

2. Imagining Social Change in Early-Modern Amsterdam: Global Processes, Local Perceptions

Ulrich Ufer

This chapter considers some of the different kinds of ways in which citizens in seventeenth-century Amsterdam experienced palpable social changes in the city as the effects of larger global processes. From its sixteenth-century status as a relatively unimportant fishing port, by the early seventeenth century Amsterdam had risen to the status of a centre of global power, a change that took place within the span of a few decades only. In the course of the seventeenth century the city would develop further into a potent, in some accounts even hegemonic commercial empire (ca. 1625-75), whose proto-industrial capitalist economy and innovative administration of financial resources were geared towards the accumulation of wealth. Global processes, however, not only led to the establishment of new institutions and to a modernization of the economy, they also had a significant impact on how urban residents identified with the city ‘on the ground’. It was through changes in their immediate environment that Amsterdammers learned to see their city as a global hub. If this applies to the years of unhindered prosperity and growth, it applies in a different way to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when the patterns of world hegemony could be seen to shift to the city’s disadvantage: as Amsterdam witnessed the disintegration of its global networks, citizens encountered the effects of economic decline and political instability – reminded, once again, of how intricately the local and the global were intertwined.

The present chapter, following some brief theoretical reflections, will argue that one especially important way in which seventeenth-century Amsterdammers thought about social change in their city was to relate it to a novel logic of accumulation – a logic which, because of the city’s central position in a global network, worked largely in its favour. What was particular about Amsterdam was contemporaries’ awareness of how social changes within the locality were part and parcel of a larger, global dynamic of change, an awareness that profoundly affected people’s sense of time, history, and identity, as we will see. In what follows, this chapter will use seventeenth-century Amsterdam as a focus for studying the development of a global consciousness, or what I have discussed elsewhere under the rubric of a ‘global animus’, in Roland Robertson’s term (Ufer 2009). Specifically, the chapter will chart cultural articulations of this global consciousness in terms of different seventeenth-century Dutch ‘urban imaginaries’, that is to say, of the different ways in which Amsterdammers experienced and thought

of their city. In successive order, we will look at an imaginary that demonstrated a positive embrace of the city's global economic involvement and the accumulative logic in which it was inscribed; an urban imaginary that consisted of more ambivalent views and attitudes towards this; and, finally, a dystopian urban imaginary that presented a largely negative take on the city as a site of accumulation.

Globalization and Global Systems in Historical Perspective

Academic debates on globalization often stress either its novelty or its historical longevity. On the one hand, approaches commonly referred to as Globalization Analysis understand it as the result of a relatively recent, qualitative break with the past, thus emphasizing the novelty and historical uniqueness of present-day flows of migrants, objects, capital, and culture (Clayton 2004). Practitioners of Universal History, on the other hand – in a way that resonates with nineteenth-century *Weltgeschichte* or 'world history' – concentrate on lateral comparisons of world regions during specific historical periods (Mazlish 1998). While both types of approach undoubtedly have their merits, the present chapter situates its discussion within a different framework, one that is best introduced as a social-anthropological form of World Systems Analysis. From its earliest inception in the 1970s, World Systems Analysis has argued for a systemic approach to both past and present global phenomena, maintaining that the only valid unit for analysis in the social sciences and the study of history is the global system as a whole (Wallerstein 1974-80). While initially criticized for overemphasizing macro-economics and the politics of hegemony at the expense of cultural processes, more recently this approach has been complemented by Global Systems Analysis. This has broadened the scope of the approach to look in a social-anthropological way at how culture, politics, and the economy all interact in the context of global processes of change (Friedman 1994; Friedman and Ekholm-Friedman 2008; Denmark et al. 2000).

In brief, what distinguishes Global Systems Analysis from other approaches is that it views social reproduction in all localities and at any time as both locally and globally embedded. Thus, the global is not seen as a larger space extending beyond a locality, but as part of 'a set of properties of the reproduction of any locality' (Friedman 2007, 116). It follows that the reproduction of local social structures, as well as their transformation, must be considered both in light of local variables and dynamics *and* in light of the locality's position within a larger, potentially global framework of interconnected places. How this applies to Amsterdam may be obvious: over the course of the early-modern period, Europe saw the emergence of a capitalist system whose mode of production, in particular its division of labour, would structure the future relations between different localities on a worldwide scale. By the seventeenth century a systemic drive towards growth and expansion had led to a unified, modern world system that comprised Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. This system's inherent trend to concentrate wealth on the basis of its division of labour favoured the rise of powerful urban centres of accumulation – such as Amsterdam at its seventeenth-century

peak – and in these centres, a commercialized form of social organization developed that would later unfurl on a universal level.

However, while localities are constituted by both local and global processes in terms of their social organization and its reproduction over time, awareness of this ‘on the ground’ comes in degrees. What is more, the meaning attributed to the phenomenon of global interconnectedness by citizens and other actors – i.e., whether they regarded it favourably or in a negative light – varies from time to time, from place to place. In seventeenth-century Amsterdam, the growing awareness of global processes and networks found expression in a range of cultural representations, but also in cultural practices and ideas about the city as community – in short, in the entire complex of images, attitudes, and cultural sensibilities that this chapter considers in terms of the ‘urban imaginary’. The following sections will inquire into positive, ambivalent, and negative dimensions of the Dutch urban imaginary in seventeenth-century Amsterdam. First, however, the idea of social change itself in the early-modern context needs to be discussed.

