Investment and Culture in Three Seventeenth Century Cities: Rome, Amsterdam, Paris

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Can economic and cultural historians talk to one another? On one side, historians of production and consumption, interested in trends and consequences; on the other, historians of styles, images and myths, concerned with intentions and meanings.

Can there be more than a dialogue of the deaf between us?

Some twenty years ago, Professor Roberto Lopez suggested a possible link between the two kinds of history; "investment in culture".[2] The first part of this paper is devoted to a discussion of this concept, at once indispensable and ambiguous. I shall suggest that there are two basic senses in which we can use the term "investment"; a narrow sense, in which there was virtually no investment in culture in early modern Europe, and a wide sense, in which almost any expenditure on culture may be regarded as an investment. The second part of this paper is concerned with the physical transformation of three seventeenth century cities; Rome, Amsterdam and Paris. It will discuss both the purposes and the cost of these three programmes of rebuilding.

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[1] A draft of this paper was presented at the ninth *Settimana di Studi* at Prato (1977), and an earlier draft of parts III-VI at the Leeds conference of the Urban History Group (1975). I should like to thank participants in these conferences for suggestions which have been incorporated in the present version.

[2] R. S. Lopez, "Hard Times and Investment in Culture", in W. K. Ferguson (ed.), *The Renaissance: Six Essays* (New York, 1953).

I

Suppose we define "investment" in general terms as the productive use of resources, as opposed to unproductive "consumption" or "waste"; the laying out of wealth with an eye to future profit, as opposed to present pleasure.[3] However, "investment", like "profit" and "productive", may be understood either in a narrow (literal) or a wide (perhaps metaphorical) sense, so it may be useful to discuss these two meanings of the term one by one. "Investment", in its narrow sense, was a concept well known to Europeans in the later part of our period. *Investire,* in this economic sense, is recorded in Italian from the fourteenth century onwards, on phrases like *investire in tele.* In 1598, John Florio defined the Italian term for his English readers as "to laie out or emploie one's money upon anie bargaine for advantage", and the verb "invest" occurs in English in this sense from the beginning of the seventeenth century. Curiously enough, it did not come into use in French until quite recently - the term has no place in Littré.[4]

While cultural historians study the concept of investment, economic historians can look at the productive use of resources between 1100 (say) and 1800; at the amount of wealth which was put into land or houses, business partnerships or voyages, equipment (ploughs, looms, presses, and so on), jewels or plate, private loans or the public debt, company shares or offices in local or central government.

Was there investment in this sense in paintings, sculptures or buildings in preindustrial Europe? The practice is, of course, well known today. In June 1976, for example, the newspapers divulged the fact that the British Rail Pension Fund had bought a Picasso, possibly for one million pounds. It is a reasonable assumption that the managers of the fund did not buy the Picasso for aesthetic reasons; it was to lay out their money "for advantage". Did this action have any parallel in preindustrial Europe?

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[3] F. MACHLUP, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (Princeton, 1962).

[4] J. FLORIO, *A World of Words* (London, 1958).

Historians differ in their answers to this question. My own belief is that there was little or no investment in the narrow sense in works of art before the eighteenth century at the earliest. To defend this grand and incautious generalisation, it is necessary to explain away various apparent exceptions to it, which may be grouped for convenience under four headings.

1) Treasure. Throughout the period 1100-1800, rich men collected cups, dishes, salt-cellars and other splendid examples of the goldsmith's art. They probably accumulated because they knew that such objects would retain their real value; but what gave the objects their value was their material, not the craftsmanship embodied in them. Inventories tended to describe the objects in terms like these: "une couppe d'argent dorée dedans et dehors, poinsonné dessus à ung compaignon et une demoiselle, pesant deux marcs, trois onces ung gros, qui valent à 9 livres le marc, 21l. 10s. 2d. obole".[5] No value seems to have been added by the goldsmith, and the frequency with which objects like this were melted down suggests that their owners were less interested in art than in liquidity.

2) Paintings and statues. An art market existed, in Italy and the Netherlands at least, from the late Middle Ages onwards, in the sense that artists sometimes made pictures (and in Italy, statues as well) without specific patrons in mind, but were able to dispose of them afterwards. There were a few middlemen between artists and their potential customers, though it might be misleading to call them "art dealers", because they did not specialise in selling works of art full-time. They included artists, merchants, jewellers, book-sellers, flower-sellers, and even noblemen, like Gianbattista della Palla, who exported Italian paintings to the court of François I.[6] Not only the middlemen but also some

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5 M. MOLLAT et al. (eds.), *Les Affaires de Jacques Coeur*, I, (Paris, 1952), p. 59.

6 L. SALERNO, "Dealing and Dealers", in *Encyclopaedia of World Art*, 4 (London, 1961), pp. 252-5 (Salerno does believe, unlike the present author, that a Raphael might be "a capital investment" in the seventeenth century); H. FLOERKE, *Studien zu Niederländischen Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte* (Munich-Leipzig, 1905), p. 85 f; on Della Palla, M. WACKERNAGEL, *Der Lebensraum des Künstlers in der Florentinischen Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1938), p. 289 f.

collectors and travellers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were well aware of the market price of the works of art which they owned or visited. To take only two examples: the contemporary catalogue of the 113 paintings belonging to Fulvio Orsini (died 1600), librarian to cardinal Farnese, carefully lists the value of each; they came to 1789 scudi in all. Filipp von Zesen, in his *Description of Amsterdam* (1664), mentions the famous collection of "excellent paintings" and "all sorts of exotic and unusual objects" belonging to the patrician Gerrit Reynst, and adds that it is valued at "more than three tons of gold". Once bought, paintings and sculptures could of course be sold again, often at a considerable profit. In 1604 the ruler of Mantua gave an estate worth 50,000 scudi for a painting attributed to Raphael. The auction of works of art took place ragularly in seventeenth-century Amsterdam and in eighteenth-century Paris and London (Christie's began operations in 1766). The picture collection of the financier P. L. Randon de Boisset fetched over 1,300,000 livres in a sale at Paris in 1777.[7]

