PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE: CIVIL SERVANTS IN
DORDRECHT, 1550-1795*

Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk
Leiden University, the Netherlands

Introduction

Ever since his famous work *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (“Economy and society”) appeared in 1922, Max Weber’s concept of bureaucratization has been further elaborated as well as fiercely debated. Especially concerning the bureaucratization of public administration, either on the local or on the national level, the subject has received ample attention. Although Weber himself ascribed as many as twenty characteristics to an ideal-typical bureaucracy, many authors after him have sought to simplify his model. Most of them, however, include the following features into their model: a continuous, hierarchically structured administration, with a high degree of division of labour (or: specialization), established rules and procedures, competent (trained) professionals appointed on full-time and paid positions, and an expanding administration, separate from ownership. In any case, Weber’s ideal-type of bureaucratic administration is typified by a high degree of what he calls rational organization.

Weber’s bureaucratic model thus consisted of many characteristics, and several sociologists have attempted to measure the degree of bureaucratization in various societal contexts. These studies are quite useful in showing that there is a great deal of variation in bureaucratic systems and organization, and furthermore, that in some contexts increasing bureaucratization may have entailed more rational organization, where in other contexts, the opposite was the case. It is highly probable that in the early modern period, alternative approaches were more ‘rational’ than the bureaucratic one. In fact, so many of Weber’s bureaucratic features were underdeveloped in early modern times, that it could scarcely be called a ‘bureaucratic system’ as empirical historical studies point out. However, this does not mean that all tendencies towards what we would call a more ‘professional’ organization of public administration were absent in early modern society.

Although bureaucratization and professionalization are certainly related, it would be unwise to consider them as interchangeable concepts. Professionalization is often defined as the transformation of occupations into independent professions with certain characteristics, normally including full time occupational performance, formal educational requirements, a certain code of professional ethics and rules and the formation of professional associations and a professional identity. Sociologists generally associate this transformation with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some historians, however, trace the roots of occupational professionalization to the early modern, or even the medieval period. In my opinion, this is justified by employing a somewhat broader definition of professionalization than most sociologists do, which embodies some aspects of Weber’s bureaucratization. This broader definition implies a general development towards more professional organization, which may occur on the level of the department or sector as well as on the level of the individual occupation.
Characteristics of this development are:

1) increasing hierarchical organization within the professional group
2) tendency towards full-time, increasingly specialized occupation
3) creation of formal rules for recruitment and execution of the job
4) requirement of formal (academic) education
5) fixed payment

As we can see, certain characteristics of this conception of professionalization are scarcely to be distinguished from certain aspects of Weber’s model of bureaucratization, most notably from his characterization of the bureaucratized staff. In the sense of professionalization of public administration, bureaucratization may to a certain extent indeed have taken place in early modern societies. Therefore, I am inclined to consider professionalization of public administration to be a specific aspect of bureaucratization, which can nevertheless be analysed as a process on its own, without adopting the all-encompassing bureaucratic system as a model. Another advantage is that the criteria of professionalization, in contrast to those of bureaucratization, do not necessarily refer to a deterministic notion of ‘rationalization’ and ‘modernization’. This leads to the acknowledgement of the quite distinctive and contextually determined reason of ‘pre-modern’ societies on its own.

In this paper, I would like to empirically test to what extent professionalization of public services took place in an early modern town in Holland, Dordrecht. Employing the abovementioned five criteria, I want to uncover what degrees of professionalization occurred in public administration in general, and in three specific public services in particular: the city’s secretariat, the urban midwifery, and the city’s gatekeepers. Below, I will more extensively account for the choice of these particular occupational groups, but here it suffices to rank them as (relatively) high, middle and low status occupations in the public domain. I do not only intend to compare the degree of professionalization of these three groups in the early modern period, but also to explain similarities and differences in their respective developments.

As explanatory factors, some assumptions can be tested. First of all, it is likely that economic and demographic circumstances influenced the degree of professionalization. It may be assumed that in times of prosperity and population growth, cities were in need of a more professionalized administration, with more civil servants – both in absolute sense and in relation to the population – and that there were more financial possibilities for the local government to interfere in this process. Secondly, the degree of professionalization will have depended on the social standing of certain offices. On the one hand, it is likely that the higher ranked and most esteemed offices required more abilities and control. On the other hand, it may also have been that exactly the higher offices could benefit from a relatively great deal of autonomy, which, in fact, does conform to the narrow sociological definition of professionalization, but rather conflicts with the broader definition. Thirdly and finally, it is to be seen how the type of service influenced the degree of professionalization in terms of their perceived importance to the community. It may for instance be assumed that occupations in the sphere of health care and law and order were traditionally considered to have required more professional skills and training than for instance the domains of trade and transport, public works, etc. Presumably, general administration was a sort of in-between in this respect, gaining more significance in the eyes of contemporaries and therefore professionalizing to a greater
extent in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also retaining a great deal of autonomy.

**The development of public services in Dordrecht**

Around 1570 the port town of Dordrecht, situated in the south-west of the province of Holland, had arrived at a turning point in its history. Several years before, members of the Dutch gentry, supported by an alliance of cities, had started revolting against the Spanish king, Philip II. As one of the oldest cities of Holland, and for a long time the most important staple of the Northern Netherlands, Dordrecht remained loyal to Philip until 1572. However, when its trade interests could obviously not be guaranteed by the Spanish armies, Dordrecht, after some internal political struggle, decided to join the revolting cities, provided that it could maintain most of its staple privileges. 

Contributing to this alteration were the city’s enduring economic crisis, increasingly threatened by Spanish tax reforms and by competition from the neighbouring harbour town of Rotterdam. Dordrecht’s economy soon started to profit from the general upswing followed by the Dutch Revolt, and like in other Holland towns, things turned for the better around 1580.

**Figure 1 – Map of Dordrecht, 17th century**

Source: http://www.wereldorientatie.net/htm/kaarten/pages/Dordrecht_jpg.htm
These developments in Dordrecht are mirrored in fluctuations of the city’s financial balance, which some have even described as the “measure of prosperity”. Although there are some significant flaws to the use of urban financial accounts as a source for an accurate historical reconstruction of the economy and society, they nevertheless give an impression of several aspects of the early modern urban society, ranging from the economic position of the town to everyday life of its citizens. With regard to public services, the main subject of this essay, Dordrecht’s financial records form at least a reasonable indication for the government’s investments in several domains of public interest, and moreover, of changes over time. For instance, throughout the early modern period public works, such as the maintenance of roads, canals and buildings formed an important responsibility of the urban government (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2 – Relative expenditure of Dordrecht for several survey years, 1575-1790**

From the graph we learn that the relative expenses of the various public domains fluctuated from year to year. Partly, this reflects the specific circumstances in the chosen survey years, as for instance the expenditure on military defence in the first decades of the war against Spain, and the expenses on public works varied considerably from year to year as well. Nevertheless, certain trends can be discerned in the development of government expenditure. For one thing, the interest paid on loans slowly but surely gained relative importance, most notably in the eighteenth century. Loans formed a significant part of the city’s revenues, but at the same time the interest to be paid became an ever greater burden.

