship turns out to be a concept that is difficult to pin down, not only on supranational but even on national level, because it is derived from different political, cultural and legal traditions, of different times. Moreover, we can look at citizenship from different perspectives. In this paper, I am not focusing on the narrow, "passive" citizenship, which is understood as a legal status, and hence is often used as a synonym of membership in a democratic nation-state and which "tends to mean nationality, the right to a passport" etc. (Kaldor 1996: 22 ). Neither am I concentrating on the "social citizenship" approach, which assumes civil and political rights already to be accomplished, and therefore concentrates on social rights, an approach closely connected to the now classical formulations of T.H. Marshall (Marshall 1950: 47-74, Van Gunsteren 1998: 106-109). Instead, I will focus here on the (active) political view of citizenship (Dekker 1994: 11-12).

The oldest and most classical theory of citizenship is the republican one, which emphasises the double function of citizenship: governing and being governed at the same time, or, in other words, self-government. In addition, it includes civic virtues like sacrifice for the community and willing obedience to law (Heater 1990, Riesenberg 1992). Civic virtues in this theory are of martial ("heroic") or, as Van Gunsteren puts it, "unilaterally masculine" nature (Van Gunsteren 1998: 21, Filipowicz 1997: 113-140). There are two other main theories of citizenship developed from this republican version: the liberal individualist theory and the communitarian one (Van Gunsteren 1998: 16-21, Kymlicka and Norman 1994). The former builds on and develops the individualistic egalitarian aspect of the classical republican theory and stresses the importance of individual rights. The latter emphasises the duties of a citizen towards fellow members of the community they belong to. Both individualistic and communitarian theories include republican emphasis on the self-governing character of citizenship, but, by putting all emphasis on, respectively, the individual and the community, they are vulnerable to unavoidable one-sidedness.

In neo-republican theories, there is an attempt to avoid this predisposition by incorporating and developing elements of both the liberal individualist and the
communitarian theory, and in this way to revitalise the republican one\(^2\). Modern republicans preserve egalitarianism and civic virtues, but they stress - apart from the *duty* to obey law - the *voluntary* character of the obligations (as opposed to the obligations that any state, including non-democratic ones, imposes on its members). Those civic virtues concern in new republican approach more the "un-heroic", private part of human life (which clearly refers to the liberal individualist approach) (Van Gunsteren 1998, Walzer 1994). The idea of sacrifice for community as we find it in the classical republican theory, has now been replaced by care for "the other", referred to as "other-regard", i.e. a form of civic consciousness which is more or less understood as taking the interests of fellow-citizens into account and, by doing so, making it possible to live together in the 'community of fate' possible.

Other influence of communitarianism in the approach of modern republican theory is visible in the attitude towards the group: instead of being mainly anxious of the tyranny of (sub-)communities and (especially "deep") groups, the theory tries to deal with probable frictions "organising plurality". However, citizenship in the neo-republican sense is - unlike the Kantian idea of cosmopolitan citizenship based on human rights (Held 1995: 231-235) - territorially bounded. As a result, problems of exclusion and acceptance play an important role in this theory. The theory also concentrates on the process of societal change rather than aiming towards a predefined goal - the shape of future 'republic' (incomplete republic? neo-republic? semi-republic?) is unknown and unpredictable. Citizenship is realised by actually *practising* it; as Van Gunsteren puts, neo-republicanism "concentrates on the actual situated exercise of citizenship" (Van Gunsteren 1998: 27). The more transformed and "privatised" the republican virtues are, and the more positively modified the perception of the communities and groups within society is, the more this modern version of republicanism deserves to use the prefix "neo" - to cite Jane Mansbridge, who used this phrase in a different context\(^3\).
Democracy for citizenship

The double function of citizenship – governing and being governed – is closely related to the two main types of democracy: representative (i.e. territorial, parliamentary etc.) and participatory democracy (Held 1993, Dekker 1994: 12-14, Pateman 1986). The borders between the two types are rather vague: participatory, active elements could be present in less mechanistic variants of representative democracy; in fact, the process of voting, despite its often plebiscitarian character, must be regarded as a participatory action in itself. Likewise, one could list representative mechanisms in several models of participatory democracy (e.g. special 'functional chambers' of parliament in functional models). Nevertheless, in this text I will make use of the common distinction between the two types of democracy.

