

The development of police forces in urban Europe in the eighteenth century

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Over the last twenty years or so, the European literature on the history of the police has grown considerably. In addition to the pioneering studies of English-speaking historians,¹ we now have major works on pre-Napoleonic Italian and German towns and principalities. Yet the history of the police prior to the creation of modern institutions is largely yet to be discovered. In his monumental history of the Dutch police,² Professor Cyrille Fijnaut clearly states that the police existed before the integration of the Netherlands into the Napoleonic Empire, but he nevertheless only covers the post-Napoleonic period in his book. In the United Kingdom, the police – or rather various forms of police – existed well before (and after) the birth of Scotland Yard in 1829 and we have known for some time – thanks to Clive Emsley³ – how criticisms of the London police were voiced above all by reformers intent on denigrating the force. However, for the English police forces of the eighteenth century we still only have Elaine Reynolds's admirable thesis.⁴ In German-speaking countries, the importance of *Polizeiwissenschaft* in eighteenth-century cameralist thought has naturally led legal historians to take an interest in the concept of policing, policing legislation and the role of the police in the politics of power. In the major synthesis edited by Michael Stolleis⁵ on early modern Europe or in the research carried out under Peter Blickle⁶ the concrete aspects of the application of policing norms in society are therefore intentionally left to one side. We get closer to these aspects in the publications of the University of Stuttgart-Hohenheim research group 'Policey/Polizei im vormodernen [early modern] Europe'.⁷ Thus the multi-author volume *Policey in lokalen Räumen*⁸ offers very in-depth case studies and demonstrates the diversity of the transformations of police forces between the Middle Ages and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Italy, too, the history of the police reflects these two poles, with legal historians being more attuned to general concepts and to police relations with the state while historians proper are more apt to turn their attention towards the activities of the police, the policemen themselves, their practices and their relations with society. All are in agreement, however, in considering the eighteenth century as a defining moment in the evolution of police forces. The studies brought together by Livio Antonielli⁹ reflect and provide insights into the wealth of the Italian material. In the case of French historians, a long-held fascination with the creation of the

institution of the Parisian 'Lieutenance de Police' in 1667 and the belief, nowadays more qualified, in the omnipotence of a prematurely centralised state, have tended to focus the history of the ancien régime French police on Paris.¹⁰ The Terror and the disquieting figure of Joseph Fouché then took up the baton, limiting the history of the revolutionary police to a political history of power. The revival of police studies – France initially lagging very much behind its European neighbours – only became possible once historians went beyond these caricatural images and started to focus instead on the daily practices of the police, the officers in charge of policing and their relations with the people. This change in perspective has allowed us to uncover – in the large provincial French towns – very different kinds of police from the Parisian police,¹¹ but also to reconsider the place of the Lieutenance Générale within the overall picture of Parisian systems of security. The administrative autonomy of French towns – maintained in spite of the growth of the ancien régime's monarchical administration – has also facilitated this fresh approach to the history of the police, in the sense that questions of normativity and techniques of power do not pertain exclusively to the role of the state, but are also relevant in discussions of the local community, corporations, neighbourhoods etc. The complexity of the situations under observation sheds light on a great diversity of evolutions which cannot always be interpreted in terms of a continuous, Weberian, state-forming process, nor in terms of a growing professionalisation of the police themselves.

The eighteenth century provides an exciting period of historical observation for the police of European towns and cities. The old equilibriums were being disrupted by the growth of urbanisation, the challenging of the traditional bases of power, the rise of individualist and liberal aspirations in defiance of corporate organisations, and the increased circulation of men and ideas. The police for their part were questioned, criticised, reformed. New tasks were assigned to them, others withdrawn. Right across Europe, the eighteenth century was a time of soul-searching about the role of the police, leading to a considerable growth in the available sources. Alongside the traditional sources – policing legislation, account books and judicial archives – there now appeared writings of reflection, improvement and remonstrance on the subject of the police.¹² By different authors and in very diverse formats, what the eighteenth-century writings about the police had in common was that they questioned – and attempted to redefine – police responsibilities. If certain of these writings remained

purely speculative proposals, others accompanied and framed reforms that were actually put into practice. Whilst the present article does not claim to be a synthesis of the European material, by studying several cities it should be possible to tease out the different, even contradictory, trends underlying the transformations in the make-up of police forces during the eighteenth century.

