

Liberal Citizenship: Medieval Cities as Model and Metaphor

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Abstract. In a recent article in *Space & Polity*, Nezar AlSayyad and Ananya Roy draw suggestive analogies between medieval urban forms and troubling contemporary realities, such as gated urban enclaves and impoverished squatter settlements. Invoking the medieval city as an analytical device, they show how several prevalent urban practices of citizenship are in tension with, and sometimes flatly contradict, liberal complacencies and democratic hopes. However, this article suggests that there is another story to be told, using some of the medieval cities they invoke to critical ends. The narrative highlights the ways in which certain medieval spatial and civic forms might enrich liberal and democratic aspirations, helping us to re-imagine at least two core values of liberal democratic citizenship.

Introduction

In a provocative and engaging analysis, Nezar AlSayyad and Ananya Roy (2006) draw suggestive analogies between medieval urban forms and troubling contemporary realities, such as gated urban enclaves and impoverished squatter settlements. In contemporary urban settings, as was true of some medieval cities, there are modes of citizenship that exist alongside, and in tension with, other forms of civic membership, especially national citizenship grounded in abstract rights and entitlements. These local modes of membership are often parochial and protective, rooted in patronage relations or membership in particular associations (guilds in medieval times, ‘common interest developments’ and homeowner associations in the present day) and they have characteristic exclusionary territorial logics.

AlSayyad and Roy use the medieval city not as a discrete historical and geographical category, but instead as a multifaceted analytical device: they draw on several distinctive spatial forms and social practices, found at various times and places during the middle ages, using them to reveal “the entanglement of democracy and freedom with the political structures of empire and medievalism”, to call “into question the inevitability of progress”, and “to draw attention to the enduring paradoxes of urban life and form” (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006, p. 5). In doing so,

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they insist that the “competing sovereignties” found in both medieval cities and fragmented contemporary urban regions “cannot be understood in the sense of interest-group liberalism, a democratic system of checks and balances” and must instead

be understood as a hardening of ever-fragmenting fundamentalisms and parochialisms—the politics of fiefdoms negotiated through modes of visible and invisible regulations (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006, p. 12).

I do not dispute the richness and aptness of the medieval city as an analytical device, but I am sceptical that we must interpret competing and fragmented sovereignties in the manner claimed: I think we can usefully understand these in liberal terms, without asserting the inevitability of progress, or denying the historical entanglement of freedom and democracy with empire and medievalism. Yet to do so, liberals may have to tell a story more like AlSayyad and Roy’s, putting aside for a time the abstract analyses and arguments we have tended to favour.¹ Liberals may do well to attend to the complex and sometimes fragile and contradictory ways that liberal and democratic values and practices have emerged historically. And we will have to be sensitive to the implications of that tangled history for how we articulate our values in an increasingly urban world characterised by deep diversity, enduring legacies of injustice and the deeply inegalitarian vagaries of contemporary capitalism.

AlSayyad and Roy help us with one side of this task, revealing messy, ambivalent and at times disturbing practices of liberal democratic citizenship as they play out in the built forms and exclusionary politics of capitalist cities. Yet it is the liberal democratic promise of cities—medieval and modern—that interests me here, so I will use AlSayyad and Roy’s analytical device to reinterpret two moral elements of liberal democratic citizenship: toleration and representation. Doing so will, I hope, reveal not only plausible historical roots of certain proto-liberal and democratic values and practices in medieval cities with particular spatial and civic forms, but also show that the lens of ‘the urban’ can help liberals to articulate and defend those values and practices in ways more sensitive to the entanglements and contradictions of actually existing liberal democratic citizenship.

Why do this? Unapologetic liberals will see no point in complicating their favoured ideals: good philosophical and practical arguments support toleration and representation; no creative reconstructions are needed. For their part, various critics are sceptical of toleration and representation to begin with: the former is too easily offered from a standpoint of indifference and condescending privilege, while the latter is but an ineffectual echo of genuinely inclusive and responsive politics. Why bother tinkering with problematic ideals?

I cannot answer both of these critics to their satisfaction and satisfying one will not impress the other. Useful insights, however, sometimes lurk in the terrain between well-fortified intellectual camps. A suspicion I try to make good on here is that certain urban forms may lessen tensions between liberal democrats and some of their critics, by showing how grudging, self-interested tolerance and trust, on the one hand, and narrowly partisan class interests, on the other, may provide fertile soil in which more inclusive and responsive politics can take root.

That is a statement of hope; but the medieval city reveals plausible grounds for that hope—grounds we might miss by focusing only on pathologies of

proto-liberal and neo-liberal cities, and failings of democracy therein; or, alternatively, if we simply dismiss those pathologies and failures as ephemeral, the inevitable frictions and disappointments of putting our lofty ideals into practice.

So, while critics will remain sceptical of toleration and representation, and more generally of the marriage of liberalism and democracy, it may interest them that plausible articulations of key liberal democratic philosophical commitments can be formulated in light of important criticisms, and in ways that bring those ideals closer to other democratic values (inclusion, contestation, recognition). Liberal democrats might also take heed, if their values can be articulated in ways that mitigate at least some of the tension between liberal ideals and more robust democratic hopes.

Uses of the Medieval City

AlSayyad and Roy

highlight three distinctive spatial formations: the gated enclave, the squatter settlement and the camp, showing how modalities of medieval urbanism make possible an understanding of the paradoxes and potentials of these spaces (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006, p. 3).

Again, I believe they largely succeed in clarifying and elaborating the paradoxes of these spaces. I am less certain they do full justice to their potential, and that is what I aim to address.

My concern here is with the first of the three spatial formulations developed by AlSayyad and Roy, which explores the analogy between gated urban enclaves and the enclosed medieval cities—of northern Italy, Flanders and what is now Germany—that fascinated Henri Pirenne (1923/1969). I limit myself to this historical set of spatial and civic forms not because I find AlSayyad and Roy's second and third analytical formulations uninteresting (quite the opposite), but because it is here that I believe we can find, in some of the same medieval sites they invoke to critical ends, a more nuanced understanding of liberal citizenship as a normative ideal.

This is not to deny the force of AlSayyad and Roy's analogies as they develop them: a great virtue of their analysis is to demonstrate how several prevalent urban practices of citizenship are in tension with, and sometimes flatly contradict, liberal complacencies and democratic hopes; this becomes especially clear when we invoke the analytical frame of medieval spatial forms.

