The 'I' and the 'we' of citizenship in the age of waning democracy: Wolin and Balibar on citizenship, the political and dedemocratization

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ABSTRACT

Despite drawing on different historical traditions and philosophical sources, Sheldon Wolin and Étienne Balibar have come to see citizenship and democracy in fundamentally similar ways. However, the work of one has not been considered alongside that of the other. In this paper, I examine some of their key texts and draw out three areas of common concern: the historical specificity of the political, citizenship as a dialectical process and dedemocratization. The significance of Wolin and Balibar's writing on citizenship and democracy lies in a set of proposals for the eternal rebirth of the citizen as democratic agent between action and institution, hierarchy and equality, individual and community, difference and the universal. Their open-ended frameworks can be seen as an antidote to contemporary pessimism about the fate of democracy as either political order or normative ideal. I conclude by suggesting that contemporary Ecuadorean and Bolivian debates about how to combine relational ontologies and liberalism has opened a fertile domain for re-imagining the I and We of citizenship.

Fukuyama's gambit that the fall of the Soviet Union would usher in a period in which liberal democracy would be unrivalled as either a political ideal or a practical method for organizing state and society has largely come to be. Yet, the pillars of both liberalism (liberty and pluralism) and democracy (equality, participation) are in retreat in the Americas, Europe and Australasia where rising socio-economic inequality and diminishing civil liberties place limits on the possibility of rule by the demos. The outlook for democracy outside of what O'Donnell referred to as 'the northwest quadrant' (North America and Europe) is not much brighter (O'Donnell 2010). After the 'third wave' of democratization, which extended from southern Europe in the 1970s to Latin America in the 1980s and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, faith in the idea of liberal democracy has waned. There has been a growing sense of disjuncture between liberal democracy as a normative ideal and the actually existing institutions associated with it. This disjuncture between democracy as ideal and reality reached absurdist ends in 2002 when the US and its allies used the establishment of democracy as

a justification for invading Iraq, and making its civil society safe for terrorism. Meanwhile, advocates of a causal relationship between free market capitalism and liberal democracy saw the expansion of an entrepreneurial middle class in China as a positive sign that Chinese authoritarianism would give way to a more liberal and democratic form of government (Anderlini 2012; Wang 2003). Instead, the Chinese state has cracked down on dissent, solidified authoritarian control (Nathan, Diamond, and Plattner 2013) and may represent a durable form of top-down but popular one-party rule (Keane 2017). Similarly, despite robust economic growth, many countries in S.E. Asia teeter on an edge between democracy and 'electoral' or 'competitive authoritarianism' (Boudreau 2009; Case 2009; Levitsky and Way 2010) while leading the world in the acceleration of inequality (Jain-Chandra et al. 2016). Some left-sympathizing political analysts, meanwhile, pinned their hopes for state-level democratization on the 'pink tide' of regimes that came to power in the first decade of the twentieth century in Latin America on the back of popular resistance to neoliberal imperialism (e.g. Escobar 2010; Mouffe 2013; Silva 2009). These administrations were able to carry out redistributive reforms when commodity prices were high, but have devolved into populist nightmares (Venezuela) or are being devoured by far-reaching corruption scandals (Brazil, Argentina) that imperil democratic gains. Anti-technocratic, grass roots democratic experiments in southern Europe (such as Podemos and Syriza) have struggled under the weight of Eurozone financial authoritarianism. Unelected technocrats now sit alongside elected, right-wing populists while the idea of European social democracy is in retreat. Democracy, and democratic citizenship, has become chimerical at a time when it has no clearly articulated political rivals. In the context of 'darkening times', 'crisis', 'extremes' and the spectre of new styles of authoritarianism, the outlook for democracy looking East, West, North or South, appears ever more uncertain.

Brown's (2015) thesis that neoliberalism poses a more significant threat to democracy than dictatorship by reducing everything to a single, economic, metric of value, delegitimizing politics itself, remains an open wager. From the 1990s, centrist parties like Labor in Australia and the UK abandoned commitments they once had to socialist alternatives, and agreed to the financialization of everything. With this, the Keynesian pact that had sustained dissensus within two-party electoral systems died with a whimper. By agreeing to the idea that social justice could be achieved through market-led 'Third Way' reforms, public debate was reduced to questions of technical solutions and policy packages rather than open-ended discussion about the good polity or just society. As Mouffe's (2013) thesis of agonistics suggests, when political difference is policed out of public arenas (such as parliament and elections), it does not disappear. It simply manifests in private and undemocratic spaces such as religious organizations, corporate administration or nationalist movements. Populist movements and religious fundamentalism have become international symptoms of the failure of liberal democracy to provide adequate representative or participatory mechanisms – voice or choice – for the expression of the interests and identities of citizens (Laclau 2007; Müller 2016).

The structural (social equality) and legal (rights and liberties) conditions for the practice of citizenship have been eroded. The boundless war on terror has driven a militarized reduction in civil liberties and expansion of state and executive powers that have closed public spaces and criminalized practices previously associated with citizenship. Many governments have normalized the use of surveillance mechanisms and databases that operate outside of any legal framework or juridical processes, as well as torture, kidnapping and indefinite

detention (Bigo and Walker 2009; Gambetti and Godoy-Anativia 2013; Hocking 2003). Meanwhile, the one thing uniting the largest protests of recent history (against the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, for action on climate change, the Arab Spring mobilizations and Occupy movements) was ineffectiveness in bringing about democratizing reforms to expand the sharing of power. Social media have facilitated mass mobilization, but also lend themselves more to populist talking down than to demotic talking up to power. Demotic action has increasingly failed to gain institutional traction.