Both types of democracy, as well as the relation between them, are relevant for different aspects of the type of citizenship I am interested in. Although the exact model of representation may be of influence, representative democracy does not seem to cause many problems as far as citizenship is concerned – perhaps only apart from the discussion about the accountability of representatives towards the represented, and questions about the frequency and the (optional) obligatory character of voting. More complicated, and thus more interesting for us, is citizenship in relation to participatory democracy.

Participation is clearly present in the self-governing aspect of active political citizenship, which we are concerned with in this text. Many innovative models of participatory democracy - such as deliberative (discursive), green and neo-direct democracy - have been and are constructed within democratic theory. Just as the distinction between the two types of democracy is sometimes blurred, also the particular models of participatory democracy may in some sense overlap. Some of them could be suited to provide the participation component within a particular form of citizenship and are therefore worth examining within the context of citizenship. In this text, I will focus on associative
**democracy** - a specific model of participatory democracy - in relation to a variant of the neo-republican theory of citizenship.

**Main designs of associative democracy**

Associative democracy is commonly understood as a model of participatory democracy in which the individual participation takes place in the context of self-governing interest groups or *associations*, which have, in their turn some sort of democratic structure. Within the framework of society, those groups can inform, compete and co-operate in order to achieve their goals. By doing so, they directly or indirectly provide the society with additional means of representation (individuals are represented through the groups they are members of, and therefore by their interests) and even regulation (associations can directly implement certain policies). Territorial representation could be seen as a special case of this type of functional representation: territorial interests are represented by territorial groups, i.e. the groups of individuals belonging to (living in) a certain area. Wolfgang Streeck sums it up by saying that associative democracy is about "socially responsible self-governance of functional groups" (1995: 188).

The idea of associative democracy originates from different sources, and that is one of the reasons why the exact understanding of it, the type of associations it involves, and their functioning in society differs from author to author. One of the first modern formulations of associative democracy came from Paul Hirst; he formulated in the second half of the eighties his own original plan for associationalistic democratic reconstruction, by expanding and developing ideas of English political pluralism and Guild Socialism of the 1920s (Hirst 1989, Hirst 1993, Hirst 1994). Hirst preserves strong economic aspects of the pluralist doctrine and guild ideology, but he broadens the focus towards application within modern political systems. He describes the associations as spontaneously arising and democratically self-governing, and he especially stresses their voluntary character (Hirst 1993: 12, Hirst 1994: 19). Associations should be built up, or rather, spontaneously arise, "from below", i.e. from within the society, and the state
should have minimal power over their existence and their structure. In fact, Hirst prescribes that the relations between authorities and the associations take place on the local or regional level, with (if possible) omission of the national state level (Hirst 1994: 39).

Hirst believes that the functioning of such groups would be a solution for the shortcomings of both the liberal capitalist economy and the majoritarian parliamentary representative democracy, and he considers associative democracy as a "vital supplement" - rather than a substitute - for the latter (Hirst 1994: 42; Hirst 1997: 24). In fact, Hirst states that associative democracy can strengthen representative institutions - and thus representative democracy - because freeing them from an overload of activities allows them to concentrate better on their main functions, "to provide society with a framework of basic laws to guide social actors; to oversee forms of public service provision to hold public officials accountable; and to protect the rights and interests of citizens" (Hirst 1997: 18).