Another consistent trend is the low public expenditure on poor relief. This did not mean that the Dordrecht government did not take any responsibility for the poor relief of its citizens. Rather, they had delegated charity to the (public) Reformed Church welfare board (*Diaconie*). Indirectly however, the urban authorities contributed by passing on the returns from several (indirect) taxes and fines to the *Diaconie*. Usually, these amounts
were not registered as such in the financial administration, which explains their virtual absence in Figure 2. In the course of the eighteenth century, more and more indirect taxes were raised as a result of the increasing problem of poverty, and the direct government contribution rose as well, as Figure 2 points out.²³

Furthermore, the growing expenditure on salaries of urban officials, most notably in the first half of the seventeenth century, is striking. Between 1602 and 1655, government spending on civil servants rose from around 15 to almost 42 per cent.²⁴ Although the first year of reference, 1602, is perhaps a bit coloured by the high expenditure on military defence, the relative growth of urban salaries remains remarkable when we leave military expenses out of the dataset: from 20 to 40 per cent. In absolute terms, the spending on salaries increased from 16,000 to 35,600 guilders (fl.), while the total of all expenses in fact declined in these two particular years.²⁵ This implies that the number of civil servants, and possibly also their individual earnings, rose noticeably during this period. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the share of expenditure on salaries of civil servants gradually declined to 38 per cent, to stabilize around 30 per cent in the eighteenth century. In absolute terms, this means an expenditure of fl. 38,000 in 1699, fl. 32,200 in 1750 and fl. 42,400 in 1790. Remarkably, other sources suggest that the number of civil servants did not decline between 1699 and 1750, but perhaps even increased somewhat!²⁶

These particular developments will be explained in the next section, where I will focus more specifically on (qualitative and quantitative changes in) the supply of Dordrecht’s civil servants. Based on varied literature dealing with public services and civil servants, I will first make two classifications of officials, one according to function and one according to field of activity in the public domain, relevant for the early modern period. Then, I will describe the developments of the civil staff in Dordrecht over time. In trying to find explanations for changes or continuities, I will link the developments in the city’s staff to more general economic and demographic trends, to test whether the first of my assumptions made in the introduction to this paper holds true.

**Dordrecht’s civil servants through better and worse**

In order to come to terms with the complexity of civil service in the early modern period, it is useful to make a categorization of public officials. While studying the historical and sociological literature on public servants, it struck me how many diverse classifications there are, and although some of them overlap, they all have quite their own distinctions (see Table 1 for a schematic overview).²⁷

Well-considered as these classifications may be, they all deliver problems when applying them to early modern urban administrations. Because of its crudity, Van Braam’s typology into three classes is applicable, but equally unspecific especially for its rather large third category. Therefore it does not do justice to the complexity of early modern civil service. Vries’ classification is somewhat more elaborated and focuses more on the type of appointment and payment. The problem here is that in most early modern cities, these features were rather blurred. For instance, one could have a position as a guardianship councillor, which was clearly a ‘subaltern’ office, but did not generate a fixed payment by the Dordrecht government, because it was prescribed that this function
was not to be remunerated. At the same time, many higher and lower offices received fixed payment as well as variable perquisites as a regular source of income.\textsuperscript{28}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 – Three classifications of civil servants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Governing officials e.g. city councillors, aldermen, sheriff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Civil officials e.g. trustees of orphanages and guest houses, superintendents of market and cloth hall, guardianship councillor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Functionaries (in fact all other civil servants assisting the city authorities, ranging from administrative to medical personnel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Raadschelders offers a somewhat different approach. While Van Braam and Vries merely focus on function and type of appointment, Raadschelders’ classification is rather based on specific working sphere of the officials. Nevertheless, this division is not absolute, because his categories 1 and 2 are based on position, instead of field of activity. For instance, his ‘governing officials’ might be burgomaster or sheriff (thus, either in the sphere of general administration or law). Furthermore, Raadschelders’ distinction between civil officials and functionaries is far from clear, at least less so than in Van Braam’s classification. This is why I distinguish between two typologies; one according to position and one according to work sphere in the public domain (see Tables 2 and 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 – Categorization civil servants according to position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I - Governing offices</strong> (see Vries, but: either with fixed pay or not)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a- magistrate offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b- subaltern offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II - Assisting offices</strong> (personnel working for the city, either fixed pay or not)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a- administrative offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b- non-administrative offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III - Other offices</strong> (personnel incidentally hired by the town (e.g. construction workers, but also notaries etc.), officials working outside the city)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 – Categorization civil servants according to working sphere

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>General administration, legislation, finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Enforcement of law and order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ecclesiastical services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Social care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Infrastructure, transport and trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sanitation, fire safety and public lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first categorization is useful when we want to find out more about the structure of the urban bureaucracy, and the relationship between the various types of appointments. More detailed analysis may also be able to distinguish the relationship between the various ways these officials were remunerated and whether or not there is a link between the position and the type of payment. The second categorization is particularly useful for identifying in more detail the fields of influence and interest of urban administrations. More than the general expenditure described in the previous section, the spending on salaries according to working sphere can show to what extent the urban government was able to interfere in several domains of public life in the city. In the following, I will employ especially this last method, based on Dordrecht’s city accounts.

As we have already noted, Dordrecht’s spending on salaries rose enormously from the end of the sixteenth until the end of the seventeenth century, most exponentially between 1575 and 1602 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Dordrecht’s spending on salaries, 1575-1790

Sources: see Figure 2.
This growth concerned all salaries, but most notably the general administrative and law enforcement staff (nos. 1 and 2): from fl. 1,750 to fl. 7,900 (4.5 times as much). The growing expenditure in this period corresponds with more qualitative data on the expansion of the city’s administration. Judging from the inventory of archives of Dordrecht’s secretariat, most administrations (protocols, marriage and burial registers, charge sheets, et cetera) either started or vastly expanded in the second half of the sixteenth century, most notably in the 1580s and 1590s.29

This ‘bureaucratization’ coincided with the explosive demographic growth Dordrecht experienced between 1575 and 1600, from about 12,000 to 18,000 inhabitants.30 While the population kept growing steadily – though not as spectacularly as before – at least until the 1630s, the absolute spending on civil servants grew even faster. In this period, it mainly concerned salaries of ecclesiastic services and people working in trade and transport. This suggests that there is a relationship between demographic change and the growth and decline of a bureaucratic staff. When the population grows at a fast rate, in first instance the ‘basic’ bureaucracy (staff in general administration and law and order) is extended, while in a period of consolidation and more moderate demographic growth, the civil staff is adjusted to the needs for other services. Of course, the number of civil servants did not always rise and fall in exact concordance with the total expenses on salaries. We also have to reckon with inflation, which occurred most severely in the first half of the seventeenth century. But even considering the rise of salaries, the list of civil servants is considerably longer in 1655 than in 1602, let alone 1575.31

As opposed to the previous century, the eighteenth century shows a relatively stable relationship between the relative expenses on staff in the several public domains. It is probable that the relations between the different domains were crystallized out by this time, and that this is reflected in the expenditure on salaries. Still, as noted, in absolute terms, payments declined between 1700 and 1750. More detailed analysis of individual salaries per category shows that this decline most severely hit ecclesiastical services (minus fl. 1,400)32 and people working in trade and transport (minus fl. 1,500). Apparently, in times of economic and demographic contraction, these were the areas on which the urban government cut down most severely.33 On the other hand, spending on salaries in general administration remained at exactly the same level, and salaries in law and order only minimally decreased.

