Civic Duty

Civic Duty:
Public Services in the Early Modern
Low Countries

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SCHOLARS**

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PREFACE

The image on the front cover of this book – painted in 1665 by Jan Steen – has been an object of debate among historians and art historians in recent decades. Although the original title was unknown, the painting was long referred to as 'The burgomaster of Delft and his daughter'. In 1991 Simon Schama used the image for his (reprinted) book on Dutch early modern culture because for him it represented the embarrassment of the rich urban elites in the Dutch Republic. In 2006, the art historian Frans Grijzenhout and the historian Niek van der Sas discovered the true identity of the man and his daughter: they were Adolf Croeser (c.1612-1668) – a citizen (burgher) and grain merchant of Delft – and his 13-year old daughter Catharina (1642-1690).[1] Croeser and his daughter are portrayed in front of their house, situated in the centre of the city and near the Old Church (Oude Kerk). The man and his daughter are in the company of a poor-looking older woman and a child, who presumably are beggars. The portrait represents Adolf Croeser as an honourable, self-conscious and dutiful citizen of Delft who fulfils his civic duty by giving to the poor in his home town. The new interpretation of the image reflects the core of this book: the notion of civic duty as a crucial element in the provision and funding of community services in the early modern period.

This study presents the results of the research project 'Civil Services and Urban Communities 1500-1800' which was funded by the Dutch Scientific Organization (NWO). The NWO VIDI grant permitted me to undertake (between 2005 and 2010) a large research project on the development and working of public facilities in the early modern Low Countries. From earlier research on early modern urban finances and judicial institutions, I learned that early modern cities provided a range of services to their inhabitants, and I was intrigued by the ways in which community facilities were organized and funded. I found that in the early modern period towns took the responsibility for many facilities that we would now define as 'public services', such as social security, schooling, and the maintenance of public buildings. My fascination for the significant role of urban corporations, such as craft guilds and neighbourhood

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[1] Frans Grijzenhout and Niek van Sas, *The burgher of Delft: een schilderij van Jan Steen* (Amsterdam, 2006).

organizations, and of many individual citizens, in the provision of community facilities, formed the starting point of study.

The study represents my own research, but also examinations by various scholars working on the project. Special thanks go to Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, Griet Vermeesch, and Martijn van der Burg who made available various findings on the working of early modern 'public services', which enabled me to write this book. Henk Looijesteijn assisted me in gathering and systematizing the immense literature on early modern public services. Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk and Griet Vermeesch also contributed to the conference that we organized in 2007 on *Civil Society and Public Services in Early Modern Europe*, held at the Leiden University. The conference offered the opportunity to discuss our work in progress and to look at the findings from a broader and comparative perspective. I thank particularly Marc Boone, Wim Blockmans, Karel Davids, Marjolein 't Hart, Kate Lynch, Mary Lindemann, Leo Lucassen, Charles Parker, Maarten Prak, and Ariadne Schmidt for their helpful contributions and comments.

I also had the opportunity to discuss my work in the context of international conferences, such as the Social Science History Association, the European Social Science History Conference, the European Urban History Conference and the World Economic History Congress. I thank Maarten van Dijck and Bert de Munck for including me in the ESF Exploratory Workshop on Civil Society, held in Antwerp, which offered me the opportunity to present and discuss parts of this study.

Finally, I am also indebted to my colleagues in the Department of Social and Economic History at Leiden University. They are an inspiring and supportive team, and I am grateful to them for continuing to support my research and for allowing me time to work on this study.

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINING AND MEASURING PUBLIC SERVICES

This study focuses on public services in the early modern Low Countries and attempts to answer the following question: who provided public facilities in urban communities and in which ways did public amenities change in the period between 1500 and 1800? The key proposition of this book concerns the definition of early modern public services. The term 'public services' now means services provided by a government to its citizens, directly (through the public sector) or by financing the private provision of services.[1] Such a definition is clearly not appropriate for the early modern civic communities in which the responsibility for a large proportion of the urban facilities was shared by churches, town governments, guilds, neighbourhoods and numerous individual citizens. The activities and involvement of seventeenth-century salesman Cornelis Jacobszoon Back in his home town of Dordrecht (in Holland) reveal some of the distinguishing features of the working of civil services in early modern communities.

As a member of one of the most influential families in town, the rich cloth merchant Cornelis was appointed as councillor and alderman of the city several times between 1596 and 1625. In addition to these offices, he also performed numerous other public duties. He was for several years the town book-keeper, and he also took on a range of military, social, religious, and economic tasks: he was a commander of the civic guards (military service), an overseer of wheat and textiles, and a warden of the church building, the guest-house for leprosy, and the local hospital. Lastly, for several years he acted as a master of the merchant company (guild). In total, he carried out seventeen public offices during a period of thirty years, and in the year of his death (1625), he was involved in nine different civil tasks at once. He carried out these duties in addition to his real profession as a trader in cloth, with which occupation he earned his money and maintained his family. The town government did not pay Cornelis for most of his services to the community, for some activities he merely

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[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_service (August 2011).

received compensation for clothes, tools, or travels that came with the job. Even more, Cornelis and other wealthy city dwellers regularly invested their own money in performing public duties or financing costly public works for which the town government did not (or only partly) have the funds.[2] In 1605 one of his fellow book-keepers paid almost 4000 guilders out of his own pocket on materials and labour loans for repairs on the town's dikes and gains.[3]

Cornelis Jacobsz Back may have been a shining example of the early modern citizens' involvement in public affairs, but his case was no exception in the Low Countries. The broad range of civil duties which Cornelis carried out without being formally paid reveals some fundamental features of the working of early modern public facilities. Firstly, public services were provided locally, within urban communities. Secondly, it was a citizen's obligation to serve the public interest and to take an active role in his community. Thirdly, citizens who invested their time and money in serving the city did not carry out these duties according to formal rules, nor did they receive fixed salaries and budgets for their services, and their operations were only sometimes monitored by supervisors. Lastly, the example of Cornelis reveals that the provision of early modern amenities – from public security to social welfare – was not financed and carried out by the efforts and investments of governments only, but for a large part also through the activities of private citizens. The case of Cornelis does not, however, reveal the whole range of early modern providers of public services. In addition to town governments and private citizens, a whole range of urban agencies provided and financed community services: churches, religious brotherhoods, guilds, civic guards, neighbourhood organizations, and many other civic corporations.