Do these examples add up to investment in art? For the few part-time middlemen, yes. The merchant of Prato and his associates, who exported religious paintings from Florence to Avignon, certainly considered paintings as commodities from which a profit could be made; "they should be bought", according to the well-known letter of 1387, "when the master who makes them is in need".[8] However, there is little evidence that collectors bought paintings because they expected to make a profit by selling them again later. Even the French financiers of the eighteenth century, who might have been expected to think of investment if anyone did, regarded their collections, according to their recent historian, as "moins un moyen de placement, un investissement, qu'un signe de reconnaissance sociale".[9] Auctions of picture-collections usually followed the death

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[7] At the Prato conference, Dr M. Bogucka stressed the seventeenth-century interest in the prices of works of art. P. DE NOLHAC, "Les Collections de Fulvio Orsini", in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1884; F. VON ZESEN, *Beschreibung der Stadt Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1664), p. 361; on Randon de Boisset, Y. DURAND, *Les Fermiers Généraux au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1971), p. 516.

[8] Boninsegna di Matteo, quoted in I. ORIGO, *The Merchant of Prato* (revised ed., Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 41.

[9] DURAND, p. 503.

or bankruptcy of the owner; it was not normal to sell one's pictures in one's own lifetime.

It is possible that attitudes were more commercial in the Dutch Republic. The French physician Samuel de Sorbière, who lived there in the middle of the seventeenth century, declared that "les Hollandois" made of painting "une espece de trafic", "et ils n'y mettent beaucoup d'argent que pour en tirer plus qu'ils n'y en ont mis: les bons tableaux font une partie de leur heritage, et ils n'en ont guère qui ne soient à vendre ou à troquer". Better known is the testimony of the English virtuoso John Evelyn, who visited the fair at Rotterdam in 1641 and was surprised by the number of paintings for sale and also by the fact that even peasants were buying them. His conclusion was that "the occasion of this store of pictures and their cheapness proceeds from their want of land to employ their stock".[10] It is interesting to find a seventeenth century writer thinking in these terms, but the foreign visitor may have misunderstood the intentions of the buyers — and in any case there *were* obvious alternative investments available to Dutchmen at this time, in the public debt and in the East India Company. Buyers of pictures (unlike the buyers of tulips) had no reason to expect their market value to rise at this time. To sum up: Professor Charles Wilson was surely right to observe recently that when people bought paintings in the early seventeenth century, "It is doubtful if considerations of investment, capital appreciation and the like came into it except very occasionally"[11] His observation may be extended to the whole of preindustrial Europe.

3) Buildings. Before the Industrial Revolution, buildings were, as T. S. Ashton once put it, among "the chief durable capital goods". Today, an architect-designed house is at once a work of art and an investment; but in preindustrial Europe (so I wish to argue), this was not the case. Rich men invested in houses and they commissioned architects to build magnificent houses — but

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10 S. DE SORBIÈRE, *Relations, Lettres et Discours* (Paris, 1660), p. 187; c.f. Floerke (note 6) p. 164, quoting Sorbière's ms; J. EVELYN, *Diary*, ed. E. S. de Beer (Oxford, 1955), 1, p. 29.

11 C. WILSON, *The Transformation of Europe, 1558-1648* (London, 1976), p .203.

these were two different kinds of house. For example, the patricians of sixteenth and seventeenth century Venice owned houses and shops as well as country estates, but most of this property was let at low rents and was not, in all probability, distinguished architecturally. The same nobles might well commission an architect-designed palace for themselves, but in that case they were not thinking of investment. They were thinking of magnificence, display, the glory of the family. The most obvious evidence of their attitude comes from wills, in which the builder sometimes forbids his heirs ever to sell or even to let the family house.[12]

Certain real or apparent exceptions to this generalisation about the motives for palace-building must now be discussed. Manfredo Tafuri has suggested that doge Andrea Gritti encouraged the building of S. Francesco della Vigna in order to increase property values in that part of Venice, where he owned a number of houses; but no evidence is offered for this suggestion which I must say I find implausible.[13] When John Evelyn was in Genoa in 1644, he explained the "marble houses and rich furniture" of the merchants in terms of investement; but his evidence on Rotterdam is, as we have seen, suspect, and his repetition of the point in this new context is doubly so.[14] It was certainly the case that the palaces of noblemen, in Italy and elsewhere, performed economic functions. They might be used to guarantee loans; they might be used as warehouses; parts of them (the ground floor or the third floor) might be let out to craftsmen; or the whole palace might be rented to a noble family without a palace of its own. However, functions are not intentions; it is unlikely that noblemen had palaces built for this kind of reason. As in the case of paintings, contemporaries were interested in the cost of fine buildings; for example, the French nobleman Monconys, on a visit to Amsterdam, noted that the famous Trippenhuis was said to have cost more than 400,000

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[12] T. S. Ashton, *Economic Fluctuations in England, 1700-1800* (London, 1959), p. 84; P. Burke, *Venice and Amsterdam* (London, 1974), p. 84 f; c.f. F. W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1976), p. 140 f.

[13] M. Tafuri, *Jacopo Sansovino* (Padue, 1969), p. 18.

[14] Evelyn, 2, p. 174.

livres.[15] However, cost-consciousness is not the same thing as investment.

The only real cases known to me of investment in fine buildings come from the world of the professional financier. Louis Le Barbier speculated in luxury dwellings in the Faubourg Saint-Germain in Paris in the early seventeenth century, and other financiers did the same in the eighteenth century, like Etienne-Michel Bouret in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. In eighteenth-century England, public buildings, such as theatres, were sometimes financed by groups of subscribers, organised through a trust.[16]

4) In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, if not before, it is possible to find examples of musical entrepreneurs. In seventeenth-century Venice, noblemen, it is said, "formed companies to build and speculate in opera houses". In London in the late seventeenth century, there was speculation in concert-halls; and the Royal Academy of Music, founded in 1719, was a joint-stock company in which participants invested in the most literal sense.[17]

To sum up the argument so far. The existence of musical entrepreneurs, speculative builders and dealers (usually if not always non-specialists) in paintings and sculptures must not be forgotten; but it must also be remembered that they were still a very small group. There was a significant change in attitudes to the arts; in the seventeenth and eighteenth century they were coming to be seen as commodities. Daniel Defoe, for example, could describe writing as "a very considerable branch of the English commerce", booksellers as "master manufacturers" and writers as their "workmen". In eighteenth century England, in the words of J. H. Plumb, "leisure and culture became a profitable speculation

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15 Prof. U. Tucci pointed out at Prato that Venetian palaces were sometimes financial guarantees. B. DE MONCONYS, *Journal des Voyages*, 2 (Lyons, 1665), p. 161.

