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Maids on the Move

The Migration of Foreign Domestic Servants to Antwerp and Brussels (1850-1910)

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INTRODUCTION

Maria Praets grew up in a Catholic family with seven children in the Dutch town of Rijsbergen in West-Brabant near the Belgian border.¹ While her father worked as a gendarme, her mother ran the household and looked after the children. Throughout Maria's youth she lived with her family in Rijsbergen, but this sedentary life came to an end when as the eldest daughter, Maria left her village in 1850 at the age of nineteen for the Belgian port city of Antwerp to find a position as a domestic servant. Since there was no railway connecting the Dutch border region with Antwerp at that time, Maria had to either walk the fifty kilometres that separated Rijsbergen from the port city or take a stage coach. After her arrival in the city, she found work in the household of a pharmacist at the *Melkmarkt* close to the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal* (Illustration 1). Five of her brothers and sisters also migrated to Antwerp in subsequent years, working as servants in hotels, restaurants, and households there too. At some point most of them returned to their native village in the Netherlands to start families of their own.

Men and women from modest backgrounds had been migrating between West-Brabant and Antwerp for many years, despite the international border that separated the Dutch region with the Belgian port city.² The movement of Maria Praets and her sisters, as such, fits perfectly with the traditional image of young rural women who went to a nearby city to work as domestic servants. In doing so, they were able to rely on information and assistance from relatives and friends who had previously moved to the same city.

In the past decades, however, historians of domestic service have challenged the extent to which this stereotype is representative in two significant respects. For many years, historians assumed – following Ravenstein's theory – that single women migrated mainly across short distances within dense migration circuits with a long-standing migration tradition, such as the large number of women from modest backgrounds moving between West-Brabant and Antwerp.³ The term migration circuit refers to the sum of all migration movements between a well-defined region of origin and a place of destination by individuals sharing a specific set of characteristics. A first important revision in the historiography was caused by an explosion in

¹ West Brabants Archief te Brabant, Archief van de gemeente Rijsbergen 1811-1927, 1995-2035, Bevolkingsregisters; SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 481#7815, 8844, 31456, 21854, 15128, 14356, and 13072; SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters, MA-BZA-B#85.

² Winter, *Migrants*, 71.

³ Ravenstein, 'The Laws', 167-235.

Illustration 1 The Melkmarkt in Antwerp, drawing by Jozef Linnig (1845)



Source: Stadsarchief Antwerpen (SAA), Beeldbank, 12#3004.

studies on single women – mostly domestic servants – who left their home region and travelled longer distances. Some of these studies demonstrate that many single European women in the second half of the nineteenth century migrated overseas to the Americas or Africa to become domestic servants.⁴ Other historians focused on relatively long-distance movements of women within the European continent.⁵ All these studies noticed an increase over time in the number of single women (mostly domestic servants) who migrated over long distances, sometimes referred to as the feminisation of long-distance migration.⁶ In the second half of the nineteenth century, female domestic servants were no longer moving exclusively within regional traditional migration circuits but started to explore new migration paths crossing longer distances. This transition towards increasing levels of long-distance servant migration is intrinsically linked to a general democratization of long-distance migration. Due to innovations in the transport and communication infrastructure, long-distance migration became an option to a growing share of the European population.⁷ The above-mentioned studies show that women were not simply the followers of male pioneers during this transition, as was previously assumed, but often acted as forerunners in the establishment of new migration circuits.

A second revision concerns the use of channels of information and support by migrant women. Leslie Page Moch, Clé Lesger, Leo Lucassen, and Marlou Schrover have challenged the idea that migrants, and female domestic servants in particular, would have relied primarily on personal networks, such as contacts with friends or relatives who lived at the place of destination.⁸ They observed that a large proportion of female migrants did not yet have any personal contacts when arriving in the city and as such had to rely on other types of intermediaries to receive information and assistance in their search for lodging and employment.

These revisions – on their turn – lead to a new set of questions which are vital to a proper understanding of the feminisation of long-distance migration and the evolution of domestic service during the second half of the long nineteenth century. Due to the transition

⁴ Diner, *Erin's Daughters*; Harzig (ed.), *Peasant maids*; Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*; Wehner-Franco, *Deutsche Dienstmädchen in Amerika*; Hahn, 'Migration'; Milharčič-Hladnik (ed.), *From Slovenia*.

⁵ See amongst other: König, 'Femina migrans', 93-115; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*; Moch, 'Networks', 431-455; Schrover, *Een kolonie*;

⁶ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80; Donato and Gabaccia, *Gender and International Migration*.

⁷ On the European mobility transition: Lucassen and Lucassen, 'The Mobility Transition Revisited', 347-377; Moch, *Moving Europeans*; Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact*; Bade, *Migration*.

⁸ Lesger et al., 'Is there Life', 29-50; Moch, 'Networks', 431-455.

towards increasing levels of long-distance servant migration, female domestic servants in the second half of the long nineteenth century moved within three different types of migration circuits. Women such as Maria Praets continued to move within traditional regional migration circuits which were dense and had a long-standing migration tradition.⁹ A second group of women moved within newly developed dense long-distance migration circuits, such as the German domestics from North-Rhine Westphalia in Antwerp.¹⁰ Finally, there was also an increasing number of individual migrants amongst the domestic servants in commercial and capital cities who arrived from regions from where few other migrants came and as such moved within thin migration circuits. A first aspect that is missing in the current literature is a consistent comparison of the migration process of servants moving within these three different types of migration circuits.

A first important question in this regard is whether the choice to move in a specific migration circuit may have been influenced by access to and use of particular channels of information and support. Until now, historians of domestic service have focused on the availability of a wide variety of different intermediaries on the domestic service labour market. They have demonstrated how servants in general could make use of personal contacts or of other – more formal – intermediaries such as commercial placement agencies, newspaper advertisements, philanthropic associations, and labour exchanges.¹¹ However, to what extent and by whom these different types of intermediaries were used, has hardly been studied. Furthermore, there is no research that compares the use of these channels of information and support by servants moving within different types of migration circuits. Did long-distance migrants, for example, rely more on commercial placement agencies and regional migrants on personal contacts?

In a similar vein, it remains unclear whether foreign servants were treated differently from Belgian servants by local and national authorities and whether foreign women who moved within traditional circuits – as Maria Praets did – were treated differently from long-distance migrants. Policies towards servants in general are discussed quite extensively in a number of

⁹ A *dense* migration circuit is one in which many migrants move.

¹⁰ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80 and Van Rompuy, 'Levensloopanalyse', 111-146.

¹¹ See amongst others: McBride, *The Domestic Revolution* 70-81; Higgs, *Domestic Servants*, 175-204; Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*, 95-99; Lee, 'Domestic Service' 450-453; Wierling, *Mädchen*, 75-79; König, 'Femina Migrans', 99-102.

studies,¹² however these studies do not pay much attention to how servants moving within other types of circuits may have been treated differently by the authorities. How significant was nationality or the extent of familiarity with certain migrant groups?

Furthermore, there is a lack of insights into possible connections between the profiles of servants, the type of households in which they were employed, their specific function in these households, and the wages they earned. For example, how different were servants who moved from West-Brabant to Antwerp compared to servants who migrated from Germany to the same city and did these differences correlate with working conditions? Such questions are essential to a better understanding of the feminization of long-distance migration and the selection of women who migrated within long-distance migration circuits.

A second aspect that deserves greater attention concerns the effects of changes over time in the domestic service labour market on servant migration. Historians of domestic service have, amongst others, observed a growing urban demand for female domestic servants throughout the nineteenth century,¹³ as well as an increased use of newspaper advertisements from the 1870s onwards,¹⁴ and the establishment of philanthropic associations to help them find decent work by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Other historians add the innovations in the transport and communication infrastructure to this list such as the establishment of an international railway system and telegraph network,¹⁶ as well as the evolutions of migration policies.¹⁷ Whether these changes had any effect on the migration trajectories of servants, their profiles, or their use of channels of information and support remains unclear in the literature.

Finally, most studies on nineteenth-century servant migration focus on one city of arrival or compare very similar cities in different national contexts. While some focus on a metropolis with a mixed economy, others concentrate on commercial cities or on medium-sized regional urban centres. There are almost no consistent comparisons of servant migration to different types of cities and this has resulted a lack of knowledge about how servant

¹² Piette, *Domestiques*, 29-136; Lee, *Domestic Service*, 453-455; Sogner, 'The Legal Status'.

¹³ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 34-35; Piette, *Domestiques*, 42-64.

¹⁴ Schrover, 'Hidden Professions', 167-181; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 77; Martin-Fugier, *La Place*, 46; Higgs, *Domestic Servants*, 165-204.

¹⁵ Piette, *Domestiques*, 413-448.

¹⁶ Van der Hert, *België onder Stoom*; De Block, 'Designing the nation', 703-732.

¹⁷ Caestecker, *Alien Policy*; Debackere, 'Tussen stad'; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid'; Greefs and Winter (eds.), *Migration Policies*; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 12-45; Coupain, 'L'expulsion', 5-48; Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210.

migration may be influenced by variations in the economic function and interurban network of a city, local urban policies, and the relative importance of formal intermediaries in a city.

To address these issues, this dissertation compares international servant migration within different types of migration circuits between 1850 and 1910 towards a commercial port city and a capital city with a mixed economy. As such, three levels of analysis return in each chapter: a comparison between different types of migration circuits, an analysis of changes over time, and a comparison between two types of cities. More specifically, the focus is on international servant migration to two Belgian cities: Antwerp, an international commercial hub, and Brussels, the capital and largest city of the country. International migration towards these cities was facilitated by the favourable position of Belgium at the centre of an increasingly integrated European economy, one connected by a dense railway network and with intercontinental maritime routes.¹⁸ Existing research has revealed a democratization and feminization of long-distance migration towards both cities which has been connected to an increasing number of foreign domestic servants.¹⁹ As mentioned above, Antwerp and Brussels share this evolution in their migration field with other European cities which makes this study not only relevant to scholars interested in the social history of Belgium, but also to those who want to gain insights into the effects of the nineteenth-century transformations on overall female migration patterns.

Explaining nineteenth-century servant migration

Research on servant migration has come a long way since the 1960s and 1970s. Although female domestic servants were among the most prominent migrant and occupational groups in societies from the past, the majority of social historians prior to the 1970s largely ignored their history. It was not until the work of pioneers such as Theresa McBride that nineteenth-century urban domestic service gradually earned its rightful place in the writing of European history.²⁰ In the eyes of historians during this period, nineteenth-century servanthood embodied a transitional stage in both the lives of individual women and the history of the European working

¹⁸ Veraghtert, 'From Inland Port', 279-422; Van der Hertem, *België onder Stoom*; Strickwerda, 'If All of Europe', 503-522; Abbeloos, 'Belgium's expansionist history', 105-127; De Block, 'Designing the nation', 703-732.

¹⁹ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 175-208.