Early-Modern Ideas of Social Change

Due to its booming economy and growing interconnectedness, change was very palpable in Amsterdam during the seventeenth century. The German poet and linguist Philipp von Zesen hardly exaggerated when, in his festive 1660s description of Amsterdam, he described the city’s rise from a poor fishermen’s town to a globally connected place of wealth and fame as a development of just a few decades (von Zesen 1664, 163). By the 1630s the city had met the challenges attendant on its global status by setting up all the institutions necessary for the successful conduct of global trade: a Chamber of Insurance, specializing in marine insurance (1598), a fleet for the protection of maritime convoys (1598), the East India Company, in which Amsterdam was the best represented of the six cities that had a say in it (1602), a Bank of Exchange (1609), a stock market (1613), a credit bank (1614), and the West India Company (1621). In addition, Amsterdam had become a hub of knowledge and learning by virtue of its central position in various European and global information networks, and through the foundation of its Illustrious School, the Athenaeum Illustre (1632). The question arises on the basis of which general notion of change contemporaries perceived – and made sense of – the momentous transformations accomplished in those decades. The modern linear timeframe with its developmental, stadial, and evolutionary conceptions of change did not rise to prominence until well into the eighteenth century, and traditional cyclical notions of change still dominated the popular mindset. At the same time, early-modern Amsterdam’s role as a global hub, where material wealth and knowledge increased at a remarkably fast pace, also invited an understanding of change that would acknowledge – and account for – the idea of continuing accumulation.

Early-modern notions of change must be discussed with prudence, paying attention to the contemporary semantics of words such as innovation, renovation, and progress. In his dictionary of foreign words, the mid-seventeenth cen-

tury Amsterdam scholar Adriaan Koerbagh understood the two Latinized words *Renovatie* and *Innovatie* synonymously, translating the first as ‘*vernieuwing, verversching*’ (renewal, refreshment) and the second as ‘*vernieuwing, verandering, weerbeginning*’ (renewal, change, restart). As for the words *Progres* and *Progressie*, he glossed them as ‘*voortgang, vordering*’ (continuation, advancement) and ‘*voortgang, voortgaaning*’ (continuation, increase).¹ Those semantics are corroborated by contemporary French usage. Antoine Furetière’s *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690) explained the word *Progres* merely as a spatial movement from one point to another, and noted that *Innovation*, in a societal context, was considered to be dangerous and destabilizing. This brief etymological digression seems to confirm the idea that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, innovative social change had not yet acquired its positive modern meaning, and that the term ‘progress’ did not yet connote a developmental or evolutionary concept of time (Godin 2010). Social change was still largely presented as a reformation, a return to a previous state, and not as innovation or future-directed development. As Benoît Godin has argued, even in the works of Francis Bacon the concept of innovation was not yet clearly tied to the future, since, as he argued in his *Magna Instauratio*, all new insights were ‘copied from a very ancient model, the world itself and the nature of things and of the mind’ (qtd. in Godin 2008, 10–11).

Thus, within the framework of seventeenth-century semantics and philosophy, future-directed, linear development was, it seems, difficult to conceive for experts and had but limited cultural currency on a wider scale. However, there was a noticeable and growing tension between traditional concepts of cyclical change on the one hand, with the penchant they encouraged for looking to the past for retrospective benchmarks, and the steadily growing awareness of accumulation on the other. Particularly in the fields of knowledge production and material wealth, accumulation was increasingly perceived as a process that seemed to continue from the past via the present into the future, thus fostering a novel understanding of change.

Against the background of a widespread perception of social change and innovation as negative or even evil, it is remarkable that in the spheres of knowledge and technology the seventeenth century saw the emergence of a positive discourse on innovation. New inventions, as well as the import of new products and production processes, were surrounded by a rhetoric that emphasized the potentially beneficial nature of those novelties for the public and the market (Thorndike 1951; Cipolla 1972). This may have had something to do with contemporary discussions that cast knowledge as an inexhaustible resource, one that permitted or even necessitated ever new discoveries. In the introduction to his dictionary of foreign words, Adriaan Koerbagh was very much concerned with the question how humanity might gain access to the vast expanses of knowledge. In fact, his motivation for compiling the dictionary lay in his ambition to facilitate such access: his work would enable people to pursue their studies in the vernacular rather than in Latin, the contemporary *lingua franca* of science (Koerbagh 1668, vii).

The emerging notion that knowledge was infinite, that learning was a cumulative process taking place over time, and that it involved a continuing series of new

insights rather than a (re)discovery of ancient authorities and texts was tangible in many spheres of seventeenth-century European society. It grew prominent, for example, in France, where the Moderns argued against the Ancients that literary style was open to improvement beyond the level of venerated classical authors. It was also in France that Blaise Pascal, in his *Fragments*, advanced the idea of a collective memory of man, which permitted one to think of human knowledge in terms of a progressive transmission of acquired assets, unfolding in the course of time. The implication was that the present was more knowledgeable than the past, which raised the expectation that this trend would continue into the future (Schabert 1979, 126). Likewise, René Descartes, who lived in Amsterdam during the 1630s, provided a philosophical framework in which the progress of learning would result from the conscious, critical interrogation of ancient wisdom and insights through a process of individual reasoning and radical doubt (van Doren 1967, 34; Delvaile 1977, 191).

Naturally, the global activities of the Dutch contributed greatly to an increase of knowledge. In Amsterdam this was particularly palpable: based on the global exchange of information, and the collection and analysis of imported artefacts and species of flora and fauna, the city was a hub for the generation of world knowledge (Smith 1984). That Dutch global expansion had a direct role in the development of a cumulative and innovatory conception of knowledge appears from the example of Abel Tasman's logbook, kept during his Pacific voyage of 1642. The maritime explorer described the mapping of the world as an ongoing enterprise, noting that a conclusive cartography of all the coastlines and hinterlands of the world depended on 'the sagacity, penetration, and application of this and of succeeding ages' (qtd. in Pinkerton 1812, 463).