This study therefore considers early modern public services as a dynamic field of interests in which various agents determined the organization and funding of public facilities. It aims to throw light on the ways in which responsibilities were shared between providers of public

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[2] City Archive of Dordrecht, Oud Stadsarchief Dordrecht, Register van de officiën (1613-1663); Manon van der Heijden, *Geldschieters van de stad. Financiële relaties tussen stad, burgers en overheden 1550-1650* (Amsterdam, 2006), 169; Eric Palmen, "De politieke elite," in Willem Frijhoff, Hubert Nusteling, and Marijke Spies, eds., *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht van 1572 tot 1813* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), 211-220.

[3] City Archive of Dordrecht, Oud Stads Archief, archief 3, nr. 2974-2975, Rekeningen van de Reparatiën 1604-1605, fol. 46-78 verso. The town government eventually compensated the book-keeper's expenses, while he complained that his income and business affairs had suffered from his public duties.

services and the factors which influenced the allocation and reallocation of public services between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. The present study intends to also look at those who provided various services to their communities, the ways in which they were rewarded and monitored, and the gain they may have sought. It focuses on the situation in the Low Countries, but in many respects, it also describes the development of the provision of public services in most towns in early modern Western Europe. The complex mixture of central and local, private and public, ecclesiastical and secular, individual and corporate initiatives characterized – to a greater or lesser extent – urban communities everywhere in Western Europe due to the fact that late medieval and early modern towns were civil societies in which public services were largely shaped and formed by conceptions of citizenship, collective interest, and communalism.[4]

Developments in public services

The most debated issue with respect to public facilities in the early modern period concerns long-term transitions from the late medieval to the modern period. Historians agree that between the thirteenth and the eighteenth centuries, population growth and urbanization resulted, in most European cities, in the expansion of civil services, which involved a more complex and more large-scale organization and funding of urban facilities. However, scholars are much less sure about the factors that shaped and formed these developments and the weight of social, economic, religious and political circumstances.

Inspired by the work of Max Weber, scholars working on Western Europe often explain the organization of public facilities and the role of citizens in late medieval and early modern communities in terms of phases of state formation. Weber identified the separation of private and public interests as one of the main characteristics of a rational (bureaucratic) system of public provisioning.[5] His analysis of early modern European communities is particularly interesting where it concerns the distinctions he made between the community structures of Western cities and those of Asian communities. Weber believed that various factors, such as migration

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[4] See for a review of the recent literature Steven Hindle, 'States, Markets and Entitlements in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Early Modern History* 6:2 (2002), 185-193, 189. For the modern city see the helpful review essay of Simon Gunn, 'Governance, citizenship, and municipal provision in the modern city', *Journal of Urban History* 33: 6 (2007), 1006-1014.

[5] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2002), originally published in 1964.

patterns, the development of state organizations and the rise of a Christian ideology weakened kin group and patrimonial relations in Western communities from the early middle ages onwards.[6]

This long-term process of state formation entailed the transformation of medieval local communities in which social and economic interactions were shaped by feudal and kin group relations into national communities with rational and bureaucratic relations. In between these two ideal types of administration, Weber distinguished a phase in which characteristics of both types of administration were intermingled. During this second phase, patrimonial relations remained predominant, while at the same time urban governments began to develop an administrative apparatus. This second phase had two main characteristics: firstly, town governments, as well as individual citizens and many other urban agencies, became involved in public administration; secondly, the private interests of citizens and the public interests of the community were very much intermingled. Weber therefore defined the early modern towns in Western Europe as local corporate communities in which (private) citizens and (public) community were largely integrated. The separation of the citizen and the public community occurred in the eighteenth century, when national states started taking over public tasks that had previously been organized locally by churches, civil institutions and individual citizens.[7]

Weber's own descriptions of the process of rationalization were rather nuanced, primarily aimed at establishing objective criteria for describing historical and sociological changes and fundamental differences between Europe and Asia. But his portrayal of European communities has encouraged many scholars to focus on a static dichotomy between the communal and bureaucratic system while assuming that the transformation from one into the other occurred linearly. In addition, there is a second problem arising from the bureaucratization process as described by Weber: employing the characteristics of the modern rational bureaucratization as a starting point for their analysis, many scholars have concentrated entirely on public services provided by governments, while ignoring other actors in the field of early modern public services. In one of the first studies on the development of public services in France, Prussia and England between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, Sir Ernest Barker associated public services solely with state administration. Barker argued that state administration emerged in the different Western European States at different times and in various ways, while at the same time the

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[6] Ibidem.

[7] Ibidem, 130-134; W.J. Mommsen, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber* (Chicago-Cambridge 1989), 109-110, 145-156.

development of public services ultimately resulted in a common European standard of administration and public service.[8]

German historian Dorwart also considered the emergence of public services in the early modern period to be a first stage in the development of the state, but he brought more depth to his analysis of the Prussian welfare state by linking changing concepts of state to the growing intervention of public authority in the private and civil sector. Dorwart describes a process in which the urban tradition of common interest and general welfare was replaced, from the later Middle Ages onwards, by a greater concern for private conduct and economic interests. The emphasis of his analysis therefore lies on the increasing variety of regulative acts (police ordinances) which authorities designed to promote the public and individual welfare. The welfare state, he argues, can therefore better be labelled *Polizeistaat*.[9]

For Dorwart, early modern cities were the microcosm of the future welfare state; urban communities showed national states the way in dealing with public responsibilities, problems of poverty, public security, public education and public health. Dorwart's analysis is especially interesting where it concerns the actions of central and local governments in relation to a growing awareness of public concern for the material and secular needs of individual citizens.[10] His study is much less informative regarding the interaction between the various governmental levels – urban governments, provinces, and central states – within states on matters of development in public services.

