

Introduction: urban crises, policing crises: mirror images? (c. 1700–1900): cities in flux and changes to policing

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ABSTRACT: The articles gathered here aim at outlining a complex view of the relationship between cities in a state of 'crisis' and changes to policing systems, in a period marked by rapid urbanization and industrialization. They explore the connections between the rhythms of urban change and the changes in the institutions responsible for policing the city. This introduction defines 'urban crisis' as a brief paroxysm and a way of describing rapid urban change that is considered problematic especially in terms of social control. It examines three sets of issues to highlight the relationships between policing powers and urban dynamics: first, how the police managed to handle unforeseen, traumatic events in emergency situations; second, how the police forces tried to legitimize their status through their understanding and control of urban dynamics; and third, how the police used the discourse of urban crisis they helped to produce, as a tool for their own ends.

For a long time, police and other law-enforcement institutions were only examined in terms of their immediate actions and reactions to tumultuous events in times of urban crisis. New studies have since emerged that turn this question around, not so much analysing what the police do in a crisis as what a crisis does to the police. This reversal is part of an evolution in historical research, which no longer considers only the repressive and coercive aspects of policing but takes a more complex view of the relationship between the institution of the police and the society around it. The articles gathered here aim to bring these two elements together: on the one hand, cities in a state of 'crisis', and on the other, changes to policing systems in the period between the Enlightenment and

the triumph of the nation-state, a period marked by rapid urbanization and industrialization. It is a matter of reflecting on the rhythms of urban change and how these relate to changes in the institutions responsible for maintaining law and order in the city.

Crises and policing: an effort to understand (or determine the problem)

This connection between the city and the police can be traced back both to the medieval organization of municipal powers and efforts to define the concept of 'the police' itself. In some European countries, historians have paid special attention to the problem of defining the notion of 'the police' from a semantic and functional point of view from the early modern period to the modern age. Initial studies focused on the relationship between the use of the term 'police' and the actual policing activities carried out by multiple authorities, before the creation of the police as an institution in the modern sense of the term.¹ Even from this semantic perspective, the etymological derivation of the term 'police' from the Greek *politeia* and the Latin *politia* highlights the intrinsic relationship between policing and law and order in the *polis*.² Analyses of policing legislation and practices confirm this connection between policing activities and the 'well-ordered' cities of early modern Europe.³

The word 'police', however, even in the eighteenth century, had a fluidity of meaning and usage that contrasted with the increasingly well-defined institutional organization of systems of control in the state-building process. This observation has led to a growing shift away from the theoretical question of 'what is the police?' to the historical problem of 'what does the police do?' in specific contexts.⁴ Converging with this

¹ Cf. P. Napoli, *Naissance de la police moderne. Pouvoirs, normes, société* (Paris, 2003); J.-M. Berlière, *Naissance de la police moderne* (Paris, 2011). For the English context, see C. Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (London and New York, 1996).

² Cf. 'Materiali per un lessico politico europeo: Polizia', *Filosofia politica*, 2 (1988), and the overview offered by P. Preto, *Il significato del lemma 'polizia'*, in L. Antonielli (ed.), *La polizia in Italia nell'età moderna* (Soveria Manelli, 2002), 13–31.

³ Cf. M. Raeff, 'The well-ordered police state and the development of modernity in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe: an attempt at a comparative approach', *American Historical Review*, 80 (1975), 1221–43; M. Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police: Social and Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600–1800* (Yale, 1983); M. Stolleis and K. Härter (eds.), *Policey in Europa, der frühen neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996).

⁴ V. Denis (ed.), 'Histoire des savoirs policiers in Europe (XVIIIe–XXe siècle)', special issue of *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines*, 19 (2008), and V. Milliot, 'Histoire des polices: l'ouverture d'un moment historiographique', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 2 (2007), 162–77, and 'Mais que font les historiens de la police?', in J.-M. Berlière, C. Denys, D. Kalifa and V. Milliot (eds.), *Métiers de police. Être policier en Europe, XVIIIe–XXe siècle* (Rennes, 2008), 9–34; L. Antonielli (ed.), *La polizia in Italia e in Europa. Punto sugli studi e prospettive di ricerca* (Soveria Manelli, 2006).

trend is an emphasis in historical studies on professional practices, the acquisition and circulation of practical and administrative knowledge, the training of specialized forces and the varying and sometimes conflicting forms of organization and hierarchy of policing institutions. These institutions have long been characterized by their diversity, the influence of the prerogatives of city magistrates, the role of the armed forces in border areas and special situations (epidemics, political and social crises) and finally by the belated affirmation of a national state police framework, whose development was neither linear nor universal. Apart from the reconfiguration of the police's areas of competence over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – shifting towards a narrower focus on maintaining law and order from a broader remit during the Enlightenment period – and apart from the clearer conception of the relationship between the police and the judiciary at the time of the French Revolution, what strikes us today is the relative inertia of policing practices and the slowness of the change mechanisms and dynamics that affect them. Beyond the variety of their vantage points, the articles in this collection share the set of topics outlined above, which deserve to be studied over longer periods of time, beyond the divisions that the history of law and institutions has privileged for too long.

