The lure of the city: migration, crime, and urbanization in Amsterdam, 1850-1905

Pluskota, M.; Kamp, J.M.

The Lure of the City

Migration, Crime, and Urbanization in Amsterdam, 1850-1905

Jeannette Kamp and Marion Pluskota*

TSEG 20 (1): 93–120
DOI: 10.52024/tseg.13643

Abstract

This article questions the impact of urbanization on crime rates by studying Amsterdam migrants before the correctional court between 1850 and 1905. The data shows no clear link between urbanization and a rise in crime, but it does reveal the role of external factors in the prosecution of specific crimes. The crisis experienced by the urban labour market in the late 1870s and 1880s had a direct impact on Amsterdam crime rates: although Amsterdam could initially integrate low-skilled workers in its labour market, the situation became unsustainable after a few years. It led to an increase in the prosecution of vagrancy and begging offenses, which were committed first and foremost by Dutch unemployed or unskilled migrant workers. This article thus shows the importance of considering migrants in crime history not as a homogenous group but as different groups, each with its own support networks and influenced differently by the micro- and macro-economic developments of the nineteenth century.

Introduction

The nineteenth century in Europe was an age of transformation: with the growth of European cities, the number of people living in an urban environment increased significantly. Migration played a significant role in this urbanization process, probably accounting for around 50 percent

* The authors would like to thank the reviewers for their very useful comments.

of the urban growth.[1] The scale of nineteenth-century migration, as experienced in cities such as Paris, London, Liverpool, or Brussels, was regularly problematized by European elites: both members of the governing elite and of the civil society focused their attention on these apparently uncontrollable levels of urban growth and migration. The most radical commentators pointed the finger at the newcomers and accused them of disrupting the social environment: they were violent, immoral, drank to excess, and survived through crimes.[2] The migrants were primarily considered to be poor, unskilled labourers, driven away from the countryside where their services were no longer needed. Supposedly lacking the necessary skills to find their way in the urban labour market, migrants were thought to resort to clandestine prostitution, theft, and other criminal activities to make ends meet.[3]

These assumptions have been challenged by migration historians, and it is now well established that urban migration in the nineteenth century was less disruptive and more selective than what was portrayed in many older accounts about the urbanization process. As Winter has shown for nineteenth-century Antwerp, old existing migration patterns continued to shape the way migrants adapted to the changing labour markets.[4] Work by historical demographers has demonstrated that it was not only the pool of unskilled labourers that left the countryside to find a living in the city, but also migrants originating from the lower middle class, who had been trained in some form of employment.[5] Moreover, most migrants moved only relatively short distances, originating from the city's immediate hinterland or province, and it was easy for them to maintain ties with their support network back home.[6] Temporary movement therefore played a crucial role in the urbanization process, and people who remained in the city usually had good socio-economic prospects and sometimes even out-performed

1 A. Lees and L. Hollen Lees, *Cities and the making of modern Europe, 1750-1914* (Cambridge 2007) 252; J. Lucassen and L. Lucassen, 'The mobility transition revisited, 1500-1900. What the case of Europe can offer to global history', *Journal of Global History* 4 (2009) 347-377, 360-361.

2 E.A. Johnson, *Urbanization and crime. Germany, 1871-1914* (Cambridge 2002) 8-12.

3 L.P. Moch, *Moving Europeans. Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington 2003) 143-147.

4 A. Winter, *Migrants and urban change*: *Newcomers to Antwerp, 1760-1860* (London 2016) 190-191.

5 H. Bras, 'Maids to the city. Migration patterns of female domestic servants from the province of Zeeland, the Netherlands (1850-1950)', *The History of the Family* 8 (2003) 217-246, 242; J. Kok, K. Mandemakers and B. Mönkediek, 'Flight from the land? Migration flows of the rural population of the Netherlands, 1850-1940', *Espace Population Sociétés* 1 (2014), URL: http://journals.openedition.org/eps/5631 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/eps.5631.

6 Moch, *Moving Europeans,* 127.

the local population.[7] And, as Moch argued for the Breton migration to Paris, even weak social ties contributed significantly to migrants' integration processes.[8]

Contrary to this more positive revision of the migration processes in the wake of nineteenth-century urbanization in general, no consensus has been reached about the links between migration, urbanization, and potential rising crime. Historians have uncovered various elements that highlight connections between the three processes. King noticed a sharp increase in homicide in the industrializing areas of England, Wales, and Scotland between 1820 and 1850 and has argued that this rise was related to the demographic composition of these cities: their populations were young, male, and consisted of a large number of migrants. Rising crime, King argues, was only temporary and connected to the early and most disruptive stages of the industrialization process.[9] Others, however, have argued that these linkages were less straightforward than one may assume. In Marseille, for instance, Sewell argues that the migrant offenders were a selective group. There was no 'permanent "dangerous class" trapped in the city slums by crushing poverty and demoralization', but instead migration created a 'temporary dangerous class'. The migrants appearing in the criminal records were a highly mobile group, attracted to the city's port, whose characteristics were different from those of the migrants residing in the city more or less permanently.[10] Johnson has also questioned the relationship between urban growth and crime trends in Imperial Germany. He argued that rising crime was particularly prevalent in cities with large Slavic minorities, though not in those with Western European communities. According to Johnson, this aspect was not the result of weak social ties or inherent immorality, but, rather, of racial prejudices and discriminatory policing, which meant that Slavic minorities were

7 L. Lucassen, 'De selectiviteit van blijvers. Een reconstructie van sociale positie van Duitse migranten in Rotterdam (1870-1885), *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 1:2 (2004) 92-115; P. Puschmann, *Social inclusion and exclusion of urban in-migrants in Northwestern European port cities Antwerp, Rotterdam & Stockholm, ca. 1850-1930* (PhD thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 2015) 244.

8 L.P. Moch, *The pariahs of yesterday. Breton migrants in Paris* (Durham 2012).

9 P. King, 'The impact of urbanization on murder rates and the geography of homicide in England and Wales, 1780-1850', *The Historical Journal* 53:3 (2010) 671-698; *Idem*, 'Exploring and explaining the geography of homicide. Patterns of lethal violence in Britain and Europe, 1805-1900', *European Review of History* 20:6 (2013) 967-987.

10 W.H. Sewell, *Structure and mobility. The men and women of Marseille, 1820-1870* (Cambridge 1985) 232.

more often targeted than Western Europeans.[11] Due to limited resources and manpower, police officers were selective in their enforcement strategies: research on Antwerp, for example, showed that, by the end of the nineteenth century, policemen specifically targeted unskilled workers and unemployed suspects, yet were willing to turn a blind eye towards 'respectable' middle-class workers and skilled labourers.[12]

Historians' explanations of potential links have thus wavered between a disruptive, but limited in time, context encouraging crime, targeting of highly mobile migrants, and discriminatory practices against foreigners by the police. These studies therefore show that it is necessary to gain a better understanding of crime in relation to the timing of urbanization, different stages within this process, and the composition of migration groups coming to a specific city, and that these issues cannot be considered separately. King's study looked mainly at industrializing centers, which attracted a large permanent and semi-permanent young male migrant population to work in the factories, especially in the early formative years. Marseille, on the other hand, was a highly active port city and as such had a much more continuous flow of transient and temporary migrants coming through the city. Although these studies have greatly improved our insights into migration or criminality separately, the relationship between the two remains unclear. Different urbanization processes and the specific local context have rarely been taken into account when studying the relationship between urbanization, migration, and crime. In this article we therefore aim to contribute to the how and why of this relationship by focusing on the development and the nature of prosecuted crime in Amsterdam in the second half of the nineteenth century.

