INEQUALITY AND THE CITY IN THE LOW COUNTRIES (1200-2020)

SEUH

STUDIES IN EUROPEAN URBAN HISTORY (1100-1800)

VOLUME 50

Series Editors
Marc Boone
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Ghent University

Inequality and the City in the Low Countries (1200-2020)

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BREPOLS

Cover illustration: J. P. Filedt Kok, 'Master of Alkmaar, *Panel of a Polyptych with the Seven Works of Charity: Feeding the Hungry*, 1504', in J. P. Filedt Kok (ed.), *Early Netherlandish Paintings*, online coll. cat. Amsterdam 2009: hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.362369 (accessed 6 January 2020).

D/2020/0095/122
ISBN 978-2-503-58868-1
eISBN 978-2-503-58869-8
DOI 10.1484/M.SEUH-EB.5.119604

ISSN 1780-3241
eISSN 2294-8368

Printed on acid-free paper.

In memory of Raymond van Uytven (1933-2018), founder of the Urban History Workshop at the University of Antwerp

Contents

Part III
Politics of Inequality

Part IV
Shocks, Crises and Inequality

Part V
Cultural and Consumer Dynamics of Inequality

Part VI
Methodological, Theoretical and Contemporary Perspectives

MARGO DE KOSTER AND ANTOON VRINTS

The New Police as Agents of Class Control?

Urban Policing and its Socio-Geographical Focus in Nineteenth-Century Antwerp

Introduction

In the 1970s left-wing historians and social scientists profoundly renewed the study of social control and policing. This – welcome – paradigm shift came with the powerful and enduring narrative that the modern police, ever since their creation in the nineteenth century, simply served as a lever of urban discipline and to protect the interests of the ruling classes (Chambliss 1975, 165-168; Crowther 2000, 39-40). The police were thus portrayed as an elite device to preserve the social status quo; to justify and reproduce socio-economic inequality. According to this narrative, in the course of the nineteenth century the police forces of large European cities acquired unprecedented powers to intervene in the heart of working-class communities and to identify, discipline and exclude the 'dangerous classes' (Harring 1983, 198). Marxist police histories portrayed the 'new' police as 'blue locusts' (Storch & Engels 1975, 84), rapidly invading urban territory, and as 'domestic missionaries' (Storch 1976, 481), successfully imposing bourgeois values upon the working class. According to this view, the modern police were also a fundamentally 'new' device that addressed new needs for law enforcement and introduced new forms of social control. This has led many scholars to conclude that the second half of the nineteenth century marked a watershed in social control and policing, the start of the 'policed society' (Silver 1967, 8) and the 'policeman-state' (Gatrell 1992, 257-260), characterised by ever widening nets of formal social control (Cohen 1985) and a focus on the policing of class (Garland 2002).

In the rapidly expanding urban centres in Europe, important investments in public police personnel and resources indeed resulted in highly increased police presence and activity towards the end of the nineteenth century (Emsley 2004, 194). Furthermore, in the context of explosive urban growth and a growing need for order on the part of local elites, a new discourse emerged about the so-called 'dangerous classes', which would become the main targets of the bourgeois civilising offensive of the late nineteenth century. Urban authorities and the bourgeoisie began to strive for a more orderly, hygienic and safe urban environment. In addition to urban embellishment through the creation of public parks and squares, 'respectable' neighbourhoods with lawful entertainments were delineated and separated from the densely populated working-class neighbourhoods, which were designated as breeding grounds for vice and crime. Moreover, urban middle groups increasingly contrasted their 'refined' manners and frugal and orderly life with what they considered the uncivilised and 'immoral' behaviour and lifestyle of the working class.

Margo De Koster and Antoon Vrints • Universiteit Gent

Inequality and the City in the Low Countries (1200-2020), ed. by Bruno Blondé, Sam Geens, Hilde Greefs, Wouter Ryckbosch, Tim Soens & Peter Stabel, SEUH 50 (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 343-356.

 DOI 10.1484/M.SEUH-EB.5.120454

In the 1840s, a new word appeared in the Brockhaus Real-Enzyklopädie that expressed these official fears for the 'problematic' lifestyle of the ever-growing army of impoverished social groups: Pauperismus (Emsley 2007, 140-141). The 'pauper' was identified primarily with those groups that flocked into the cities and came to constitute the new industrial working class.

