

Why people like to live in cities

**The role of urban institutions in the Low Countries
(1200-2010)**

**Leo Lucassen & Wim Willems
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE CONFERENCE

Note: This the English translation of the introduction to a collection of essays, edited by Leo Lucassen en Wim Willems. The book will be presented on the third day of the conference. For further details go to: publications

WHY PEOPLE LIKE TO LIVE IN CITIES

Cities, institutions and migration in the Low Countries: an introduction

Leo Lucassen en Wim Willems¹

Strangers in Athens

Before the 5th century B.C. Athens was not so different from other Greek cities, but following the victories over the Persians the city grew rapidly into Greece's most important (power) centre, with around 350,000 inhabitants circa 431 B.C.² For the most part, the population growth can be accounted for by newcomers - free migrants as well as slaves - who delivered a crucial contribution to the economic industry. Of the free migrants, some only stayed for a short time and had the status of *Xenoi*, foreigners. Others settled and were classified as *Metoikoi*, which meant fellow-citizen. Both categories of newcomers were emphatically distinct from the citizens of Athens, a status which was reserved for male residents - rich and poor alike. Initially, children of *Metoikoi* could obtain citizenship by marrying an Athenian citizen, or the daughter of a citizen. After the middle of the 5th century, however, this right was denied to descendants of migrants. The reason for this was that, in particular, poor Athenian citizens - labourers and artisans - felt their social and economic position threatened by the massive influx of newcomers. Immigrants tolerated the consequent social and legal discrimination because the city had many economic benefits. Some became rich and, despite their lesser status, took part in intellectual debates and played a role in Athens' civic life. It was, however, forbidden for them to invest in property, so they focused instead on trade.³

This example from antiquity lays bear a number of aspects of the historical relationship between cities, civics and the role of institutions. For one thing, the connection between the growth of the population and immigration under the influence of spectacular economic developments. In Athens' case this was dominated by trade and industry, and shipbuilding in particular. However, such economic prosperity should not be seen in isolation of other factors. Firstly, *political* - the victory over the Persians and the city's central position in the Delian League. Then *geographical*, that is to say, the favourable location of Athens and its harbour at Piraeus. Further, the *cultural* factors, i.e. the arts and sciences, and the *institutional* factors, the specific form of Athenian citizenship. The design of Athens not only shines a light on the question of why so many people were drawn to this city, but it also makes clear what possibilities newcomers had for becoming a citizen. If we want to understand how such integration processes have come about, then knowledge of the Athenian admissions regime is crucial. The fact is that in the same period other regimes in other regions strongly differed, as a comparison with the city-state of Sparta demonstrates. There,

¹ Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems share the Chair of Social History at Leiden University/The Hague Campus. Their most recent publications are *De krachtige stad. Een eeuw omgang en ontwikkeling* (Amsterdam 2007) and *Gelijkheid en onbehagen. Over steden, nieuwkomers en nationaal geheugenverlies* (Amsterdam 2006).

² Osborne 2008: 158.

³ Meijer 2007: 52-63.

foreigners, in as far as they were interested in settling in the city, had barely any rights and were more or less treated as slaves.

Cities and institutions

The aforementioned example from antiquity, with a few adjustments, is useful as a framework for examining the relationship between institutions and the pulling-power of cities - for residents and newcomers alike - in the Low Countries from 1200. In the (high and late) Middle Ages, cities formed relatively autonomous, administrative bodies that were ultimately subordinate to the supreme authority. In the Dutch Republic, at the end of the 16th century, this became (formally) the Estates-General, with a high degree of self-governance for cities, and from the beginning of the 19th century the power came to rest with the national state.⁴

Within the broader context of this Dutch/Flemish research project we devote attention to the institutional arrangements of cities, arrangements which have varied in space as well as over time. Our guiding principle is to what extent the (local) institutional design influenced, in practice, the settlement and integration of ‘*inwijkelingen*’ (immigrants), as well as the ‘stay-at-home’ tendencies of ‘natives’. We interpret the concept of ‘institution’ broadly. We focus not only on the political leadership of cities but also pay attention to social, cultural and economic institutions that influence the lives of residents. That means thinking about churches, militias and guilds, (neighbourhood) associations, political parties and so on – collectively known as *civil society*.⁵ The emphasis on institutions is important, because they fulfilled a central role in the functioning of city life. We know from recent research on the early modern period, for example, that a relationship existed between the specific forms of political civic institutions and the economic performance of cities,⁶ but that also counted for the social and political rights of city dwellers. Alongside formal institutions, we examine the role of the civic, the cultural and the spatial environment. While this is harder to define in institutional terms, it significantly influenced the pulling-power of cities.