Consider their use of the gated enclave to characterise medieval echoes in contemporary urban settings. In cities and their regions around the world, affluent residential enclaves are carefully policed by restrictive covenants; municipal ordinances dictate lot size, land uses and appropriate public behaviours; and sometimes private security forces patrol the streets. These carefully regulated spaces are linked in a variety of ways with other enclaves—variously tailored for employment, shopping, recreation—but in ways that splinter urban space into stark zones of opportunity and exclusion, with boundaries that inevitably track dramatic inequalities in wealth and life chances, on the one hand, and differences of race and ethnicity, on the other. Depending on the underlying physical terrain of the city and its region, these differences exploit topography in dramatic ways, as evidenced by places as different as affluent Jewish West Bank settlements on the hills overlooking poorer Palestinian neighbourhoods (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006, p. 6) or

the kinds of vertical gradients of property values found in cities like Vancouver and San Francisco, roughly following the hills and valleys in and around the city.

To the extent that these exclusionary spatial patterns emerge from, and are sustained by, prevailing politico-legal structures (property rights, zoning ordinances), we can find parallels in how the freedoms typically associated with some European medieval cities arose through similar legal demarcations of rights. City air may have made the medieval citizen free, as the old Germanic expression told, but this was freedom closely linked to carefully policed spaces and activities therein, and typically limited to members of particular occupations. For AlSayyad and Roy, this medieval strain of urban freedom clarifies

two key dimensions of contemporary gated enclaves: the monopolistic nature of freedom as territorialised in urban space and codified in urban charters; and the multiplicity and fragmentation of sovereignty (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006, p. 8).

I agree, but I believe there is another story to be told here. Again, I will try to show how two prominent aspirations of liberal democracy, toleration and representation, might arise out of some of the very features of medieval enclosed cities that seem to point instead to morally problematic understandings of citizenship as exclusionary and merely protective. And I will suggest that this story offers more nuanced and less hegemonic understandings of these liberal values.

My aim is not to defend a full-blown causal historical thesis about the medieval urban roots of liberal and democratic practices. Instead, like AlSayyad and Roy, I will use medieval cities of northern Europe as both model and metaphor. Some of these urban forms, and some of their characteristic civic practices, plausibly suggest elements of an attractive normative model of citizenship well-suited to contemporary representative liberal democracies. More speculatively, attention to these elements of medieval city life may enrich our imaginative resources when we wrestle with durable tensions in the modern marriage of liberalism and democracy under conditions of diversity and inequality.

This sort of story—of how we have arrived historically at the ‘goods’ of liberal democracy—is not uncommon among political theorists and intellectual historians. Yet while it should not surprise us that liberal rights and democratic practices find important roots in medieval urban realities, the story is rarely told against the backdrop of either the medieval or the modern city.² Instead, the usual narrative points to the failings of the ancient and republican city-states as viable spatial and civic forms, given their moral and military shortcomings. Democracy began in the city, but only succeeded to the extent that membership was highly exclusive and strongly linked to military service (for example, Dahl, 1967, pp. 955 and 960–961).³ The self-sufficient Hellenic city-states, and the small urban republics of northern Italy, were no military match for empires (although they occasionally transformed into such) and then sovereign territorial states, the latter of which eventually prevailed. Cities often had high culture and considerable capital, and thus were attractive to emerging states; but this merely meant that there were several historical paths to the Westphalian sovereign state, some of which involved capturing cities in ways that preserved their attractive economic and cultural features (Tilly, 1993, chs 2, 3 and 5; Vigneswaran, 2007). It was in these vast modern territorial states that calls for rights, the rule of law and political representation eventually arose (for example, Pitkin, 2004).⁴

That story is the target of much criticism and rightly so: rights and representation went hand-in-hand with slavery, imperialism, the subjection of women, and widespread cultural and ethnic intolerance. These troubling contradictions of the liberal project can plausibly be foreshadowed in certain medieval spatial forms and civic practices, in just the ways AlSayyad and Roy so ably present.

To be clear at the outset, then, I am not offering a paean to the medieval city. Cities have always been sites of extraordinary squalor and misery, and medieval towns and cities were characterised by deep inequalities and high mortality rates. Cities were—and remain—sites of steady influxes of desperately poor labourers (Braudel, 1981, pp. 489–491). The structure of guilds and of burgher and patrician councils in medieval European cities were far from inclusive or egalitarian. Yet even these medieval cities, and their early-modern descendants, have been sites of political organisation, resistance and reform, as they remain today (for example, Castells, 1983; Dumolyn and Haemers, 2005; Holston, 2008), not to mention engines of artistic, technological and moral innovation (for example, Jacobs, 1969, chs 3 and 4; Glaeser, 2000, pp. 475–488).

There is a vision of liberal democracy as a coming together of free citizens from diverse walks of life, with very different traditions and values, yet sharing in a common political and economic fate and arguing constructively, as moral equals, about justice and the public good—rather than, in contrast, grudgingly accepting a mere *modus vivendi* among moral antagonists.⁵ This liberal ideal of democratic citizenship is often challenged by critics as at best a utopian fiction, in tension with cultural identities and the affective sources of allegiance in contemporary settings (for example, Gray, 2000). Insofar as the experiences of contemporary city life are invoked in analyses of citizenship, it is most often in the service of—or broadly consonant with—such critiques of liberal conceits, showing how preoccupations with rights and impartiality collapse into the pathologies of neo-liberalism as a political-economic orthodoxy (for example, Holston, 1999, pp. 166–170; Bickford, 2000; England, 2008).

Yet this liberal vision of democratic citizenship is not merely a utopian fiction, derived—with either naivety or *hubris*—from an ahistorical moral geometry. It is also a cluster of paths weaving through modernity, some heavily travelled, others less so. One collection of paths is well known to historians and liberal theorists, who emphasise the rise of sovereign territorial states, representative government and the rule of law. Yet another tangle of pathways wander through medieval European towns and cities possessing particular commercial practices, civic institutions and spatial forms. And this route—well known to urban historians and sociologists—suggests possibilities for reimagining liberal democratic understandings and practices of citizenship. This will not dissolve disputes between liberals and their critics over the nature of, and possibilities for, democracy; but it may move debate forward by clarifying what is in dispute and by illuminating areas where constructive disagreement may proceed.

Still, talk of ‘pathways through modernity’ hints at a teleology that might belie my claims about constructive engagement between liberals and varied critics. My aim, in turning to medieval cities of northern Europe, is *not* to identify a steady march of ideas and practices through modernity towards high liberalism and beyond. That sort of view is at best simplistic, at worst disingenuous: the dark side of such easy confidence has inevitably been condescension toward, exclusion of and violence against those who are not on the same journey, or who suspect—not unreasonably—that there are other routes worth exploring.

