INTRODUCTION
Worlds of Citizenship

Frankfurt-am-Main, nowadays a financial powerhouse and home to the European Central Bank, was elevated to the rank of imperial city in 1245. Being an imperial city implied that the inhabitants of Frankfurt could acquire citizenship. For some this happened automatically: the sons and daughters of citizen families became citizens too; marrying a citizen gave the immigrant husband or wife citizen status. Citizenship was also available to other immigrants, provided they could demonstrate legitimate birth and that they could make an economic contribution. Immigrants, in fact, made up 56 per cent of all new citizens between 1600 and 1735. Citizens had access to guilds, but were also required to participate in the civic militias and watches, and to perform fire service. Female citizens could not participate in politics, but they could own urban real estate and continue their husbands' businesses after their husbands had died. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, legislation was introduced to prevent Calvinists and then Catholics from becoming citizens, but they could bypass such rules by marrying local citizen girls. Jews, however, were completely excluded from citizenship. In 1823, more than half of all Frankfurt households had formal citizen status.[1]

From the fifteenth century, Frankfurt's constitution allowed major citizen participation in all levels of local government; one of the city council's three members was a representative of the guilds. Despite this civic participation, tensions between the patrician elite and broad sections of the population at times erupted into open rebellion – in 1355–68, and again in 1525. Another such rebellion, in 1612–16, led

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to the complete exclusion of the guilds from politics. Still another uprising, begun in 1705, would ultimately undo this exclusion. The 1732 constitution, the culmination of a series of reforms in previous decades, restored to the citizens of Frankfurt their former broad role in local politics and administration.[2]

The nineteenth century would witness changes of a different order. On 18 January 1806, the imperial city of Frankfurt was occupied by French revolutionary forces determined to bring the benefits of the French Revolution to German citizens. Later that same year the imperial city was converted into the Principality of Frankfurt and a former chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire, Karl Theodor von Dalberg, became Frankfurt's sovereign. The so-called third member of the council, representing the guilds, was soon reduced to a supervisory board for the local economy. In other areas too, citizen participation in local politics and administration was significantly reduced. In 1810 Frankfurt became a territorial Grand-Duchy, the city itself part of a *département* (province). Frankfurt was now a *municipalité* (municipality), subject to the department and the Grand-Duke, and governed by a council that met only twice a year. In 1810 it was stated that from now on, 'all inhabitants of the Grand-Duchy enjoy the same rights'. Among those who benefitted were the local Jews, who in 1812 were at last allowed to acquire formal citizenship.

In 1815, after Napoleon's defeat, Frankfurt's status as an imperial city was restored and as such the city acceded to the *Deutsche Bund*. The third member of the council was restored in its eighteenth-century role. During the years of political shake-up, the percentage of patrician members steadily declined. The same happened to the share of artisan members in the city's political institutions, which went from more than 30 per cent in the years 1727–1806, to more than 40 per cent in the French period (1806–10), to as little as 10 per cent in the Senate of 1866. In Frankfurt – and many other places – the great winners were the professionals.[3] In one sentence, the revolutionary upheavals and subsequent restoration led to more equality in rights, but less equality in representation. And Frankfurt was perhaps lucky with the restoration of its former autonomy.[4]

The story of Frankfurt's citizenship exemplifies two core arguments of this book. On one hand it underlines how, during the premodern era, citizens could be prominent participants in public life. Frankfurt's history shows that citizen participation was not self-evident; the struggle

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over the role of citizens was not settled permanently, but subject to constant changes, and sometimes dramatic shifts. In this sense, Frankfurt was typical of premodern cities and towns all over Europe, and indeed the rest of the world. Still, citizenship was there, and it was worth fighting over. Frankfurt's history, on the other hand, also demonstrates that the French Revolution and its aftermath did not automatically improve citizens' rights and participation. In very general terms, the French Revolution strengthened the hand of national governments vis-à-vis local authorities. In France itself, and subsequently in territories conquered by the French, local citizenship and such civic organisations as the guilds were abolished. Despite Napoleon's defeat, his programme stuck in many countries where national governments were unwilling to turn back the clock. Instead, they embarked on a programme of political and cultural unification that by 1900 had succeeded in achieving most of its aims. By 2000, however, the downside of this project was becoming increasingly clear. National states had also become bloated bureaucracies, struggling to deliver on their initial promises of political freedom and social equality, and alienating their citizens in the process.

In this book I try to explain why urban autonomy was still popular in 1800, and suggest that it may even offer a (partial) solution to some of the woes of modern societies. This is not an entirely original idea; political scientists have already been toying with similar proposals. They have even invoked the past to underscore their point.[5] These political scientists are, however, poorly served by a historiography that tends to highlight the problems of urban governance and citizenship before the French Revolution and idealises what came after 1789. In the following pages I hope to demonstrate that, compared to the practices of nineteenth-century national citizenship, premodern urban citizenship actually has quite an impressive track record when it comes to political freedom, social equality and inclusiveness; or, to phrase it in the terms of 1789, of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