The notion of professionalisation allows for the incorporation of a series of reforms over a long period, between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. The notion is easily applied to the different levels of urban police during the *ancien régime*: to ‘communal’ policemen, to civic organisations and to the heads of urban police forces. From the Middle Ages subordinate policemen are found in all European towns, tasked with enforcing local police regulations. Their jobs were often not clearly distinct from other administrative functions, whether in the service of the town council (*valets de ville*), in the service of the local courthouse (*huissiers*) or in the employ of a seignorial or royal officer (*sergents du prévôt* or similar). This is how they came to acquire a great diversity of epithets: *sergents de ville*, *sergents du Magistrat*, *gardes de police*, *commis*, *commissaires*, *aides de police*, *amptman cnaepen* (Brussels), *fausthamers* (Strasbourg), *stadtknechte* (Württemberg), *alguazils*, *sbirri*, *constables*, *beadles*. The same diversity is evident in the status of these subordinate policemen; some were junior officers, accountable to themselves, others were constables appointed by the city council, yet others were chosen by more senior police officers. In general, however, their salaries were paid from the town’s coffers, and the aldermen had authority over them, which effectively meant that they were – either in part or entirely – ‘communal’ policemen. Beyond the diversity of institutional forms, there was a general tendency in the eighteenth century to cast doubt on these policemen’s abilities. In the numerous reform proposals that took shape during the course of the century, in Strasbourg as in Lille or Brussels, the *fausthamers*, *sergents de ville* or *amptman cnaepen* were held responsible for bad local policing. The official account was more or less always the same everywhere: there were too few policemen and they were not doing their job properly. They were not paid enough, which led to corruption and above all they neglected their police duties in favour of other more profitable activities, such as court duty or other occupations. The policemen were accused of being ignoramuses, wilfully brutal, and incapable of evaluating a situation with the discernment essential to the good police officer. Finally there were complaints about

their lack of discipline and their refusal to obey orders. Taken together, these accounts paint a less than glowing picture of these subordinate policemen, whose social prestige seems to have been very low. The reformers demand therefore, first and foremost, a marked increase in their salaries – only if this condition were fulfilled would policemen be less tempted by corruption, would the authorities be able to demand that they devote the greater part of their time to the police, would it be possible to recruit candidates of a better calibre and finally would the policemen themselves be better respected by the population. The agreed salary increase had therefore to be sufficient to oblige the policeman to give up his second occupation. This is what was decided for example in Namur in 1740, where the wages of the *sergents de ville* rose from 150 to 300 florins a year.¹³ In Lyon the *commissaires de police* had their pay increased from 200 to 300 pounds in 1780 and from 300 to 700 pounds in 1788.¹⁴ But often the rise in salary was still inadequate, if not flatly rejected. The disastrous state of city finances might suffice to explain these refusals or this parsimony, but there also existed – in the mind of certain aldermen – the idea that police officers must, at least in part, be spurred on in their work by sharing in some of the profits from the fines that they imposed. In Brussels, for example, the sergeants of the *amman* or chief magistrate only got a wage of 60 florins in 1767, certainly wholly insufficient to live on. In Geneva, the slight increase in the salary of the court ushers, from 100 to 150 florins in 1780, was intended to compensate for the losses linked to the reorientation of their occupation away from the issuing of writs and towards police surveillance work. The criterion of salary constitutes an important index of the professionalisation of the job of policeman, the precise study of which would allow us to measure the differing degrees of autonomy of the urban police. The reforms, or rather the reform schemes, often also incorporated a section on the discipline of police sergeants. Their hours of duty and availability were posted up and, above all, these policemen were tasked with overseeing a particular district of the town. Indeed the development of the ‘territorialisation’ of the police was another great eighteenth-century obsession, bound up as it was with the fear of the uncontrolled settlement of outsiders within the city limits. The sergeant no longer therefore had to keep watch over the entire town, roaming wherever he pleased, but was now to patrol and rigorously investigate a well-defined territory.¹⁵