I imagine instead a thicket of pathways, sometimes converging and intersecting and merging, at other times and places diverging, sometimes joining other paths and occasionally meandering back on themselves. I do, however, accept a roughly linear (if messy and convoluted) *temporality* to history and I endorse, largely without argument, core liberal political values: a range of personal liberties, toleration, inclusion and the responsiveness and accountability of authority to those governed. Insofar as some of my metaphorical pathways seem to lead in these directions, I hold out hope for a kind of moral progress.

No doubt these will be controversial premises to some, but surely not to those critics who think these values attractive, but emphasise the dramatic failures so far encountered in even roughly approximating any such ideals, and tensions lurking in the ideals themselves (for example, Roy, 2008).⁶ I am, then, addressing these critics, and fellow liberals who agree that these voices must be taken seriously.

With these metaphors and caveats in mind, my aim is to illuminate further the richness of a complex analytical category—the medieval city—especially for liberal understandings of democratic citizenship. What emerges from this analytical device by way of conceptual resources is interestingly distinct from the hegemonic conception of citizenship unsettled by AlSayyad and Roy. If we can deploy the medieval city to challenge dominant contemporary understandings and practices of liberal democratic citizenship, then we can also use it to re-imagine those liberal concepts and practices. For liberals, this effort may better capture what was morally attractive about their vision in the first place: more freedom, heightened toleration and greater inclusion and accountability in public deliberations and the exercise of political power.

Toleration

Consider toleration. The vision of liberal democratic citizenship I have affirmed here asks of citizens that they engage sincerely in public debate with bearers of diverse interests, values and traditions. This requires more than mere tolerance, bred of resignation or indifference. It requires that we take other beliefs and practices seriously enough to consider them as sources of reasons that might eventually be decisive in public affairs, even if that outcome would be unsettling for us. Citizenship thus understood is demanding, requiring toleration paired with a species of recognition: we recognise other beliefs and practices as potentially authoritative *for us*.⁷

Liberals who affirm this vision of democratic citizenship have a rich body of philosophical antecedents to draw upon: the natural rights discourse of John Locke, the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill and the deontological moral and political philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Thus can liberal democrats defend a principle of toleration by appeal to the rightful limits of state power over sovereign bearers of natural rights; or the welfare gains associated with letting individuals freely experiment in their life choices (so long as they do no harm to others); or the dignity of the rational moral subject who legislates for herself the laws she obeys.

And yet we know that these rationales easily come into tension (especially the libertarian and utilitarian approaches) and that, whichever rationale is endorsed, there seem historically to have been ample willingness and opportunities to adopt 'liberal strategies of exclusion' (Mehta, 1990). Indeed, toleration would seem to be an obvious target for AlSayyad and Roy's analytical approach. The practice of urban citizenship in contemporary cities suggests strict limits on toleration, as

‘common interest developments’ and restrictive homeowner covenants regulate behaviours in the common spaces of carefully policed urban enclaves. Relatedly, the experience of diversity in cities seems to favour a rather tepid, pragmatic sort of tolerance (for example, Wilson, 1985; Moore and Ovadia, 2006) that correlates dramatically with declines in trust and civic engagement (Putnam, 2007).

We can, furthermore, easily find echoes of these tensions and contradictions in medieval cities: the freedoms that came with citizenship in chartered cities were closely guarded and the exercise of those freedoms carefully regulated. Fernand Braudel puts the point succinctly

Though the towns opened their gates easily it was not enough to walk through them to be immediately and really a part of them. Full citizens were a jealous minority, a small town inside the town itself (Braudel, 1981/1992, p. 518).

As AlSayyad and Roy note (following Pirenne’s famous analysis), the charter that established many of these cities

was inherently exclusionary. Its benefits, such as the proceeds of communal taxes or the protections of the penal code, could only extend to those living within the chartered enclave. The urban middle class then became like the clergy and nobility—a privileged order with a special legal and territorial modality that allowed it to preserve its exceptional status and associated benefits to the exclusion of the mass of rural inhabitants (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006, p. 7).

Nor were these exclusive enclaves especially embracing of difference: paupers, heretics and homosexuals were routinely expelled or executed, and religious and aesthetic orthodoxies were carefully maintained—the freedoms ensured by these charters were certainly not the diverse ‘experiments in living’ that John Stuart Mill imagined centuries later (relatedly, see Nirenberg, 1996). Rather, medieval freedoms were typically associated with particular commercial activities and were often closely linked to guild membership.

And yet, even in these settings, liberals can find tantalising possibilities. Consider the evolution of what has been called the medieval *lex mercatoria*,⁸ a durable set of norms and practices that seems to have regulated trade among many merchants, arising after the 11th century and popular for several hundred years without a system of centralised interpretation, monitoring or enforcement.⁹ I am not concerned here with the specific (and apparently quite variable) content of this merchants’ code (i.e. the specific norms regulating exchanges and settling disputes), the degree of participation of merchants in special trade courts or the alleged universality and independence of these norms from customary law and local practices—a claim popular among some optimistic commentators, but that appears not to be borne out by historical evidence.¹⁰ Rather, I am interested in the practices through which merchants regularly signalled their sincere intentions to trade in accord with credible public rules and routinely travelled among fairs to engage in commerce on those terms.¹¹

Some of these practices are well-known to economic historians: acceptance of standardised weights and measures;¹² the use of coinage and the rise of credit;¹³ witnesses to contracts; partnerships;¹⁴ and guild membership. Other practices speak to the emergence of a certain sort of tolerance in and among medieval towns and cities: as Peter Leeson explains, medieval traders “signaled

credibility to one another by sharing customs and practices to initiate exchange”, including “knowledge of a diverse group of languages” (Leeson, 2006, pp. 897–898).¹⁵ The importance of these practices would have been most obvious at the great medieval fairs, such as Champagne, where French as a *lingua franca* was widely adopted by traders (Gies and Gies, 1969, p. 215); in the rise of Bruges as a northern trading centre to rival Venice;¹⁶ and in the Hanse franchises beginning in the 12th century, which linked the Hanse towns and cities of northern Europe with England.¹⁷

To be sure, this was pragmatic tolerance, not evidence that the contemporary philosopher’s virtue of *toleration* was widespread (or even a meaningful idea) in these medieval settings.¹⁸ And yet, in this way, while developing at least a modest (if exclusionary) sense of civic community tied to the city, merchants were also establishing modest relations of recognition and trust across a variety of places and associated cultural differences, linked to commerce.