16 On Le Barbier, M. DUMOLIN, *Etudes de Topographie Parisienne*, three vols, (Paris, 1929-31), 1, p. 132; on Bouret, *Durand* (note 9); on England, C. W. Chalkin's contribution at Prato.

17 S. T. WORSTHORNE, *Venetian Opera in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1954), p.v. He gives no reference. J. HOOK, *The Baroque* Age in England (London, 1976), p. 157.

in which more and more capital was sunk".[18] However, we should be wary of projecting these new attitudes on to the whole period 1100-1800. For most of that period, culture came towards the "waste" end of the investment-waste spectrum. To spend on the arts was a way for a prince or nobleman to acquire fame for his "generosity" or "magnificence"; this was a common assumption in early modern Europe.[19]

The fact that contemporaries thought in this way will be made more obvious if we look not simply at consumer durables but at festivals as well, festivals which might last for no more than a day or two, yet cost as much as paintings or statues or even buildings. When William Laud enlarged St John's College, Oxford in the early seventeenth century, the new "Canterbury" quadrangle cost him just over £ 5,500. He celebrated its completion by offering King Charles a banquet there, at a cost of over £ 2,600 more. This pattern of expenditure was in no way unusual for its period. The Banqueting House at Whitehall, including the interior decoration by Rubens, cost about £ 20,000; but soon after, the Inns of Court are said to have spent £ 120,000 on a masque on the same theme, The Triumph of Peace.[20] These are typical examples of princely or aristocratic display, prodigality, luxury or magnificence, far removed from mercenary "investment", closer to the world of the potlatch than the world of the stockbroker.

There was a persistent strain of criticism of this sort of expenditure as wasteful, but the expenditure went on just the same. Philippe Le Bon's Feast of the Pheasant at Lille in 1454 provoked Olivier de la Marche to comment on the "oultraigeux exces" and the "desraisonnable despense" of the occasion.[21] A mid-sixteenth century poem by the Venetian goldsmith Alessandro Caravia makes St Peter lament the splendours of the *Scuole,* charitable fraternities

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[18] Defoe (1725) quoted in I. WATT, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 55; J. H. PLUMB, *The Commercialisation of Leisure in Eighteenth Century England* (Reading, 1973), p. 17.

[19] A. D. FRASER JENKINS, "Cosimo de' Medici's Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence", in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 33, 1970.

[20] W. C. COSTIN, *The History of St John's College Oxford* (Oxford, 1958), p. 40 f; P. PALME, *Triumph of Peace: a Study of the Whitehall Banqueting House* (London, 1957).

[21] OLIVIER DE LA MARCHE, *Mémoires,* 2 (Paris, 1884), p. 369.

who were overspending on display at the expense of the poor they were supposed to be helping:

> Ducati ottantamila spenduto hanno
> Che gli bastava ben spenderne sei...
> Di poveri l'entrate si strapazza
> In fabbricar...[22]

Again, there were complaints about the cost of early Stuart masques and about the cost of the Banqueting House at Whitehall. By the end of the seventeenth century, a significant shift in the attitudes of the critics was beginning to take place. Luxury was now condemned by some writers not only for moral reasons but also for economic ones. The French *Mémoires sur les Finances* of 1688 saw magnificence not only as superfluous but also as "sterile"; in other words as unproductive, as disinvestment. Gilbert Burnet, visiting Italy in the early 1680s, expressed economic insight as well as Protestant prejudice when he made the comment that "the superstition of Italy and the great waste of wealth that one sees in the churches, particularly the prodigious masses of plate with which their altars are covered on holiday, doth also sink their trade extremely". He also made the point (made by Evelyn a generation earlier, and repeated recently by Roberto Lopez), that people spend on the arts when their desire to invest is blocked: in Rome, he wrote, "there are no ways left ... of employing one's money to any considerable advantage: for the public banks, which are all in the pope's hand, do not pay in effect 3%, though they pretend to give 4% of interest".[23]

II

So far we have taken the term "investment" in a relatively narrow, literal sense and found little deliberate investment in culture. The concept can also, of course, be employed in a wider sense, more metaphorically. Expenditure on future pleasure is a

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22 A. CARAVIA, *Il Sogno di Caravia* (Venice, 1541), sig. Di verso, discussed by B. PULLAN, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 130 f.

23 The *Mémoires* quoted by L. ROTHKRUG, *Opposition to Louis XIV* (Princeton, 1965), p. 249. G. BURNET, *Some Letters containing an Account of what seemed most remarkable in Switzerland, Italy etc.* (Rotterdam, 1686), pp. 178, 185.

kind of investment; so is giving the neighbours a share of the pig you have just killed in the hope that they will return the gift when they kill theirs. Education — whatever governments may say — is an investement in the sense that expenditure on education brings returns, both private and social, difficult as these returns may be to measure.[24]

Let us consider the possible social returns to expenditure on the arts, the extent to which waste may be a good investment. A retrospective cost-benefit analysis for Europe 1100-1800 is obviously impossible; all that one can do is offer some examples and some impressions. The returns which contemporaries expected from their expenditure on the arts may be described as supernatural, economic, political or social.