Social care was never one of the largest expenditure entries in the urban accounts, but was considerably larger in the seventeenth than in the eighteenth century. As mentioned earlier, poor relief was mainly executed by the church, and most of the urban spending on social care concerned the city’s medical staff. In 1575, the Dordrecht authorities had already appointed one medical doctor, two surgeons and four midwives to provide poor citizens with the necessary medical care. In the first half of the seventeenth century, expenditure on medical care was relatively large, due to several epidemic outbursts. In some years, up to six medical doctors were appointed, next to the pestilence master and sick-visiting staff, who were paid very reasonable salaries because of the risks they were willing to take.34 After 1665, when Dordrecht had experienced its last occurrence of the plague, a stable number of two medical doctors, two surgeons and five midwives remained until the end of the eighteenth century.35
Although city accounts are a rich source for all kinds of historical research, they are far from exhaustive when one wants to capture the professionalization of public services. For one thing, many of the so-called ‘subaltern’ offices were not remunerated at all, and therefore they mostly do not occur in the city accounts. Yet these positions, usually filled by members of the regent elite, were considered to be civil offices, which could yield considerable status and power. They are consistently mentioned in another source, the books of officials, which in turn unfortunately only records the ‘governing officials’ (see Table 2), and leaves out many of the assisting offices. Furthermore, the city accounts do not register all assisting officials as well, because many of them did not receive a fixed salary, but instead charged individual citizens with their own tariffs for the services they provided. And even offices which were regularly paid could additionally be depending on emoluments that did not end up in the urban financial administration. For instance, the burgomasters’ secretary, Hendrik van der Walle, received a salary of fl. 300,- in 1749, but he also got a maximum of fl. 200,- extra emoluments in this particular year.

Another phenomenon which is not captured by the financial accounts is that of the substitute. In early modern Dordrecht, it was widespread use that the official who was appointed to a certain position sold the office to a substitute, who did the actual work for a lower salary. This practice was common on all levels of the public arena, and it is often denounced as belonging to patrimonial or unprofessional government structures. All these matters call for a more in-depth investigation of public services on the level of the individual occupation.

In this section it was shown that the Dordrecht civil service expanded significantly in the period 1575-1650. From the second half of the seventeenth century, a long period of stagnation and even some decline set in. I have also demonstrated a link between the growth of the local reservoir of officials and economic and demographic growth. However, this relationship was nonlinear. In first instance, around the turn of the seventeenth century, demographic increase stimulated especially the growth of general administration and law and order. But with the persisting economic progression in the following decades, other public tasks, such as ecclesiastical services and services in the sphere of trade and transport, expanded relatively more. And, when the economy started to stagnate and decline, as did Dordrecht’s population, the total number of public servants did not decline. Admittedly, the urban government spent less on their salaries in the course of the eighteenth century, but this decline scarcely hit the ‘core’ of the bureaucratic staff – the officials working for the general administration or maintaining law and order. Apparently, a certain level of bureaucracy was deemed necessary, despite the decrease of the Dordrecht population.

Obviously, these broad developments do not tell us all about the extent of professionalization as characterized in the introduction to this article. One of the reasons is that the general city accounts do not quite cover the many aspects of the process of professionalization. Apart from the number of offices and the salaries paid, more qualitative characteristics will need to be investigated. This can best be done at the level of the individual occupational group. Because it would not be attainable to do this for all offices in Dordrecht, I have decided to focus on the professional development of three different civil offices throughout the early modern period: the city’s secretaries, the city’s midwives and the city’s gatekeepers.
Professionals at work? A closer investigation of three occupations

In tables 2 and 3, I have made a categorization of civil servants, respectively according to type of appointment and working sphere. In this section, I intend to look at three types of officials who were all formally working for the city for (either fixed or flexible) salaries, thus category II (assisting offices, see Table 2). All three positions were administered in the city’s financial records, and this similarity makes the comparison relevant to rule out the type of appointment as an explanatory variable. Of course, there was one obvious difference, because the secretaries represented the administrative assisting offices (IIa), whereas midwives and gatekeepers can be ranked among the non-administrative assisting offices (IIb). This relates to the differences in the work sphere of the three offices: the secretaries were involved in general administration (category 1, Table 3), midwives in social care (category 4) and gatekeepers in the sphere of transport and trade (category 6). This enables us to analyse the role of work sphere with regard to professionalization.

Furthermore, there were differences in the social standing of the three offices under investigation. The city’s secretaries were high up in the social order, since they were the most important administrative officials of the city, responsible for Dordrecht’s entire administration, including all clerks. Midwives can be perceived as a middle-rank profession compared to all civil servants (if we for instance look at salaries), whereas gatekeeper were among the lowest of the public officials. In this way, we can also include the impact of varying social status on the professionalization of public offices in our analysis.

The city’s secretaries
The administrative staff of Dordrecht consisted of several secretaries and clerks. For instance, the burgomaster had his own secretary in the sixteenth century, and so did the aldermen. Nevertheless, in the sixteenth century Dordrecht only had one city secretary (stadssecretaris), who was the highest civil servant after the pensionary. Dordrecht already had a city secretary in the fifteenth century, and perhaps earlier. The secretary and his clerks served both the general administration and the judicial court (camere van justitie). Among their most important tasks were making notes at the general meetings of the city council, registering ordinances by the government and requests by civilians, writing letters and keeping the charge sheets of the court.

Table 4 lists Dordrecht secretaries (and their substitutes) from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth century. Some remarkable conclusions can be drawn from this list. First of all, the dominance of the Berck family from 1591 to 1667 strikes the eye. Indeed, Johan Berck was the father and grandfather of the subsequent secretaries. Apart from secretary, Johan was also Dordrecht’s pensionary from 1591 to 1618. For this particular position, he had to perform many representative duties for the city abroad. In 1607 and 1610 for instance, he stayed in England for a longer period of time, and in 1618 he travelled to Denmark. Moreover, from 1622 to 1627 he resided in Venice as an ambassador. Not surprisingly, Berck needed a substitute to observe his duties as a secretary back home. The use of substitutes was very common throughout all layers of civil service, and it was not restricted to Dordrecht. It is often regarded as an unprofessional, archaic way of filling positions, but I think this has to be problematized. Although Johan Berck’s substitutes were clearly not academically educated, as opposed
to himself, they stayed in their position for quite some years, and it is therefore possible that they functioned quite well. Anyhow, there seemed to have been no objections to their appointment in this particular case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4 – Dordrecht’s secretaries, 1570-1795</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>period</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1570-1591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1591-1622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1607-1622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622-1655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1655-1667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1668-1670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1670-1693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1693-1729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1729-1745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1745-1786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786-1794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Balen (1667), 357-358; Van Dalen (1933), 221.