Certainly, the sort of density of trading relations (and an associated range of languages and ethnicities) that I am emphasising among northern medieval cities and between these cities and more distant trading communities, would have been more reliably found in ancient imperial cities such as Rome, and certainly in the great medieval and early modern trading cities, such as Venice, Genoa and Amsterdam. Yet what is striking about the medieval cities of northern Europe (especially Flanders and parts of what is now modern Germany) is that these political communities lacked either military garrisons or the grander territorial ambitions characteristic of more cosmopolitan capitals and imperial cities. Max Weber puts the point succinctly: “as a general rule dominance of the countryside was not an objective” of these medieval cities. “The typical medieval city was hardly in a position to even dream of launching on a course of colonial expansion” (Weber, 1921/1958, p. 213). Anthony Black makes a related point about the internal features of the more autonomous and powerful Italian cities compared with their northern European counterparts

In Italy, city-states achieved wider dominance than elsewhere, but they were also more prone to factionalism and despotism (Signoria). In Germany, the only other region of self-governing cities in the later middle ages, conflict between patriciate and guilds was more often resolved by powersharing based on compromise. Several Italian critics noted that German cities enjoyed greater harmony and more popular participation; and these features were to survive much longer in the German guild polities than elsewhere (Black, 1984, pp. 74–75).

The limited civic freedoms and modest economic affluence of these cities neither inspired imperial ambitions, nor provided the means to pursue expansive aims. So while some cities and city-states of the late medieval period, the Italian renaissance and early modernity certainly were more diverse places and featured greater effective political autonomy than the northern European cities I am concerned with, these former cities generally yielded to the temptations of expansion and empire in ways that the smaller northern free cities could not. And against this backdrop, merchants were motivated to tolerate others—a pragmatic motivation, but more than mere indifference or resignation. Rather, this was tolerance, married to a species of trust and, by acknowledging shared norms of commerce in this way, a grudging recognition that the values and interests of others may well be authoritative over us.

Representation

And consider representation. Representative institutions implement the core liberal democratic values of political inclusion and rule by the people, but in ways that hope to be responsive to large dispersed populations and the increasing complexity of public affairs in modern times. Modern democracy is most often associated, in theory and practice, with representative political institutions and the rule of law, and it is here that the hopes for democracy have become wedded to liberal ideals: the people rule through elaborate schemes of representation, trust and accountability.¹⁹

How else could we understand 'rule of the people' when populations are enormous, territories vast, citizens divided by myriad differences; and when we affirm personal liberty and moral equality (rather than, say, nobility, courage or loyalty to the *polis*) as the defining values of citizenship? What else could democracy mean once the self-sufficient city-state had been eclipsed by the sovereign territorial state — itself a cacophony of identities and interests — and embedded within intricate regional and global networks of diplomacy and trade? The bounds of citizenship are now cast wide, motivated by liberal ideals of political inclusion and accountable authority at odds with older and more restrictive principles for bounding the *demos*. And these ideals are implemented through *representation*.

Here again, at first blush, we find a concept central to liberal democracy, apparently benign and appealing (who would *not* favour better representation of diverse reasonable interests?) yet associated with a series of historical practices that fail dramatically to live up to the moral promise of the concept itself. In practice, representative institutions have historically excluded 'undesirable' segments of society, even while formally extending to them the franchise.

Here too we find resonant themes in medieval cities, where the structures of influence within chartered cities reflected various power struggles: between patrician councils and guilds; between merchant and craft guilds; between merchants and feudal lords; and between lords and kings. In these settings, there was a nascent sort of political accountability and perhaps even a primitive sort of representation of interests within guilds and councils; but surely these stories are overwhelmingly about the domination of some privileged interests over others?

Again, however, I think we can find intriguing and rather hopeful possibilities, although these are perhaps clearer when we see how the usual story of the rise of representation begs for a certain temper among citizens—a temper that seems roughly consonant with some features of the northern medieval city.

A popular story places the rise of representation in such historical trends as the gradual erosion of absolutism that gave rise to the Magna Carta; the meeting of commoners with lords that would eventually become a House of Commons; and the abiding importance of accountable authority in John Locke's treatise on civil government, the English civil war and the challenges to the English monarchy by the American colonists. Hannah Pitkin's characterisation is illustrative

Representation, at least as a political idea and practice, emerged only in the early modern period and had nothing at all to do with democracy. Take England, for example. The king, needing additional revenue beyond that from the royal estates and traditional feudal dues, required each shire and borough to send a delegate to commit the locality to special additional taxes. So representation was imposed as a duty from

above, a matter of royal convenience and administrative control (Pitkin, 2004, p. 337).

How did these delegates, and eventually the subjects whom they came to represent, come to understand this as representation of their interests and a way of holding the king to account? Again, Pitkin

As the practice was repeated, it gradually became institutionalised. Sometimes the delegates were sent with instructions from their communities; sometimes they were expected to report back on what had transpired. Gradually they began to make their consent conditional on redress of grievances, to think of themselves as members of a single, continuing body, and sometimes to join forces against the king. So representation slowly came to be considered a matter of right rather than a burden, though even then the selection of delegates was by no means democratic, often not even accomplished by election (Pitkin, 2004, p. 337).

The medieval practice of consultation had, then, gradually come to be understood as a mechanism of political accountability—of representation. Representation could then become a recognisably *democratic* ideal

Only when these struggles between king and parliament culminated in civil war in England in the seventeenth century, and subsequently in the great democratic revolutions of the late 18th century, was the alliance between democracy and representation formed (Pitkin, 2004, pp. 337–338).²⁰

This story has been told in different ways for different cases, applying different methodologies and theoretical frameworks, but nonetheless affirming certain territorial and ideational realities as critical to the rise of the liberal democratic imagination.

Considering England, for example, Charles Tilly (1993, pp. 152–160) explains the shifting balance of nascent institutions of representation, on the one hand, and coercive consolidation and imperialist expansion, on the other, in terms of the relative equality and mutual dependence between coercive elements (the king and his forces) and a capital-intensive urban region (London). In theoretical contrast, Edgar Kiser and Yoram Barzel “suggest that the rule of law and proto-democracy” in England after the Norman conquest “evolved as an unintended consequence of the self-interested wealth-maximizing behavior of rulers and their subjects” (Kiser and Barzel, 1991, p. 398).