So far, little is known about urbanization and crime in the Netherlands. Manneke shows that in Rotterdam there were no 'sensational fluctuations' in the number of prosecuted offenses at the peak of the city's urbanization process. Her study, however, does not provide a systematic analysis of the origin of the offenders tried before the city's court in this period, except for the noted presence of many German women among registered prostitutes.[13] Meershoek

11 Johnson, *Urbanization and crime*, 234-235.

12 M. De Koster and A. Vrints, 'The new police as agents of class control? Urban policing and its socio-geographical focus in nineteenth-century Antwerp', in: B. Blondé *et al.* (eds), *Inequality in the city in the Low Countries (1200-2020)* (Turnhout 2020) 343-356, 354.

13 N. Manneke, *Uit oogpunt van policie: zorg en repressie in Rotterdam tussen 1870 en 1914* (Arnhem 1993) 76.

noted an increase in property offenses for Amsterdam, yet did not relate these numbers to population growth.[14] Urban growth in cities such as Amsterdam or Rotterdam (occurring at a much lower rate than in cities in England, Germany, and Belgium) was mainly thanks to the migration of people from the surrounding provinces.[15] The case of Amsterdam is a particularly interesting one for studying this question, as the city's urbanization occurred with different timing than many of the cases studied before. Already in the early modern period, the Netherlands were more urbanized than any other region in Europe.[16] Although the port had an important function in the urban economy, the city also had a large service and manufacturing sector resulting in a large and diverse labour market. By the late eighteenth century, however, the Netherlands suffered from economic decline and missed the first industrial revolution. Industrial development only picked up in the second half of the nineteenth century. After a discussion of the sources used in this article and of the socio-economic context of Amsterdam, the first section of this article studies the development of prosecuted offenses in relation to the city's population growth. Did increased migration to the city lead to a rise in crime, and if so, during which stage of this process? The second section then turns to the crimes and the background of the offenders: were there differences between locals and the different migrant groups?

Sources and definitions

To answer these questions, we are analyzing the court records of the Amsterdam *arrondissementsrechtbank,* the correctional court of Amsterdam and its vicinity, between 1850 and 1905. These court records include cases that were dismissed before trial and cases from other localities in a radius of approximatively 25 kilometers from Amsterdam.[17] Until 1886, this court tried misdemeanours (*misdrijven*) but did not pass sentence on infringements, which were tried by a lower court, nor did it pronounce judgement in felony cases (*misdaden*) such as murder, forgery,

14 G. Meershoek, *De gemeentepolitie in een veranderende samenleving* (Amsterdam 2007) 101.

15 L. Lucassen, 'Het einde van een migratieregime. Buitenlanders in Holland gedurende de 19e eeuw', *Holland* 33:3 (2001) 190-214.

16 J. De Vries, *European urbanization, 1500-1800* (London 1984) 45-46.

17 Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), Parket van Officieren 5074.A.2 – 53-73. A more complete description of the jurisdiction of the Amsterdam court can be found in Marion Pluskota, '"Criminal families" and the court. Co-offending in Amsterdam, 1897–1902', *The History of the Family* 20:2 (2015) 270-290, DOI: 10.1080/1081602X.2014.1001770. Amsterdam's population increase was faster than in the surrounding countryside.

or burglary. The new penal code of 1886 put an end to the distinction between misdemeanour and felony: from then on, the magistrates of the *arrondissementsrechtbank* were required to also sentence more serious offenses. Thus, a wide range of offenses was tried by this tribunal, destruction of goods, violence, adultery, vagrancy, theft, and fraud being only a few examples. The number of cases per year grew regularly: from a mere 450 suspects in 1812, the tribunal tried more than 1500 persons from Amsterdam and its surroundings a century later. In this article we use the criminal statistics published by the ministry of justice and the municipality of Amsterdam, as well as the registers of the tribunal's clerk. These registers and statistics provide an overview of the number of prosecuted crimes and police reports per year but no information on the background of the offenders, other than their sex. Therefore we have supplemented information on age, profession, place of birth, sentence, and so on, from the judgement records of the correctional court.

In this article we focus only on the offenses that occurred in Amsterdam in the years 1850, 1865, 1880, and 1905. These sample years were selected to cover the entire process of accelerated urbanization in the city. The year 1850 was chosen to represent the preceding era, a period of economic deprivation and decreased mobility; 1865 covers the onset of Amsterdam's growth and, as the economy picked up, its rise in migration levels; 1880 covers the height of the city's urbanization in this century, which was at the same time a period of crisis and shortage of labour opportunities; by 1905, the city was still growing but at a more stable rate and with new and established policies to manage problematic urban living conditions. Historians have shown that timing was important when it comes to the relationship between urbanization and crime. Tensions and anxieties about uncontrollable migration and the disruption of public order and the rise in violent offenses and property crimes were particularly high in the early stages of rapid urban expansion.[18] The cases prosecuted by the correctional court of Amsterdam represent a selective image of criminality. The sample years only include cases that were detected by the police and/or were reported to the judicial authorities by the public. The focus is set on the judiciary system or, in other words, on the work of the tribunal and not on police practice on the ground. These parameters allow us to have a better understanding of the priorities of the court.

18 King, 'Impact of urbanization', 696-697; M. De Koster, 'Stedelijke criminaliteit en rechtshandhaving in het verleden. Een greep uit recent historisch onderzoek', *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 54:4 (2012) 388-397, 389.

In addition to identifying the selective nature of criminal sources, it is important to formulate exactly who is counted as a migrant and who is not. In this article, 'migrants' are defined as people born outside of Amsterdam, either in the Netherlands or in another country. Despite the abolition of urban citizenship and the centralization of bureaucracies in the nineteenth century, the place of birth remained one of the defining principles determining belonging, for example, in relation to the organization of poor relief.[19] We focus on geographic differentiation but are forced to omit other markers of minority formation such as ethnicity and religion, as these were not registered in the sources, despite their importance in relation to crime. Amsterdam's Jewish population was regularly subject to stigmatization and discrimination. Jewish peddlers and street vendors were regularly attacked by street youth, and stereotypes of Jews as swindlers and fraudsters were widespread.[20] Moreover, the nineteenth century was also a period of intensified racialization and policies of minority formation of certain groups, such as travellers, by the authorities.[21] However, issues related to urban population growth in the Netherlands were not ascribed to particular minority groups as was the case, for example, in the United Kingdom with Irish migrants.[22]

We are aware that their place of birth does not automatically imply that migrants had arrived in Amsterdam only recently: some of these suspects may have been living in Amsterdam for many years already, or they may have been married and have a family with someone from Amsterdam long before being sent before the tribunal. However, because of the strong cultural differences between Dutch regions at the time – in terms of language, dress type, names, and religion – we believe that making a distinction between Amsterdam-born and not Amsterdam-born is still relevant in a nineteenth-century context. Aggression, insults, and other forms of discrimination against migrants occurred throughout the century.[23] Newspaper reports from Rotterdam,

19 M.H.D. van Leeuwen, 'Overrun by hungry hordes? Migration and poor relief in the Netherlands, sixteenth to twentieth centuries', in: S. King and A. Winter (eds), *Migration, settlement and belonging in Europe, 1500–1930s. Comparative perspectives* (New York 2013) 173-203, 194.