Another possible doubt on the professionalism of the position of secretary is its apparent hereditary character, which raises the question of venality. For almost a century, the Berck family filled the position of secretary. Officially, the position was not hereditary, but in practice, the Berck family had a lot to say about their own succession. This appears from a request in 1645, in which Matthijs Berck, the current secretary, asked Dordrecht’s burgomaster Abraham van Beveren whether his eldest son, Johan Berck, could succeed him in this position, either already during his lifetime or after his future death. Matthijs granted his request extra weight by stating that both he and his late father Johan Berck had dutifully served the city of Dordrecht in this particular function for many years. The burgomaster and aldermen granted his request, and seven years later, in 1652, the actual succession in practice, the observation (waarneming) of the secretariat by Johan was implemented, due to Matthijs’s ‘extreme old age’. Regardless of the official channels through which it was achieved, securing a high office in this way obviously does not have the ‘professional’ characteristics of recruitment I have formulated in the introduction to this paper.

Another feature of the secretary’s position in this particular period was that it could be combined with other important and strenuous positions, such as that of the city’s pensionary. All three Berck men were for at least some time also pensionary, and the oldest Berck even spent a considerable time abroad in order to fulfil this position. This suggests that actual specialization of the secretary’s office had not been very much carried through during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At least from around 1600 onwards, the secretary received an annual salary from the city which was quite comfortable compared to other Dordrecht officials. In 1602, Johan Berck received the
sum of 600 guilders for his duties as the pensionary, whereas his substitute at the secretariat received 150 guilders. The salary for the substitute was thus not subtracted from Berck’s own fee, but directly paid by the city, implying a formalization of this substitution as well as control by the city’s authorities. In 1655, his son Matthijs received the same amounts of money: 600 guilders for his duties as a pensionary and 150 for his work as the city’s secretary. Although the bulk of the secretary’s income was constituted by the emoluments he received from his clients, we should not underestimate the value of this extra per annum pensionaries and secretaries were paid, especially when the positions were combined, as was often the case.

Apparently, the city’s authorities wanted to change these practices. A few months after Johan Berck (the younger) died in 1667, they issued a very detailed instruction for the city’s secretary, leading to major changes in the office. First of all, from now on, two secretaries would be appointed. Although it is not made explicit in the document, this measure suggests that the workload may have increased too much for one person in the course of the seventeenth century. Another reason may have been a more deeply felt need for control of the office. This is also suggested by the fact that both secretaries had to change shifts regularly: every other month, one of them would serve the court and the other the town council.

The instruction furthermore comprised a detailed description of all the tasks and duties of the secretaries, as well as their having to be present at specific hours. Also, and this is very important, it was explicitly stated that the office of secretary could by no means be combined with the position of pensionary, and that these offices instead would always be separated. Another important ordinance was that the secretaries in no way were allowed to interfere in matters concerning appointments, applications and government affairs in general. This probably also concerned their own position, making the venality of their function increasingly improbable (though not impossible, as we can see in table 4). Furthermore, it was decided that the consigned money secretaries received at the courts, was not to be used for personal ends, but instead to be rendered to the city’s treasury as soon as possible, unless the court decided otherwise.

All these regulations appear to have led to the professionalization of the secretary’s office. Nevertheless, there were also stipulations which do not conform to the criteria mentioned above. For one thing, it was explicitly stated that the secretaries (apart from a small payment for the registration of a certain tax) did not receive a fixed salary, but had to gain their income from the emoluments they received for performing their specific duties. Moreover, the secretaries had to pay their clerks’ salaries from their own pockets, which seem to suggest that the secretary’s office retained a highly patrimonial structure. Secondly, there were no formal requirements for the recruitment of the secretary, and although in practice they were mostly academically educated men (see their title of mr. (LLM) in Table 4), this was not formally demanded.

In the early eighteenth century, again steps were undertaken towards further circumscription and control of the secretariat’s office. In 1723 the city council decided that the consigned money of the orphan’s court (Weeskamer) that was raised under the responsibility of the secretary during his lifetime, was no longer to be conveyed to his heirs after his death, as had been common practice before. And three years later, in 1726, a detailed instruction for the clerks was issued, which means that professionalization was not restricted to the higher offices, but also infiltrated the lower
offices within time. It was stated that the clerks had to be in the office from 9:00 to 12:00 and from 14:00 to 16:00, or longer if their work required so. They had to obey to the secretaries’ instructions and were not to leave town without their explicit permission. Furthermore, they could not ask their civilian clients for emoluments, but they had to be satisfied with the fixed salaries granted to them by the secretaries.

All in all, there are strong indications that the city secretariat experienced a great deal of professionalization in the last decades of the seventeenth and the first decades of the eighteenth century. First of all, an increasing hierarchy was created, with the appointment of two secretaries and explicit instructions how to govern their clerks. Secondly, there were an increasing number of rules and instructions concerning the secretary’s position and his office over this period, an indication of formalization and increasing control by the authorities. Thirdly, there was increasing specialization, since from 1668 onwards it was forbidden to combine the secretariat with the office of pensionary. This also had to do with the wide variety of tasks the secretary had to perform according to the instruction, implying that it was a full-time job, which even required two people.

Nevertheless, there are also certain indications that this apparent process of professionalization was by no means final. Although in practice the secretary’s office was usually not hereditary, and substitutes seem to have become less common, there were no formal regulations to enforce this. Thus, according to the list of civil servants in 1749, the duties of first secretary Jacob Karsseboom were in fact performed by mr. Johan Beudt. Moreover, the secretaries’ payment was still not fixed, but by regulation rather consisted of emoluments, which could amount to quite considerable sums of money! However, the city council did take measures to enlarge its control over the secretaries’ finances, for instance by stipulating that their consigned money was to be returned to the treasury as soon as possible and was not to be transmitted to their heirs. Taken all these characteristics into account, I would therefore label the developments in Dordrecht’s secretariat as a moderate process towards professionalization of the office.

The city’s midwives
At least from the end of the fifteenth century, Dordrecht’s authorities felt responsible for the delivery of babies of the less fortunate female citizens. According to the treasurer’s accounts of 1496, two city midwives received a salary. Respectively in 1512 and in 1535, their number increased to three and four, and at the end of the sixteenth century, the authorities even appointed a midwife for Dordrecht’s jurisdiction outside the city walls (the extra-ordinaris vroedvrouw – extraordinary midwife). Furthermore, in times of pestilence, one midwife was especially assigned (and accordingly paid extra salary) to take care only of the contaminated pregnant women.

For as far as we know, there were no specific instructions for the midwives until the beginning of the eighteenth century, but there were nevertheless more or less defined expectations regarding their duties. For one thing, like all other city officials, they had to take a yearly oath at least from the first half of the seventeenth century. In this oath the city’s midwives had to declare to render their services to “all the poor women living off welfare in this town, as well as to others, without being in any way negligible.” What this neglect exactly meant, was not circumscribed, but it is at least clear that the midwives were obligated to help all women in labour who called for them, both if they
were poor, and if they were not. One important precondition on which the oath dwells extensively (and in far more detail than on any other requirement) was that the midwife found out who the baby’s father was before she delivered it, in order to get the mother married as soon as possible afterwards, in case she was unmarried. Apparently, it was customary practice that midwives interrogated the labouring mother at the peak of their delivery, since “times of the heaviest pains of childbirth were the most suitable moment to let the guilty conscience speak”.