The term 'dangerous classes' came into vogue with the work by Parisian police officer Honoré Frégier, 'Des classes dangereuses dans la population dans les grandes villes et des moyens de les rendre meilleures', published in 1840, and was inextricably linked with the urban context (Frégier 1840, 7). These lower strata of morally depraved, idle, lazy, licentious, violent and criminal tramps and paupers would henceforth constitute the core of definitions of social problems in Europe, and the alarmed bourgeoisie increasingly associated them with the danger of social and political unrest (Philips 2003, 79-107). This problematising perception of the city and its 'dangerous classes' was also present in the work of nineteenth-century criminologists. The urban condition and the effects of urbanisation soon appeared as important criminogenic factors in early studies on the causes of crime (Becker 2002; Musumeci 2018). Against this background, a sociological school developed in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, under the influence of Durkheim and Tarde in particular. These studies tried to reveal the interrelationships between urbanisation, class and criminal behaviour through extensive observation and description of the urban 'underclass', as the journalist Henry Mayhew did in 1862 for the London "dangerous classes, the idle, the profligate, and the criminal" (Mayhew & Binny 1862, iii).

Although official fears and discourses about the 'dangerous classes' undeniably soared and the capacity of urban police forces greatly expanded towards the end of the nineteenth century, several scholars have recently called for closer scrutiny to add nuance to and challenge the traditional narrative about the modern police as a bourgeois instrument of class control. First, early modern police historians began to question the chronology and the supposed novelty of the coming of the modern police. They have demonstrated that in Paris, London, Geneva, Berlin, Saint Petersburg and many other European cities – especially in the German regions where '*Polizeiwissenschaft*' developed – significant police growth and modernisation had already occurred in the final decades of the eighteenth century (Denys 2010; Vidoni 2011; Milliot 2006; Cicchini 2012; Beattie 2012; Barrie 2008). Moreover, these studies suggest that there was no clear or distinct break between early modern and modern policing concerns and strategies. Eighteenth-century urban authorities and the upper classes in general were also apprehensive of the movements of the lower orders and charged their powerful police forces not only with tasks of political policing, but also with order maintenance in 'rookeries' and surveillance of 'dangerous groups'. In Naples during the 1780s the official categories of dangerous individuals began with 'the idle, vagabonds, and adventurers' (*oziosi, vagabondi, avventurieri*) (Alessi 1992, 7). In his work on crime, police and penal policy in Europe, Clive Emsley confirms that next to the Gauner inhabiting the urban underworld, early modern perceptions of the crime problem focused on the lower orders of society and the mobile groups of 'wandering poor' in particular (Emsley 2007, 42-43).

Second, new research has demonstrated that class was only one of many interrelated factors shaping police attention and strategies on the ground. As a result of organisational, legal and political mechanisms, the police's need for public support and the complex reality of

everyday police work, European police forces all operated under similar crucial constraints. These constraints were at least as important in shaping their practice – and their authority – as were the unprecedented powers they acquired during this same time (Emsley 2000). Consequently, a high level of selectivity entered the everyday operations of the police, a blind eye being turned to certain types of criminal behaviour deemed not to challenge the social order. Overall, practical policing concerned crime management, not elimination, for the police required minimum compliance even from lower classes in order to operate, and in certain areas they faced a hostile public until well into the twentieth century (Deluermoz 2012; De Koster, Deruytter & Vrints 2018; Vrints 2019). As has been demonstrated for nineteenth-century London, Paris, Antwerp and Milan, for example, the police pursued a policy of 'containment', keeping crime and disorder within bounds in a well-policed area. They did not simply target the lower classes but literally patrolled the boundary between respectability and disreputability; for most arrests were not made in the 'rookeries' that cradled the 'dangerous classes', but at the margins between those areas and their more respectable neighbours (Davis 1991, 16-17; De Koster 2008, 360-362; Mori 2016, 282).

Third, recent work has shown that the 'new' police were not simply an instrument of the ruling classes but were also used by the populations under their control to serve their own ends and interests. This has served as a useful corrective to images of the police as a 'monolithic' instrument of coercion, which was external to local society. Yet the analytical pendulum has now swung to the other extreme. Some recent accounts are inclined to overstate the weaknesses of urban police forces and, in highlighting processes of mutual accommodation and reciprocity, to play down the conflictual logic that governed the relationship between the police and the urban working classes. Yet, as Churchill and De Koster, Deruytter and Vrints, for example, have demonstrated for nineteenth- century British and Belgian cities, everyday relations between the police and the poor were marked by persistent antagonism and friction (Churchill 2017; De Koster, Deruytter & Vrints 2018, 158-159).