While many on the left (e.g. Rancière 2006, 2013; Zizek 2009) have abandoned the notion of the citizen along with the small-p politics of 'capitalo-parliamentary mediocrity', Balibar and Wolin hold onto the citizen as a living remnant of a historically recurrent portent of democratic possibility and a fulcrum of open-ended struggle for equality and liberty. For them, the figure of the citizen is open-ended, and must continually be re-invented according to the historical conditions and political terms of the day. The work of Balibar and Wolin is useful for thinking through the current political moment because each conceives of the citizen as the agent of political change, and each focuses on democratization or dedemocratization as process rather than democracy as institutional end. Each explores the tension between constituent moments and constitutional orders, and each conceives of democratization as contingent on ongoing challenges to hierarchy, which cannot be institutionally preserved and need to be periodically re-asserted. For each, a polity is either democratizing, which is to say power is being more equitably shared or hierarchies challenged, or dedemocratizing whereby power is becoming more concentrated and hierarchies are reinforced. Balibar and Wolin see liberal democracy as a fraught compromise built around antinomic tendencies and principles including liberty and equality, participation and representation, institutions and constituting or 'demotic' moments, order and anarchy. A dialectical tension results in democracy's open-endedness and the possibility to evolve with changing social and historical conditions. However, it also means that democracy's internal tensions can twist it incrementally into something altogether undemocratic. Balibar uses the term 'ademocracy' to describe a situation whereby the dialectical dynamic between citizen insurrection and institutional order stops, leaving an ossified set of institutions that favour hierarchy. Wolin, meanwhile, uses the term 'inverted totalitarianism' to outline a political order possessed of all the institutions of liberal democracy whereby citizenship has been reduced to spectacle and elections a ritual to legitimize an inegalitarian social order.

While each draws on a range of historical and philosophical sources, Balibar cleaves to the French Revolution, the *Declaration of the rights of man and the citizen* and European social democracy as his frames for exploring the figure of the citizen. Wolin's analyses, meanwhile, revolve around the American constitution and the evolution of American democracy since its founding. The ground they cover creates a complementary whole of sorts spanning Anglo-liberal and continental philosophy, and the distinctly American and French revolutionary traditions and debates about equality, liberty, democracy and the political. The theoretical reach of each scholar is epic. Wolin traverses the entire Western intellectual tradition raking the surface to draw out the political in philosophy. Balibar, meanwhile, is more eclectic and, especially in *Citizen subject,* moves into literature rather than history to explore the citizen as caught between universality and difference. Given the similarities and complementarities in the questions they ask, and the ways they go about addressing these, it is unfortunate that the work of the one has not been considered alongside the work of the other. Their theories of the political and of citizenship are both premised on

sensitivity to cultural and historical specificity. Together, they shed light on possibilities for the re-emergence of the citizen as agent of democratization on either side of the Atlantic.

In this paper, I focus on several texts of Balibar and Wolin in which their major arguments on democracy and citizenship are developed. I am specifically concerned with unpacking cleavages and possibilities for being and becoming citizens and for arresting a dedemocratizing drift that these texts identify. I draw significantly on Wolin's *Fugitive democracy and other essays*, a collection of papers published individually between the 1960s and early 2000s but released as a book one year after Wolin's death in 2016, and Balibar's *Citizen subject: Foundations for philosophical anthropology,* a collection of essays that Balibar began in the 1990s that was not published until 2016. The scope of each book is expansive and goes well beyond the reach of this paper. *Fugitive democracy* is divided into several sections that offer the reader an insight into the evolution and continuity of Wolin's thought on democracy, liberalism, the relation between political theory and practice and his wide-ranging sweep through classical and contemporary political philosophy, from Aristotle to Tocqueville, Hobbes to Marx, Weber, the Frankfurt School, Arendt, Rawls and Rorty. The title 'Fugitive democracy' is Wolin's theory of what remains of the possibility of rule by the demos, moments of demotic resistance against global tendencies towards inequality, in the age of 'inverted totalitarianism'. Many of Wolin's ideas relating to fugitive democracy are fleshed out in his 2008 critique of US democracy in the age of the war on terror, *Democracy incorporated: Managed democracy and the spectre of inverted totalitarianism*, which I also draw on in this essay. Balibar's *Citizen subject*, by contrast, takes the reader on an excursion through the subjectivity of the citizen as a fraught antinomy between the particular and the universal, or what Balibar refers to as 'philosophical anthropology'. This journey moves through a range of literary, historical and philosophical terrains including the works of Tolstoy, Rousseau, Derrida, Locke, Descartes, Hegel, Marx, Blanchot and Freud. The title of the book comes from Balibar's response to Jean-Luc Nancy's question 'who comes after the subject?' Balibar's answer was 'the citizen'. *Citizen subject* complements Balibar's *Citizenship* (2015) and *Equaliberty: Political essays* (2014), which develop his theory of citizenship as antinomic and processual.