The same trend towards professionalisation is found in the evolution of the citizens' militias (known as *gardes bourgeoises* or *milices bourgeoises*). There again the local context is all important, with circumstances varying from towns where the citizens' militias were completely disbanded (for example in French garrison towns) to those where the militias still fulfilled their guard duty and night-time patrols (as was the case for the towns of the United Provinces) via an intermediate situation, in which the institution of the citizens' militias still existed and the post of officer was sought by townspeople for reasons of social prestige or fiscal advantage, but the personal service was reduced to a minimum (such as occurred in numerous towns in France and the Austrian Netherlands¹⁶). In spite of this diversity, and with the exception of the United Provinces, it seems that the citizens' militias were definitely in decline in the eighteenth century. Not only was their military role totally outmoded, but their participation in night-time security – through rounds, patrols in the streets and watches at the town gates – was increasingly called into question by observers. In the eighteenth century townspeople no longer much cared about the common security of their town. Most of the time they evaded militia duty by finding someone to deputise for them. When deputising was privately arranged between the burgher and a miserable wretch who would accept a few pence to keep watch, the result was catastrophic, and all the commentators poke fun at these crippled old men, incapable of holding a gun, who were supposed to watch over the town. On the other hand, when the town hall itself paid watchmen – often former soldiers – to deputise, then the night police were a bit better turned out.¹⁷ But the most effective solution, to which numerous towns had recourse, consisted in simply doing away with the citizens' militias and establishing a professional watch, a night-time police paid to ensure order and security at night. The transition from citizens' watch to professional watch occurred in Toulouse in 1780,¹⁸ in Limoges in 1776, and in Marseille in 1749. The same trend also affected the Austrian Netherlands. In 1752 Ghent replaced its citizens' militias with a company of forty-two men, called *pandoeren*.¹⁹ Bruges followed suit in 1756 with two companies of thirty men,²⁰ combined into one in 1786. At Courtrai, the magistracy likewise established two companies of *waekende mannen* in 1768, each of forty-four men.²² In garrison towns the creation of a professional watch was avoided by recourse to patrols of soldiers, which explains the lack of a watch in Lille or Namur.²³ In Brussels, the retention of the citizens' militias, at least in their organisation if not in their personal service, was one of the points of contention

between the aldermen and the government. From the start of the 1760s, the Austrian government pushed for the replacement of citizens' militias and the so-called *serments* (militias in which the citizens had to swear an oath (Fr. *serment*) to abide by its regulations) by a more efficient 'municipal militia', but the procrastinations of the aldermen, combined with the impossibility of finding the means to finance it, put back the establishment of the new night militia until 1786.²⁴ In the meantime, the city council had sent the *sergents de ville* back to their judicial occupations and recruited, in august 1784, six men and a leader to take care of the policing of markets. The plans for a night militia unveiled between 1760 and 1783 provided for the recruitment of up to 300 men, but the council was more realistic, proposing to employ just thirty men in 1786.²⁵ Subsequent events, however, did not allow this professional watch to be deployed.

Whether in the case of new sergeants recruited by the urban authorities or members of the professional watches, or indeed the 'watchmen' of London,²⁶ it was common practice in the eighteenth century to assign these jobs for preference to former soldiers, still young after six or twelve years of service in the army. For the towns themselves, the advantage of soldiers over civilians was considerable: these men were used to discipline, could withstand the exhaustion of long watches and night marches, knew how to use a firearm and command the respect of the citizenry.²⁷ In the writings of the reformists, the recruitment of former soldiers is accompanied by a demand for a militarised form of police force: uniforms, military ranks for the senior officers, rules of discipline for the men, sometimes even quartering in barracks. The discourse was the same, whether in Bordeaux²⁸ or Nantes²⁹. Thus militarisation encouraged the professionalisation of urban police forces in the eighteenth century.

The third aspect of the trend towards the professionalisation of the urban police emerges in the calls for a single leader. In most towns, in fact, where the police came under the control of the aldermen, leadership was exercised collegiately. Furthermore, these municipal posts were temporary, often annual, even if they could be extended. To the eighteenth-century reformers this situation seemed inappropriate: how, they maintained, could policing which is not learned in books or by study but through experience and usage be entrusted to people who had only had the responsibility for one or two years? How could the police be properly run by magistrates without experience, who had to learn everything and then left their posts at the very moment

when they were beginning to understand what to do? All the reformists therefore argued in favour of the police headship being entrusted to one man alone, whose competence would grow stronger with every passing year. Looming very often behind this demand was the shadow of Paris's lieutenant general of police. Created in 1667 by the separation of the police and the judicature of the Châtelet courthouse, the 'Lieutenance Générale' and its incumbent came to symbolise in the mind of the European elites a Parisian police force that was as effective as it was formidable.³⁰ The Parisian lieutenant general of police was therefore often invoked in debates about the police, at times being put forward as a model and at others being used as a foil. But even outside the Parisian context, the tendency to criticise the collegial leadership of the aldermen became more widespread. It crops up for example in the writings of the Vicomte de Sarsfield, military commander of Valenciennes, who was exasperated by the inertia of the city council,³¹ or in those of the Grenoble lieutenant of police, Paul-Joseph Vallet, who in 1759 published a pamphlet entitled 'Consuls must not interfere with the police.'³² In Strasbourg in 1782 a report by the tax department official Windholtz proposed appointing a 'director of the police bureau' who would control the *fausthamers*, the patrol sergeants and the sentries. In Naples the anonymous author of 'Observations on the Kingdom of Naples' went as far as to state that policing in Naples would only ever be properly carried out if a police lieutenant were to be established there as in Paris or Florence.³³ In Florence, in 1784, the responsibilities of the *auditore fiscale* were split into two distinct functions: *presidente del Supremo Tribunale di Giustizia* for judicial powers and *presidente del buon governo* for the governance of the police.³⁴ In European capitals, it was often on the initiative of the sovereign that single police chiefs emerged, such as the 'intendant general of police' created in Lisbon in 1760,³⁵ Madrid's 'superintendent general of police' in 1782,³⁶ and Milan's 'director of police' in 1787.