In sum, on the one hand, recent work on nineteenth- century urban policing challenges the narrative of the police as agents of class control while, on the other, it suggests that class remains an important category for the analysis of day-to-day police practices. Unfortunately, except for Paris, London and several port cities (Davis 1991; Slater 2012; Churchill 2017; De Koster 2008; Conchon, Montel & Regnard 2018), studies that attempt to reconstruct daily activities and police-public interactions drawing on research of archival police records are still relatively scarce. This chapter hopes to bring new insights to this field and discussion by examining the socio-geographical focus and the social interactions that characterised day-to-day police operations in the city of Antwerp. We aim to demonstrate that police activity was undeniably shaped by class dynamics, and thereby helped to reproduce unequal power relations, yet this was done in more complex ways and by more diverse agents and interests than is often suggested.

Antwerp as test case: central approaches, questions and sources

In order to deepen our understanding of class dynamics in the policing of nineteenth-century cities, this article focuses on the Belgian city of Antwerp. Antwerp is a particularly good test

case in this respect, since it was a very rapidly expanding port city – whose population more than tripled between 1847 and 1900 (86,000 to 300,000) – that evolved from being lightly to rather heavily policed during this period. The Antwerp police force grew exponentially from only 24 policemen in 1847 to 634 men in 1900. As a result, police density intensified from only one police officer for every 3,500 inhabitants in 1847 to one per 473 inhabitants in 1900, turning it into one of the most strongly policed European cities at the time. The number of offences registered by the Antwerp police (per 1,000 inhabitants) increased fivefold in the same period, suggesting that the police's role developed significantly in the second half of the nineteenth century. As a port city, Antwerp was confronted with distinct challenges and problems of crime and disorder such as concentrations of a rather 'rough' clientele in vice districts (brothels and bars), large flows of people and goods to be monitored and secured, and numerous incidences of dockside theft or destruction of merchandise. This of course shaped specific police concerns, forms of control and police-public relations, yet these were mainly concentrated in the harbour area and its immediate surroundings. In the rest of the city, police activities mainly concerned the usual street and neighbourhood policing, with mediation in fights and conflicts, arrests of drunks, prostitutes, vagrants and 'disorderly' persons, and a broad range of tasks of administrative control. Overall, everyday policing in the city of Antwerp was characterised by similar patterns of urban policing to those observed in other nineteenth-century European cities (De Koster, Deruytter & Vrints 2017).

We adopt a layered approach to reconstructing the class dynamics of police activity. To begin with, we use the spatial dimensions of police-public interactions as an indicator for social class. After all, there was socio-geographic segregation in Antwerp just like in many other nineteenth-century cities. The Antwerp police districts had different social profiles, and also within the districts' borders there were differences between the inhabitants of broader avenues, who were generally more well-to-do, and those living in smaller alleys and slums. When certain social groups in specific neighbourhoods became the subject of intensified police control, this can be observed in terms of space. To what extent were (shifting) police priorities in terms of law enforcement, crime fighting and municipal regulations enforcement translated into geographically differentiated practices on the ground? Were certain neighbourhoods or streets targeted or avoided altogether because of their social profile (hotspots versus no-go areas)? Conversely, did residents of certain streets or neighbourhoods call upon the police more frequently than others? We examine the professional backgrounds of those who came into contact with the police. Which social groups were possibly targeted by the police? Did all social groups resort to the police with comparable frequency? Examining these issues from a historical perspective, we ask whether the socio-spatial pattern of everyday police activity shifted as the Antwerp police apparatus expanded towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Such an inquiry is possible because the city police archives in Antwerp have been better preserved than elsewhere in the Low Countries and Europe. For this contribution we use published police statistics as well as archival records at the level of the district police station. The police statistics are published in the annual report of the City of Antwerp and allow for drawing the main contours and evolutions of police activity in the city as a whole. In order also to cast a glance at the grassroots level, we analysed the police reports (registers of *procès-verbaux*) of the second police district for the years 1825 (n=130, all)

and 1890 (n=126, randomised sample of one in 20). The police reports or *procès-verbaux* result from various types of interaction between the police and the public. For one, they attest to the wish of the governmental authorities to control urban space by means of law enforcement, crime fighting and the enforcement of municipal regulations. They are also very informative about how the population uses the police. They comprise many reports on offences (violence, defamation and theft) which are most often reported by the population.