On this latter explanation, elements of the rule of law (i.e. impartial courts and policing) and political accountability (i.e. the introduction of regular consultation) emerge as a strategic concession by rulers who know that they can reliably benefit by securing the co-operation of especially their more powerful subjects. Yet rational subjects — knights and serfs alike — will not consider offers credible unless they have some confidence that terms of agreements will be honoured. The same approach seems plausibly to account for the rise of consensual taxation and associated administrative mechanisms, most notably voting (Kiser and Barzel, 2002).

Yet whether the rise of representation, accountability and rule of law is understood historically in terms of Tilly’s dynamics of capital and coercion; or

by reference to new combinations of ideas fomented in revolution (for example, Fahrmeir, 2007, ch. 2; Hobson, 2008); or as a rational bargaining equilibrium given certain favourable demographic features (as Kiser and Barzel suggest), the conclusion nonetheless seems to be that the liberal and democratic elements of the nascent English state (i.e. the rule of law and political representation) arose out of the ideational, material and strategic environments of expansive territorial regimes—first kingdoms, then sovereign territorial states.

I do not dispute the plausibility of these explanations, nor of the story Pitkin and the historians tell of strategic concessions by kings leading gradually to the beginnings of democratic representation and accountability through the rule of law. I do, however, suspect that, if we hope to find in such stories ideals worthy of affirmation, then we need to think more carefully about the sort of moral psychology implied by these historical tales.

Consider, for instance, Pitkin's suggestion that knights and serfs alike gradually came to understand the duty of consultation as a right to accountability through representation. This implies a (not-implausible) learning model consistent with Kiser and Barzel's rational-choice account: subjects gradually learned that it was in their interests to interpret consultation as representation, providing a credible mechanism of accountability. Yet what sort of prevalent understandings of politics would foster such learning, and sustain this gradual transition, as subjects came to understand themselves as citizens? What factors might have generated and sustained such background understandings, in England and on the continent?

And consider Kiser and Barzel's claim (2002, p. 491) that medieval rulers in England and France were pushed to fund new projects through consensual taxation by "the massive increase in the number of people moving out of serfdom to become free subjects". From whence did these free subjects emerge? Enclosure movements in England were sporadic in the centuries they consider, beginning in earnest only much later.

There are gaps, then, in the usual telling of this story of the rise of liberal rights and representative institutions: how would citizens have to understand their civic identity to make sense of the move to modern liberal understandings of the practice of democratic representation? And are there particular socio-spatial forms that might seem to favour such understandings?

Max Weber's and Henri Pirenne's readings of medieval history—the latter so central to AlSayyad and Roy's analysis—suggest that, however, pragmatic and self-interested was the freedom accepted by privileged classes in chartered cities, this may have been enough to foster in these groups the expectation of some measure of influence over the affairs of the city. This is the import, for example, of Pirenne's account of the rise of middle-class demands for legal reforms in the cities of Flanders, where merchants eventually clustered in a settlement (*portus*) around the older *burg* (originally fortifications for garrisons of knights, overseen by a *castellan* in the service of a prince or baron)

In these reforms it devolved upon them to take the initiative, for they could not rely on either the castellans, the monasteries, or the barons whose lands they occupied, to bring them about. But it was also necessary, in the midst of a population so heterogeneous as that of the *portus*, for a group of men to take control of the mass and to have enough power and prestige to give it direction. The merchants, in the first half of the

eleventh century, resolutely assumed this role. Not only did they constitute the wealthiest element in each town, the most active and the most desirous of change, but they had in addition the strength that union gives (Pirenne, 1923/1969, pp. 185–186).

In the resulting merchant guilds, and then eventually in city councils, these subjects were beginning to understand themselves as citizens. Yes, this process—as it then played out over the following centuries in the establishment of municipal courts and councils—was as divisive, exclusionary and self-serving as AlSayyad and Roy suggest. It was a way for a particular social class to establish, assert and consolidate privilege. Yet it also marked the emergence of a group motivated by an idea that resembles, in nascent form, that of representation as accountability. And in the cities of Flanders and elsewhere in the north, this idea could only develop in particular ways: trading was a way of life for many in this privileged class and political supremacy and imperial expansion were simply not in the cards.

I make no claim to find in these medieval cities fully fledged roots of modern democratic representation—that would be an absurdly strong claim. I simply note that features of some medieval cities that AlSayyad and Roy take from Pirenne can be interpreted in more than one way. These cities exhibited processes of fragmented and contested sovereignty, driven by various claims to privilege. Yet they also marked a subtle change in the conceptual landscape of medieval Europe (if Pirenne's, but also Fernand Braudel's and other consonant accounts are to be believed).²¹ Yes, the middle class in these cities were bearers of privilege and they fought to secure that status. Yet they were also negotiating both private and shared interests with fellow members of a distinct public and these negotiations were embedded within increasingly tangled webs of economic, political, and moral relations that exposed these citizens to diverse practices and interests beyond their own carefully regulated civic spaces.²²

Urban Roots of Liberal Citizenship

Obviously, John Locke looms large in the history of ideas about toleration and representation; yet encounters with diversity, and a fumbling towards political inclusion and accountability (of the sorts suitable for modern representative institutions), arguably have an urban pedigree. We could say, without too much exaggeration, that the prominence of cities in European economic life, and especially the rise of free chartered cities in the medieval north, can enrich our understandings of representative liberal democracy as a style of governance grounded in interests and rights, rather than nobility and virtue.

The transition that characterised these European cities as influential political and economic centres is vital to my interpretive aims here: the cities of particular interest to me are not merely seats of imperial or national administration, or former fortified garrisons, or the site of sacred places and rituals, or the symbolic centre of an ethnic or national identity—although they have, of course, been some and occasionally all of these things. Rather, they are settlements that gave rise to a nascent idea: that residents with interests grounded in (but not limited to) the spaces of the city should have some degree of control over their own fates as a distinct civic community, yet while simultaneously recognising norms that bind them to increasingly diverse communities of others outside that community.

Certainly, the scope of such consideration was narrow in these settings: many city residents were not, and could not become, citizens. Yet the idea emerged, however, tenuous its hold and restrictive its terms. This idea emerged as merchants and artisans were at the same time increasingly entangled with other communities through trade—and thus too the norms of trust and reciprocity associated with commerce—all while these cities faced the still very real power of kings and lords, and the emerging realities of coercive territorial states. This sense of civic identity—of a shared fate *in place*—is not, then, simply a rearticulation of the ancient Hellenic *polis* with its restrictive understanding of citizenship (although it certainly was restricted largely to a particular privileged class). The idea is more complex, shaped through persistent encounters with diversity, mediated by intersecting legal, moral and coercive structures.