We realise fully that the risk of such an approach may be that the wider geographical and economic contexts fade into the background.⁷ The lot of a city is never determined by its institutions alone but also by its position in the national network of cities and by international geographic shifts in economic priorities. In other words, by developments of a structural nature which individual cities have little control over. In current times we think of the attraction of London as a financial centre and, as a consequence, the possible weakening of the Amsterdam Southern axis (‘Zuidas’, Amsterdam’s international business hub), or the position of the Randstad in the European power field. For these reasons, this volume makes room for wider regional, national and economic-geographic infrastructures.

The emphasis on institutions forces us to analyse the relationship between urbanisation and the nature of population dynamics, which includes migration as well as ‘stay-at-home’ behaviour patterns, in a way that is different to usual.⁸ The idea that the pulling-power of cities is determined solely by the structure of the labour market and by planning and economic networks is too limited. Not that these don’t have an influence, far from it. It is more that the economic-geographic processes are embedded in and determined by locally-designed institutions and the cultural and spatial environment. We believe that a systematic survey of the dimensions of the institutional perspective will provide more insight into the pulling-power of cities on citizens, from inside as well as outside the Netherlands and Flanders. The

⁴ For the demographic developments of Dutch cities see Lourens & Lucassen 1997.

⁵ Putnam 1993 and Morton et al. 2006.

⁶ Van Zanden and Prak 2006.

⁷ Lesger 1990; Davids & Lucassen 1995; O’Brien 2001.

⁸ Hohenberg and Lees 1985, Sewell 1985; Moch 1992; Hochstadt 1999; Lesger, Lucassen and Schrover 2002; Lesger 2006; Winter 2007

same goes for the process of settlement and integration. Therefore, not only the influence of institutions deserves to be described, but also structured comparisons are necessary between cities over diverse periods.

With respect to the choice of the Low Countries, recent historical research into the special character of Northwest Europe in relation to other regions in the world has revealed just how ‘modern’ this part of the globe was, already from the Middle Ages. In particular, the no small part played by feudalism, the early appearance of wage-work, the relatively autonomous role of women in the labour market and the reasonably independent position of children, who were pretty much able to choose their own marriage partner and were less dependent on the (patriarchal) families they were part of.⁹ These ‘modern’ characteristics manifested themselves particularly in cities and their repercussions were felt in diverse institutions. Think of the spread of institutionalised care for the elderly, orphans, single women and the poor, evidenced by the Dutch and Flemish almshouses still visible today. Unlike in Southern Europe, from early on these urban institutions replaced the function of family networks. For newcomers, the isolation from family and care had the advantage that they gained relatively easy access to various forms of support.

The authors of this volume have been asked to put the relationship between diverse *institutional* dimensions and the pulling-power of cities under the microscope. Bearing in mind the impact of the nature of the population dynamic in different periods and taking into account various civic contexts. It is about reflecting on the question, to what extent does such an approach have added value in respect of the more usual approaches? In this way we connect with the renewed interest of social and economic historians in the influence of institutions, starting from the opinion that institutions were heavily responsible for forming human interactions.¹⁰ Based on extant literature we distinguish six dimensions. The first four of these already have a long tradition: *politics*, *economics*, *geography*, *social structure*, while the last two have only gained attention more recently: *culture* (including identity, representation)¹¹ and *physical space* (planning, architecture and environment).¹² The mutual relations between the six distinguished angles are examined using the guiding principle; to what extent have institutions influenced cities? One way of doing this is to examine the population dynamic and its shifts over time. In this way more insight is gained into the growth, stagnation and fall of cities. That also means looking at geographic mobility, so immigration and emigration, as well as stability.¹³ In other words, why do people arrive, stay and leave?