Citizenship remains a key feature of our own societies. Debates about immigration policies, the future of democracy, or how to reform the welfare state immediately touch on issues of citizenship: who is affected by these changes and how? Or, to put it more bluntly: who is 'in' and who is 'out'? Understanding the historical trajectory of citizenship before it morphed into its modern form can help us shape the future, not only through a long-term perspective, but equally by expanding the range of historical possibilities. Citizenship was a crucial

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element in the modernisation of societies across much of the globe during the centuries referred to in Europe as 'medieval' and 'early modern'. Max Weber made the point almost a century ago when he claimed that self-organisation by urban citizens, as it emerged in medieval Europe, gave them a head start over Asian towns where emperors and clans constrained society. This, he claimed, also helped to explain why Europe has managed to dominate the world over the past half millennium.[6]

Since Weber launched his thesis, however, we have learnt a great deal more about the historical roots and development of citizenship, and the societies in which it emerged. Conceptually, much has changed as well since Weber's time. This book takes a fresh look at the development of citizenship in the premodern era, i.e. before the French Revolution introduced democracy and 'modern' forms of citizenship.[7] Weber's claim, and the accompanying claim that Europe's success on the world stage was predicated on its unique citizenship arrangements, are challenged in this book in two significant ways. First of all, I hope to demonstrate that a remarkable amount of what Weber saw as unique features of European cities can also be found in the cities of the Middle East and China. Secondly, and contrary to Weber's argument, in substantial parts of Europe itself these supposedly unique features of European cities and citizenship failed to deliver the economic dynamism and social well-being promised by his model.

Clearly, another factor was in play. This factor, I argue, was the particular relationship between local, i.e. urban, and national governance. Only where states were organised in such a way that urban institutions could significantly impact state policies did the effects that Weber predicted in fact materialise. To put it the other way around: only those regions where towns were supported by states responsive to their needs did citizenship produce the effect that Weber predicted. Three distinct stages can be distinguished, this book claims, in the emergence of that dynamic state–city interaction. First, in the city-states of Italy during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, in many ways, city and state were identical. Due to their small sizes, however, city-states were vulnerable to outside pressures. The second stage was the urban federation, as it triumphed in the Low Countries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the long run this model too suffered from problems of scale, combined with internal sclerosis. The third stage was parliamentary rule as it evolved in post-Reformation England and

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ultimately triumphed during the Glorious Revolution of 1689. In all three systems, state policies were to an important extent shaped by urban interests and urban representatives.

In the process of outlining this story of European citizenship, I want to set another record straight. Recent research on premodern towns, within and outside Europe, has been dominated by the social history of elites. Historians of these urban elites have time and again made the point that small oligarchies monopolised urban politics. In the following pages it is argued, however, that the role of ordinary people in urban politics has been systematically underestimated, and that civic institutions directly or indirectly helped shape local politics in most premodern towns. There was, in other words, more 'democracy' before the French Revolution than historians have usually acknowledged, fixated as they have been on national politics. Popular influence was, moreover, greatest where it mattered most: in local institutions, where public services were designed and delivered. By destroying this local form of citizenship, the French Revolution initially made Europe less, rather than more democratic.

Definitions of Citizenship

Before we can explore the historical trajectories of citizenship, we need to know what it is that we are talking about. Like so many concepts that we seem to understand intuitively, citizenship is complex and many-sided. The *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* (2002) provides no fewer than four different definitions of citizenship.[8] The first, and probably most commonly used, focuses on 'political rights to participate in processes of popular self-governance'. This first definition goes back to classical antiquity and its political philosophy. The second concentrates on the legal status of individuals 'as members of a particular, officially sovereign political community'. This definition became predominant in nineteenth-century Europe, after the French Revolution had introduced the modern constitution. A third, which became more popular in the twentieth century, uses a much broader canvas and sees citizens as 'those who belong to any human association'. The final one is broader still, and defines citizenship as 'certain standards of proper conduct'.

The common theme in all four is that citizenship is about the membership of human associations and the standards of behaviour

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appropriate to that membership. Two out of the four definitions focus on the political domain as distinguishing citizenship from the membership of, say, a sports club or mandolin orchestra. This aspect would therefore seem to be essential to any satisfactory definition. It is also implied in the simple and straightforward definition provided by the world's leading expert in citizenship studies, Engin Isin. Citizenship, he writes, is 'the right to claim rights'.[9] Those rights, one assumes, including the right to claim them, are ultimately provided by the state or some other public authority.

Rights, however, are not homogeneous. In one of the most celebrated discussions of citizenship, the British sociologist T. H. Marshall distinguished three types of rights: civil rights, political rights and social rights. The emergence of these rights in England, according to Marshall, was sequential. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries civil rights, the rights to justice and the ownership of property, together with the freedoms of the person, speech and faith, were gradually established. In the nineteenth century political rights were given to many more people with the expansion of the franchise. In the twentieth century, the creation of the welfare state gave people a right to a decent living, through access to education and social services.[10]