20 J. Lucassen and L. Lucassen, *Migratie als DNA van Amsterdam: 1500-2021* (Amsterdam 2021) 19.

21 A. Cottaar, *Kooplui, kermisklanten en andere woonwagenbewoners: groepsvorming en beleid 1870-1945* (Amsterdam 1996); L. Lucassen, *'En men noemde hen zigeuners'. De geschiedenis van Kaldarasch, Ursari, Lowara en Sinti in Nederland: 1750-1944* (Amsterdam 1990).

22 B.S. Godfrey, P. Lawrence and C.A. Williams, *History and crime* (London 2008) 111.

23 M. de Boer, 'Vreemder en gekker dan Peking. Vreemdelingenverkeer, promotie en het imago van Amsterdam 1883-1913', *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 108 (2016) 8-39, 13; H. Obdeijn and M. Schrover,

for instance, linked rural newcomers from Brabant and Zeeland to all kinds of emerging urban problems: they were unhygienic, caused disorder on the streets and made neighbourhoods unsafe as they were likely to steal from or assault passersby.[24] Being Dutch did not prevent one from being discriminated against, either, especially if coming from the border regions and the countryside. Likewise, some groups, such as migrants from Friesland, upheld their distinct identity by supporting the creation of associations and clubs reserved for people of the same background, acknowledging and defending their cultural difference.[25]

Migration and the urban labour market in nineteenth-century Amsterdam

The Netherlands, including Amsterdam, witnessed a fundamental change in migration patterns in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. During the early modern period, the coastal province of Holland had been at the core of the *North Sea Migration System*. Migrants from neighbouring countries were attracted by the Dutch Republic's economic prospects. Amsterdam in particular drew many foreign migrants: in 1600, around 40 percent of its inhabitants were of foreign origin; their number slowly decreased to reach circa 25 percent around 1800.[26] After this period, when Amsterdam had lost its preponderant role on the international market and labour opportunities in former push-regions increased, foreign migration to the Netherlands declined drastically.[27] Foreigners made up only 5 to 6 percent of the city's population in the mid-nineteenth century, and except from the border region, Amsterdam remained the main destination of foreign migrants to the Netherlands. As in the past, Germans were the most important group, followed by Belgians and Scandinavians. Chain migration and concentration of professions still

Komen en gaan. Immigratie en emigratie in Nederland vanaf 1550 (Amsterdam 2008) 115.

24 N. Manneke, 'Reacties van Rotterdamse burgers op de migratie rond 1900', in: P. van Laar *et al.* (eds), *Vier eeuwen migratie. Bestemming Rotterdam* (Rotterdam 1998) 172-187.

25 F. Suurenbroek and M. Schrover. 'A separate language, a separate identity? Organisations of Frisian migrants in Amsterdam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31:5 (2005) 991-1005.

26 For an overview of Dutch migration history see: J. Lucassen and L. Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie. Een verhaal van winnaars en verliezers* (Amsterdam 2018).

27 Lucassen, 'Het einde van een migratieregime'; J. van Lottum, *Across the North Sea. The impact of the Dutch Republic on international labour migration, c. 1550-1850* (Amsterdam 2007) 177.

continued in this period: northern Germany regularly sent apprentice bakers to Amsterdam, while plasterers from the city of Oldenburg used to come over for a short period of time to learn their trade.[28] This concentration of professions for foreign migrants often followed older, pre-existing migration patterns.

Overall, the first half of the nineteenth century was marked by stability in terms of population movements. Data on population mobility in Amsterdam show a migration rate of 1.4 per 1,000 inhabitants around the 1850s.[29] This low rate of migration can be explained in part by the late industrialization of the Netherlands: in the first half of the nineteenth century, the labour market there did not develop as fast as in other European cities, and urbanization levels remained almost stagnant. Although King Willem I tried to encourage new economic developments, it was only in the second half of the century that the elite started to invest in new projects and industries. From the 1860s onward, Amsterdam's labour market was revived – particularly in the construction industries and the port, which provided new job opportunities – a period often referred to as Amsterdam's second Golden Age.[30] The opening of the North Sea Canal in 1876, which connected Amsterdam to the North Sea, provided a real boost to the port economy. As a result of the new economic tide, people found their way back to Amsterdam in search of work. In the period 1876-1880, the migration rate had increased strongly, to 12.1 per 1,000 inhabitants.[31] Thus, migration had a direct impact on population growth in Amsterdam: with 224,000 inhabitants in 1850, the city had almost doubled its population by 1890.

Contrary to Amsterdam's first Golden Age, this time most of the migrants attracted to the city's labour opportunities, up to 90 percent, came from other parts of the Netherlands, especially from the provinces of North Holland (where Amsterdam is located) and South Holland. Many migrants from North Holland came from the municipalities surrounding Amsterdam such as Sloten, Watergraafsmeer, or Nieuwer-Amstel. It was therefore easy for them to keep in touch with their original support network. Just as in the seventeenth-century, patterns of

28 J. Lucassen, *Naar de kusten van de Noordzee. Trekarbeiders in Europees perspektief, 1600-1900* (Gouda 1984) 98; Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en gaan*, 110.

29 C. Lesger, 'Noord-Hollanders in beweging. Economische ontwikkeling en binnenlandse migratie, ca. 1800-1930', *CGM Working Paper* 4 (2003) 21.

30 A. Knotter, *Economische transformatie en stedelijke arbeidsmarkt. Amsterdam in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Zwolle 1991).

31 Lesger, 'Noord-Hollanders', 24.

Illustration 1 Construction of Theatre Carré in Amsterdam, 1887.
(source: Collection City Archives Amsterdam.)

chain migration and regional specialization emerged. North Hollanders and Frisians were often employed by the port industry; bricklayers predominantly came from Brabant and carpenters from Friesland.[32] Most of the migrants coming to Amsterdam must have been relatively well connected: they were either in close vicinity of their immediate family in the surrounding provinces or loosely integrated into a network set up by other migrants who had settled in the city before them and could help them to find lodging and work.[33]

Amsterdam had acted as a safety valve for migration since the early modern period. If work could not be found in the city or on its docks, men could always board a ship and sail to the East, while women could count on some relief if they became destitute.[34] Amsterdam was a prime example of what Leo Lucassen has dubbed the 'Tantalus Torment' model of migration regulation, in which authorities take a

32 Knotter, *Economische tranformatie*, 133-137.

33 F. Suurenboek, 'Binnenlandse migratie naar en uit Amsterdam (1870-1890)', *CGM Working Paper* 2 (2001) 38-39, 20.

34 Van Leeuwen, 'Overrun by hungry hordes?', 197; L. van de Pol and E. Kuijpers. 'Poor women's migration to the city. The attraction of Amsterdam health care and social assistance in early modern times', *Journal of Urban History* 32:1 (2005) 44-60.

hands-off approach to regulating migration and movement is governed predominately by the labour market.[35] Yet settling in Amsterdam, even temporarily, involved some administrative hurdles for Dutch migrants and foreigners alike, even more so as the nineteenth-century bureaucracy and police control developed. Recent historiography has shown that migrants were put under increased control in the nineteenth century.[36] Although the control system had some similarities with early modern traditions, such as the recording of who was entering and staying in the city, the bureaucratic development, followed by the professionalization of the police, fueled the will of the municipality to gain a better overview and more control of its population. In 1849 the Dutch government issued its first Aliens Act. The need to do so was fostered by an economic recession as well as the revolutionary movements that swept through Europe. The Netherlands did not want to become a 'refuge for quarrelers and troublemakers who are thrown out by other countries – a general asylum for the poor, the beggars, the vagrants from all parts of this world.'[37] In the parliamentary discussions leading up to the act, foreign vagrants (especially Germans) were closely associated with property and public order crimes.[38]

The Aliens Act stipulated that every foreign newcomer had to report to the police upon arrival in the Netherlands and hand over their passport or other identification papers. If they were deemed admissible they were handed a document, the *Reis- en Verblijfspas*, which was issued for three months and had to be renewed each time after it expired. According to the act, only foreigners who could prove that they were able to support themselves while in the Netherlands were allowed to stay. Further criteria were added later on (for example, foreign traveling musicians were denied entry).[39] Control over foreigners was the responsibility of the police and from 1878 onwards, a special

35 L. Lucassen, 'Cities, states and migration control in Western Europe. Comparing then and now', in: B. De Munck and A Winter (eds), *Gated communities? Regulating migration in early modern cities* (Farnham 2008) 217-240, 218.