The articles in this collection reflect this broad conception of the police and policing. The 'police' of Mexico City at the turn of the eighteenth century, examined by Arnaud Exbalin, should be understood as the concrete expression of the principles of 'good government'. It is 'not confined to the maintenance of law and order and not identified with the exercise of a specialized function'.⁵ This notion of policing refers to the set of measures put in place by the royal and municipal authorities to ensure the well-being of the city and its habitants, to support their lives (*faire vivre*) and even their 'thriving' (*mieux vivre*), to invoke Michel Foucault's analyses.⁶ The articles by Quentin Deluermoz, Simona Mori and Céline Regnard are concerned with policing in a narrower sense of the term, synonymous with the maintenance of law and order and represented by specialist institutions. In this shift in meaning from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, we see decisive changes in the process of urbanization and the development of police institutions. The longer-term comparisons found here between different situations of urban crisis are useful for evaluating this distance, in space and time, and for analysing the relationship between the city and the police. Defining the notion of 'urban crisis' is a prerequisite, moreover, for examining its implications for the field of policing, as presented in the case-studies here.

⁵ A. Lempérière, *Entre dieu et le roi, la République: Mexico, XVIe–XIXe siècles* (Paris, 2004), 78.

⁶ M. Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: cours au Collège de France (1977–1978)*, edition prepared by M. Senellart under the direction of François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (Paris, 2004), 31–58 and 319–70.

The term 'urban crisis' has mainly been used by specialists of contemporary cities, sociologists in particular, and to a lesser extent by geographers, since the 1960s.⁷ We need to be careful when using the term retrospectively to refer to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cities, just as with the term 'pathologies'.⁸ This 'systemic' vision of urban problems has only slowly been adopted as the functionalist discourses and representations of the city, and the analytical categories that stem from them, have been disseminated and refined over time, first by Enlightenment economists and physicians, then by engineers in the nineteenth century.⁹ The producers of these categories also included policing institutions and figures, undergoing accelerated changes during this same period.

The origins of the term 'crisis' derive from the field of medicine, where it has been used to refer to a rapid change in the course of an illness and the consequences of this change. By analogy, it means a sudden and serious alteration of a given order, a brutal disruption of equilibrium, and the results of this disruption. The expression has sometimes been used by historians as a way of describing critical phases in a city's development. The most rigorous use of the term 'crisis' has thus been when studying demographic and socio-economic transformations, especially in pre-industrial cities that commonly encountered crises in mortality rates due to food shortages and epidemics.

This analytical tool, convenient in its very ambiguity, thus became part of the theoretical repertoire of historians of pre-industrial cities. A state of crisis is declared when the usual habits and practices of a community are threatened and disrupted by a number of possible factors including natural catastrophes, fires, food shortages, epidemics, wars, the economy or internal conflicts between social groups or political

⁷ This expression is loaded with social and economic connotations and also incorporates urban planning and architectural concerns, especially in cases of uncontrolled urban expansion. See, among many others, J. Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, 1961; new edn 1993); M. Gossé, 'La crise mondiale de l'urbanisme. Quels modèles urbains?', *Les annales de la recherche urbaine*, 86 (2000), 85–91; C. Bachmann and N. Leguennec, *Violences urbaines. ascension et chute des classes moyennes à travers cinquante ans de politiques de la ville* (Paris, 1996), 557. The description of the symptoms of poorly controlled urban development or 'congestion' is also part of much older discourses, cf. C. Topalov, 'La ville "congestionnée". Acteurs et langage de la réforme urbaine à New York au début du XXe siècle', *Genèses. Sciences sociales et histoire*, 1 (1990), 86–111.

⁸ Y. Marec (ed.), *Villes en crise? Les politiques municipales face aux pathologies urbaines (fin XVIIIe s.–fin XXe s.)* (Paris, 2005), and its use in the medical topographies in the eighteenth century, the genre that founded the 'environmental' approaches, J.-P. Bardet, *Rouen aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. Les mutations d'un espace social* (Paris, 1983).

