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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Architecture of Politics and the Politics of Architecture: A Comparative Approach to Parish Church Building and Civic Government in Late-Medieval Europe

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Abstract

Church construction was one of the most challenging, and most political, tasks undertaken by medieval cities. Comparing examples from across Europe reveals profound differences, however, in both the architecture of politics and the politics of architecture; that is, how building projects were administered and how their administration shaped their socio-political significance. Although ranging across the continent, this article is centered on construction in two representative cities: Vienna and London. While the former had a small number of churches, all under the direct control of the mayor and council, the latter had over a hundred, each overseen by locally appointed officers. In Vienna, church construction was, thus, an important field of activity for the city government, which oversaw the work and celebrated its own leadership of the project; in London, it lay outside civic control and offered local opportunities for domination by wealthy families. This difference can be found across the continent, separating the large, old cities of England, northern France, Spain, and the Low Countries, which could have numerous churches, from smaller towns and cities both in these places and across the rest of central, northern, and southern Europe, which typically had a single, major parish church and only a few subordinate ones. This article considers the implications of these two contrasting models—centralized and decentralized, civic and parochial, high government and local politics—on how architectural production functioned as a field of political activity and how church building shaped local distributions and articulations of power in medieval Europe.

Keywords: Vienna; London; comparative history; architectural history; medieval city; urban history; parish; medieval studies; churchwardens; social history

Introduction

In June 1407, the Vienna city council went to inspect the building works at the main parish church of St. Stephen's. The fabric warden's accounts record a substantial

expenditure on wine for "the councillors and the craftsmen" but no other information about this visit.[1] Historians must turn instead to the reports of the chronicler, Thomas Ebendorfer, to guess its purpose and outcome: that, because of deviations from the original plan, the enormous south tower, then under construction, had to be demolished to the height to which its first master had brought it, and restarted.[2] It was a dramatic moment in the architectural history of the church—building work would grind to a halt for a year—but even if the conditions and consequences of the inspection were exceptional, the visit itself was not.[3] St. Stephen's, although a vast collegiate church with a chapter founded by the Habsburg duke, Rudolf IV, was still the city's main parish church and its building work was a civic project, overseen by a fabric warden appointed by the city council (*Rat*), which also audited the accounts and agreed upon the selection of senior craftsmen.[4] The work was even substantially funded out of city revenues.[5] That several men from the council would visit the building site suggests the gravity of the situation, but that they would take an active interest in directing the work they were funding and overseeing was wholly logical.

There is, by contrast, no comparable moment in the history of parish church building in London.[6] The oversight of church construction never formed a part of the formal responsibilities of the offices of mayor or alderman. They never visited the building site in an official capacity, never oversaw the contracting, accounting, and auditing of the work, and never chose masons, appointed fabric officers, or had a hand in designs. The exceptionally wealthy men who ran the city did contribute to many building projects on the city's churches, both financially and managerially, but as private individuals, typically in their home parishes. At the wealthy parish church of St. Mary-at-Hill, London,[7] for example, the mayor was present at a payment made in 1499–1500 to a former warden and auditor, who appears to have been running

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[1]*"den herren und den gesellen,"* *herren* here indicating *Ratsherren*. I have translated *"Kirchmeister"* as "fabric warden" to prevent confusion with parish "church masters" and "churchwardens," mentioned below. Medieval terminology was highly varied, in both vernacular languages and Latin, and I have employed standard modern scholarly English usage throughout this article for reasons of clarity. Karl Uhlirz, ed., *Die Rechnungen des Kirchmeisteramtes von St. Stephan zu Wien* (Wien: W. Braumüller, 1901), 38; Johann J. Böker, *Der Wiener Stephansdom: Architektur als Sinnbild für das Haus Österreich* (Salzburg: Verlag Anton Pustet Salzburg, 2007), 44.

[2]Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, Alphons Lhotsky, ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1967), 283.

[3]Böker, *Der Wiener Stephansdom*, 112; Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, 282; Ferdinand Opll, *Nachrichten aus dem mittelalterlichen Wien: Zeitgenossen berichten* (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1995), 113.

[4]I tell this story in some detail in "St Stephen's, Vienna, and the Crises of 1408: Practice Theory and the Sociopolitics of the Medieval Building Site," *Journal of Medieval History* 49, 4 (2023): 516–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2023.2228325.

[5]Public funds consistently constituted the second most important funding source for the work: Barbara Schedl, *St. Stephan in Wien: Der Bau der gotischen Kirche* (Wien: Böhlau, 2018), 292 (Abb. 6).

[6]The only surviving record of the city's arms in a London church comes from Thomas Hoxton, who found them in the windows of St Peter le Poor in ca. 1790. Stow did not mention these arms in 1603, but if they do predate him they may have a link to one of the two sixteenth-century mayors buried there, perhaps Martin Calthorpe, who died while in office in 1589. John Schofield, "Saxon and Medieval Parish Churches in the City of London: A Review," *Transactions of London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 45 (1994): 23–146, 128–29; John Stow, *A Survey of London*, Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, ed., vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 175.

[7]P. Jeffery, R. Lea, and B. Watson, "The Architectural History of the Church of St Mary-at-Hill, in the City of London," *Transactions of London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 43 (1992): 193–200, 195; Clive

building work on the church.[8] This was probably William Remyngton (in office 1500–1501, alderman of Billingsgate 1485–1511), who would be buried in the church and was a regular donor.[9] That the building work was run by a senior, local parishioner at St. Mary-at-Hill, with the mayor no more than looking on in a private capacity, was typical. Examples of building projects administered by other parochial officers can be found at All Hallows, London Wall (1528–1529),[10] and the wealthier parishes of St. Andrew Hubbard and St. Peter Westcheap (1437–1440).[11]

The construction of these two church towers, bookending the fifteenth century, suggest very different models for the political framework in which building work was to be carried out in large cities in the European Middle Ages. In one case, the city's government was actively inspecting the building site, appointing the fabric warden(s), agreeing on contracts, paying out wages and costs, auditing accounts, and even commanding changes to the design; in the other, these tasks were overseen by parish masters or churchwardens, whose appointment and accountability was at a strictly local level, outside direct civic control. Church building in medieval Vienna was highly formalized within the structure of the city's government; in London, it was relatively more ad hoc and variable in its organization within the city's varied parochial administrations. In Vienna, it was overseen from the peak of a centralized pyramid; in London, it took place in localities organized like a set of overlapping and interconnected villages, in which each parish took charge of its own church construction. The differences between the architectural politics of the two cities were, in many ways, great: centralized and decentralized; civic and parochial; high government and local politics.

Stark as these differences are, scholars of the organization of medieval parochial architecture have not yet worked at the kind of scale necessary to explicate their causes, types and effects, although there have been calls for precisely such comparative study of the parish.[12] In the last thirty years and more, numerous excellent local, regional, and national studies have provided highly nuanced accounts of the administration of medieval parishes, including the construction of their churches, but rarely of their continental context or transregional similarities and

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Burgess and Beat Kümin, "Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes in Late Medieval England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44, 4 (1993): 610–30.

[8]The churchwardens' accounts of St. Mary-at-Hill can be found at: London, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), P69/MRY4/B/005/MS01239/001/001 (1431–1553), see f. 181; Henry Littlehales, ed., *The Medieval Records of a London City Church (St. Mary at Hill) A.D. 1420–1559*, Early English Text Society 125, 128 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1904), 239; Clive Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government: Lessons from London and Bristol," *English Historical Review* 117, 471 (2002): 306–32, 326; Clive Burgess, "Shaping the Parish: St. Mary at Hill, London, in the Fifteenth Century," in John Blair and Brian Golding, eds., *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 254–69.

[9]See Littlehales, *Medieval Records*, 239.

[10]The churchwardens' accounts of Allhallows, London Wall, can be found at: LMA P69/ALH5/B/003/MS05090/001 (1455–1536); Charles Welch, *The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Allhallows, London Wall, in the City of London* (London: privately printed, 1912), 56–59.

[11]The churchwardens' accounts of St. Peter Westcheap can be found at: LMA P69/PET4/B/006/001 (1441–1601), f. 27–33; and those of St. Andrew Hubbard at: P69/AND3/B/003/MS01279/001 (1454–1524).

[12]E.g., Richard Kieckhefer, review of Michele C. Ferrari and Beat Kümin, eds., *Pfarreien in der Vormoderne: Identität und Kultur im Niederkirchewesen Europas*, *Speculum* 95, 2 (2020): 549–51, 549, https://doi.org/10.1086/708476.

differences. The aim of this article is to propose such a large-scale framework into which historical work on regions and localities could be set.[13] Its central claim is that foundational to the politics of medieval urban church construction—in London, Vienna, and across the continent—was the "architecture of politics," that is, specifically, whether a city's civic authority had integrated its parochial lay fabric fund(s), something common everywhere in smaller cities and towns but variable in larger ones. This variability, I will argue, depended on the chronology of urbanization: older cities often had large numbers of long-established, self-governing parishes that could not be integrated into civic structures, while later foundations were typically centralized under a single parish structure, from which lay responsibilities were then assimilated to increasingly powerful municipal governments. It was, simply put, structural ecclesiastical differences that were critical in determining the political framework in which medieval parish church construction was realized, and less other variables that described much urban difference, such as the population or morphology of the city, the status of the church, its seigneurial context, or the project's architectural ambition. That all of these could be remarkably diverse within each of the two models will be shown clearly in this article's second section, which will argue that London and Vienna might stand in for a constitutional difference that crisscrossed medieval Europe, albeit with many local variants. Quite how these differences might have played out in terms of the sociology and symbolism of the church building (the "politics of architecture") is, necessarily, a more speculative question that will occupy the article's third and final section.