Marshall's ideas have been very influential.[11] In at least one area, however, they are no longer accepted. For Marshall, citizenship was self-evidently a national institution and the rights that he talked about were provided by national governments. In the light of developments in the past half-century, this has become much less obvious. Globalisation and the mass migration that is an integral part of it have undermined the nineteenth-century idea of an exclusive relationship with a single national polity. Many people now have dual nationality, or descend from parents of different nationalities, and as a result have strong attachments to more than one state.[12] In Europe, this issue has become more urgent due to the creation of the European Union (EU) and the transfer of sovereign powers from the member states to EU institutions.[13] The EU itself is thinking aloud about the development of an EU citizenship, not as a replacement, of course, but alongside national citizenship.[14]

The identification of citizenship with national states has also left its mark on the historiography of citizenship, which has concentrated very much on two distinct periods: antiquity and the modern age. Greek and Roman antiquity is seen as the cradle of European citizenship, the

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period starting with the French Revolution as its phase of maturity.[15] The Middle Ages and the early modern period are a problem, because states as we know them either did not exist or failed to provide proper citizenship regulations. Andreas Fahrmeir's textbook on citizenship typically calls this the stage 'before citizenship', and portrays the French Revolution as 'the invention of citizenship'.[16] This gap in the history of citizenship can be bridged by shifting the focus away from states and towards the urban environments where citizenship did exist, both as a formal status and as a set of practices.[17]

This then brings us to a second area where Marshall's definition has been amended: its legal dimension. Underlying Marshall's definition was the assumption that citizens gained rights that would be legally enforceable, because they were established in the constitution or in other laws. Increasingly, students of citizenship have been forced to acknowledge that laws on citizenship can be contradictory and that citizenship practices can exist outside the rules covering formal citizenship, as the product of certain types of behaviour. For example, migrants without formal citizenship can nonetheless participate in local elections after a certain number of years' residence. In these and similar ways, inhabitants become de facto citizens through practices technically reserved for citizens only.[18] This practice-oriented approach, which is used throughout this book, widens the community of 'citizens' far beyond those having formal citizen status. Citizenship therefore is not so much concerned with distinctions between categories of people, but rather with the roles people play in society.[19] Nonetheless, important questions need to be answered about, for example, the gender, cultural or racial distinctions related to formal citizenship. In those areas citizenship status did indeed distinguish between people.

Ruling out the idea of citizenship as an exclusively legal category and abandoning the national perspective on citizenship may add to the problem of definition, but both must be discarded if we wish to compare the development of citizenship across time and space. Therefore I prefer a definition proposed by Charles Tilly. He defined citizenship as[20]

> a continuing series of transactions between persons [i.e. citizens] and agents of a given [polity][21] in which each has enforceable rights and obligations uniquely by virtue of 1. the person's membership in an exclusive category, the native-born plus the

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> naturalized, and 2. the agent's relation to the [polity] rather than any other authority the agent may enjoy.

This definition is practice-oriented because it focuses on 'transactions', rather than on the rights and obligations as such, and allows for the possibility that other authorities than the state, for example local institutions, can create citizenship.[22] 'Authority' in this definition should probably be further specified as 'authorities in charge of spatial units', to distinguish them from prison wardens or museum directors. A shorter version, proposed by Richard Bellamy, makes essentially the same point. Bellamy defines citizenship as 'a particular set of political practices involving specific public rights and duties with respect to a given political community'. I agree with the 'political' in community, but think that the practices are broader than merely political. Bellamy too acknowledges that to function properly, political citizenship requires 'social and moral dispositions': in other words, more than politics.[23] Tilly himself proposed a simplified version, defining citizenship as 'a tie entailing mutual obligations between categorically defined persons and agents of a government'.[24] What is lost in this admittedly more elegant formulation, is the interactivity implied in the 'transactions' of his earlier definition. The 'tie' instead foregrounds the legalistic definition that has been a source of so much confusion over this topic in the past.

Citizenship and the 'Quality' of Society

Because it is multifaceted, to some extent voluntary, and touches on several of the crucial dimensions of society – politics, the economy, social arrangements, perhaps also culture – citizenship is clearly an important element of what determines the quality of a society. In recent years, three influential books have strongly suggested a more specific connection between citizenship and economic prosperity. Interestingly, all three have made extensive use of historical data. Only one uses citizenship as such as a key variable, but in a broader sense the other two also touch on the issues discussed in this book.

The most influential of these authors has no doubt been Douglass North, the 1993 Nobel laureate in economics. In a nutshell, North has argued that for market exchanges to proceed smoothly, transaction costs need to be low. Transaction costs include the expenses related to transportation and information gathering, but crucially also

the rules and regulations ensuring property rights and contract enforcement. When institutions perform poorly, transaction costs will increase and the economy will be poorer as a result. On the basis of this simple observation, North, together with John Wallis and Barry Weingast, developed a theory of socio-economic development.[25] North, Wallis and Weingast distinguish two basic types of societies; the first they call natural-order societies, the second open-access societies. Natural-order societies are, historically speaking, the commonest type by far. In these societies, elites compete for the largest share of the economic pie. Although this competition is about economic gains, the weapons are political. With the aid of privileges and, if necessary, real weapons, elites help themselves (and their supporters) to whatever they can lay their hands on. In advanced versions of such natural-order societies, elites accept limitations on this sort of rent-seeking, but reluctantly and never permanently. As a result, natural-order societies and their economies are subject to short-term cycles of political upheaval.