1) Supernatural returns. Insofar as men built churches or commissioned altarpieces to placate the anger of God or to ensure the favour of the Virgin Mary and other powerful supernatural protectors, we might describe their expenditure as "investment", whether we personally consider their actions as efficacious or not. Cosimo de' Medici is a famous example of a man who spent largely on religious buildings to compensate for the profit he had made from usury.[25]

2) Economic returns. Building on a grand scale had the obvious advantage of keeping both craftsmen and unskilled workers employed, a point which was not infrequently made by writers between 1500 and 1800. In Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset,* written in the 1530s, Pole defends magnificent building against Lupset on the grounds that "many men are well set a-work thereby". Jean Bodin praised Pericles for employing the public treasure to beautify Athens, because this was to banish "the two greatest plagues of a commonwealth, idleness and poverty". Gregory XIII put similar ideas into practice in Rome. Louis noted with pride in his memoirs

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[24] MACHLUP (note 3); J. VAIZEY, *The Economics of Education* (London, 1962) chs 2-3; J. VAIZEY et al., *The Political Economy of Education* (London, 1972), chs 5-6.

[25] E. H. GOMBRICH, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art", in his *Norm and Form* (London, 1966); c.f. note 19.

"the number of poor workers I have supported by employing them on my buildings". The criticism of sterile "expenditure" made, as we have seen, against Louis, was soon to be answered by those economic writers who saw "public benefits" flowing from "private vices".[26]

3) Political Returns. From 1551 onwards, Gilbert van Schoonbeke constructed new walls and fortifications for Antwerp at a cost of nearly 1,000,000 gold crowns.[27] Is money spent on defence an investment? It is certainly expenditure in the hope of returns. So of course is propaganda. The expensive court masques of Catherine de' Medici and James I, for example, carried political messages from the ruler to the audience.[28] It might also be argued that the Escorial (at a cost of 6,000,000 ducats), and Versailles (at 66,000,000 livres) were built to make the Spanish and the French monarchy more respected. The effectiveness of this kind of propaganda is impossible to calculate; we shall never know whether Versailles was worth the money. What can be said is that in some cases the construction of magnificent buildings for the purposes of propaganda seems to have been counter-productive. The early Stuarts made themselves more unpopular by the very means, such as the Banqueting House, by which they tried to gain respect, and every historian knows the result of Leo X's attempts to finance the building of St Peter's.

4) Social returns. These are at once the least precise and the most important of all. Professor Norbert Elias has made this point more explicitly and vigorously than most historians, arguing that since houses were a symbol of one's social position, for an aristocrat in eighteenth-century France (say) it was obligatory to have a house of a particular magnificent kind, despite the cost. Such ex-

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[26] T. Starkey, *A Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset* ed. K. M. Burton (London, 1948), p. 96; J. Bodin, *Six Livres de la Republique* (1576), Book 6, ch. 2; Gregory XIII quoted by G. Baglione, *Le Vite de' Pittori...* (Rome, 1642), p. 4; Louis XIV, *Memoirs* (New York, 1970), p. 67.

[27] J. Wegg, *Antwerp 1477-1559* (London, 1916); c.f. H. Soly's contribution to the Prato conference.

[28] F. Yates, *Astraea* (London, 1975), pp. 149 f; S. Orgel - R. Strong, *Inigo Jones: Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols (London, 1973).

[29] N. Elias, *La Société de Cour* (Paris, 1974), pp. 32 f.

penditure was only "waste" from the bourgeois point of view.[29] To maintain high social status, it was also necessary to spend conspicuously on painting or sculpture. Town councils and guilds had to spend money in this way as well as nobles and princes, whether the expenditure took the permanent form of a town hall or the temporary one of the decorations made and the entertainment organised on the occasion of a "royal entry" into a particular city. The same methods, employed on a still more lavish scale, were necessary for anyone who was not content to maintain his social status, but wanted to improve it. It is a commonplace that in early modern Europe men bought land and office not only to increase their capital but also to increase their standing; and money spent on paintings and palaces was another means to this end. In Venice in the early eighteenth century, as Francis Haskell has pointed out, "four or five families who had been ennobled only some fifty years earlier were in the very forefront of artistic patronage": the Widmann, for example, the Labia, and the Manin.[30]

In short, the concept of "investment in culture" is more ambiguous than it looks at first sight. Do we mean investment in a narrow sense or a wide sense? Are we thinking of the middleman or the patron? Are we concerned with expenditure in the hope of return, or are we trying to discover whether there really were returns? However, this idea of "returns", precise or vague, material or immaterial, intended or unintended, should make a dialogue possible between cultural historians concerned with motives for patronage and economic historians interested in outlets for capital.

III

Let us turn from "investment" to "urban culture". What, in the early modern period, were the returns on municipal expenditure on the arts? It would be easy to give as many answers to this question as there are towns. But is this variety structured? Can we establish a typology of towns, or some relationship between cultural expenditure and social structure? As a small contribution towards

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30 F. HASKELL, *Patrons and Painters* (London, 1963), p. 250 f.

such a typology I should like to compare three seventeenth-century cities; Rome, Amsterdam and Paris. All three cities were growing rapidly in the period. In all three cities a good deal of money was spent on building, but it was spent by different kinds of people, with different aims and different consequences.

To begin with Rome, which had a population varying between 100,000 and 150,000 in the seventeenth century. From the functional point of view it may be described as a holy city, a treasury of relics, a centre of pilgrimage; but also as a capital city, an administrative centre for both the Papal States and the Catholic Church. It was not an important centre of production or of international trade. It was a centre of conspicuous consumption, including imports, but its only exports were "invisible" ones: indulgences and dispensations.

The social structure of the city corresponded to these functions. "The city is all court and all nobility", wrote Montaigne, with pardonable exaggeration. He might have said that it was all clergy; there were more than 8,000 priests, monks and nuns in the city in 1700. There some rich entrepreneurs, but they were involved in finance and the import of grain, not in the export trade. The most common occupations of heads of households in sixteenth Century Rome, to judge from the surviving records, were "innkeeper" and "tailor". The one industry which flourished was building. In the early seventeenth century, there were 415 master carpenters and 388 master masons in the city.[31]

As for the political structure, Rome was governed — in theory — by a senator, a *gonfaloniere,* three *conservatori* and some lesser officials, including the fourteen *caporioni* or captains of districts, and the *magistri viarum,* in charge of the streets, whose numbers had been increased from two to fourteen by Sixtus V. In practice, however, Rome was ruled by a prince, absolute in temporal as in