We opted for the second police district because its social heterogeneity can be seen as a sort of microcosm for the entire city. In the nineteenth century this district comprised the north-easterly part of the old town between the Oude Leeuwenrui in the north and the Lange Nieuwstraat in the south and expanded to the east in the course of the century as the city grew to incorporate the neighbourhood between the Sint-Jansplein and the De Coninckplein. As a result, the district's area increased by one third after the demolition of the city walls in 1860. There were streets with a pronounced bourgeois profile such as those in the vicinity of the Keizerstraat. A number of streets and corridors in the northern half of the district had a predominantly working-class population, while in the southern half the workers were concentrated in the so-called Kattenkwartier (Cat Quarter), one of the city's biggest slums. There was a nightlife area round the De Coninckplein with many cafes and dance halls. We analysed the places of residence and the occupations of the offenders and the complainants (using the HISCLASS classification: see Mandemakers et al. 2018) who appeared in the registers of the police of the second district in order to determine the social profile of the 'targets' and the 'clients' of the police.

Police activity in the entire city

The published police statistics make it possible to gauge certain trends across time for the city of Antwerp as a whole. One glance at the officially registered offences is enough to add nuance to the image of the police imposing top-down repression upon the population. Police prosecution of all sorts of violations (ranging from public drunkenness to stray dogs) increased greatly towards the end of the nineteenth century yet shifted rapidly from one category of offences to another. This mirrors the extent to which policy makers managed to impose their rapidly changing priorities on the police and the population. The more gradual but sustainable increase in the number of registered cases of theft and violence, however, points to an equally important phenomenon, namely that large sections of the population started to call on the police as part of their own strategies of conflict settlement. Indeed, no less than 90 per cent of police reports on theft or violence resulted from a complaint lodged by citizens. A double reality therefore lurks behind the development of police statistics. Greater control was indeed exerted over the population, but that same population also turned to the police much more frequently to serve its own purposes (De Koster, Deruytter & Vrints 2017). Reducing the coming of the new police entirely to a top-down regulating offensive is therefore an oversimplification.

We have only the number of prosecutions by the police court per police district to help us to differentiate spatially at city level. These police courts were the lowest courts and were responsible for dealing with the majority of *procès-verbaux* produced by the police. The close connection between the police and the police court is illustrated by the fact that

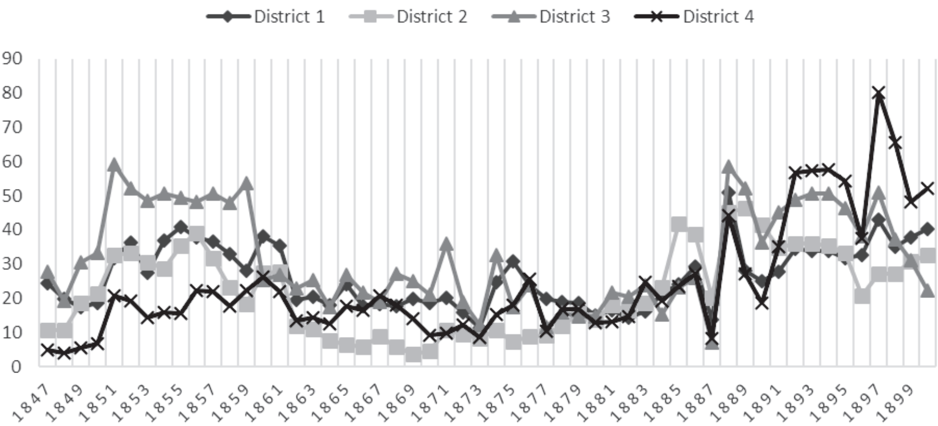

Figure 1. Prosecutions before the police court per 1,000 inhabitants in four inner districts of the city of Antwerp, 1847-1900

Source: Verslag over het bestuur en den zakentoestand der Stad Antwerpen (annual report of the city of Antwerp). Antwerp, years 1847-1900.

the police commissioner of the district acted as the crown prosecution service. Was the intensity of prosecution by the police court the same throughout the entire city? To keep the scale of the analysis constant, we focus on the four districts in the old city centre. The boundaries of these districts have remained relatively constant (unlike the districts extra muros) and their social profile is relatively well-known. Districts 3 and 4 can be considered as rather homogeneous. District 3 comprised the key points of bourgeois sociability in the Antwerp city centre and was inhabited by the higher social groups. District 4, on the other hand, had a predominantly poor working-class population. Districts 1 and 2 were more heterogeneous: they comprised both richer and poorer neighbourhoods.