While an emergent logic of accumulation and expansion was applied to the domain of knowledge, contemporaries brought similar ideas to bear on the economic sphere. In his economic treatise *The Interest of Holland*, published originally in 1662 as *Interest van Holland, ofte Gronden van Hollands Welvaren*, the textile entrepreneur Pieter de la Court described the generation of material wealth in the cities of the United Provinces. Anticipating that the trend of steadily rising incomes would continue into the future, he wrote:

the riches and plenty of many cannot be kept within the walls of their houses; ... over and above their costly and stately buildings, they are visible in their coaches, horses, and other tokens of plenty in every part. There are but very few in the cities of the foresaid Province [of Holland] that do not yearly increase their capital. Yea, if the foresaid complainers and murmurers look but into their own books, I assure myself that most of them (unless they are profuse, negligent and debauched) shall find their stock one year with another, considerably increased. (de la Court 1746, 410)

To contemporary observers, the phenomenon of accumulating wealth, so clearly visible in the Dutch Republic (or at least in Amsterdam), was closely related to the globally interconnected and innovative character of Dutch society. Notably – and aptly – a few years earlier, in 1659, the same Pieter de la Court remarked that

the Dutch finishing industries and carrying trades depended on distant markets both for the acquisition of raw materials and for the sale of products:

Since our manufactures are separated from trade, we have to compare them to a clockwork whose key and mainspring or weight, which drive it, are situated in a foreign country or city. Thus our clockwork must stand still, if foreigners are unwilling to wind up the mechanism or pull up the weights. (de la Court 1911, 53)²

Speaking from the point of view of a local consumer, no lesser commentator than René Descartes remarked in 1631 that ships were bringing the plenty of both the Indies and Europe to Amsterdam (Adam and Tannery 1974, 202-4). In a similar vein, Josiah Child, an English merchant, member of parliament, and shareholder in his country's East India Company, extolled in 1668 that the Dutch were 'giving great encouragement and immunities to the Inventors of New Manufactures, and the Discoverers of any New Mysteries in Trade' (4). Two decades later, Child's compatriot Nicholas Barbon, economist and speculator, lauded the Dutch promotion of new fashions as a driving force which would keep 'the great Body of Trade in Motion' (1690, 65-6) and would continuously advance the accumulation of wealth and profit.

In what follows, I shall be interested in the ways in which this novel culture of accumulation impacted on contemporary understandings of social change in the urban environment. To this aim, the following sections will consider how the idea of accumulation was in turns favoured, critiqued, and rejected in the urban imaginaries of seventeenth-century Amsterdammers.

Positive Imaginaries of the Global City

As sites of social change, cities constantly fashion and refashion their image. They are composed of multiple layers of memory and experience – as urban representations and the built environment reflect. In this sense, cities can be thought of as palimpsests that are constantly being overwritten, or as 'urban imaginaries' that evolve over time. As Andreas Huyssen puts it, an 'urban imaginary' is the 'cognitive and somatic image' that citizens carry within them of 'the places where [they] live, work, and play'; thus they are 'part of any city's reality, rather than being only figments of the imagination' (Huyssen 2008, 3). Urban imaginaries also reflect the larger cultural context, including the values and meanings that inform urban life. As such they involve different languages and vocabularies, differences in class, ethnicity, and gender, and a multiplicity of cultural identities. In regard to a situation where citizens are strongly aware of how their locality is tied to global processes, to focus on the 'urban imaginary' may reveal how they responded to the many, positive as well as negative changes that globalization brought to their environments.

Let us start by looking at official perspectives on seventeenth-century Amsterdam. Clearly, representations that were officially commissioned did not just

reflect a growing awareness of the global and accumulative logic governing Amsterdam's economy and social organization – they also celebrated it. By the mid-seventeenth century, the city had become deeply involved in the administration and amassment of capital. The city's culture of objects, too, expanded significantly over the course of the century, as is testified by the lush representations of household goods on many paintings of domestic interiors, and by the increasingly large numbers of those paintings themselves (van der Woude 1991, 315). Amsterdam's sevenfold demographic rise between about 1580 and 1660 and the successive phases of city extension also fortified the idea of accumulation and expansion in people's minds. The idea of accumulation was expressly thematized in the allegorical cornucopia imagery that adorned official representations of the city: we find this imagery in architecture, in paintings, on the frontispieces of celebratory descriptions of the city, and in theatrical performances put up on the occasion of urban festivities.



2.1. Clavichord Lid showing an Allegory of Amsterdam as the Centre of World Trade (1606).
(Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

A first indication that the city's global interconnectedness formed an important point of reference, permitting it to self-identify in terms of innovation and prosperity, dates back to 1602. In that year, the city ordered a clavichord with painted lid as a prestigious embellishment for the (old) town hall. The artist, Pieter Isaacs, decorated the lid with a bird's-eye view of the four continents, showing a female allegorical figure of Amsterdam in the central foreground (Figure 2.1). Significantly, the figure, who is seated on a throne, rests one hand possessively on a celestial globe, while using the other hand to embrace a cornucopia that is pouring out the riches of the world. The representation also featured a Latin caption which emphasized the historical significance of recent global expansionist

enterprise, pointing out that the Dutch had ventured into parts of the world that had been unknown to the ancients. The same link between the three related ideas of progressive accumulation, of being at the heart of a process of global expansion, and of being innovatory in the sense of transgressing boundaries that had limited previous ages is also in evidence in the interior and exterior decorations adorning the new town hall (dating back to the 1650s and 1660s, when most of the original decorations were completed). Again, the cornucopia occupied a central place, among others on the town hall's rear tympanum. Here, the accumulation of wealth, objects, and knowledge in Amsterdam was placed within a global context, with representations of the four continents handing their riches to an allegorical personification of the city (Fremantle 1959, 64; see also Michael Wintle's chapter in this book). The *Hoorn van Weelde* (horn of plenty) was also put in a global context in other visual representations of Amsterdam, for example in Gerard de Lairesse's painting *Allegory of Wealth* (ca. 1670) and in a mural by the same painter for the residence of the wealthy merchant family Trip (Fokkens 1662, A5-A9). The horn also featured as part of the frontispieces to numerous eulogies about the city written in the 1660s (Dapper 1663; von Zesen 1664).