North, Wallis and Weingast think that this unholy war of the elites against their subjects first came to an end around 1800 in three countries, through a series of related events.[26] In the British colonies in North America the American Revolution that erupted in 1776 installed a government that was accountable to its citizens. French involvement in this war and its financial consequences then led to the French Revolution of 1789 that toppled the elites in that country. The series of wars against revolutionary France subsequently forced the English elites to follow a path that had already been cleared a century earlier by the Glorious Revolution, which gave power to Parliament. During these three related revolutions, elites were forced to acknowledge the role of citizens in their polities by introducing democratic rule. This finally stopped the endless rounds of rent-seeking and started investments in long-term improvements that would ultimately prove beneficial to all, i.e. citizens and elites alike. The 'open access order' had arrived.

Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson tell a roughly similar story. For them too, the distinction between rich and poor countries is all about 'institutions, institutions, institutions'.[27] They see the Glorious Revolution as the turning point. Parliamentary constraints on the monarch (or the executive) helped secure property rights, changed the fiscal regime and led to improved infrastructure and to a much more aggressive protection of international trade by the British state.[28] This, Acemoglu and Robinson argue, created the foundations to launch the

Industrial Revolution. Institutional reforms, or their absence, then determined which countries were able to follow the British example. Outside Europe, however, the Europeans imposed the sort of institutional regimes that prevented non-European regions from imitating that example. To this day, the distinctions between prosperous and poverty-stricken economies are very much determined by institutional structures and the incentives they generate.

Political scientist Robert Putnam came to the same conclusion in two influential works on civic institutions in Italy and the United States.[29] Of these two, the Italian study is the more interesting for our purposes, because it is historically oriented. In a study of the quality of local government in modern Italy, Putnam and his collaborators found strong evidence of two distinct cultures. In the north, local citizens were very involved in civic organisations; in the south, people were suspicious of public institutions and instead relied on family relations and patronage to get things done. For Italy, Putnam explains this situation as the outcome of long-term historical processes. In the north, city-states created civic institutions and citizenship and promoted general welfare, while in the south, feudal lords excluded their subjects from political participation in order to exploit them. The result, Putnam claimed, was not just poor-quality institutions in southern Italy and better ones in the north but also a serious gap in prosperity between the two regions.[30]

Putnam's claims have not been universally accepted. Scholars of Renaissance Italy have pointed out that he idealised the faction-ridden and often violent political conflicts of the communes and completely ignored the rise of strong-man solutions that saved the city-states from imploding.[31] That, however, is not the point here. Like North, Wallis and Weingast, and like Acemoglu and Robinson, Putnam is convinced that civic involvement in the way society is ruled has long-term beneficial effects.[32]

Putnam explains the impact of civic organisations using the concept of 'social capital'. Membership brought skills and networks that helped people to make their way through life. Amartya Sen has identified 'freedom' as the key factor. Freedom, Sen argues, contributes in itself to people's sense of well-being, but is also positively connected to the improvement of material well-being. The reason is that freedom gives people the opportunities to shape their own lives, and those opportunities will encourage them to work harder and more efficiently. 'Agency', therefore, is both desirable in its own right, and for the

positive externalities that it generates.[33] In Besley's 'agency model' citizens can select the most competent politicians through elections, and reward those who deliver on their citizens' preferences by re-electing them.[34]

There are many instances in which effective agency requires that individuals act in unison. Citizenship is a case in point. Defining citizenship as a set of practices more or less automatically implies that citizens themselves can shape and in many ways even create their own citizenship, but that they only do so as part of a collective. The development of citizenship therefore needs to be explained as a form of collective action. Much of the story of this book is concerned with times when states found it very difficult to impose their authority. After the fall of the Roman Empire, most of Europe was plunged into a prolonged period of political anarchy. While the Church and secular princes were trying to figure out who was in charge, towns made their own bid to provide public order, and in many ways this was a bottom-up process. Citizenship, in other words, was created in an environment of collective action, rather than imposed from above, even though that sometimes happened as well.[35]

Collective action is one of the key puzzles of the social sciences and scholars in sociology, anthropology, economics and political science have put forward theories as well as empirical data to demonstrate that collective action can produce durable results. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, for example, have argued that humans are a naturally 'cooperative species', as a result of their dependence on game. Eating the meat of large animals was possible only when hunters joined forces. Human history is a long series of such combined efforts.[36] Mancur Olson, on the other hand, underlines that collective action can easily produce negative effects. Collectives have to provide incentives for their members to remain loyal to the group and those incentives often take the form of creating insider advantages, or 'rents'. The ways in which modern states defend the interests of their citizens to the exclusion of migrants and refugees are a clear example of how borders create divisions between the established and the outsiders. Collective action, in other words, has winners as well as losers, and rent-seeking behaviour by the insiders is likely to emerge sooner rather than later.[37] Therefore, we cannot take for granted that collective action will automatically produce beneficial effects.