⁹ B. Lepetit, *The Pre-Industrial Urban System: France 1740–1840* (trans. G. Rodgers) (Cambridge, 1994); S. Barles, *La ville délétère: médecins et ingénieurs dans l'espace urbain (XVIIIe–XIXe siècles)* (Seysse, 1999).

factions.¹⁰ For cities in the nineteenth century, the term can refer to the social dislocation specific to emerging industrial economies and periods of economic depression.¹¹ 'Cities in crisis' evokes cities under the pressure of the influx of immigrants and poorly managed geographical expansion, cities whose social structure and environment were rapidly transformed due to the boom in certain economic areas during the industrial revolution, and cities that have had to adapt to rapid changes in the functions they perform or the reorganization of urban hierarchies. This partial review is not an attempt to exhaust the meanings of this protean term, but simply to remind us that its utility is derived from its elasticity and metaphorical dimension, bringing together multiple factors that had previously been kept separate in historical analyses.¹² At this point of our analysis, the flexibility of the concept appears productive because it combines and juxtaposes a number of factors and descriptive elements.

The term 'crisis' seems to apply to a wide range of situations. It first seems to be a way of describing transformations, a dynamic of change. The discursive function of the term is clear, accounting for abrupt changes and the imbalances they create in urban societies. The concept of a crisis is above all a way of observing and questioning historical situations characterized by numerous changes that are difficult to grasp fully by those experiencing them. Does it offer the same benefits as an analytical tool? When we consider their history, especially in an era characterized by an often-unprecedented surge in urbanization, it seems in fact that cities are perpetually 'in crisis', being in a constant state of transformation – to such a degree that we may doubt the existence of urban crises *per se*. We may even consider rejecting the term all together in favour of one that could better capture urban dynamics – the perpetual movement that characterizes cities, whose intensity varies according to its size and activities – without making an implicit judgment.¹³

Even though the notion of 'urban crisis' is loaded and changeable in discursive terms, even implying a system of signs, it is nevertheless difficult to avoid taking the notion of a crisis into consideration, this time understood as a moment of intense malfunction or traumatic breakdown

¹⁰ C.R. Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City, 1450–1750* (London and New York, 1995), ch. 11, 'Urban crisis', 275. See also by the same author, *Urban Politics in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2000), ch. 5, 50–64

¹¹ A. Hardy, 'Urban famine or urban crisis? Typhus in the Victorian city', in R.J. Morris and R. Rodger (eds.), *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History, 1820–1914* (London and New York, 1993), 209–40; F. Bourillon, 'Changer la ville. La question urbaine au milieu du 19e siècle', *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 64 (1999), 11–23.

¹² See the variety of uses of the term in the recent overview: P. Clark, *European Cities and Towns, 400–2000* (Oxford, 2012).

¹³ G. Massard-Guilbaud, H.L. Platt and D. Schott (eds.), *Cities and Catastrophes/villes et catastrophes. Coping with Emergency in European History/Réactions face à l'urgence dans l'histoire européenne* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Brussels, New York, Oxford and Vienna, 2002).

that produces specific effects on a particular scale when it occurs in an urban environment. Rather than referring to an 'urban crisis' we should instead speak of a crisis 'in' the city. Such an environment is anything but neutral. Natural catastrophes are not confined to urban enclaves, but their effects are magnified by the material and human features of the city. Some examples in recent centuries include the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, epidemics such as the plagues in Rome and Naples in 1656 and the Great Plague of Marseille in 1720, or the cholera pandemics of the 1830s.¹⁴ They cause a major breakdown in social, political and economic structures and create acute problems of law and order in the broader sense. In a different category, the revolutionary crises that arose in Europe, especially in the wake of the French Revolution and at the time of the 1848 'springtime of the people', had a special resonance in cities, especially capital cities, since these were the seats of the political powers whose authority was being challenged in the growing clashes over questions of sovereignty.

In the articles brought together here, the notion of 'crisis' takes on different meanings. For Arnaud Exbalin, the 'crisis' that shook Mexico City in 1692 was an urban uprising that temporarily suspended normal power relations and revealed the underlying tensions of colonial society. In Paris during the revolution of February 1848 and the 1871 Commune, two periods compared by Quentin Deluermoz, the city was plunged into a state of political crisis and upheaval for several months where the usual co-ordinates and frameworks for everyday activities collapsed, the normal exercise of power was suspended and a desire arose to change radically the previous state of affairs, which were judged to be intolerable. In relation to Milan in the aftermath of the Risorgimento, Simona Mori discusses the perception of a social crisis marked by ongoing political agitation and an influx of immigrants to the city. Céline Regnard's study of Marseille at the turn of the nineteenth century examines a multifaceted 'crisis' as described by observers of the time, linked to the accelerated industrialization of the leading French port and the growth of the city.