Politics

For a long time, the landscape of urban history has been dominated by the study of political institutions, in the Middle Ages as well as in later periods. This means the city government and its related institutions, such as militias, orphanages, institutions for poor relief. The role of elites and the upper middle classes have always received plenty of attention too. In the Middle Ages, in particular, the city formed an independent legal unit. For many countryside dwellers, subject to feudal relations, cities were an attractive destination, if only for the fact that they offered a chance to break free of such obligations. At that time, the political and legal

⁹ Davids and Lucassen 1995; Lynch 2003; De Moor and Van Zanden 2006; Van Bavel 2007; Nederveen Meerkerk 2008.

¹⁰ Boone et al. 1996: 3. See also North 2002.

¹¹ See for example: Ward 2001; Florida 2002; Green 2002; Parsons 2003; Kooij 2004; Gyáni 2004; Elliot 2005; Kloosterman 2006; Rath 2007.

¹² An early example is Taverne 1978 and later Bonke 1996. More recently published, partly influenced by the ‘spatial turn’, Arnold 2000; Miller 2000; Prior 2002; Escobar 2003; Hassan 2003; Hills 2004; Isenberg 2005.

¹³ Although even in the most recent Dutch city histories it is still a forgotten child: see Van de Laar & Van der Schoor 2006. The same is also true for emigration from cities (see e.g. Jones 2005).

independence of a city proved a strong attraction for populations in outlying areas. In an already older, but recently re-published, book Antony Black argues that from the 12th century cities differed fundamentally from the feudal countryside because of the corporative organisation of urban life. Through this, city dwellers could profit from a relatively high level of social solidarity and fraternity. Furthermore, the civic community was characterised, in spite of gradual differences in the degrees of citizenship, by a fundamental equality of city dwellers in the legal sense - which has been called the '*cohésion horizontale*'.¹⁴ Within the city walls, personal freedom was many times greater, the proprietary rights fixed and the arbitrary violence repelled.¹⁵ A form of *civil society* existed, albeit one that deviates from the definition understood in modern times.¹⁶ However, too rigorous an interpretation of the divide between city and surrounding country, at least as far as Flanders is concerned, is cautioned against.¹⁷ City dwellers also had the possibility to settle in the countryside, the so called *hagepoorters* (a kind of 'rural citizens'), as a way of maintaining their citizenship.

Moreover, with regard to the economic and legal freedoms of city dwellers, before 1800 there were big differences between the cities in the west of the Netherlands and those in the east, including Germany. The trend seems to have been: the further east, the more restrictive the city rules. That brings to mind the marriage restrictions for the poor and the exclusion of various social and religious groups by guilds and institutions for poor relief. A strong variation between the different regions resulted in the cities in the west of the Netherlands being considerably more attractive.¹⁸ Clearly it was not just economic reasons that were the basis of the large-scale migration from areas of Germany. The development of a city was of course influenced by the quality of the political leadership and its handling of civic finances.¹⁹ The same also goes for the quality of the official apparatus, for example in terms of the organisation of daily life, social care and public order.²⁰ In short, the choices the city administrators made, and the quality of their leadership, played a role in the pulling-power of cities and their relations not just with outlying areas but with other cities too. In modern times, although cities may have lost a great deal of their autonomy, their political colour and policies still differ significantly, and this has consequences for their pulling-power.

Just as in Athens, Dutch and Flemish cities in the early modern period made a clear distinction between their inhabitants. To start, with between men and women. Indeed, women were not per definition excluded from political and economic citizenship, but certainly the guild system was dominated by male norms, which meant that the role of women was, at best, marginal.²¹ But in many cities men too were generally only minority citizens, with all the associated (political and social) rights, which varied a great deal from city to city.²² The content of citizenship will have had little influence on the enthusiasm of migrants to settle, for the simple fact that many natives were not citizens either. It could, however, have had consequences for the competitiveness of cities, that themselves used access to citizenship as a way of enticing sought after migrants. This occurred circa 1600 in cities such as Haarlem and Leiden, which tried to attract as many textile workers from the Southern Netherlands

¹⁴ Van Uytven 1983: 11.

¹⁵ See also North 1990, 2002.

¹⁶ Black 2003b: 33.

¹⁷ Stabel 1997.