Collective action requires coordinating mechanisms. These can take various forms, starting with the family, but in the public domain the two most important are the market as the coordinator of economic activities, and the state as the coordinator of politics.[38] These two mechanisms are very different. Whereas the market operates, it seems, without an identifiable coordinator, through what Adam Smith called the 'invisible hand' balancing supply and demand, the state can be precisely identified in terms of its personnel. But here is the problem: is it self-evident that what those individuals – the sovereign, the government, a dictator – want to achieve can be imposed upon the people? Too much of the social scientific and historical literature assumes that it can. This book starts from the assumption that this is not at all so, and that huge costs are indeed involved in persuading people to comply with government regulation.[39] The historical record is full of political contestation.[40]

Political scientists Wolfgang Streeck and Philippe Schmitter have suggested that, next to the family, the market and the state, voluntary associations are a fourth type of coordination mechanism. They define them as 'functionally defined interest associations', whose members, through 'inter- and intra-organizational concertation', can ensure 'proportional shares'.[41] From this point of view, civic organisations are effective because they reduce uncertainty and help people to act more effectively.

Claiming that institutions can make societies better is one thing, proving it quite another. This applies especially to the centuries covered by this book, for which reliable statistical data are lacking. Even though much progress has been made in the systematic collection of quantitative data about historical societies, for the time being we still have only two measurements that cover enough countries at sufficient data points to give us more or less reliable indications of the 'quality' of these societies. Those indicators are urbanisation and average national income, or GDP/capita.[42] These are, unfortunately, not even independent indicators, since urbanisation is one of the variables economic historians use to estimate the size of GDP. They are, however, the best we have, and therefore their suitability for the task that they are assigned in this book needs to be briefly discussed.

Many economists see urbanisation as a proxy for premodern economic and social development.[43] Urban economies were predicated on effective farmers who had to feed the town dwellers; urban growth

made farmers more productive.[44] Urban trade and industry generally grew faster than agriculture. Recent quantitative research on historical towns in the period covered by this book suggests that citizen participation in local politics and parliamentary representation of urban interests did indeed create 'significant direct positive benefits' for European towns, compared to those of the Middle East and North Africa.[45]

Since World War II, economists have developed increasingly sophisticated tools to establish the size of national income. The results of their calculations nowadays provide a very important instrument for economic policy and a standard for governmental performance. Economic historians have applied the same methodology to past societies. For the nineteenth century good data are available, but for earlier centuries they have to be reconstructed, acknowledging the huge gaps in the historical record and the need, therefore, to estimate and, sometimes, guesstimate missing data. The best-known figures for GDP/capita, and the related concept of living standards, have been produced by the late Angus Maddison.[46] Inevitably, his figures have been challenged, but more importantly, they have also been improved upon by scholars such as Robert Allen, Stephen Broadberry and Bishnupriya Gupta, Paolo Malanima, Bas van Leeuwen and Jan Luiten van Zanden.[47] In combination with improved data on urbanisation, their work allows us to gauge – still crudely, but with greater precision than before – the different trajectories of societies, both within Europe and between Europe and other continents.[48] Where appropriate, but especially in Parts II and III of this book, their figures are used to make claims about the impact of citizenship on the prosperity of societies, and by implication about their overall well-being.

Methodologies for a Comparative History of Citizenship

Methodologically, this book takes its cues from a distinguished series of works on historical sociology.[49] These books share an interest in large topics, such as the rise of the modern state (Charles Tilly, Thomas Ertman) and democratic regimes (Barrington Moore Jr., and North, Wallis and Weingast), the origins of rebellions and revolutions (Tilly again, Theda Skocpol), of the modern world economy (Immanuel Wallerstein), and the emergence of the welfare state (Abram de Swaan).[50] Another characteristic shared by these works is their attempt to mine the historical record for patterns that might help us understand

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the development of human societies. Most historical sociologists hesitate to apply the word 'theory' to their results, presumably because they have realised that historical processes have certain unique dimensions that make it very difficult to reduce them to statements that can be tested against other evidence.

Historical sociology has been dominated by American social scientists, uninhibited by the historian's natural inclination to see each historical event as somehow unique. Due to the roots of their field in nineteenth-century nationalism, historians moreover tend to be country specialists, reluctant to wander very far outside the area of their expertise. Sociologists, economists and political scientists have felt free to go where they please. I have to admit that I myself, having done a great deal of archival work on the urban history of the Netherlands and relatively little outside it, have often felt intimidated by my lack of first-hand, i.e. archive-based, knowledge of the topics I discuss in this book. I have, however, persuaded myself that at the end of the day it cannot count as a handicap to have at least some experience with the original material, even if that experience is temporally and geographically limited.

Another feature that this book borrows from the historical social scientists is their particular application of the comparative method. In its more sophisticated form, the comparative method requires a precise outcome, or dependent variable, and a limited set of factors (independent variables) that explain the outcome.[51] Given the scope of the present inquiry on one hand, and the incomplete nature of the historical evidence on the other, I allow myself a less restrictive form of narrative, which I reckon will be more accessible to my fellow historians.[52] That narrative is, nonetheless, shaped by two distinct types of comparison, types that Tilly labelled the universalising and variation-finding forms of comparison.[53] The universalising comparison is applied in the first part of this book, which investigates shared features of medieval and early modern European towns. The goal here is to identify characteristics of the legal, political, economic, social and military dimensions of citizenship that were common to most instances, even though the precise details would differ from one town to another. My claim is that between roughly 1000 and 1800 urban citizens all over Europe could tap into a similar set of institutions to shape their lives.