In the 1970s, the rationalisation model of Weber and the moral practical explorations of Barker, Dorwart, and Chapman inspired Dutch and Belgian scholars to explore early modern public services in the Low Countries.[11] These studies were less concerned with the concept and meaning of states than the study of Dorwart; instead they focussed more on the rise and development of bureaucracies within the central, provincial and local governments, and the implications thereof for performing public duties. Employing Weber's characteristics of rational administration in various regions in the Low Countries, Van Braam, Maes, and Raadschelders

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[8] Sir Ernest Barker, The development of public services in Western Europe, 1660-1930 (Oxford, 1945), 2-4, 93.

[9] Reinhold August Dorwart, *The Prussian Welfare Sate before 1740* (Oxford/ Cambridge, Massachusetts 1971) 2-5.

[10] Ibidem, 10-11.

[11] Brian Chapman, *The profession of government: the public service in Europe* (Londen, 1971); W.H.G. Armytage, *The rise of the technocrats: social history* (London-Toronto, 1975).

demonstrated how valuable such concepts were for comparative descriptions of long-term developments in public services.[12] However, as Roorda and Huussen rightly pointed out in 1977, employing Weberian models of rationalization may also hinder historians from revealing the rationale of the working of early modern public services.[13] In other words, such a teleological approach might demonstrate how bureaucracies evolved according to modern Western European standards, but it does not necessarily improve our understanding of the logic of early modern public provisioning. This is due to the fact that Weberian models of state-formation and rising bureaucracies tend to focus entirely on the actions of governments, leaving out other actors in the field of early modern provisioning.

However, these studies also touch on the key questions of the present study. In Dorwart's study of Prussia, urban governments and later on central states intentionally took on a wide range of tasks – from building regulation and public sanitation to poor relief and education – to both regulate moral conduct and serve individual needs. The Low Countries followed a very different path of state formation in the early modern period, but did they also follow a different path where it concerned long-term developments in public services? In what ways and to what extent did local and central governments expand their actions in the field of civil services and increase their control over public tasks? Such questions are very much related to processes of urbanization and economic growth from the late medieval period onward.

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[12] L.Th.Maes, "Ambtenarij en bureaucratisering in regering en gewesten van de Zuidelijke Nederlanden in de 13ᵉ -15ᵉ eeuw," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 90 (1977): 35-357; A. van Braam, "Bureaucratiseringsgraad van de plaatselijke bestuursorganisatie van Westzaandam ten tijde van de Republiek," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 90 (1977): 457-483; J.C.N. Raadschelders, *Plaatselijke bestuurlijke ontwikkelingen, 1600-1980. Een historisch-bestuurskundig onderzoek in vier Noord-Hollandse gemeenten* (Den Haag, 1990); M. Damen, *De staat van dienst. De gewestelijke ambtenaren van Holland en Zeeland in de Bourgondische periode I1425-1482)* (Hilversum, 2000); J.F.A. Wassink, *Van stad en buitenie. Een institutionele studie van rechtspraak en bestuur in Weert 1568-1795* (Hilversum, 2005).

[13] D.J.Roorda and A.H. Huussen jr., "'Das Heft in der Hand und Geld im Kasten'. Historische beschouwingen over vroeg-moderne overheidsbureaucratie in Europa," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 90 (1977): 303-327.

Factors of growth

An important and long unresolved issue concerns the factors that affected the growth and restriction of public services. Most historians agree that the process of urbanization in Western Europe, which occurred from the late medieval period on, was an important driving force behind the development of civil services. Early urbanization and the associated population growth created the need for bureaucracy. As a consequence, from the twelfth century onwards, public institutions emerged in many European towns: first a military force, some forms of legislation, and an administration of justice, followed by relief for the poor, sick, and elderly, and certain provisions for trade and commerce. There were, of course, significant differences between geographical areas: the cities of Italy and Flanders expanded much earlier than the towns of Holland or England (the latter began growing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries).[14]

In her study on London, Barron demonstrated that the increasing expenditures on public services display the trend in the town's bureaucracy: at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the city of London appears to have employed a civil service of about eight people who were paid a total of £ 41 per year; by 1485 the city was employing at least twenty-four civil servants and the salary bill was about £ 200 altogether.[15] Similar correlations between urban growth and expanding civil services occurred in the major towns of the Low Countries. During the Golden Age, Amsterdam's expenditures on public works rose from less than 100,000 guilders in 1580 to 3 million guilders in 1708. In the eighteenth century the city spent 1.2 million of the urban income on reimbursements and emoluments to more than 3,200 office-holders.[16] As the example of Cornelis Jacobsz Back revealed, not all servants of the city were registered or fully paid for their services, so the expenditures of Amsterdam on its

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[14] H. de Ridder-Symoens, "Training and professionalization," in W.Reinhard ed., *Power elites and state building* (Oxford, 1996) 153-154.

[15] Caroline M. Barron, Londen in the later Middle Ages. Government and People 1200-1500 (Oxford, 2004), 196.

[16] Marjolein ´t Hart, "The glorious city: monumentalism and public space in seventeenth-century Amsterdam," in Patrick O'Brien ed., *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam, and London* (Cambridge, 2008), 133; Maarten Hell, ""Schatkist van den Staet". Amsterdamse regenten en de hogere overheid," in Willem Frijhoff and Maarten Prak, ed., *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam 1650-1813* (Amsterdam, 2005), 184-189; idem, "De Oude Geuzen en de Opstand. Politiek en bestuur in de tijd van oorlog en expansie 1578-1650," in Frijhoff and Prak, *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam*, 291-298.

office-holders did not by any stretch cover all the real costs of civil servants.