A similar idea of supplementing representative democracy with associative democracy rather than substituting it, we find in the work of Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, who build their design on radically transformed corporatist ideas. They see traditional representative democracy not only as a provider - via governmental agencies - of a framework in which groups can operate, but also as a positive influence on shaping them. The reason for this active attitude directed towards changing the conditions, terms and statuses of associations is to avoid an unfavourable particularistic influence of groups within society (Cohen & Rogers 1995a). It may seem paradoxical that an associative project takes the possible danger of groups as a point of departure. But, in fact, it makes the proposal of Cohen and Rogers more attractive, as it does not look away from the weaker points and problems present in of associative democracy, but, on the contrary, tries to concentrate on solving them. Their solution is that the state shapes (curbs) the associations (or, as they say, their quality), in order to make them more public-spirited, or other-regarding. However, Cohen and Rogers do not make clear how the imposed other-regard can change into the virtue of other-regard.
Cohen and Rogers describe several features of qualitative variation that associations can possess, and propose a judgement system in which the exact "tuning" of the variations as are needed for achieving a certain goal - i.e. needed in a particular kind of association - is left to the central state authorities. As variables that may be tuned in this way, they mention for example accountability of group leadership to members, encompassingness (as they call it) or completeness of group membership relative to affected populations, and characteristic modes of interaction with other groups (Cohen & Rogers 1995a: 48-49). The result is - and much criticism focuses on this - that the associations may not be spontaneous or 'natural' anymore and their autonomy from the state might be undermined (Hirst 1995, E.O. Wright 1995: 2). However, Cohen and Rogers see this artificiality as an advantage rather than a draw-back, because it makes the groups more responsive to the curbing by the state in order to achieve external solidarity. The tools that the state uses to achieve needed response, are conventional tools of public policy: tax, subsidies and legal sanctions (Cohen & Rogers 1995a: 44).

The artificial character of groups is also clearly present in the associative (neo-corporative) proposals of Philippe Schmitter. Although also based on them, these proposals differ from the original European corporatism even more than Cohen and Rogers' proposals. Instead of giving the state the decision of how the associations should be tuned, as Cohen and Rogers do, Schmitter proposes a fixed "constitution" (or general provisions, as he calls it) for all groups, which describes their internal structure, their rights and the means to check on them from outside. Schmitter mentions for example a guarantee for democratic procedures, a guarantee that public authorities will not intervene in the internal deliberations and choices, and a commitment to full public disclosure of associational revenues and expenditures (Schmitter 1995: 175). Only associations who would fulfil their duties according to those general provisions could gain and maintain a semi-public status.

Less than Hirst and even Cohen and Rogers, Schmitter concentrates on classical 'productively' defined interests (capital and labour); instead, he focuses on non-profit
organisations as associations (Schmitter 1995: 170). For regulating their influence in society, Schmitter introduces a system of *vouchers*, similar to the mechanism developed among others by Claus Offe. In this system, the idea is that every individual citizen gets a fixed amount of vouchers, with which he/she can "vote" for associations that have the semi-public status, by giving them one or more of the vouchers. In this setting, being a member is not a requirement for voting for the association, and vice versa, membership does not oblige to vote. Schmitter has thought of quite detailed arrangements concerning the distribution of the vouchers; his idea is that they could be administrated jointly with the yearly income tax. By introducing "voucherism", Schmitter establishes some kind of democratic mechanism, parallel to the traditional representative democracy, but the links between participatory and representative democracy are, because of the scrutiny provisions, clear and strong, just like in the two aforementioned designs of associative democracy.

The fact that each of the designs of associative democracy discussed here excludes a variety of groups (among others ethnic and familial groups) from taking part in associative democracy, has been criticised by many (Bader 1998a, Bader 1998b, Mansbridge 1995, Young 1995). However, this exclusion is not just a result of the very character of the designs, in particular of the democratic preconditions that are to be met by the groups, but it also serves pragmatic goals like the effectiveness of negotiations between associations (Immergut 1995: 206) and the overall efficiency of the "double democratic" - associative and representative - system.

**Relevance of associative democracy to citizenship**

In my opinion, all three designs of associative democracy that I discussed above, are suited to play the role of the participatory component in citizenship. This may seem surprising, as the designs of both Hirst and Cohen and Rogers are quite sceptical to the very notion of citizenship. They perceive it as an outdated notion in the modern society. In fact, Cohen and Rogers claim that their associative democracy promotes what used to
"[march] under the banner of 'citizenship'" (Cohen & Rogers 1995b: 262), but, apparently, does not march there anymore Also Hirst is critical about what he calls the "republican-citizenship standpoint", because he, similarly to Cohen and Rogers, views it as irrelevant in the modern society (Hirst 1997:82).