¹⁸ Lourens and Jan Lucassen 2000.

¹⁹ 't Hart & Van der Heijden 2006; 't Hart & Limberger 2006.

²⁰ Van Steensel 2006.

²¹ Relatively little attention is paid to the *gendered* character of citizenship (political, economic and military). The gender angle is much clearer in studies about city space – see Howell 2000; Furnée 2002a and 2002b; Hills 2003.

²² Boone & Prak 1996; Kuijpers & Prak 2002.

(especially the region around Lille and Roubaix) as possible within their walls by offering, among other things, free citizenship.²³ This forces a parallel with present attempts by urban governments to attract the middle classes or large companies (or institutions) to move and establish themselves within their council boundaries. Immigration always finds a place in the wake of this; we only have to think of the many international institutions in a city such as The Hague. In the cadre of *city marketing*, The Hague goes to great lengths to promote itself as an international city of justice and peace.

Cities have also always attempted to exclude certain groups, or exclude them from urban facilities. In the early modern period, people with a religion that deviated from the dominant belief system - protestant Huguenots from France, Catholics in protestant cities and Jews per definition - were regularly denied citizenship or barred from the city.²⁴ Sometimes such an ideologically driven policy could have disastrous consequences for a city, such as in the case of Granada where, at the end of the 15th century, Jews, Muslims and Islam converts from Christianity (Moriscos) were purposefully driven out. It was only with the rise of the tourism industry after World War Two that this flourishing multicultural city has been able to recover somewhat from this historical blow.²⁵ Many cities also established their own foreigners policy. There is a detectable historical connection between the economic tide and restrictive measures. From the end of the 17th century in Leiden, poor foreigners could not spend longer than one night in the city. 'Buurtknechten' (neighbourhood officials) were engaged to find illegals; that is to say, visitors who had settled without permission. Providing shelter to illegal foreigners was punishable and anyone caught doing so had to pay the full amount received in rent into the city poor relief fund.²⁶ An exception to this rule was Amsterdam, which until the end of the 18th century remained open for immigrants, because it was believed that the city would ultimately profit from this.²⁷ In modern times cities are officially no longer able to establish their own foreigners policy, since the national state took over this power in the 19th century. None the less, we can read almost daily in the newspaper that there is considerable tension between the national policy and the practical execution of it at the local level. In particular, the life of newcomers without legal status remains, to a great degree, influenced by city policy.²⁸

Alongside a secular government, many cities, especially in the Middle Ages, also had church authorities. Using Norwich as the basis, it is documented that from the 11th century the trend in Norman England was to concentrate the power of bishops, thereby stamping the authority of the church on the city.²⁹ Ecclesiastical power centres were structurally embedded in the general development of cities, based on the extensive land tenure of churches inside and outside of cities and the influence of this on their physical identity. Furthermore, churches were closely involved in the distribution of assistance to the poor; it was only from the 16th century that secular authorities, such as city governments, also played a meaningful role in this area. In a number of cases churches also acted as migrant organisations, such as those for Jews and Lutherans in the Netherlands and for Netherlandish Calvinists in England.³⁰ Ecclesiastical institutions in cities, certainly those that directed their attention fully or partially towards migrants, already form an interesting factor due to their role in the process of settlement. And so we know that the pulling-power that Amsterdam had on Jewish migrants in the 17th and 18th century, and particularly those from Eastern Europe, was also on account

²³ Dorren 2001; Lucassen & De Vries 1996.

²⁴ Soly & Thijs 1995.

²⁵ Coleman 2003.

²⁶ Prak 1999; Walle 2005.

²⁷ Van de Pol and Kuijpers 2005.

²⁸ Meershoek 1999; Lucassen 2001; Van Eijl 2005; Engbersen and Burgers 2001; Van der Leun 2001.

²⁹ Atherton 1996; see also Harris 2005.