²⁰ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*.

class.²¹ McBride describes domestic service as ‘the chief means by which large numbers of people effected the transition to modern urban society’,²² but also as a crucial channel to migration and social mobility.²³ Part of this transition was the enlargement of urban recruitment areas for domestic servants in northwestern Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. McBride links this enlargement to the decline of agricultural employment for women and the growing urban demand for female domestic servants in this period.²⁴

In later years, Keith Snell, Joyce Burnette, Bridget Hill, and others elaborated in greater detail on how strong population growth, de-industrialization of the countryside, and specialisation of agriculture led to a demise in female employment opportunities in rural areas in England.²⁵ Early modern women often received their income through proto-industrial activities, working on family-owned land, making use of commons, or working as servants on other farms. However, due to various transformations outlined above, most of opportunities for income were lost to women. Working as a rural servant also became more difficult as farmers increasingly replaced servants – on a one-year contract – with day labourers.²⁶ Pamela Sharpe and Bridget Hill demonstrate how big farmers, while relying mostly on male day labourers, hired the wives of these male labourers only when extra work needed to be done.²⁷ Unmarried women were often ruled out of getting these jobs by men who wanted them for their own wives. Many unmarried women were therefore left with no other option than to migrate either to a nearby or distant city to find a job, mostly as a servant in a bourgeois household. Their gender, in combination with their marital status, determined their disadvantageous position in society. Keith Snell even claims that the great numbers of servants in nineteenth-century cities represents a disguised form of female underemployment at the time.²⁸

In this rather gloomy picture of nineteenth-century urban domestic service, women seem to have only worked as domestics in cities due to a lack of alternative employment opportunities in the countryside. Other historians, however, also point to several pull-factors

²¹ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*; Châtelain, ‘Migrations’, 506-528.

²² McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 17.

²³ On the link with social mobility: McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 9; Idem, ‘Social Mobility’; Broom and Smith, ‘Bridging occupation’, 321-334.

²⁴ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*.

²⁵ Snell, *Annals*, 15-66; Burnette, ‘Labourers’, 59, 41-67; Hill, *Women*, 17.

²⁶ De Langhe, *Oude Vrijsters*, 106.

²⁷ Sharpe, *Adapting to Capitalism*; Hill, *Women alone*, 20-21.

²⁸ Snell, ‘Agricultural seasonal unemployment’, 109.

which drew many rural women to cities and more specifically to urban domestic service. Devos, Schmidt and De Groot refer to the so-called lure of the city caused by, amongst others, the presence of certain institutions, extensive possibilities for obtaining poor relief and a greater degree of tolerance towards behaviour that deviated from the norm.²⁹ Within the context of a survey conducted by Nelly Verbeke in Brussels in 1942, one in five of the interviewees – all female domestic servants – declared that they had migrated to Brussels simply to be in a metropolis, to have fun, and to enjoy more freedom.³⁰ Nonetheless, these motivations still do not explain why so many chose to work as domestic servants. According to McBride, the protective environment offered by the employers' household and the chance for young women to learn to perform various household tasks was an important reason for many rural families in sending their daughters into urban domestic service as well as providing the opportunity for them to save a relatively large amount of money.³¹ Servants' high levels of savings of servants could be the result of profitable salaries as well as the provision of room and board by the employer, in addition to the fact that servants had very little opportunity to spend their money as they were given almost no time off.³² Furthermore, domestic service did not require any special training. Employers preferred women with prior experience but in general, any respectable candidate could easily find employment.³³ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, many capital and commercial cities prospered in the nineteenth century, which generated the growth of the urban middle-classes who – following the example of the upper-classes – increasingly hired domestic servants. According to Lesger et al., it was common knowledge that such cities 'offered ample opportunities for employment' for female domestics.³⁴ As local women often preferred alternative employment, much of the growing number of domestic service positions could be filled by migrant women.

This does not imply, however, that all young, single women migrated to commercial or capital cities to enter service. To a large extent this decision also depended on the individual and household characteristics on the micro level. The rich literature on this level of analysis is

²⁹ Devos et al., 'Introduction', 9-14.

³⁰ Verbeke, 'Le problème'.

³¹ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 49.

³² McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 49-50; Higgs, *Domestic Servants*, 77-90; Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Immigrant Women*, 90; Sarasua, 'Were servants paid', 527.

³³ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 49.

³⁴ Lesger et al., 'Is There Life', 32.

largely dominated by historical demographers.³⁵ Their research has demonstrated that strong correlations exist between age, sex, social and economic position, household composition, and marital status on the one hand and the propensity to migrate on the other. Within this context, the concept of life-cycle service is a hotly debated topic. Life-cycle service refers to the stage of life between childhood and marriage during which a major part of the population of north-western Europe entered service. Scholars such as John Hajnal, Peter Laslett, and Michael Mitterauer have linked the relatively young age at which young people left home with the western European marriage pattern which is marked by relatively late ages of marriage of both husbands and wives.³⁶ As a result there was a relatively long time-span during which young adults were single and as such more likely to enter domestic service.

However, there were significant differences among nineteenth-century women in this respect. In an article about entering service, Hilde Bras lists the effects of other individual and household characteristics on the propensity of women to enter service in the Dutch province of *Zeeland*.

‘Girls from unskilled labouring-class families were significantly more likely to leave home to become servants, while farmers’ daughters on the contrary were less likely to do so. Moreover, after the death of a parent, and especially when the father died, girls were also more likely to enter service. The same held true for young women who as children had frequently migrated with their families. Having a large number of older and younger sisters in the household also significantly heightened girls’ chances of entering service. Finally, girls whose father was not present to sign their birth certificate, usually illegitimate children, were also more prone to leave home for a position as a co-resident maid.’³⁷

Research into other cases in north-western Europe has yielded similar results and revealed that both the particular situation of the household and migration experience within the family

³⁵ See amongst others: Kok, ‘Choices and constraints’, 137-158; Dribe, ‘Migration of rural families’, 247-265; Kesztenbaum, ‘Cooperation’, 85-104; Bras, ‘Maids to the city’, 217-246; Bras and Neven, ‘The effects of siblings’, 53-71; Tsuya and Kurosu, ‘Social class and migration’, 434-455; Rosenbaum-Feldbrügge, ‘Gender differences’, 679-705; Paiva et al., ‘To stay or to migrate’, 568-593.

³⁶ Hajnal, ‘Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system’, 449-494; Laslett, ‘Characteristics’, 89-115; Mitterauer, ‘Servants and youth’, 11-38.

³⁷ Bras, ‘Social change’, 249.

influenced migration of young women.³⁸ However, it is important to note that these results only point to certain tendencies as there was a significant degree of variation in the characteristics of servants and their families.

Furthermore, regional differences also matter in order explain why some young women migrated whereas others stayed put.³⁹ For example, the gendered division of labour in the countryside granted women more opportunities for income in regions that specialized in cattle because certain tasks, such as the milking of cows or the production of butter and cheese, were traditionally carried out by women. At the same time, in some regions, proto-industrial activities remained important during the nineteenth century, implying that different members of the household, including women, produced goods to order so as to supplement their farming income. As such, female unemployment rates were the highest in regions without proto-industrial activities which specialized in grain production like such as Zeelandic Flanders, for example.⁴⁰

What is remarkable in the literature on nineteenth-century domestic service is that it almost exclusively focuses on domestics who migrated from the countryside to cities. Nevertheless, Bras and Pooley noticed that a substantial proportion of urban domestics did not originate from the countryside but from other cities.⁴¹ This inter-urban movement of women has long been overlooked and is still not yet properly understood. It demonstrates how the history of nineteenth-century servant migration should not be reduced to a rural exodus. A further issue is that the causes for increased servant migration in the nineteenth century outlined above, do not fully explain why servants also increasingly travelled long distances. Existing literature on the general democratization of long-distance migration in nineteenth-century Europe refers to innovations in the transport and communication infrastructures, but detailed research on the effects of the increasing interconnectedness of cities and regions and the variation between different types of cities in this respect, is scarce.⁴² Furthermore, several

³⁸ For Belgium see: Matthys, *Sex in the city*, 136-155; Piette, 'Women going to the cities', 286-288; Van Goethem, 'Dienen in de stad Antwerpen', 9-39. For other countries see amongst others: König, 'Femina migrans', 97; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 44-48; Vikström, 'Female Domestic Servants in Sundsvall', 103-107; Higgs, *Domestic Servants and Households*, 51-76.

³⁹ De Langhe, *Oude Vrijsters*.

⁴⁰ Van Cruyningen, 'Vrouwenarbeid', 43-59.

⁴¹ Bras, *Zeeuwse meiden*, 72-73; Pooley, 'Domestic Servants', 412-415.

⁴² On the European mobility transition: Lucassen and Lucassen, 'The Mobility Transition Revisited', 347-377; Moch, *Moving Europeans*; Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact*; Bade, *Migration*.

studies on nineteenth-century domestic service have pointed to changes and variations in local policies regarding servants,⁴³ and the emergence of newspaper advertisements and philanthropic associations as intermediaries in the domestic service labour market.⁴⁴ Yet, rarely do they discuss how these differences and changes affected servant migration.⁴⁵ The content of these studies is addressed in further detail in the respective chapters on policies and formal intermediaries. Finally, there is still much uncertainty about the extent to which domestic servants were dependent on informal networks. For many years, most historians assumed that female migrants relied primarily on family and friends for information and support, however research by Moch and Lesger et al. demonstrates how many migrant women did not have any contacts when they arrived in a city.⁴⁶ How these solitary migrants received information and support is still very unclear. This study therefore focuses explicitly on intermediary structures and on how access to and use of these structures differed between servants moving within different types of migration circuits. In doing so, this dissertation applies an infrastructural approach which is explained in more detail in the next section.

Migration infrastructure

The formation and development of migration circuits are – to a large extent – determined by channels of information and support at the meso level within the limits set out by macro conditions. In the words of Paul-Andre Rosental, ‘economic causes, though important, cannot simply be applied mechanically because they are mediated by these intermediary, mesoscopic structures’.⁴⁷ Although historians have realized the importance of the meso level for a number of decades now, discussions about intermediary structures in much of the historiography are still limited to general references to information flows or informal networks and are characterized by a lack of detailed analyses of the variety of information channels and intermediaries used by migrants in this period. Most migration historians either focus on one type of intermediary (often the migrant network) or do not link developments at the meso level

⁴³ See amongst others: Lee, ‘Domestic service’, 453; Piette, *Domestiques*; Sogner, ‘The Legal Status’, 183-187.

⁴⁴ Schrover, ‘Hidden Professions’, 167-181; McBride, *Domestic Service*, 77; Martin-Fugier, *La Place*, 46; Higgs, *Domestic Servants*, 165-204.

⁴⁵ An exception in this respect is: Lee, ‘Domestic service’, 435-460.

⁴⁶ Lesger et al., ‘Is there Life’, 29-50; Moch, ‘Networks’, 431-455.