My comparative discussion draws out three themes: the historical specificity of the political; citizenship as a dialectic; and the ways that democratic institutions are compatible with dedemocratization. Firstly, I explore how Balibar and Wolin conceive of the political in terms of historically contingent challenges to an inegalitarian social order. Secondly, I contrast Balibar's notion of citizenship as a dialectic of institution and insurrection to Wolin's distinction between constitutional democracy and democratic constitutionalism. Each sees institutions as fraught and inadequate means of encouraging democracy. Each understands democracy and citizenship as fundamentally volatile, and requiring ongoing challenges to the status quo. Citizenship either expands as challenges to inequality are formalized in new rights and liberties, or recedes as these challenges fail. However, as soon as new rights and liberties are written into law and institutionally recognized, the potential for rule by the demos is contained. I identify ambiguities in the ways that Wolin and Balibar envisage the relation between democratizing moments and the socio-cultural terrain of citizenship practice. Thirdly, I contrast the ways that Wolin and Balibar conceive of liberal democracy evolving into something distinctly undemocratic. Wolin sees 'inverted totalitarianism' as the result of citizenship reduced to spectatorship and participation reduced to rituals that legitimize an inequitable social order. Balibar's citizenship dialectic, meanwhile, accounts for

evolution toward authoritarianism or what he refers to as 'ademocracy', a situation whereby universalizable claims for equality and liberty no longer have political currency (Balibar 2015, 106). Ademocracy and inverted totalitarianism are useful frames for thinking about the fate of liberal democracy in a world marked by increasing inequality, hostility to political difference and diminishing civil liberties. I conclude with a brief discussion of what light Wolin and Balibar can shed on possibilities for democratization in a dedemocratizing world. I suggest that recent constitutional reforms in Ecuador and Bolivia, which blend relational ontology to liberal divisions of individual and community, nature and culture, are examples of a self-fashioning of the demos that have the potential to inspire other new figures of the citizen and permutations of the 'I' of citizen and the 'we' of community and demos.

The historical specificity of rights and the political

Wolin and Balibar rose to prominence as political theorists in the 1960s, and the tumult of this time has been a major influence on their political thought, including their theories of the political and of rights. The combative, anarchic spirit of '68 animates Balibar's theory of citizenship. Wolin, meanwhile, began his career at U.C. Berkeley to a backdrop of resistance to the Vietnam War and the rise of the civil rights movement. Living through a period in which there were successful, or at least legitimate, challenges to the dominant social order perhaps inspired Wolin and Balibar's understanding of the political in terms of historically specific challenges to inequality. One of Wolin's most influential papers, reproduced in *Fugitive democracy,* criticizes the rise of 'methodism' in political science. He argues that theory, when seen from a historical perspective, is a form of political action that expands the range of the possible while a cult of methods, 'methodism', dehistoricizes, depoliticizes and supports the status quo. Wolin's work involves a recurring vocabulary of concepts including authority, power, security, the common good, the city, the demos, the citizen. However, the meanings attributed to these terms are never fixed, and always situated in specific historical fields. For Wolin, the reader and theorist are engaged in a dual act of interpretation, understanding the specificity that gave rise to a theory in the first instance and understanding the context in which one is now viewing the world.

Wolin sees the political as historically contingent and concerned with struggle against inequality. Wolin's clearest articulations of his theory of the political is found in two chapters of *Fugitive democracy*, one on Arendt and the other on Rawls. In each, he demonstrates how attempts to create a dehistoricized terrain of pure politics results in a reification of the status quo and an anti-democratic legitimization of inequality. Wolin finds Arendt's appeal to a realm of pure political reason hostile to both democracy and the political because it assumes that only those of means can afford to be 'rational'. He sees Rawls's appeals to formal equality and public reason, meanwhile, as ways of delegitimizing struggles for actual equality. Here, Wolin echoes Bobbio's (2005) critique of contract theory as inverting history by positing equality as a beginning rather than the end of social struggles. The consequence is revering a right rather than the struggle that resulted in the right. As Wolin puts it: 'To impose the bland ideal of reasonableness and to posit a "nonhistorical" original position from which to stipulate basic principles is to lobotomize the historical grievances of the desperate' (Wolin 1996, 106). Wolin continues:

> The fundamental primacy accorded individual rights justifies unequal persons and powers, but because every citizen can claim them formally, the norm of equal rights gains priority

over the fact of inequality. Thus liberal inequality is democratized and democratic equality is liberalized. (Wolin 1996, 110)

In Wolin's reading of Rawls, the less well-off are to be passive recipients of philanthropy rather than political agents of any kind because the sorts of struggles on which subaltern agency rests have been excised from a domain of rational politics. Wolin is equally critical of the way that a recent language of inclusivity makes inequalities between groups of people disappear, and encourages consensus and conformity. Inclusivity, he argues, is perfectly compatible with hierarchy and authoritarianism but incompatible with equality or democracy. This observation leads Wolin to ask 'what kind of democracy is it where equal rights are formally guaranteed but where wealth and power are no less concentrated than poverty and powerlessness?' (Wolin 2016, 55).

Wolin and Balibar are each critical of the ways that individual rights can disappear the specificity of and collective agency involved in struggles that brought about their recognition in the first instance. The terms of the political, who was organizing in what name, against which interests, how an 'I' became a 'we', vanish into legalese oblivion. At the same time, an artificial sense of individual agency is erected over a history of collective effort. The individual has gained a primacy that relates to no historical context whatsoever. Erasing the importance of collective action results in reducing the citizen's actual agency. In this way, dehistoricized individual rights disempower citizens, whose agency rests in a public space that connects an individual to a community. Theories of the demos as actor appear to be more inchoate than those of actor–action, and collective force tends to remain conceptually undeveloped, struggling to account for a power that does act as a discrete subject. 'Because the heroic has been claimed as an individualistic category, the idea of an agonistic demos seems not only unfamiliar but oxymoronic' (Wolin 2016, 54). Wolin argues that since classical Athens, there has been an emphasis on the figure of the hero in political theory that has challenged recognition of the demos as political agent. One of the issues is the impasse between celebrating heroic individuals, on the one hand, and ambivalence concerning irrational, populist hordes, on the other. This division of rational individual and irrational people echoes a more fundamental separation of the individual and the community at the heart of liberal notions of citizenship. Liberal revolutions refashioned the demos and the citizen out of the subject, creating the citizen subject. However, the separation of the individual and the community speaks to an intellectual and political heritage that creates an irresolvable tension at the heart of citizenship, and which might be inadequate for thinking and enacting democratic citizenship today. Balibar puts it thus:

> It is a characteristic trait of modern citizenship … that the rights of citizens are carried by individual subjects but conquered through social movements that are able to invent, in each circumstance, the appropriate forms and languages of solidarity. Reciprocally, it is essentially through collective action aiming to conquer or extend rights that the 'subjectivization' that autonomizes the individual and grants her a true power to act comes. The dominant ideology refuses to acknowledge this, or presents it in inverted form, suggesting that collective political activity is alienating, perhaps even by its very nature, demeaning or totalitarian. (Balibar 2015, 43)

Recognition of the problem of conceiving individual rights as legal constructs rather than as the products of social struggles is common to Balibar and Wolin. Wolin elides the tendency to immunize the individual by moving between the demos as a popular collective implying the citizen, and the citizen as political agent that implies a demos. Whereas Wolin

is critical of Arendt for abstracting politics from the social terrain, however, Balibar uses Arendt's discussion of civil disobedience and De la Boétie's (1975 [1552]) *Discourse of voluntary servitude* to argue that the open-ended right to claim rights is the basic condition for citizenship. Neither freedom nor equality can be institutionalized. The closest we can come, for Balibar, is in protecting the right to dissent and the legitimacy of disobedience as bases for the cultivation of the faculty of judgement. Balibar's discussion of Arendt and de la Boétie (the perfect tyranny is tyrants all the way down) lead him to conclude that the choice we have is between becoming 'a little Eichmann and transforming [ourself] into a citizen by resisting authority' (Balibar 2014, 186). Balibar continues: 'Equality and freedom therefore have to be imposed by the revolt of the excluded, but also reconstructed by citizens themselves in a process that has no end' (Balibar 2014, 207). Balibar's history of citizenship emphasizes the significance of insubordination and disobedience towards established powers and especially the state. Resistance, insurrection and insubordination, Balibar argues, are essential for precipitating political change, even or especially if they lead to later legal repercussions. 'Only through direct opposition to legality does political freedom periodically constitute itself anew such that the institutions that organize it become *its* institutions, the "institutions of freedom"' (Balibar 2017, 264). Balibar is adamant that rights can neither be granted nor taught, but are learned in the process of being won through struggle. Like Wolin, Balibar sees rights as living tools that have specific histories and domains of utility, or as 'footholds' for future struggles.

> We should think of the 'Charters of Fundamental Rights' … as symbolic expressions of the ensemble of powers that the 'people' have acquired over the course of their history, the sum of their emancipatory movements, serving as footholds for future inventions, rather than buttressing the established order and limiting future struggles for freedom and equality a priori. (Balibar 2015, 18)

The dialectics of citizenship: institution and insurrection, norm and form

Wolin and Balibar each see citizenship in terms of the possibility for becoming and remaining political by challenging inequality and institutions that legitimize it. The process of citizenship is ongoing and open-ended. Balibar refers to a 'trace of equaliberty' as a struggle for universalizable claims to liberty and equality that re-emerges in different times and places, and Wolin emphasizes that the demos needs to continually re-invent itself according to the historical conditions of the day. At the same time, however, citizenship and democracy require institutions to stabilize anarchic moments and to provide the footholds for future struggles toward equality and liberty. This creates a tension that Balibar conceives of as a dialectic of institution and insurrection and that Wolin imagines in terms of demotic bursts or moments of democratic constitutionalism followed by longer phases of constitutional democracy. Each scholar sees the possibility of a dialectical process resulting from the incommensurability between democratizing insurrectionary moments and dedemocratizing administrative orders.

For Wolin, the dialectic revolves around moments of demotic action (fugitive democracy and democratic constitutionalism) and their containment in constitutional arrangements (constitutional democracy) that limit possibilities for equality and power sharing. Wolin uses the term 'fugitive democracy' to denote the moments when the demos pushes back against any tendency to concentrate power or normalize hierarchy. Without these moments

of fugitive democracy there would be no institutions (e.g. elections or rights) to spread or check power in the first place. The central premise of Wolin's fugitive democracy thesis is that democracy is 'a phenomenon that can be housed, but may not be realized, within a form' (Wolin 2016, 53).

Wolin argues that constitutions were invented as a means of domesticating a Greek democracy that began in the fifth century A.D. with the cancelling of debts that allowed more people to become active citizens. He argues that constitutional democracy replaced democratic constitutionalism in fifth century Athens and after the framing of the US Constitution. In 'Norm and Form', Wolin writes that constitutions should primarily be seen as mechanisms for containing democracy's 'political surplus', which he defines as the unwillingness of the demos to be limited to its current share in political power and institutions. Wolin distinguishes 'constitutional democracy' from 'democratic constitutionalism' as alternative approaches to citizenship in the democratic order. 'Constitutional democracy' reifies institutions over open-ended struggle, end over process. 'Democratic constitutionalism', on the other hand, is a situation in which 'democratization has dictated the form of constitution' (Wolin 2016, 84). Democratic constitutionalism is 'representative of a moment rather than a teleologically completed form' (Wolin 2016, 85).