³⁰ Respectively Kuijpers 2004 and Esser 2007.

of the religious and cultural infrastructure of the city.³¹ In modern times poor relief was taken over by the state, however, churches and also mosques still form an important network for migrants and influence the ways in which new citizens find their place in a city.³²

Economy

Just like Athens in antiquity most cities form centres of economic and administrative activity. For these reasons they are, and continue to be, attractive for people from outside. Moreover, until well into the 18th century, the mortality rate in many cities was so high that newcomers were crucial to maintaining the size of the population and certainly to increasing it. Also, migrants sometimes possessed skills which there were a local shortage of, as was the case with the Southern Dutch textile workers in 17th century Leiden and Haarlem. Alongside this, there has always been the question of seasonal labour in cities, for example for construction projects.³³ That is still the case even today. Work is an important pull-factor and, likewise, the reason why, ultimately, many people stay. The composition of the local population, inclusive of newcomers, is strongly dependent on the type of city.³⁴ Industrial cities appear to attract different sorts of migrants than political or ecclesiastical administrative centres, trade metropolises, harbour cities or provincial cities. Civic authorities can, certainly in the short term, do little to influence this – once formed, an economic profile works like a kind of oil tanker. But a similar dependence can prove to be negative in the long-term. In the 17th century, Leiden was a successful textile city and circa 1670 was the biggest city in the Netherlands after Amsterdam; then the demand for cloth fell, wreaking revenge on the one-sided economic structure of the city. The consequence was high unemployment, pauperisation, decreased immigration and the departure of many residents to other parishes. In a sense, the city had become the prisoner of its past.

From an institutional perspective this raises the question: under which conditions are cities in a position to set out a new course and what possibilities do civic institutions such as administrators and businessmen have? Alongside this, it is important to examine the workings of economic institutions such as guilds, and later Chambers of Commerce, with the central question, to what extent have they played a dynamic or a stagnating role in urban economies?³⁵ To what extent did economic institutions, such as guilds and later unions, but also for example associations of merchants and entrepreneurs admit newcomers or exclude them? Guilds were an important institution on the economic landscape until modern times, also for migrants. The rules stated that only citizens could be vested with the title of guild master; in the tariffs too we come up against a distinction between the sons of masters, residents and foreigners. Depending on the time and the place, there were groups such as the Jews – with the exception of a few Amsterdam guilds – and Catholics, that never managed to climb over the wall of exclusion in Dutch cities.³⁶ Of course, this had huge consequences for the way in which these groups established themselves. It is known that Jews were compelled to specialise in sectors that were not tied to the guilds. Alongside this, mutual insurance societies for professions existed, and generally migrants could participate in these.³⁷ In some cities, such as in Leiden, immigrant mutual relief funds existed which were not tied to professions. Although the guilds were abolished circa 1800, the mutual insurance societies continued to exist. In the 20th century their role has been taken over by unions.

³¹ Fuks Mansfeld 1989; Bodian 1999; Sonnenberg-Stern 2000; see also Green 1998.

³² Penninx and Schrover 2001; Lucassen 2004.

³³ Lucassen 1987; Knotter 1991.

³⁴ Hohenberg & Lees 1985.

³⁵ There has been an enormous amount published about guilds in the last few years, in which the emphasis has been on re-valuing their role and their flexibility. See for example, Stabel 2004.

³⁶ Lourens and Jan Lucassen 2000.

³⁷ Bos 1998.

Geography

Closely tied to the economic approach is the geographical approach. Since the 1970s, historians and social scientists argued, rightly, that cities don't develop in isolation, but they form a part of (inter)national networks.³⁸ They adopt their own positions dependent on geographic location, size and economic profile. The pulling-power of cities on migrants is determined by their place in the network and by spatial shifts which occur over time. The transformation of Antwerp in the 18th and 19th century, from a centre for the textile industry to an international harbour city, is a good example of this.³⁹ More elusive are the structural changes in economy and geography, such as the gradual shift of urban focus from Antwerp (16th), via Amsterdam (17th) to London (18th century).⁴⁰ A more recent example is Rotterdam, which in the 20th century relied heavily on the strength of its harbours, while the employment opportunities for unskilled workers dramatically decreased following the conversion to containers.