⁴⁷ Rosental, ‘Between Micro and Macro’, 459.

to changes in migration patterns. In contrast, recent research by social scientists has demonstrated the complexity of the meso level and the high number of non-migrant actors involved in the migration process. This strand of research focuses less on the causality of migration (explaining why migration occurs) than on the social mechanisms that drive the process (the functioning of migration) and applies an infrastructural approach.⁴⁸

In a special issue on migration infrastructures, Weigiang Lin et al. describe the type of studies that inspired them in the development of this approach.⁴⁹ They refer to the growing interest in mobility studies ‘in the myriad of infrastructures that daily support the movements of people, objects, and even Internet signals’, and research on transport infrastructures such as ‘the global organisation of logistical global supply chains’ or ‘the infusion of particular political meanings and identities in travelscapes such as roads’.⁵⁰ The innovative aspect of the infrastructural approach is that it shifts the attention away ‘from the people who move [...] towards those human *and* nonhuman actors that move migrants within specific infrastructural frames’.⁵¹

The migration infrastructure itself is a product of the interaction among and interdependence of the actors within the different dimensions of the infrastructure: the social (relatives, colleagues, employers, friends, acquaintances), the commercial (placement agencies, lodging houses, inn keepers), the humanitarian (philanthropic associations), the technological (communication and transport), and the regulatory (local and national authorities).⁵² In order to understand the functioning of the social mechanisms behind migration and settlement processes, it is essential to consider the need of these human and nonhuman actors to interact with each other to reach their respective goals. In the words of Xiang and Lindquist, ‘migration can be more clearly conceptualized through a focus on infrastructure rather than on state policies, the labor market, or migrant social networks alone’.⁵³ They therefore aim for a more holistic approach with the concept of migration infrastructure.

⁴⁸ Xiang and Lindquist, ‘Migration infrastructure’, S122-S148; W. Lin et al., ‘Migration infrastructures’, 167-174.

⁴⁹ W. Lin et al., ‘Migration infrastructures’, 167-174.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 167.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 169.

⁵² Xiang and Lindquist, ‘Migration infrastructure’, S124.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, 122.

Table 1 The different dimensions of the migration infrastructure

Dimension	Actors	Activities
Regulatory	Local and national authorities	Monitor mobility and activities of population
Commercial	Placement agencies; lodging house keepers; innkeepers	Offer placement/lodging/other services
Humanitarian	Philanthropic associations	Offer placement/lodging/leisure activities/education
Social	Family; colleagues; employers	Offer information and support
Technological	Means of transport, communication, and monitoring	Facilitate mobility, spread of information, and monitoring individuals and groups

The concept of migration infrastructure has some similarities with other concepts that have been introduced during the past decades but also differs from these concepts to a significant degree. The migration system theory, already introduced in the 1970s, has been successful in enhancing our understanding of the mechanisms behind dense migration circuits but fails to appreciate the ‘diverse and sometimes unstable patterns of migration’.⁵⁴ Other concepts such as the mobility regime/migration apparatus, migrant network, or migration industry emphasize the role of one dimension of the infrastructure or – in the case of migration industry – consider migration predominantly as a form of business while neglecting the importance of other intentions and factors.⁵⁵ In contrast, the concept of migration infrastructure emphasizes the interaction between different dimensions and the diverging motivations of the

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, S132; Mabogunje, ‘Systems approach’, 1-18.

⁵⁵ See among other: C. Tilly, ‘Transplanted networks’, 79-95; Arango, ‘Theories of international migration’, 15-36; Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen, ‘introduction’, 1-23; Feldman, *The Migration Apparatus*.

actors involved. Xiang et al. demonstrate how this migration infrastructure both facilitates and constrains the mobility of individuals in present-day societies.⁵⁶

Different chapters of this dissertation analyse how the migration infrastructure encountered by domestic servants evolved during the second half of the nineteenth century, how it differed between Antwerp and Brussels and, most importantly, how it affected the formation and development of different types of migration circuits. These three levels of analysis (comparisons between migration circuits, analysis of changes over time, and comparisons between cities) are discussed in more detail below.

Circuits, Time, and Cities

Comparison between different types of migration circuits

Throughout the nineteenth century, Antwerp and Brussels recruited the majority of their servant population from their regional hinterland.⁵⁷ This implies that despite the democratization and feminization of long-distance migration, most servants in both cities continued to be Belgian women who migrated across short distances within dense migration circuits with a long standing tradition. However, in the case of Antwerp, Winter has observed that the regional hinterland also included the Dutch border region of West-Brabant.⁵⁸ As mentioned above, women from this region had been migrating to Antwerp in high numbers long before Maria Praets arrived in the Belgian port city. These women shared many characteristics with Belgian migrants, crossed short distances, and moved within dense migration circuits with a long-standing tradition. As such, the focus on foreign servants does not exclude regional servant migration from this study. Furthermore, the results of existing studies on Belgian servants in Antwerp and Brussels will also be included in order to gain a proper understanding of this type of migration circuit.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Xiang and Lindquist, 'Migration infrastructure', S122-S148.

⁵⁷ Chapter 1.

⁵⁸ Winter, *Migrants*, 71.

⁵⁹ See amongst others: Piette, *Domestiques*; Van Goethem, 'Dienen', 9-39; Matthys, *Sex and the City*; De Langhe, *Oude Vrijsters*; De Maeyer et al., *Upstairs*; De Keyzer, "Madame est Servie".

Table 2 Types of migration circuits

	Distance	Density	Migration tradition
Regional	Regional	Dense	Long-standing
Long-distance	Long	Dense	No
Individual	Long	Thin	No

In the second half of the nineteenth century, both cities experienced an enlargement of their recruitment area for domestic servants.⁶⁰ This implies that servants from the hinterland of Antwerp and Brussels were increasingly joined by women who travelled much longer distances. These recent arrivals moved in newly developed dense long-distance migration circuits or as so-called individual migrants who moved from regions where few migrants came from, thereby moving within thin migration circuits. According to Greefs and Winter, they were forerunners in the democratization and feminization of long-distance migration.⁶¹ Their research indicates that domestic servants were among the first people from a more modest background to move in substantial numbers from, for example, the Cologne region towards Antwerp. Coppens' analysis on the international migration field of Brussels, provides similar results.⁶² As described above, the first aim of this dissertation is to compare the migration process of servants moving within these three types of migration circuits in order to gain a better understanding of this feminization and democratization of long-distance migration.

Changes over time

Answering the question why certain servants became forerunners in the transformation process of female migration patterns also requires a longitudinal approach. This study starts in 1850 when the democratization and feminization of long-distance migration to Antwerp and Brussels had not yet taken place and ends in 1910 when servant migration to both cities reached

⁶⁰ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 175-208.

⁶¹ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 74.

⁶² Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 175-208.

its first peak. The period in between 1850 and 1910 was characterized by a number of changes for which the effects on servant migration are often assumed but rarely studied in detail.

The establishment of new international railway connections and the centrality of both cities within this transport network facilitated the enlargement of the hinterland and the interurban network of these cities.⁶³ The fact that both cities profited from both the commercialization of the global economy and the success of Belgian industry, as well as being increasingly densely populated,⁶⁴ also contributed to this enlargement which may have facilitated migration from more distant regions. Increased servant migration may also have partly been the result of the severe impact of the agricultural crisis around 1880 on some rural regions.⁶⁵ This crisis was caused by cheap American agricultural imports and may have strengthened the effects of overpopulation, de-industrialization, and agricultural specialization in the countryside and, as such, pushed many young rural women from these regions to booming cities such as Antwerp and Brussels.

Some historians working on domestic service in other countries, have demonstrated how newspaper advertisements became increasingly important in the domestic service labour market from the 1870s onwards,⁶⁶ and how several international philanthropic associations were established some years later which focussed specifically on supporting migrating servants.⁶⁷ Were these advertisements and philanthropic associations responsible for the increasing long-distance servant migration to Antwerp and Brussels, or were foreign servants mostly recruited by the growing number of wealthy compatriots? Changes in the role and importance of different actors in the migration infrastructure and the impact of these changes on servant migration have not yet been addressed in detail by historians of nineteenth-century domestic service and are the central focus of several chapters in this study.

⁶³ Van der Herten, *België onder Stoom*; De Block, 'Designing the nation', 703-732.

⁶⁴ Veraghtert, 'From inland port', 274-422; Billen, 'Sociaal-economische structurering', 111-120; Devos and Van Rossem, 'Urban Health Penalties', 74-109.

⁶⁵ Chalmes and Bossaert, *Histoire*; Schrover, 'The demographic consequences', 451-480; Langeweg, *Mijnbouw*; Segers, 'Economic clusters', 91-118; Verbruggen and Greefs, 'Foreign domestic servants', 173-194.

⁶⁶ Schrover, 'Hidden Professions', 167-181; McBride, *Domestic Service*, 77; Martin-Fugier, *La Place*, 46; Higgs, *Domestic Servants*, 165-204.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

Comparison between two cities

Finally, the different function of Antwerp and Brussels, the former as a commercial international port city and the latter a capital city with a mixed economy may also have had an impact on servant migration to these cities. First, the composition of the cities' elite and middle classes was different due to the specific positions of the two cities within the Belgian economy. Antwerp was a city of traders, businessmen, and clerks who profited from the commercial opportunities offered by the city's thriving port.⁶⁸ The definitive breakthrough of Antwerp as an international commercial hub took place in the 1860s but the revival of the port had already taken off in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹

Brussels was the administrative, political, and financial centre of a rapidly industrializing nation and also aimed to be the residential centre for the Belgian and European nobility as well as the political and financial elite by investing in a thriving cultural sector, wide promenades and opulent shopping arcades such as the famous *Galeries Saint-Hubert* (Illustration 3).⁷⁰ The presence of this elite generated opportunities for retailers, the hotel and catering industry, and producers of luxury goods. In addition to those from the middle-classes who were active in these sectors, many were civil servants in the capital who worked for the Belgian state.⁷¹ Neither city is well known for its industrial activities which were nevertheless important for the urban economy. In Antwerp port-related industries flourished, such as sugar refineries, the metallurgical, diamond and later also the chemical industries.⁷² These industries attracted industrial entrepreneurs, engineers, and diamond merchants to Antwerp. Brussels' city region (extending beyond the limited territory of the city of Brussels) also featured much industrial activity such as heavy industry in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, textile and food industries in Anderlecht, and varied small-scale industrial production in Brussels, Koekelberg, and

⁶⁸ Veraghtert, 'From inland port', 274-422; Devos, 'German Ocean Shipping', 217-227; Devos and Greefs, 'The German presence', 105-128; Devos and Greefs, 'German traders', 452-454; Greefs, 'De terugkeer van Mercurius', 55-86; Greefs, *Zakenlieden*; Devos and Van Damme, *In de ban*; Greefs and Van Damme, *In behouden haven*.

⁶⁹ Veraghtert, *De havenbeweging*; Idem, 'From inland port', 274-422; De Kesel, 'Structurele ontwikkeling', 124-168; Jeuninckx, 'De havenbeweging in de Franse en Hollandse periode', 94-123.

⁷⁰ Billen, 'Sociaal-economische structurering', 118-120 and 126-139; Jaumain, 'L'image de Bruxelles', 155; Schaepdrijver, *Elites*; Brogniez, Debroux, Le Maire, 'The Rise of a Small Cultural Capital', 129-157; Cassis, *Capitals of Capital*, 33, 68-69, 125-126; Kurgan van Hentenryk, 'Economie en vervoer', 222.

⁷¹ Schaepdrijver, *Elites*, 37-46; Scholliers, 'The Diffusion of the Restaurant Culture', 45-68; Billen, 'Sociaal-economische structurering', 111-114.

⁷² Veraghtert, 'From inland port', 387-393; Hofmeester, 'Shifting trajectories', 42-49.