A theatre play, directed in 1662 by Jan Vos, elaborated on this allegorical imagery; the play employed images of global interconnectedness, accumulation, and progress beyond traditional boundaries as elements of an official urban imaginary. The play was performed during the festivities that were held to celebrate the completion of Amsterdam's most recent urban extension. Descriptions of the stage design and the stage directions emphasized the fact that Amsterdam's merchants now traded in places in Africa 'where the Greeks have never been'; in distant East Asia, which 'had denied access to Alexander's armies'; in the northern seas, the zone 'that Argus, Jason's ship, did not dare to reach'; and in hitherto unknown Western parts of the world, where Amsterdam's merchants 'had tamed various wild people and turned them into traders'. While the presence of 'numerous strangers' on stage attested to the city's demographic increase, the world's riches were described as pouring out over Amsterdam from the mouth of a cornucopia, once more surrounded and supported by the continents (Vos 1662, 5-6).

Cornucopian allegories, then, were prominent in visual representations of Amsterdam's civic identity. Highlighting the unprecedented advances that were being made, they emphasized the novelty of Amsterdam's global role, suggesting that the city's status was innovative and progressive measured by the benchmarks of previous civilizations. Their prominent visibility also underlines how the logic of accumulation and expansion that drove the city's economic ascent was incorporated in the official urban imaginary, stimulated by city elders and office holders.

Ambivalent Imaginaries of the Global City

We have seen that the notion of continued expansion and accumulation gained increasing importance in official representations. At the same time, some contemporary observers were especially alert to the remarkable contradictions of this

newly emerging paradigm. Indeed, an ambivalent attitude towards the unfolding paradigm of accumulation and global expansion was as much part of the urban imaginary in this period as the celebratory attitude of officials. To some extent, this ambivalence reflected apprehensiveness about the increasing commercialization of modern life and the outward superficiality – the preoccupation with appearances – in the city. Additionally, it reflected conservative concerns about the stability of the social order and anxiety about the possibility of moral decline. Where the previous section focused on cornucopian allegory, in what follows the main focus is on the allegorical figure Schynschoon (‘nice appearance’) in seventeenth-century Dutch literary sources. This figure was often an object of attention for the contemporary public, as it sought to come to grips with its ambivalent feelings about a society organized around the logic of accumulation.

Pieter Bernagie’s morality play *De Mode* (1698) is one of the most telling examples of how, from a conservative point of view, the ‘nice appearance’ afforded by wealth and affluence could be seen to represent a threat to social stability and order. To briefly rehearse the play’s story line: a poor young woman named Armoë (Poverty) is corrupted by the intrigues of the character Schynschoon (Nice Appearance). Eager to promote her social standing, Poverty dresses after the latest fashion, thus disguising her poor social background. Under the alias of *De Mode* (Fashion) she marries another allegorical character, *Overdaad* (Pomp). She believes to have made a good match, but her husband’s seemingly elevated social status is soon revealed to be just as pretentious as her own, since he has squandered his father’s and grandfather’s riches and finds himself on the verge of bankruptcy (94-7). While Poverty symbolized society’s doubts over the wealth behind ostentatious consumption, Pomp’s story of transgenerational economic decline put into question the sustainability of accumulative processes and the likelihood of their continuation in the future. The themes of feigned social status and the difficulty to distinguish between reality and appearance were also developed by Eduard Sijbrands Feitama, writing in the same decade as Bernagie. In his poem ‘Eerste Kuyering in Gedagten’, a poem about an imaginary stroll through the city, Feitama describes how he beholds the prestigious new residential buildings on the *Herengracht*. To him this was not an architecture of plenty. Rather, looking at the embellished façades and adorned gables he felt provoked to question if this conspicuous display of status and wealth was, in fact, truly backed up by financial means; he feared it might be economically unviable pretence, based on ‘*losse borg*’ or ‘loose credit’ (Feitama 1684, 176).

For some contemporaries, an important threat posed by Schynschoon – pretentious outward appearance – was that it ignored existing customs in regard to outward apparel, thereby undermining the possibility of a clear identification of social status and rank. As one character put it in another play by Bernagie, *De Huwelijken Staat* (1684): ‘The disorder of dress is a great pity, it has become impossible to tell the different estates apart’ (qtd. in van Vloten 1881, 247). For the most part, the concern that traditional social order was under threat was projected onto the lower social strata. Two novels by Timotheus ten Hoorn, *Het Leeven en Bedryf van de Hedendaagsche Haagsche en Amsterdamse Zaletjuffers* (1696) and ‘*t Hollig Bollig Leeven van Verscheide Hedendaag-*

sche Kameniers met de Comptoir-Knegts (1707), illustrated at length how maid servants and clerks who held the lowest ranks rebelled against their lot by pretending to be of higher social status. The accumulation of wealth was here placed in contrast with the accumulation of debts: the ostentation of the servant and clerks was based on habitual overspending (ten Hoorn 1707, 149-50).