As Peter Clark noted in his study of urban history, outlining the urbanization trend is much easier than calculating precise rates of growth; it is even more difficult to find clear-cut patterns of urban growth and rising civil services. Recent studies on urban history have shifted the attention from the major European cities, such as London, Antwerp, and Amsterdam, to the growth and economic development of relatively smaller towns. Such studies have improved our understanding of the impact of urbanization, economic growth, and the rise of a bureaucracy on the ways in which communities coped with civic problems. They have also shown us that smaller cities may have responded similarly to problems caused by demographic and economic growth, although they would have done so later than cities that expanded much earlier.[17]

The urbanization level of the Low Countries was as of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries exceptionally high, even compared to other European regions that experienced economic and demographic growth. The pattern of the towns in the Netherlands was less polarised than, for instance, the pattern of early modern England, but there too there were major differences in the scope and scale of civil services in larger and smaller towns. For example, the populations of the maritime Rotterdam and the textile centre of Leiden developed from the late sixteenth century onwards, while the population of smaller town such as Gouda did not expand for almost another century. The numbers and types of communal facilities in these Holland towns expanded simultaneously, as did the numbers and types of public servants.[18]

Urbanization and population growth were undoubtedly important driving forces behind the bureaucratization processes, especially with respect to long-term developments in public services. Historians are less certain about the demographic fluctuations and the role of economic conjuncture in the short term. Did economic prosperity result in a direct

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[17] Peter Clark, *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain 1540-1840* (Cambridge 2000), 1-30; D.M. Palliser, Peter Clark and Martin Daunton, *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Luc Pinol et al., *Histoire de l'Europe urbaine.* 2 vols. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2003).

[18] Manon van der Heijden and Ariadne Schmidt, "Public services and Women's Work in Early Modern Dutch Towns," *Journal of Urban History*.36:3 (2010): 368-386; Arie van Steensel, "Het personeel van de laatmiddeleeuwse steden Haarlem en Leiden, 1428-1572," *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis* 9 (2006): 192-252.

expansion of public facilities or in a decline in periods of depression? It seems plausible that there was a causal relation between economic prosperity and increasing urban population on the one hand, and a growing public service that involved the development of bureaucratic staff on the other.[19] Yet it is also likely that governments in 'high pressure' economic regimes would have tended to centralize social provisions, since the pluralist provisions (from guilds, parish churches, and other local institutions) would have been inadequate to deal with the increasing problems of poverty, scarcity, and disease. In such cases, severe economic circumstances may have pressurized urban governments to undertake new initiatives to improve public amenities. In their work on capitalism and social policies in early modern Europe, Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly addressed such links between economic cycles and urban policy or cycles of public provisioning. They argued that from the fifteenth century onwards, population growth and impoverishment led governments to set up regulations and social institutions to control the labour market.[20]

Historians generally conclude that ideologies and concepts of public good were more important than social and economic circumstances in establishing social facilities.[21] In his work on public welfare in early modern England, Paul Slack recognized that economic conditions and demographic pressure may have encouraged local institutions to reform and improve social provisions, but he notes that such responses were far more related to contemporary perceptions of what were 'in each case extremely complicated conjunctures of war, death, disease, and sometimes currency problems and political upheavals'. Slack argues that the particular circumstances of each city or town may have been more relevant than the general economic background in explaining the complex workings of public services. He concludes that investments in public services were less a matter of economic circumstances than of policy, choice and political perceptions.[22]

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[19] See S. Reynods, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 337-338.

[20] Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in pre-industrial Europe* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982); Catharina Lis, Hugo Soly and Dirk van Damme, *Op vrije voeten? Sociale politiek in West-Europa 1450-1914* (Leuven: Kriktak, 1985).

[21] See Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[22] Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement. Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 62-67, 150-156; W.C. Jordan, *The*

   The enormous stream of new studies on medieval and early modern urban history has shown the complexity of causal connections between economic and demographic circumstances and variations in public provisioning. In a recent analysis of public service professionalization in Dordrecht (the home town of Cornelis Jacobszoon Back), Van Nederveen Meerkerk explains that the links between economic and demographic circumstances and developments in public provisioning were not necessarily linear. In Dordrecht, around the turn of the seventeenth century, economic and demographic developments resulted in increasing expenditures on public facilities and, accordingly, on the salaries of civil servants.[23] Yet, the civil staff did not similarly decrease during periods of economic stagnation and moderate population growth. It seems that the correlation between demographical changes and expenditures in public services was only apparent in times of urban growth and economic prosperity. The correlation seems to have been far less strong during periods of demographic and economic decline. Van Nederveen Meerkerk argues that town councils were less inclined, or perhaps less able to reduce the level of bureaucracy established in more prosperous times. In such cases, public officers were given other assignments so they could serve the city in other ways.

   As Slack suggests, the particular circumstances (including government structure and comparative autonomy) of respective towns and cities were perhaps more relevant than economic or demographic conditions. Efficient urban policies may have enabled cities to respond better to changing levels of demand for public facilities. Tilly and Blockmans offer political explanations of this kind in their work, examining the relation between urbanization and the transformation of states and how cities negotiated with the rulers of states in Europe after 1000 A.D. [24] For Tilly and Blockmans, medieval and early modern cities were not isolated entities but economic and political centres belonging to larger economic and political networks. Within these networks, each city negotiated its own power position and financial autonomy. Developments in public services in early modern towns are therefore connected with processes of state formation,

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Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century (Princeton: NJ, 1996), 172.

[23] Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, "Professionalization of public service: civil servants in Dordrecht 1572-1795," *Journal of Urban History* 36:3 (2010): 345-368.

[24] Charles Tilly and Wim Blockmans , eds., *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); also in this volume Marjolein 't Hart, "Intercity Rivalries and the Making of the Dutch State," 196-217.

warfare politics, and the evolution of tax systems, which exceeded the public sphere of the city.

Such connections between state formation, warfare, tax systems, and urban autonomy help historians to explain why only some governments were able to establish efficient financial systems, and accordingly were able to respond to changing levels of demand. Dordrecht again offers an instructive example. Here, successful efforts on the part of state-makers (in this case, the province) to impose control over urban finances resulted in a loss of urban financial autonomy towards the end of the sixteenth century, although this did not necessarily harm urban funds. The cities of Holland profited from increasing provincial control since this meant restoration of urban credit. In the case of Dordrecht, such profit was destined primarily for the various public works (such as repair and construction of walls, harbours, and streets).[25]

Markhoff and Tilly also believed that the efforts of late medieval and early modern states to implement warfare reform triggered the rise of bureaucracies.[26] Prussia and France often serve as the example of rising public services against the background of processes of state formation, but the models drawn by Tilly and Markhoff have also been an inspiration for many historians working on the Low Countries.[27] Recent studies observed that the warfare policies of the Dutch Republic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries caused increasing military expenditures, which in effect pressured urban governments to create new taxes and administrative bodies to manage the increasing income and expenses.[28] Therefore, the growth of a military apparatus and the greater need for efficient fiscal organization did – at least in the Dutch case – trigger local governments to

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[25] Manon van der Heijden, "State formation and urban finances in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Holland", in *Journal of Urban History*, 32:3 (2006): 429-450; Manon van der Heijden, *Geldschieters van der stad. Financiële relaties tussen stad, burgers en overheden 1550-1650* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2006),115.