Laken.⁷³ As such, Brussels also provided opportunities for industrial entrepreneurs and craftsmen.

As it was the elite and the middle-classes who employed the servant population, their profile, financial capital, and preferences may have had a significant impact on the demand for domestic servants, their working conditions, and remuneration. Existing research on the (Belgian) domestic service labour market does not provide much detailed information in this respect but it seems plausible that, for example, the needs and expectations of a noble family with regard to their domestic staff differed from those of a business family in terms of the number of staff required and the profiles they were looking for.

Second, the orientation of the international network of Antwerp and Brussels also differed due to their different functions. While Antwerp developed especially dense economic interactions with the German Rhine area and with other commercial cities in Europe and beyond,⁷⁴ the interurban network of Brussels was oriented more towards other European capital cities and financial centres, particularly Paris.⁷⁵ This had important ramifications for the international migration fields of both cities. For example, Antwerp was characterized by the presence of a German ‘colony’, which consisted of traders and businessmen but also of clerks and domestic servants, who each established their own associations, churches, and schools.⁷⁶ The presence of this German elite and their organizations may have resulted in an increasing demand for German household staff and the availability of various channels of information and support for these German servants which other foreign women might have lacked. Finally, the role of Antwerp as a commercial port city and Brussels as a capital city also led to differences in the policies developed with regard to international migration and the domestic service labour market. These differences and their impact on servant migration are discussed in detail in the first chapter of this dissertation.

⁷³ Billen, ‘Sociaal-economische structurering’, 111-114.

⁷⁴ Devos, ‘German Ocean Shipping’, 217-227; Devos and Greefs, ‘The German presence’, 105-128; Devos and Greefs, ‘German traders’, 452-454; Greefs, ‘De terugkeer van Mercurius’, 55-86; Greefs, *Zakenlieden*.

⁷⁵ Cassis, *Capitals of Capital*, 33, 41, 68-69, 125-126; Scholliers, ‘The Diffusion of the Restaurant Culture’, 45-68.

⁷⁶ Devos and Greefs, ‘The German presence’, 105-128; Devos and Greefs, ‘German traders’, 452-454; Greefs, ‘De terugkeer van Mercurius’, 55-86; Greefs, *Zakenlieden*; Greefs, ‘Clubs as vehicles’, 375-395.

Illustration 2 Antwerp from the left bank (1889)



Source: FAA, FOTO-GF#107.

Illustration 3 Galeries Saint-Hubert, Brussels (ca. 1900)



Source: AVB, Galeries Saint-Hubert, Bruxelles [Galerie de la Reine, vue intérieure vers la rue des Bouchers et la galerie du Roi ; noir et blanc ; 1 carte postale], ca 1900, ASB W-9453.

Methodology and structure

More specifically, the first chapter addresses the registration of domestic servants in Antwerp and Brussels and the monitoring practices of the local and national authorities regarding domestic servants and foreign domestics in particular. It discusses definitions of domestic servants and foreigners, provides an overview of the number of registered (foreign) servants in both cities and their share of the total population, before analysing the monitoring practices of local and national authorities as well as their interaction with other dimensions of the migration infrastructure and how this might have influenced servant migration. The reason why the focus in the first chapter is on the registration and monitoring practices of the local and national authorities is not because the latter are considered the most dominant actors in the servants' migration and settlement process, but rather because provide much of the source material used in this dissertation. An appropriate interpretation of foreigners' files or population registers requires a good understanding of the registration and monitoring practices in both cities. It needs to be emphasized, however, that this chapter not only addresses the production of sources by the authorities but also introduces and evaluates the latter as actors within the migration infrastructure. Much of the Belgian historiography on international migration in the second half of the nineteenth century focuses on the policies of the central state and more recently on the implementation of these policies by the local authorities.⁷⁷ Less attention has been paid to the dependency of local and national administrations on the active participation of non-governmental actors in the implementation of migration policies and on the attitude of the authorities towards female foreigners and domestic servants in particular. The *bulletins de renseignements*, the correspondence between the national and local administrations, as well as the police reports which are all included in the individual foreigners' files, provide significant information on these and related issues.⁷⁸

The following chapter compares the expansion of the international recruitment area for domestic servants of Antwerp and Brussels, discusses the developments of the main migration

⁷⁷ Caestecker, *Alien Policy*; Debackere, 'Tussen stad'; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid'; Greefs and Winter (eds.), *Migration Policies*; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 39-43; Coupain, 'L'expulsion', 5-48; Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210.

⁷⁸ B. Willems et al., *Migratiegeschiedenis*; Caestecker, *Alien Policy*; Coupain, 'L'expulsion', 5-48; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 209-292; Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 233-294; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 39-43; Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210; Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 64-65.

circuits, and analyses the individual characteristics of the servants being studied. The *bulletins de renseignements* in the local foreigners' files are the main sources for this chapter. An existing database created earlier, contains all data from the *bulletins* of foreigners who arrived in 1850 and 1880 in one of these cities.⁷⁹ Within the context of this project, all foreigners who moved to Antwerp in 1910 and all foreign domestic servants who migrated to Brussels in the same year, were added to this database. The result is a total sample of 1627 foreign female domestic servants spread over three sample years. The birth places and previous places of residence of these servants have been processed via GIS-software in order to reconstruct developments in the migration circuits within which foreign domestics moved towards Antwerp and Brussels during the three sample years.

These years have certainly not been chosen at random. The foreigners' files were introduced in 1840 but it probably took local and national administrations some time to adequately implement this registration practice.⁸⁰ Moreover, existing research indicates that in 1850 the international recruitment area of both cities still resembled that of the preceding period. The potato crisis apparently did not have a major impact on international migration circuits to Belgian cities.⁸¹ By 1880, the recruitment areas of Antwerp and Brussels had expanded significantly. However, the number of domestic servants in both cities had not yet reached its peak. Furthermore, there were not yet any philanthropic associations which focussed explicitly on domestic servants. To take the role of these philanthropic associations into account and to address a potential further expansion of the recruitment area for domestic servants after 1880, the year 1910 has also been included in the analysis.

Of course, the decision to work with three sample years has a number of implications. As the foreigners' files are structured chronologically in the archives, it would also have been possible to include every foreigner who arrived in a certain month or every tenth file for example so that a larger number of years could be analysed. However, the advantage of working with sample years instead of other sampling methods is that it enables the density of each migration circuit to be measured, provides data on a significant number of servants or

⁷⁹ This database was constructed under the supervision of Hilde Greefs and Anne Winter. More information on this database: Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 64-65; Debackere, 'Tussen Stad', 40; Coppens, 'Tussen Beleid', 149.

⁸⁰ B. Willems et al., *Migratiegeschiedenis*; Caestecker, *Alien Policy*; Coupain, 'L'expulsion', 5-48; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 209-292; Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 233-294; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 39-43; Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210; Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 64-65.

⁸¹ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 175-208.

other occupational groups who arrived in the same year and thus in a similar context, and avoids the risk of overlooking small minorities within the foreign population. A significant disadvantage, however, is that it is difficult to make a distinction between short- and long-term developments. For example, the arrival of a large number of foreigners from a certain region may be a reaction to a temporary crisis and as such, be typical for the sample year but not for a longer period. As the difference between short- and long-term developments is not always clear from the data, it is of the utmost importance to have a good understanding of the push and pull factors behind the developments of the most significant migration circuits being analysed and the individual characteristics of the foreign domestics. This requires the inclusion of insights from the existing literature (however scarce) on the migration circuits and regions of origin of the servants but also a study of the profiles of the foreign domestic servants on the basis of the data from the *bulletins de renseignement*. Such an analysis also enables the identification of differences among servants who moved within different migration circuits.

Variations in the profiles of servants may also have resulted in different working conditions, functions, and wage levels. These elements are addressed in the third chapter of this dissertation. The individual foreigners' files sometimes provide information about the remuneration and functions of the servants but do not enable the working environment to be studied. A database has therefore been created which contains data on the composition of the households where the foreign domestics lived and worked. These data has been found in the population books of both cities. An important limitation of this source is that foreign servants were not yet registered consistently in the population books in 1850. Fortunately, the database on the Antwerp foreigners' files also contains data on foreign servants who arrived in the city in 1860. However, for Brussels, information could only be gathered for the sample years 1880 and 1910.

Reconstructing the composition of households via the population books is a time-consuming process which could only be carried out for a sample of foreign domestic servants. Servants were selected on the basis of the distance they had travelled, the density of the circuit within which they moved, and the existence or not, of a long-standing and strong migration tradition. This methodology allows a comparison to be made between different types of migration circuits which is one of the main aims of this dissertation.

The composition of the household and profile of the head of the household which can be derived from the population books, provides indications about the wealth of the family, the number of colleagues of the servant in question, the number of children they had, which are all indicators of any particular servant's workload. The results of this analysis may reveal significant differences among the servants and migration circuits under study. These differences could be the result of variations in work experience or the use of different information channels.

These information channels are at the centre of the following two chapters which focus on the actors at the meso level of the migration process. The fourth chapter compares the use of social networks by the servants belonging to one of the migration circuits under study. As mentioned above, hypotheses concerning the use of social networks by domestic servants remain largely untested and few researchers make a comparison between regional hinterland and long-distance migrants. By comparing different types of migration circuits and not limiting the analysis to a few individuals only, this chapter allows for a more complex understanding of the use of social networks by domestic servants. A differentiation is made between vertical ties with employers, horizontal ties with colleagues, and contacts with relatives who had lived or were living in Antwerp or Brussels. The birth places and previous places of residence of the colleagues and employers which can be found in the population books, are used as indicators for pre-existing contacts between them and the servant under study. The index of the foreigners' files informs us about the presence of relatives at the place of destination.

The remaining dimensions of the migration infrastructure that need to be addressed are both the commercial and humanitarian dimensions. Studies on nineteenth-century domestic service and migration regularly reflect on the negative perception other actors had of placement agencies and newspaper advertisements. Although they discuss the motivations behind the establishment of non-profit driven intermediaries at the end of the nineteenth century, they mostly ignore their intermediary role in both the migration and settlement process of domestics.⁸² The fifth chapter examines the extent to which these formal intermediaries were important channels of information and support for the foreign servants being studied here, while also addressing the interaction between these actors and the other dimensions of the

⁸² On the negative perception see for example: Martin-Fugier, *La Place*, 60-62; Piette, *Domestiques*, 153-154 and 414-418.

migration infrastructure and how this interaction affected the lives of servants. A variety of different sources is used for this purpose such as newspaper advertisements, address books, and the archives of a philanthropic association.

This final chapter is followed by the conclusion which summarizes the main findings of this dissertation, reflects on the contribution of this study to the literature on nineteenth-century migration and domestic service, and discusses the questions and hypotheses which arise from the results and which may inspire further research. Most attention is paid to changes over time and the comparison between the different types of migration circuits and the migration infrastructure in the two destination cities. These three levels of analysis return in each chapter of the dissertation.