Balibar shares Wolin's disdain of institutions as fundamentally anti-democratic, and places the locus of democracy in a fleeting and fraught space between organized, historically situated action and institutions. Balibar explores different dimensions of the citizenship dialectic in *Citizenship and equaliberty*, where he defines institutions as 'both a process of materially constituting the political community, in the singular, and a plural set of juridical and technical systems of subjection and power that traverse the frontier between civil society and the state' (Balibar 2014, 207). This definition would include things as diverse as rights, schooling, medicine and urban design, which all bind differences together into new universal orders. Balibar shows how notions of universality created through institutional arrangements, however, are premised on different axes of exclusion. '[W]ithin the framework of civic-bourgeois universality, the principle form of exclusion is *differential inclusion*'. The citizen part of a citizen subject exerts a pull towards a realizable universality. However, subjectivity is produced through multi-fold practices of difference – gender, age, ethnicity, religion, bodily, etc. – that resist neutralization. Echoing Wolin's critique of Rawls, but etched on a much wider palette, Balibar's *Citizen subject* explores how the universal in citizenship excludes differentially. Everyone is equal, but this equality leaves open the possibility of many forms of inequality.

In *Citizen subject*, Balibar draws out the impossible tensions between what he calls 'anthropological difference' and universal constructions of equality and citizenship. This creates a paradox of 'sovereign equality', whereby equality is unilaterally conferred but the subject continues to be a site of conflict between the individual and the collective, rights and privileges, real and symbolic freedom and equality. The citizen is therefore torn between different states of subjection as a constituent of the state and an actor of permanent revolution. Although equality is unilaterally conferred by a the state as a basis of citizenship, citizenship always remains, nonetheless, a site of conflict for grappling with new axes of political struggle as they emerge. Balibar sees the citizen subject having two major characteristics, each of which has its own dialectic and aporias. The subject is a *subditus*, and the subject is not a *servus (slave)*. Being a *subditus* means entering into a relation of obedience, but the citizen is also one who is free. This is an elaboration of Aristotle's notion of the citizen as one who

rules and is ruled in turn. For Balibar, this duality of subjectivity creates an unresolvable tension within citizenship. The sweep of Balibar's works underscores how any construction of the individual or willing agent is indissociable from the political, which is grounded in sociality and the solidarity of communitas. The 'I' always presupposes a dynamic relation with the 'we', consciousness with the political.

The relationship between extraordinary moments of demotic action to social processes and subjectivity in Wolin's and Balibar's theories of citizenship is not unproblematic. Wolin has been criticized for creating an unbridgeable cleavage between eruptive demotic moments and political consciousness, cultural norms and social structures. For instance, Kalyvas writes that this results in a separation of 'the extraordinary from any reference to rules, procedures or "norms"', when in fact it is not 'the constitutional people versus the revolutionary people … but the relation of tension by which each sustains the other' (Kalyvas 2008, 489). Vick (2015) meanwhile argues that Wolin's focus on radical democracy undersells the importance of institutional change for promoting citizen participation. Wolin recognizes that political consciousness and conscience need to be nurtured in small-scale settings. However, while he advocated for participatory citizenship, he never examined grassroots or associational life in detail. The closest he comes is in pointing out that while small-scale associations 'workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods, and local communities' may seem unlikely threats to 'Superpower', they are the ground on which counter-power can grow (Wolin 2008, 291). Missing is an account of the daily work of being a citizen, of grass roots organizing and associational life and of the cultural conditions that encourage a democratic conscience, public space and commonality.

The perceived lack of connective tissue between extraordinary moments and citizenship as lived process has contributed to the view of some that Wolin's democratic theory is a no-win situation (e.g. Kateb 2001, 39). Brown sees Wolin as arguing that *only* fugitive moments rather than new continuities of democracy are possible. For her, fugitive democracy represents 'Wolin's last hope for democratic expression amidst complex national and globalized powers wholly unsuited to it. Fugitive democracy embodies the remains of democratic possibility in our time' (Brown 2016; :xviii). McIvor (2016), however, points out that what must be emphasized, even if this is not apparent in Wolin's writing, is the cultural terrain that supports political change *between* moments of demotic eruption.

> [T]he work of democratization requires a supportive ethos or culture that reinforces particular ways of seeing and acting within the world. Absent this culture – which is decidedly lacking in the age of Superpower – demotic energies can and likely will be siphoned off for undemocratic purposes. (McIvor 2016, 425)

According to this view, citizen consciousness and conscience are not (only) eruptive but evolutionary. Fugitive moments may be strung together or sedimented towards an evolving public conscience that encourages public mindedness and the public space to act as citizens. Nevertheless, this process of sedimentation involves numerous dimensions of complexity across social structures, cultural values and institutional arrangements that defy easy theorization (O'Donnell 2010, sketched a framework for citizen agency that aimed to account for cultural, social and institutional dynamics).

This multidimensional complexity is somewhat obscured in Balibar's binary opposition of *either* democratization *or* dedemocratization. According to Balibar, there can be no status quo with respect to citizenship or democracy.

> [E]ither it advances', which is to say it articulates *new fundamental rights*, which are both 'rights of man' and 'rights of the citizen', and develops them with varying degrees of speed into institutions (such as social security, the right to work, citizenship for foreigners, etc.), or it 'regresses', which means that it loses the rights it had acquired. (Balibar 2015, 124, 125)

While Balibar draws attention to the dynamic nature of democracy and citizenship as processes rather than institutional ends, a focus on rights as proxies for democratization appears to downplay the importance of the socio-cultural terrain for cultivating the political consciousness and social projects required to successfully challenge inequality. It is not so much that Balibar does not acknowledge the significance to democratization of a 'supportive ethos or culture', but that the cultural terrain does not fit within his dialectics.

Despite their ambiguities, however, Wolin's fugitive democracy and Balibar's citizenship dialectic throw valuable light on the instability of democracy and citizenship. For Wolin, democracy is only ever a moment, and citizenship is the process of achieving these moments. Likewise, for Balibar citizenship concerns becoming and remaining political by challenging an inequitable status quo. In both cases, the figure of the citizen is the agent of democratization that links individuals to a community in specific struggles for liberty and equality. In conception of the citizen as irreducible to either community or individual, as process rather than end, Wolin and Balibar challenge the immunitary logic of liberalism. Their writing on citizenship also demonstrates how precarious political consciousness is, and how liberal democracy can evolve towards distinctly undemocratic forms of rule.