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[31] J. Delumeau, *La Vie Economique et Sociale de Rome dans la seconde moitié du XVI^e siècle,* 2 vols (Paris, 1957-9); L. Pastor, *History of the Popes,* vols 21-32, English translation (London, 1952-7); J. A. F. Orbaan, *Sixtine Rome* (London, 1911); P. Portoghesi, *Roma Barocca,* English translation (Cambridge, Mass., 1970); M. Petrocchi, *Roma nel '600* (Bologna, 1970); P. Scavizzi, "Attività edilizia a Roma" in *Studi Storici,* 1968. I am much indebted to the comments of Helge Gamrath, Gérard Labrot and Paola Scavizzi on the Roman section of this paper.

spiritual affairs, and often intervening in the affairs of the city, even in small matters. In the time of Sixtus V, for example, the *magistri viarum* forebade Roman housewives to dry their laundry on ropes hung across the streets, but the pope intervened to have this prohibition withdrawn.[32]

Although the population did not rise sharply, much of Rome was rebuilt between the late sixteenth and the late seventeenth century. To mention only the most important enterprises: under Sixtus V (1585-90), Piazza del Popolo was laid out, and also six new streets, including Via Sistina and Via Felice, while a Roman aqueduct was restored to use. Under Paul V (1605-21), St Peter's was completed, a fountain placed in the piazza in front of it, and another major aqueduct repaired. Under Urban VIII (1623-44), Palazzo Barberini was built, Piazza del Quirinale enlarged and another new street constructed, the Via Urbana. Under Innocent X (1644-55), the main building project was the reconstruction of Piazza Navona, which was given a new palace, a new church, and a new fountain - Bernini's famous Fountain of the Four Rivers. Under Alexander VII (1655-67), Piazza S. Maria della Pace was reconstructed, and Piazza S. Pietro encircled by its famous colonnades. Clement IX (1667-9) planned the reconstruction of S. Maria Maggiore, but died before his plans could be put into effect, and a long hiatus followed without major papal projects until Innocent XII (1691-1700) had a new piazza laid out on Monte Citorio, with a huge statue of himself in the middle. An eighteenth-century English visitor observed with admiration, that "The public piazzas, or squares, are more numerous in Rome than in any other city of Europe". In spite of important architectural commissions from religious orders and from individual noblemen, this transformation of Rome was primarily the work of the popes.[33]

Of course the designs were the work of professional architects, but a number of popes took a close personal interest in building projects. Sixtus V frequently visited his buildings while they were

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[32] Orbaan, p. 111.

[33] T. Nugent, *The Grand Tour*, three vols (London, 1778) 1, p. 270; c.f. G. Coyer, *Voyages*, 2 vols (Paris, 1775), 1, pp. 151 f.

under construction to see how work was going on. Similarly, Innocent X frequently visited Piazza Navona to watch the progress of the work, and the decision to employ Bernini on the fountain was his own. Alexander VII made architectural drawings himself and kept a wooden model of Rome in his bedroom, "like one" (a contemporary diarist drily commented), "who had no greater task than the beautifying of the city".[34]

This urban renewal was expensive. Jean Delumeau has calculated that St Peter's cost the papacy 1,500,000 scudi over the hundred and twenty years that it was under construction. Sixtus V spent over 1,000,000 scudi on building in a reign of only five years. Paul V spent over 1,200,000 scudi on building in a reign of sixteen years, and died deeply in debt. Where Paul V owed 18,000,000 scudi in 1619, Urban VIII owed 35,000,000 in 1640, and it is likely that the pope's building projects had something to do with the increase. While Piazza Navona was under reconstruction, a pasquinade was posted up: "Instead of fountains and obelisks we want bread, bread, bread, bread". Innocent XI was one of the rare seventeenth century popes to balance his budget; he was also one of the rare popes not to build on a grand scale.[35]

What were the objectives of papal building policies? We cannot assume that all the popes of the period had the same aims. Papal reigns tended to be short, and different popes had extremely diverse ideas about the value of rebuilding Rome. Giovanni Baglioni, who organised his lives of Italian artists around the five major papal reigns between 1572 and 1642, contrasts Gregory XIII, who built out of piety, with Paul V, who wanted "magnificent and memorable works".[36] However, there was a certain continuity in papal building policies between 1585 and 1669, which it seems not unreasonable to explain in terms of the role of the pope as it was understood in this period, and the demands which this role made on its holders. Waste in one sense, the embellishment of the

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34 On Sixtus, Orbaan, p. 43; on Alexander, Portoghesi, p. 34.

35 ORBAAN, p. 171; DELUMEAU, p. 763 f; W. REINHARD, *Papstfinanz und Nepotismus unter Paul V* (Stuttgart, 1974), ch. 1; PETROCCHI, p. 76 f; the pasquinade quoted by Portoghesi, p. 35.

36 BAGLIONE (note 26), pp. 4, 95.

holy city was also expenditure in the hope of political returns. The magnificent buildings were a form of propaganda for the Counter-Reformation papacy, a way of legitimating claims which the Protestants had challenged.[37] At a more precise level of analysis, it should be stressed that ritual and symbolism seem to have been paramount considerations in the rebuilding of Rome at this period. Domenico Fontana, the architect who put into effect the projects of Sixtus V, described them as follows: "Our Holy Father, wishing to make it easy for those who, moved by devotion or by vows, often come to visit the most holy places of the city of Rome, and in particular the seven churches so famous for their indulgences and relics, has opened many wide and straight streets".[38] The streets were primarily intended for processions and were laid out in a part of Rome with few or no private houses. Sixtus spent 76,000 scudi on the transportation and erection of four Egyptian obelisks, which had crosses placed on their tops. Their function was symbolic; to represent the triumph of Christianity over paganism. Again, Urban VIII had Piazza del Quirinale enlarged because he wanted to make more room for the pilgrims who gathered there to be blessed. Piazza S. Pietro was designed by Bernini as a "crowd container" (to use Lewis Mumford's phrase), primarily for the papal blessings at Christmas and Easter. Covered passages were designed with the needs of processions in mind; their function was liturgical. At the same time, the plan of the square was symbolic: Bernini himself compared the curving colonnades to the motherly arms of the Church.[39]

Popes had other objectives in building besides religious ones. Innocent X was interested in reconstructing Piazza Navona because his family palace was there, and Alexander VII planned to reconstruct Piazza Colonna for similar reasons. Popes were usually old men driven by the desire to do something quickly for their relatives and to make their names remembered. They (or their architects)

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37 G. LABROT, Le Mythe de Rome (forthcoming).