36 V. Milliot *et al.* (eds), *Police et migrants. France, 1667-1939* (Rennes 2001); M. De Koster and H. Reinke, 'Policing minorities', in: P. Knepper and A. Johansen (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the history of crime and criminal justice* (Oxford 2016) 268-284, 273.

37 Quote in: Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen en gaan*, 108. Original: 'dat Nederland een toevlugstoord zou worden voor de woelzieken en onruststookers, die andere landen uitwerpen – een algemeen armengesticht voor de behoeftigen, de bedelaars, de landloopers van alle oorden der wereld'.

38 *Ibid.*

39 C. van Eijl, *Al te goed is buurmans gek. Het Nederlandse vreemdelingenbeleid 1840-1940* (Amsterdam 2005) 44; M. Leenders, *Ongenode gasten. Van traditioneel asielrecht naar immigratiebeleid, 1815-1939* (Hilversum 1993) 85.

department was set up for this purpose at police headquarters in Amsterdam.[40] Despite the act it was relatively easy for foreign migrants to settle in the Netherlands, as the criteria remained quite vague, border patrols were limited, and local authorities' discretion meant that the rules were often interpreted to the municipality's benefit. Amsterdam maintained a relatively lax migration policy and willingly issued *Reis- en Verblijfspassen*, whereas a city like Rotterdam was more restrictive.[41] In theory, this approach meant that Amsterdam had fewer legal possibilities to expel foreigners, as newcomers who were officially admitted and had thus received a residence card could only be removed by order of the police court (*Kantonrechter*). Those never admitted, however, could simply be brought outside the city limits by the police.

While foreign migration was regulated by the local police department, domestic migratory movements were also monitored by the municipalities. The main reason for this oversight was the organization of poor relief in the Netherlands. In 1854 – with the introduction of the *Armenwet* – financial responsibility for the poor had to be carried fully by the person's place of birth, even when no longer a resident of that municipality. Previously, newcomers could apply for municipal poor relief after an uninterrupted stay of four years in a town (for foreigners, it was six years). This rule was abolished, though, and the residential municipality was allowed to claim the costs of relief from the municipality of birth. In such cases the municipality of birth was entitled to demand that the recipient returned home.[42] In 1887, a royal decree stated that people migrating to a new municipality were required to apply for a residency document (*bevolkingskaart*) in their old place of residence. Upon arrival they had to show it to the municipality, who then decided if they could settle in the city or not.[43] The guiding principle for authorities, both in the case of internal and foreign migration, was managing relief schemes and preventing destitute newcomers from being able to access these programs with impunity. In 1870, after a reorganization of the poor law, the board of

40 G. Meershoek, 'De stad onder toezicht. Het gezag over de openbare ruimte 1878-1918', in: M. Hell and P. de Rooy (eds), *Waakzaam Amsterdam. Hoofdstad en politie vanaf 1275* (Amsterdam 2011) 296-359, 319.

41 L. Pöckling and M. Schrover, 'Registers van verstrekte en geweigerde reis- en verblijfspassen (1849-1923)', in: M. Schrover (ed.), *Bronnen betreffende de registratie van vreemdelingen in Nederland in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Den Haag 2002) 35-70, 57; Van Eijl, *Al te goed*, 134.

42 Van Leeuwen, 'Overrun by hungry hordes?', 195.

43 C. Reimann, 'People on lists in port Cities. Administrative migration control in Antwerp and Rotterdam (c. 1880-1914)', *Journal of Migration History* 6:2 (2020) 182-208, 200.

Amsterdam's municipal poor relief stated that they had taken measures to 'ensure that Amsterdam, in addition to taking care of its own needy residents, would not also be burdened with the support of the poor from other places'.[44] It is also known from other port cities that authorities that had been open to economic migrants during prosperous times were more eager to apply (often already existing) regulations to exclude impoverished migrants from settling in the city.[45] These principles may have significantly impacted the prosecution efforts of urban judicial authorities and, hence, influenced crime rates.

Crime in Amsterdam

A quantitative examination of the number of prosecuted offenses by Amsterdam's correctional court (graph 1) shows that the link between crime and rapid industrial and urban expansion is complex and not as straightforward as sociological theories on anomy, urban living conditions, and modernization tend to portray. From the mid-1850s onward, a gradual increase in the number of prosecuted offenses can be observed, with a peak around the 1880s – just around the time when the city's migration rate was at its highest.[46] During this period, the court dealt with around 2,000 individuals annually. A steady decline can be observed from the mid-1880s onward.

Yet, although it might be tempting to see a relationship between increasing urbanization and rising crime, the actual crime rate – the number of offenses per 100,000 inhabitants in Amsterdam (graph 1) did not increase. From 1855 onward, it remained more or less the same, oscillating between 450 and 550 individuals per year for 100,000 inhabitants until the late 1880s, when crime rates started to decrease regularly to less than 200 at the beginning of the twentieth century. This trend parallels Nelleke Manneke's findings for Rotterdam: population growth there was even more intense than in Amsterdam; in just fifty years its population tripled, from around 90,000 in 1850 to 330,000 at the turn of the century. During this period the crime rate remained stable at around 380 per 100,000 and was thus even lower than that

44 *Jaarverslag gemeente Amsterdam 1870* (Amsterdam 1871) 107.

45 M. De Koster, B. Deruytter and A. Vrints, 'Police-public relations in transition in Antwerp, 1840s-1914', *European Review of History* 25:1 (2018) 147-165, 155; E. Debackere, *Welkom in Antwerpen? Het Antwerpse vreemdelingenbeleid, 1830-1880* (Leuven 2020).

46 Lesger, 'Noord-Hollanders', 21.

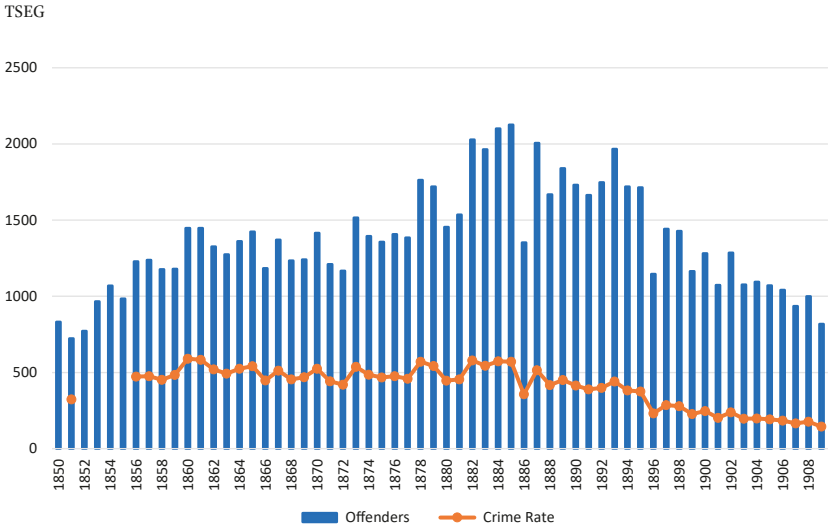

Figure 1 Number of offenders and crime rate per 100,000, Amsterdam Correctional Court, 1814-1909.