1 REGISTRATION AND MONITORING

This chapter analyses the registration and monitoring of foreign domestic servants by the local authorities of Antwerp and Brussels and the *Sûreté Publique* (SP) at the national level. The aim is to compare the developments of the policies of these authorities, analyse the instruments they used to implement these policies, and discuss differences between Antwerp and Brussels and whether or not the registration and monitoring practices affected foreign domestic servants differently from the rest of the population. Furthermore, elaborating on the context within which much of the source material used in this dissertation was produced, is also a necessary precondition to interpret these sources in an appropriate manner.

The focus on registration and monitoring of foreign domestic servants by local and national administration ties in with two different strands of research. The existing literature on domestic service has focused more on legislation than on the implementation of regulations and development of policies by local and national administrations.⁸³ Studies on the impact of the registration and monitoring of servants by both state and city authorities on servant mobility are scarce. The literature on nineteenth-century migration policies is more extensive.⁸⁴ While early research applied a top-down perspective with a focus on the development of ‘national’ migration regulations as a result of the emergence and ambitions of the ‘modern nation-state’,⁸⁵ recent studies have grown more attentive to the role of local authorities in the implementation and interpretation of these regulations and highlight the long-term genealogy and entanglement of national and local migration policies.⁸⁶

This recent strand of research – inspired by Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’ – has also focused increasingly on the technologies, materialities, and practices of migration policies in nineteenth-century Europe.⁸⁷ While much of this research analyses the policies regarding (international) migrants in general or refugees or expellees in particular, this chapter

⁸³ See amongst others: Sogner, ‘The Legal Status’, 175-188; Martin Casares, ‘Domestic Service’, 189-210; Nagata, ‘Domestic Service’, 211-234; Sarti, ‘Freedom and Citizenship’, 127-164.

⁸⁴ See amongst others: Timmer and Williamson, ‘Immigration Policy’, 739-771; Noiriël, ‘Surveiller’, 77-100; Leenders, *Ongenode gasten*; Reinecke, ‘Governing Aliens’, 39-65; Feldman, ‘Migrants’, 79-104; Caestecker, *Alien Policy*; Debackere, ‘Tussen stad’; Coppens, ‘Tussen beleid’; Greefs and Winter (eds.), *Migration Policies*; Coppens and Debackere, ‘De toepassing’, 12-45.

⁸⁵ Noiriël, ‘Surveiller’, 77-100; Leenders, *Ongenode gasten*; Reinecke, ‘Governing Aliens’, 39-45; Feldman, ‘Migrants’, 79-104; Caestecker, *Alien Policy*.

⁸⁶ Lucassen, ‘Cities’, 217-240; Debackere, ‘Tussen stad’; Coppens, ‘Tussen beleid’; Coppens and Debackere, ‘De toepassing’, 12-45; Greefs and Winter (eds.), *Migration Policies*.

⁸⁷ Foucault, ‘Governmentality’, 87-216; Greefs and Winter, ‘Introduction’, 6-7.

brings the perspective of a specific but significant female occupational group among international migrants in nineteenth-century Europe. Moreover, the role of non-governmental actors in the development and implementation of migration policies is also addressed, an aspect that often remains overlooked in the existing literature on this subject.

The first section of this chapter discusses the criteria used by the authorities during this period to determine who was to be considered a foreigner and addresses the development of definitions of domestic service. This is followed by an overview of the development of the number of servants registered in Antwerp and Brussels in the second half of the long nineteenth century. Thereafter, the attempts of local and national authorities to monitor the mobility of servants and foreign servants in particular are addressed with specific attention to changes over time and to the instruments used by the authorities to do this. The subsequent sections focus on: the documents carried by foreign domestic servants to prove their identity, how authorities dealt with unwanted foreign women, and the interaction between the regulatory dimension and the other dimensions of the migration infrastructure.

Foreigners and domestic servants: definitions

After Belgian independence, the Belgian state designed a legal framework regarding citizenship and migration to which local communities had to adhere even though it was also vague and open to interpretation.⁸⁸ Belgian citizenship was determined by the father's nationality, regardless of the individual's birthplace (*jus sanguinis*). Those who were born on Belgian soil but whose parents were foreigners were free to choose whether or not to acquire Belgian citizenship when they reached adulthood. Any foreign woman who married a Belgian man automatically acquired Belgian citizenship. However, if her husband died or she left Belgian territory for her country of birth she lost her right to Belgian citizenship. When a foreign man married a Belgian woman, he remained a foreigner and his wife acquired his nationality. Finally, there was also a naturalization procedure, but this was rather expensive and as such of no interest to foreign women who were or had been domestic servants. In theory, anyone who did not possess Belgian citizenship was considered a foreigner, however, in practice, administrations went by the place of birth on the documentation they carried as an

⁸⁸ Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 81-83; Coupain, 'L'expulsion', 37; Caestecker, *Alien policy*, 15.

indicator as they did not mention their nationality. If an individual was born abroad but had Belgian citizenship he or she had to provide the necessary documents to prove this.

In many respects, foreigners in Belgium had the same rights and obligations as Belgians did.⁸⁹ They were able to bring a case before the Belgian courts, open a business, acquire property rights, marry, and had freedom of worship, to gather peacefully, to submit petitions. The most significant restriction on the rights of foreigners concerned the legislation on expulsions.⁹⁰ In order to expel resident foreigners, a rather rigorous procedure had to be followed which involved a Royal Decree even though the existing legislation did not stipulate clearly who was to be considered a resident foreigner. This ambiguity gave the authorities a great deal of room for manoeuvre. Furthermore, the legislation stipulated that a non-resident foreigner could be expelled when he or she disrupted public order although what was precisely meant by the latter was again not clarified. Much of the legislation on expulsions was thus left open to interpretation and granted the authorities a great deal of autonomy with regard to their alien policies.⁹¹

In the case of female servants, it was almost always clear who should be considered Belgian or a foreigner, whereas contemporaries and historians had and have many more problems in determining who should be identified as a servant. Throughout the centuries, definitions of service and domestic service changed and old definitions co-existed with new ones creating much confusion among administrators, policy-makers, the press, employers, and servants themselves.⁹² In the early modern period, a wide range of professionals belonged to the servant class such as book keepers, tutors, and secretaries. Many prominent figures in early modern society also presented themselves as servants such as the pope, noblemen, or kings.

However, in the years leading up to the French Revolution, servitude became increasingly problematic.⁹³ Values of servitude contrasted greatly with new ideas of freedom and equality. According to Raffaella Sarti, this resulted in a stigmatization of domestic servants.⁹⁴ 'They were not considered worthy of being free and independent citizens and were excluded from the franchise in all the French Constitutions except that of 1793, never

⁸⁹ Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 92-93.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 93.

⁹¹ Debackere, 'Tussen stad'; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid'; Feys, , 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210.

⁹² Sarti, 'Who are servants?', 3-59.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 9-16.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

enforced'.⁹⁵ With this exclusion came the problem of determining who was in fact a servant. Upper-class servants such as book keepers, secretaries, clerks, librarians or tutors who were previously often considered to be servants, were now excluded from the servant class. At the same time, 'certain functions typically performed by male servants simply died out' while 'the decreasing economic role of the household as a unit of production' and 'the development of new job opportunities thanks to industrialisation' drove many men out of domestic service.⁹⁶ As a result of these developments, many historians have observed a so-called feminization of domestic service while in reality female servants did not so much take over functions previously performed by men as continued to clean, wash, cook, and take care of the children as they had always done.⁹⁷ The demand for the latter type of servants, however, grew exponentially during the nineteenth century due to the growth of the urban middle classes whilst the male servant gradually disappeared.⁹⁸

Nonetheless, nineteenth-century population censuses are often unclear about who is considered a domestic servant. In Belgium, for example, the term *servante* or *meid* is used not only for live-in domestic servants but sometimes for waitresses, hotel workers, and other female workers as well.⁹⁹ Fortunately, the occupations of co-residents that are provided in the population registers often clarify whether a *servante* should be identified as a live-in domestic servant or a waitress for example. This dissertation focuses mostly on live-in domestic servants or servants who lived and worked in private households and did not perform any activities as a waitresses or shop assistant. This definition excludes several women who may have been considered domestic servants by contemporaries but it enables a research group to be selected on more or less objective grounds through the information in the population registers. A more detailed discussion regarding this issue is included in the third chapter.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 10.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 19.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, 16-21.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters, MA-BZA-B#83-MA-BZA-B#694 and 378#1-378#1385 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population. About the identification of domestic servants in censuses in England see amongst others: Higgs, *Domestic Servants and Households*, 26-50.

The registered servant population in Antwerp and Brussels: an overview

The prosperity of the urban middle and upper classes caused a growing demand for domestics in Antwerp and Brussels. Table 3 and 4 show that the total number of (male and female) domestic servants in both cities increased steadily between the middle and the end of the long nineteenth century. In Antwerp, however, this demand did not keep up with the population figures in Antwerp in general which grew spectacularly (Table 3). This can partly be linked to ‘the growth of employment opportunities in the male labour market’ which had caused a clear masculinization of the urban population in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰ In 1796, there were 69 men for every 100 women, by 1830 this had risen to 77, and by 1880 even to 95, stabilizing in the subsequent years somewhere between 90 and 95.¹⁰¹ In relation to the total population, domestic service, therefore became less important in the Belgian port city, even though there was a clear increase in demand in absolute numbers and many young women continued to arrive in Antwerp to work as domestic servants.

The growth figures of the servant population in Brussels were similar to that of Antwerp, but the general population of the capital did not increase to the same extent as that of the port city (Table 4). Most of the population growth in the capital region occurred in the border communities and not in Brussels which was already very densely populated and limited in size. In absolute numbers, there were more domestic servants living in the capital than in Antwerp, with an increase from 7,598 servants in 1846 to 16,989 in 1910. Over the same time span, the population of the capital became feminized as the sex ratio diminished from 92 to 82 due to a predominance of women among migrants. Many of these women found positions as domestic servants or worked in other sectors such as the hotel and catering, retail, or entertainment industries.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Winter, *Migrants*, 130.

¹⁰¹ Table 1 and Winter, *Migrants*, 130.

¹⁰² Chapter 2.

Table 3 Number of domestics in Antwerp in relation to the total population and the sex ratio of the city (1866-1910)

Year	Domestics	Population	Increase domestics index (1866=100)	Population increase (index 1866=100)	Sex ratio
1866	5648	117269	100	100	89
1880	6933	169112	123	144	95
1890	8255	224012	146	191	93
1900	9124	272831	162	233	91
1910	11382	301766	202	257	91

Source: *Gemeentebld der stad Antwerpen*, Stad Antwerpen, 1867-1911.

Table 4 Number of domestics in Brussels in relation to the total population and the sex ratio of the city (1846-1910)

Year	Domestics	Population	Increase domestics index (1846=100)	Population increase (index 1846=100)	Sex ratio
1846	7598	118239	100	100	92
1900	12157	183686	160	155	/
1910	16989	177078	224	150	81

Source: Piette, *Domestiques*, 53-62; *Gemeentebld 1911*, Stad Brussel, 411; De Belder, 'socio-professionele structuren', 232.