Each of these elements has appeared historically in cities throughout the world. In the ancient cities of Mesopotamia, we find ethnic and linguistic diversity along with the importance of cities as nodes in networks of trade (van de Mieroop, 1999; Yoffee, 2004, pp. 53–59). In the classical Hellenic city-states, we find the idea of citizens ruling together and sharing a common fate. In the towns and walled cities of late Zhou China, we find hereditary contracts offered prudentially by lords to urban merchants, leading to some practical autonomy for the contracting merchants within these settlements (Chang, 1963). Yet with the rise of the chartered city in places such as Flanders and what is now Germany, we eventually find all of these elements together: grudging toleration of diversity and calls for influence over civil matters by merchants and artisans, and a sense of civic membership mediated by external ties of trade.

This is not to deny that these same processes were also tied to the emergence of a particular socioeconomic class and a characteristic mode of production, both of which would come to dominate the Western world and much of the globe. Nor, again, is it to challenge plausible explanations of toleration and representation that point to political compromises such as Westphalia, gradual transformations of attitudes and expectations under proto-representative medieval practices, or the strategic play of interests under monarchic rule. Nor, yet again, is it to deny the critical force of the story AlSayyad and Roy tell. Yet there is another story to be told and it is perhaps more favourable to liberal democratic hopes.

A central theme in this story—the rise of free citizens in, and trade among, medieval cities of northern Europe and beyond—suggests that these sites may be a richer source for liberal democratic accounts of citizenship than AlSayyad and Roy seem to aver. Fragmented sovereignties and exclusionary practices? Yes, but also a distinct foreshadowing of toleration, accountability and a politics grounded in rights and reason, rather than privilege, force or fraud. That too is a story worth telling.

And there are other stories to be told, obviously. The rise of guilds and incorporated towns in medieval northern Europe arguably traces a path from nascent capitalism to efforts at shielding society from the disruptive effects of markets—and, by implication, from a liberal (libertarian) preoccupation with the market as an ordering principle of social life, rather than an institution embedded within society (for example, Polanyi, 1944). The seeds of tension between liberalism's libertarian impulses and socialism's egalitarian correctives were planted very early on indeed in the rise of capitalism. We might say that, insofar as the roots of capitalism are importantly urban, as Weber and Pirenne and Braudel

suggest, so too are the ways in which commercial freedoms and personal rights arose in intimate relation to (and conflict with) communal values and practices.²³

Conclusion

How does this exploration of certain medieval urban forms help chastened but hopeful liberals to re-imagine democratic citizenship? Summarising my interpretive efforts here, I conclude that, when we understand toleration and representation through the lens of the medieval city—and more generally, through the lens of urban spaces and certain characteristic practices, especially those associated with day-to-day commercial activities—we find ideals more modest and incremental, but perhaps more useful, than how they often appear in the throes of contemporary philosophical analysis and liberal advocacy.

On toleration: we see from my analysis how a workable account of this virtue can appeal to grudging tolerance and provisional recognition and trust, reinforced through the mundane rituals of daily commerce and mutual upkeep of shared public spaces. We find these practices in the closed (and exclusionary) cities of medieval northern Europe, but also in the patterns of subtle interdependence typical of life in so many contemporary cities, even those rife with the practices of exclusion and marginalisation along lines of class and race.

True, recent news from the social sciences suggests that urban citizens continue to flee from diversity as developers and planners help them do so, in much the same ways that Richard Sennett (1970) condemned decades ago.²⁴ Today, citizens of several affluent industrialised societies report being less trusting when living in dense and diverse settings (for example, Putnam, 2007). Yet we can nonetheless find, in some of the characteristic practices of city life, a modest understanding of toleration that belies these sceptical findings: whatever urban citizens in the affluent West report to survey researchers, certain built forms and informal daily routines within cities, when not regulated away through the policing and sequestering of difference and conflict, can give us a normative picture of toleration as emergent tolerance and pragmatic trust across differences—however painful and unsettling those relations may at times be.²⁵

Similarly for representation: a lofty and complex normative ideal (see, for example, Rehfeld, 2009) detailing who represents whom, and to what ends; but we can find in certain urban forms—both medieval and contemporary—certain civic practices (again tied to commercial pursuits and distinctly local concerns) that favour a disposition to imagine one's interests and aspirations as importantly linked to our fellow citizens, but also to those further afield, who are affected by our actions and whose actions affect us. And this moral psychology, vital to representative democracy, is usefully understood when framed not as it so often is, at the spatial and organisational scales of the national tribe or territorial state; but instead against the city: its characteristic spatial practices, linked to commerce and day-to-day affairs, especially in spaces with multiple primary and secondary uses.

In presenting toleration and representation in this way, linked to certain distinctly urban practices tied to commerce and the co-operative maintenance of day-to-day routines in shared urban spaces, I am essentially endorsing something like Richard Sennett's anarchic vision of the good city: he thought we could do away with much central planning and control in cities. The resulting "visual and functional disorder" (Sennett, 1970, p. 142) would be desirable, not dangerous:

citizens would be forced to deal constructively with myriad conflicts across class, ethnic and cultural distinctions, not retreat from them through restrictive zoning and municipal fragmentation (Sennett, 1970, chs 6–8).

We might reasonably worry that this vision, while attractive for its indictment of the exclusionary and inegalitarian effects of much urban planning and municipal governance, is nonetheless naive, assuming as it does the favourable consequences of local economic practices associated with past dynamics of urbanisation, famously detailed by Jane Jacobs (1961, 1969). If left alone, however, urban economies today may not evolve as Jacobs and Sennett imagined, facing as they now do very different regional and global pressures (for example, Fainstein, 2005, p. 6). Yet even granting the force of this concern, liberals can still take away from these older, more anarchic visions of the good city attractive moral understandings of toleration and representation,²⁶ and these resonate, in just the ways I have described, with certain medieval practices and forms.