In other words, the collection illustrates the two main meanings of 'urban crisis': a brief paroxysm, as in disasters and political uprisings, and a way of describing rapid urban change that is considered problematic. These different kinds of crises, by creating emergency situations or problems of law and order, and more fundamentally because they weaken or break apart the usual social rules, challenge the police as an institutional lynchpin for 'living in harmony'. But beyond climactic moments such as catastrophes and revolutions, and despite its suggestive and descriptive qualities, the notion of 'urban crisis' can tend to lack substance and become

¹⁴ Cf. A. Forti Messina, *L'Italia dell'Ottocento di fronte al colera*, in *Storia d'Italia*, Annali n. 7, F. Della Peruta (ed.), *Malattia e medicina* (Turin, 1984), pp. 429–94; I. Fosi (ed.), 'La peste a Roma', *Roma moderna e contemporanea*, 14 (2006); G. Quenet, *Les tremblements de terre aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. La naissance d'un risque* (Seyssel, 2005); C. Carrière, M. Courdurie and F. Rebuffat, *Marseille, ville morte: la peste de 1720* (Gemenos, 2008; 1st edn, 1968).

diluted. Ultimately, this collection aims to examine the different categories of urban change: not only disturbances of the social equilibrium that emerge abruptly, but also those that develop more quietly over the longer term. More specifically, it aims to examine the way that police institutions and powers perceive these disturbances, use them and participate in a discourse of 'urban crisis' that is sometimes vague in scope.

This discourse is also sometimes considered in relation to a 'policing crisis'. It becomes a symptom of the difficulties the police experience in performing their duties and an indicator of its flaws. Police institutions and powers have played a crucial role in the city, both because of their place in the urban political hierarchy, but also by virtue of their growing ability, from the modern to the contemporary era, to develop and implement their own concepts of urban order. The capital cities and major economic, shipping and manufacturing centres that we have focused on in this collection – Paris, Marseille, Milan and Mexico City – represent especially pertinent vantage points for observing the effects of these dynamics, and the 'dizziness' experienced by some of their observers and administrators. The most developed urban centres were also the ones with the largest police forces, which underwent major transformations in response to the challenges they faced over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their fundamental role in regulating urban life tended to give them more weight in the diagnosis and management of 'crises', alongside political and religious authorities, doctors, engineers and architects.¹⁵

Three sets of issues may serve as a guide in reading this collection and assist in appreciating the relationships between policing powers and the complexity of urban dynamics. In the first place, sometimes the police were confronted with the demands of an emergency situation, a brutal upheaval that tore society and the urban environment apart. How did they manage in these cases to both 'protect' and 'serve' the community, and handle the many unforeseen events that tested their organizational skills and ability to adapt? Secondly, looking beyond these traumatic events, the police forces expanded, professionalized and became more autonomous in relation to the judiciary in the major European cities over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To what extent did they try to legitimize their status through their understanding and control of urban dynamics, in its different forms and rates of acceleration? Finally, far from remaining passive in the face of the urban transformations between the Enlightenment and the industrial age, the police also appear as narrators

¹⁵ J. Innes and N. Rogers, 'Politics and government, 1700–1840', in P. Clark (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. II (Cambridge, 2000), 542–3; J.M. Eyler, *Victorian Social Medicine: The Ideas and Methods of William Farr* (Baltimore, 1979); D.M. Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London, 1828–1860* (New York, 1986); G. Zucconi, *La città contesa. Dagli ingegneri sanitari agli urbanisti, 1885–1942* (Milan, 1989); Barles, *La ville délétère*; S. Adorno and F. De Pieri (eds.), 'Burocrazie tecniche', *Città e Storia*, 2 (2010); D. Kalifa, *Les bas-fonds: histoire d'un imaginaire social* (Paris, 2013).

of these events with their own set of interests. To what extent do we see the police use the discourse of urban crisis, a discourse they helped to produce, as a tool for their own ends?

The police in the face of upheaval

The brutal and sometimes unexpected disruptions of the urban order – its spaces and activities, its political and social mechanisms and rules – can both reveal hidden dysfunctions in police powers and accelerate changes that have been anticipated in certain quarters. Whether greater or lesser in intensity, from catastrophes to riots (as Arnaud Exbalin shows in examining some especially serious disturbances in Mexico City at the end of the seventeenth century), the consequences of such events were far from insignificant. By upsetting the community's living environment and use of space as much as its social organization, they tested institutions and their practices, the rules of communal life and the foundations of the economy. For this reason, the 'city in crisis', which showed certain symptoms of disorder, was also likely to reflect a 'police force in crisis', because it did not have the means to achieve its objectives, or was ineffective in implementing the expected remedies. To what extent therefore can a crisis in policing, a systemic and recurring dysfunction or 'disorder' of the police force, contribute in turn to urban crisis and disorder? Far from being harmonious and disciplined bodies that develop in an orderly manner, as their administrators would like the outside world to believe, urban police forces were divided entities, beset by internal struggles and competing interests between members and factions, while at the same time having to answer to regulatory authorities and community demands. A brutal rupture or catastrophe could encourage these underlying tensions to come to light and help decide institutional and political questions that had been left unresolved.