In general, the domestic service labour market was one in which migrant women were strongly represented.¹⁰³ In contrast to most local women, they were prepared to work and live in the city's middle and upper-classes private households. The great majority of these migrant women were Belgians from the regional hinterland of Antwerp and Brussels. However, as shown in table 5, there were also an increasing number of foreign female domestic servants in both cities. It is important to note that while the data tables 3 and 4 are based on census and tax data and refer to the number of servants (broadly defined) who resided in Antwerp and Brussels, the data in table 5 are based on a database of individual foreigners' files (explained in detail in the next chapter) and refer to the number of foreign female domestic servants who arrived annually in these cities. As such, it is not possible to calculate the proportion of foreign women among the servant population based on these data, nevertheless they do indicate that it never exceeded 10 percent in either city.

Table 5 Number of foreigners, single foreigners, single female foreigners, and foreign domestics arriving in Antwerp and Brussels in 1850, 1880 and 1910

	Antwerp			Brussels		
	1850	1880	1910	1850	1880	1910
Number of foreigner files	661	1663	4024	1481	2469	6000 (+/-)
Single foreigners	566	1277	2909	1162	1900	Unknown
Single female foreigners	188	604	892	291	659	Unknown
Single foreign female domestics	146	347	408	105	245	314
% domestics among sing. fem. foreigners	78	57	46	36	37	Unknown

Source: Database foreigner files (1850-1910).

¹⁰³ Van Goethem, 'Dienen in de stad Antwerpen', 9-39; De Langhe, 'Rural single female migrants', 39-60; Matthys, *Sex and the City*; Piette, *Domestiques*; De Maeyer et al., *Upstairs*; De Keyzer, "Madame est servie".

Although they were a minority within the total servant population, foreign domestics were the most prominent occupational group among foreign women in both Antwerp and Brussels. The number of foreign female servants arriving annually in both the port and capital city between 1850 and 1910 increased from 146 to 408 and 105 to 314 respectively (Table 5). In Brussels, their proportion within the total group of single foreign women increased slightly from 36 to 37 percent between 1850 and 1880. In Antwerp, it decreased from 78 percent in 1850 to 57 and 46 per cent in 1880 and 1910. Nonetheless, domestic service continued to offer the most employment opportunities to foreign women. Prostitution was also a significant sector for foreign women, but only in 1880 were these women included consistently in the foreigner files. In that year, there were 148 prostitutes or 25 percent of the total group of single female foreigners in Antwerp and 147 or 22 percent in the Belgian capital, a difference of respectively 32 and 15 percent with domestic servants.¹⁰⁴ Alternative employment opportunities for unskilled migrant women were to be found in the hotel and catering industries, the entertainment industry, and petty trade.¹⁰⁵ Overall, the demand for foreign labour in these sectors was higher in the capital than in the port city, but none of these sectors employed numbers of foreign women on a par with the sex industry and the domestic service labour market.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, women had been a minority within the total group of foreign immigrants in Antwerp and Brussels. This had barely changed by 1850, although afterwards, the proportion of women among single foreigners increased significantly. Greefs and Winter link this feminization to a general democratization of Antwerp's international migration field.¹⁰⁶ Foreign women – especially foreign domestic servants – would have been pioneers of the democratization of long-distance migration towards the Belgian port city. In Brussels this feminization was less pronounced although there was also a clear increase in the number of foreign domestic servants (Table 5). After 1880, the recruitment area of Antwerp was characterized by a reverse trend, a masculinization. During the final decades of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, there was a strong increase in the number of migrants from Eastern Europe, among whom were many Jews. The integration of this population into Belgian society has been studied quite extensively but there are few studies

¹⁰⁴ Database foreigners' files Antwerp, 1850-1910 and Database foreigners' files Brussels, 1850-1910.

¹⁰⁵ Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁶ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80.

that focus specifically on their migration movements.¹⁰⁷ It seems that there were few single women within this group who migrated to Antwerp on their own but further research is necessary to substantiate this hypothesis. The major growth in the total number of foreigners in Brussels and the limited increase in the number of female domestics among these foreigners suggests a similar evolution to that of Antwerp.

How to monitor the floating servant population?

The sources on which the data mentioned in the previous section are based, are all the result of the administrative diligence of the local authorities of Antwerp and Brussels and their attempts to monitor the urban population's mobility. From early on, domestic servants were of particular interest because of their high mobility rates and perceived links between domestic service on the one hand, and vagrancy and prostitution on the other. On 25 September 1813, a Napoleonic decree obliged all individuals who wanted to be employed as domestic servants in a city of more than 50,000 inhabitants to register themselves at the local police office.¹⁰⁸ After their registration prospective servants would receive a *livret de domestique*. This employment record book provides some biographical information such as name, age, previous place of residence as well as their date of arrival in the city and the name and address of their employer.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the employer of the servant was invited to write down his comments about the servant in his or her employment record book when he or she left the household.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, only a few of these *livrets* have survived. With the employment record book system, the French regime aimed to give employers more control over their domestics. It was the state's response to the complaints of employers concerning the general behaviour of their servants and particularly their propensity to change positions frequently.¹¹¹ In order to make sure the system functioned efficiently, employers were expected only to hire servants who had

¹⁰⁷ See amongst others: Vanden Daelen, *Laten we hun lied*; Saerens, *Vreemdelingen*; Schreiber, *L'immigration juive*; Stamberger, 'Zionist pioneers', 67-104.

¹⁰⁸ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Algemene Dossiers, 1794-1914, I 160, 112, *Police des domestiques*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem* and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, *Arbeidersboekjes*, 731#1997.

¹¹⁰ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Algemene Dossiers, 1794-1914, I 160, 112, *Police des domestiques* and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, *Arbeidersboekjes*, 731#1997.

¹¹¹ McBride, *The domestic revolution*, 70; Piette, *Domestiques*, 65-94.

received an employment record book from the local police. If a servant did not register, he or she risked a prison sentence from anything between eight days up to three months.¹¹² There was no punishment for the employer included in the decree. If a domestic was not able to find a position within a month, he or she had to leave the city or was to be treated as a vagrant.¹¹³

These regulations seem to have served three main purposes: to provide employers with more information about previous behaviour of the servants they hired, to reduce the rate of turnover of positions by domestics, and to limit servant migration which – according to some contemporaries – often led to vagrancy and other forms of criminality, once they became unemployed. No proof has been found which confirms or even suggests a strong link between servant mobility and vagrancy, yet it was a recurrent theme in nineteenth-century discussions about the domestic service labour market.

Clearly this fixation with monitoring the movements and activities of domestics by the Napoleonic regime fits perfectly within the broader ‘registration offensive’ during the (post)-revolutionary period.¹¹⁴ Population registers, civil status certificates, registers of passports, hotel and visa registers, and registers of residence cards were all introduced under French rule in Antwerp and Brussels. These general registers were deemed insufficient for some groups in society and supplementary measures were therefore taken. Day labourers, for example, also had to register themselves at the local administration offices after which they received an employment record book which was very similar to that of the domestics. Some of these registration practices resemble earlier administrative procedures from the early modern period, but the variety of registers and the administrative ambitions of the state clearly increased during this period.¹¹⁵

For the implementation of the employment record book system, the French regime had to rely entirely on the local administration of the major cities of the French Empire. Within this context, the attitude of the city of Antwerp towards the new regulations contrasts markedly with that of the city of Brussels. While the former was reluctant to implement the regulations, the latter did so with much enthusiasm. The local police in Brussels had already established an

¹¹² ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Algemene Dossiers, 1794-1914, I 160, 112, *Police des domestiques* and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, *Arbeidersboekjes*, 731#1997.

¹¹³ Piette, *Domestiques*, 69.

¹¹⁴ Winter, *Migrants*, 62.

¹¹⁵ See amongst others: De Munck and Winter, *Gated Communities*.

official placement agency for domestics in 1804 after employers had complained that it was impossible to verify the morality of servants before hiring them.¹¹⁶ The aim was to collect information about their past behaviour and put an end to the abuses by private placement agencies who – according to some – were profiting from the high rates of servant mobility. Rauter, an employee of the local police who already managed the official placement agency for day labourers, also took charge of the agency for domestics.¹¹⁷ Employers were obliged to only recruit domestics who had registered themselves at the official placement agency.

However, the agency did not fulfil the expectations of the police authorities. It turned out that the new regulations were difficult to impose on both servants and their employers. The latter were blamed for this. Although employers had asked local authorities to take measures against the immoral behaviour of the domestics in the city, they showed no interest in adhering to the proposed measures.¹¹⁸ It was within this context that the Napoleonic decrees were welcomed in Brussels as an interesting addition to existing local policies. Rauter was also asked to lead the new *police des domestiques* and thus became responsible for the registration of domestics and the delivery of the employment record books. In a letter to the mayor, Rauter states that thanks to the new imperial regulations, ‘we would be able to quickly eradicate the evil *à la racine*’.¹¹⁹ Despite Rauter’s claims, the criticism on the policies of the Brussels police concerning domestics only increased from this moment onwards.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, private placement agencies continued to flourish.

Under Dutch rule, the city of Brussels continued its policy concerning the registration and surveillance of its floating servant population.¹²¹ Rauter continued to run both the *police des domestiques* and the official placement agency. However, he was increasingly criticized for his domineering character and was even suspected of profiting from the financial gains of the agency. In 1818, Rauter’s office was closed and the activities of the *police des domestiques* and the *police des ouvriers* was passed over to the general police and stationed in the city hall.

¹¹⁶ Piette, *domestiques*, 73-74.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 73 : ‘Ils manifestent une indifférence coupable à l’égard des mesures proposées’.

¹¹⁹ AVB, Fonds Police, Pol. 773, *Lettre adressée par Rauter au Maire de la ville de Bruxelles du 9 avril 1812* : ‘On parviendrait promptement à extirper le mal jusqu’à la racine’

¹²⁰ Piette, *Domestiques*, 74.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, 74-76.

Meanwhile, the city of Antwerp showed no interest in implementing the French regulations. There are no traces to be found in the Antwerp city archives of any kind of implementation of the *police des domestiques*. At the end of 1815, the city of Antwerp received a letter from the governor of the province in which the latter complained that the port city had not yet implemented the laws concerning the *livrets des ouvriers*.¹²² There was no mentioning of the *livrets des domestiques* but this complaint indicates that Antwerp may have been reluctant to implement these types of decrees.

In 1839, the Belgian *Sûreté publique* (SP) aimed to rethink the surveillance of domestics and day labourers and intended to develop a nationwide policy based on the Napoleonic decrees.¹²³ The *police des ouvriers* was eventually implemented in all major Belgian cities (including Antwerp) but the development of a general policy towards the *police des domestiques* proved to be far more difficult for the SP. In response to a letter from the SP concerning the *police des domestiques*, the mayor and aldermen of Antwerp, for example, claimed the following:

‘In this city, we have never implemented any of the measures prescribed by the imperial decree of October 3, 1810 with regard to individuals of one sex or the other entering into domestic service. In addition we wish to point out to your Honour that we see neither the necessity nor the usefulness of this decree for this city, and we wish that things be left here in their present state.’¹²⁴

The Antwerp administration was clearly not interested in implementing the Napoleonic decrees. In a letter to the governor of the province of Antwerp, the Antwerp administration explained that it had serious doubts about the effectiveness of the employment record book system for domestics.¹²⁵ Ghent simply wanted to continue its existing policies which were

¹²² SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, *Arbeidersboekjes*, 731#1997.