Obviously, none of this is to pretend at a solution to the tensions and contradictions of actually existing capitalist liberal democracies, let alone neo-liberal cities therein. I have sought only to share, along with AlSayyad and Roy, in their use of a critical analytical device—the medieval city—and I have deployed that tool in the service of liberal ideas and aspirations; in doing so, I hope I have also revealed that these liberal hopes are usefully understood as *urban* hopes.²⁷

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Notes

1. Liberals have told such stories before: agonistic and ironic liberals lean away from ambitious philosophical foundations, attending to the historical contingency, internal tensions and practical failings of liberalism. These liberals acknowledge that our identities, aspirations and philosophical conceits are described in vocabularies forged against the backdrop of an 'Enlightenment' of coercive states and imperialist legacies. For ironists, liberalism is simply our way of doing things, loyalty to which is "morality enough" without "an ahistorical backup" (Rorty, 1983, p. 199). Agonists may allow for uneasy *modus vivendi* among contingent and incommensurable values (Gray, 2000). Where I part with these liberals is at their avoidance of philosophical justification. Rorty would have us reject the conceit "that intellectual or political progress is rational, in any sense of 'rational' which is neutral between" historically contingent vocabularies and associated metaphors (Rorty, 1989, p. 48). Gray, for his part, allows that something like legitimacy is possible, but not through philosophical argument about justice and the like; legitimacy will instead reflect pragmatic political compromises stripped of any moral richness (Gray, 2000, p. 134). I think these sceptical stances ignore much of the nuance and richness of on-going debates surrounding constructivism in ethics and political philosophy (for example, Rawls, 2005, lecture 3; McKinnon, 2002). Constructivists argue that reasoning in certain ways can yield general normative claims (maxims more robust than 'this just seems to be our way of doing things') without depending on controversial

metaethical and metaphysical foundations. These are, to be sure, on-going and sometimes-heated philosophical debates and my aim here is not to defend ethical constructivism for liberal justification; but my uses of the medieval city to recover and re-imagine certain core liberal values reflect this ambitious but reasonable philosophical hope.

2. Rarely, yes, but the modest democratic promise of medieval cities has been noticed before, most notably by Lewis Mumford (1938), who complained that our modern urban forms and related civic practices are more imperial Roman than high medieval. Carol Aronovici (1944) also found, in Pirenne's history and other sources, some of the liberal and democratic promise of medieval urbanism that I will seek to illuminate here.
3. The significance of the latter feature, for distinguishing the understandings of democracy and citizenship in ancient versus medieval cities, was not lost on Max Weber, who noted that

chronic war was ... the normal condition of the Greek full citizen ... Military reasons explain the fact that the city state of antiquity, so long as it maintained its characteristic form, developed no craft guilds and nothing similar to them, that instead it erected a political military monopoly for the citizenship and evolved into a soldiers' guild. ... In contrast with this the center of gravity of military technique in the early middle ages lay outside the cities, in the knighthood (Weber, 1927, pp. 330–332).

4. Riesenbergs (1992) and Fahrmeier (2007) offer consonant genealogies of the idea of citizenship.
5. This vision is most obviously associated with the political liberalism of John Rawls (2005).
6. There are terminological differences in how political philosophers use terms like 'liberalism' and 'democracy' and 'citizenship', and how those terms are sometimes deployed by theorists and critics in other fields. For example, my normative vision of liberal democratic citizenship, drawing as it does on a distinctly democratic understanding of (Rawlsian) political liberalism, seems consonant with Roy's understanding of 'post-liberalism' as a critical and inclusive project (Roy, 2008, pp. 94–96). I am perplexed, however, by the contrast between a 'reflexive, liberal self' characterised by empathy and restraint while "searching for norms of public conduct and transaction" and a vision of citizenship that is "agonistic, political, radically impossible, and in this sense hopeful" (p. 100). The former seems to me at least as hopeful (and morally attractive) as the latter.
7. Philosophers will want more precision here: we *tolerate* others when they engage in a practice, or affirm a belief, that we have reason to condemn or otherwise reject, yet we nonetheless resist any inclination—and stay our ability—to interfere with that belief or practice. Whatever reason inclines us to reject the belief or practice in question, we are *tolerant* to the extent that (i) we are able to interfere, but (ii) we do not take our reasoned rejection as sufficient warrant to do so, and (iii) our non-interference is a stance we affirm for good reasons, rather than merely resigning ourselves to out of impotence, prudence or indifference (or affirming on the basis of morally suspect or controversial grounds—as, for instance, when racists claim to be tolerant when resisting the urge, motivated by their dubious views, to act violently against others). There is typically a symmetry to toleration: disputing parties must tolerate each other, although there are as often asymmetries in the power each party has to interfere with the other. My use of toleration as integral to liberal democratic citizenship emphasises the *public character of reasons* involved at stages (ii) and (iii), and the *trust* involved in accepting other reasons as potentially authoritative. We must trust that others will not exploit our tolerant stance and threaten our reasonable interests (see Dees, 1998). Of the rich body of philosophical analysis on toleration, and closely related work on justificatory neutrality, I have drawn on Scanlon (1996), Galeotti (2001) and Cohen (2004).
8. In translation, this is often rendered as 'Law Merchant,' but 'law for merchants' would be more apt. *Lex Mercatoria* is the title of Gerard Malynes' famous treatise, from 1622, on commercial law in early-modern England; on its significance, see Rogers (1995).
9. A lack of centralised mechanisms of co-ordination and enforcement, but not an absence of legal and political institutions, which were vital in mediating disputes between foreign merchants and locals. These were, however, typically urban courts and offices (for example, Pirenne, 1923/1969, ch. 7; Volckart and Mangels, 1999, pp. 443–446). This gave a local flavour to the *lex mercatoria*, leaving an important place for customary law and local traditions that some zealous interpreters ignore or downplay, preferring instead to find in the medieval merchant laws, and associated courts, the antecedents to, for instance, international trading norms. Also, according to Anthony Black, the interplay between the increasingly town- and city-centred commercial and civic realities of medieval life, on the one hand, and the thinking of jurists and scholars, on the other, was rather

slight (on this, see Lopez and Raymond, 1955, p. 408), but scholastic values were not necessarily antagonistic to guilds and free towns and cities—indeed, quite the opposite (Black, 1984, chs 4, 6 and 7).

10. Again, some optimistic scholars of economic history and international law find in the medieval *lex mercatoris* either the historical roots of, or an attractive template for, contemporary norms associated with trade across jurisdictions (such as voluntary commercial codes and model contracts that become widely accepted standards). More sober and historically informed commentators are far more circumspect, for example, Volckart and Mangels (1999), who emphasise the relative paucity of historical evidence on medieval trading. Summarising the weight of historical evidence, Charles Donahue writes that

Medieval merchants did participate in the operation of courts that dealt with mercantile matters, but they rarely, if ever, did it totally independently of local political power. So far as the law itself was concerned, there were probably some mercantile customs that made trading possible—some quite local and some of wider extent. These customs did not, however, add up to a mercantile legal system, for wherever we see such a system created it is the work of men who are imbued with a scheme of law that is not the creation of merchants but, in the case of England, of the customary courts of the realm, or, in the case of Italy, of the doctors of the *jus commune* (Donahue, 2004, p. 36).