This is why such events possess a creative power that goes well beyond the town-planning issues associated with the reconstruction or reorganization of an urban space. In many cases, we find a profusion of regulations, then to varying degrees an attempt to redefine local powers and how they were expressed in practice, for example by controlling specific populations or activities in city spaces. Each vantage point allows us to trace the concentric ripples, more or less pronounced, that emanated from the shock. In an emergency situation of total devastation, the police ordinances issued in Lisbon in 1755 were first aimed at preventing looting, then organizing supplies so that the disaster was not compounded by rioting, and finally evacuating corpses to contain the risk of epidemic. Religious concerns and the demands of spiritual consolation came second, after the measures instigated by the public authorities. Out of this set of ordinances, the reforming prime minister Marquis de Pombal gradually developed a project to overhaul the police institutions of the city and

kingdom, some elements of which had already been envisaged before the catastrophe.¹⁶ The new urban planning projects made possible by the earthquake were accompanied by quite radical reforms of urban powers and the organization of the police.

The creative power of a crisis – the opportunities presented by an apparent *tabula rasa* – could facilitate the emergence of new solutions, but could also revive issues from older debates, adding weight to previous criticisms and reveal long-standing dysfunctions. However, it is also useful to assess the impact of certain local traumatic events or the effects of urban change in general on the evolution of policing systems, discourses and practices, independently of any previous reformist discourse.

The police as ‘experts’ on urban change

Anyone looking into discourses inspired by urban change soon encounters doctors and scholars, engineers and economists, the writer-journalists of the emerging periodical press and social reformers or other religious moralists. Among these voices, the role played by representatives of the police – in both the general, administrative sense of the *ancien régime* in France and its more restrictive contemporary sense of maintaining law and order – was not insignificant. They drew part of their authority from their ability to detect and monitor changes in the mood of the urban social body with its ebbs and flows, its private and clandestine activities.

Police authorities and actors in the first place played a major role in the ‘good government’ of the city, ensuring the everyday maintenance of law and order. But beyond this, from the eighteenth century onwards, they increasingly assumed an active role as ‘experts’ of the city, diagnosing problems and implementing solutions to address its ‘evils’, alongside other participants in the discussion of urban dysfunction and reform. The emerging role of the police in this process cannot be separated from the development of more substantial and professionalized forms of policing and police administration, and the increasing autonomy of this sphere, which gathered strength across Europe from the end of the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth century.¹⁷ The existence of the police as a professional group during this period is linked to their ability to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about the city. As a result, it is not surprising to find police administrators among the ‘moral entrepreneurs’ who made a career out of denouncing the perils of city life, as in London in the eighteenth century. Henry Fielding, who was appointed chief magistrate of Westminster in 1748, headed the Bow Street office of

¹⁶ F. Borda D’Agua, ‘L’intendance générale de police de la cour et du royaume du Portugal: réflexions sur son histoire et ses références européennes’, in C. Denys (ed.), *Circulations policières 1750–1914* (Lille, 2012), 139–58.

¹⁷ Berlière, Denys, Kalifa and Milliot (eds.), *Les métiers de police*; Emsley, *The English Police*.

'thief-catchers' in the 1750s while at the same time producing pamphlets advocating major police reforms in London and the whole of England, as well as reforms of the ineffective Poor Law. This advocacy was continued by his brother John Fielding after his death in 1760.¹⁸ Patrick Colquhoun, a close associate of Bentham and appointed to one of the police magistrate positions in 1792, became an advocate for a centralized policing system in London that would monitor 'at risk' occupations. He tirelessly elaborated his position in successive editions of his *Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis*, starting in 1795.¹⁹ In Enlightenment-era Paris, a prominent magistrate such as the *lieutenant-général de police* Jean-Charles-Pierre Lenoir based whole sections of his urban improvement policy on regular consultations with 'experts': technicians, scientists, doctors and chemists. His administration became a crucible for forging a body of knowledge both able to describe the dysfunctions of the city and develop remedies for the problems observed.²⁰

In many cases, the 'evils' attributed to city life were used as scapegoats for changes that were not necessarily connected to the symptoms described. In the United Kingdom of the 1830s–1840s, claims of the formation of a 'criminal class', the English equivalent of the 'dangerous classes' identified in Paris at the same time, illustrate this discrepancy between the descriptions of social observers or 'moral entrepreneurs' and the actual social transformations that were taking place. Those describing the effects of the industrial revolution on English society at that time saw only disturbing trends at work: the rise of violence among the poor, growing resistance to authority, the deterioration of family life, the spread of pauperism, the advance of barbarianism and the retreat of civilization. Criminality, established as a social phenomenon during this period, became the visible expression and explanatory principle of a more global dynamic of change, demanding special attention from government and the social and political elites.²¹ Writing the history of this period thus amounts to examining how police actors conceived urban transformation and helped develop the categories for analysing social change and organize policing practices around them.