¹²³ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Algemene Dossiers, 1794-1914, I 160, 112, *Police des domestiques*.

¹²⁴ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Algemene Dossiers, 1794-1914, I 160, 112, *Police des domestiques*, date: 03/05/1839. Translation of: ‘*On n’a jamais exécuté en cette ville aucune des mesures de police prescrites par le décret impérial du 3 8bre 1810 à l’égard des personnes de de l’un et de l’autre sexe qui prendraient service comme domestiques. Nous ajouterons, Monsieur l’administrateur, que nous ne voyons nullement pour cette ville la nécessité ni l’utilité de ce décret, et nous désirons que les choses soient laissées ici dans l’état actuel.*’

¹²⁵ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, *Arbeidersboekjes*, 731#1997.

based on the imperial regulations. Brussels and Liège however asked for new measures to enhance the control over domestics in the country.¹²⁶ The dependency of the national government on the support of the local authorities, the lack of consensus among the latter, and some technical judicial difficulties, made it very difficult for the SP to arrive at any single conclusion. Ultimately, it decided to leave it up to the various communities themselves as to how they would deal with their servant population. According to Piette, ‘this decision put an end to direct intervention by the central authorities with regard to the *police des domestiques*’.¹²⁷

While Antwerp did not take any measures, the Brussels’ administration continued to distribute the employment record books which were mandatory for every domestic in the city. The regulations concerning the *police des domestiques* were described in each employment record book.¹²⁸ It was stipulated that every domestic in the capital had to present themselves at the city hall with a certificate from his or her master and a document which confirmed their age and place of birth. The domestic would then receive an employment record book for which 50 centimes had to be paid. If domestics left their position, their master had to return the employment record book to the city hall and explain why they had left.

The different attitudes of the local administration in Antwerp and Brussels towards the servant population is remarkable. One could argue that the merchant city applied a more liberal policy regarding the domestic service labour market. Indeed, similar observations have been made in relation to Liverpool for example.¹²⁹ However, these liberal policies were not characteristic for all European port cities at the time. In Bremen for example, a *gesindebuch* or employment record book was introduced in 1830 and only abolished in 1918 ‘when domestic servants were finally placed on equal footing with other female employees’.¹³⁰ In his comparative study on Liverpool and Bremen, Lee refers to national differences to explain the variation in the policies regarding domestics in both cities.¹³¹ However, the case of Antwerp

¹²⁶ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Algemene Dossiers, 1794-1914, I 160, 112, *Police des domestiques*.

¹²⁷ Piette, *Domestiques*, 79. Translation of: ‘*cette decision met définitivement un terme à l’intervention du pouvoir central sur la police des domestiques*’.

¹²⁸ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Algemene Dossiers, 1794-1914, I 160, 112, *Police des domestiques*.

¹²⁹ Lee, ‘Domestic service’, 453.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, 453-454.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, 455.

and Brussels demonstrates that cities within the same nation could also develop divergent policies.

Only by the end of 1880s did the Brussels administration stop handing out employment record books to servants.¹³² From 1890 onwards, servants were treated like every other resident in the capital with regard to administrative procedures. The employment record book system was no longer considered useful. In 1910 Charles De Quéker, the secretary of the Labour exchange of Brussels and director of *l'assistance publique*, even defined the employment record book system as '*un petit slave book ambulant*'.¹³³

The Sûreté Publique and foreigners' files

While the national government was never able to implement a nationwide policy with regard to domestic servants, it did succeed in developing a rather efficient system to monitor the mobility and behaviour of non-nationals in its territories. The institution that was responsible for the implementation of the national regulations concerning foreigners was the *Sûreté Publique* (SP). From 1840 onwards, it was part of the Ministry of Justice although the administrator-general who headed the SP could act more or less independently.¹³⁴ He was allowed to engage directly with civil servants and the gendarmerie and ask them to carry out any measures he deemed necessary. Furthermore, he corresponded directly with all the police departments in the country, even though the latter actually fell under the authority of the mayors. The SP had four major responsibilities during the nineteenth century. It monitored individuals and groups who could potentially disrupt public order or posed a threat to the existing establishment, it archived all documents concerning these individuals and groups, it informed the national government and the local police about the necessary measures that needed to be taken, and it monitored the foreigners' police and foreigners on Belgian territories. The institution's archive demonstrates that most of SP's time was dedicated to the latter and

¹³² *Ibidem*, 89.

¹³³ De Quéker, *Nos domestiques*, 20.

¹³⁴ Keunings, 'Les relations', 43-54; Caestecker et al., *De individuele vreemdelingendossiers*; Libert, 'In vogelvlucht', 23-48; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 113-120 and Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 93-96; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 17-18; B. Willems et al., *Migratiegeschiedenis*.

more specifically to collecting all necessary information about each individual foreigner who stayed in the country.¹³⁵

Like domestic servants in Brussels, foreigners in Belgium were also subject to a specific administrative procedure which was different to that of the rest of the population who were registered in the population books only. In contrast to the employment record book system, however, this procedure would continue to exist throughout the period under study, and was implemented meticulously by the local administrations of both Brussels and Antwerp, resulting in an abundance of source material providing unique information about the foreign inhabitants of these cities.

From 1840 onwards, all communities in Belgium had to identify and register every foreigner who was planning to stay for more than two weeks.¹³⁶ More specifically, the local administration had to fill in a so-called *bulletin de renseignement* (Illustration 4 and Illustration 5). This *bulletin* provides information about: the name, place and date of birth, previous place of residence, both abroad and in Belgium, address, profession, marital status, date of arrival in Belgium and the particular community, information about partners, children, and parents of the foreigner as well as information about the documents he or she carried to prove his or her identity. In Antwerp and Brussels, the task of filling in the *bulletins* was executed by the local police. According to Greefs and Winter, both the police and the foreigners themselves perceived this merely as an administrative procedure which fitted within the general population registration.¹³⁷ The local police was not able to track unregistered foreigners consistently and as such, relied heavily on the cooperation of foreigners and other actors. As a consequence, an unknown number of foreigners registered late or not at all. However, Debackere has observed that employers of foreign domestics who were not registered were fined, effectively ensuring that employers would compel their foreign domestics to identify themselves at the local police station.¹³⁸

Of the two *bulletins* which were filled in by the local police, one was kept by the local administration in a local foreigner file, while the other was sent to the SP and kept in a national

¹³⁵ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid.

¹³⁶ Keunings, 'Les relations', 43-54; Caestecker et al., *De individuele vreemdelingendossiers*; Libert, In vogelvlucht', 23-48; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 113-120 and Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 93-96; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 17-18; B. Willems et al., *Migratiegeschiedenis*.

¹³⁷ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 65.

¹³⁸ Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 113.

foreigner file. The correspondence between authorities, police reports, and other documentations concerning any foreigner were all added to both the local and national file. When a foreigner left the community and later returned, a new *bulletin* (and copy of this *bulletin*) was filled in and added to the existing local and national file. If he or she moved to another Belgian community, the administration of the latter created a new *bulletin* a copy of which was again sent to and kept by the SP in the original national file. Local and national foreigner files therefore provide us with unique information about the stay of any foreigner in both the particular community and Belgium respectively. In theory the national foreigner files should contain all the documentation relating to the particular foreigner. Unfortunately, however, only a selection of the national files from the period between 1840 and 1890 have survived. At some point, the SP decided to destroy the majority of the files only keeping those deemed important at the time (about one third of them).¹³⁹ However, the complete series of local foreigner files from Antwerp and Brussels do remain in the archives of both cities to this day.

The foreigners' files not only enabled the SP to monitor the activities and mobility of foreigners on Belgian soil but also to gain information about unwanted foreigners who were to be expelled from the country.¹⁴⁰ The ambiguous legal status of foreigners in Belgium gave the SP a great deal of room for manoeuvre in this respect. However, it depended heavily on the local administrations which provided its main channels of information as well as being the actors who implemented the policies of the SP. Ellen Debackere and Alexander Coppens, in their dissertations, have written about the implementation of national migration policies and the SP's measures as undertaken by the local authorities in the city of Antwerp and Brussels respectively.¹⁴¹ Debackere observed that the interests of the local authorities in terms of migration policies often differed from those of the national government.¹⁴² Contrary to the SP, the port city always put its commercial interests first. The city government was consistently concerned about its reputation and keen to avoid any reputational damage caused by expulsion practices or malpractice towards foreigners. This sometimes led to discussions between the

¹³⁹ B. Willems et al., *Migratiegeschiedenis*.

¹⁴⁰ Caestecker, *Alien Policy*; Coupain, 'L'expulsion', 5-48; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 209-292; Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 233-294; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 39-43; Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210; Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 64-65.

¹⁴¹ Coppens, 'Tussen beleid'; Debackere, 'Tussen stad'.

¹⁴² Debackere, 'Tussen stad'.

city government and the SP regarding expulsions or other aspects of dealings with regard to foreigners.

Illustration 4 Bulletin of Gertrude Engels, Antwerp 1880(page 1).

44001
ADMINISTRATION DE LA SURETÉ PUBLIQUE. *Engels, Gertrude,* 4 ans 1880.
VILLE D'ANVERS.
N° 217 Rue Souverainne Isabelle Sect. 6 N° 24

1. Nom et prénoms de l'étranger; *Engels, Gertrude.*

Nom et prénoms de sa femme, s'il est marié;

Nom et prénoms de ses enfants, s'il en est issu du mariage.
à Maria-Weiler (Allem).

2. Lieu de naissance et âge de l'étranger; *Eschweiler (Prusse), le 3 Mars 1863*

Lieu de naissance et âge du père de l'étranger; *Pierre-Joseph, né à Kinsweiler (Prusse), âgé de 67 ans.*

Lieu de naissance et âge de la mère de l'étranger; *Schleumer, Agnès, née à Gurzenich (Prusse), âgée de 48 ans.*

3. Occupations de l'étranger. *servante*

4. Moyens d'existence. *ses gages.*

5. Antécédents.

6. Conduite. *inconnus*

7. Moralité.

8. Dernier domicile à l'étranger, avec indication du nom de la rue et du n° de la demeure. *Eschweiler, Neue StraÙe, 27.*

Source: SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 481#44001.

Illustration 5 Bulletin of Gertrude Engels, Antwerp 1880(page 2).

9. Epoque de l'arrivée dans le pays.	<i>En février 1880</i>
10. Dernière résidence en Belgique avant d'arriver dans la commune.	"
11. Epoque de l'arrivée dans la commune.	<i>En février 1880</i>
12. Nature des papiers, leur état, autorité qui les a délivrés. (1)	<i>Un certificat de changement de résidence délivré à Eschweiler le 23 février 1880</i>
13. Y a-t-il lieu de l'autoriser à séjourner dans la commune? (2)	<i>Je pense qu'une autorisation de séjour provisoire peut être accordée.</i>
<i>indécise</i>	<p><i>Anvers, le 28 juillet 1880</i> <i>Le Commissaire de police</i> <i>[Signature]</i></p>
	<p>Anvers, le <i>4 Août</i> 1880</p>
	<p><i>[Signature]</i> Le Bourgmestre,</p>
<p>(1) Les papiers doivent, dans tous les cas, être retirés au porteur et transmis à l'Administration de la sûreté publique. Le Bourgmestre pourra en donner reçu. (2) L'étranger dépourvu de papiers ou qui n'a que des papiers irréguliers ne pourra être admis à séjourner dans le Royaume, s'il n'en a obtenu l'autorisation. Le Bourgmestre informera l'étranger qu'il doit adresser à M. l'Administrateur de la sûreté publique une demande de séjour, accompagnée</p>	

Source: SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 481#44001.