Schmitter, on the other hand, considers citizenship a "crucial property intrinsic to all types of democracy", and accuses Cohen and Rogers of ignoring this notion (Schmitter 1995: 183). In fact, Schmitter introduces the term 'secondary (organisational) citizens' - "alongside the usual individual variety" (Schmitter 1995: 174). In my opinion, there is no reason not to consider also both the associations of Cohen and Rogers, with their rights and duties, and the voluntary self-governing associations in the design of Hirst, as 'secondary citizens' in this sense.

But also Schmitter does not show how associative democracy could contribute to the notion of citizenship, because he does not adequately address this problem (Schmitter 1988, Schmitter 1995). Nevertheless, I can see important reasons why associative democracy as a model of participatory democracy is well-compatible with the notion of citizenship. Heater considers the English Guild Socialism of the 1920s as one of the very few examples in history where participation by a large number of citizens through membership of "a variety of associations, interest groups and pressure groups" did not lead to undermining the essential functions of the republic and the loyalty owed to it by citizens (Heater 1990: 96-99). In my opinion, all designs of associative democracy presented here also address (and try to solve!) the problem of split loyalties, although only Hirst's design has Guild Socialism as a forerunner - in fact, he himself underlines those roots (Hirst 1993:14, Hirst 1994:32-34).

What makes associative democracy especially relevant for citizenship is not only its participatory nature, but also its 'other-regarding' character (however controversial in the context of associative designs it may be), which is to some extent emphasised by all above-mentioned designs. It corresponds to the very virtue of civic consciousness which is present in the neo-republican theory of citizenship. Indeed, the notion of civic
consciousness is directly used by Cohen and Rogers, as it is required for maintaining the conditions of popular sovereignty, political equality and distributive equity - three norms of democratic governance fundamental in their design (Cohen & Rogers 1995a: 38).

As mentioned before, both types of democracy - participatory and representative - are essential to the notion of citizenship. None of the mentioned above authors refers to the importance of representative democracy for individuals who, because of circumstances or out of free will, are not participating in any association. The discussed associative democracy designs do not even attempt to give those individuals any of the protection that association members enjoy. Nevertheless, this problem is solved automatically, as all of the three designs of associative democracy that are discussed here are meant by their authors as an addition (or supplement) to an already existing and functioning system of representative democracy, and - contrary to the common views on associative democracy – in each of those designs the representative system, being the final authority, is located above or even controls the participatory part. In Cohen and Rogers' design, this control is exercised more directly by the agencies emanating from the representative system, which evaluate the conditions and performance of the associations. In the case of Hirst's and Schmitter's designs, the legal system, maintained by traditional representative means, plays a similar role, creating a framework or 'rules of the game' for the associative participatory part. All designs present a specific variant of connecting the two types of democracy. This connection is essential for citizenship and proposals included in the particular designs of associative democracy could thus provide a needed contribution to the development of a theory of citizenship.

Another contribution to the theory and practice of citizenship lies in the civic education provided by associative democracy. The educational project is traditionally an important ingredient of any citizenship scheme (Heater 1990, Dekker 1993, Dekker 1994). Modern republicanism is quite sceptical about the chances for success in learning how to be a 'good citizen' via traditional theoretical methods of instruction (Van Gunsteren 1998: 81-90, Van Gunsteren 1996). However, the advantage of civic education within associative democracy designs is that, rather than consisting of such methods, the education is
implicitly embedded in the practical, real setting of self-governing democratic associations. Through dealing with the existing procedures within associations, citizens can learn the difficult art of exercising their rights and fulfilling their duties towards the group. In this way, the group can be perceived as a 'school of citizenship'. The emphasis within the group on the education of "personal and social responsibility" - or in other words societal duties - could link associative democracy with Amitai Etzioni's communitarianism (Etzioni 1995: x, 23-53, 89-115)\textsuperscript{15}.