¹⁸ L. Bertelsen, *Henry Fielding at Work: Magistrate, Businessman, Writer* (Basingstoke, 2000); J.M. Beattie, *The First English Detectives: The Bow Street Runners and the Policing of London, 1750–1840* (Oxford, 2012).

¹⁹ On Colquhoun as a 'moral entrepreneur', see D. Philips, 'Three moral entrepreneurs and the creation of a "criminal class" in England, c. 1790s–1840s', *Crime, histoire & sociétés/Crime, History and Societies*, 7 (2003), 79–107; L. Radzinowicz, *A History of the English Criminal Law and its Administration from 1750*, 4 vols. (London, 1948–68), vol. III, chs. 9–10; R. Paley, 'Patrick Colquhoun (1745–1820)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5992>, accessed 12 Feb. 2015.

²⁰ V. Milliot, *Un policier des lumières, suivi de mémoires de J.C.P Lenoir* (Seyssel, 2011), 364–9; T. Le Roux, *Le laboratoire des pollutions industrielles. Paris, 1770–1830* (Paris, 2011), 79–109.

²¹ V.A.C. Gatrell, 'Crime, authority and the policeman-state', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1990), vol. III, 243–310. See also Philips, 'Three moral entrepreneurs'.

Paris and London are just two prominent examples of cities where a discourse developed around the idea of dangerous urban classes during the process of industrialization: the case-studies of Marseille and Milan presented in this collection by Céline Regnard and Simona Mori are also very significant from this point of view.

During the nineteenth century, Marseille underwent important developments in terms of its economy, demographics and urban spread. These trends took place against a backdrop of an increasing need for immigrant labour. The resulting social change created deep anxieties, stimulating a debate about the need for police reform. Regnard presents the concerned letters sent by municipal authorities to the departmental *Préfecture*, describing problems with law and order in the city, and how local police authorities were trying to attract the attention of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Paris in order to manage Marseille's problems. This perception of a crisis persisted until a national police force was established in Marseille in 1908. As Regnard shows, using local police sources from between 1855 and 1908, there was a significant gap in time and content between the major local debate about police reform and the institutional response. Regnard concludes that the 1908 reform only represented a 'feeble echo' of the preceding debate and did not reflect the severity of the perception of the crisis.

We can see similar issues in Simona Mori's article, which focuses on reports written by local police officers (*questori*) for the Provincial Prefect (*prefetti*) and then sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The case-study of Milan uses sources ranging in date from the birth of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 to 1889. The reports focus on public law and order in the city, defined by the notion of *pubblica sicurezza* (public security).²² Every three months, the municipal police produced reports on political events and parties, local associations, the press, educational and welfare institutions and so on. The main problem referred to in these reports, however, is the control of the 'dangerous classes'. A number of policemen started writing books on the subject during this period, giving rise to a new form of literature in Italy, influenced by French criminological literature and Cesare Lombroso's Italian school of criminology.²³ Using these different sources and statistics on crime, Mori examines the relationship between social change and perceived problems in the definition of the so-called 'dangerous classes'. Who did this term refer to in Italian cities and how did police officers use this notion? As Mori shows us, this idea was strongly linked to the pre-industrial social environment, even in nineteenth-century Italy. The social group that was seen as the most dangerous was not initially the urban

²² Cf. *Villes et territoire pendant la période napoléonienne (France et Italie)* (Rome, 1987); I. Moullier, 'Police et politique de la ville sous Napoléon', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 54 (2007), 117–39.

²³ M. Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology* (Wesport, 2002).

working class, but newly arrived members of the peasant classes. For a long time, the real danger came from immigration and the displacement of local populations that created a chaotic urban environment.²⁴ Only later, in 1870, did control of the behaviour and political activities of the urban working classes become the main goal of the municipal police force.

Who benefits from the 'crisis'?

While police authorities make an effort to be seen as able to conceive, grasp and master urban change, one cannot avoid raising the question of how certain police figures used moments of crisis and accelerated change tactically as levers to open up opportunities for reform. In other words, the assessments offered by the police can appear as self-fulfilling prophecies whose goal was above all the advancement of the police institution. The 'great' moments of urban police reform were thus often justified by reference to the 'crisis' in the city concerned or more specifically to the lessons from a particular crisis event occurring in the city.²⁵ Complaints about lack of security, imminent threats or the inadequacy and shortcomings of existing police structures were the precursor to local police reforms, some radical, some partial, such as the famous reforms in Paris in 1667 and those in London in 1829. These reforms are given a specific date, but they in fact represent the beginning of a process that is spread out over time, involving tensions, contradictions and *post hoc* adjustments.