Source: Noord-Hollands Archief, Haarlem, Arrondissementsrechtbank Amsterdam, Vonnissen 1838-1909. Inv. nos 1-221; Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Rechtbank Eerste Aanleg, Register van strafzaken, Inv. nos 53-73. Population numbers: M.H.D. Van Leeuwen and J.E. Oeppen, 'Reconstructing the demographic regime of Amsterdam 1681-1920', *Economic and Social History in the Netherlands* 5 (1993) 61-104.

of Amsterdam despite its more intense process of urbanization.[47] It appears, therefore, that migration had a limited impact on crime rates in the two largest cities of the Netherlands.

Late-nineteenth-century sociologists and twentieth-century scholars not only linked urbanization to rising crime but also to a change in the nature of crime.[48] The dominant views equated (growing) cities with higher levels of (lethal) interpersonal violence or rising property offenses.[49] Neither of these statements finds support in the Amsterdam data. Until the introduction of the new penal code in 1886, the published criminal statistics distinguished between public order and administrative offenses (*Algemene Zaak*), offenses against persons (*tegen Personen*), and against properties (*tegen Eigendommen*). Although the number of property offenses increased slightly during this period, the growing number of cases in the 1870s and 1880s was predominantly caused by crimes against the *Algemene Zaak* (graph 2), which made up more than

47 Manneke, *Uit oogpunt van policie*, 2.

48 Johnson, *Urbanization and crime,* 8-12.

49 King, 'Impact of urbanization', 672; H. Zehr, *Crime and the development of modern society* (London 1976) 115-119.

half of the offenses prosecuted during this period. The level of violence, on the other hand, remained relatively stable.[50] Moreover, as data provided by Peter Spierenburg indicate, there was no increase in lethal violence, either (which, before 1886, was not prosecuted by the correctional court), as the homicide rate remained relatively stable, fluctuating about 0.5 per 100,000 inhabitants during the nineteenth century.[51]

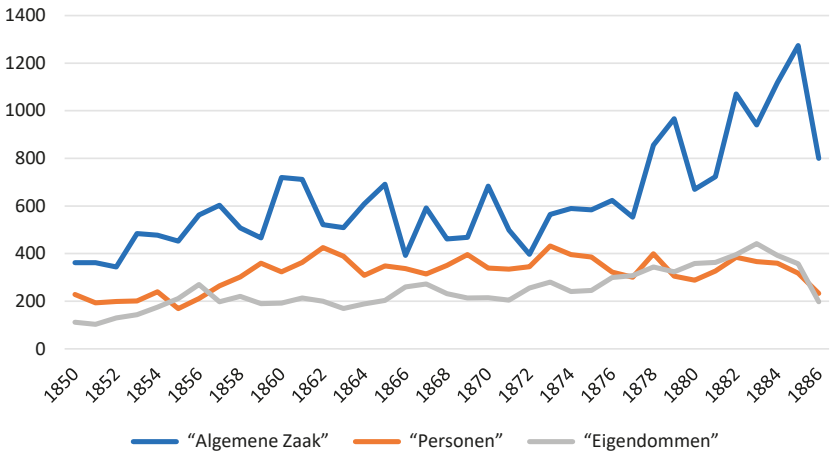

Figure 2 Total number of offenders prosecuted per category of crime, Amsterdam Correctional Court, 1850-1886.[52]

Source: Geregtelijke statistiek van het Koningrijk der Nederlanden, 1850-1886 (Den Haag).

What occupied the Amsterdam police instead of violence or serious property offenses were more mundane offenses and the maintenance of public order. Between 1876 and 1886, more than half the crimes against the *Algemene Zaak* were cases of begging and/or vagrancy.[53] This increase must be seen in relation to the crisis on Amsterdam's labour market following the agricultural crisis that had plagued Europe since 1873: although, thanks to a strong domestic market, the impact

50 Manon van der Heijden and Marion Pluskota, 'Leniency versus toughening? The prosecution of male and female violence in 19th century Holland', *Journal of Social History* 49:1 (2015) 149-167.

51 P. Spierenburg, 'Long-term trends in homicide. Theoretical reflections and Dutch evidence, fifteenth to twentieth centuries', in: E.A. Johnson and E.H. Monkkonen (eds), *The civilization of crime. Violence in town and country since the Middle Ages* (Urbana 1996) 63-106, 87.

52 After the introduction of the *Wetboek van Strafregt* in 1886, crimes were no longer categorized according to the three categories that previously existed in the Code Pénal.

53 *Geregtelijke statistiek van het Koningrijk der Nederlanden* (Den Haag) *1880-1889*.

of the crisis on agricultural prices only started to be felt from 1882 onward, the crisis already had an impact on the job market in the countryside.[54] The construction boom in Amsterdam from the 1870s offered ample employment opportunities to newcomers to the city. Initially, the construction industry was primarily a seasonal business for the rural workforce surplus, and the migrant labourers returned home during winter. From 1878 onward, however, due to decreasing employment opportunities in the countryside, many stayed in the city to supplement their income with temporary jobs such as working the docks or peddling food or coal.[55]

The city authorities watched this development with concern: the growing pool of migrant day labourers created strong competition for Amsterdam's local pool of unskilled labourers, and they witnessed a rise in unemployment as a result: 'after a period of abundance, when great works were carried out, and construction sites were everywhere, many workmen came to Amsterdam, either of their own accord or via contractors. When the work was done, the worker stayed', according to a report of the municipality in 1886.[56] Consequently, the published criminal statistics show that the number of begging and vagrancy cases took up a considerable part of the police's workload, rising to 692 cases in 1885 and making up more than one third of all prosecuted offenses.[57] By the 1890s, the number dropped to less than two dozen cases per year after the city's public prosecutor, in an effort to decrease the court's workload, decided to no longer prosecute every arrested individual who claimed to be a vagrant with the aim of being sent to one of the country's labour colonies in the northern provinces for a short period of time. Instead of coming to Amsterdam, these vagrants now went to other cities, including The Hague and Rotterdam.[58]

54 J.L. van Zanden and A. van Riel, *The strictures of inheritance. The Dutch economy in the nineteenth century* (Princeton 2004) 282.

55 P. de Rooy, 'Een woelige wereldstad, 1883-1893', in: R. Aerts and P. de Rooy (eds), *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam deel IV: Hoofdstad in aanbouw 1813-1900* (Amsterdam 2006) 433-505, 455.

56 Original quote: '[…]vermindering van arbeid na eene periode van overvloed, toen groote werken werden uitgevoerd, overal gebouwd werd, en dientegevolge veel werkvolk naar Amsterdam kwam, hetzij uit eigen bewegen, hetzij door aannemers medegebracht. Het werk was gedaan, de arbeider bleef'. This and similar quotes are found in: F. Smits, 'Van de wind kan men niet leven. De gemeentelijke armenzorg in Amsterdam in het laatste kwartaal van de 19e eeuw', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 19:1 (1993) 94-114, 104.