To control for the fact that I use works from a wide range of towns, to capture as much as possible of the variety of individual urban

histories, I pay extra attention to four towns in particular: Siena in Italy, Münster in Germany, Utrecht in the Netherlands and York in England. These towns all belonged to the middle-sized category of European towns, with populations that around 1600 all ranged between 10,000 and 15,000 inhabitants. Only Siena, where the population numbered 50,000 at the time of the Black Death, was at some point substantially larger. These four towns crop up time and again in the chapters of Part I of this book.

In the second part, I try to establish why identical local institutions nonetheless did not produce the same beneficial results – in terms of urbanisation or economic growth – throughout Europe. In this part I argue that the different ways in which towns were incorporated into the state's functioning can help explain these variations. Here I apply the variation-finding type of comparison. In Part III I compare Europe's citizenship experience with that of two Asian regions, China and the Middle East, and also the development of citizenship in the Spanish and British colonies in the New World. Again, the aim is to identify variations, in order to understand the emergence, development and impact of citizenship practices.

Max Weber and the 'Great Divergence'

These comparisons between Europe and other continents bring us, inevitably, back to the works of German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) – inevitably, because Weber was one of the great sources of inspiration for historical sociology as an intellectual enterprise, but also and more pertinently, because he formulated a thesis that has come to dominate the debate about European citizenship ever since it was first published in 1922. In a nutshell, Weber's argument is that much of the emergence of modern society in Europe is explained by this unique feature of Western society: citizenship.[54] In Weber's definition, towns distinguished themselves from the countryside in five aspects. They had fortifications, markets, their own court of justice, associations of inhabitants and, finally, (partial) self-governance.[55] Weber did not claim that all aspects were found in all European towns. Nor did he claim that all these features were unique to Western towns. Indeed, he acknowledged that Asian towns shared many features with their European counterparts. They had, for instance, occupational organisations that looked very much like guilds. The same was true for the towns

of the Middle East. However, these organisations were not bound together in that super-guild that was the European corporate town, with its 'sworn' community and political autonomy.[56]

Corporate status permitted European citizens to develop common policies of their own. They were not, or only to a limited extent, subject to the directives of a central government. The corporation or commune in the West was an alternative to such overarching social structures as the empires, castes and tribes that existed in societies outside Europe.[57] These inhibited the emergence of communes in the non-Western world; their absence was a precondition for the rise of the commune in medieval Italy and subsequently in the rest of Europe.[58] In the original commune, Weber argued, all citizens were equal, even though that did not last very long. The well-to-do were the only citizens with sufficient leisure time to devote to public affairs, and in due course they monopolised municipal offices. In some towns this was formalised by the creation of patrician guilds with an exclusive claim to municipal offices.[59]

It has been suggested that Weber's discussion of the European town was in several dimensions idealised. He emphasised that citizens defended their own towns, but this was not quite true after the Middle Ages, when professional armies took over.[60] His discussion of the rise of the patriciate already casts a huge question mark over his concept of citizenship. If ordinary citizens had so little say in the public affairs of their hometowns, what then did it mean to be a citizen? What was the fundamental difference between being the subject of a prince or a patriciate? Or did he want to say that only the patricians were genuine citizens? He has also been criticised for creating too much of a uniform picture of the Western as well as of the Oriental city.[61] More to the point, perhaps, our knowledge of European urban history has increased massively since Weber wrote his work, which was a development of the argument of his PhD thesis from 1889.[62]

One very influential element of Weber's analysis was his claim that there is a fundamental difference between Western and non-Western societies. It is not very difficult to see how Weber's predilection for 'ideal types' led him into an essentialist position, which assumes that vast areas like Europe, or China, or the Islamic world for that matter, can be captured in certain common, presumably essential, features. The comparison between continents as such is nonetheless valid, and indeed a central feature of this book. It therefore pays to briefly

summarise the debate that has preoccupied historians about this issue in recent years, especially since the publication, in 2000, of Kenneth Pomeranz's book *The Great Divergence*, the title of which has carried over into the whole debate.[63]

In a brutally abbreviated form, Pomeranz's argument runs as follows. Around 1900 China and Europe were, economically speaking, two different worlds, whereas in, say, 1600 or even 1700 they had been much more similar. The difference in 1900 therefore was not the result of structural distinctions between these two regions, but of some coincidences that allowed Europe to jump ahead during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of those coincidences was the availability of cheap calories (sugar, cocoa, etc.) from the colonies; the other one was easily accessible coal that provided – initially inefficient – British steam engines with cheap fuel. To prove his point, Pomeranz systematically compared the most advanced regions in Europe (the British Isles) and China (the Yangzi delta) on a number of points that had been highlighted by other historians as factors explaining the Industrial Revolution. By demonstrating that Britain and the Yangzi delta were perhaps gradually but not radically different, Pomeranz made the point that the Industrial Revolution was not so much the result of structural process of societal transformation, but rather of Fortune favouring the Europeans.