Other activities by midwives we can derive from non-prescriptive sources, such as requests to the town council. One of these practices, which was already prevalent from the beginning of the seventeenth century, was the visits they paid to pregnant women: already in the early modern period, there was some sort of antenatal control. Furthermore, there is some evidence that midwives treated gynaecological affections, for instance by prescribing and preparing medication. It even occurred that medical doctors called for a midwife to cure gynaecological ailments. Another frequent role of the city’s midwives was that of expert witness for the town’s judicial court, for instance in the case of illegal births, or to decide whether a woman performed an illegal abortion. Moreover, when a woman was under suspicion of infanticide, she usually received a gynaecological examination by one of the city’s midwives.

Not much is known about the formal requirements for city midwives until the beginning of the eighteenth century, but it is to be expected that she was at least expected to have practical experience and proof that she was a legitimate midwife. It was only in 1720 that the first, very detailed, instruction for midwives was issued, but we may assume that some of the already prevalent practices were also integrated in this document. The fact that for the first time rules were elaborately laid down, nevertheless points to a great deal of professionalization. This tendency is also visible in other parts of the Dutch Republic from the end of the seventeenth century.

According to the 1720 instruction, Dordrecht’s midwives had to have legal proof that they were admitted to the practice of midwifery. It was explicitly stated that certificates from outside the city were not valid, and that midwives from elsewhere had to be examined again in order to obtain their licence. Furthermore, they were to be at least 25 years old, to have inherited or bought citizenship rights, to be able to read and write, and to have given birth to at least one child themselves. It is remarkable that – perhaps apart from the last requirement – none of these formal requirements had much to do with the abilities and experience to deliver babies. Nevertheless, these requirements were also present in midwives’ instructions in many other Dutch towns in this period, and they were definitely deemed very important at the time.

However, in contrast to some instructions in other towns, the Dordrecht instruction continued with a very long list of detailed prescriptions regarding the professional prerequisites and behaviour of the city’s midwives. For a minimum of three years before their exam, midwives had to assist a licensed midwife, who had at least performed her work for ten years, and they had to at least perform sixteen deliveries with their mistress. Remarkably, daughters of midwives “who have attended this work with their mothers from their young days”, were exempted from this formal entry requirement. They could suffice with one year of ‘internship’ with their mothers before they were admitted to the exam. The exam was taken by the city’s medical doctors and surgeons. Apart from this practical experience, there were also stipulations about the behaviour of
midwives: they had to be sober and calm, and they had to prevent women in labour from panicking. Moreover, midwives were explicitly forbidden to handle extraordinary deliveries or the use of instruments unless they had called in the advice of at least two of the examiners.\textsuperscript{68}

This leads us to the creation of a hierarchy within the medical profession, which is sometimes also referred to as the medicalization of midwifery.\textsuperscript{69} As mentioned above, the midwives’ exam was taken by (male) doctors and surgeons. In some towns, such as Utrecht, the city’s midwives were also involved in the exam, but this was not the case in Dordrecht. According to Drogendijk, the examination by male medical practitioners was already common in the seventeenth century and perhaps earlier.\textsuperscript{70} But explicitly regulating this, as well as the interdiction of the use of obstetric instruments, points to a need to formalize and tighten the hierarchical relations between the medical professions. Also, it points to an increasing wish of the city to enlarge its control of midwives, and of medical practice in general.

In this respect, the establishment of the \textit{Collegium Medicum} in 1755 is also noteworthy. Despite regulations, there were still many unlicensed medical practitioners in Dordrecht, “by which not only many people have been bereft of money, but also of health”, according to the authorities. The \textit{Collegium} therefore had to verify the certificates of all practising doctors, surgeons, pharmacists and midwives within Dordrecht’s jurisdiction. However in fact, only one case concerning the city’s midwifery appeared before the \textit{Collegium} between 1755 and 1795. This involved surgeon Cletton and his housewife, a midwife from a nearby village, who were both illegally practising their profession within the city walls of Dordrecht. Although they were both found guilty in 1790 and again in 1791 with various illegal treatments, they were only definitely expelled from the town in 1793 after several new offences. Obviously, the \textit{Collegium} had only limited controlling power.\textsuperscript{71}

In the \textit{Collegium}’s establishment act, apart from many stipulations regarding the control of the various professional groups, the boundaries of their specific competencies were also explicitly defined. These prescriptions meant that medical doctors were forbidden to practise surgery, doctors and surgeons were not to hold chemist’s shops, whereas pharmacist were not allowed to visit patients more than once or give medical advice outside the sphere of the medication they provided. Thus, the medical professions were clearly demarcated, implying a specialization of the field.\textsuperscript{72}

Remarkably, midwives were not at all mentioned in this particular stipulation. On the other hand, the only surgical interventions medical doctors were allowed to do without notifying the surgeon’s guild, were obstetric surgeries. Thus, the midwives’ profession was increasingly controlled, but as opposed to other medical professions, not protected by the \textit{Collegium}! This clearly indicates their low status in the field. This was comparable to other cities all over Europe, in which midwives felt the increasing competition from male obstetricians (\textit{vroedmeesters}).\textsuperscript{73} Compared to other cities, Dordrecht appointed a city’s obstetrician rather late, in 1792.\textsuperscript{74} Nevertheless, like elsewhere, the occupation of midwives was professionalized and marginalized at the same time due to these developments towards medicalization.

This eighteenth-century marginalization was however not visible in the salaries paid to the city’s midwives (see Table 5).
Table 5 – Dordrecht’s city midwives’ annual salaries, 1575-1790 (in guilders)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>year</th>
<th>midwife 1</th>
<th>midwife 2</th>
<th>midwife 3</th>
<th>midwife 4</th>
<th>midwife 5 (extraordinary)</th>
<th>midwife 6</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1575</td>
<td>36,-</td>
<td>21,- (half year’s fee)</td>
<td>21,- (half year’s fee)</td>
<td>31,50 (half year’s fee)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>109,50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td>54,--</td>
<td>48,--</td>
<td>54,--</td>
<td>44,--</td>
<td>10,--</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>220,--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1655</td>
<td>225,--</td>
<td>72,--</td>
<td>72,--</td>
<td>72,--</td>
<td>80,--</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>521,--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1699</td>
<td>112,50</td>
<td>72,--</td>
<td>72,--</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80,--</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>336,50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1720</td>
<td>90,--</td>
<td>54,--</td>
<td>52,--</td>
<td>30,--</td>
<td>90,--</td>
<td>26,--</td>
<td>342,--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>90,--</td>
<td>76,75</td>
<td>76,75</td>
<td>76,75</td>
<td>90,--</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>410,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>90,--</td>
<td>90,--</td>
<td>90,--</td>
<td>90,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>510,--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1761</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>750,--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>150,--</td>
<td>900,--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. nos. 2598, 1617, 2659, 3056 and 3107. Drogendijk (1935), 64-65.