If we now look at the intensity per district and per 1,000 inhabitants of prosecutions before the Antwerp police court (Figure 1), a striking counter-intuitive pattern comes to the fore. The spatial focus of the activities of the Antwerp police court shifts over time. On the one hand, police prosecutions up to 1870 were roughly the most common in the richest, third district. On the other hand, police prosecutions were much lower in the poorest fourth district up to 1860. After a period of convergence between the districts, at the end of the century prosecutions before the Antwerp police court turned out to be the most intense precisely in the fourth and predominantly working-class district (although it started to attract more bourgeois households after the construction of a new avenue to the posh South district). In other words, whereas the prosecution activity was more intense in the bourgeois neighbourhoods than in the neighbourhoods of the alleged 'dangerous classes' during the darkest days of proletarianisation, this ratio was reversed during the expansion phase of the Antwerp police in the late nineteenth century.

Given that the activity of the police court is closely connected with the action of the district police on the beat, a two-fold hypothesis emerges. First, it seems that in expanding, the police focused primarily on controlling the better neighbourhoods, and that they developed more comprehensive regulating ambitions in the poor neighbourhoods

only in a second stage. It very much looks as if the police would 'sweep' the bourgeois neighbourhoods first, while leaving the poorer neighbourhoods relatively untouched at the outset. The ambition to regulate the behaviours of broader layers of the Antwerp population apparently arose only late in the nineteenth century. The more comprehensive regulatory ambitions during this period may be linked to the gradual democratisation of voting rights. If the entire population was to have some say in government, then the people had to behave as the bourgeoisie did. Secondly, it seems that far into the nineteenth century, the people living in the better-off neighbourhoods were more inclined to call on the police in order to resolve their own conflicts than their counterparts in the poorer neighbourhoods. They acted far earlier as complainants or as informers about incidents in the neighbourhood, because the police had already been present in their well-to-do neighbourhoods for quite some time. The socially heterogenous second district of the city of Antwerp therefore constitutes an ideal testing ground for the tenability of our two-fold hypothesis.

Into the district

A glance at district level proves most insightful. As will be discussed below, the nature of police activities changed radically between 1825 and 1890. This significant shift in type of activities in the course of the nineteenth century seems to be reflected in spatial terms as well. In other words, not only did the police turn to doing other things over the years, they also focused their activities on neighbourhoods and social groups with another socio-economic profile. An exploratory analysis of the police reports of the second district evidently seems to confirm the hypotheses which we formulated at city level.

In order to detect long-term trends, we categorised the huge number of denominations of offences registered by the second district police, grouping them into types of offences (see Table 1). These types fall into three major categories: administrative control (administrative duties and economic life); crimes (theft and violence); and public hygiene and public order offences (public hygiene, traffic, bars, prostitution, etc.).

Table 1 on the nature of police activities in Antwerp's second district clearly shows that police tasks of predominantly economic and administrative regulation in 1825 shifted to various forms of public order maintenance and behaviour regulation in 1890. In 1825 the police were primarily concerned with supervising economic activity (issuing licences of all kinds, checking hygiene regulations for trade and compliance with market regulations) and the addresses of the population (verification of registration in the population register), just as had been the case during the Ancien Régime. By 1890, the Antwerp police had a far broader task package with clearly more comprehensive behaviour regulating ambitions; they went after alcoholism and unlawful frequenting of bars and prostitution. The categories of public order and hygiene offences were 'inflated' considerably as new sorts of public order offences and forms of 'unruly behaviour' were added to the Antwerp police ordinances (local by-laws).