But was this threat to social order solely caused by individual failings, or was it rather to be explained by the conditions of growing commercialization and by the effects of a globally interdependent economy? From the perspective of a detached observer like Nicholas Barbon, the increasing commercialization of modern life and rising consumption patterns played an important, and actually advantageous role in the Dutch accumulation of wealth. From a critical local perspective, however, it was questionable whether increased spending patterns, an increased need for money in everyday life, and constant chasing after profit were a desirable form of social change. As one observer noted:

all time spent on things other than earning money, regardless how it is spent, is seen by the people (so it seems) as time wasted. Because it is for money, that the teacher teaches and preaches the gospel; the advocate protects his master for reasons of money, illnesses are healed for money, the merchant and shop-keeper trade their wares for money, etc. In short, it is solely to gain money that one should spend one's time. So that it appears to me that the utmost goal of all things is to earn money. (Koerbagh 1668, vii-viii)

The inordinate pursuit of gain could even be perceived as a threat to the moral community of the city. In his poetic diatribe of 1675, 'Op Amsteldam', Willem Godschalck van Focquenbroch evoked the image of the Whore of Babylon when he described Amsterdam as a place forsaken by virtue, love, and honour, one whose inhabitants knew no greater pleasure than that of scraping money together (van Focquenbroch 1946, 17-18). Thus doubt and ambivalence entered the urban imaginary. It was asked whether in a monetized society the 'nice appearance' of accumulating wealth, with all its opportunities for further increase of profit, did not come at the price of social feeling and responsible social action. Would non-profitable social relations, such as love, friendship, or solidarity, not get relegated to a second-best place in such a money-driven environment?

The larger issue behind such considerations was the question in how far the improvement of material conditions went hand in hand with man's moral and cultural refinement. As Simon Schama has shown, cultural and moral scepticism in the Dutch Republic were strongly influenced by religious sentiments: the commercialization of life, and the vanity and regard for status and outward appearance it induced, were regarded as detrimental to the civic community's spiritual well-being and the individual's eternal soul; Christian virtues such as faith, purity, love, and peacefulness seemed to be relegated to second rank (Schama 1987, 219-20). In the context of Dutch global activity, the moral relation between local affluence on the one hand, and the global means employed to foster and sustain this affluence on the other, was thrown into question. Some compatriots, while participating in the logic of accumulation and profit, felt that the means by which

such profit was realized entailed an ethical regression. Others emphasized the spiritual harm which the Dutch were inflicting upon themselves to direct the flows of global wealth to Amsterdam's cornucopia. Writing about his experiences on the small VOC off-shore trading post of Dejima in the harbour of Nagasaki during the 1690s, the German physician Engelbert Kämpfer described the numerous debasements he and his colleagues had to suffer in their efforts to procure Japanese silver for the company – silver being of the utmost importance to the Dutch Asian trade cycle. Kämpfer noted that

we had to endure many shameful restrictions imposed by those proud heathens. We may not celebrate Sundays or other festivities, we may not sing religious songs or speak our prayers; we never pronounce the name of Christ, nor may we carry around the image of the cross or any other symbol of Christianity. In addition we have to endure many other shameful impositions, which are very painful to a sensitive heart. The only reason which induces the Dutch to live so patiently with all these pains is the pure and simple love for profit and for the costly marrow of the Japanese mountains. (1964, 72)

It might be objected that such experiences at the fringes of the Dutch economic empire did not impact on the urban imaginary at the centre. Other authors, however, bear witness that an ethics of accumulation was submitted to criticism in local discourse, too. Local controversy over the ethics of global trade began already during the early years of the Dutch East India Company, the VOC, when the company was permitted armed intervention as an adequate means to further Dutch commercial interests in Asia (Boxer 1965, 95; Chaudhuri 1985, 88). An anonymous pamphlet of 1645, occasioned by belligerent conduct of the Dutch in Asia, drew attention to the discrepancy that seemed to exist between those distant perpetrations of unlawful violence and locally held notions of civilized conduct and righteousness:

Would it be possible that this government, which only has gain and profit in view, could cause anything other than injustices, molestations, injuries, slander, unjustified wars, disputes, alien and unchristian procedures and acts, murder, robbery, betrayal, unjust verdicts and all other evil, misdeeds and sins? [This] justly attaches world-wide blame to the Dutch renown. (*Discovers*, 18)

But the question of means and ends was also posed with regard to the maltreatment and precarious living conditions of the VOC employees themselves. The 'ant-like' labour of miserably paid sailors who endangered their health on the oceans could be seen as a reckless sacrifice to vain consumer desires at home, it was said. There was no actual need for porcelain, tea, and other East-Indian commodities: only urban pomp and the craze for luxuries had turned those into necessities (Gargon 1717, 300-1).

It is against the background of this idea of a deplorable renunciation of established standards of virtue and ethical behaviour being at the heart of the city's

economy – both on the level of the individual and on that of the wider moral community – that we should understand other critical comments made about Amsterdam as a hub of global commerce. As early as 1632, the scholar Caspar Barlaeus had used the occasion of his inaugural speech as president of the newly founded Athenaeum Illustre to remind his audience of city elders and businessmen of their ethical obligations. He evoked the figure of the ‘wise merchant’, the *Mercator Sapiens*, but he knew that

[s]peaking to merchants – people who lust after profit, in a place where gold coins jingle, in a city which is geared to the earning of money – I would aim too high, if I spoke of anything other than trade, profit and wealth. Not to instruct them how to earn money, but to teach them to do it in a wise manner; not to give prescriptions about the art of making a profit (I frankly have to admit that I know nothing thereof), but to investigate the best and wisest ways to this aim; not to condemn the drive to accumulate riches, but to rein it in through a just insight. (qtd. in van der Woude 1967, 60)

Some years later, in a private letter to Constantijn Huygens, Barlaeus concluded more pessimistically that commercial interests had long prevailed over matters of religion or spirituality, and that ignorance, ambition, and avarice reigned supreme in the world (Wicquefort 1696, 2).