Town and Parish

Comparing Vienna and London makes it clear what was at stake: both were large cities with powerful civic governments and considerable legal entitlements, but remarkably different parochial structures. Late-medieval Vienna had some twenty to twenty-five thousand inhabitants, making it among the largest cities in the Holy Roman Empire, if still about half the size of London.[14] Although suffering from a

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[13] A few recent influential examples on a larger scale are: Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400–1560*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996); Beat Kümin, "The English Parish in a European Perspective," in Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, and Beat Kümin, eds., *The Parish in English Life* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 15–32; Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Andrew Brown, *Church and Society in England, 1000–1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Arnd Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen in der Stadt des späten Mittelalters: Politik, Wirtschaft und Verwaltung* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005); Joseph Morsel, "Construire l'espace sans la notion d'espace. Le cas du Salzforst (Franconie) au XIVe siècle," *Actes de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l enseignement supérieur public* 37 (2006): 295–316; Beat Kümin, *The Communal Age in Western Europe, c.1100–1800: Towns, Villages and Parishes in Pre-Modern Society, Studies in European History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Michele C. Ferrari and Beat Kümin, eds., *Pfarreien in der Vormoderne: Identität und Kultur im Niederkirchenwesen Europas* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017).

[14] Richard Perger, "Der Organisatorische und Wirtschaftliche Rahmen," in *Von den Anfängen bis zur Ersten Wiener Türkenbelagerung (1529)*, vol. 1, Wien. Geschichte einer Stadt (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), 206–8; Derek Keene, "Medieval London and Its Region," *London Journal* 14, 2 (1989): 99–111, https://doi.org/10.1179/ldn.1989.14.2.99.

reduction in the wake of the Black Death, the city's late-medieval population represents a substantial rise since around 1200, when it had some five to ten thousand residents.[15] The combined population of the city of London, Southwark, and Westminster had also declined considerably since the Black Death, from a medieval high point of some eighty thousand in 1300 to around forty to forty-five thousand in 1380, but the city would continue to grow throughout the later Middle Ages, largely through immigration.[16] Differences in population were vastly exceeded by differences in parochial organization: while late-medieval London had some 108 parish churches, Vienna had just three and only a few additional public chapels.[17]

The reason for this dramatic contrast may be found in the chronology of the cities' early parochial development, which took place on either side of a period of Europe-wide ecclesiastical reform associated with Pope Gregory VII (in office 1073–1085) that compelled secular lords to hand their foundations to clergy.[18] Although Vienna and its churches predated this period, it was still only developing as a trading center and its churches and chapels were successfully centralized under the control of the city's rector. This precedent would not only make assimilation to the city's authority logistically more straightforward as it grew in power over the following centuries, but would also directly associate parochial oversight with city-wide authority.[19] Indeed, the new centralized parish of St. Stephen's was founded at around this time, ca. 1137/1138, intended perhaps as the core of a new urban community, which would, as it turned out, only begin to develop later in the twelfth century. Earlier foundations became either effectively private chapels (as was the case for St. Ruprecht's, St. Peter's, and Maria am Gestade, the first of which may have been the city's original parish) or subordinate parishes staffed by clergy from St. Stephen's

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[15]This gestures both to its economic growth and to the importance it had gained in Habsburg ambitions in that period. Peter Eigner, Petra Schneider, and Ruprecht Doblhammer, "Verdichtung und Expansion: Das Wachstum von Wien," in Karl Brunner and Petra Schneider, eds., *Umwelt Stadt. Geschichte des Natur- und Lebensraumes Wien* (Wien: Böhlau, 2005), 22–53, 27; Richard Perger, *Beiträge zur Wiener Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte im Spätmittelalter*, vol. 32, Jahrbuch des Vereines für Geschichte der Stadt Wien (Vienna, 1976), 11–41, 11–13.

[16]Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 45; Vanessa Harding, "The Population of London, 1550–1700: A Review of the Published Evidence," *London Journal* 15, 2 (1990): 111–28, https://doi.org/10.1179/ldn.1990.15.2.111.

[17]In addition to St Stephen's, there was also the subordinate parish of St. Michael's and the monastic parish of the Schottenstift. Still, older churches or chapels remained: St. Rupert's, St. Peter's, and Maria-am-Gestade. Elisabeth Gruber, "Organizing a Community: Council, Urban Elite, and Economy in Medieval Vienna," in Elisabeth Gruber and Susana Zapke, eds., *Medieval Vienna in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 187–221, 197.

[18]A brief contextualization can be found in Adriaan Bredero, *Christendom and Christianity in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 19–22.

[19]Helmuth Feigl, "Zur Entstehung des Pfarrnetzes in Österreich unter der Enns im Zeitalter der Babenberger," *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich* 42 (1976): 52–69; Christoph P. Sonnlechner, "Die Entstehung der niederösterreichischen Pfarrsprengel. Eine Kritik des Wolf'schen Filiationssystems," in *Österreich im Mittelalter: Bausteine zu einer revidierten Gesamtdarstellung* (St. Pölten: Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, 1999), 97–117. The example of Spain, where some cities were founded late but (for quite other reasons) had multiple parishes that were not brought under the control of the city, suggests the importance of the Reform for establishing this process and will be discussed in the following section.

(as at St. Michael's).[20] In this, Vienna was typical of many cities across Europe: parochial systems in places that were founded or grew significantly after about 1100 tended to be restricted to a single dominant church; when parishes proliferated it was typically because they predated the Reforms and already had well-established rights that prevented reorganization.[21] As cities grew over the rest of the Middle Ages, and intramural parishes subdivided (or suburban parishes were added) to deal with demographic pressures, the dominance of the main church was maintained. Indeed, a number of new churches, and monasteries and friaries, were founded in Vienna over the long thirteenth century but it maintained its fundamental ecclesiastical structure, dominated by a single parish church.[22]

Certainly by the later Middle Ages, the city council was in charge of the building funds of St. Stephen's, Maria am Gestade, and St. Michael's, appointing a fabric warden to oversee each of them and auditing their accounts at an annual meeting.[23] The prehistory of these "*fabricae ecclesiae*" is unclear, but such lay funds were installed in churches across Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (they are in evidence somewhat earlier in France and Italy, and later in the Holy Roman Empire) and, in single-parish cities, they were often eventually swallowed up by civic institutions, when they did not remain under the direct control of a powerful collegiate church.[24] In every case, the earliest surviving evidence for the appointment of a *Kirchmeister* (that is, a permanent lay fabric warden) in Vienna—at St. Michael in 1325, St. Stephen's in 1334, and Maria am Gestade in 1424—should not be taken as indicating the date of their installation, but does perhaps suggest that they participated in the strengthening of the city's privileges under Frederick III and Albrecht II in the decades after 1300, after a period of instability in the 1280s and 1290s.[25] In any case, the long thirteenth century marked a period during which many cities, including Vienna, won, and occasionally lost, various new powers, including control of the building funds.

Of the churches administered by Vienna's city council, Maria am Gestade is perhaps the most significant, since it had not been part of the city's parochial system but rather a possession of the powerful Benedictine Schottenstift (founded shortly after St. Stephen's) until 1302, followed by a number of wealthy families, the Austrian sovereigns and, most lastingly, the bishop of Passau.[26] That the municipality could take charge of maintenance work even here testifies to its political strength,

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[20]As will become clear, "parish" was hardly a uniform ecclesiastical unit in the Middle Ages and should best be understood here as a variable set of entitlements. Vienna, like all medieval cities, also had a plurality of other churches and chapels, including ones open to the public.

[21]András Kubinyi, "Stadt und Kirche in Ungarn im Mittelalter," in Franz-Heinz Hye, ed., *Stadt und Kirche* (Linz: Österr. Arbeitskreis für Stadtgeschichtsforschung, 1995), 179–98.

[22]For a succinct survey of this complex period of history, see Peter Csendes, "Medieval Vienna and Its Political Configuration," in Elisabeth Gruber and Susana Zapke, eds., *Medieval Vienna in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 48–78, 58–66.

[23]Franz Klein-Bruckschwaiger, "Das Kirchmeisteramt zu St. Stephan in der Wiener Stadtverfassung," *Wiener Geschichtsblätter* 24 (1969): 502–9.

[24]Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, 133–47; W. H. Vroom, *Financing Cathedral Building in the Middle Ages: The Generosity of the Faithful*, Elizabeth Manton, trans. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 57–58.

[25]Vroom, *Financing Cathedral Building*, 47–48.