This substantive shift ran parallel to equally sweeping socio-geographic changes. As Figure 2 indicates, the spatial focus of police attention, measured on the streets to which the police report belonged, shifted significantly. In 1825, police activity was concentrated

Table 1. Police activity in Antwerp 2nd district: categories of offences registered in 1825 and 1890

	1825		1890	
administrative duties	30	23%	6	4%
economic life	21	16%	14	10%
theft and damage	14	11%	19	14%
physical violence	11	8%	7	5%
verbal violence	2	2%	7	5%
public hygiene	9	7%	2	1%
traffic	7	5%	3	2%
public drunkenness	0	0%	16	11%
pubs	3	2%	13	9%
prostitution	1	1%	9	6%
diverse public order offences	11	8%	12	9%
other offences	24	18%	32	23%
total offences registered	133	100%	140	100%

Source: Antwerp City Archives (Felixarchief), Police Fund, 2nd district, police reports (processen-verbaal), year 1825, 450#62; year 1890, MA#24557-24561

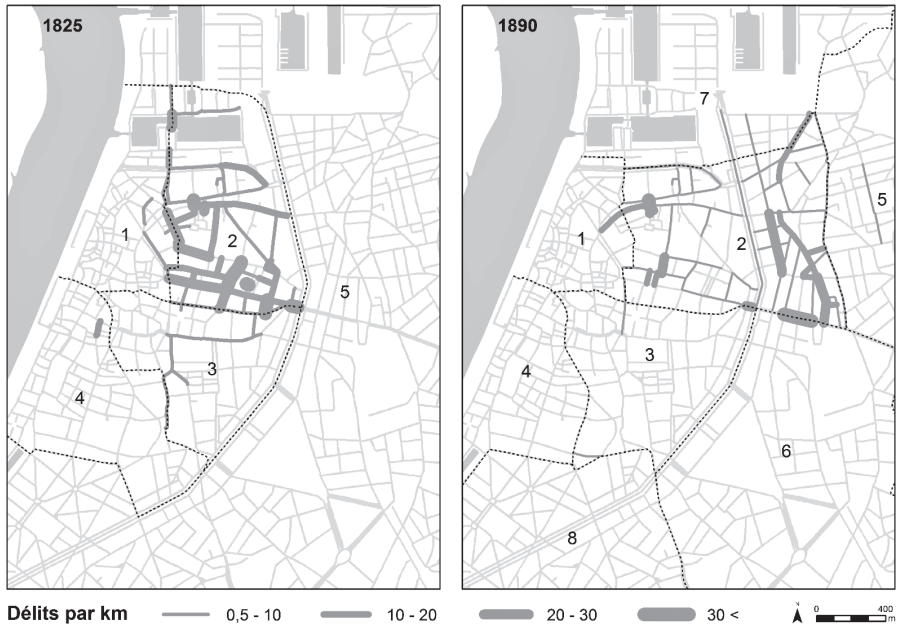

Figure 2. Offences registered by Antwerp 2nd district police per km (per street) in 1825 and 1890

Source: Antwerp City Archives (Felixarchief), Police Fund, 2nd district, police reports (processen-verbaal), year 1825, 450#62; year 1890, MA#24557-24561

Table 2. Accused (arrested by or reported to the police): professions (HISCLASS)

	1825	1890		1825	1890
non-manual	52%	24%	*higher skilled*	29%	1%
			medium skilled	13%	20%
			lower skilled	11%	2%
manual	48%	76%	*medium & higher skilled*	26%	8%
			lower skilled	12%	9%
			unskilled	10%	60%
professions known	119	89			

Source: Antwerp City Archives (Felixarchief), Police Fund, 2nd district, police reports (processen-verbaal), year 1825, 450#62; year 1890, MA#24557-24561