The collegial leadership of the police remained, however, in the eyes of the urban magistracies one of the strong signs of their administrative autonomy, of their independence in the face of a central government that would rather have imposed a single chief, as being easier to control. The recruitment of the junior officials (*auditeurs*) and lieutenant of the Geneva police court can thus be attributed to an attachment to republican forms of power. The junior officials were elected for three years, the lieutenant for one. Thus the police roles were temporary because they were envisaged simply as an apprenticeship for nobler political positions and as the first

step of a *cursus honorum* in the service of the Republic.³⁷ It was also the reason behind the resistance led by the Brussels aldermen against the *amman* Rapédius de Berg in the years 1775–85.³⁸ Ferdinand Rapédius de Berg had been chosen by the Austrian government to improve, through the office of *amman*, the policing of the city, which was then for the most part in the hands of the town hall. To this end de Berg had received an unprecedented salary increase, from 700 to 2,000 florins, as well as the right to appoint the *handuyts* or night watchmen. But in spite of these new means and his good will, the new *amman* came up against a hostile city council and, poorly supported by the government, finally ended up dropping his police duties. The daring reformism of Emperor Joseph II gave de Berg his chance for redress: in 1786 he was appointed ‘director of general policing in the Netherlands’ and tasked with centralising all the police forces in the country. The new director, however, only had time to draw up some instructions and organise his desk before the ‘little revolution’ of May 1787 obliged him to leave his post and surrender to the aldermen all latitude in terms of policing.

The reform of city police forces in the eighteenth century did not therefore lead, apart from certain exceptions, to the establishment of a state police force. Modernity was not in this case synonymous with the development of central police power, and most of the reforms in the staffing and organisation of the urban police came about at the instigation of the aldermen. In London the reforms spread from parish to parish, while in the Austrian Netherlands the aldermen’s assemblies passed on information and experiences among themselves from town to town. Furthermore, during the second half of the eighteenth century, improvements in the police were also sought through the revival of traditional mechanisms of control in the town.

In fact, in numerous European towns and cities in the early modern period there existed neighbourhood organisations that both created a form of solidarity between inhabitants of the same district and also made it possible to exercise control and monitor behaviour that deviated from the then accepted norms. The kind of policing practised by local residents could be compared to what we might today call community policing or, at a pinch, ‘proximity policing’. It is naturally easier to detect in towns where these neighbourhood associations assumed an institutional form that has left specific archives, as in Ghent,³⁹ Haarlem⁴⁰ or Leiden,⁴¹ but informal neighbourhood surveillance existed in all ancien regime societies, as David Garrioch

has amply demonstrated for example for eighteenth-century Paris.⁴² It is difficult to generalise about the extent of intervention of these neighbourhood schemes, each town being a specific case, according to whether the neighbourhood organisation was in decline or still active, and also depending on whether the urban population was undergoing a more or less rapid transformation. In a little town with a static population, the neighbourhood organisations, whether institutionalised or not, could play an important role of social control. On the other hand, in a town whose population was growing, whose economic activities were diversifying, where large numbers of migrants were staying for a time or settling, the traditional means of regulating the neighbourhoods could no longer always be guaranteed. Towns in the eighteenth century underwent considerable change: most saw their populations increase and even those that remained stable were faced with problems of social cohesion, linked to the growing gulf between rich and poor. Eighteenth-century European towns had to cope with an influx of 'foreigners': rural folk from nearby or migrants from further afield, who sometimes found it difficult to integrate into the world of guilds safeguarded by the town. At the same time, the crisis of urban industries in the face of the growth of the proto-industrial work of the countryside increased the joblessness of workers in the towns. The strengthening of the communal police could be a means of confronting new problems, but it presupposed financial resources that were difficult to find, at a time when town councils were faced with rising costs in aid to the poor or in the embellishment of the townscape. Certain cities therefore preferred to turn instead to neighbourhood organisations that had the advantage of not costing the town anything, or very little.