Historians of criminality and policing have claimed that bureaucrats, 'experts' and police administrators used the existence of criminals to justify the extension of their power and influence, though not without difficulty and debate. These phenomena still remain to be examined specifically within a comparativist framework, if only because of the way that solutions implemented in a given location were circulated and appropriated elsewhere. This extension is connected to the growth in the federal state's areas of responsibility and its increasing control over the maintenance of law and order, through the criminal justice system as well as the police.²⁶ In this regard, a decisive change took place between the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth century, through the dominance of centralized governments and the constitution of national police systems, even though local structures sometimes retained an element of autonomy. Such was the case in France with the municipal police authorities, and in Rome, in the Papal States, where even during the Restoration there were

²⁴ B. de Munck and A. Winter (eds.), *Gated Communities? Regulating Migration in Early Modern Cities* (Farnham, 2012).

²⁵ C. Denys, B. Marin and V. Milliot (eds.), *Réformer la police* (Rennes, 2008); B. Gainot and V. Denis (eds.), *Un siècle d'ordre public en Révolution (de 1789 à la Troisième République)* (Paris, 2009).

²⁶ Gatrell, 'Crime, authority and the policeman-state', 243–310, 245–6.

ecclesiastical structures with important policing duties, dating back to the Council of Trent.²⁷

We need to be careful, however, not to have an overly instrumentalist view of the discourse on urban crisis, seeing it as a simple tool in the hands of the police hierarchy to promote their own interests. The dramatization of ‘crises’ or the harmful effects of urban change did not always have the desired institutional effects: responses to crises did not necessarily lead to concrete innovations. The causal links between the claims of a crisis and changes to policing were rarely as immediate or direct as some reformist discourses would have us believe. The ‘moral entrepreneurs’ of London in the second half of the eighteenth century – the Fieldings, then Patrick Colquhoun – died before the reforms they strove for were realized, despite the mounting alarm at the rising crime rates in London from the end of the eighteenth century, illustrated by some sensational cases. Traditional historical accounts have for a long time associated the creation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 with a dramatic rupture demarcating an acute period of disorder from a salutary period when order was restored.²⁸ But the transformations of the London police involved a more complex process that was spread out over several decades. It involved a combination of significant legislative decisions adopted between 1774 and 1812 (the Westminster Watch Act of 1774; the Middlesex Justices Act of 1792; the Night Watch Act of 1812, not to mention the creation of the Bow Street office from 1742) and ‘grass-roots’ initiatives in the context of local structures such as the parishes.²⁹ The demands of the ‘great reformers’ were not the only factors at work. The new division of the territory of Lyon into police districts in 1745, supposedly a response to the need better to ‘contain’ the city after a disturbing rioting incident, remained an empty gesture, a reform that was unable to dethrone the municipal *pennonages*.³⁰

It is conceivable, on the other hand, that the public debate on the ‘urban crisis’ was used to negotiate or legitimize new forms of policing. From the end of the seventeenth century to the French Revolution, we can see the effects of a debate being opened up that was no longer confined to the narrow spheres of government, which concerned both the expectations of the population when it came to managing the urban environment and

²⁷ M. Anderson, *In Thrall to Political Change: Police and Gendarmerie in France* (Oxford, 2011); M. Vogel, ‘Politiques policières et systèmes locaux: les polices des villes dans l’entre deux guerres’, *Revue française de sociologie*, 35 (1994), 413–34; C. Lucrezio Monticelli, *La polizia del papa. Istituzioni di controllo sociale a Roma nella prima metà dell’Ottocento* (Soveria Manelli, 2012).

²⁸ S.H. Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland 1780–1850* (Cambridge, 1988); D. Taylor, *The New Police in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester, 1997).

²⁹ E. Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies: The Night Watch and Police Reform in Metropolitan London, 1720–1830* (Stanford, 1998); D.J. Cox, *A Certain Share of Low Cunning: A History of the Bow Street Runners, 1792–1839* (Cullompton, 2010); Beattie, *The First English Detectives*.