primarily on the better neighbourhood round the Keizerstraat. In 1890, the focus was clearly round the Sint-Jans and De Coninckplein, a (new) neighbourhood outside the old city walls characterised by the presence of poorer social groups, including many newcomers, but above all by a very busy nightlife and prostitution. Consistent with this shift from richer to poorer districts, there was also a proletarianisation of the public against whom the police acted. In 1825, those who came into negative contact with the police in the port city generally belonged to the middle and even top layers of Antwerp society (see Table 2). No fewer than 30 per cent of the accused and arrested stemmed from the highly skilled commercial and wealthy elites of Antwerp (merchants, entrepreneurs, people of independent means, brokers, army officers, pharmacists, members of the nobility, etc.). The preponderance of the better-off segments of the population was to be seen even among occupations that entailed manual labour. Most people accused or arrested by the police in 1825 were skilled craftsmen who, unlike those in the lower manual occupations, were often self-employed, had certain assets and managed their own workforce. The image of merchants and craftsmen squares with that of the trade-oriented port city which had retained many characteristics of the Ancien Régime as industrialisation had been delayed until the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Remarkably, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the police thus concentrated not on the lower classes but on the middle classes and even the elites. This observation is consistent with the fact that the police focused primarily on regulating economic life. Furthermore, when it came to the enforcement of administrative obligations, the focus was clearly on the property-owning class. The police kept watch on whether employers and homeowners registered their (domestic) staff or tenants correctly in the population registers. The impoverished inhabitants of the city, many of whom were concentrated in the slums of the socially heterogeneous second district, were left completely out of the picture of this early nineteenth-century police. During this period, the police acted as inspector, standard compliance officer and mediator on behalf of the city council, geared to and for the well-to-do classes, while the lower and certainly lowest classes lay largely beyond their focus. In the early nineteenth century, the Antwerp police was there first and foremost to facilitate economic life in the trading city: the regulation of broader behaviours was clearly not part of their remit.

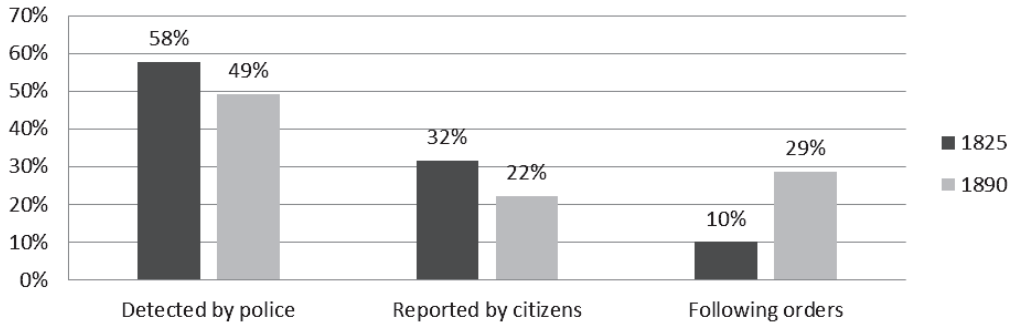

Figure 3. Origin of the police reports (*procès-verbaux*) in 1825 and 1890

Source: Antwerp City Archives (Felixarchief), Police Fund, 2nd district, police reports (processen-verbaal), year 1825, 450#62; year 1890, MA#24557-24561

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the focus of the Antwerp police appears to have shifted markedly to other social groups in urban society (see Table 2). The public targeted by the police underwent a striking proletarianisation, which was initially reflected in a far greater number of accused who earned their daily bread through manual labour. Secondly, an important shift from highly skilled to less skilled workers took place in various sectors. The elites in the early nineteenth century trading city disappeared off the police radar (from 29 to 1 per cent) and the focus was clearly placed on the working class and unskilled labourers in particular (from 10 to as much as 60 per cent). The above-discussed shift of police tasks to the maintenance of public order and the regulation of popular leisure activities went hand in hand with increased control over and criminalisation of the lower classes. The social shift was also reflected spatially. Whereas at the beginning of the century the accused registered by the Antwerp police of the second district lived predominantly in the richer streets in the heart of the district, in 1890 they were to be found in the more recent and more working-class areas outside the old city centre.

When we look at the origin of the police reports in Figure 3, the picture of the police as an unequivocal, top-down control mechanism of the ruling classes is not confirmed at district level either. A substantial number of the police reports were drawn up as a result of complaints. In such cases, the initiative for intervention did not stem from the police themselves, but from the population. This observation is in line with recent historical research where it is stressed that a significant part of police work is reactive. However, contrary to what might be expected, the proportion of cases reported by citizens in police reports did not increase. This can be attributed to the increase in so-called 'duties fulfilled following orders', reports on actions (such as collecting witness statements or conducting an extra investigation) that the police carried out by order of higher authorities (usually the public prosecutor's office). However, the absolute numbers of complaints by citizens did increase, and did so at a much faster pace than the population during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Can we now also say something about the social background of the users of the police (Table 3)? Although the number of complainants with a known occupation is relatively limited, a clear pattern emerges. In 1825, it was predominantly the better-off who called