Thus in Valenciennes, a town whose finances were dire and where poverty levels were very high, the aldermen decided, in a great ordinance of 24 September 1768, to revive an old neighbourhood institution: the *ruage*. It had been at the outset, at any rate in the fifteenth century, a territorial organisation of the citizens' militia, based on the bringing together of the inhabitants of a few streets. The heads of these *ruages* were called *connétables des rues* ('constables of the streets'). A ruling by the Archdukes Albert and Archduchess Isabella in 1615 had reorganised them, but little trace of their activity is found between then and 1768. The ordinance passed that year by the aldermen gave the constables a very clear brief to take on the policing of their little district. Their job was to maintain public calm and prevent disorder. To that end they had to denounce to the authorities dens of iniquity, parents who abandoned their

children, and citizens who entertained soldiers at their homes in the evening. The ordinance is followed by a list giving the names of 200 new constables and their streets. This list, when compared with the poll tax registers, enables one to establish the social profile of the constables, which was often very close to that of other inhabitants of the street, in other words they were people who were reasonably well representative of the local population. The few mentions in the local judicial archives also build up the image of a mediator in minor night-time disturbances rather than a repressive police officer.⁴³

In Toulouse, some 500 *dizeniers* (a 'dizenier' being head of a band of ten men) oversaw very small districts called *moulons*.⁴⁴ The dizenier, who had to live in his own moulon, had the double responsibility of giving the *capitouls* or municipal officials an account of everything connected with policing and of applying in the moulon the administrative decisions taken at the town hall. The dizeniers carried out the censuses, compiled the lists of young people having to draw lots of the militia, and could issue certificates attesting to good conduct or proving poverty. They were at one and the same time conciliators in the district – representatives of the population whose grievances they relayed to the capitouls – and the driving belts of municipal power. The institution seems to have gone into decline before the capitouls vigorously took it back in hand in the eighteenth century. From 1754 especially, the dizeniers were more tightly controlled, and their jobs distinctly reoriented towards the maintenance of order and the prevention of disorder. Within the framework of their duties they could carry out house searches, denounce criminals to judges, prevent fracas and head the citizens' militia patrols. Gradually new tasks were added: lighting the street lamps, seeing to the cleaning of the streets. In 1783, their status was completely overhauled, they were given a distinctive uniform (a two-tone black and white hood) and the capitouls referred to them as *commissaires de quartier*. The city council of Toulouse thus sought to give renewed value to these police auxiliaries, on whom it conferred increasingly extensive powers, without any financial compensation, since throughout the whole of the eighteenth century the post of dizenier remained entirely voluntary.

The city of Naples was divided into twenty-nine small wards or *ottine*. Every year (theoretically), the inhabitants of the ottine elected six candidates and the king chose from among them a captain and two procurators. An ottina comprised a few streets, a square. The ottine captains were middle-ranking notables, neither plebeians nor

nobles, and their duties consisted in maintaining order, prosperity and security among citizens. These were people who were respected as much by the urban administration as by the general populace, who saw them as their natural protectors. Like the *dizeniers* of Toulouse, they served both as mediators – settling problems in the district – and as intermediaries between local people and the city authorities. Thus they kept the registers up to date, particularly those connected with the dispensing of aid to the poor, and issued certificates for people needing them in order to request a passport or be admitted to the ranks of the bourgeoisie. The *ottine* captains were in the service of the people of their district but at the same time were also the eyes and ears of the prince in that same district. This ambivalence was part and parcel of their job. But following the reform of the Naples police in 1779, the *ottine* captains, without their existence being called into question, were now placed under the wing of the judges of the Vicaria (the royal courthouse), who themselves were divided among twelve new districts. The *ottine* captains thus became the auxiliaries of the local official receivers, the auxiliaries of the prince's territorial police in the city. This evolution in the role of the *ottine* captains does not seem to have really worked, but it reveals how the royal administration in Naples tried to take over a neighbourhood organisation in order to enhance policing.⁴⁵

For a borderline case we must turn to Madrid, since in this court city it was royal power that created, apparently *ex nihilo*, a system of neighbourhood policing in the context of a great police reform of 1768, two years after the so-called 'Motin d'Esquilache' revolt. The city was divided into eight large districts (*cuarteles*) entrusted to the royal judges, the *alcades de corte*. And these eight large quarters were themselves subdivided into eight, making in total sixty-four small districts (*barrios*) placed in the care of junior officers (*alcades de barrio*), elected by the inhabitants of the district from among its honourable citizens. Their role was to register the population of the *barrio*, check the weights and measures, keep an eye on paupers and vagrants, attend to the cleanliness of the streets and the upkeep of fountains. They could arrest thieves and criminals caught *in flagrante* and keep hold of them until the arrival of a judge. Each *alcade de barrio* had to keep, day after day, a 'book of occurrences' where he would note down everything that happened in his *barrio*. Those that have been preserved reveal that these officers acted above all as mediators, arbitrating in conflicts between families and neighbours and offering a lot of help to the poor.⁴⁶

In all these examples, the city elders turned to minor notables, people who were not necessarily very rich or very powerful, but who possessed a moral authority that was recognised by the other inhabitants of the district. Their services – understood as the contribution that a responsible citizen owes to his motherland – were not therefore remunerated and, of course, the head of the district did not quit his usual professional activities in order to fulfil his duties in the district. What we observe here, therefore, is an evolutionary trajectory that runs contrary to the professionalisation of the police.