Dystopian Imaginaries of the Global City

While the positive urban imaginaries discussed above testified to an affirmative embrace of the material wealth that was consequent on the globalization of the Dutch economy, ambivalent imaginaries revealed a critical contemporary stance in regard to feigned status display and social disorder in the city and also in regard to moral failings overseas. As this final section seeks to show, from ca. the 1670s onwards, unfavourably changing economic and political conditions emphasized and intensified already existing dystopian urban imaginaries. These went beyond ambivalent attitudes towards the globally embedded, economy-driven city, warning against the degrading effects of the urban environment both on the individual and on the community, and comparing it negatively with an idealized, Arcadian form of sociability.

While the 1660s had still seen the publication of encomiums on Amsterdam’s rise and remarkable increase in economic power and wealth, the decades that followed witnessed a shift of appreciation away from the city towards Amsterdam’s hinterlands. This is clearly registered in Holland’s regional Arcadian literature. Contrary to adaptations of the Arcadian topic in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European aristocratic societies, authors in the bourgeois Netherlands conceived the mythical Arcadia as a refuge for disaffected urbanites and not for disillusioned or ostracized courtiers. In the imagined Dutch Arcadian landscapes, city dwellers found a retreat from the vicissitudes of an urban society which they perceived to be degenerate. Here, life was marked by social equality, by reconcili-

ation with nature and God, and by the absence of such apparently symptomatic urban vices as competition, deceit, pretence, and spiritual alienation.

In fact, Dutch Arcadian works of the early 1700s revived a literary tradition dating from the mid-seventeenth century and even earlier. The tension between life *intra* and *extra muros* had been discussed for the first time in Dutch literature by the late-mediaeval Frisian scholar Jacobus Canter. In his *Dialogus de Solitudine* of the late fifteenth century he had contrasted two rival ideals of the city, represented by the dialogue's speakers. Philodem, on the one hand, saw the urban environment as the only social setting that was favourable to the prospering of what was good in human nature: the city's material wealth, the safety provided by its walls, and the mutual inspiration of harmoniously cohabiting, civilized urbanites allowed an advancement of knowledge and of the arts. Hyppolit, on the other hand, saw nothing but degeneration, human alienation, and deceit in the city. Opposing his friend, he put forward the view that a solitary and self-sufficient life in the countryside or in the forests, unrestricted by the complex interdependencies of urban civilization, would permit a better and more original form of existence (Enenkel 1995, 267-91). The subject of urban versus rural forms of social organization was taken up again during the late 1620s and 1630s, when the United Provinces went through a phase of intense urbanization. At this point, the subject was explicitly expressed with reference to the myth of Arcadia. Jacob Cats and Johan van Heemskerck wrote long poems and bestselling novels on the Arcadian theme. The following years also witnessed the publication of a large number of shorter poems in praise of the country estate (*Hofdichten*) and of pastoral scenery (*Harder Liedt* or *Harder Klachte*).

Jacob Cats's 'Galathea, ofte Harders Minne-klachte' ('Galathea, or the Shepherd's Lament over Love') of 1627 juxtaposed urban and rural life by opposing two suitors, a shepherd and an urbanite, who competed for the love of a shepherdess. Telling the story from the shepherd's point of view, the city was negatively portrayed as a location ruled by vanity, deceit, social instability, mutual mistrust, economic dependence, overcrowding, and neighbourly intrusion. Notably, Cats's shepherd noticed the detrimental effects of Amsterdam's global interconnectedness on its inhabitants' well-being. He warned that the merchant – as ideal-typical representative of the *homo urbanus* – could never sleep quietly, since his globally dispersed property and investments were always threatened by risks that lay outside his control. How much more peaceful was the idealized life of the country dweller, who could keep his premises under close watch (van Vloten 1862, 579-90). The shepherd depicted the social organization of country life as a wholesome and virtuous experience, liberating man from urban vices. Where the globally interwoven city economy made people dependent on commerce and monetary speculation, country dwellers were leading self-determined and self-sustained lives through their devotion to honourable manual labour – or so it was claimed. The shepherd also held that exotic importations – such as Asian spices, Chinese silks and porcelains, Indian calicoes, Japanese kimonos, American tobacco, or Arabic perfumes – needed to be viewed very critically (Ufer 2010, 14-16). The suggestion was that there was a strong connection between the global market, the consumption of luxury goods, and moral corrosion in the city:

Things seem to be considered nice,
It seems they achieve the highest price,
If they go by an exotic name,
And certainly a man must claim,
That they come from Moorish lands
Or from the Barbaric strands,
That from shores in India
They've been brought here from afar.
Bad people only hold things dear
If from afar they're brought to here. (van Vloten 1862, 587)

In fact, none of the authors of Dutch Arcadian literature were permanent rural residents. Constantijn Huygens, Caspar Barlaeus, or Jan Jansz. Starter, to mention but three, were politicians and men of letters who wrote with their own experiences of the city in mind. Their dystopian urban imaginaries and reveries about an alternative social condition reveal in more or less serious manner their own sense of dissatisfaction with urban life.

Contemporary observations that urban life might have a corrupting effect on the soul of citizens, and alienate them from their religious beliefs and moral sentiments, also motivated a search for spiritual reconciliation *extra muros*. The *Hofdichten* of the 1630s and 1640s bear witness to a search for communication with God, specifically by embracing his creation in a more natural environment. Caspar Barlaeus, for example, found detachment from the city, consolation from urban disappointments, and reconciliation with God on his country estate Oostwijk in the Beemster-Polder, where he contemplated nature's splendour. He dedicated a poem to the simple description of a lime tree in which he saw revealed the essence and beauty of creation:

This tree is the beautiful palace through which God reveals
His wisdom, his power and the goodness of his command.
Whoever touches the painted leaves, the bark, feels
The Creator as with his own hand. (Schull 1835, 64)

This proto-transcendentalist idea that reconciliation with nature would provide a refreshing and even spiritually purifying wellspring for worn-out urban souls was central to many of the Arcadian publications. It was most explicitly expressed by one of the characters in the *Amstellandsche Arcadia* (1737). Having left the city's throng, and having taken residence on the country estate, he 'learned how to see the great Creator's hand in all this greenery, in the birds and even in the smallest animal' (Willink 1737, 109).