The (changed) composition of the city population and the selectivity of migration streams cannot, therefore, be explained examining it from a spatial angle. This was how 19th century Rotterdam and Antwerp, as international harbour cities, attracted a different sort of German than provincial Utrecht.⁴¹ The majority of the Cape Verdean community which has formed in the 'Maasstad' (Rotterdam) since 1960 is inextricably linked to the international harbour function of the city.⁴² Furthermore, the changed economic profile of a city has economic, demographic and cultural consequences for the intensive relationships it has with the surrounding region, or in the case of harbour cities the hinterland – depending on the specific function of the city in question. That begs the question, what were the diverse effects of the migration from city to countryside, in the case of close mutual relations?⁴³

Finally, medievalists in particular stress that cities indeed specialised in particular legal, educational, medical and economic services, but that the city and the countryside were very closely linked to each other.⁴⁴ Cities often showed agrarian characteristics – for a long time there was much ground in cities left undeveloped – and city and rural elites maintained close contacts.⁴⁵ But it is also emphasised that during the late Middle Ages, for example in Wales, the relationship between the countryside and the cities was very tense.⁴⁶ Attention to regional differences is, therefore, imperative.

Social structure

The call for social cohesion is increasingly loud today. Residents of poorer areas and neighbourhoods in particular rarely feel a mutual connection and consequently no longer feel responsible for their immediate environment. The consequences are as clear as day: vandalism, neglect of public space, feelings of insecurity and criminality. This situation of course impacts the pulling-power of cities, as illustrated by the increasingly biased population composition of present day Rotterdam. Of course, similar complaints are far from new.⁴⁷ In any case, this alarm-bell has been sounded countless times since the 18th century, always with the same message, namely that social cohesion was on the point of disappearing

³⁸ Kooij 1986; Lesger 1990; Stabel 1997; Pooley and Turnbull 1998; Nicholas 2003.

³⁹ Winter 2007.

⁴⁰ Davids & Jan Lucassen 1995; O'Brien 2001.

⁴¹ Lesger et al. 2002; Winter 2007.

⁴² Van de Laar 2007.

⁴³ Lee 2005, see also Tilly 1974.

⁴⁴ Clark 1995; Stabel 1997; Palliser 2006.

⁴⁵ Glennie & Whyte 2000.

⁴⁶ Reed 2000.

⁴⁷ See for example Lis and Soly 1992.

definitively.⁴⁸ This qualification does not mean that the social bonds between city dwellers have not been liable to changes. The institutions such as the ‘*gebuurten*’ (neighbourhoods) in early modern Leiden, for example, were considerably more active and more cohesive than the neighbourhood associations of today.⁴⁹ The same goes for other associations and organisations, whose pulling-power and cohesive function, for residents as well as newcomers, has always changed in time and space. The questions raised in this regard are: who gained access to the diverse social connections? What were the criteria for gaining access – such as class, religion, gender, ethnicity and age? And what consequences did this have on the pulling-power of cities? This goes not only for official organisations, but also for personal networks.

The place of migrants in such social structures became an important theme in American social history from the 1970s.⁵⁰ A fundamental criticism has been formulated of the macro-economic approach to seeing migration in terms of *push* and *pull*, and more attention is given to personal networks and institutions.⁵¹ Without these networks it is impossible to grasp the selectivity of migration streams. Crucial to this approach is the notion of *chain migration*. Studies of European migrants in American cities revealed significant clusters of migrants from the same village or region.⁵² The explanation for the existence of ethnically similar neighbourhoods of ‘urban villagers’ was sought in the exchange of information between migrants. This approach has gained supporters in Europe, among social scientists as well as historians of the early modern and modern periods.⁵³ This aside, migrants do not let their choices depend solely on whether they already know someone in the place of settlement, sometimes there is sufficient general information available about the possibilities in a particular area.⁵⁴

In line with the attention for ethnic networks, there are also many studies focused on migrant organisations, as indicated previously when discussing the role of churches. Even today, newcomers, also internal migrants, call upon diverse organisations that fulfil social, religious, political, cultural as well as economic functions in their lives.⁵⁵ This is generally limited to the first generation. One of the central questions remains: under what conditions do such connections function as a barrier or a bridge to integration in the wider civic society? An interesting point in this regard is to what degree newcomers, alongside their own networks and organisations, made use of and gained access to general social connections and to what degree they themselves aspired to this? The well-known American political scientist Putnam has argued, on the basis of large-scale research in American cities that in the short term, immigration and ethnic diversity have negative consequences for social cohesion and mutual ‘*trust*’. Moreover, migrants not only demonstrate little trust in the members and institutions of society, but also in the members of their own groups. Consequently, their degree of organisation is low and diversity leads in the short-, and possibly also the middle- to long-term, to a weakening of social bonds. Though this theory appears to be untenable in terms of today’s European cities,⁵⁶ it would be interesting to test it in the historical context of the Netherlands and Flanders.