But there is no one single trend common to all the towns and cities studied, as the examples of Ghent and Brussels demonstrate. The extent and continuity of the archives of the Ghent *gebuurten* (neighbourhoods) allows one to study how they evolved over the long term.⁴⁷ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Ghent comprised around 200 neighbourhoods, under the leadership of a *gebuurtedeken*, elected from among the well-to-do inhabitants of the district, for three years. As elsewhere, the neighbourhood encouraged a very tight social bond, by the obligatory presence at banquets and burials. The system for meeting the costs of neighbourhood policing was highly developed here, with fines and levies of all kinds; meetings of the local assembly were frequent, and even a chapel could be maintained by the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the neighbourhood was expected to foster civil tranquillity, resolve minor conflicts on its own and help the authorities find and arrest crooks and criminals – this was to be achieved by a kind of global surveillance of offenders' movements, providing very in-depth insider knowledge. Newcomers were particularly closely monitored and couldn't settle in the area without paying a 'welcome tax'. These were all elements common to a number of neighbourhoods, but were more formalised here no doubt than elsewhere. The originality lay less in the system itself than in its evolution, the chronology of which differed from the other towns discussed here. At Ghent in fact it was in the second half of the seventeenth century, especially the decade 1660–1670, that there was a decisive increase in the administrative and policing responsibilities entrusted to the neighbourhoods by the municipal administration: they had to hand over to the communal lists of poor outsiders who had settled in the district, had to perform guard duty, provide judicial information, even carry out arrests, were tasked with the paving of the street, and then in the eighteenth century were put in charge of street lamps. As in Toulouse, the 'role

of *gebuurtedeken* evolved little by little from a role of internal head to that of negotiator with the magistracy'. But in the second half of the eighteenth century, with the city authorities creating a professional police apparatus, the role and importance of the neighbourhoods went into decline and the city council therefore clawed back the tasks that it had delegated to the districts.

In Brussels, the sources on these local organisations are poor for the early modern period. The division of the urban area into *wijcks* or districts goes back to the establishment of the citizens' militias and was a consequence of the city's expansion. The fifteenth-century political ordinances mention the *wijckmeesters*, two honourable men chosen annually by the aldermen in each *wijck* to organise relief in the event of fire and to signal problems. In the early modern period, however, these *wijckmeesters* disappear, their duties having passed to the *hondersten* (meaning 'hundredths' and corresponding with the French *centeniers*), who assumed the same responsibilities, as well as managing the local citizens' militia. The ten districts of citizens' militias were subdivided into smaller districts under the leadership of the *hondersten*, of which there were forty. The *hondersten* were the source of all detailed administrative knowledge concerning the Brussels population. They played an essential role in censuses, the registration of the poor and the collecting of taxes. In the eighteenth century they were no longer replaced annually: volunteers who obtained the aldermen's consent remained *hondersten* until they died or resigned. It is not really possible to speak of 'neighbourhood' in relation to the *hondersten* of the Brussels districts since they did not issue from the local community nor did they play a role for the animation of the district. However, they lived locally, were known by all the inhabitants and were probably respected, given their power to impose fines on those who defaulted on their militia service. Hence the idea, which recurred in several plans for the improvement of the Brussels police, to use them as go-betweens linking the municipal police with the community. Thus in a scheme of 1750,⁴⁸ the author is surprised not to find, in the ordinances passed, any police duties assigned to the *hondersten*. For, in his opinion, there could be no serious police without the 'territorialisation' of the workforce, which had to adapt itself to the growth of the population. Le Baussant therefore proposes creating *quarteniers* or *commissaires de quartier* charged with policing the district. Each 'commissaire' would have to conduct a thorough investigation of his particular district every three months in order to record

everything concerning public safety. They would gather complaints and denunciations, must intervene – if need be by calling on the assistance of the armed citizens – in the event of quarrels or disturbances in places of prostitution or taverns lodging vagrants. They would centralise the billeting orders of the innkeepers so as to bring them to the *amman* after 10pm, they would have to keep tabs on about ‘bad households’, whose disputes shocked the public, and maintain a register of furnished rooms. Finally, they would supervise the citizens’ militia patrols as well as oversee the markets in their district. This scheme, like many others of its kind, was never put into action, and the hondersten were not replaced by local policemen. The idea was certainly in the air in the eighteenth century, but was not realised in practice.