The idea of learning citizenship by practising it in and via the association, gets an extra dimension in the supranational setting of the European Union, where split and multi-layered loyalties are a reality that has to be taken into account. In associative democracy, multiple - often conflicting - loyalties are present almost by definition, as individuals are being members of various associations - plus an inclusive 'community of faith' - at the same time. Those associations can be either sub- or supra-associations of each other, completely distinct associations, or something in between: overlapping in some ways, but distinct in others. In this paper I am not dealing with the well-known problem of 'democratic deficit' in the European Union. This deficit is mainly linked to the disfunctioning of the representative type of democracy on European level, such as limited power of European Parliament (the directly chosen element of the system) versus omnipotence of the council of ministers and the Commission. When discussing the chances and shortcomings of European citizenship, Étienne Balibar states that the cry against losing sovereignty, which is well-heard in many (present and potential) EU-countries, can be seen as a conscious or subconscious "transferred" cry for not losing the old, established democratic state mechanism for the hardly democratic decision procedures of 'Brussels' (Balibar: 1996)\textsuperscript{16}. It is one of the reasons why the only type of European citizenship conceivable (and for most people, the only type desirable) for the near future is a sort of multi-layered citizenship, as national citizenship will have to coexist with the supranational one.

The associations could in fact also serve as "schools" for exactly this multi-layered aspect of the European, pluralist citizenship, as they are multi-layered themselves (Heater 1990:
314 - 338, Perczynski 1997b). However, the question is whether one can compare sub- and supra-membership to sub- and supra-citizenship. In other words: can the European states be imagined in the associative democracy variants playing in uniting Europe a role similar to associations in nation-states? And if so, can the European Union be perceived as some kind of "community of communities"? My answer to both questions is negative, as nation-states, understood in their classical Weberian sense, are, unlike associations, inclusive and non-voluntary, and they possess functions and qualities far exceeding those of self-governing associations17. That is also the reason why we can speak about state citizenship but not about "association citizenship". Only if one would look at the modern nation-state from a different, 'network' perspective, as suggested by J.-M. Guéhenno, the picture becomes more complicated (Guéhenno 1995). Such a nation-state could be compared to an association and the design of associative democracy could more directly apply to it.

Conclusion

I have attempted to show that associative democracy is a model of participatory democracy that is well-compatible with citizenship, and could, more concretely, expand and strengthen the active, participatory component in neo-republican citizenship. One of the main advantages of incorporating associative democracy in that way, is that it includes aspects of other participatory models, so that it provides for participation on different levels and in different ways. For example, one could recognise features of direct democracy within the self-governing associations, where members are taking active part in the decision and implementation processes within the association. Facets of deliberative democracy are also clearly present in associative democracy, as associations could provide concrete arenas of deliberation, and, in fact, the overall associative system could also be seen as an arena of negotiating, competing and co-operating associations.

Associative democracy also provides possibilities for citizens to learn and practise their civic skills as a side-effect of their activities in the associations; the latter can be seen as a
kind of schools of democracy and citizenship. Associative democracy also seems to be particularly suited for the modern problems of divided loyalty, which are clearly visible in uniting Europe; European citizenship could therefore incorporate certain aspects of the associative democracy designs to deal with the presence of pluralistic and multi-layered loyalties. In the neo-republican theory of citizenship there is a call for organising the existing plurality within society. I think that the associative democracy designs can provide exactly such an "organisation" within and among the associations, which represent that plurality. As I mentioned, both representative and participatory democracy are essential in modern citizenship. In my opinion, the presented designs of associative democracy are worth examining for their ways of combining the two types of democracy.

The internal debate among the theorists involved in developing the associative democracy designs, which was heated up especially in the first half of the 1990s, focused on issues like artificiality versus naturalness (spontaneity) of groups or top-down (via the state) versus bottom-up (i.e. societal) approaches towards associations. In my opinion, these contradictions are not as contradictory as the debate suggests. A certain degree of both artificiality and spontaneity is needed for any association in order to function in the society. Similarly, I think Bader is right when stating that what is needed is a "skilful combination" of the state approach and the societal approach towards associations (Bader 1998b: 19). That combination should, in my opinion, depend especially on the stage or phase which the associative project is in.