[26] Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the history of European state-making," in C. Tilly, ed., *The formation of national states in Western Europe* (Princeton: Un. Press, 1975), 3-83; idem, *Coercion, capital and European states, AD 990-1992* (Oxford/Cambridge, Massachusetts 1993); J. Markhoff, "Governmental bureucratization: general processes and an anomalous case," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17 (1975), 479-504; idem, *Who wants bureaucracy? A study of French public opinion* (Ann Arbor, 1975).

[27] Maarten Prak, "Charles Tilly: de kunst van het samenleven," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 119 (2006): 559-564.

[28] Van der Heijden, *Geldschieters van de stad*; Griet Vermeesch, *Oorlog, steden en staatsvorming. De grenssteden Gorinchem en Doesburg tijdens de geboorte-eeuw van de Republiek (1570-1680)* (Amsterdam: Un. Press, 2006).

more efficiently raise taxes and manage urban finances. What is more,
increasing local government income allowed new public initiatives to
develop.[29]

The evolution of new tax systems and public debt seems to have been
for many European cities an important condition for efficient policy
regarding public services. According to this line of reasoning, efficient
systems of public provisioning may have been hindered by local providers
who clung to traditional structures to protect their autonomy or by the
governmental inability to organize taxation and public debt. Reform and
improvement of early modern public services were then (at least partially)
the result of successful negotiations between the state and its citizens. In a
recent article on 'economic citizenship', Van Zanden and Prak continue
Tilly's argument that citizenship can be defined as the 'continuing series
of transactions between persons and agents of a given state in which each
has enforceable rights and obligations'.[30] Such a system requires mutual
rights and duties of both the state and its citizens; citizens have to
participate in the social, political, and economic life of the community
(including paying taxes) while communities are supposed to protect the
safety and interests of the citizens. Citizenship is thus defined by a set of
rules concerning the exchange between the state as the supplier of
collective goods and citizens as consumers of these goods and as tax-
payers.

Here again, public debt and taxation represent the keys to success;
government control through modern forms of taxation and the formation
of modern public debt suggests a degree of trust between the state and its
citizens. Van Zanden and Prak argue that such a 'contract' increased the
efficiency of the exchange between the state and its inhabitants, and
consequently led to an increased supply of public goods at relatively low
costs to the economy.[31] A recent comparison between two cities in Holland
in the seventeenth century seems to confirm Van Zanden and Prak's

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[29] F.P.Wagenaar, '*Dat de regeringe niet en bestaet by het corpus van de magistraet
van Den Hage alleen'. De sociëteit van 's- Gravenhage (1575-1802). Een
onderzoek naar bureaucratisering*, (Hilversum 1999).
[30] Charles Tilly, "Citizenship, identity, and social history," *International Review of
Social History* 40:3 (1995), 1-19, 8; Jan Luiten van Zanden and Maarten Prak,
"Towards an economic interpretation of citizenship: The Dutch Republic between
medieval communes and modern nation-states," *European Review of Economic
History* 10:2 (2006): 111-145. Also Elizabeth Tingle, "A City at War: Changing
Definitions of Citizenship in Nantes during the Later Wars of Religion 1580-89,"
European Review of History 7:1 (2000): 99-108
[31] Van Zanden and Prak, "Towards an economic interpretation", 114-116.

analysis; high levels of government control enabled cities in Holland to cope with seventeenth-century economic and demographic growth more adequately than other cities.[32] Indeed, the analysis applies especially to the Dutch Republic, which Van Zanden and Prak call an 'intermediate' stage in the process of state formation between medieval communes and the nation-states of the nineteenth century.

Although the analysis of state formation and government control furthers our understanding of long-term trends in public services, such an approach also presents a fairly abstract image of the functioning of early modern urban provisions. It does not provide information about the issues most central to the present study: the various agencies that provided services, how public tasks were organized and financed, and how facilities developed over time. Furthermore, in most European cities, the state played a very small role in providing services for citizens. Taxation and public debt may have been vehicles for urban governments in realizing efficient public services; but in everyday life, public services were largely the outcome of conflicting interests between diverse urban interest groups. The choices and policies of urban governments were shaped by processes of conflict and consensus within the urban community: among urban elites, middle groups (such as guilds and civic guards), religious organizations and many other local institutions. Whether it concerned food supply in Aragon, public health in Coventry, or medical care in Hamburg, reform and improvement of public facilities were above all the result of compromises between town governments, churches, and citizens.

Perhaps this was even more the case in the highly urbanized areas of the Low Countries, where central governments had little to do with everyday community services, and where bureaucracies mostly developed locally in the towns. Possibly, urban autonomy in public services prevailed as long as it did not concern the greater interests of the state or the provinces, such as military defence, warfare policies, and foreign affairs. For this book, it is of interest whether, and if so how, centralization in the Low Countries resulted in reallocations of public services between central, provincial, and local governments.

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[32] Claartje Rasterhoff, "Public spending and population growth in Leiden and Utrecht during the Golden Age, " in Manon van der Heijden et al. eds., *Serving the Urban Community. The Rise of Public Services in the Low Countries* (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2009), 107-134.

Civil society: networks of public provisioning

This study suggests that an understanding of early modern public provision requires the recognition that early modern urban communities were civil societies. The term "civil society" often refers to voluntary private and collective action around shared interests, purposes, and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family, and market, but in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family, and market are often complex and negotiated. In civil societies, non-governmental organizations such as the citizens' militia, community groups, neighbourhood organizations, guilds, and religious associations actively take part in providing community services.