57 *Geregtelijke statistiek van het Koningrijk der Nederlanden* (Den Haag) *1880-1889*.

58 *Idem*; J. Bierens de Haan, *De Nederlandsche strafbepalingen tegen bedelarij en landlooperij* (Utrecht 1895) 76-78.

*Illustration 2 'From the life of an Amsterdam police officer.' Police cartoon from the illustrated Sunday paper (*Zondagsblad*) of the* Echo. *(source: Collection City Archives Amsterdam.)*

In addition to a focus on vagrancy, Amsterdam's political and societal elite were fearful that the population growth would disrupt public and moral order. In newspapers and other publications, fueled by knowledge about the situation in cities like London and Paris half a century earlier, Amsterdam's civil society voiced their concerns about problems arising from the city's expansion.[59] Yet, contrary to the public opinion in earlier centers of urbanization that

59 Meershoek, 'De stad onder toezicht', 301-303; M. Wagenaar, 'Van gemengde naar gelede wijken. Amsterdamse stadsuitbreidingen in het laatste kwart van de negentiende eeuw', in: M. Jonker *et al.* (eds), *Van stadskern tot stadsgewest. Stedenbouwkundige geschiedenis van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1984) 157-183, 178.

feared the emergence of a *classe dangereuse*, Amsterdam's elite and middle classes were primarily concerned with the management of increasing traffic chaos, garbage, other urban planning issues, and the general morality of the working class.[60] Responding to these societal concerns, in the 1870s the municipality made some efforts to modernize the city's police force, along the lines of modern police forces elsewhere in Europe. It was not until then that the number of police officers was expanded and the city's nightwatch, a force run by civil volunteers since the early modern period, was abolished and replaced by paid policemen. After the reorganization of the police force the number of *processen-verbaal* dealt with by the police more than doubled.[61] These published police reports show that the daily business of Amsterdam's police force was not overwhelmed by the pursuit of criminal offenses: half of the police reports concerned the compliance with police regulations such as the ban of small livestock on the streets, garbage collection, stray dogs, and evasion of the local dog tax. According to Wolffram, the modernization of the municipal police forces in the Netherlands during the last quarter of the nineteenth century led to more effective control over what became seen as risk groups, including migrants.[62] The following section, on the origin and background of offenders prosecuted before Amsterdam's correctional court, shows that this group was rather selective.

Amsterdam's working class and provincial paupers

Who were the offenders prosecuted during this period in Amsterdam? Contemporary moral commentators and early sociologists and criminologists perceived crime as an alien product – brought to the city by immoral, uncivilized, and/or unskilled migrants who, intentionally or unintentionally, upon arrival fell into a life of crime. One therefore could assume that the further away they came, and thus the more alien migrants were to the city, the more likely they were to be overrepresented among

60 Meershoek, 'De stad onder toezicht', 302-308.

61 *Idem*, 319.

62 D.J. Wolffram, 'De moderne stad. Migratie, sociale beheersing en ruimtelijke ordening, 1850-heden', in: L. Lucassen and W. Willems (eds), *Waarom mensen in de stad willen wonen, 1200-2010* (Amsterdam 2009) 173-199, 179.

Table 1 Origin of the total population and of offenders tried by Amsterdam Correctional Court, 1849-1909.

Offenders							
Year	N	Amsterdam	NH	NL	Colony	Abroad	Unknown
1850	562	58,9	8,4	15,7	0,2	7,8	9,1
1865	626	58,6	4,2	15,7	0	3,7	17,9
1880	1242	50,4	11,2	28,5	0,2	2,8	6,9
1905	828	57,2	14,3	24,4	0	3,6	0,5
Total Population							
1849	224035	79	4,8	11,7	0,3	4,3	
1869	264694	77,8	5,4	14	0,2	2,5	
1879	317011	74,2	6,8	16,1	0,3	2,6	
1909	566131	68	9,8	20,1	0,4	1,7	

Sources: NHA, AA, Vonnissen 1850, 1865, 1880, 1905; www.volkstellingen.nl.

criminals.[63] An analysis of the backgrounds of offenders tried by the city's correctional court during the sample years shows that the reality was often more complex. The study of the defendants' places of birth reveals that migrants were indeed more likely to be prosecuted than Amsterdammers, and that this discrepancy already existed before the migration peak of the 1870s and 1880s (see table 1). The court data from 1850 and 1865 show that close to 60 percent of the suspects were born in Amsterdam, whereas they formed almost 80 percent of the city's population. In 1905, Amsterdam-born offenders still accounted for 57.2 percent of the tried offenders, but their share of the total population had decreased to 68 percent. Migrants were thus overrepresented in all years according to their share of the total population. Interestingly enough, none of the subgroups stands out in particular. Foreign migrants were not necessarily more likely to be prosecuted for a criminal offense than those coming from North Holland or the rest of the Netherlands. The majority of labour migrants were between the ages of 15 and 40, and their share among the urban population of this age group was much higher than of the population as a whole. As this was also the age group of the majority of offenders, their overrepresentation may very well be less marked.

63 M. De Koster, 'Stedelijke criminaliteit en rechtshandhaving in het verleden', 388-397, 394; J. Davis, 'Urban policing and its objects. Comparative themes in England and France in the second half of the 19th century', in: C. Emsley and B. Weinberger (eds), *Policing Western Europe. Politics, professionalism, and public order, 1850 1940* (New York 1992) 1-17.

However, the share of migrants differed greatly per category of crime. Theft, violence, and vagrancy are the crimes commonly associated with migration during the nineteenth-century urbanization process.[64] What is revealing for Amsterdam, is that the overrepresentation of migrants is much less marked among cases of theft and assault (with the exception of theft in the 1880s) than might be expected (see table 2). Violence was a regular occurrence in local working-class communities in neighbourhoods like the Jordaan, and both men and women participated in these neighbourhood fights.[65] During the nineteenth century, elite anxiety towards working-class societies increased, along with their wish to educate them to live a 'proper' life, which prompted judicial and police authorities to intervene in what had previously been considered private business.[66] Contrary to violence, which was very much rooted in local popular culture, begging and vagrancy were crimes in which migrant offenders were clearly overrepresented (see table 2)

As we have seen in the previous section, the economic crisis of the 1880s led to an increase in the prosecution of begging and vagrancy offenses. However, it was a specific group of migrant offenders that was prosecuted. During this period, Dutch migrants made up almost two thirds of all individuals prosecuted for begging and vagrancy. The number of offenders without a permanent residence among Dutch migrants had grown significantly over the years. Whereas, in 1850, around 10 percent of offenders born in North Holland and other provinces were not registered as a resident of any municipality, by the 1880s it was the case for half of them. Even among Amsterdam-born offenders, 20 percent were *zonder vaste verblijfplaats* (without permanent residence) during the crisis years.[67] Previous research by Frank Suurenbroek on Amsterdam suggests that it was the most destitute and unskilled migrant labourers who stayed in the city during these crisis years, whereas those with familial support networks back home and/or the skills to find employment elsewhere left.[68] The professions registered for domestic migrant offenders in the

64 Moch, *Moving Europeans*, 143-146.

65 O. Ruitenbeek, 'Niet zonder kleerscheuren. Criminaliteitspatroon, eergevoel en het gebruik van fysiek geweld door Amsterdamse volksvrouwen (1811-1838)', *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 102 (2010) 63-85; *Idem*, 'Bonje met de buren. Burenruzies in de Amsterdamse volksbuurten aan het begin van de negentiende eeuw', *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 97:4 (2010) 155-162; De Rooy, 'Een woelige wereldstad 1883-1893', 433-505; Meershoek, 'De stad onder toezicht', 316-317.