Ademocracy and inverted totalitarianism

The conditions of possibility for the emergence or sustenance of democracy are neither constant across cultures nor through time, making citizenship inherently unstable. The institutional preconditions that gave rise to citizen led democratization in the 1960s, and which inspired Wolin and Balibar, have given way to more hierarchically organized polities marked by rising socio-economic inequality, expanded corporate, police and executive powers and constraints on civil liberties. Foreshadowing recent studies that indicate a global turn toward new forms of authoritarianism (e.g. *The Economist* 2018), Balibar and Wolin identified means by which liberal democracy can maintain many of its institutions (e.g. elections, parliament, representation, independent judiciary, etc.) while discouraging and disfiguring democratic citizenship. For Wolin this was the move towards 'inverted totalitarianism', and for Balibar the possibility of 'ademocracy'. Ademocracy results when the citizen dialectic is arrested because universalizable struggles for equality and liberty no longer have enough cultural currency to gain traction.

> A hypothesis of this kind allows us to imagine political regimes that are not *moderately democratic* (within the limits compatible with the reproduction if inequality; what Boaventura da Sousa Santos refers to as 'low-intensity democracies') or *anti-democratic* (on the model of dictatorships, authoritarian regimes, or historical fascisms), but in fact *a-democratic*, in the sense that the values inherent in demands for universalizable rights (which we have grouped together under the name 'equaliberty') no longer play any role in their functioning or their development (even as forces of resistance or contestation). (Balibar 2015, 106)

Ademocracies no longer have a citizenship dialectic oriented around universalizable demands for equality and liberty. The condition of ademocracy could result as the antinomy between difference and universality unravels towards either a fractiousness where no

sense of a 'we' is possible or a constructed consensus that disappears the 'I' altogether, or a terrain in which rights that bind an 'I' and a 'we' lose their cultural relevancy. Balibar discounts Brown's thesis that neoliberalism poses a singular totalizing threat to democracy. In *Undoing the demos*, Brown (2015) argued that neoliberalism equates to the delegitimization of politics and difference as *Homo oeconomicus* and a singular metric of value colonize every social domain. Balibar, however, sees ademocracy as a process that results from mechanisms internal to social democracy's own dialectical tendencies – between insurrection and institution, difference and universality – rather than to the colonization of these elements by neoliberal ideology. Entertaining the possibility of ademocracy explains the banalization of export ready democracy, the justification of invasion on the grounds of defending human rights and the decline of civil liberties relative to securitarian fear. The notion of right and freedom has been so emptied of practical significance, and evoked in its inversion, as to render it politically null. As Balibar puts it:

> Today, we can observe a 'securitarian' or 'authoritarian turn' taking place in the functioning of regimes that present themselves as liberal democracies. This has had an impact on both the exercise of civil rights and the limits of pluralism, which had earlier represented liberalism's points of pride as an 'open society'. (Balibar 2015, 120, 121)

The near universal curtailment of civil liberties – especially those relating to protest, privacy and public assembly – among European and Anglo states has created an institutional terrain hostile to the practice of citizenship, which demands open public spaces and the legitimacy of dissent. But the securitarian turn, like the neoliberal assault on Keynesian social policy and labour laws that preceded it, has been incremental rather than absolute. Focusing on the case of the US, Wolin argued that existing democracies would not abruptly lurch into dictatorship by way of an election result or coup, but would be dedemocratized from within.

Wolin's account of 'inverted totalitarianism' shares many of its tenets with Bertram Gross's prescient 1980 book *Friendly fascism: The new face of power in* America. Like Gross, Wolin distinguishes classical (e.g. Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany) from inverted totalitarianism by noting that the leader of an inverted totalitarian order is a product not an architect of the system. In this context, mass disengagement rather than mass mobilization is encouraged and private media rather than public agencies disseminate propaganda to reinforce the official version of events. As the state shrinks its involvement in the provision of services, it expands its intervention into private life (in line with Foucault's discussion of the expansion and intensification of biopolitics). Secondly, inverted totalitarianism does not demand or herald a radical break from the past but has emerged 'imperceptibly, unpremeditatedly, and in seemingly unbroken continuity with the nation's political traditions' (Wolin 2008, 46). Thirdly, it is premised on the blurring of distinction between foreign and domestic threat or interest and increasing incursions of military organization into daily life. Fourthly, democracy is 'managed' insofar as it is centred on 'containing electoral politics; it is cool, even hostile toward social democracy beyond promoting literacy, job training, and other essentials for a society struggling to survive in the global economy' (Wolin 2008, 47). Wolin's critique of American democracy as inverted totalitarianism hinges on his notion of citizenship and participation being replaced by spectatorship and the proffering of opinions that entail no share in power or responsibility. He compares the demotion of the citizen in the twentieth century to the condition of being a patient 'bearing or enduring with composure, long suffering or forbearing' (Wolin 2008, 60), and argues that the challenge of democratization lies in 'a reordering of basic power arrangements and a different understanding

of civic commitments from that of the spectator' (Wolin 2008, 43). The recent success of populist movements that make use of social media to enhance spectacle rather than create new means of rearranging power, and the rising popularity of nationalist, xenophobic parties amidst ongoing war underscores how unclear the figure of the citizen has become, and how urgent the task is of reimagining democracy, civic commitment and power-sharing.