38 D. FONTANA, *Della Trasportatione dell'Obelisco Vaticano* (Rome, 1590), f. 101 recto.

39 R. WITTKOWER, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750* (Harmondsworth, 1958), p. 125.

were also aware of practical problems, including traffic problems, which were growing more acute in this period because of the rising popularity of the carriage. This was the reason for the construction of the "five-lane" Via Felice, and the reconstruction of Piazza S. María della Pace to give carriages access to the church.[40] All the same the impression remains that these practical considerations were not uppermost in the mind of papal builders.

It is highly likely that there were both private and social returns to the popes and to the Church from the money spent on rebuilding Rome, although these returns cannot be measured. The building programme was designed *ad majorem Dei gloriam,* and incidentally to bring fame to the Barberini, Pamphili, Chigi and other papal families; but how can we tell whether God's glory or the Barberini's really was increased? The possible economic returns from the building programme range from the relief of unemployment to the encouragement of tourism, and the benefit of Roman innkeepers. However, there is a debit side too. Money spent on building is money which might have been spent in ways which would have been more productive economically, such as lowering taxes or encouraging the cloth industry. There is much to be said for Delumeau's description of this expenditure as "ensevelissement de la richesse, pétrification de l'argent".[41] There is also something to be said for the comments of Gilbert Burnet, hostile Protestant observer though he is. Burnet thought there was no other city in Italy "where the churches, convents and palaces are so noble, and where the other buildings are so mean, which indeed discovers very visibly the misery under which the Romans groan".[42] He was surely right to read the physical appearance of the city as the outward sign of its political, social and economic structure.

IV

No great European city of the seventheenth century was more unlike Rome than was Amsterdam. We move from a city which

[40] PORTOGHESI, p. 242.
[41] DELUMEAU, p. 515.
[42] BURNET (note 23), p. 222 f.

was top-heavy with nobles and clergy to one with few clergy and virtually no nobles at all. Amsterdam was not the political centre of the Dutch Republic. Insofar as this federal republic had a centre at all, it was The Hague. From the economic point of view, however, Amsterdam was truly central. It was a port, a money market and a centre of industry, whether this was organised in small workshops or (as in the case of some brewing, printing and soap-boiling establishments), in factories. The population of the city was largely composed of merchants, shop-keepers, and craftsmen, and it expanded rapidly from about 30,000 in 1585 to about 200,000 in 1680. The town was ruled by its four burgomasters and its town councillors and other officials with very little interference from outside, although the *Stadhouder* did intervene, or try to intervene, on a few memorable occasions.[43]

Like Rome, Amsterdam enjoyed a building boom in the seventeenth century, but for different reasons and with different results. To house the many immigrants to Amsterdam it became necessary to extend the city well beyond its old walls, and Amsterdam increased about six-fold in size (compared to nearly seven-fold in population), between 1585 and 1680. 1612 is the crucial date in the history of Amsterdam town planning, the beginning of a huge but carefully considered expansion, the "Plan of the Three Canals (Herengracht, Keisergracht, Prinsengracht), which gave the city its celebrated half-moon shape. This has been called with justice "the boldest, most extensive and most successful feat of town planning ever achieved in the country and indeed, for that period of time, in the world".[44]

The plan was put into execution as follows. The town council bought the land earmarked for development, divided it into lots and sold it. Building regulations were strict and seem to have been enforced. Social zoning (apparently rare in early modern Europe, for nobles and paupers lived side by side in many cities from Edinburgh to Venice), existed in the new parts of Amsterdam

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[43] On Amsterdam, A. BREDIUS et al., *Amsterdam in de Zeventiende Eeuw*, 3 vols (The Hague, 1897-1905); H. BRUGMANS, *Opkomst en Bloei van Amsterdam*, second ed. (Amsterdam, 1944).

[44] G. BURKE, *The Making of Dutch Towns* (London, 1956), ch. 9.

right from the start. The town councillors and other prosperous merchants tended to buy houses along the three canals, where the allocation of space was a generous one. The result was the creation of what might be called an upper-class suburb, outside the old town though within the new fortifications. A suburb, but not an entirely residential district, for in traditional style an Amsterdam merchant would have his shop, his warehouse and his home in different parts of the same building. The town council laid down the minimum distances between rows of houses and excluded certain noisy, dirty or smelly trades, such as blacksmiths, dyers and brewers, from this area altogether. To the west of the three canals there was a zone of cheap housing which was unregulated, crowded and inhabited mainly by immigrant craftsmen. By the early eighteenth century, if not before, it had acquired the unofficial, ironic name of "De Jordaan": in other words, the Promised Land.[45]

The result of this planning was a town which impressed many foreign visitors by its regularity and cleanliness. A medium-sized wooden town had been replaced by a large brick city. House-building was the outstanding achievement, but there were important public buildings too. There was the Bourse, East India House, and West India House for the merchant community. There were hospitals for foundlings and for the sick, old, and poor: the Burgerweeshuis, Dolhuis, Gasthuis, Leprozenhuis, Oudemannen-huis, and so on. There was the Rasphuis and the Spinhuis, prisons for men and women respectively. Some visitors were impressed by the success of the welfare institutions. "It is a rare thing to meet with a beggar here, as rare as to see a horse, they say, upon the streets of Venice, and this is held to be of their best pieces of government, for besides the strictness of their laws against men-dicants, they have hospitals of all sorts for young and old, both for the relief of the old and the employment of the other; so that there is no object here to exercise any act of charity upon".[46] Other visitors were more struck by what was lacking in Amsterdam.