66 Pluskota, 'Criminal families', 271-272; C. Smit, *De volksverheffers. Sociaal hervormers in Nederland en de wereld 1870-1914* (Hilversum 2015).

67 NHA, AA, Vonnissen 1850, 1865, 1880.

68 F. Suurenboek, 'Binnenlandse migratie naar en uit Amsterdam (1870-1890)', *CGM Working Paper* 2 (2001) 38-39.

Table 2 Share of offenders tried for assault, begging & vagrancy, and theft, Amsterdam Correctional Court, 1850-1905.

Assault								
	1850		**1865**		**1880**		**1905**	
Amsterdam	124	62,30%	111	67,70%	143	61,40%	62	54,90%
North-Holland	18	9,00%	3	1,80%	16	6,90%	14	12,40%
Netherlands	31	15,60%	24	14,60%	46	19,70%	30	26,50%
Abroad	16	8,00%	11	6,70%	11	4,70%	3	2,70%
Colony	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	0,40%	0	0,00%
Unknown	10	5,00%	15	9,10%	16	6,90%	0	0,00%
Total	**199**		**164**		**233**		**113**	
Begging and Vagrancy								
	1850		**1865**		**1880**		**1905**	
Amsterdam	51	57,30%	35	44,30%	131	32,80%	6	54,50%
North-Holland	8	9,00%	9	11,40%	67	16,80%	0	0,00%
Netherlands	26	29,20%	32	40,50%	198	49,60%	5	45,50%
Abroad	2	2,20%	2	2,50%	2	0,50%	0	0,00%
Colony	1	1,10%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
Unknown	1	1,10%	1	1,30%	1	0,30%	0	0,00%
Total	**89**		**79**		**399**		**11**	
Theft								
	1850		**1865**		**1880**		**1905**	
Amsterdam	58	70,70%	64	71,90%	159	56,80%	176	60,10%
North-Holland	10	12,20%	4	4,50%	34	12,10%	46	15,70%
Netherlands	6	7,30%	16	18,00%	72	25,70%	61	20,80%
Abroad	5	6,10%	4	4,50%	10	3,60%	10	3,40%
Colony	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
Unknown	3	3,70%	1	1,10%	5	1,80%	0	0,00%
Total	**82**		**89**		**280**		**293**	

Source: NHA, AA, Vonnissen 1850, 1865, 1880, 1905.

court records seem to support this pattern and suggest a process of impoverishment among domestic migrant offenders during the period (see table 3).[69] In 1850, 40 percent of defendants from North Holland

69 The professions are coded using the Hisco-classification: see M. van Leeuwen *et al., Hisco: Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations* (Leuven 2002).

were unskilled workers, and about 9 percent declared themselves unemployed.[70] In 1865, the share of unskilled labourers remained the same, yet the share of those unemployed had increased to 34 percent. In the 1880s, the number of unemployed among offenders originating from North Holland was almost half. The background of migrants from other parts of the Netherlands is very similar: in 1850, 31 percent listed an unskilled profession and 15 percent were unemployed; in 1865, about 25 percent worked as unskilled labourers and another quarter was unemployed. By the crisis years of the 1880s, 56 percent were unemployed. In 1905, unemployment among domestic migrants had decreased to pre-crisis levels and again most listed a profession as day labourer, dockworker, or another form of casual labour.

Table 3 Occupational class of prosecuted offenders, Amsterdam Correctional Court, 1850-1905.[71]

	1	2	3	4	5	-1	0	6	N
1850									
Amsterdam	0	22,40%	31,40%	0,00%	30,20%	3,60%	0,30%	12,10%	331
North-Holland	0	17,00%	31,90%	0,00%	40,40%	2,10%	0,00%	8,50%	47
Netherlands	0	14,80%	31,80%	1,10%	30,70%	6,80%	0,00%	14,80%	88
Abroad	0	20,50%	56,80%	2,30%	13,60%	2,30%	0,00%	4,50%	44
1865									
Amsterdam	1,40%	23,70%	31,30%	0,00%	22,60%	4,60%	2,50%	13,90%	367
North-Holland	0,00%	11,50%	15,40%	0,00%	34,60%	3,80%	0,00%	34,60%	26
Netherlands	1,00%	14,30%	20,40%	1,00%	25,50%	10,20%	1,00%	26,50%	98
Abroad	4,30%	30,40%	26,10%	0,00%	26,10%	4,30%	0,00%	8,70%	23
1880									
Amsterdam	0,30%	12,10%	27,50%	0,00%	27,80%	3,80%	2,20%	26,20%	626
North-Holland	0,00%	5,80%	13,70%	0,00%	28,10%	3,60%	0,00%	48,90%	139
Netherlands	0,30%	5,60%	18,10%	0,00%	16,70%	2,50%	0,80%	55,90%	354
Abroad	0,00%	17,10%	48,60%	0,00%	11,40%	2,90%	11,40%	8,60%	35

70 NHA, AA, Vonnissen 1850, 1865, 1880.

71 Class 1 Elite (higher managers and higher professionals); 2 Lower Middle Class (lower managers, professionals, clerical and sales personnel and foremen); 3 skilled workers (medium skilled and lower skilled); 4 Self-employed farmers and fishermen; 5 unskilled workers and farm workers; -1 no code in his class; 0 unmentioned/unknown; 6 declared as unemployed.

	1	2	3	4	5	-1	0	6	N
1905									
Amsterdam	0,20%	13,90%	33,20%	0,20%	37,60%	2,90%	0,80%	11,10%	476
North-Holland	0,00%	11,80%	29,40%	0,80%	47,10%	2,50%	1,70%	6,70%	119
Netherlands	0,50%	19,70%	28,10%	0,00%	32,00%	6,40%	3,00%	10,30%	203
Abroad	0,00%	23,30%	36,70%	0,00%	26,70%	13,30%	0,00%	0,00%	30

In the years of the booming construction industry, the city had an abundance of, especially casual, labour opportunities. It appears that it was precisely among this category of workers that the economic crisis was felt the hardest, and it was they who were subsequently prosecuted for begging and vagrancy. The common perception still is that those workers mainly originated from the countryside, pushed by the agrarian crisis.[72] As Jan Kok, Kees Mandemakers, and Bastian Mönkediek have shown, not all rural regions in the Netherlands were affected in the same way. The highly commercialized grain cultivating regions, and later also dairy farming regions, dominant in the western and northern parts of the country, were affected much more by the crisis and had higher rates of out-migration than the mixed three-field agriculture system in the east and south.[73] While the sources do not reveal the occupations offenders held prior to their arrival in Amsterdam, their place of birth can be used to establish whether internal migrants came from regions particularly affected by the agrarian crises. In fact, it does not seem to have been the case. Unsurprisingly, the majority came from the provinces of North and South Holland. Vagrants and beggars originating from the latter province were not from small agricultural villages. Rather, many were born in larger cities like Rotterdam, Leiden, Delft, Schiedam, and The Hague.[74] In the nineteenth century, there was an active migration circuit between the larger cities of the conurbation now called the Randstad. Rotterdam, for example, attracted many migrants from Amsterdam and vice versa, most of them casual or low-skilled labourers moving between the two cities to find (temporary) employment, with economic fluctuations directly impacting the levels of mobility.[75] More than half

72 Van Leeuwen, 'Overrun by hungry hordes?'; Kok *et al.*, 'Flight from the land?'.

73 Kok *et al.*, 'Flight from the land?', 8-9.

74 NHA, AA 1880.

75 Suurenbroek, 'Binnenlandse migratie', 23; J. Bruggeman and P. van de Laar, 'Rotterdam als migrantenstad aan het einde van de negentiende eeuw', in: Van de Laar *et al.* (eds), *Vier eeuwen migratie,* 146-170, 149-154.