³⁰ O. Zeller, ‘Quartiers et pennonages à Lyon à l’époque moderne’, *Bulletin du Centre d’histoire économique et sociale de la région lyonnaise*, 1 (1979), 42–52.

the organization and practices of the police authorities. Ever since the Enlightenment, there had been a significant dialogue between intellectual debates about the dangers of urban development and the administrative and political solutions attempted by the municipal powers responsible for the city's security. Much of the material produced during the boom in pamphleteering in 1789 associated despotism with arbitrary police powers and the poor performance of routine tasks connected to public hygiene and the assistance of the most destitute, offering a glimpse of what would be a 'new' police serving the population and a reformed urban government.³¹

In this historical process, the dramatization of the crisis in the growing voice of public opinion was used to negotiate and legitimize a new model of a 'well-policed' city, as Quentin Deluermoz shows in this issue through a comparison between the political crises of 1848 and 1871 in Paris. This legitimation drew on real or symbolic elements to promote police reforms, through negotiations between central state institutions and the municipal police force, or to foster the development of a rhetoric of crisis that was increasingly focused on controlling the 'dangerous classes' in the city during the nineteenth century. In any case, and in the different contexts, the crucial issue in this kind of urban crisis was the transformation of the duties of the police in accordance with the new political cultures: in the late eighteenth century and the first half of nineteenth century, the police forces assumed responsibility for a new model of territorial and community security in the cities that reached its climax in the urban protests of 1848.³²

In the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions, the perception of the crisis in urban law and order took on a political role in the nation-building process and the balance between the central and peripheral powers of the nation-state. The case-studies of Milan and Marseille in the late nineteenth century presented by Simona Mori and Céline Regnard show how the need to strengthen local police powers, especially regarding control of the 'dangerous classes' and the increasing immigrant labour population, became a symptom of a political confrontation between major cities and the capital. In the context of this confrontation, seeking a new national balance, Marseille became a sort of 'antithesis' to Paris, and Milan tried to significantly increase its own standing in the new unified Italian state.

Complaints about the 'urban crisis' often go together with efforts to redefine the police and its practices, which in turn sometimes led to tensions – 'crises' – within the police forces themselves. In the case of Paris in the eighteenth century, there was a transition from a visible police force that played an arbitrating role, strongly imbued with the formalism and paternalist ideology of the Parisian courts, to an intrusive and hidden police force, whose procedures were secret and summary, infinitely

³¹ P. Manuel, *La police de Paris dévoilée par l'un des administrateurs de 1789* (Paris, 1790).

³² For Italy, see E. Francia, *Polizia e opinione pubblica in Toscana nel Quarantotto*, in P. Macry (ed.), *Quando crolla lo stato. Studi sull'Italia preunitaria* (Naples, 2003), 141–77.

closer to the 'government of conduct' that was seen as indispensable for disciplining a city in the throes of expansion. This transition, orchestrated by the police *lieutenant-général* D'Argenson (1697–1716) and embodied by the new corps of police inspectors, was strongly challenged by Parisians, with the parliament of Paris (1716–19) leading an investigation. The instability of this new corps prior to its reorganization in 1740, and the questionable legitimacy of its practices, meant one of its main duties – the surveillance of landlords and foreigners in the city – was only performed in a haphazard manner during the first half of the century, even though this had been identified as essential to the preservation of urban law and order.³³ A little later, the police's routine use of abductions and a 'secret team' to remove idle young beggars (or those assumed to be such) from the streets of Paris prompted deadly riots against police agents and widespread protests against the new police *lieutenant général* Nicolas Berryer in May 1750, during the affair of the so-called *enlèvements d'enfants* (child abductions).³⁴ The Parisian population did not object to the police *per se*, but rather a certain type of policing and the officers who represented it, namely the inspectors, their *mouches* (informants) and the *lieutenant général*. The *commissaires de police* of the Châtelet, who were identified with a more visible police force that operated in a more traditional way, were left out of these criticisms. The Parisian riots of the spring of 1750, like the Gordon Riots of June 1780, can be seen as moments where certain tensions linked to the evolution of urban society combined with ones created by changes in how police and judicial functions were performed.³⁵ They represented both an outlet for accumulated tensions and a reflection of a changing society and forms of regulation that were struggling to adapt and gain general acceptance. The 'urban crisis' and the 'police crisis' were thus, each in their own way, the most visible symptoms of urban change.

Whether handling emergency situations during violent urban upheavals, emerging as experts on the subject of the orderly city and its rapid transformations, or acting as self-interested narrators of urban imbalance and its consequences, the police and its transformations are intimately connected to the rhythms of change in the city, which they appease, make intelligible or use for their own ends. 'Urban crisis' may well be an essential component of the formation, consolidation and operation of the modern police force.

³³ D. Roche (ed.), *La ville promise. Mobilité et accueil à Paris (fin XVIIe-début XIXe siècle)* (Paris, 2000), 21–76.

³⁴ P. Piasenza, *Polizia e città: strategie d'ordine, conflitti e rivolte a Parigi tra Sei e Settecento* (Bologna, 1990).

³⁵ I. Haywood and J. Seed (eds.), *The Gordon Riots. Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2012), in particular, T. Hitchcock, 'Re-negotiating the bloody code: the Gordon Riots and the transformation of popular attitudes to the criminal justice system', 185–203.