Given the stark outlines of his thesis, critics have naturally been piling on the evidence that would prove Pomeranz wrong.[64] Jan Luiten van Zanden, for example, emphasised how European societies, and especially those around the North Sea, had already during the late Middle Ages developed nuclear households, levels of literacy and corporate institutions, including citizenship, which were all conducive to the development of market economies and economic growth.[65] In other words, it was not so much the level, but the dynamic of economic development that was different in both societies. Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and Bin Wong have combined both arguments. They support Pomeranz in his observation that levels of development were not so different between both societies, but confirm Van Zanden's idea of different trajectories. Rather than the institutions foregrounded by Van Zanden, however, they see warfare as the main area of distinction. The Chinese state, in their picture, was a relatively benign actor, more benign, at least, than its aggressive counterparts in Europe. Paradoxically, warfare led the Europeans to the steam engine.[66] I hope

to demonstrate that the history of citizenship can contribute a new and significant angle to this debate about differential development.

About the Contents of This Book

This professes to be a comparative study of different historical forms of citizenship and their impact both in particular polities and on the wider world. Its building blocks are numerous local historical studies, which hold a gold mine of detail on this topic. Unfortunately, even among historians we find a huge gap between the detailed knowledge that has been produced in such studies of individual towns, and the clichés that still abound in textbooks. Those clichés are, inevitably, repeated by social scientists and are as a result firmly embedded in the scholarly literature. Much of that literature, moreover, is still fixated on Weber's ideas from 1922.[67] The problem with those ideas, as we see in the following pages, is not that they were completely wrong. In many respects Weber's intuitions were correct, but they were not entirely correct, and his mistakes have huge implications for the way we have come to think about European institutions and societies, as well as those of other continents.

The aim of this book is to set that historical record straight. With what we have learned about urban societies in the period covered here, it is possible to tell a new story about the development of European societies. This is important for historians, but for the social sciences as well, because citizenship happens to be one of the areas where the social sciences have leaned heavily on knowledge produced by historians. There is an uncanny tendency among social scientists to refer to works that have, frankly, been overtaken by more helpful ideas for some time. Apart from Weber himself one thinks of the continued interest in the works of Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, who died in 1935 and whose work on the medieval city originated as a lecture series in 1922 and was published in 1927.[68] In a way, of course, the historians have only themselves to blame, because they have been reluctant to produce the sort of text that could replace Pirenne as a helpful and up-to-date sampler of the historical literature. The present book seeks to provide that too.

Trying to address this agenda by applying local data to a global questionnaire, this book is in danger of intellectually overstretching itself. Inevitably, I have relied on the case I know best and where

I spent many years in the archives, i.e. the Netherlands, or rather the Dutch Republic, for a substantial chunk of the period covered in these pages. I have tried to avoid the Scylla of portraying the Dutch experience as typical of Europe as a whole, and the Charybdis of saying the exact opposite and making it into a completely unique case, as Dutch historians are at times prone to do. Instead, I try to show in Part II that it was part of a specific trajectory that citizenship in Europe was passing through.

Another limitation is this book's urban setting. Historically, this can be defended by the fact that formal citizenship in the centuries covered in these pages was located in towns. Citizenship in the form of a piece of paper was almost exclusively reserved for the inhabitants of towns – almost, because some regions, notably in Flanders, southern Germany and Switzerland, had so-called *paleburghers*, i.e. villagers who could obtain a special type of citizenship rights in nearby towns.[69] Still, my insistence on citizenship practices rather than formal status implies that villagers too could claim to be citizens. German historian Peter Blickle and his collaborators have provided strong arguments in their work, against the overemphasis on the urban–rural distinction, precisely when it comes to political institutions.[70] I am convinced that a story similar to the one told in this book might also be written about the countryside.

The preceding pages, even though they deal with very complex issues, still suggest a relatively straightforward set of questions for the historian: what was the nature of citizenship prior to the democratic era, and under what circumstances could it have an impact on societal prosperity? To answer these two questions, this book is divided into three parts. The first question is addressed in Part I, the second in Parts II and III. Part I analyses structures rather than developments; Part II turns from these shared experiences to investigate some of the distinctions between various European regions and also suggests a development over time, while Part III compares Europe's trajectory with, on one hand, similar societies in Asia, and, on the other hand, the Spanish and English colonies in the Americas.

Because we have defined citizenship as a set of practices, rather than an idea, Part I concentrates on a systematic analysis of these practices in the political, economic, social and military domains. Each chapter tries to establish how institutions provided citizens with agency, i.e. gave them the capacity to shape their own lives. The purpose of this

first part is to show that premodern towns indeed offered many opportunities to their citizens to actively engage in public life and contribute to the development of their communities. To investigate this participation in communal life, we need to focus on some of the institutions that were generally available in premodern towns. For Chapter 2 on politics this is primarily the town council or councils. Many towns had two, some even three councils, with varying degrees of representativeness. Citizens could articulate their political demands through elections, but also through petitions, and if those did not work, through riots and rebellions. Special attention is paid to the role of wards, districts, neighbourhoods – whatever they might be called – the small entities that provided another layer of texture to urban communities. A major question for this chapter is whether urban politics were really dominated by oligarchies, a small number of elite families who presumably monopolised local offices.