Illustration 3 Handing out bread and coffee to beggars at the police station.
(source: Drawing by Hendrik Maarten Krabbé, 1896, Collection Atlas Dreesmann, City Archives Amsterdam.)

of the offenders originating from the province of North Holland who were prosecuted for vagrancy in 1880, however, came from places with a population of less than 10,000 inhabitants, mostly within a 25-kilometer radius of Amsterdam.[76] Thus, it appears to have been predominantly the situation of the Amsterdam labour market, which was unable to accommodate a large group of casual labourers, rather than the crisis in the countryside that influenced crime and prosecution patterns in relation to begging and vagrancy.

76 NHA, AA 1880.

Strikingly, among those tried in Amsterdam for vagrancy the number of foreigners was really low.[77] This fact may have had less to do with their economic situation and more with the way foreign vagrants were policed. During the crisis, authorities tightened their control over the admission of foreigners. The Aliens Act of 1849 stipulated that only strangers who could prove they had sufficient means of subsistence were allowed to stay. In the 1880s, as casual employment opportunities dried up, the number of foreigners who were refused entry and subsequently deported from the Netherlands increased sharply, from 1,693 in 1875 to 3,186 in 1880, and even 3,537 in 1885. North Holland was responsible for approximately 10 percent of all deportations, almost all of them from Amsterdam.[78] These individuals are not counted in the criminal statistics, as the majority of them were not convicted of a crime but simply denied the right to stay in the Netherlands, on account of being poor. Still, we also know from the correspondence between Amsterdam and the ministry of justice that – going against regulations – the city occasionally prosecuted foreign vagrants and subsequently sent them to the labour colonies instead of expelling them directly.[79] This situation partially explains why foreign migrant offenders had a much better economic profile: in all sample years more than half of them were skilled or belonged to lower middle-class professions. In addition, it is likely a reflection of the fact that foreign migrants who managed to settle in the Netherlands had a relatively large human capital and managed to integrate in society quite successfully.[80] However, this success did not prevent all of them from getting occasionally into a fight or falling into poverty and crime. Overall, though, they seem to have been significantly better off than domestic migrant offenders. Despite there being signs of occasional discrimination against Germans and other foreigners by the Dutch, they were not targeted or framed as a risk group *per se* by the police.[81]

77 M. Schrover, *Een kolonie van Duitsers. Groepsvorming onder Duitse immigranten in Utrecht in de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum 2002) 39-41.

78 Van Eijl, *Al te goed,* 58.

79 *Ibid.*, 48.

80 Lucassen, 'Selectiviteit van blijvers', 115.

81 Lucassen and Lucassen, *Migratie als DNA*, 154-155.

Conclusion

This article links the historiography on crime and on migration and examines the impact of migration on crime rates by studying Amsterdam migrants brought before the correctional court. The 'complexity of this issue'[82] means that no one-size-fits-all explanation can be formulated; it demands that historians look at different variables to make sense of the observed changes. Contrary to the English case, which saw a rise in crime in the early, disruptive years of industrialization-related urban growth, Amsterdam's crime rate remained more stable throughout the period. However, there were significant changes in terms of both the types of prosecuted offenses and the offenders' profiles, which indicate that differences in economic development and labour market characteristics in a city's urbanization process are of importance. Changes in crime rate, particularly the prosecution of vagrancy, became conspicuous in the 1880s. With the boom in the construction and port industries, starting in the late 1860s, the city attracted a large workforce of low- and unskilled labourers, and these casual migrants came first and foremost from the Netherlands.

As long as Amsterdam's economy was able to absorb these large numbers of casual labourers, authorities had no issues with people coming to the city. By the 1880s, when the effects of the agricultural crisis were also felt in the urban economy, this toleration was no longer the case. After a few years of continuous drop in agricultural prices, even the previously healthy urban labour markets began to feel the impact of the crisis, meaning that opportunities for employment started to decline. By then, migrants who had previously been easily absorbed by the city's labour market, even as low- or unskilled workers, became unemployed, due to the extent of the economic crisis. The background of the offenders prosecuted during the crisis years supports this premise: compared to earlier years, more of them were unemployed, and most came from the regions that had previously supplied casual workers to the urban labour market. Foreign migrant offenders, on the other hand, had a much better economic profile. Research on Rotterdam has shown that this situation was not just the case among criminal offenders, but among urban migrants in general. It underscores the selective nature of migration, distinguishing between groups that successfully settled in the city permanently and those that had not.

82 M. De Koster and H. Reinke, 'Migration as crime, migration and crime', *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies* 21:2 (2017) 63-76, 71.

Likewise, it directs our attention towards the response of the authorities. Reacting to the failure of the market to 'integrate' these individuals, and concerned by the strain these unemployed people put on the local poor relief system, the elite supported the use of the judiciary system to limit the settlement of low-skilled, unemployed people, through increased prosecution for begging, vagrancy, and petty thefts. Moreover, it was particularly during this period that Dutch authorities, including those in Amsterdam, prevented large numbers of foreigners from settling in the country and expelled them on account of not having the means to support themselves. Previous research on other port cities has found similar responses by police and municipal authorities, fitting with the 'Tantalus Torment' model described by Lucassen. Further research is needed, therefore, to understand the intricate relationships between migration regulation in general, and the impacts it had on the attitudes of authorities towards newcomers breaking the law. At the same time, the Amsterdam case reminds us that prosecution patterns were not only shaped by economic circumstances and/or the responses of authorities to those circumstances. The agency of those arrested for vagrancy, for example, comes through as well. Looking for a temporary place to stay in the labour colonies, many chose to get arrested with this purpose in mind. Once Amsterdam ended this practice, people looking to stay in a labour colony diverted to other cities such as Rotterdam and The Hague.

As historians of migration have shown, the process of urbanization was not fueled by 'hordes of uncivilized migrants' who would then go on to commit violence and property crimes. However, different groups of migrants led to different crime patterns. This article shows the importance of considering migrants in crime history not as a homogenous group but as different groups, each with their own support networks and influenced differently by the micro- and macro-economic developments of the nineteenth century.

About the authors

Jeannette Kamp (1986) is a social historian studying crime to understand how the daily lives of historical actors were impacted by processes like migration, gender norms, and state formation between 1600 and 1900. She has published extensively on crime and gender in Germany and the Netherlands, notably *Crime, gender and social control in early modern Frankfurt am Main* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). She is currently working as a post-doc in the project 'Tolerant Migrant Cities?' and researches the process of urbanization and its impact on crime in the Netherlands between ca. 1850 and 1910.
E-mail: j.m.kamp@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Marion Pluskota (1983) is an assistant professor in social history specialized in crime and gender history. Her main fields of interests are the history of gender relations in crime history from the 18th- to the early 20th-century in Europe and the history of sex work. Her most recent publication, 'Gender and the Geography of Crime in Nineteenth-Century Leiden and Amsterdam', *Crime, History, and Societies* (2023) analyzes the gendered use of the urban space in nineteenth-century Leiden and Amsterdam and its impact on recorded crimes.
E-mail: m.pluskota@hum.leidenuniv.nl