« The public places or squares in Amsterdam are not very handsome; the principal is that which they call the Dam, and is

45 BREDIUS.

46 J. HOWELL, *Epistolae Ho-Elianae*, fourth ed. (London, 1673), p. 11.

very irregular ». Or again: « Amsterdam n'a point de belles places: la principale est le Dam, place irréguliere et sans ornement ».[47]

In other words, Amsterdam was rich where Rome was poor, in buildings for commerce and welfare, and poor where Rome was rich, in churches (despite the new Noorderkerk and Westerkerk), and in squares.

These differences between the urban landscapes of Rome and Amsterdam seem to reflect their different social structures. The success of Amsterdam was the success of regulation; the regulation of beggars, the regulation of housing. Symbolic needs were less in Calvinist Amsterdam than in Catholic Rome. Practical needs were greater in Amsterdam than in Rome because the immigration rate was much higher. Decisions about town planning were made by the businessmen on the town council of Amsterdam, whose priorities were different from any pope's. The initiative for the great expansion of 1612 seems to have come from the businessman Frans Oetgens, who was burgomaster no less than ten times between 1599 and 1624. Oetgens and his friend did very well out of the 1612 expansion, buying up land outside the old walls and then selling it at inflated prices to the town council, a procedure which deeply shocked their colleague C. P. Hooft, from whose private papers our knowledge of the whole sordid business is derived.[48] The « Jordan » affair was another profitable piece of speculation in real state.

There was, of course, one building in Amsterdam which was built for show as much as for use, and that was the new Town Hall designed by Jacob van Campen, a building of palatial proportions (and now, of course, actually in use as a palace). At the time, there were complaints that the building was excessively and unnecesarily expensive and in 1653, when the Dutch were at war with England, the plan was modified to save money. However, when peace came, these modifications were scrapped because the town council were concerned with the project's « status and dignity »

[47] NUGENT (note 33), 1, p. 72; COYER, (note 33), 2, p. 240, quoted by A. Tenenti in his "Discours inaugural" to the Prato conference.

[48] N. DE ROEVER, "Tweërlei Regenten", in *Oud-Holland*, 7, 1889.

(*standt en ansien*). The final cost was said to have been eight million *livres*, about an eighth of the cost of Versailles.[49]

The enlargement of Amsterdam shows us « investment » in the most literal sense, in bricks and mortar if not in « culture ». The returns envisaged seem to have been mainly economic, although status and dignity were not forgotten; thrift and sobriety were so highly valued by the Dutch that for private individuals to build for prestige may well have been counter-productive. Where selfishness in Rome took the form of building for prestige, in Amsterdam it took the form of building for profit. Where unselfishness in Rome took the form of building for the glory of God, in Amsterdam it took that of building for the relief of the poor. But why should there be fine squares in one city and not in the other? Was it the Mediterranean climate and style of life which made them seem so desirable in Rome? Was it the emphasis on privacy and domesticity which made them seem less important in Amsterdam?

V

Rome and Amsterdam were poles apart both in their attitudes to town planning and in their social structures. In many respects Paris came somewhere in between, while in others it was out on its own. Paris was at this time by far the largest city of the three, with a population of something like 200,000 in 1600, rising to 500,000 or more in 1700. Like Rome it was a capital thronged by courtiers and officials, although the king was in Paris much less than the pope was in Rome, especially after Versailles had been built. Paris was also a centre of trade and industry. Manufacturing was especially important in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, which was outside the walls and therefore outside the control of the guilds. Yet the city was dominated by lawyers and bureaucrats. It was they who usually held the post of *prévot des marchands* (despite the title), and of *échevin*, in other words, mayor and

[49] K. Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam* (Utrecht, 1959), pp. 25n, 32n; Sorbière (note 10), p. 30.

aldermen. The town council (*bureau de ville*) exercised real power over the city, but the King and the Parlement often intervened in the affairs of Paris, and from 1667 onward, the powers of the town council were eroded by the appointment of a new official, the *lieutenant de police,* concerned with activities as diverse as street cleaning, fire-fighting, and the inspection of markets.[50]

Changes in the urban landscape of seventeenth-century Paris parallelled both Rome and Amsterdam. The "Roman" side consisted in the construction of a bridge, four squares, and several monuments. The bridge was the Pont-Neuf, begun in 1578 and finished in the reign of Henri IV. Two important squares were also laid out in Henri IV's time: the triangular Place Dauphine, which filled the space where the Pont Neuf met the Ile de la Cité, and the square Place Royale (now Place des Vosges). Two more squares were built in the reign of Louis XIV: the circular Place des Victoires and the octagonal Place Louis-le-Grand (now Place Vendôme). An example of the monuments is the enormous Arc de Triomphe planned for the Porte Saint Antoine. The lower part of it was built from 1668 onwards, but it was never completed and the torso was demolished in 1716.[51]

The "Amsterdam" side of the transformation of Paris consisted in the enlargement of the city to make room for immigrants. In spite of Louis XIII's attempts to prevent expansion by edict, Paris approximately doubled its population in the course of the seventeenth century, and, as in Amsterdam, this expansion provided marvellous opportunities for what might euphemistically be called "investment" by speculators in real estate. In the 1630s, the fields opposite the Tuileries were built over and became the fashionable Faubourg Saint Germain, and the fortifications were extended westwards so that this suburb could be safe inside the walls (as late as 1636, a siege of Paris seemed a possibility).

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50 P. Lavedan, *Histoire de l'urbanisme à Paris* (Paris, 1975), part 2; L. Bernard, *The Emerging City* (Durham, N.C., 1970).

51 Lavedan, pp. 154f, 202f, 215f, 225f, 231f; P. Bourget/G. Cattaui, *J. H. Mansart* (Paris, 1960), pp. 99f; on Porte Saint-Antoine, W. Herrmann, *The Theory of Claude Perrault* (London, 1973), p. 24.