Although the yearly salaries show a quite volatile development, with at least until the early eighteenth century very variable amounts among the different midwives, the overall trend is as follows. In the first half of the seventeenth century a sharp rise occurred, consistent with the development of wages in the Dutch Republic in general and that of civil servants in Dordrecht in particular (see above). In the second half of the century, the midwives’ wages started to decline, a process that would continue until about 1730. Then, their salaries gradually rose to 150 guilders at the end of the century.  

Until 1722 the city midwife’s salary depended both on the number of years of service and on her position compared with the other midwives: the longest in service received the highest salary, which could amount to quite an extensive difference (see e.g. 1655 and 1699). In 1722 the city decided to equalize the midwives’ wages, but only in case of the death of one of them, in order to protect the practising midwives for the loss of income. In 1750 this equalization was almost established; only the old midwife outside the city walls received a different salary. Apparently, she did not die soon, because in 1760 the city council finally decided to standardize all fees at once, and fix it at 150 guilders. This salary was still prevalent in 1790.

In conclusion, there are many signs that the job of the city midwife professionalized a great deal in the period under investigation, and mainly from the early eighteenth century onwards. Although it was probably based on earlier (unwritten?) rules, the 1720 instruction was a clear turning point in the city’s midwives’ history. First of all, their tasks were circumscribed in detail in this document, containing prescriptions regarding the midwives’ requirements, abilities, duties and behaviour. Secondly, the ongoing specialization and medicalization of the profession was documented, for instance by prohibiting the use of instruments and the need to call in doctors or obstetricians in case of extraordinary deliveries. This increasing competition by male medical specialists occurred in the entire Dutch Republic, leading to a stricter control and a more formalized hierarchy within the medical field in general.

Control on the midwives had existed in Dordrecht at least since the beginning of the seventeenth century because they were examined by the city’s medical doctors, which was also laid down in the instruction of 1720. From 1755, the *Collegium Medicum* provided for an increased degree of control, at least in theory. In practice, however, midwives hardly ever appeared before this *Collegium* until 1795, and city midwives never did, which implies that they functioned quite well in this period.
With regard to the hierarchy within midwifery, some things changed as well. Whereas before 1700 the salary of midwives was to a high degree based on the length of their appointment, this distinction more and more lost ground. From 1722 onwards, the individual salaries from the five (and from time to time six) midwives converged towards fixed and equal amounts. They were no longer based on seniority and personal bargaining, a development which culminated in their officially decreed standardization in 1760.

The city’s porters
Dordrecht had a quite typical geographical situation. Since a dramatic flood in 1421 (the Sint-Elisabethsvloed), it had been an island surrounded by several waterways. At the end of the sixteenth century, however, when the population grew spectacularly, the city’s authorities started to reclaim land, especially to the south of Dordrecht. Despite these reclamations, the city remained surrounded by water, as is also visible in Figure 1 above. Around 1600, several new harbours were dug, in order to contribute to Dordrecht’s accessibility for sea traders. Although Amsterdam and Rotterdam had taken over its function as the main port of the Northern Netherlands, Dordrecht remained an important trading place and the overall economic upswing created a need for new docks and wharfs.\footnote{77}

Along the embankments of Dordrecht, several gates formed an important part of the city’s defence, originally meant to protect the population from naval attacks. In the seventeenth century, however, the main function of the gates was to hermetically close the city each night for outsiders and in case of imminent danger. Because the gates were guarded permanently they – together with numerous locks – also served as the principal point of administration of all transport of goods and people to and from the town. After most harbours had been constructed, Dordrecht had no less than sixteen gates.\footnote{78}

Together with the permanent supervision of the locks, this created a lot of work for officials as gatekeepers (portiers), lockkeepers (sluiswachters) and barrier-closers (boomsluiters). At some gates, a superintendent for the harbour was appointed as well, and two of the gates were also used as a prison, which provided work for two city jailers. In total, the gates, locks and bridges to the town amounted to 19 offices in 1602, and an even larger number of 26 in 1655. This number of 26 officials remained stable until the end of our research period.\footnote{79}

Apart from the supervision of gates, locks and bridges, some gatekeepers had to keep an administration of all non-citizens entering the gates. This was done at the Groothoofdsport, the main gate in the northeast of the town, at the Vuylpoort in the northwest and at the Rietdijkspoort, in the east. These were the main naval gateways to Dordrecht. An administration was also kept at the St. Jorispoort and at the Blauwpoort and the Sluyspoort in the south of the city.\footnote{80} In some cases, the gatekeeper and the clerk (schrijver) at these gates were the same person (as for instance in the case of the Rietdijkspoort in 1655), but it was also possible that these tasks were separated, such as at the Groothoofdsport in 1602. Apart from his – low – annual salary, the gatekeeper also received a small toll from each incoming person. It was thus in his interest to keep a sharp eye on everybody who entered the city’s gates.

It is very likely that most of these positions were not fulltime. Although the gatekeeper had to be permanently present at the gate, he (or, occasionally, she) could apparently attend to several jobs at the same time. For instance, in 1655, the gatekeeper
of the *St. Jorispoort* was at the same time gatekeeper and bridge keeper at the *Vriesepoort*.\textsuperscript{81} Since these gates lay next to each other – though about 100 metres apart – these functions were apparently easy to combine. In 1699, both positions were administered as one (“the gatekeeper of the St. Joris- and the Vriesepoort”), so it is likely that the work was not strenuous enough to be performed by two people.\textsuperscript{82} We also know that gatekeepers could have other obligations, unrelated to their work, such as Sacharias Woutersz, who was gatekeeper at the Groothoofspoort and at the same time the city’s broker in hop around 1635.\textsuperscript{83} Another phenomenon among gatekeepers was the use of substitutes, as appears from various archival records. Sometimes, it concerned a widow who received even less than the formally appointed gatekeeper, but sometimes the substitute was actually the relative of a gatekeeper who was actually too old to perform the job.\textsuperscript{84}

About the requirements and recruitment for these positions, not much is known. It is conceivable that gatekeepers were supposed to be able to read and write, in order to keep their administration, but the fact that in some years there were separate clerks suggests that this was no necessity. The job could apparently be flexibly constituted, according to the abilities of the applicant. Nevertheless, it was occasionally mentioned in the city council’s resolutions that gatekeepers had to be “useful and capable” (*tot nut ende bequaem*) for performing their duties at the gate.\textsuperscript{85} In practice, it is debatable what this actually meant for the capabilities of the applicant, because on numerous occasions, people made requests to the city in order to obtain the first vacant position available. This kind of application was probably most common for the lower skilled offices. In February 1666 for instance, Govert Jansz requested to the authorities to be able to obtain the first vacant position as a gatekeeper. When in October of that year the gatekeeper of the Blauwe poort died, Govert was indeed allowed to fill his position.\textsuperscript{86}