The most controversial issue in associative democracy designs - and at the same time a very crucial one as far as the relation between associative democracy and citizenship is concerned - is, in my opinion, the problem of other-regard, or "external solidarity". There was some debate about it, but that concentrated on accusations of imposing artificial solidarity from above (Hirst 1995), to which the reply was that imposed solidarity is better than no solidarity at all (Cohen & Rogers 1995b). In my opinion, this answer does not solve the contradiction that is still lying there: protecting particular interests versus maintaining external solidarity. The discussion would be more helped with constructive proposals to solve this problem, coming from all different existing designs or new
(potential) designs of associative democracy. In order to prevent this young - it is going on since the 1980s - debate from dying out (and thus sharing the sad faith of a short life with the debate around associationalistic proposals that was taking part in Great Britain in the 1920s), I think that this challenge should be taken up. This is not only needed for the theory of associative democracy itself, but, in my opinion, also for its application in the theory of citizenship.
Notes


2 In other words to answer the question, to paraphrase Kolakowski, how to be "an individualistic-communitarian republican".

3 Mansbridge refers to neo-corporatism (Mansbridge 1995: 136).

4 Held mentions a third type of democracy, based on a one-party model, but he himself acknowledges that "some may doubt if this is a form of democracy at all" (Held 1993: 15). Indeed, I consider myself included in the mentioned "some".

5 These models were present in guild and collectivist designs of British socialism (Cole 1920a, Perczynski 1996).

6 Most of the authors of associative designs use terms association and group interchangeably and I will do the same in this text.

7 Information is indeed the most common function of associations (Mansbridge1995: 135).

8 English political pluralism is a political doctrine developed in the 1920s mainly by G.D.H.Cole and H. Laski, under the strong influence of both British socialism and liberalism (Hirst 1989, Perczynski 1996a, Perczynski 1998, Wright 1979). Because of its strong functional aspect and hostility toward representative democracy it differs from the today better-known American variant which stresses group competition within the traditional system of representative democracy. However, the similarities are also quite striking and it is educational to compare in this respect two texts of R. Dahl - (Dahl 1947) and (Dahl 1989). See also (Lock 1991: 206) and (Perczynski & Szklarski 1997a).

9 For the relation between English political pluralism and Guild socialism see (Perczynski 1995).

10 Radical, anti-collectivist projects seem to influence also associative proposals of J. Mathews, who, even more than Hirst, focuses on economy. His associative democracy is to be understood as "collective activity via existing associations of workers and citizens" (Mathews 1989: 12) who are directly involved "in shaping the economy" (114-115). On the economy focuses also imaginative associative design of C. Sabel (Sabel 1995).

11 Similarly to Hirst, Cohen and Rogers present "evidence" proving the superiority of associative democracy also in economic sense: the achievements of quasi-corporatist economic policies of some of the Western European countries are confronted with the failures of both social democratic (interventionist) economic policies and liberal-conservatist (monetarist) economic policies. This evidence seems quite doubtful; analyzing it lies outside the scope of this text.

12 For a connection of the voucher system to deliberation see (Fishkin 1991: 99-100, 121).
In fact, apart from the criteria imposed on associations, we find in Schmitter's design another exclusion mechanism aimed against the inefficiency of the system: a threshold for new associations, comparable to the well-known threshold in some parliamentary election systems. Only with a certain minimum amount of vouchers, such candidates could acquire the semi-public association status, and become 'players' in the associative democracy system (Schmitter 1995: 180).

They use the term 'citizen' just referring to the individual members of the state (apparently because of the lack of a better term). Mathews in his associative democracy design analyses in the context of citizenship Marshall's social rights, which is not surprising since, as already mentioned, his all associative democracy design has a distinctly economic character (Mathews 1989: 5-9).

Etzioni's approach is in a way less "ambitious" than associative democracy: practically any group in the society - even familial ones - could play a role in it, and the precondition of democratic self-governing is not required.

Peter Holmes is probably right when referring to this 'democratic deficit' he writes that "it does not exist because 'Brussels' impose things on member governments. Rather, the member states find the Council of Ministers to be a convenient devise to ignore its own parliaments" (Holmes 1996: 66).

For five basic function of the state "as we consider them today" (sic!) see (Weber 1978: 901). Especially the first, legislative function seems to dramatically distinguish the state from a voluntary association.
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