The creation of Faubourg Saint Germain was planned in advance; less is known about the unplanned expansion of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, the "Jordan" of Paris, a poor area which remained outside the protection of the city walls. A contemporary estimated that there were 40,000 people living there in 1711; if this were true the area was, by the standards of the time, an important town in itself.[52]

In seventeenth century Paris there was also an increase in the provision of what we would call the "social services", for example the building of hospitals such as Saint Louis (for the plague-stricken), La Miséricorde (for orphan girls), Les Invalides (for crippled soldiers), and the famous, or notorious Hôpital-Général, a workhouse for the poor. Street lighting was introduced in this period. The government took over the tasks of cleaning and paving the streets, some of which were widened to prevent the traffic jams which followed the rise in the popularity of carriages. Dyers and tanners were ordered to move out of the centre of the city.[53]

Who was responsible for all these changes? Where the city was concerned, decision-making seems, ironically enough, to have been less centralised in Paris than in Rome or even Amsterdam. Kings sometimes intervened: Henri III took a personal interest in the Pont Neuf, and Henry IV in the two squares laid out in his reign. The town council took some initiatives, notably the decision to construct Place des Victoires. Certain architects played an important part in reshaping Paris, especially François Blondel, who directed public works in the reign of Louis XIV, and the famous Jules Hardouin-Mansart, who designed both Place des Victoire and Place Vendôme. Then there was the first *lieutenant de police,* Gabriel de la Reynie, who took the decision to light Paris at night and also to tear down the so-called "Cour des Miracles", the area where professional beggars congregated after a day spent on the streets. A few private individuals were also

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[52] DUMOLIN (note 16), 2, p. iii.
[53] LAVEDAN, pp. 271f; BERNARD, passim.

of some importance. There were the entrepreneurs, such as Louis Le Barbier the financier, who headed the syndicate for the development of Faubourg Saint Germain, and Antoine Crozat, who was associated with Mansart and with four other financiers in the *lotissement* of Place Vendôme. There were also private patrons, such as Antoine Séguier, who founded La Miséricorde, and Marshal Feuillade, who helped to pay for Place des Victoires, and to some extent imposed his own rather baroque tastes on Mansart.[54]

What were the objectives of these transformations? Ritual and symbolism were important in Paris as in Rome. For example, Henri III wanted the Pont Neuf constructed — so it has been suggested — in order to make it easier for religious processions, in which he often took part, to get from the Louvre to the Augustins.[55] The cult of the monarch in the seventeenth century made an even greater impact on the Paris landscape. All the four new squares were the settings for royal statues. Place Dauphine was focussed on the equestrian monument to Henri IV on the Pont Neuf; Place Royale was the frame for an equestrian monument to Louis XIII, and Place Vendôme for a similar monument to Louis XIV. As for Place des Victoires, it was designed as a setting for a statue of Louis XIV by Desjardins, "with Victoire, that is, a vast winged woman close behind his back, holding forth a laurel crown over the king's head".[56] The lamps which burned before this royal image seemed blasphemous to some contemporaries, and indicate the extent to which the absolute monarch was standing in the place of God. In Paris, as in Rome, the shape of the city carried a political message; it glorified the ruler. But in Paris, much more than in Rome, these symbolic objectives coexisted with the more utilitarian ones associated with men such as Le Barbier and La Reynie.

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54 On Le Barbier, Dumolin, 1, p. 132; on Crozat and Feuillade, BOURGET/CATTAUI, pp. 99f.

55 F. YATES, *Astraea* (London, 1975), p. 176. Contrast the explanation given in Félibien's *Histoire de la Ville de Paris*, 2 (Paris 1725), p. 1272; he sees the function of the bridge as linking the city proper with the faubourg Saint-Germain area.

56 M. LISTER, *A Journey to Paris* (London, 1699), p. 25.

VI

Using the language of "returns", we may say that the ruling Amsterdammers were more concerned with material returns, the ruling Romans with immaterial (but not simply spiritual) returns, with the ruling Parisians somewhere in between. The correlation between these concerns and the economic functions and the social structures of the three cities will be obvious enough.

It may be thought that the picture sketched in the last few pages is too neat. The objection might be made that I have stressed the poorhouses and prisons in Amsterdam and neglected those in Rome — for Sixtus V did have a poorhouse built and Innocent X commissioned the Carceri Nuovi. Again, I have stressed the churches in Rome and neglected the churches in Amsterdam, like the Noorderkerk and the Westerkerk. I have not discussed the housing developments for immigrants to seventeenth century Rome, notably in rione Monti. I have not mentioned the Roman real estate developers; yet the diarist F. Valesio called Piazza S. Ignazio (constructed 1727-8) "Piazzetta del Guadagno", because of the speculations in property there. The real challenge to comparative history lies in answering questions like these.

The short answer to these objections is that I believe I have stressed what was most important in each of the three cities. In this preliminary sketch the criteria of importance have been impressionistic, and I have made particular use of the accounts of visitors to all three cities and especially of their reactions to what they saw. Ten years after Sixtus V had founded a poorhouse and forbidden begging in Rome, a Sienese visitor commented that "In Rome one sees nothing but beggars, and they are so numerous that it is impossible to go along the street sometimes without being surrounded by them". In Paris, some forty years after the "great confinement" of the poor in the Hôpital Général, an English visitor reported that "the great multitude of poor wretches in all parts of the city is such, that a man in a coach, a-foot, in the shop, is not able to do any business for the numbers and importunities of beggars". Even if the witness was exaggerating (and foreigners may have been plagued worse than Parisians), it does look as if

attempts to deal with the problem of the poor were a failure in Paris as in Rome. Visitors to Amsterdam, however, tended to agree about the success with which the same problem was confronted there.[57] One day it may be possible to supplement these impressionistic criteria with something more precise, for example to calculate the relative amounts spent on different kinds of building in the three cities, and hence the real priorities of their ruling elites. This work has not been done, nor is enough known about the economic history of the three cities in this period to answer the question whether rebuilding took place in periods of prosperity (as if it were simply display) or recession (in which case it may have been an attempt to relieve unemployment).

What stands out from this comparison of three cities over one century is not so much change over time as differences between regions. Italians were happier spending money on grand buildings than the Dutch. One is reminded of the comments of a succession of English visitors to Italian libraries, from Lassels to Addison, that the money was spent on the building instead of the books. The economic historian will observe that stone came relatively cheap in Italy, dear in the Dutch Republic; but the cultural historian will stress the importance of facades in Italian life.

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[57] DELUMEAU, p. 407; LISTER, p. 20.