[26]Stefanie Linsboth, "Der hochgotische Chor von Maria am Gestade in Wien—Bauintention und Nutzung," *RIHA Journal* 80 (2014), https://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2014/2014-jan-mar/linsboth-maria-am-gestade; Jutta Raphaela Schey, "Die Bedeutung der Kirche Maria am Gestade für die Patronatsherren im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2012), http://othes.

although perhaps also to the administrative convenience of such an arrangement for the church's owners. An even better demonstration, however, is the failure of a plan made by Rudolf IV in the middle of the fourteenth century to remove the St. Stephen's building fund from the council and place it under the control of the college that he had established at the church. Not every city in the empire was able to maintain or win control of a fabric fund from a powerful college in its central parish church, but Vienna did.[27] Acquiring these fabric funds was not only a demonstration but also an extension of the city's field of activity in a period when the independence of urban government was being gradually, but not irrevocably, won. They brought with them a substantial economy—some £1,000 a year for St. Stephen's alone in the fifteenth century—and thus new powers over fundraising, patronage, and expenditure (and, perhaps, as I discuss below, new moral authority).[28] The completeness of their assimilation to the city government, and the importance they were accorded, can be shown by the facts that only the more senior "inner councilmen" were eligible to hold the office of fabric warden, that even after the inner council was expanded in 1396 to include artisans, the office continued to be held only by merchants, the wealthiest and most powerful constituency in the city, and that several fabric wardens were senior or capable enough to go on to become mayor.[29]

The establishment of St. Stephen's as the dominant parish in the course of the mid-twelfth century, as part of a continent-wide ecclesiastical reform movement, determined the ways in which two subsequent developments that were common across Europe would come to shape the administration of church construction. The first was the establishment of lay responsibility for at least a large portion of the church's maintenance and liturgy, a process that probably began in most places in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, and the creation of independent lay funds (*fabricae*) to finance it. The second was the development of increasingly powerful city governments over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and beyond.[30] In cities like Vienna, which were unified under a single parish church, and especially if there was no powerful collegiate chapter already in the town, these civic bodies would often come to assimilate and oversee the pre-existing lay fabric fund(s) and the building work they financed, alongside their other responsibilities, generating what I will refer to as the "Vienna model."[31] In these places, both maintenance and major building works—which in Vienna and elsewhere could be on a cathedral-like scale—were typically, although not invariably, financed out of the same account.

By contrast, in London and other cities with a large number of long-established parishes, church fabric funds would never be swallowed up into civic government and, at least by the later thirteenth century, they were typically controlled by lay officers in each parish, generally referred to by modern historians as "churchwardens." The historical context for this difference is relatively easy to outline: many elements of London's civic and ecclesiastical government were

univie.ac.at/24767/; Carl Dilgskron, *Geschichte der Kirche unserer lieben Frau am Gestade zu Wien* (Vienna: Mayer, 1882).

[27]Schedl, *St. Stephan in Wien*, 79. See a number of counter examples in Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*.

[28]Ibid., Abb. [figure] 5.

[29]Richard Perger, "Die politische Rolle der Wiener Handwerker im Spätmittelalter," *Wiener Geschichtsblätter* 38 (1983): 1–36, 1.

[30]Kümin, *Shaping*, ch. 2.1.2.

[31]Vroom, *Financing Cathedral Building*, 33–34, 49–51.

sufficiently well-established by the eleventh century to persist through the period of the Gregorian Reform and resist centralization under either ecclesiastical or municipal control.[32] London's civic administration was divided into wards, within which a number of officers discharged duties relating to criminal justice, cleanliness, and repair, but not to church building work.[33] The ward had developed around the same time period as the parish, in the late Anglo-Saxon period, but any early overlap was soon lost and, by the twelfth century, the latter represented a much smaller administrative unit with very different responsibilities and was already outside the direct control of civic government, preventing any significant organizational reform.[34] England's other large, multi-parish towns and cities—including, for example, Norwich, Cambridge, and Salisbury—had a similar disconnect between their civic and parochial organization,[35] with at least some parts of the latter dating to before the twelfth century.[36] After 1200, the number of parishes was maintained: even during demographic reductions in the later Middle Ages, when other towns were cutting back on parish numbers, London's remained relatively static.[37] The city did oversee major building projects, such as work on quays and bridges, which were agreed at the Court of Common Council, the most representative of the institutions of government, but not church construction.[38]

London's churchwardens were only partly analogous to the Viennese fabric wardens.[39] There was considerable local variation, but in the later Middle Ages they seem typically to have been answerable to senior parishioners, generally termed the "parish masters" by modern historians. They formed more-or-less formalized oversight committees, often named after the number of their members, and audited the churchwardens' accounts. However hierarchical this structure was, though, the wardens were probably formally appointed, or "elected," before an annual assembly, likely consisting of the male householders in the parish (other bodies or individuals such as the patron or parson could also be involved).[40] Although they would invariably take care of parochial maintenance work, among other liturgical and financial responsibilities, the churchwardens were, unlike in Vienna, by no means always responsible for construction projects. In parishes

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[32]John Blair, "Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church," in John Blair, ed., *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950–1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988), 1–19.

[33]Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages, 121–27, 147–58*; John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chs. 7–8.

[34]Norman John Greville Pounds, *A History of the English Parish* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 144–46; Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, ch. 8.

[35]Pounds, *History of the English Parish*, 145.

[36]Schofield, "Saxon and Medieval Parish Churches," 35–42.

[37]Ibid., 76–77.

[38]Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, 134; see, e.g., John Alexander McEwan, "Charity and the City: London Bridge, c. 1176–1275," in Elizabeth New and Christian Steer, eds., *Medieval Londoners: Essays to Mark the Eightieth Birthday of Caroline M. Barron*, (London: London University Press, 2019), 223–44.

[39]Charles Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origins of the Office of Church Warden*, St. Anthony's Hall Publications 7 (London: St. Anthony's Press, 1954); Kümin, *Shaping*, ch. 4; French, *People*, 68–70.

[40]There is a large literature on the topic, but see Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 24; French, *People*, 73; Kümin, *Shaping*, ch. 2.2.2.

such as St. Mary-at-Hill, as described above, building work was taken over directly by parish masters or dedicated fabric wardens.[41] The likely reason was that, unlike the churchwardens, they had the skills, capacity, and seniority to run such demanding projects.[42] On the other hand, even single-parish English towns could follow suit: at Hedon (with a population of around nine hundred), a separate administration was set up for church construction, presumably since such a small place also lacked a sufficiently specialized administration.[43]

The dominance of Vienna's fabric wardens over even major projects can probably be explained on two grounds, one formal and one social: its administration was more developed, with a professional clerk and chief builder (*Baumeister*), and so had the logistical capacity to handle a complex building site; and its fabric warden was sufficiently senior, in wealth, profession and experience, to be entrusted with the work. England's parochial churchwardens, by contrast, were typically drawn from more middling ranks of local society and certainly not exclusively from city government (although plenty also served in civic office), and they rarely had subordinates.[44] This had other organizational consequences: for example, small urban (and rural) parishes would typically have had less specialized administrations than the civic government of large single-parish towns and thus took on a broader portfolio, so that, for instance, churchwardens in the former often administered property, a task that would be handled by a city's treasury.[45] Even Vienna is not quite such a simple test case: certain sums, and so presumably their associated tasks, can be found disappearing from the fabric warden's annual accounts and presumably shifted into those of other bodies.[46]

The most obvious architectural, and financial, consequence of these differences is that while even wealthy parishes in London built relatively modest church buildings, albeit often richly furnished, St. Stephen, Vienna, was constructed on a vast scale, appropriate to its large number of canons and the attempts of its Habsburg (and Babenberg) patrons to develop it into a cathedral (they did not succeed until 1469, although this process was not finished until 1480). That St. Stephen's architectonic conception was essentially as a cathedral is generally attributed to its status as part of Habsburg ambitions for Vienna, but its patronage is far more complex and both archaeological and account evidence indicates that financing came substantially from the city, both through public finances and direct contributions by individual

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[41] Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts"; Justin Colson, "Late Medieval London Parish Administrators and the Cursus Honorum: Oligarchy or Community?," in David Harry and Christian Steer, eds., *The Urban Church in Late Medieval England*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies 29 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2019), 157–78.

[42] Byng, *Church Building and Society*, ch. 4.

[43] The following section will also give examples of some continental towns that followed the Vienna model but nonetheless ran major projects under temporary, separate committees subject to the oversight of civic authorities. J. R. Boyle, *The Early History of the Town and Port of Hedon* (Hull: A. Brown & Sons, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1895), 89.

[44] French, *People*, 86; Kümin, *Shaping*, 33–38; Gabriel Byng, "Recreating a Parish Polity: The Masters and Stores of Chagford, 1480–1600," in David Harry and Christian Steerm, eds., *The Urban Church in Late Medieval England*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies 29 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2019), 137–56.

[45] Burgess and Kümin, "Penitential Bequests."

[46] E.g., Schedl, *St. Stephan in Wien*, 87.

citizens.[47] This was, however, sufficient: in Vienna, the parish encompassed virtually an entire city of some twenty thousand people; in London, many parishes would have had only a few hundred residents. By contrast, architectural work on London churches after 1200 consisted largely of extensions made gradually and ad hoc over the course of decades.[48] In Vienna, unlike London, total civic wealth, even if lower in absolute terms, had many fewer architectural outlets and so its products could be correspondingly more spectacular.

City and Parish in Medieval Europe

Concentrating on Vienna and London provides an appropriately stark contrast that is enlightening for the political and architectural history of each city, but could this distinction be extended across Europe, allowing, of course, for substantial local variation? From the thirteenth century, cities with numerous churches, typically with long-established parishes possessing an independent fabric fund administered by "elected" churchwardens, could be found across eastern England, the Iberian Peninsula, parts of the Low Countries and northern France, while those in south and southwest France, Germany, Poland, Scandinavia, and Hungary rarely had more than a few churches and typically one principal parish church. Italy is something of a special case since the town was usually identified with a single diocese, the cathedral of which was the town's main church.[49] In these places, the building fund and the officials who administered it were often integrated into civic structures under the control of the mayor and council, even if their creation had preceded the development of urban rights. The following survey is based on accessible secondary sources and is proposed as no more than a rough, but suggestive, sketch of the continent's comparative context, with many generalizations and lacunae that I hope future historians will fill.