That it was indeed worthwhile to claim offices at the gates in this way, is shown by the example of Jan Ghijsberts, who in 1634 had been a gatekeeper at the Groothoofspoort for 26 years. He requested that his son-in-law, the abovementioned Sacharias Woutersz, who had helped him in previous years with the job, would be allowed to succeed his father-in-law as a gatekeeper, since Jan had become too old for performing the work. The authorities indeed granted him this request. Remarkably, fourteen years later Sacharias made a successful request to hand over the position to his son, Vastart Sachariasz.\textsuperscript{87} Apparently, patrimonial structures were not the prerequisite of more important positions such as the city’s secretaries, but were also vital for the lower positions such as gatekeepers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6 – Annual salary of the officials at the Groothoofspoort, 1602-1790 (in guilders)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gatekeeper/clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harbour intendant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barrier closer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\* In 1750 and 1790, the harbour intendent and barrier closer were the same person.
Source: GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. nos. 2598, 2617, 3056, 3107 and 3147.
As for the fixed salaries the gatekeepers received, these remained surprisingly stable over the years. If we again take the Groothoofdsport as an example, we can discern the following development in the city’s annual payment (but equal developments occurred in the other positions at the gates). The fact that remarkably little changed in the salaries of the gatekeepers, in spite of overall changes in real wages throughout the period, may be due to the fact that the larger part of these officials’ income was derived from the emoluments they received by passengers and tradespeople entering the city of Dordrecht. This could amount to substantial gains, as appears from a city council resolution in 1720. It was stated that the gatekeepers and barrier closers demanded amounts based on “their own fantasy”, and that they tried to get money from incoming people for each time they crossed the city gates, whereas the rule was that they only had to pay the toll once on a particular day.

To prevent these malpractices, and to regulate some other things that went wrong, such as the fact that the gatekeepers opened the gates too late and/or closed them too early, a very detailed resolution was issued by the city government on 3 September 1720. For every month (obviously depending on variations in daylight), the exact opening and closing hours of the gates and locks were prescribed in detail. The gatekeepers were also instructed to announce the opening and closing of the gates half an hour in advance by ringing the tower bells. Obviously, gatekeepers were frequently absent from their posts and simply kept the gates and bridges closed during the day, leading to inaccessibility of the town. Furthermore, with regard to the emoluments, it was stipulated that the gatekeepers were only to receive five stuivers from each incoming person per day. If they would not stick to these rules, the government threatened to punish them severely: either with juridical pursuit or with the denial of their office.

All in all, even in the lower offices, ‘unprofessional’ practices like substitution and the payment of emoluments were quite common. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, there were no formal rules to circumscribe the duties of the office of gatekeepers, nor were there regulations with regard to the requirements and recruitment for the job. In fact, it appears several times that the office could well be safeguarded for relatives, leading to modest ‘dynasties’ also within the lower segments of civil service. With regard to specialization and full-time employment it can be stated that, during the entire period, gatekeepers could combine several posts, both within and outside their profession. It can thus be concluded that there was not much professional specialization, although it may be that the job became somewhat more demanding, since the function of barrier closer and harbour master at least at the main naval gate, the Groothoofdsport, was one and the same person. Finally, regarding control and regulations of the profession, there was indeed a notable change in 1720, when the authorities decided to regulate the duties and the fixation of the emoluments for gatekeepers and barrier closers.

Conclusion

At the end of the sixteenth century, Dordrecht, as the rest of Holland, was on the eve of an explosive increase in wealth as well as in the number of inhabitants. This was mirrored in a spectacular growth of Dordrecht’s bureaucracy, both in number of officials and in salaries paid by the city. Although in general, economic and demographic circumstances
catalysed the growth of the administration, it would be unwise to conclude that there was a lineal relationship with bureaucratization. This can be seen from developments starting in the second half of the seventeenth century, when Dordrecht’s economy and size decreased markedly, but the number of bureaucrats stayed more or less the same. Apparently, once a certain level of bureaucracy was attained, it was not easy to diminish the number of offices again. In some areas of the public domain cutbacks were made in expenses on salaries. These measures however did not hit the salaries of the administrative core, and spending on law enforcement only minimally declined, at least in an absolute sense.

But if indeed an increasing bureaucracy had been established around 1600, what does this tell us about the level of professionalization? To find this out, I have looked at the level of the occupational group, by analysing the professionalization of three different offices in the city of Dordrecht according to five criteria. Table 7 shows us schematically to what extent professionalization occurred in the offices of Dordrecht’s city secretaries, midwives and gatekeepers according to these criteria during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Table 7 – Professionalization of three offices in the city of Dordrecht

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterium</th>
<th>Secretaries</th>
<th>Midwives</th>
<th>Gatekeepers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) increasing hierarchical organization</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) tendency towards full-time, specialized occupation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) creation of formal rules for recruitment and tasks</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) requirement of formal (academic) education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) fixed payment</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ = established to a great extent
± = established to some extent
- = not significantly established

Although all three offices professionalized to some extent, there are clear differences between the secretaries, the midwives and the gatekeepers. Both with the offices of the secretaries and the midwives, we have discerned a clear-cut trend towards increasing hierarchical organization and specialization, whereas these developments were absent regarding the gatekeepers.

Despite these variations it is clear that for all three offices, formal regulations and increasing control were established during the period under research. Especially in the 1720s, there was a clear wave of professionalization in this respect. For all three professions ordinances were laid down regarding the (further) circumscription of their duties. Nevertheless, the regulations were by far the most strict for midwives, containing even almost psychologically motivated prescriptions regarding their behaviour (they were not to frighten the women they treated). For the secretaries, the new regulations were reasonably detailed, but they still contained a lot of loopholes, leaving considerable space and freedom regarding requirements for and performance of the work, such as no formal educational requirements and no fixed salaries. For gatekeepers, prescriptions were specified regarding the exact hours to open and close the gates and of the maximum of emoluments they were to receive, but that was all. No hierarchy came into being, and no specialization occurred as opposed to the offices of secretary and midwife. Their annual salary was fixed, and this hardly changed over the centuries. At the same time they received highly variable payments apart from this small salary.
To explain these differences, we have to look both at the social status of their office and at the working sphere they concerned. Secretary was the highest administrative function apart from the pensionary, who had actually become more like a diplomat. The city secretariat was considered very important, and relatively early, in 1668, formal rules were created. Of course, it was no coincidence that this resolution was issued shortly after secretary Johan Berck, the third member from the Berck-family had deceased. Obviously the Dordrecht authorities wanted to break almost eighty years of their dynasty and prevent such practices from now on by installing a second secretary and laying down several regulations. However, in this ordinance, no formal job requirements were made, neither was their salary fixed – on the contrary. From 1668 onwards, the secretaries were to receive all their income from fees they received while performing their work. The exact amounts of the charges for each type of service, however, were fixed in detail.

Nevertheless, the prescriptions for the secretaries were far less strict than those for the midwives. This probably had to do with the type of service they provided and with their social standing. Services relating to public health have always been very important, but especially in the preindustrial period, with lots of epidemic diseases and high shares of infant mortality, the work of midwives was considered vital. Another important role of the midwives, the control over illegal births, must not be underestimated. Therefore, the fact that the city’s authorities demanded a high degree of control over such an important profession can hardly come as a surprise. However, midwives’ social standing was relatively low, both – and increasingly – within the medical professional group, and within the range of public offices. This, and the fact that they were female professionals, must also have played a very large role for the degree of control that was executed on their office. Thus, in spite of their relatively low status, the city midwives were probably one of the most professionalized group of officials in town.