Later examples such as Abraham Rademaker's *Hollands Arcadia* (1730), Claas Bruin's *Noordhollandsche Arkadia* (1732), and Daniel Willink's *Amstellandsche Arkadia* (1737) need to be understood in the context of Dutch decline during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Military defeats suffered by the Dutch Republic in the third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-4) had been accompanied by the well-nigh defeat of the city of Amsterdam by French troops

during the Franco-Dutch War (1672-8). In addition, Dutch engagement in the Nine Years' War (1688-97) and in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-13) had negative economic repercussions and led to the bankruptcy of the United Provinces in 1713. Diminishing profits from global trade, due to increasing competition with other European nations, further challenged the urban imaginaries of Amsterdam as the site of a prospering economy, sustained wealth, and a peaceful life. Arcadian literature of the early eighteenth century discussed more or less openly the moral superiority of country life over life in the city, pointing to the threat of the moral decline of urban civilization or even to its imminent regression. Criticizing the unscrupulous search for profit in the city, the *Amstellandsche Arkadia* drew an analogy with the biblical story of Belshazzar to evoke God's pending punishment of urban blasphemy and spiritual impurity (Willink 1737, 239). Perhaps one of the most drastic dystopian images of urban regression was developed by Claas Bruin in his *Noordhollandsche Arcadia*. Leaving Amsterdam for a country stroll, and looking back towards the city from outside its gates, one of Bruin's protagonists exclaimed:

... but should I not fear
That she [Amsterdam], alas! was already at her peak ...
Demise comes sudden, without notice,
If you attempt to rival God
Through arrogance, riches and other shortcomings. (Bruin 1732, 13)

Conclusion

Seventeenth-century Amsterdam's central position in an extensive, worldwide network of information exchange and economic interdependencies favoured the emergence of a paradigm that revolved around a logic of accumulation. This paradigm could be traced through the rise of new social and economic institutions, but also through contemporary debates about knowledge, technological innovation, and economic growth. It is against the backdrop of this larger paradigmatic shift that the present chapter has analyzed local identifications with, perceptions of, and experiences in Amsterdam as a global city, looking specifically at what it meant to see the city as being caught up in the dynamics of global change. These identifications have been discussed here on the basis of allegorical and symbolic representations in literature and the visual arts, and with reference to the concept of 'urban imaginaries'. As we have seen, urban imaginaries that reflected the new logic of accumulation were most prominently expressed in official representations of the civic identity of the city: for the most part, allegories that presented the city as receiving the cornucopian blessings of its global trading ventures. At the same time, we have seen that ambivalent attitudes to a changing urban economy, and anxiety over the city's devotion to material wealth, were at the heart of rivalling imaginaries. In their most extreme form, these involved dystopian elements, criticizing the city as a site of declining virtue, and articulating the idea of the mythical retreat of Arcadia as a counter-image to alleviate the

new urban disaffection. Taken together, these variegated imaginative responses to the city as a global place testify to the inner diversity and dynamism of the early-modern ‘global consciousness’ that took shape in Amsterdam in the course of the seventeenth century.

Notes

- 1 While *voortgang* and *vordering* come closest to the idea of advancement and progress, particularly in contemporary usages relating to advances in the sciences and the accumulation of knowledge, the exhaustive database on Dutch Golden Age literature, the *Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren* (DBNL), surprisingly does not show any usages of the word *voortgaaning*.
- 2 Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Dutch or German sources are the author’s own.

Works Cited

- Adam, Charles, and Paul Tannery, eds. *Ceuvres de Descartes*. Vol. 1. Paris: Vrin, 1974.
- Barbon, Nicholas. *A Discourse of Trade*. London: Tho. Milbourn, 1690.
- Bernagie, Pieter. *De Mode*. Amsterdam: Erven Jacob Lescaijle, 1698.
- Boxer, C. R. *The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600–1800*. London: Hutchinson, 1965.
- Bruin, Claas. *Noordhollandsche Arkadia*. Amsterdam: Evert Visscher, 1732.
- Chaudhuri, Kirti N. *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.
- Child, Josiah. *Brief Observations Concerning Trade and Interest of Money*. London: Printed for Elizabeth Calvert, 1668.
- Cipolla, Carlo M. ‘The Diffusion of Innovations in Early Modern Europe’. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14.1 (1972): 46–52.
- Clayton, Thomas. “‘Competing Conceptions of Globalization’ Revisited: Relocating the Tension between World-Systems Analysis and Globalization Analysis’. *Comparative Education Review* 48.3 (2004): 274–94.
- Dapper, Olfert. *Historische Beschryving der Stadt Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1663.
- de la Court, Pieter. *The True Interest and the Political Maxims of Holland*. London: J. Nourse, 1746.
- . *Het Welvaren van Leiden. Handschrift uit het Jaar 1659*. Ed. Felix Driessen. ’s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1911.
- Delvaille, Jules. *Essai sur l’Histoire de l’Idée de Progrès jusqu’à la Fin du XIII. Siècle*. New York: Olms, 1977.
- Denemark, Robert A., Jonathan Friedman, Barry K. Gills, and George Modelski, eds. *World System History: The Social Science of Long-Term Change*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Discours op Verscheyde Voorslaghen Rakende d’Oost en VVest-Indische Trafyken*. N.p.: n.p., 1645.