In the eighteenth century, therefore, the evolution of urban police forces followed a variety of paths. The recourse to local minor notables went against the trend towards professionalisation applicable to ‘communal’ policemen, and the imposition of a single police chief was far from being a universal phenomenon. The connection between the police forces of different eighteenth-century cities lay more in their shared concerns than in the solutions they implemented. In simple terms, it seems that while issues of policing and the diagnosis of urban pathologies were often the same, the diversity of local circumstances prevailed when it came to putting plans into action. By studying further European towns we would of course be better placed to discern the dominant tendencies, but in the current state of knowledge the idea of a linear historical process leading from community police to centralised state police via municipal police is not borne out. On the contrary the eighteenth century offers an array of varied processes in the modernisation of urban police forces.

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Notes:

1 Philip Rawlings, *Policing: A Short History* (Uffculme, Devon: Willan Publishing, 2002) provides an accessible introduction to the English-language bibliography.

2 Cyrille Fijnaut, *De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Politie* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2007).

3 Clive Emsley, *The English Police: a political and social history* (London, New York: Longman, 1991, 1996).

- 4 Elaine Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies, The Night Watch and Police Reform in Metropolitan London, 1720-1830* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998).
- 5 Michael Stolleis (ed.), *Policey im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1996).
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- 8 André Holenstein, Frank Konersmann, Joseph Pauser and Gerhard Sälter (eds), *Policey in lokalen Räumen. Ordnungskräfte und Sicherheitspersonal in Gemeinden und Territorien vom Spätmittelalter bis zum frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 2002).
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- 10 This is still unfortunately true of the chapter devoted to the ancien régime in Michel Aubouin, Arnaud Teyssier and Jean Tulard, *Histoire et dictionnaire de la police, du moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris: Laffont, 2005)
- 11 Jean-Luc Laffont, *Policer la ville, Toulouse capitale provinciale au siècle des Lumières*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Toulouse II, 1997, 3 vols; Catherine Denys, *Police et sécurité au XVIIIe siècle dans les villes de la frontière franco-belge*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002).
- 12 Vincent Milliot (ed.), *Les Mémoires policiers, 1750-1850. Écritures et pratiques policières du Siècle des Lumières au Second Empire* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006).
- 13 Denys (2002), 74-81.
- 14 Stéphane Nivet, 'Acquisition des règles du métier et spécialisations des commissaires de police à Lyon au XVIIIe siècle', in *Être policier: les métiers de police(s) XVIIIe-XXe siècle*, transactions of a conference held at the University of Caen, March 2007, forthcoming.
- 15 Catherine Denys, 'La territorialisation policière dans les villes au XVIIIe siècle', *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine* 50-1 (2003): 13-26. Vincent Denis, 'Peut-on réformer un "monument de la police"? La réforme de la police de Strasbourg en débat à la fin de l'Ancien Régime, 1782-1788', in Vincent Milliot (ed.), *Les Mémoires policiers, 1750-1850. Écritures et pratiques policières du Siècle des Lumières au Second Empire* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 131-149.
- 16 Serge Bianchi and Roger Dupuy (eds), *La Garde nationale entre peuple et Nation en armes. Mythes et réalités, 1789-1871* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006).
- 17 Thus in Brussels the aldermen employed *huerlingen* or *loonwaeckende mannen* to make up for the deficiencies of the citizens' militias and the *serments* when it came to performing sentry duty. Furthermore, ten to twelve *handuyten* (night watchmen) patrolled the streets of individual districts.
- 18 Laffont (1997), 719-723.
- 19 *Recueil des ordonnances des Pays-Bas autrichiens*, 3rd ser., vol. 7, p. 150.
- 20 *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 48.
- 21 *Ibid.*, vol. 12, p. 529.

22 Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles [Brussels City Archives], 'archives anciennes', file 373. Printed rulings relating to these Bruges or Ghent companies can be found in the Brussels City Archives, as well as in the boxes relating to the Austrian Privy Council at the Archives Générales du Royaume [Belgian State Archives]. Sent by the latter towns to Brussels, they were intended to serve as models.

23 Denys (2002), 105-123.

24 C. Denys, 'Les projets de réforme de la police à Bruxelles à la fin du XVIII^e siècle', *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée*, 115-2 (2003), 807-826.