In southern France, urban *consulats* administered parochial building funds, the *fabriques*, as part of civic government, while in the heavily churched cities to the north the funds were run by lay *marguilliers* or *fabriciens*, who were appointed by senior parishioners.[50] For example, Marc Venard's case study for the rebuilding of a parish church by its churchwardens—in a specialized adaptation of their usual structure—is taken from the now-ruined Saint Vincent in Rouen, the capital of Normandy, in the years after 1515.[51] The city had some thirty-six parishes in the late Middle Ages, even more churches per head of population than London, several of which had been founded centuries before the Gregorian Reforms, and it followed the London model

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[47]For indications of individual patronage, see Tim Juckes, "A Tale of Two Churches: Court and Parish Projects at St. Stephen's in Vienna," *ARS* 53, 2 (2020): 112–37. For the varieties of income to the works, see Schedl, *St. Stephan in Wien*, Abb. 6.

[48]Schofield, "Saxon and Medieval Parish Churches," 47–48.

[49]C.N.L. Brooke, *Churches and Churchmen in Medieval Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1999), 75–76; Kümin, "English Parish."

[50]Marc Venard, "La construction des églises paroissiales, du XVe au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 73, 190 (1987): 7–24, 9, Marc Venard, "La construction des églises paroissiales, du XVe au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 73, 190 (1987): 7–24, 9, https://doi.org/10.3406/rhef.1987.3391; M. Maurice Clément, "Recherches Sur Les Paroisses et Les Fabriques Au Commencement Du XIIIe Siècle d'après Les Registres Des Papes," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 15, 1 (1895): 387–418, https://doi.org/10.3406/mefr.1895.6146. As at St. Mary at Hill, however, major building projects could be administered separately in French towns.

[51]Venard, "La construction des églises paroissiales."

in running building work through its parochial churchwardens.[52] Even in this large and important city, with a population of up to fifteen to twenty thousand, and in the case of a vast church building, work was still run at a local, parochial level. A revealing contrast may be found in Montpellier in southern France, with a population of forty thousand, making it second only to Paris, but with just two principal parishes, one in the lord's and one in the bishop's quarter of the town, though it had an increasing number of chapels, friaries, and monasteries, and an important pilgrimage church.[53] Although its churches were ancient, the city had largely developed in the twelfth century and its first town government developed after a rebellion against its seignorial lords shortly after 1200.[54] In other words, it exemplified the "Vienna model" and indeed, here it was the city's *consuls* who led building work at Note-Dame des Tables from the 1370s.[55]

Iberian cities and towns could also have large numbers of parishes, with populations that would have been even smaller than some in London, and these were often in foundations made after the Gregorian Reform as large numbers of parishes were established in reconquered cities. Late-medieval Lisbon, for example, the largest city on the peninsula, had approximately fifty thousand inhabitants and some twenty-four churches, founded in the wake of the reconquest of 1147, along with many religious houses, hospitals, colleges and hermitages.[56] Seville was perhaps the most extreme example, with five to seven thousand late-medieval households and twenty-four parishes, a disparity that has often been attributed to the city's exceptional frontier status, the need for religious conversion, and the direct replacement of mosques in the wake of the city's conquest in 1248. Madrid had a comparable population and some ten parishes, also founded after the reconquest in the early twelfth century.[57] Tom Nickson has described the committee of wealthy locals who contracted for building work at Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona in the

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[52]Elma Brenner, *Leprosy and Charity in Medieval Rouen* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015), 22, for a survey of the city's social and economic experience in this period, see: 14–16, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781782046653; François Lemoine and Jacques Tanguy, *Rouen aux 100 clochers: dictionnaire des églises et chapelles de Rouen, avant 1789* (Rouen: Éditions PTC, 2004), 12; Anne Curry, "Les villes normandes et l'occupation anglaise: l'importance du siège de Rouen," in Pierre Bouet and François Neveux, eds., *Les villes normandes au Moyen Âge. Renaissance, essor, crise: actes du colloque international de Cerisy-la-Salle, 8–12 octobre 2003* (Caen: Presse Universitaire de Caen, 2006), 109–24, 111–12.

[53]A. Germain, "La paroisse à Montpellier au Moyen Âge," *Mémoires de la Société archéologique de Montpellier* 5 (1869): 1–56, 3; Louise Guiraud and J. Calas, *La paroisse Saint-Denis de Montpellier: Saint-denis de Montpelliéret, Saint-Denis aux faubourgs, la paroisse actuelle* (Montpellier: en vente à la librairie de J. Calas, 1887). The creation of churches such as Notre-Dame des Tables was to be strictly subordinate to the main parish.

[54]Archibald Ross Lewis, "Seigneurial Administration in Twelfth Century Montpellier," *Speculum* 22, 4 (1947): 562–77, https://doi.org/10.2307/2853138.

[55]Jean-François Vinas, *Notre-Dame des Tables: histoire détaillée de ce sanctuaire au double point de vue du culte et de l'édifice* (Montpellier: Félix Séguin, 1859), 275, 284.

[56]José da Felicidade Alves, *As Igrejas Medievais (1147–1495)*, ed. Paulo Almeida Fernandes, vol. 2, Peregrinação Pelas Igrejas de Lisboa (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, 2019), 30–35. There were at least four pre-conquest intramural churches, three suburban ones, and by the fourteenth century, a total of twenty-two, which endured to the end of the Middle Ages, with two new suburban parishes. There were yet more churches in the surrounding hills.

[57]Danya Crites, "Churches Made Fit for a King: Alfonso X and Meaning in the Religious Architecture of Post-Conquest Seville," *Medieval Encounters* 15, 2–4 (2009): 391–413, 407–8, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006709X458909.

fourteenth century, which may be usefully compared with a surviving contract from 1296 for the parish church of Olocau, north of Valencia, which the municipal council made directly with the architect.[58] The contrast here functions as a good example of the significance of the Gregorian Reform: Barcelona had been captured much earlier, in 801, but it maintained its five city churches (as well as a number of extramural parishes) since its counts and bishop were powerful enough to resist reform, while city government was discontinuous and patchy in its authority before 1259.[59] The small town of Olocau, by contrast, had a single parish church. In other words, the two places followed the "London" and "Vienna" models, respectively.

The Low Countries show a similar contrast. Most towns were relatively small, with a single, often collegiate church founded before the urban center had developed and overseen by the city council, along similar lines to the situation in Vienna.[60] Even the large city of Antwerp, for instance, with some forty thousand inhabitants, had just one main parish – with an enormous church building – until the 1470s.[61] As in many other places, even when new parishes were created there, a version of the "Vienna model" was maintained, shoring up the authority of the city council over the work of new parochial officers. New wardens swore, for example, not to undertake new construction work without the consent of the mayor and aldermen, who also audited the accounts. Some adaptation is in evidence, though, allowing for a degree of parochial independence: the city appointed upper churchwardens drawn from the ranks of the aldermen, but the four regular churchwardens who carried out the administration were drawn from among wealthier parishioners. Nonetheless, the city still had to approve them.[62] Both maintenance and building work could be run through the churchwardens' accounts, although specialized committees were occasionally appointed for major projects.[63] Similar top-down control was exercised elsewhere, where parishes were small in number, or developed once urban government was sufficiently powerful to restrict parochial independence. At the Buurkerk in Utrecht, for example, with a population of twenty thousand and four parishes, the city appointed the churchwardens and oversaw building work, and they rendered their accounts to the mayors before an audience of the parishioners.[64] Four was a relatively large number of parishes for the Low Countries but only two dated

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[58]My thanks to Dr. Nickson for sharing a draft of his forthcoming article with me.

[59]Stephen P. Bensch, *Barcelona and Its Rulers, 1096–1291* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 54, 176; Josep Baucells i Reig, *Vivir en la Edad Media: Barcelona y su entorno en los siglos XIII y XIV (1200–1344)*, Anejos del Anuario de Estudios Medievales (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2004), 1396–97. The population of Barcelona dropped from some fifty to thirty thousand residents in the later Middle Ages.

[60]Claire Billen and Chloé Deligne, "Urban Space: Infrastructure, Technology and Power," in Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, Bruno Blondé, and Marc Boone, eds., *City and Society in the Low Countries, 1100–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 162–91 170, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108645454.006.

[61]W. H. Vroom, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe-kerk te Antwerpen: de financiering van de bouw tot de beeldenstorm* (Antwerp: Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1983).

[62]Jeffrey Muller, St. *Jacob's Antwerp Art and Counter Reformation in Rubens's Parish Church* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 20.

[63]Ibid., 23–26.

[64]Vroom, *Financing Cathedral Building*, 408, 416.

back to before the thirteenth century. (When the city came to build its own chapel, however, it financed the work directly.[65])

Still, examples of cities with larger numbers of parishes and independent churchwardens, as in the London model, can be found in the Low Countries. A notable case in point is the city of Liege, with twenty-five parishes (and ten thousand people; even more parishes per person than London). The churchwardens (*mambours*) at the large parish of Saint-Martin-en-Ile provide a good example of independence from civic control.[66] Another example of the London model can be found in Ghent, with seven parish churches.[67] At the large church of St. Jacob, the three to four lay churchwardens (*kerkmeesters*) who ran maintenance and kept the accounts (as well as the Holy Ghost masters who handled poor relief) were not appointed by the city, though the positions were occupied by wealthy men who were active in civic politics.[68]

Scandinavian towns were very small—even the largest, Stockholm and Bergen, had at their greatest extent in 1300 populations of some seven thousand—and typically had only a single parish, making them comparable to smaller towns elsewhere on the continent.[69] Trading communities that founded their own churches, such as the Lübeck merchants in Falsterbo, could have an interesting adaptation of the Viennese model, stretched overseas. Here, they administered the *fabrica* themselves—and oversaw building work that included the erection of a clock tower—but did so under the supervision of the Lübeck bailiff.[70] Falsterbo had a number of other churches and chapels in the later Middle Ages, but still a single dominant city church.