- Enenkel, Karl. *Kulturoptimismus und Kulturpessimismus in der Renaissance. Studie zu Jacobus Canters 'Dyalogus de solitudine' mit kritischer Textausgabe und deutscher Übersetzung*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Feitama, Eduard Sijbrands. *Christelijke en stigtelijke rym-oeffeningen*. Amsterdam: Vorster, 1684.
- Fokkens, Melchior. *Beschrijvinge der Wijdt-Vermaarde Koop-Stadt Amsterredam*. Amsterdam: Markus Willemsz. Doornick, 1662.
- Fremantle, Katharine. *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam*. Utrecht: Haentjens, Dekker and Gumbert, 1959.
- Friedman, Jonathan. *Cultural Identity and Global Process*. London: Sage, 1994.
- . 'Global Systems, Globalization and Anthropological Theory'. *Frontiers of Globalization Research: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches*. Ed. Ino Rossi. New York: Springer, 2007. 109-32.
- Friedman, Jonathan, and Kajsja Ekholm-Friedman. *Modernities, Class, and the Contradictions of Globalization: The Anthropology of Global Systems*. Lanham, MD: Alta Mira, 2008.
- Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire Universel*. The Hague and Rotterdam: n.p., 1690.
- Gargon, Mattheus. *Walchersche Arkadia*. Vol. 2. Leyden: Luchtmans, 1717.
- Godin, Benoît. 'Innovation: The History of a Category'. Working Paper no. 1, Project on the Intellectual History of Innovation. Montreal: INRS, 2008.
- . "'Meddle Not with Them That Are Given to Change": Innovation as Evil'. Working Paper no. 6, Project on the Intellectual History of Innovation. Montreal: INRS. 2010.
- Huysen, Andreas, ed. *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008.
- Kämpfer, Engelbert. *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan*. Vol. 2. Stuttgart: Brockhaus, 1964.
- Koerbagh, Adriaan. *Een bloemhof van allerley lieflijkheyd*. Amsterdam: n.p., 1668.
- Mazlish, Bruce. 'Comparing Global History to World History'. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28.3 (1998): 385-95.
- Pinkerton, John. *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World*. Vol. 11. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1812.
- Schabert, Tilo. 'A Note on Modernity'. *Political Theory* 7.1 (1979): 123-37.
- Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. London: Collins, 1987.
- Schull, Petrus Steven. *Poëzy van Casper van Baerle*. Dordrecht: Van de Velde Olivier, 1835.
- Smith, Woodruff D. 'The Function of Commercial Centers in the Modernization of European Capitalism: Amsterdam as an Information Exchange in the Seventeenth Century'. *The Journal of Economic History* 44.4 (1984): 985-1005.
- ten Hoorn, Timotheus. *Het Geheim Ontdekt, of 't Hollig Bollig Leeven van Verscheide Hedendaagsche Kameniers met de Comptoir-Knegts*. Amsterdam: Timotheus ten Hoorn, 1707.

- . *Het Leeven en Bedryf van de Hedendaagsche Haagsche en Amsterdamsche Zaletjuffers*. Amsterdam: Timotheus ten Hoorn, 1696.
- Thorndike, Lynn. 'Newness and Craving for Novelty in Seventeenth-Century Science and Medicine'. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12.4 (1951): 584-98.
- Ufer, Ulrich. 'Globalization and Modern Identity Practices – Locals and Cosmopolitans in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam'. *Hermes: Journal of Language and Communication Studies* 43 (2009): 97-117.
- . 'Urban and Rural Articulations of an Early Modern Bourgeois Civilizing Process and Its Discontents'. *Articulo: Journal of Urban Research* 3 (2010): 2-14.
- . *Welthandelszentrum Amsterdam. Globale Dynamik und Modernes Leben im 17. Jahrhundert*. Köln: Böhlau, 2008.
- van den Boogaart, Ernst. *Civil and Corrupt Asia: Image and Text in the Itinerario and Icones of Jan Huygen van Linschoten*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- van der Woude, Ad. 'The Volume and Value of Paintings in Holland at the Time of the Dutch Republic'. *Art in History, History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture*. Ed. David Freedberg and Jan de Vries. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. 285-329.
- van der Woude, Sape, ed. *Mercator Sapiens. Oratie Gehouden bij de Inwijding van de Illustre School te Amsterdam op 9 Januari 1632*. Amsterdam: Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1967.
- van Doren, Charles Lincoln. *The Idea of Progress*. New York: Praeger, 1967.
- van Focquenbroch, W. G. *Focquenbroch: Bloemlezing uit zijn Lyriek*. Ed. W. F. Hermans. Amsterdam: Van Oorschot, 1946.
- van Vloten, Johannes. *Alle de Wercken van Jacob Cats*. Vol. 1. Zwolle: De Erven J. J. Tijl, 1862.
- . *Het Nederlandsche Kluchtspel van de 14e tot de 18e Eeuw*. Haarlem: W. C. De Graaff, 1881.
- von Zesen, Philipp. *Beschreibung der Stadt Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: Joachim Noschen, 1664.
- Vos, Jan. *Vergrooting van Amsterdam, door Jan Vos. Op d'Amsterdamsche Schouwburg, door Meer dan Tachtentig Persoonen Uitgesproken en Ver-toont*. Amsterdam: Jacob Lescaillje, 1662.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World-System*. Vols. 1 and 2. New York: Academic Press, 1974-80.
- Wicquefort, Joachim. *Lettres de J. de Wicquefort avec Les Reponses de G. Bar-lée*. Amsterdam: George Gallet, 1696.
- Willink, Daniel. *Amstellandsche Arkadia*. Vol. 1. Amsterdam: Arent van Huyssteen, 1737.