As Black observed in his work on guilds and states, such notions of civil society existed in Western European towns from the late middle ages onwards. He found that city governments, as well as church bodies, lay confraternities, and guilds undertook a variety of activities, involving jurisdiction and economic and social legislation. In the course of the late medieval and early modern period, these networks of provisioning became increasingly complex as adjustments were constantly being made for the interplay of the interests of each of these urban agencies.[33] Black considers the medieval town a guild of all citizens, in which civic concern and public provisioning originated from the guild ethos of mutual aid, mutual protection and insurances.[34] His explorations help to understand urban ideologies and their effect on the organization and funding of early modern public provisioning. Though indebted to Black's valuable study, this book focuses on the practical operation and interplay of civil, governmental and ecclesiastical actions, rather than the ideologies on which they were founded.

The basic assumption is that early modern facilities were organized and funded by networks of urban citizens who operated through various urban agencies, such as civic guards, neighbourhood associations, guilds, and, in some cases, through individual civil actions. At many times and in many places civil services were organized ad hoc and sometimes only if immediate action was required. The fragmented character of early modern provisions makes it difficult to present figures pertaining to the financial distribution of services among various providers, but clearly, a large part of the public facilities were financed not by taxes and public loans but through private, ecclesiastical, and corporative action.

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[33] Anthony Black, *Guild & State. European political thought from the twelfth century to the present* (New Brunswick and London, 2003) 44-47.
[34] Ibidem, 47.

Rousseau and Hegel identified such community actions primarily as the expression of self-interest of particular groups or families in pre-modern societies, representing a less developed social society than the modern state in which common interests would transcend individual self-interest.[35] In line with Lynch and her work on European communities, the present study assumes that the term "civil society" incorporates both positive and negative features.[36] The organization and funding of early modern public provisions were characterized by the blurred interests of various groups in urban communities: private persons and their families, civic corporations and their members, churches and their followers, and urban governments and their office-holders. In my view, the provisioning of public services was as much a manifestation of the particularistic interests of various urban agencies as a truthful expression of civic ideals for serving the common interests of all citizens.[37]

Seeing the system of early modern public provisioning as an urban network of people with both shared and conflicting interests requires the examination of the interplay of these networks of provision. Slack describes this variety of early modern provisions as a 'mixed economy', a society in which diverse types of welfare provisions existed and intermingled. This mixture of institutions, voluntary or formally corporate, functioning under an urban government with greater or less intrusive effect, was characteristic of the organization of welfare in Western Europe since the Middle Ages. [38] In such a mixed economy, there was centralisation of social provisioning, but also a strong corporate and voluntary sector. This study is particularly interested in the interplay of these diverse types of early modern provisions in the Low Countries. How did such a network of provisions operate, what were the decisive powers, and to what extent was there conflict or agreement about the (re-)allocation of public tasks between various providers of civil services? Key words in the interplay between private, corporate, governmental and religious institutions of provision in the early modern period are centralisation, governmental supervision, and religious reformation.

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[35] Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani ed., *Civil Society. History and Possibilities* (Cambridge: Un. Press, 2001).

[36] Katherine A. Lynch, *Individuals, families, and communities in Europe, 1200-1800. The Urban Foundations of Western Society* (Cambridge: Un. Press, 2003), 18-19.

[37] See also Paul Slack, "Great and good towns 1540-1700," in Peter Clark, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge: Un. Press, 2000), 347-376, 364-365.

[38] Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 159.

Reform and reallocation

Historians have examined reallocation of provisions among providers in various ways, usually by focusing on a particular type of provision, such as medical care, education, or conflict regulation. As noted, the few studies that provide an overview of public services direct their attention to processes of bureaucratisation and the intensification of governmental action, and they seldom focus on the interaction of private, public and religious actors.[39] It is difficult to make general conclusions about so fragmented a system. Social care, for example, was in most Western European countries offered by church bodies and lay confraternities, and to a lesser extent by town councils. Sometimes guilds or neighbourhood associations provided social care, but most often it was offered through private donations, by wealthy benefactors. Such providers sometimes operated separately, although they occasionally cooperated by financially supporting each others' activities or, in times of crisis, by establishing programs against poverty and disease.

It is also difficult to define the general characteristics of an entire network of public services because each type of service had its own particularities, and general economic or social developments could have different consequences for different kinds of services. There were also important differences between countries in Western Europe and between geographical areas and cities within each country. As with comparative autonomy and governmental structure, so too religious reforms might have caused developments in public services. In most Protestant towns during the sixteenth century, for example, legislation and prosecution of all types of offenses shifted from ecclesiastical to secular control. Such changes not only brought about a reallocation of public tasks (in this case law

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[39] For example, Ernest Baker, *The development of public services in Western Europe, 1660-1930* (Londen: Oxford Un. Press, 1945); Reinhold August Dorwart, *The Prussian welfare state before 1740* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971). For the Dutch public service: J.C.N. Raadschelders, *Plaatselijke bestuurlijke ontwikkelingen, 1600-1980. Een historisch bestuurskundig onderzoek in vier Noord-Hollandse gemeenten* (Den Haag ,1990). Authors who focus on the interactions between various agencies: Slack, *From Reformation to Improvemen*t; Mack Walker, *German Home Towns. Community, state, and the general estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca, 1971); G. Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain, 1830-1990* (Oxford, 1994).

enforcement) but they could also result in professionalization, in the sense of a more complex administration and an increasing bureaucratic staff.[40]

Reallocation pertaining to jurisdiction and legislation is an example of more general developments in early modern public services. The most important characteristic of early modern public services relates to the unclear boundaries between private, public, and ecclesiastical initiatives. This fragmented network of provisions remained in existence throughout the early modern period, although there were major shifts in the allocation of services. In most areas, town governments began streamlining and centralizing the funding and organization of local provisions over the entire field of public services: justice administration, police forces, medical care, orphan care, poor relief, education, and military defence. Urbanization and population growth spurred towns to improve and expand their systems of public provisioning. This sometimes provided town governments with a justification for taking further control over public funds that had previously been managed by parish churches, guilds, or civic guards. Such shifts had several consequences: some services became more intensively supervised by urban governments than before, and were thus less a matter for civic and religious groups; and urban facilities became more professionalized and specialized.[41]

As Slack observes, these processes of centralisation and governmental control were by no means linear and differed per period and geographical area. The new bureaucratic state of Prussia, as described by Dorwart, was perhaps the most effective in imposing centralized control over public security and social order. In contrast, the urban governments of Italy and the Low Countries may have tried to impose more centralized systems of provisioning, but often without success. Slack explains that in both these areas corporate and religious agencies actively handled much of the public welfare: in Italy confraternities, in the Low Countries subsidiary corporations and denominational groupings. Slack suggests that the strong

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[40] Manon van der Heijden, *Huwelijk in Holland. Stedelijke rechtspraak en kerkelijke tucht 1550-1700* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1998).