The gatekeepers’ work was of course important for the city, but far less so than the work of the other two analysed groups. In this case, social standing and the (low skilled) type of work are hardly to be separated, and we can therefore say that both played a role in the modest degree of professionalization of the work in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Because they were low skilled, gatekeepers were easily replaceable, and this in fact was shown by the frequent occurrence of substitution in this field of work. The necessity of regulation and control was less urgent than vis-à-vis the higher ranked offices.

As we have seen, practices of patrimony, substitution and payment in the form of emoluments remained existent throughout the early modern period. I would like to stress here that it is to be problematized how unprofessional these practices actually were. More often than not, children had observed and cooperated in the work of their parents. This was the case with secretaries and gatekeepers alike, as is also shown in other research. In the case of the midwives, this was even formally acknowledged by the city authorities, leading to lower educational requirements for their daughters! The widespread practice of patrimonial recruitment, but also substitution and variable payment, obviously had its functions, and could function reasonably well. Also, it is not surprising that ‘ordinary citizens’ hardly ever protested against these patrimonial customs, because they were common at all social levels of public office. The fact that the offices were public services, demonstrably did not conflict much with the reality that the professionals themselves tended to regard them as ‘private property’ in the early modern period.
References

* This paper is based on my research within the NWO VIDI-project Civil Society and Urban Communities ([http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/history/csuc/](http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/history/csuc/)). Because my own role in this project only started in June 2007, the results are very preliminary and I would appreciate it if the paper was not cited without my permission. I would like to thank the other researchers in the project, Manon van der Heijden and Griet Vermeesch for their useful remarks and unpublished papers.


9 Ritzer, “Professionalization, Bureaucratization and Rationalization,” 627-634, has shown that Weber himself considered professionalization and bureaucratization to be separate, though very much intertwined, processes, most notably p. 632.


This broader definition of professionalization is also used by De Ridder-Symoens, “Training and Professionalization,” and Van der Heijden & Schmidt, “For the Benefit of All?”.


As Weber, implicitly and explicitly (e.g. Weber, *Gezag en bureaucratie*, 127), often does. See also Ritzer “Professionalization, Bureaucratization and Rationalization”.


Or, as Hall “Professionalization and Bureaucratization,” 102, states: “increased bureaucratization threatens professional autonomy”.


This was in fact the same problem many Holland towns encountered at the end of the sixteenth century. Van der Heijden, *Geldschieters*, 123-125.


The spending on civil servants even discards the many foremen and workers who were involved in public works, because most of them were not permanently employed by the urban authorities, but rather contracted for individual projects. Both in the urban administration, and in Table 1, they are classified under the expenses on public works.

From fl. 104,600 in fl. 1602 to 85,200 in 1655. This was mainly due to the aforementioned high military expenses in 1602, which were absent in 1655. Without these expenses, there was a slight growth in total expenditure, from fl. 77,400 to fl. 85,200.

Municipal Archives Dordrecht (GAD), Stadsarchief, inv. nos. 1903, 1907, 1927a and 1930.


This has also been noted for other areas in the (Southern) Low Countries. See Rene Boumans, “De ambtenaren. Wethouders en stedelijke functionarissen in de 16de, 17de en 18de eeuw,” in J.L. Broeckx e.a.,
This practice was by no means limited to Dordrecht or Holland. See Vries, “Geschapen tot ieders nut,” 334; Vermeesch, “Patrimonialism”.


J.L. van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht* (Dordrecht, 1931-1933), 221. The pensionary was the principal juridical advisor and delegate of the city.


This measure at the same time yielded the benefit of cutting down public expenses, because both secretary and pensionary were no longer paid by the city from now on.

According to Balen’s list, Matthijs van Berck was only pensionary in 1634. However, the archival sources I have used also describe him as pensionary both in 1645 and in 1652. It is possible that Balen registered his substitutes for the other periods. Compare: Balen *Beschryvinge*, 356 and GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. nos. 1101 and 1102.

“[...] van sijne lange goede diensten oock ten regarde van die van sijn vader za. wijlen heere Johan Berck ridder etc. inde selve functien”, GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 1101.

The following is based on: GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 1102, Instructie voor de secretarissen.

“D’voors. secretarissen sullen haer niet vermogen te bemoeyen met eenige sollicitatie, recommendatie, ofte kruyperien de regieringe van dese stadt concernerende.”

This measure at the same time yielded the benefit of cutting down public expenses, because both secretary and pensionary were no longer paid by the city from now on.

“haer te vreden houden met het geene haer voor salaris bij de secretarissen wert toegevoegt” GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 1105.

In 1749, both secretaries together received over 4,000 guilders in emoluments, which was among the highest in Dordrecht (apart from the two chief tax and toll collectors). GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 1930.

As stated by Drogendijk, *De verloskundige voorziening in Dordrecht van ± 1500 tot heden* (Amsterdam, 1935), 15-16.

See for instance GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 846, fol. 131v.

Drogendijk, *De verloskundige voorziening*, 31.


Drogendijk, *De verloskundige voorziening*, 29-30.

Van der Borg, *Vroedvrouwen*, 43-44, 46.

GAD, Keuren en verordeningen, inv. no. 21, no. 59, art. 1-3.

In fact, the necessity to read and write goes as far back as the first century A.D., when this was stipulated by Soranos. Van der Borg, *Vroedvrouwen*, 51.

GAD, Keuren en verordeningen, inv. no. 21, no. 59, art. 4.

GAD, Keuren en verordeningen, inv. no. 21, no. 59, art.12 and 14.

See for instance Van der Borg, *Vroedvrouwen*, 94.

Drogendijk, *De verloskundige voorziening*, 37.
71 GAD, Geneeskundig toezicht, inv. no. 2, 27-03-1790; 11-9-1793.
72 GAD, Geneeskundig toezicht, inv. no. 2, 22-07-1755.
74 Drogendijk *De verloskundige voorziening*, 68-72.
75 Apart from Gouda, where the city’s midwives received respectably 300, 250, 200 and 160 guilders at the end of the eighteenth century, this fee of 150 guilders appears to be relatively well-paid. See Van der Heijden and Schmidt, “For the Benefit of All”, table 4.
76 GAD, Oud Rechterlijk Archief, inv. no. 36, 10-12-1760.
79 Compare GAD, inv. no. 2617 with inv. no. 2659.
80 Havers, “De Dordtse ruimte,” 47.
81 GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 2659.
82 GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 1927a.
83 Compare GAD Stadsarchief, inv. nr. 948, fol. 17 and fol. 5v.
84 GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. nos. 948, fol. 5v and inv. no. 1930.
85 GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 948, fol. 5v.
86 GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 946, fol. 178.
87 GAD, Stadsarchief, inv. no. 948, fol. 5v and inv. no. 946, fol. 94v.
88 “[K]oopluyden, schippers ende passagiers […] voor het passeren van haare persoonen aan de poortiers ende boomsluyters naar der selver fantasye moeten betaalen […]” GAD, Keuren en ordonnanties, inv. no. 21, no. 41.
89 GAD, Keuren en ordonnanties, inv. no. 21, no. 41.
90 Vermeesch, “Patrimonialism”.