⁴⁸ For the 20th century, see Blokland 2003; Lupi 2005; Lucassen 2007 and Lupi 2007.

⁴⁹ Walle 2005.

⁵⁰ Thernstrom 1973; for an historiographical overview, see Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen 1997.

⁵¹ Hoerder 2002.

⁵² Tilly 1990; Moch 2002.

⁵³ Moch 1983; Wegge 1998; Schrover 2002; Kuijpers 2005.

⁵⁴ Lesger, Lucassen and Schrover 2002; Lesger 2006; Chotkowski 2006; Winter 2007.

⁵⁵ Lucassen 2004; Vermeulen 2006; Suurenbroek & Schrover 2007.

⁵⁶ Gesthuizen and Scheepers 2009.

Culture

The cultural dimension of migration has been underexposed for a long time, but in the wake of growing interest in cultural history, this approach is gradually gaining ground. If we limit ourselves for the moment to the field of historical migration studies, then we see that attention was already paid to the image of metropolises such as Budapest, Paris and New York and the influence of this on the decisions migrants make to settle or go to work there.⁵⁷ Alongside this are studies which focus on the relationship between tourism and migration in civic cultural centres.⁵⁸ One explanation of the hesitation by historians to undertake research on this is, perhaps, that the influence of cultural factors is much harder to quantify and model.⁵⁹ Moreover, it is difficult to study cultural, social, geographic and economic dimensions separately. Even so, all sorts of substantial connections between them can be pointed out. In this way, the presence of the Ministry for Colonies, trading houses and international companies (Shell, BPM) in The Hague in the 19th and 20th century, meant that it was an attractive place to settle for colonial officials on leave and, after decolonisation, for returning Dutch Indonesians, because of the existence of a prominent cultural infrastructure.⁶⁰ Likewise, the commercial activities of pioneers from migrant circles can form a decisive factor for newcomers settling in a particular city.⁶¹ In recent times too, we are reminded that cities with a broad range of cultural activities (and a climate of tolerance) are attractive to higher educated migrants. However, we also know that such skilled newcomers in turn generate much work for unskilled migrants in the service sector.⁶²

In the last decades, there has been a clear interest in observing the cultural aspects of urban history. This goes for image, identity and marketing as much as for the changed patterns in the areas of consumption (shopping) and use of space (hanging around the streets).⁶³ Alongside this, there are studies into the way in which urban elites in England, France and Scotland, from the 17th to the 20th century, used museums as a way of distinguishing themselves from other social classes and in this way guaranteed their exclusive identity.⁶⁴ Closely related to this are studies on the role of Maecenas's (patrons of the arts) as the motor behind the consumption of culture and science.⁶⁵ Finally, the interest in so called 'civic religion' should be pointed out, or at least the way in which civic authorities, corporations and residents use their city's statues, rituals and festivals – and continually invent new ones – as a way of emphasising and propagating their (unique) identity. A documented example is the Italian Siena from the high Middle Ages until way into the 20th century.⁶⁶

Physical space

The apparently recent interest in architecture, city planning and the underlying patterns of cities, also have clear institutional aspects. It was, as we know, often administrators who took the initiatives at a local as well as at a central level.⁶⁷ One of the best known historical examples is that of the prefect of the Seine département, George-Eugène Haussmann, who was given the task by Napoleon III to level large parts of the Middle Age heart of Paris and to

⁵⁷ See the volume *Distant Magnets* by Hoerder & Rössler 1993.

⁵⁸ Levenstein 1998; Green 2002.

⁵⁹ For an attempt see Friedman 2007.

⁶⁰ Willems 2001 and Willems 2008.

⁶¹ Cottaar 1998.

⁶² See Florida 2001; and Sassen 1991.

⁶³ See respectively Ellis 2003; Gyáni 2004; Elliot 2005; Larkham & Lilley 2003; Arnold 2000 and Furnée 2002.