11. Here see Braudel (1982, pp. 82–92) on the significance of, and co-ordination among, town and city fairs in northern Europe from the 13th into the 17th centuries.
12. These are features that arise with urbanisation at the dawn of civilisations: weights and measures provide clear evidence of social complexity in two of the earliest recognisably urban settlements in Mesopotamia and the Indus river valley (Yoffee, 2004, ch. 4; Possehl, 1990, p. 273). In the great medieval fairs of Flanders and Champagne, the host town or city would typically use their local standard (for measures of cloth, or currency) and rates of exchange were then determined. The established merchant houses of the great Italian cities helped to develop increasingly sophisticated financial instruments of exchange along with various means of settling accounts. To illustrate

an Italian merchant may borrow a sum in Genoa in local currency, pledging as security the goods he is shipping to Champagne, and specify that repayment is to be made in money of Provins at the Fair. If the goods are entrusted to a third party, the contract may specify that they travel at the creditor's risk (Gies and Gies, 1969, p. 222).

Such a hypothetical transaction would have been far from the most complex of the sorts that emerged from the 13th-century fairs of Flanders, Champagne and Brie, which anticipated the increasing prominence of exchanges linking European producers and retailers, and the eventual rise of Amsterdam as the centre of European commercial life in the 17th century (see Braudel, 1982, pp. 90–114).

13. On this, see Lopez and Raymond (1955, ch. 5); Lopez (1971, ch. 3); and Postan (1973, ch. 1).
14. See Postan (1973, ch. 3); Berman (1983, pp. 352–354).
15. Much of Leeson's textual evidence is drawn from Lopez and Raymond (1955).
16. On Champagne and Bruges, see for example, Braudel (1984/1992, pp. 111–116 and 98–101 respectively).
17. On these, see Braudel (1984/1992, pp. 101–106); and Lloyd (1991).
18. That said, alongside pragmatic and self-interested tolerance arising out of trade, there does seem to have been a distinctive medieval scholarly and legal understanding of toleration (*tolerantia*). This involved marginalising—sometimes violently—certain facets of cultural and religious otherness; yet in nascent respects marginalisation may have been surprisingly accommodating of difference, if Istvan Bejczy (1997) is to be believed: “In the later Middle Ages *tolerantia* had become an argument to justify the existence of all social deviance, especially in the urban community” (p. 375); “medieval tolerance coexisted with a uniform truth, whereas the effort of pluralizing religious truth in early modern times was accompanied by a decreasing willingness to tolerate social deviance” (p. 383). On late medieval precedents of the more familiar currents of modern religious toleration that arise with the declarations of Maximilian II, the Peace of Westphalia and Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration*, see Grossmann (1979).
19. To be sure, what we now call *representation* as a democratic *practice* does not begin with late medieval consultation or early modern parliaments and assemblies: the classical Athenian democracy

- featured representative elements, although as Hannah Pitkin reminds us, the ancient Greeks had no distinct term for the practice (Pitkin, 1967, pp. 2–3). In democratic Athens, all of the citizens met together periodically in a large assembly to decide important issues, but much of the day-to-day business of government took place in councils of representatives, many chosen by lot (Stockton, 1990, ch. 3).
20. On the complexities of this historical process in England and the US, see Morgan, 1988, chs 2–5 and 10–11.
 21. Pirenne’s broader thesis — that the revival of commerce after a lapse in the 9th and 10th centuries was central to the rise of trading cities in medieval Europe — has faced serious challenges. His account seems to have underestimated the continuity and complexity of trading around the Mediterranean and along Nordic searoutes in the centuries before and after the first millennium, as well as the persisting economic roles of Roman settlements through the Merovingian and Carolingian periods (Verhulst, 1989). In contrast, Weber’s and Pirenne’s story of an emerging and increasingly politically aware and influential merchant class in and around medieval towns, while subject to some qualifications and complications (for example, Witt, 1971), is far less controversial (for example, Black, 1984, chs 3–5 and 9; Berman, 1983, pp. 359–399; Pounds, 2005, chs 5–6 and pp. 152–157).
 22. Marxists may suspect I read too much into a particular stage of historical evolution: the rise of bourgeois class consciousness against the old feudal order. Gramscians may further worry that I am merely identifying the historical conditions that allowed cross-cutting alliances required for ‘passive revolution’ by the ascendant bourgeois class. I do not deny the descriptive plausibility and explanatory utility of this mode of analysis; I simply interpret the moral salience and normative significance of bourgeois consciousness and cross-cutting connections rather differently.
 23. Anthony Black’s richly textured analysis of the interplay between guilds and civil society in European thought and practice suggests that something like egalitarian/democratic and liberal/libertarian values—“of mutual aid and craft honour, on the one hand, and of personal freedom and legal equality, on the other” (Black, 1984, p. 237)—are intricately interwoven. Each find powerful mutual expression in medieval urban society, even if, as Black notes, the civil society “values of market exchange have since been on the ascendant” (p. 238).

The history of ideas, however, clearly demonstrates that the values of civil society are only one half of Europe’s political tradition, and that in several cultural milieux and social philosophies they have co-existed with, and thrived alongside, the values of fellowship and mutual aid (Black, 1984, pp. 239–240).

24. For Sennett, residential segregation in post-1950s US cities was importantly a product of immature middle-class desires for spaces (and lives) purified of complexity and difference; and of municipal, state and federal policies and programmes that took such immaturity largely as given, favouring built forms that carefully separated residents into racially and socioeconomically homogeneous enclaves of residence, work, shopping and recreation.
25. I have linked this understanding of toleration to commercial practices in and among medieval cities, but for a fascinating recent exploration of something like these tendencies in several contemporary urban markets in the UK, see Watson (2009), who concludes that these

markets revealed a plethora of fleeting forms of ‘rubbing along’, connecting, lingering and taking pleasure in a shared space for everyone in the market including those who are often marginalised elsewhere’ (Watson, 2009, pp. 1589–1590).

I am more sanguine than Watson about the democratic possibilities of such fleeting forms: true, linking them to actual changes in political attitudes or inclinations may be too ambitious, but it is precisely the *notion* of (liberal) democracy that I think these sorts of urban commercial practices help us to clarify and elaborate.

26. For one way that Sennett’s and Jacobs’ visions might be deployed to construct a moral account of urban democratic citizenship, see King (2004).
27. I am grateful to a reviewer for this succinct characterisation.

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