[41] Raymond van Uytven, "Stedelijke openbare diensten te Leuven tijdens het Ancien Régime," in *L'initiative publique des communes en Belgique. Fondements historiques (Ancien Régime) 11ᵉ Colloque International. Spa, 1-4 Sept. 1982. Actes* (Brussels, 1984), 21-44; Walter Prevenier, "Synthese van het colloquium," in *L'initiative publique*, 695-718; Hugo Soly, *Urbanisme en kapitalisme te Antwerpen in de 16ᵈᵉ eeuw. De stedebouwkundige en industriële ondernemingen van Gilbert van Schoonbeke* (Brussels: Gemeentekrediet, 1977); Van der Heijden, *Huwelijk in Holland*, 30-40.

input of these corporate, private, and ecclesiastical agencies may have hindered urban elites from imposing governmental supervision.[42]

The subject of poor relief is surely the most examined and debated issue with respect to reallocations in early modern public provision. The immense body of literature on poverty and charity in Europe has outlined the institutional development and spread of poor relief reform throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Socio-economic historians have concentrated especially on questions pertaining to the extent of reform in poor relief and charity reorganization and the causes behind improvement and reform. In his work on social welfare and Calvinist charity, Charles Parker distinguishes between various approaches that historians have used to describe and explain patterns of poor relief reform. There is general consensus among historians that rising levels of poverty and disenchantment with traditional forms of charity inspired Protestant and Catholic cities to establish comprehensive networks of poor relief from the sixteenth century onwards.[43]

However, there has been significant disagreement about the causes of poor relief reform. Until the nineteenth century, most historians believed Protestantism and humanism were the most important driving forces behind welfare reorganization. However, new work on poor relief showes that changes in charity structure were related not so much to religious reform but to older and more general problems of urbanization and population growth. Natalie Zemon Davis demonstrates that in Lyon, Catholics and Protestants joined forces in creating a new system of charity.[44] Others have argued that in England and in parts of Italy (among other places), sixteenth-century reformers merely adopted regulations and policies that had been developed by their predecessors in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[45] But in some cases there is a clear correlation between new humanist or Protestant ideologies and the reform of

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[42] Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 156-158.

[43] Marco van Leeuwen, "Logic of charity. Poor relief in preindustrial Europe," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24 (1994): 589-596; Marco van Leeuwen, "Groepsdwang of liefdadigheid. Armenzorg en liefdadigheid in de vroegmoderne tijd," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 22: 4 (1996): 369-374; Charles Parker, *The Reformation of Community. Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-19.

[44] Nathalie Zemon Davis, "The sacred and the body social in sixteenth-century Lyon," *Past and Present* 90 (1981): 40-70; Parker, *The reformation of community,* 10.

[45] Parker, *The reformation of community,* 10; Brian Pullan, "Catholics Protestants and the Poor in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. 35:3 (2004): 441-456.

charitable activity. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, several cities in Germany and the Netherlands implemented the proposals of humanist Juan Luis Vives for establishing a rational system with centrally managed funds and strong town government control, with the intention to re-educate the poor. Perhaps Vives's ideas represented views long shared by Catholics, Protestants, and urban elites; but even so, his work clearly stimulated cities to bring such ideas into practice.[46]

A second important perspective was offered by historians who examined the correlation between the rise of a capitalist economic system and the widespread underemployment that pushed many people into pauperism. In several works on preindustrial capitalism and labour markets, Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly argued that labour market transitions shaped the system of poor relief in early modern Europe; assistance to the poor was set up to secure low-wage labour supply and to ensure social stability.[47] In the 1980s many historians followed Lis and Soly's economic approach, but as Parker concludes 'many of the elements of sixteenth-century welfare occurred gradually over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, long before any part of Europe had a rationalized labour market.'[48]

In her work on charity in early modern Italy, Sandra Cavallo criticizes both the economic approach (with its focus on economic rationality and political utility) and the 'religious versus secular' approach (with its focus on 'dechristianization' and secularization of control over assistance). Her main argument addresses the lack of concern on the part of historians for the interests, emotions, and conflicts within which social actors operate. By focusing on charity as a response to the poor or to the threat they represent, historians have created a blind spot for the multiple meanings that charity held for benefactors.[49] In short, historians failed to see how the motivations of those engaging in charity shaped the system of relief. In her examination of Turin in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Cavallo

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[46] Manon van der Heijden, "Juan Luis Vives: icoon van de vroegmoderne armenzorg," in J. van Eijnatten, Fred van Lieburg, and Hans de Waardt, eds., *Heiligen of helden* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2007), 61-71.

[47] Catharian Lis and Hugo Soly, *Poverty and capitalism in pre-industrial Europe*, Rev. ed (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982); Catharina Lis, Hugo Soly, and Dirk Van Damme, *Op vrije voeten? : sociale politiek in West-Europa (1450-1914)* (Leuven: Kritak, 1985).

[48] Parker, *The Reformation of Community*, 12.

[49] Sandra Cavallo, "The motivations of benefactors. An overview of approaches to the study of charity," in Jonathan Barry and Colin Jones, eds., *Medicine and charity before the welfare state,* (London/New York, 2003) 46-62, citation, 46.

redirects attention to correlations between the trend of charitable action
and the chronology of political and family conflict. She finds that
assistance to the poor was essentially a means of strengthening identity,
support, and influence of the centres contesting control of the city. In some
periods, however, charitable activity was predominantly an expression of
the actions of individuals and families.[50] Cavallo's work reveals that
charity and poor relief were as much the outcome of the political and
personal motives of those providing assistance as of economic
circumstances and religious ideologies.