Refashioning the demos and the I and we of citizenship

The future success of democratizing struggles cannot be either assumed or foreclosed. Echoing Lefort (1994), Wolin and Balibar see democracy as a process of ongoing invention, and this fact of change must be acknowledged to prevent dedemocratization. If democracy is to exist, the figure of the citizen needs to be re-imagined and practised according to the historical circumstances of the day. This is the moment of remembering and recreating the political. Wolin writes:

> Democracy requires that the experience of justice and injustice serve as moments for the demos to think, to reflect, perchance to construct themselves as actors. Democracy is about the continuing self-fashioning of the demos. (Wolin 1996, 98)

Citizen driven democratization requires more than a desire to level inequalities or remove those in power, but recognition that the power of the polis belongs to the people (or the living however one might define that). Redefining how power is shared is a generative act that recreates the demos and the citizen. If we take either ademocracy, where universalizable struggles for equality and liberty no longer find traction in political debate, or inverted totalitarianism, where the citizen has been replaced by the spectator, as models for the fate of liberal democracy today, then what light can Balibar and Wolin shed on the 'self-fashioning of the demos' now? What is at stake in moving from spectatorship to citizenship and in reinvigorating a dialectic of 'I' and 'we', institution and insurrection?

There are many dimensions of injustice and inequality that could and are sparking new traces of equaliberty, or could be examples of the self-fashioning of the demos. Gundogdu (2015) explores the strategies of migrants and refugees who are denied rights within or between states. Kymlicka (2014) proposes extending citizenship to non-human animals as a means of reinvigorating democratic praxis and introducing new aspects of trans-species ethics. Ingram's 'radical cosmopolitics' (2013) is critical of the ways that abstract universalism can reproduce inequalities and injustice, while advocating for the importance of rebuilding some form of universalism from the ground up. What seems to be missing, however, is an articulation of the figure of the demos as political agent that can sublate but not erase the figure of the citizen as form of individual subjectivity and collective agency. This amounts to a new understanding of the citizen in relation to the demos, the individual to the community and freedom to community.

As Esposito sees it, modern democracy 'speaks a language that is opposed to that of community insofar as it always has introjected into it an immunitary imperative' (Esposito 2013, 39). This immunitary imperative has linked community to totalitarianism and liberty to the individual when, for Esposito as for Balibar and Wolin, we need to imagine freedom in terms of communities that come into being. Freedom, like democracy and citizenship, is not thing or end but becoming. One cannot be free but can only become free. In order for democracy to re-emerge from its own auto-immunization we need to rethink community and reconnect it with democracy. Community, in its links to totalitarianism, militarized

anti-refugee policies and notions of populist hordes, has come to equate to internment, the opposite of communitas. Esposito notes that communitas, being in common with, should be seen as the basis of a freedom that is compatible with democracy in a way that liberal, immunitary freedom, is not. Communitas recalls a sense of ecstasy in opening to otherness, being-with. 'Whereas communitas opens, exposes, and turns individuals inside out, freeing them to their exteriority, immunitas returns individuals to themselves, encloses them once again in their own skin' (Esposito 2013, 49). Possessive individualism, premised on individual liberties, inhibits the experience of communitas and inoculates against freedom as a becoming with.

For Honneth as for Esposito, freedom is necessarily intersubjective, and cannot be reduced to an individual. Honneth places the idea of social freedom at the centre of his theory of 'democratic will formation', and his *Social foundations of democratic life* outlines work, family and the market as domains of possibility for the experience of inter-subjective freedom. Unlike Wolin and Balibar, however, Honneth does not see institutions as necessarily limiting freedom or reinforcing hierarchy. Freedom is only possible through participation in social institutions, which Honneth understands as cultural and historical norms that stabilize relationships and public space.

> A subject is only free if it encounters another subject, within the framework of institutional practices, to whom it is joined in a relationship of mutual recognition; only then can it regard the aims of the other as the condition for the realization of its own aims. (Honneth 2014, 45)

Honneth's work emphasizes the slow, sedimentary process of building a public sphere and a demos, and the contingent nature of freedoms in different social domains (e.g. civil society, the workplace, the family). This leads Honneth to speak of 'democratic ethical life' where social freedom across different spheres of sociality are reciprocally joined in a shared 'we'.

> Free market participants, self-aware democratic citizens and emancipated family members – all of whom correspond to the ideals institutionalised in our society – mutually influence each other, because the properties of the one cannot be realized without those of the other two. (Honneth 2014, 330, 331)

The most significant, recent, national-level examples of the refashioning of the demos around notions of reciprocity across different dimensions of sociality, of becoming and relating to, come from South America. Bolivia and Ecuador have redrawn the terms of the political in ways that do not assume a division between the community and the individual or nature and culture, and which might inspire new iterations of the citizen subject no longer caught in liberal, immunitarian knots. Ecuador and Bolivia have rewritten their national constitutions in ways that combine relational ontologies with elements of liberalism to create a new way of thinking about citizenship that decentres the individual and includes animals, plants, spirits and ecologies in a political community (De la Cadena 2016; Escobar 2010; Vattimo and Zabala 2013). The political processes that led to, and have been engendered by, the Bolivian and Ecuadorian constitutions are major steps toward moving beyond the separation of individual and community, and nature and culture, around which the pan-colonial political world has been organized since the seventeenth century. By placing humans and non-humans, the individual and the community, on the same legal plane, new ways of thinking about being, becoming and relationship can emerge. Ecuador's notion of *buen vivir* captures the logic of a citizenship oriented around becoming and relating to rather than membership and possessive individualism. Here, there is an attempt to conceive of