Economically, the most important institutions in local communities were the guilds. With very few exceptions, premodern towns had dozens of guilds, each organising tens, hundreds or even thousands of members. A debate has been going on for some time now as to whether guilds contributed to economic growth. In Chapter 3, the focus is much more on their role in the community. We also want to know whether guilds restricted access to urban trades.

Socially, urban welfare agencies looked after those who had problems providing for themselves. Charitable institutions were perhaps even more common, if not more numerous, than guilds. In some places they would be governed by the Church, but very often pious names were a cover for public governance. Charity was simply too important to be left entirely to Churches. Charities were important instruments of communal inclusion and exclusion. The balance between these two is an important topic for Chapter 4.

In modern studies of citizenship, the military aspect tends to be omitted. In the premodern era it was, however, vitally important, as Chapter 5 tries to demonstrate. Large numbers of citizens were drafted in to contribute to the defence of the local community in wartime, but also during periods of peace. In Niccolò Machiavelli's version of citizenship, civic militias allowed citizens to prove their civic virtue. The literature on the Military Revolution has obscured the fact that these forces survived into the early modern era. How and why they did so is a key topic for this chapter.

The first part of this book draws on urban histories from all over Europe and most of the time disregards the variations between towns and regions, and also ignores temporal developments, at least most of the time. The second part does the exact opposite. Here I start to unpack the Weberian idea of a single European urban experience. In the four chapters that make up Part II, I focus on different areas that stood out in the urban and civic landscape. The focus in this second part shifts from the internal workings of citizenship within urban communities to the external relations of those communities with the state in which they were located. I analyse the impact of towns in the wider polity. Three regions, the economically and politically most advanced of their time, are highlighted: medieval Italy (Chapter 6), the early modern Low Countries (Chapter 7) and, finally, England (Chapter 8). The challenge is to explain which types of citizenship arrangements made these three regions so singularly successful – at least for a time. The final chapter (Chapter 9) in this part also looks at other regions, such as the Holy Roman Empire, France and Spain, where towns were embedded in state structures in such ways that urban citizens had less access to the state machinery and national politics.

Part III of this book then widens the inquiry by bringing in evidence from the Middle East and Asia (Chapter 10), as well as from the Spanish and English colonies in the New World (Chapter 11). Here we come to the crux of the Weberian claim concerning the uniqueness of European citizenship and its possible contribution to Europe's precocious economic development since 1800. First we look at endogenous developments in Asia, where urban communities were often as large as they were in Europe. In both the Middle East and China, empires were predominant, a form of government often portrayed as anathema to citizenship. There is no doubt that the concept of citizenship as such was absent from these societies; in this specific sense citizenship was indeed a uniquely European phenomenon. But as we have defined citizenship as a set of practices, we can be more open-minded about the presence or absence of citizenship in Asia. The same aspects of citizenship – urban politics, guilds, social provisioning and civic militias – as in Europe are investigated. Unsurprisingly, we observe both similarities and differences between Europe and Asia. These can, nonetheless, help us to identify the key features that may have distinguished Europe's institutional framework from that of Asian towns and countries.

Whereas the discussion of citizenship in Asia is mostly an endogenous story, turning to the New World forces us to account for the import of institutions by the Spanish and British colonisers. In the Americas, an important debate has been waged about the impact of colonial institutions on long-time economic performance. Spanish colonists left a legacy of 'poor' institutions, it has been argued, whilst the British endowed the United States with 'good' institutions. Historical studies of citizenship in these regions have not been widely undertaken. Still, what we can find out about them seems to contradict this black-and-white contrast between South and North America.

The topic of this book is so enormously complex that it is impossible to 'prove' very much about the role of citizenship in the premodern world. Some readers may also be put off by what they might consider an overly optimistic picture of premodern urban societies painted in the following pages. So am I oblivious to the fact that these premodern towns and cities were pools of vice and violence, that they were regularly ravaged by plague and other diseases, that women and children, not to mention labourers and slaves, were exploited there and that they were often ruled by greedy and corrupt elites? I can assure you that I am aware of all of these things. Yet I am not so sure that in these respects urban environments were worse than rural, or that early modern towns were worse than towns in antiquity, the Middle Ages or even the nineteenth century. Nor do I think that these downsides of urban life help us explain the fact that the percentage of urbanites roughly quadrupled in Europe between the eighth and fifteenth centuries, and had doubled again by 1800.[71]

Instead I hope to persuade the readers of this book that citizenship arrangements could make an important contribution to the promotion of welfare in societies of this period more generally. I also try to show that Asian societies, even if they did not have the concept, nonetheless had citizenship practices which in various dimensions resembled those in Europe. In other words, this book tries to develop a more sophisticated version of Weber's comparison between Asia and Europe. At the same time, it is an attempt to demonstrate that there was much more citizenship and agency in premodern urban populations than textbook histories of the period still usually assume. It is often said that the rise of democracy was a hallmark of the modern era. I hope

to show in this book that in many ways nineteenth-century Europe was perhaps less democratic than it had been in previous centuries. To see that, however, we have to let go of the exclusively national perspective that has dominated history-writing since its emergence as an academic discipline in that same nineteenth century.