⁶⁴ Prior 2002.

⁶⁵ Galinou 2004; O'Brien 2001.

⁶⁶ Parsons 2004: xvi.-xx

⁶⁷ Taverne 1978; Van der Cammen & De Klerk 2003.

replace it with a modern city design.⁶⁸ Ironically, this inheritance has felt like a suffocating corset for current French politicians and city architects; President Sarkozy has even offered a prize to stimulate a new vision and design for the city. Another example is the plan by Philip II in the second half of the 16th century to model Madrid on his monarchical desires. The construction of the Plaza Mayor created a centre from a Renaissancistic design with straight lines and uniform building, with the dual goal of order (*policia*) and decoration (*ornato*).⁶⁹ The interest in the relationship between civic space and civic identity is clearly increasing, such as in a study of Middle Age Ghent, in which the ritual and symbolic functions of civic spaces (such as squares) for authorities is pointed out.⁷⁰ These studies make it, apart from anything else, clear that the border between the cultural and the dimensions of physical space are sometime blurred.

That architecture can significantly influence the social lives of city dwellers, and thereby the nature of cities, is apparent from the urbanisation of the cloister life in early modern Europe and the consequences for the limited use of space by nuns.⁷¹ In modern times there have also been many studies which put central the relationship between planning and the changing civic character, such as the rise of ‘*beach resorts*’ in England.⁷² Finally we point to the relationship between city planning and environmental history. For example, how the fight against disease in the 19th century had a big influence on the organisation of civic space, by among other things, the construction of parks and the rise of zones which foster the segregation between social classes.⁷³

Population dynamics and civic institutions

When we look more closely at the aforementioned angles and concepts, the relative lack of theme is noticeable. Where it does occur, it seems that for most researchers – and certainly historians – cities are interchangeable.⁷⁴ Civic institutions too are often studied in relative isolation and seldom in relation to the pulling-power of cities and the nature of population dynamics. This volume will, emphatically, give attention to this. The following questions function as the main thread:

- 1) How did the six distinguished institutional dimensions relate to each other (in the period under study and in geographical space) and to what extent did they have an independent influence on the population dynamic?
- 2) To what extent was the pulling-power of a city determined by economic developments and were cultural and physical space developments dependent on this? Or was the relationship the other way around and are economic developments more dependent on cultural configurations?
- 3) To what extent were economic developments dependent on political configurations and economic institutions?
- 4) To what extent should the Middle Ages and the early modern period be seen as one period when it comes to civic developments?
- 5) To what extent could cities defend themselves against structural *longe durée* shifts in the economic conjuncture?

⁶⁸ The American anthropologist Scott (1998) has characterised this as an example of a ‘high modernist’ ideology.

⁶⁹ See Escobar 2003.

⁷⁰ See for example the volume *Shaping Urban Identity*, red. Boone & Stabel 2000; Boone 2002.

⁷¹ See Hills 2004, in which they show how, in the 16th and 17th centuries, Naples became a city of cloisters and churches under the influence of the Spanish.

⁷² Yates 2002; Hassan 2003.

⁷³ Isenberg 2005.

⁷⁴ See Kooij and Van de Laar 2000.

- 6) To what extent was the political playing field of cities determined by sovereign and later national power politics?
- 7) To what extent can we talk of a typical Dutch-Flemish pattern in terms of the relationship between institutions and the pulling-power of cities and what role did the relative civic autonomy play in this?
- 8) What influence did the specific function and ad hoc structure of cities have on the working of diverse institutions? Were economic institutions, for example, more important for industrial centres than for administrative centres?
- 9) Which geographical differences in the Low Countries can we point to when talking about the nature of those institutions that have been distinguished?
- 10) How did the influence of civic institutions on population dynamics change over time and how can they be explained?
- 11) In the concluding chapter of the volume the balance sheet will be drawn for the relationship between population dynamic and civic institutions in the period from 1200 to 2000. Particular attention will be given to the relative weight of the six distinguished dimensions. That also counts for the potential differences between the three periods of time being examined, so the Middle Ages, the early modern and the modern periods. The aim is to gain insight into factors which determine the pulling-power of cities, but also the relations between cities and the surrounding countryside – and the role of civic networks.

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