The valuable work of these scholars illustrates that re-organizations in
social provisions may follow various paths: there were important
differences between cities, regions, and countries, but also between
provisioning sectors. Catherine Denys has demonstrated this for
eighteenth-century police forces in Europe: most towns addressed the
same issues, and town governments usually shared the same analysis of
how to solve problems of policing; but in the end their actions were
controlled by the particular local circumstances of each town. Secondly,
reallocations of facilities in pre-modern cities resulted not from one
decisive factor, but from a complex set of demographic, economic, social,
political, and personal causes. Thirdly, although significant changes in the
system of provisioning occurred during the early modern period, such
alterations were always firmly rooted in traditional conceptions of how the
common interest should be best served.[51]

Path dependency clearly shaped how the various services providers
performed and reformed their public tasks. The case of the eighteen-
century police force in European towns shows that governments
attempting to replace civil guards by professional forces could realize such
reformations only by using traditional networks. Historians who examined
changes in early modern public services have arrived at similar
conclusions.[52] Parker, for example, argues that from the viewpoint of
Dutch magistrates, the reorganization of social provisions in the sixteenth

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[50] Ibidem, 54-55. See for this line of reasoning also Richard C. Trexler, "Charity
and the defense of the urban elites in the Italian communes," in Frederic C. Jaher,
ed., *The rich, well-born, and the powerful. Elites and upper class in history*
(Champaign, 1973); Anne McCants, "Nederlands republicanism en de politiek van
liefdadigheid," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 22: 4 (1996): 443-455.
[51] Catherine Denys, "The Development of Police Forces in Urban Europe in the
Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Urban History* 36:3 (2010), 332-345.
[52] Also Elizabeth Tingle, "Stability in the Urban Community in a Time of War:
Police, Protestantism and Poor Relief in Nantes during the French Wars of
Religion, 1562-89," *European History Quarterly* 36:4 (2006): 521-547.

and seventeenth centuries was rooted in the paternalistic obligation to the civic community. [53] In her examination of sanitary facilities, Dolly Jørgensen observes that English town councils actively developed strategies to provide services because such facilities fit their larger understanding of the public good. Indeed, actors in the field of social provisions legitimized their actions by referring to the common good, claiming that their activities would benefit the urban community as a whole. [54]

Actively providing public services was a demonstration of one's central position in the urban community. Marc Boone shows for late medieval Ghent that guilds operated in the field of conflict regulation to justify their position within the urban community. Their activities as judges were not limited to occupation-related cases; they also dealt with sexual offences such as assault and rape. By copying the institutional framework of the magistrates – even their official clothes resembled those of the town aldermen – they established and confirmed their authority within the urban community. [55] The obligations and rights in such a system of provisioning went both ways: citizens performed public duties to fulfil their role of good citizens, and in doing so they served the city. Yet clearly such activities may have served their own private interests as well. As Black explains, in early modern towns, the ideal of the common good might have been employed as an ideological defence of the interests of guilds, families or political factions. [56]

Ideals of peace, common good and collective interests were key elements in the ideological foundation of civic communities since the late Middle Ages, or what Black identifies as 'the ethos of early modern towns'. [57] The rationale of the existence of the autonomous cities was defined by their initial purpose; a social, legal, and economic shelter for those who lived within the town walls. The range of activities that city

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[53] Charles Parker, "The Pillars of a New Community: Conflicts and Cooperation over Poor Relief in post-Reformation Holland, "in Van der Heijden, *Serving the Urban Community,* 155-167.

[54] Dolly Jørgensen, ''"All Good Rule of the Citee" : Sanitation and Civic Government in England, 1400-1600," *Journal of Urban History* 36:3 (2010), 300-316.

[55] Marc Boone, "Les gens de métiers à l'epoque corporative à Gand et les litiges professionels (1350-1450)," in Marc Boone and Maarten Prak, eds., *Individual, corporate and judicial status in European cities (late middle ages and early modern period)* (Leuven/Apeldoorn: Aksant, 1996), 23-48.

[56] Black, *Guild & State*, 70.

[57] Ibid., 44-65.

governments, church bodies, and corporate organizations undertook were intended to secure the basic requirements of civic life: public security and social welfare. As a consequence, poverty, legislation, and public order were the most obvious areas of widespread civic public concern. This study aims to include the whole spectrum of facilities provided in the towns of the Low Countries, but the initial purpose of early modern civic communities directs the attention to areas of public security and social order.

Civic duty

The link between public services, collective interest, and notions of the common good brings us to another relevant question: what were the purposes that lay behind civic activism? Did magistrates, guild masters, and civic guards truly intend to serve the common interest or were they primarily building networks and power positions to serve their own interests and those of their families and friends? Recently, Sheila Ogilvie renewed the discussion about the efficiency of pre-industrial guilds, debating whether such institutions might have been obstacles to rational economic reform and development. Ogilvie strongly argues that the rent-seeking guilds in pre-industrial Germany generated no demonstrable positive externalities, and that they persisted only because they redistributed resources to powerful groups in society.[58] In other words: local interest and the selfishness of corporations triumphed over economic reason. The question is whether Ogilvie's rather pessimistic interpretation of the guilds' functioning helps us to understand the role of guilds and corporations in the system of public provisioning.

There is also the more optimistic point of view of Slack, who stresses that there was another side to the 'unconstructive' guilds and corporations: their voluntary activities provided a variety of civic forms of welfare provisions.[59] While Ogilvie emphasizes the unprofessional and self-seeking character of such corporations, Slack points instead to the multitude of services for citizens in civic communities. Here again, seeing the early modern civic communities as civil societies is crucial for explaining the activities of urban institutions and the role of citizens.

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[58] Sheila Ogilvie, "Whatever is, is right? Economic Institutions in pre-industrial Europe,", *Econonomic History Review* 60:4 (2007), 649-684 and "Rehabilitating the guilds: a Reply", *Economic History Review*. 61:1 (2008): 175-182; S.R. Epstein, "Craft guilds in the pre-modern economy: a discussion," *Economic History Review* 61:1 (2008): 155-174. Slack, *From Reform to Improvement*, 159.
[59] Slack, *From Reform to Improvement*, 159-160.