Hungarian towns typically grew relatively late, during the fourteenth and fifteenth century, while maintaining a single parish church over which urban authorities had a strikingly high degree of control.[71] Here, there is evidence of towns passing civic

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[65]Other smaller towns, such as Kampen (up to ten thousand inhabitants), followed the typical model of having churchwardens appointed by the city. Guido Marnef and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "Civic Religion: Community, Identity and Religious Transformation," in Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, Bruno Blondé, and Marc Boone, eds., *City and Society in the Low Countries, 1100–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 128–61 143, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108645454.005.

[66]D. Henry Dietrich, "Confraternities and Lay Leadership in Sixteenth-Century Liège," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 13, 1 (1989): 15–34.

[67]Four within and three without the city walls. It had a population of sixty thousand inhabitants in the fourteenth century and forty to fifty thousand in the sixteenth century, making it the largest city in the Low Countries.

[68]Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "Exploring the Features and Challenges of the Urban Parish Church in the Southern Low Countries: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Ghent," in Andrew Spicer, ed., *Parish Churches in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2016), 53–77, 65, see also 57–58; Anne-Laure Van Bruaene and Michal Bauwens, "De Sint-Jacobskerk in Gent. Een onderzoek naar de betekenis van de stedelijke parochiekerk in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden," *Handelingen van de Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 65 (2011): 103–25, 108–9.

[69]Birgit Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, c. 800–1500*, Nordic Series 17 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 42.

[70]Carsten Jahnke, "A Church Landscape that Disappeared—Hanseatic Merchants, Churches and the Scanian Fairs," in Ingrid Gustin, *et al.,* eds., *Mellan Slott Och Slagg, Lund Studies in Historical Archaeology 17* (Lund: Institutionen för arkeologi och antikens historia, Lunds universitet, 2016), 97–103, 98.

[71]Kubinyi, "Stadt und Kirche"; András Kubinyi, "Egyház és város a késö középkori Magyarországon," in Ilona Sz. Jónás, ed., *Társadalomtörténeti tanulmányok a közeli és a régmúltból* (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kara Egyetemes Történeti Tanszék, 1994), 74–87.

funds to the churchwardens, alongside their usual revenues, for the purpose of church repair or building work and the purchase of other artistic works, in keeping with the Vienna model. Saxon towns in Transylvania seem to have funded the building and maintenance of the church through the churchwardens (*vitrici* or *aeditii*), as elsewhere, and typically seem to have appointed them, often from among council members or other politically active men.[72] In the important commercial town of Brașov/Kronstadt, for example, which had a population of some eleven to twelve thousand but only a single parish church, which oversaw other junior churches, the municipality paid the churchwardens directly for building work.[73] Similarly, in Bistritz, by the 1510s, building work was overseen by the town council, through the churchwarden.[74] A distinction within the Vienna model between arms-length civic control of fabric wardens (as in Vienna) and direct oversight of church building projects (as in many cities for roads, gates, docks, and so forth) can be introduced here, the significance of which is probably local in nature. Zsolt Simon's study of the churchwarden's accounts of the important Transylvanian town of Sibiu/Hermannstadt in 1505–1511 indicate that the warden was appointed by the town council but that the latter was increasingly paying for major artistic projects directly by the end of the Middle Ages.[75] The town had grown around a single parish church, acquiring further chapels, hospitals, and friaries without subdividing the parish.[76] This model extended even to mendicant houses and hospitals, both of which had lay wardens who were accountable to the municipality and were sometimes even members of the council.[77] One cause of a degree of church independence in these places was the presence of multiple ethnic communities, which were permitted to build their own churches.[78]

Vienna was far from alone within the Holy Roman Empire in exemplifying municipal control of parish church building work. Arnd Reitemeier's meticulous survey of urban parishes in medieval Germany, *Pfarrkirchen in der Stadt des späten Mittelalters*, is taken up largely with civic, or clerical, administration and

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[72]Katalin Szende, "The Urban Economy in Medieval Hungary," in József Laszlovszky et al., eds., *The Economy of Medieval Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 335–58, 346–47, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004363908_018; Adinel C. Dincă, "Churchwardens and Their Accounts in Late-Medieval Transylvania (14th to 16th Centuries): A Preliminary Assessment," in Ionuț Epurescu-Pascovici, ed., *Accounts and Accountability in Late Medieval Europe: Records, Procedures, and Socio-Political Impact*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 50 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 273–303, 281; Mihaela Sanda Salontai, "Die Stadtkirche als Repräsentationsmittel des aufstrebenden Bürgertums: Die St. Nikolauskirche in Bistritz," *Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 39, 110 (2016): 76–90, 90.

[73]Zsolt Simon, "Financing Culture in the Middle Ages: The Transylvanian Saxon Towns' Municipalities," *Yearbook of the "Gheorghe Sincai" Institute for Social Sciences & the Humanities of the Romanian Academy* 14 (2011): 255–69.

[74]Salontai, "Die Stadtkirche," 77–78, 86, 90.

[75]Zsolt Simon, "The Late Medieval Churchwarden's Accounts of Sibiu/Hermannstadt," in Susana Andea and Adinel Ciprian Dincă, eds., *Literacy Experiences Concerning Medieval and Early Modern Transylvania*, Yearbook of "George Barițiu" Institute of Cluj-Napoca, Supplement 54 (Cluj-Napoca, 2015), 76–77.

[76]It had a population of some eight thousand. Radu Lupescu, "The Medieval Fortifications of Sibiu," in Olaf Wagener, ed., *"Vmbringt Mit Starcken Turnen, Murn": Ortsbefestigungen Im Mittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 351–62.

[77]See the example of Pál Nagy in Gabriella Erdélyi, *A Cloister on Trial: Religious Culture and Everyday Life in Late Medieval Hungary* (London: Routledge, 2016); Dincă, "Churchwardens and Their Accounts," 279.

[78]Kubinyi, "Stadt und Kirche."

management of parochial funds, and its associated building work.[79] When variations on the oversight and auditing of urban churchwardens by the local council (*Rat*) are discussed, the major difference is the involvement of seigneurial representatives or members of a collegiate chapter from a powerful *Stiftskirche (or of priests in rural places)*, in overseeing the work.[80] His key example of Wesel, with some 4,500 inhabitants and a single parish church (until suburban additions after the 1420s), which was rebuilt by order of the town council in 1500, might be taken as typical for the small towns that made up much of the empire.[81] England, too, had smaller towns with a single dominant parish church where building work, and the fabric fund, was led and administered by civic authorities, in the Vienna model,[82] such as projects I have described elsewhere in Totnes (with a population of about 1,400 in 1377) or Bridgwater (about 1,700).[83] In terms of the administration of church building, these towns were, in other words, similar to somewhere like Wesel.

Cologne is, however, a notable exception and would follow the London model, despite the markedly strong overlap between the seven inner-city civic "*Sondergemeinde*" (special communities) from the early twelfth century, and its earlier ecclesiastical "*Pfarrsprengel*" (parishes).[84] Although the two often covered the same area, they remained formally distinct, even increasingly so during the later Middle Ages, even while cooperative activities between them continued. (In fact, the city's suburban parishes were never closely identified with civic communities.) Cologne's parish structure long predated the Gregorian Reform, and by the later twelfth century it already had thirteen parishes, to which more would be added.[85] Tobias Wulf describes the relatively late development of the city's lay *fabrica* in the thirteenth century and afterwards, followed by the formalization of a lay parochial administration and the installation of independent parish-level churchwardens around the early fourteenth century, and eventually the emergence of governing committees, very similar to the London model.[86] He associates increased expenditure at a parochial level, including on building work, with the development of this parochial structure.[87] Wulf gives the example of construction at St. Jacob's in the early sixteenth century, which was overseen by the churchwarden, although the city council played a modest role, at his request, in resolving a conflict. Indeed, by the end

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[79]Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*; see also Arnd Reitemeier, "Pfarrkirche, ihre Verwaltung und die herrschenden Geschlechter der Stadt im späten Mittelalter," in Sabine Klapp and Sigrid Schmitt, eds., *Städtische Gesellschaft und Kirche im Spätmittelalter: Arbeitstagung auf Schloss Dhaun 2004* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2008), 81–92.

[80]Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen*, 61.

[81]Ibid., 20–22.

[82]Pounds, *History of the English Parish*, 146.

[83]Byng, *Church Building and Society*, 187–90. It is worth nothing that these towns had much larger populations than many London or Rouen parishes.

[84]Tobias Wulf, *Die Pfarrgemeinden der Stadt Köln: Entwicklung und Bedeutung vom Mittelalter bis in die Frühe Neuzeit* (Siegburg: Verlag Franz Schmitt, 2012), ch. 2.2.1.

[85]Late-medieval Cologne had a similar population to London, twice that of Vienna. Ferdinand Opll, "Cologne and Vienna in the Middle Ages: A Comparison," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 92 (2005): 5–30, 13–15.

[86]Wulf, *Die Pfarrgemeinden*, ch. 2.2.2, 55–56.