demos as simultaneously singular, communal and ecological, and to turn away from a possessive individualism (of bodies and nature) that has held freedom hostage to capital. The preamble to the Bolivian constitution, meanwhile, states that 'we have left behind the colonial, republican and neoliberal idea of the state'. What makes the Bolivian constitution unique is the ways it tries to harmonize liberal and communitarian forms of government at all levels. The liberal side is conceived in terms of equality and redistribution, political rights and wealth. But the constitution places communal political forms on the same footing as representative democracy, with education as a means of facilitating political participation and decolonialization (Bolivia 2009). Indigenous Bolivian scholars have argued that Bolivian history involves many contexts and instances where representative and direct democracy, liberal and individual formations have coexisted and become enmeshed (Cusicanqui 2008). This enmeshing, which doesn't resolve the contradictions of liberal immunitarianism and relational ontologies, grounds Bolivia's notion of plurinationalism as the basis of its republican, democratic order. Plurinationalism emphasizes the coexistence of a plurality of nations within a state, as opposed to multiculturalism that allows for cultural diversity in the sphere of private affairs but a singular (and oftentimes colonial) culture to be assumed in public life. Plurinationalism allows for new permutations of the I and the we of citizenship, and of the demos as agent. *Pachamama*, an Andean earth goddess, and *Sumaq kawsay*, the Ecuadorian principle of living well with non-humans, cannot be fit into liberal frames. However, their inclusion in constitutions creates a terrain for the emergence of new notions of the demos oriented around becoming and being with rather than possessing and being. According to Escobar:

> The implications of this potentially epochal transformation are momentous. It means, first and foremost, that the very notion of the refounding of society and the state that is at the core of the constitutions escapes the logic of capital, politics, and the state and the modern frameworks that have made them possible. (Escobar 2010, 40)

These constitutions have been part of a process of democratic constitutionalism, but given the political and economic pressures faced by both nations it remains to be seen how far this open-ended period of democratization can go. There are propitious conditions in Bolivia for innovations away from 'low intensity liberal democracy', including the commonplace nature of discussions on the streets and in the many levels of government about democracy, citizenship, capitalism and liberalism, which follows on the back of years of social mobilization that led to the drafting of the new constitution. Tockman argues, however, that 'far from its colorful discourse and symbols, the [ruling party] MAS's centralization of power has in many ways constrained political space for the practice of participatory and communitarian democracy' (Tockman 2017, 123).

The geometries of political life that are recognized by the Ecuadorian and Bolivian constitutions derive from cosmological and social practices indigenous to the peoples of these two countries. Nonetheless, they represent fertile departures from liberal immunitarian frames that have privileged being to relationship, individual to community, and may open new possibilities for refashioning the demos, which Wolin sees as 'a "culture", that is, a cultivating, a tending, a taking care of beings and things' (Wolin 2016, 248), elsewhere.

Conclusions

Despite drawing on different historical traditions and philosophical sources, Wolin and Balibar have independently come to see citizenship and democracy in fundamentally similar ways. I have identified three themes in the work of Balibar and Wolin that are useful for understanding citizenship in relation to democratization and dedemocratization. Firstly, they share a view of the political as historically specific challenges to the reproduction of inequality and the status quo. These struggles must go outside of the rules of the game in order to create new, more democratic, institutional rules. Democratization does not occur by following rules alone, but by dissenting and standing up to power. From this flows their call to remember the struggles that led to the recognition of rights and other institutions associated with citizenship rather than on the rights themselves as abstracted legal entities. Secondly, each conceives of citizenship as the driving force of democracy, which can be understood as a dialectic between institutions and insurrection or fugitive moments and their containment in constitutional orders. Anarchic struggles for equality and liberty are either ignored, subverted, or gain traction and change the existing institutional order. This latter scenario is the pivot between insurrection and institution as Balibar understands it, and between democratic constitutionalism and constitutional democracy, as Wolin conceives of it. I have indicated, however, that Wolin and Balibar's dialectical frameworks tend to emphasize the extraordinary – demotic moments and insurrection – without fully accounting for how these ruptures relate to cultural norms, social practice and associational life. Thirdly, each identifies what happens when citizens are unable to successfully challenge inequality and expand the demos's share in power. Balibar imagines either dedemocratization towards securitarian authoritarianism or ademcoracy, where the citizenship dialectic stops and struggles for equality and liberty are either snuffed out entirely or no longer play any part in political debate. Wolin, meanwhile, developed his thesis of inverted totalitarianism as a way of showing that when the citizen is reduced to spectator who legitimates the reproduction of a political order by offering opinions rather than participating in power, the institutions of liberal democracy end up creating and legitimizing electoral authoritarianism.

Despite articulating plausible theories for the gradual transformation of liberal democracies into distinctly undemocratic political orders, Wolin and Balibar have also given us reason for optimism. The significance of Wolin and Balibar's writing on citizenship and democracy lies in a set of proposals for the eternal rebirth of the citizen as democratic agent. This is a broad-based, open-ended antidote to pessimism about the fate of democracy as either political order or normative ideal. The open-endedness of their frameworks is an appeal for reconceiving citizenship and democracy as processes rather than containable ends, precisely because the measures of containment – laws, institutions, rights – occlude the specificity of struggle and learning on which the practice of citizenship rests. I suggested that Esposito's notion of freedom through relation and Honneth's notion of democratic will formation complement Wolin and Balibar's efforts to encourage new ways of conceiving of social freedom and the agency of the demos. Finally, I indicated that the political processes associated with the recognition of plurinationalism in Ecuador and Bolivia demonstrate how it is possible to imagine the demos as political agent without erasing the figure of the citizen as individual subject. Balibar and Wolin encourage us to focus on the coming into being of new modes of citizenship and constellations of the demos, and this is as far as any

theory of citizenship can go in facilitating democratization that, as they both point out, is contingent on historically specific struggles for equality, justice and freedom.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

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