Table 3. Complainants: professions (HISCLASS)

	1825	1890		1825	1890
non-manual	45%	45%	*higher skilled*	25%	21%
			medium skilled	20%	21%
			lower skilled	0	3%
manual	55%	55%	*medium & higher skilled*	35%	10%
			lower skilled	5%	10%
			unskilled	15%	34%
professions known	20	29			

Source: Antwerp City Archives (Felixarchief), Police Fund, 2nd district, police reports (processen-verbaal), year 1825, 450#62; year 1890, MA#24557-24561

upon the police. They were first and foremost wholesalers and retailers and self-employed craftsmen, as had been the case in the Ancien Régime. The fact that it was primarily the property-owning class that made use of the police strengthens the impression that the police's primary role was in regulating economic life. In 1890, the proportion of the elites and middle groups among the non-manual professions continued to be high, but the profile of the complainants with a background of manual work shifted significantly. The proportion of unskilled workers increased substantially, and that of skilled craftsmen decreased correspondingly. Is this phenomenon a reflection of the contraction of the group of self-employed craftsmen as a result of the Industrial Revolution? Is this an indication that the bottom social groups also proceeded cautiously to involve the police in their strategies of conflict settlement?

Overall, this process of instrumentalisation and appropriation of the police by the lower classes appears to have started after something of a delay. The proportion of the higher and middle classes among complainants remained high towards the end of the nineteenth century. The proletarianisation of the profiles of the complainants did not proceed apace with the rate of those accused and arrested by the police. The increasing intervention by the police in the lives of the lower classes and the poorer streets was not immediately reflected in a generalised popularised use of the police, as would be the case in Antwerp some 30 years later (Vrints 2019). The focus of police control over the poorer segments of the Antwerp population, combined with the relatively slow appropriation of the police by the lower social groups, suggests that in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the police remained first and foremost a regulating body at the service of the better-off layers of the population.

Conclusion

The Antwerp police took on the role of 'domestic missionary' towards the end of the nineteenth century by executing many more tasks pertaining to public order maintenance and the regulation of vice (public drunkenness, pubs, prostitution) that directly impinged upon the lives and sociability of the working class, and by intervening more often in the

heart of working-class neighbourhoods. Police activity in Antwerp was thus undeniably shaped by class dynamics, yet in much more complex ways than is often suggested. In terms of geographical focus, the police did not solely, nor continuously, concentrate their attention on the poorer city areas and their working-class inhabitants, but rather developed different strategies for regulating the urban territory and its myriad of social groups. In the beginning of the nineteenth century the Antwerp force still functioned like an Ancien Régime police body, regulating economic life and mediating conflicts between the better-off. By the end of the century their enforcement strategies reflected much broader regulatory ambitions. A common feature of these strategies was that they distinguished the 'respectable' from the 'rough'. Within working-class communities, discretionary law enforcement specifically targeted the lower orders of the working class – the 'dangerous classes' of the most disadvantaged and deprived. Our evidence for Antwerp suggests that towards the end of the nineteenth century police targets were not to be found among the respectable middle and working classes but among the disreputable sections of the so-called '*Lumpenproletariat*' of unskilled casual labourers and the unemployed. When dealing with the more respectable sections of the working class, on the other hand, the police were willing to turn a blind eye to minor offences in exchange for cooperation with witness statements and criminal investigations. Or, as Cohen pointed out in 1979, 'in the new heartlands of the working class city [the statutory norms] were increasingly used only as an emergency measure … a system of informal, tacitly negotiated and particularist definitions of public order were evolved which accommodated certain working-class usages of social space and time and outlawed others' (Cohen 1979, 31).

Yet everyday urban policing involved much more than surveillance and disciplining of the 'dangerous' lower strata only. Middle classes and the bourgeoisie equally came into contact with the Antwerp police on a regular basis: both in 1825 and in 1890, the police of the Antwerp second district remained an instrument for conflict settlement between the more well-to-do citizens. Further, our evidence suggests that the poorer layers of the population in Antwerp – even the most disadvantaged ones – were not just 'targets' of police operations, but increasingly used the police for their own ends, thereby mobilising these 'domestic missionaries' in significantly different ways from those the authorities had initially planned.

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