[87]English historians tend to focus on the extension of lay responsibility for the church fabric as a legal entitlement that brought with it demanding financial duties rather than growing expenditure per se. See, for example, Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation*; and Carol Davidson Cragoe, "The Custom of the English Church: Parish Church Maintenance in England before 1300," *Journal of Medieval History* 36, 1 (2010): 20–38.

of the fifteenth century there was a growing obligation to get permission from the city's revenue officers (*Rentmeister*) for alterations, a kind of occasional, external intervention into parochial construction that seems to have been typical there but which does suggest an attempt to hybridize the London model.[88] (This would change by the seventeenth century, when the churchwardens reported damage directly to the *Rentmeister*.)[89]

The most developed form of civic control of church building was in Italian towns and cities, which were typically identified with a single diocese and cathedral church, and constituted such a distinctive version of the Vienna model that they could probably be referred to as a third model in their own right. Here *communes* took over responsibility for construction and maintenance of the cathedral—and often for other chapels or churches—from the bishop, installing remarkably elaborate lay institutions, *opera*, to manage the work.[90] The process began, perhaps, as early as the later eleventh century and by the middle of the thirteenth the arrangements were both more elaborate and more professionalized than those to the north: in Bologna, the city employed craftsmen to carry out rebuilding work in the 1160s, after the bishop failed to rebuild after a fire in the 1130s, beginning a practice of direct payment and oversight that would continue into the thirteenth century.[91] In Siena, lay appointees to oversee the cathedral workshop began by the 1250s, and early statutes show that its officers, oaths, funding, and responsibilities were determined by "the Nine," who ran the *commune*.[92] The physical protection of church buildings even formed part of the oath of Siena's *podesta*.[93] By the 1280s, the director of the *opera* in Pisa had a substantial staff and house and was forbidden from taking on any other work (quite the opposite of the English churchwarden or German *Kirchmeister*).[94] In Orvieto, cathedral construction was undertaken by an *opera* composed of a treasurer and four supervisors, all elected by the *commune*. In addition to a permanent staff, large committees, including clerics and lay, professional and unpaid, and expert and amateur members, were used for major projects.[95]

The institutionalization, power, and seniority of the *opera* may have given it a degree of independence from the *commune* that was not paralleled by northern fabric wardens within the Vienna model, who hardly constituted a separate institution, although they did often have junior employees and seem to have possessed a high degree of latitude between their annual audits. On the other hand, the formation of an independent body led to regulation and highly formalized oversight controls: in Siena, the financial officers of the *opera* (five in number) served for just three months

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[88]Wulf, *Die Pfarrgemeinden*, 364–65.

[89]Ibid., 360–61.

[90]Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125–1325* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010), 123–24; George W. Dameron, *Florence and Its Church in the Age of Dante* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 123–24; Vroom, *Financing Cathedral Building*, 65–68.

[91]Thompson, *Cities of God*, 21.

[92]Ibid., 20; William M. Bowsky, *A Medieval Italian Commune: Siena under the Nine, 1287–1355* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 285.

[93]Thompson, *Cities of God*, 20. In the 1250s, too, Vicenza had a professional supervisor of its cathedral's works.

[94]Ibid.

[95]Vroom, *Financing Cathedral Building*, 67–68.

and had to report to the *commune* at the end of every term.[96] Indeed, the regular reform of the personnel, organization, and systems of accountability of the city's *opera* indicates that it remained a point of concern for the *commune*. The bishop continued, often, to have a supporting role: in Genoa, church taxes were given to the *opera* for building work, although it was overseen by the *commune*.[97] In most cities, the *opera*, often working from its own palazzo, oversaw the building site's finances, the purchase of equipment and the hiring of craftsmen, as well as managing markets, woods, taxes, or other rights and properties that funded its activities. However, day-to-day direction of the building site was the responsibility of the *capomaestro*, who was accountable to the *opera* through systems that could be increasingly elaborate, involving large numbers of advisers, experts, and colleagues.[98]

Italy was exceptional, but Wim Vroom has found a number of cathedrals north of the alps with lay fabric masters, who in several cases were installed after the city made major contributions to the fabric fund and apparently sought greater control over its building plans, as at Palma and Huesca in Spain and, to some extent, in Lübeck.[99] In most cases this was cooperative, with lay and clerical wardens working together, but an exception can be found in Strasbourg, where the city took over the cathedral fabric directly in the 1280s, appointing the *Pfleger* and overseeing major building work. Disputes between the city on the one side and the bishop and chapter on the other (two sides often opposed elsewhere) continued here through the later Middle Ages.[100] Otherwise, as Vroom has shown, construction projects at cathedrals, like Old St. Paul's in London, were largely run internally by canons or monks, and their employees, although they did seek funding from the laity.

This survey, aside from its brevity, crudeness, and many overlooked examples, has methodological problems that must be acknowledged. First, parish numbers and civic powers changed significantly and sometimes quickly in individual places during the Middle Ages. Secondly, generalization about regional differences should be taken here as no more than a broad brush that would admit of considerable local and temporal difference, including the countless examples that were not examined in the course of writing this article or for which no evidence survives. Thirdly, even when church construction was a civic matter, the organization, powers, history, and practice of urban government varied considerably from one town to the next, as did parochial size, organization, and management.[101] For the mayor of Vienna and the mayor of Bridgwater (or the parish authorities of St. Mary at Hill, London, and of Saint Vincent, Rouen) to oversee building work does not entail similarities in the social, political, or cultural significance of their activities or even in important details of their management. In particular, it should be recalled that other institutions apart from the parish and city, most notably the chapter of a powerful urban collegiate church, could run parochial building work, and so the power of one did not

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[96]Klaus Tragbar, "Siena 1357: The Failure of a Great Plan," in Ine Wouters et al., eds., *Building Knowledge, Constructing Histories* (Boca Raton: CRC, 2018), 43–49, 44, https://doi.org/10.1201/9780429506208-7.

[97]Carrie E. Benes, *Urban Legends: Civic Identity and the Classical Past in Northern Italy, 1250–1350* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2011), 67–68.

[98]Tragbar, "Siena," 44.

[99]Vroom, *Financing Cathedral Building*, 60–65.

[100]Ibid., 134–38.

[101]R. N. Swanson, "Bishoprics and Parishes," in R. N. Swanson, ed., *The Routledge History Of Medieval Christianity, 1050–1500* (London: Routledge, 2015), 19–30, 25–26.

necessarily entail the weakness of the other, while complex patterns of cooperation between all of these, along with clergy, private individuals, and guilds, were probably common.[102] Lastly, although the major parish church is often both relatively well documented and deliberately integrated into a broader political structure, subordinate parishes or chapels, and perhaps smaller projects in larger churches, probably often had an ambiguous and changing status that permitted high degrees of private initiative or cooperation between different authorities (as when guilds took over building work or when civic authorities worked together with private owners, as at Maria am Gestade, or bishops, as often happened in Italy). This short article, however, is intended only to demonstrate how a comparative approach at a vast scale can locate important structural differences that would remain invisible at a local or regional level, and in doing so to suggest how some institutional developments shaped the politics of architectural production.

The Politics of Architecture

Even allowing for considerable variations within the Vienna and London models, the stark differences between them evidently had major implication for the politics of architecture—that is, for what large-scale civic or communal church construction meant for the practice, authority, and reach of city and parish governments and how buildings manifested these differences in their materiality and semiotics. In Vienna, church building and maintenance was a major field of council activity: within the ambit of city government or its delegates fell the keeping, auditing, and archiving of building accounts; the appointment of the fabric warden; the oversight of the work; the commissioning (or at least the approval) of master craftsmen; the writing of contracts, accounts, and deeds; the inspection of the building site; the raising of public funds; and the visiting of comparable buildings.[103] As noted above, this both expressed and extended the power of the city's government; it demonstrated its independence from seigneurial power and brought a large amount of caLondon's to pital expenditure and attendant powers of patronage under its control in periods when civic entitlements were frequently fought over. The praxis of church building in Vienna connected "top" to "bottom" in relatively direct and highly regulated ways (at audit, the mayor himself would, after all, hear even the smallest transaction paid to a laborer) that tended to repeat, and so also to concretize and even to justify existing social and administrative structures.

Architectural production also constituted some of the aesthetics of civic power: the visit to the building site, the laying of foundation stones, the recording of architectural events in the city books, the hearing of audits, and the meeting with the master mason were moments when mayoral responsibility was visibly discharged and celebrated, and sometimes even sacralized, as suggested by the wine drunk during the inspection of the site in 1407, the congratulatory meal invariably held after the accounts were audited or the processions of clergy and nobility at the laying of foundations.[104] These

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[102]Again, see numerous examples in Reitemeier, *Pfarrkirchen.* For examples of cooperation between lords and tenants, see Gabriel Byng, "The Contract for the North Aisle at St James, Biddenham," *Antiquaries Journal* 95 (2015): 251–65; and "The Construction of the Tower at Bolney Church," *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 151 (2013): 101–13.

[103]Schedl, *St. Stephan in Wien*, "Der Kirchenbetrieb und die Baustelle."