25 The text of this decree is published in *Recueil des ordonnances des Pays-Bas autrichiens*, vol. 12, p. 488. A certain haziness surrounds both the make-up and the actual duties of the municipal militia in the year 1785-86.

26 Ruth Paley, "'An Imperfect, Inadequate and Wretched System'?: Policing London Before Peel', *Criminal Justice History*, 10 (1989), 95-130.

27 Denys (2002), 82-84.

28 Vincent Denis, 'Réformer la police à Bordeaux au dix-huitième siècle: les mémoires de Moyse Clou Pudeffer, 1747-1748', in Milliot (ed. 2006), 121-130.

29 Stéphane Perréon, 'Guet professionnel, bataillon d'infanterie ou garde bourgeoise? L'échec des tentatives de réforme de la police de Nantes en 1786-1788', in Milliot (ed. 2006), 151-168.

30 Allan Williams, *The Police of Paris*, (Bâton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979) Fayçal El Ghoul, *La police parisienne dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle (1760-1785)*, (Tunis: Université de Tunis, 1995). The publications of Jean Chagniot, *Paris et l'armée au XVIII^e siècle. Étude politique et sociale*, (Paris: Economica, 1985), of Steven L. Kaplan, 'Note sur les commissaires de police de Paris au XVIII^e siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, XXVIII, 1981, 669-686, and Vincent Milliot, 'Gouverner les hommes et leur faire du bien'. *La police de Paris au siècle des Lumières, Conceptions, acteurs, pratiques*, unpublished post-doctoral thesis, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2002, have revised the image of an all-powerful lieutenant general at the head of the Paris police.

31 Denys (2002), 42.

32 Clarisse Coulomb, 'Qui doit faire la police à Grenoble? Autour du mémoire de P-J Vallet, Les sieurs Consuls ne doivent point se mêler de la police, 1759', in Milliot (ed. 2006), 67-85.

33 Brigitte Marin, '*Policer la ville. Polices royales, pouvoirs locaux et organisations territoriales à Naples et à Madrid dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle*', unpublished post-doctoral thesis, Paris 1, 2005, p. 70

34 Carlo Mangio, *La polizia toscana. Organizzazione e criteri d'intervento (1765-1808)*, (Milan: Giuffrè, 1991).

35 For this piece of information I am indebted to Flavio Borda d'Agua, who is preparing a thesis on the eighteenth-century Lisbon police under the supervision of Michel Porret at the University of Geneva.

36 Marin (2005), 190-197.

37 Marco Cicchini, 'Faire la police avant le policier. Genève au XVIII^e siècle. Un modèle de police républicain?', in *Être policier: les métiers de police(s) XVIII^e-XX^e siècle*, transactions of a conference held at the University of Caen, March 2007, forthcoming.

- 38 Frédéric Kisters, 'Ferdinand Rapédius de Berg, amman de Bruxelles et polygraphe', *Cahiers bruxellois*, XXXIII (1992), 17-68. 'Rapédius de Berg, Ferdinand-Pierre', in C. Bruneel and J.P. Hoyois, *Les grands commis du gouvernement des Pays-Bas Autrichiens. Dictionnaire biographique du personnel des institutions centrales* (Brussels: Archives Générales du Royaume, 2001), 515-518.
- 39 Harald Deceulaer and Marc Jacobs, 'Les implications de la rue: droits, devoirs et conflits dans les quartiers de Gand (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)', *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 49-3 (2002), 26-53.
- 40 Gabrielle Dorren, 'Communities within the community: aspects of neighbourhood in seventeenth-century Haarlem', *Urban History*, 25 (1998), 173-188.
- 41 Kees Walle, *Buurthouden, de geschiedenis van burengebruiken en buurtorganisaties in Leiden 14^e-19^e eeuw* (Leiden: Ginkgo, 2005).
- 42 David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- 43 Denys (2002), 328-332.
- 44 Laffont (1997), 735-782: 'Le dizenier, sentinelle avancée de l'administration municipale'. Jean-Luc Laffont, 'La police de voisinage à la base de l'organisation policière des villes de l'ancienne France', *Annales de la recherche urbaine*, 83-84 (1999), 23-30.
- 45 B. Marin (2005), 101-110
- 46 B. Marin (2005), 115-138.
- 47 Harald Deceulaer and Marc Jacobs, 'Les implications de la rue: droits, devoirs et conflits dans les quartiers de Gand (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)', *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 49-3, (2002), 26-53.
- 48 Nineteen-page pamphlet 'Essai sur le rétablissement de la police à Bruxelles' (1898) by a certain J. Le Baussant in the 'Secrétairerie d'État et de guerre' collection of the Archives Générales du Royaume in Brussels.