[104]Numerous examples can be found in Uhlirz, *Die Rechnungen.*

were not insignificant associations for the city's government to foster: contemporary iconographies could show even kings visiting building sites, while architectural patronage was a "good work" that would speed the donor's soul through purgatory and the church building was of course a central and remarkable element of religious praxis.[105] In London, where the moral or spiritual authority, and the economic potency, of the city's government was no less important, the closest equivalent was the building of new quays or similar non-ecclesiastical projects, which carried a quite different set of associations.[106]

This is not to argue that London's elite were not able to access the political advantages that came through the oversight of church construction, but it was a somewhat different, probably broader elite and a somewhat different and perhaps more powerful set of advantages. In contrast to Vienna, where, other than craftsmen, only a tiny minority wealthy enough to sit on the council and/or serve as fabric warden had any direct role in the work, the London model provided a larger number of individuals with both local and city-wide opportunities for involvement in the administration and control of church construction.[107] London's high government was no less narrow than that of Vienna, but a much broader sweep of men served as parish masters, churchwardens, and fabric wardens.[108] This reflected the sheer size and complexity that the city's governance had reached by the late Middle Ages: Caroline Barron estimates a thousand men were involved then in some office or another, even as London's central government became increasingly oligarchic.[109] This would also increase the indirect involvement and everyday familiarity with church construction of a broader part of the population: in the city's small parishes, often with only a few hundred residents, interactions between masters, congregations, and builders were more intimate and more immediate during periods of construction.[110]

And yet, the contrast between the two cities should not be characterized as a vertical civic organization and a horizontal parochial one, in which Vienna's church building was bound to the elite and London's to the "community." Even in the latter, parochial leadership, as we have seen, was probably made up largely of small groups of wealthy parishioners, including men who acted at times as mayors and aldermen, and who had an outsized role in appointing churchwardens, auditing their accounts, and directing their work, and even took on major parochial projects directly or directed those who did.[111] As a set of practices that structured relationships between different bodies, individuals, and social groups, architectural production may have

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[105]Gabriel Byng, "The Dynamic of Design: 'Source' Buildings and Contract Making in the Late Middle Ages," *Architectural History* 59 (2016): 123–48, 123.

[106]See especially the argument made in David Harry, *Constructing a Civic Community in Late Medieval London: The Common Profit, Charity and Commemoration* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019), 28.

[107]Byng, *Church Building and Society*, 23–24.

[108]Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts."

[109]Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, 198.

[110]Gary G. Gibbs, *Five Parishes in Late Medieval and Tudor London: Communities and Reforms* (London: Routledge, 2019), 16, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429026232.

[111]Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts." See numerous examples in Gibbs, *Five Parishes*, e.g., 38–40, and see also 170–71; Katherine L. French, "Rebuilding St. Margaret's: Parish Involvement and Community Action in Late Medieval Westminster," *Journal of Social History* 45, 1 (2011): 148–71; and Ian Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith Made the Medieval Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

been even more important in London than in Vienna.[112] Since London's parochial-level societies were less formalized than Vienna's civic hierarchy, with unofficial, personal differences determining who was involved in church building, the work itself could play a more significant role in both determining and demonstrating social difference.

The clearest example of how this could work is probably how an individual family could dominate whole church buildings in London while in Vienna private donations to St. Stephen's were limited to, at most, particular units or objects (which was also common in London).[113] The wealthy families who appear to have led the rebuilding of St. Michael Crooked Lane, St. Laurence Pountney, and St. Michael Paternoster Royal are good examples.[114] Taking over construction would provide an opportunity for these families to dispense employment and patronage, install their own administrative structures, and visibly exercise their oversight, even beyond the parish, with a degree of independence not available to the wealthy in cities like Vienna.[115] Another possible example is the regularity with which surviving churchwardens' accounts begin with a major building project: while this could be the consequence of chance survivals or a deliberate archival strategy, it suggests that new works stimulated new forms of administrative practice and record-keeping that offered roles for "middling" other subordinate parishioners within the otherwise elite practice of church construction.[116]

To what extent and how building work was (pre)consciously associated with civic or parochial authorities is a challenging question. In medieval Europe, it is always difficult to establish a social semiotics of architecture—that is, how, when, for whom, or even if a building "represented" particular ideas, people, or offices.[117] One approach would be to invert the logic of the previous sections: if the building was funded and overseen by the city government or the parochial masters, then it "must" have been understood as representing them and, more specifically, as communicating something about their piety, competence, or social commitment (and so, in a further step, buttressing their authority, legitimacy, or other political interests). Such an argument is evidently problematic, not least for the imprecision of the term "represent" and the lack of knowledge of contemporary reception, but examples of inscriptions, heraldry, or imagery indicate that some sort of association with the work was actively sought by patrons and builders, even if evidence of specific moments of meaning-making about the work by contemporary visitors are vanishingly rare.[118]

Explicit surviving examples of civic governments describing their own patronage are relatively uncommon but one revealing instance can be found in a remarkable

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[112]For a practice theoretical approach to the politics of medieval church construction, see Byng, "St Stephen's, Vienna."

[113]E.g., the patronage of sculpture: Juckes, "Tale of Two Churches." For a similar analysis of elite church building in Cologne, especially by newcomers, see Wulf, *Die Pfarrgemeinden*, 327.

[114]William Page, ed., A History of the County of London: London within the Bars, *Westminster and Southwark*, vol. 1 (London: Victoria County History, 1909), 574–76, 577–80.

[115]For examples of active gentry administration of a building project outside London, see Byng, "Construction"; and "Contract."

[116]Byng, *Church Building and Society*, 168.

[117]See the excellent historiography in Paul Crossley, "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography," *Burlington Magazine* 130, 1019 (1988): 116–21.

[118]For "practices of meaning" in medieval architecture, see Byng, "St Stephen's, Vienna."

inscription given twice in Ulm Minster in 1377.[119] It records how Ludwig Kraft "laid here the first foundation stone of this parish church in the name and by the will of the council" (*von haissen des rates wegen hie zu vlm lait lvdwig kraft … de(n) erste(n) fu(n) dame(n)tstain a(n) diser pfarrkirchen*).[120] Kraft held the right of patronage, had negotiated the church's relocation, and had funded its construction.[121] However, Ulm, following the Viennese model, still retained such a close bond between council and church that, it seems, Kraft required its authority to lay the cornerstone. The suggestion, in other words, is that Kraft is the exception that proves the rule: church construction in towns where civic government and parish were united was so commonly associated with the council that Kraft needed to explicitly account for his role in the work, while awkwardly acknowledging the authority of the city. The modest number of surviving inscriptions of this kind might suggest not the absence of such associations but rather their strength. Londoners, meanwhile, needed to have no such compunctions about claiming unilateral power in church building, while no Viennese layman had such an outsized role in building St Stephen's.

St Stephen's has no such explicit inscription evidence, but in 1450 the town included an elaborated account of the laying of the foundation stone of the north tower in its most important city book, the *Große Stadtbuch* or *Eisenbuch*.[122] In fact, the mayor is not mentioned until towards the end of the passage, followed by other figures from the civic hierarchy, but the inclusion of the text in this particular book suggests that it was understood, or claimed, at least in part, as a civic event. In terms of the fabric itself, Tim Juckes has pointed out that when large-scale figures of Rudolf IV and his family that had been made for him in the 1360s were installed high on the church's west front, perhaps in the 1420s, they were given arms including those of the city of Vienna, "introducing a civic perspective" to a cycle which had probably not been intended to have one.[123] It is striking, too, that as civic government and seigneurial authority in Vienna changed on several occasions in the late Middle Ages, sometimes violently, the building work at St. Stephen's was largely unaffected: no matter who was in power, or how they had come to be there, this demanding and expensive project continued.[124] It suggests that building work was understood, at least by councilmen, as the distinctive province not of one party or individual (or of their ideals and ambitions) but rather of civic government, or perhaps more abstractly, of the city itself.

By contrast, there are strikingly few instances in London, or for that matter outside it, in which inscriptions or similar media explicitly record building work as the

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[119]My thanks to Tim Juckes for suggesting this example to me.

[120]Assaf Pinkus, *Patrons and Narratives of the Parler School: The Marian Tympana 1350–1400* (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009), ch. 4.

[121]Hans Peter Köpf, "Lutz Krafft, der Münstergründer"; and Joachim Gaus, "Dedicatio ecclesiae: Zum Grundsteinlegungsrelief im Münster zu Ulm," both in Hans Eugen Specker and Reinhard Wortmann, eds., *600 Jahre Ulmer Münster* (Stuttgart: Zobel-Verlag, 1977), 9–58, and 59–85, respectively.

[122]Ferdinand Opll, *Das große Wiener Stadtbuch, genannt "Eisenbuch." Inhaltliche Erschließung*, vol. 4, Veröffentlichungen des Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchivs A 3 (Wien: Wiener Stadt- u. Landesarchiv, 1999); Böker, *Der Wiener Stephansdom*, 255–56; a digitised version of the Eisenbuch can be found here (see f. 160): "Großes Wiener Stadtbuch, Genannt 'Eisenbuch' (3.4.A.1.1)," WAIS—Wiener Archivinformationsystem— Tektonik, https://www.wien.gv.at/actaproweb2/benutzung/archive.xhtml?id=Stueck++00000169m08alt# Stueck__00000169m08alt. (accessed 27 June 2022).

[123]Juckes, "Tale of Two Churches," 129; Gruber, "Organizing a Community," 195.

[124]This is the core of my argument in "St Stephen's, Vienna."

responsibility of the parish. "Parochial identity," "parochial community," and "parochial membership" have become popular terms in recent scholarship, but these are distinctively modern analytical categories and their medieval antecedents, if they existed, need considerable nuancing.[125] Unlike the city (or the guild), the parish was never incorporated, received few legal entitlements, rarely had arms, and had no explicit list of "members" (as cities did for citizens or guilds for members) or any formalized and permanent government (in theory, if not in practice). There was, in effect, little that the parish *qua* parish could "do" (collective actions were, rather, brought by groups of individual parishioners).[126] It is telling that the Middle English Dictionary entry for "parish" includes not a single incident where it is the subject for an active verb. The term "parish" was used to describe a unit within ecclesiastical government (with certain legal entitlements and obligations), a geographical area, or a building or group of people, but not an entity that was agentive in its own right, like the city, at least before the early modern era, when it began to gather greater powers and formalized government.

Similarly, the churchwarden was not an equivalent office to that of either the mayor or the fabric warden in Vienna. There are very few surviving inscriptions that name the churchwarden(s) *qua* churchwarden(s) as the "author" of a work (and none in London). Even in the rare exceptions, such an inscription is typically preceded by a specific name and it is unclear whether the individual acted in that capacity or simply claimed the position as status while acting privately.[127] The role of the churchwarden has been much discussed in recent historiography, but it is likely, perhaps especially in big cities and even when they were overseeing a discrete building project, that they were understood largely as administrators of a particular set of activities rather than as the project's leaders or as "representatives" of "the parish" or the building work. Clive Burgess has argued persuasively that even the churchwardens' account books that constitute our main evidence for parochial building work were kept in order to honor the hard work of individuals who would not otherwise be acknowledged, rather than, as was long thought, as a record of their leadership of a local political unit.[128]

Importantly, without a strong contemporary abstract conceptualization of "the parish," the church building itself was probably more important in providing an

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[125]See the surveys in French, *People*, 21–22; and Kümin, *Shaping*, 2.

[126]There were legal work-arounds for the purposes of owning property, for example, and particular collective actions, but these did not lead to legal recognition of the parish. The city of London (and some other places) did own the patronage of some livings, a practice that was more common elsewhere in Europe. There are also some examples of parish seals, and Burgess gives the example of pyramidal arrangement of contributors in one parish. Kümin, *Shaping*, ch. 2.2.3, see also 2.2.1–2; Elizabeth New, "Signs of Community or Marks of the Exclusive? Parish and Guild Seals in Later Medieval England," in Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy, eds., *The Parish in Late Medieval England*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies 14 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 112–28.

[127]Byng, *Church Building and Society*, 159; David Griffith, "Texts and Detexting on Late Medieval English Church Screens," in Richard Marks, Spike Bucklow, and Lucy Wrapson, eds., *The Art and Science of the Church Screen in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017), 71–99. See also Eamon Duffy's warning about the interpretation of arms as indicating financial patronage: "The Disenchantment of Space: Salle Church and the Reformation," in James D. Tracy and Marguerite Ragnow, eds., *Religion and the Early Modern State: Views from China, Russia, and the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 324–76.

[128]Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts," 314–15.

articulatable metonym for both local identity and the bundle of practices the made up a locality. It is notable, for example, how many more wills left money to particular furnishings, the fabric fund, or building works rather than to the churchwardens, and how contemporary poets used the parish church building or particular parochial liturgical activities as symbols of local commitment, while writing little about "the parish" itself.[129] The dominance of private individuals and groups in inscriptions should make us alert to both modern and medieval claims that the building was overtly connected to a "community" with a local "membership" rather than to those who had "annexed" parts of the building.[130] Some London churches seem to have been composed of a collection of architectural units each funded by a different wealthy family, and historians rarely have sufficient sources to determine whether they were nonetheless actively understood by contemporaries as "an emblem of parochial identity" and a "symbol of the parish community" or rather as an assemblage of more particular acts and gifts.[131] Although terms such as the "community" or "all the parishioners" are common in medieval sources, they are typically found in texts written by the elite to describe, and validate, their own actions —that is, they are a rhetorical, moral, and/or legal claim that the historian should hesitate to repeat as reflecting either a social reality or a widespread contemporary discourse.

The dominance of inscriptions to the architectural patronage of individuals, guilds or fraternities, or other institutions (as when St. Botolph Aldgate had the arms of its patrons, Holy Trinity Priory Aldgate, carved in its stonework when it was rebuilt in the sixteenth century), rather than to the parish or churchwardens, also reveals something of how administrative differences shaped discursive ones: cities like London lacked a means of articulating, or even thinking, collective responsibility for church building in the way available to citizens of cities like Vienna.[132] I have argued above that the lack of formalized government in London parishes made church building by wealthy families more constitutive of social hierarchies, and this point may be extended into local semiotics. If it is doubtful that there was a distinctively parochial "identity," "membership," or "imaginary," then it is likely that other forms of identification, perhaps especially those to do with architecture, such as "donor," "giver," "founder," "churchwarden," or "fabric warden" constituted more important parts of local discursive repertoires than did "parish" or "parochial community."[133]

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[129]E.g., Ellen K. Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England*, 1st ed. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015), 10; Byng, *Church Building and Society*, 140.

[130]I take the latter term from: Paul Binski, "The English Parish Church and Its Art in the Later Middle Ages: A Review of the Problem," *Studies in Iconography* 20 (1999): 1–25, 9–10.

[131]E.g., the Bugges and Darbys at St. Dionis Backchurch: Schofield, "Saxon and Medieval Parish Churches," 100. See also how collective space was privatised through seating: Gabriel Byng, "'In Common for Everyone': Shared Space and Private Possessions in the English Parish Church Nave," *Journal of Medieval History* 45, 2 (2019): 231–53, https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2019.1593628; and "Breaking the Peace: Representation, Affect and Materiality in Pre-Modern England," *Journal of Material Culture* 26, 4 (2021): 472–92, https://doi.org/10.1177/13591835211039779.

[132]Schofield, "Saxon and Medieval Parish Churches," 96. See numerous examples, often collected from John Stow, in this article.

[133]These words are chosen as examples based on modernized forms of Middle English terms. Cf. Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England*, 2.

Explicit examples of how the patronage of church construction shaped how buildings, and presumably families, were described and known can be found at St. Laurence Pountney and, probably, St. Benet Fink, churches that were renamed after their (re)builders, apparently in their own time.[134] The discursive impact of informal, private patronage away from such unilaterally dominated churches, and on parishioners outside the elite, is somewhat harder to find, but one interesting example can be found in the lists of donors to building work, and other major projects, that were made at Allhallows London Wall.[135] They demonstrate how construction work provided an opportunity to articulate informal hierarchies within the parish with new clarity (in this case on paper, although elaborate inscriptions in the work itself can be found elsewhere).[136]

In London there was, in other words, no purposive, abstract, collective entity to which parish church building work could be either conceptually or symbolically assigned, but there were arms, inscriptions, account books, and even names that made known the gifts or work of individuals. It seems likely that this did determine how the work was known, at least to later generations: John Stow, one of London's most important early antiquarians, writing in the 1590s, would often ascribe building work to private donors, typically on the basis of the arms that he found in a church, but never to "the parish."[137] Meanwhile in Vienna, the city's arms were displayed on the church, since the council had both the means and the authority to present it as a field of collective, civic activity (which is not to claim that, even if successful in shaping local discourses, contemporaries understood it to involve the "whole," the "community," et cetera). It is, however, not the case that the collective was wholly irrelevant in London or that private donors were immaterial in Vienna, but even these kinds of patronage took forms that were placed within the fundamental parochial structures of both places: incorporated, self-governing guilds were important to coordinate the work of individuals in the former, while patrician families had to distinguish their gifts from the work of the city in the latter.[138]

Conclusion

The formal governmental context within which the administrative systems for church building and maintenance were developed deeply shaped the social, economic, and managerial functioning of the building site. Vienna and London might be taken as extreme examples: The ecclesiastical structure of the former had been centralized under a single parish church, and later its fabric funds were assimilated to its increasingly powerful city council, which administered them alongside the many other responsibilities that made up civic government. The parochial structure of the latter was plural, decentralized and largely self-governing (excepting the usual oversight of archdeacons or bishops), and so its fabric funds were

[134]"Colleges: St Laurence Pountney," in William Page, ed., *A History of the County of London*, *Volume 1: London within the Bars, Westminster and Southwark* (London: Victoria County History, [1909]), British History Online: https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/london/vol1; Harry Bristow Wilson, *A History of the Parish of St. Laurence Pountney. London* (London: Rivingtons, 1831), 2; Stow, *Survey of London*, vol. 1, 69.
[135]Gibbs, *Five Parishes*, 33–38.
[136]E.g., Byng, *Church Building and Society*, 186.
[137]Stow, *Survey of London*.
[138]Juckes, "Tale of Two Churches," 130.

administered by local officers, with no direct role for the mayor and aldermen. Many versions of the Vienna model could be found across the continent, from the elaborate and professionalized institutional arrangements of Italy to the legislative controls over new, semi-independent churchwardens in Antwerp, to direct payments from the city council in Sibiu. Meanwhile, cities with a large number of churches in the Iberian Peninsula, northern France, and the Low Countries, with devolved parochial structures that had survived the Gregorian Reforms of ca. 1100, adopted the London model.

Quite how the formal control of church building shaped a more encompassing politics of architecture is a question for further study by the cultural, and the local, historian, but it is clear that it had a profound impact on opportunities for and the form of participation in the leadership of projects. While in Vienna, building work manifested, and possibly reinforced, formal (and informal) differences that structured the city's social world from the mayor to the laborer, in London, it had a more local, but perhaps more powerful, structuring function within the context of the small, intimate, and varied parishes where it took place. This even extended to the means by which "identities" were articulated: the church building itself became an important way both to identify a locality and to articulate one's place within it. Everywhere, however, wealthy individuals donated directly to church building, whether or not they also participated in civic or parochial government. Everywhere, too, church construction was both assimilated to and influential over preceding administrative, social, and discursive structures.