As the century progressed, however, the Antwerp administration became both more efficient at registering the presence of foreigners and more restrictive in its migration policies. By 1880, the local authorities even repeatedly took the initiative to expel foreigners from Belgian soil, especially those who lacked any income. Even so, Debackere also observed that Dutch migrants – who were more often considered to be part of the local population than other foreigners – regularly received poor relief which according to Belgian legislation, should only be given to foreigners in exceptional circumstances. This leads the author to suggest the hypothesis that the concept of belonging was a more dominant guideline with regard to the city government's policies regarding foreigners and poor relief, more so than national regulations.

In contrast to the Antwerp authorities, the city of Brussels took fewer initiatives with regard to alien policies and largely followed the SP's recommendations.¹⁴³ Only when Hody was head of the SP did conflicts arise between this institution and the capital's mayor. This was partly a consequence of ideological differences between Hody, a conservative catholic, and the liberal mayors of Brussels. When more liberal administrators led the SP conflicts with the capital were rare. In contrast to the Antwerp authorities, those in Brussels seem to have been less involved about decisions on who to expel or not. The local police often simply followed the orders of the SP in this respect and almost never asked for any clarification. The Brussels city council apparently had fewer qualms about implementing a rigorous alien policy than that of Antwerp.

A striking element of the migration policies in Belgium during this period is how easily the SP and local authorities were able to expel foreigners from Belgian soil.¹⁴⁴ In England for example, 'a non-British subject could only be expelled if a court recommended his or her deportation'.¹⁴⁵ Between 1835 and 1914, 340,000 expulsions were carried out in Belgium.¹⁴⁶ The total number does not refer to the total number of expellees, rather to the number of expulsions. This means that when a person was expelled on several occasions, he or she is included several times in this statistic. Still, it is an impressive amount given the fact that larger

¹⁴³ Coppens, 'Tussen beleid'.

¹⁴⁴ Caestecker, *Alien Policy*; Coupain, 'L'expulsion', 5-48; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 209-292; Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 233-294; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 39-43; Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210.

¹⁴⁵ Reinecke, 'Producing', 248.

¹⁴⁶ Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210.

countries such as France or the United States had lower expulsion figures.¹⁴⁷ At least 77 percent of expellees were ousted due to a lack of means and another 11,3 percent for crimes.¹⁴⁸

The national authorities' attempts to gain more control over the growing floating non-national population were more common. Most European states during this period developed instruments to monitor non-citizens within their territories and all were heavily dependent on local authorities to implement migration policies and regulations.¹⁴⁹ From the 1860s onwards, most states no longer focussed on systematic border controls and passport systems but 'relied on the local registration of change of residence, and the identification and deportation of paupers, criminals or persons who seemed to present a political threat when and if they came to the authorities' attention'.¹⁵⁰ Although issuing residence permits, identity cards, and other documents was very common practice, the use of foreigners' files was rather exceptional and provided the local authorities and SP with a substantial amount of information about most foreigners in Belgium. A major advantage of these foreigners' files in comparison to identity documents, is that these files were kept by the authorities and not carried by the foreigners themselves. As a result, complete series of these files can still be found in the archives of many Belgian communities and enable historians to collect significant amounts of data on the foreign population in Belgium from 1840 onwards. Until recently, the files were mostly used to study the Belgian state's policy regarding foreigners or to analyse the activities of a limited number of foreigners. However, the creation of large databases during the course of this project and others like it also allows for more complex social analyses of significantly larger groups of foreigners as will be demonstrated in several chapters of this dissertation.

Proving one's identity

When foreign domestic servants registered themselves at the local police office, they needed to prove their identity by providing identity documents issued by the authorities in their place of birth or their previous place of residence. Carrying such documents was not only obligatory, it was also a means by which foreigners could prove their identity and to be allowed to

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴⁹ Greefs and Winter (eds.), *Migration Policies*.

¹⁵⁰ Fahrmeir, 'Conclusion', 299.

(temporarily) reside in Belgium. Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate that only a very small number of foreign domestics did not have any certificate or other documentation at all to prove their identity. Only in 1910 did a significant number of foreign servants arrive in the capital without such a document, after which the city administration began to request a certificate from the servant's previous place of residence or the birth. The types of documents carried by other servants are interesting indications for the administrative practices in other countries. From early on, the vast majority of the Dutch servants had a certificate of a change of residence which they received from the local administration of their previous place of residence and which contained some general information. Such a certificate was mostly used by cities or villages which had population books. In Germany, a certificate of change of residence only seems to have been used on a significant scale from around 1880 when it increasingly replaced passports. French and Luxembourg servants rarely had a certificate of a change of residence and frequently carried a civil status certificate (*akte van de burgerlijke stand*).

Table 6 Documents carried by foreign domestic servants in Antwerp to prove their identity.

	The Netherlands				Germany				Other			
	1850	1860	1880	1910	1850	1860	1880	1910	1850	1860	1880	1910
Certificate of change of residence	89 (74)	101 (89)	161 (95)	160 (90)	4 (17)	3 (10)	53 (38)	42 (56)	3 (75)	2 (33)	18 (36)	16 (43)
Employment record book	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2)	0 (0)	5 (21)	1 (3)	41 (29)	4 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (26)	1 (3)
Civil status certificate	4 (3)	0 (0)	1 (1)	3 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (9)	14 (19)	0 (0)	1 (17)	7 (14)	16 (43)
Passport	6 (5)	9 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (29)	23 (77)	13 (9)	1 (1)	1 (25)	3 (50)	3 (6)	0 (0)
Certificate of good conduct	9 (7)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (17)	1 (3)	2 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (4)	1 (3)
Unspecified or other	7 (6)	3 (3)	0 (0)	13 (7)	4 (17)	2 (7)	16 (12)	12 (16)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (4)	3 (8)
Without	6 (5)	0 (0)	4 (2)	2 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)	2 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (10)	0 (0)
Total	121 (100)	114 (100)	169 (100)	178 (100)	24 (100)	30 (100)	139 (100)	75 (100)	4 (100)	6 (100)	50 (100)	37 (100)

Source: Database foreigners' files Antwerp 1850-1910.

Table 7 Documents carried by foreign domestics in Brussels to prove their identity.

	The Netherlands			Germany			Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			France			Other		
	1850	1880	1910	1850	1880	1910	1850	1880	1910	1850	1880	1910	1850	1880	1910
Certificate of change of residence	7 (17)	35 (76)	45 (69)	0 (0)	20 (20)	46 (53)	0 (0)	2 (5)	15 (43)	3 (25)	3 (8)	2 (5)	0 (0)	1 (8)	2 (4)
Employment record book	2 (5)	5 (11)	0 (0)	3 (11)	38 (38)	5 (6)	1 (14)	36 (82)	4 (11)	1 (8)	10 (28)	2 (5)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (2)
Civil status certificate	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (6)	0 (0)	8 (8)	9 (10)	0 (0)	2 (5)	14 (40)	0 (0)	17 (47)	25 (57)	0 (0)	2 (17)	27 (48)
Passport	1 (2)	0 (0)	1 (2)	9 (32)	5 (5)	4 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (6)	0 (0)	8 (80)	3 (25)	4 (7)
Certificate of good conduct	0 (0)	2 (4)	0 (0)	3 (11)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (14)	1 (2)	0 (0)	2 (17)	3 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	0 (0)
Unspecified and other	27 (64)	3 (7)	7 (11)	10 (36)	21 (21)	14 (16)	5 (71)	2 (5)	1 (3)	5 (42)	0 (0)	5 (11)	1 (10)	2 (17)	4 (7)
Has to be produced	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	16 (29)
Without	5 (12)	1 (2)	0 (0)	3 (11)	8 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (3)	1 (2)	1 (10)	2 (17)	2 (4)
Total	42 (100)	46 (100)	65 (100)	28 (100)	101 (100)	87 (100)	7 (100)	44 (100)	35 (100)	12 (100)	36 (100)	44 (100)	10 (100)	12 (100)	56 (100)

Source: Database foreigners' files Brussels 1850-1910.

Some servants used an employment record book to prove their identity. The implementation of the employment record book system for domestics seems to have been popular among many local and national administrations around 1880. Only Dutch servants almost never showed an employment record book to the Antwerp or Brussels administration to prove their identity. In 1910, however, the employment record books had almost disappeared. Apparently, governments throughout Western Europe came to the same conclusion that the employment record book system was inefficient or no longer necessary.

Controlling the mobility of domestics seems to have become less of a priority for the authorities even though employers continued to complain about the so-called servant problem.¹⁵¹

The SP regularly checked the identity and previous behaviour of foreigners by corresponding with the authorities either in their place of birth or previous place of residence. Such correspondence not only occurred when foreigners did not carry the necessary documents but also on other occasions. The information and documents provided by domestic servants seem to have been trustworthy as cases of identity fraud among foreign domestics were very rare. At the same time, the fines employers received when they hired unregistered foreign servants probably resulted in high registration rates among the foreign servant population. As such, the SP and local administrations of Antwerp and Brussels seem to have successfully developed a system which allowed them to get an overview of the foreign servant population in these cities.

(Un)wanted?

Existing literature often focuses on how domestics in the nineteenth century were perceived by some as potential vagrants and criminals, but did this negative perception also led to restrictive policies towards, and the close monitoring of, foreign domestic servants in cities like Antwerp and Brussels? Most files on foreign domestic servants only contained a *bulletin* without any police reports or other additional documents which suggests that neither the SP nor the local police were monitoring these women closely. In 1850 and 1880, respectively 81 and 67 percent of the foreign domestics in Antwerp only had a *bulletin de renseignement* included in their file compared to 70 and 60 percent of all foreigners.¹⁵² The presence of extra documents does not necessarily imply that a particular foreigner was suspected of something. Documents included in the file could simply be the result of some general administrative procedures. Nonetheless, the presence of extra documents within a file is a first step in finding foreigners who were closely monitored by the authorities. Unfortunately, a quantitative analysis of the extra documents for the Brussels' case is not possible because much of the correspondence about individual foreigners is not kept inside the files but in a separate series.

¹⁵¹ Sarti, 'Historians', 282-285.

¹⁵² Database foreigner files Antwerp 1850-1910.

The proportion of women among the expellees is very low. In 1860, 1870, and 1880 respectively 41, 46, and 49 percent of all foreigners in Antwerp were women. However, Debackere has observed that in the same years, only 15, 9, and 9 percent of the expellees were female.¹⁵³ Alexander Coppens describes a similar pattern for Brussels.¹⁵⁴ In 1880, 35 percent of all foreigners who arrived in Brussels were women compared to 17 percent of those expelled (without a royal decree). Coppens also shows that while 29 percent of the foreign women in the capital were registered as servants, the latter accounted only for 9 percent of the female expellees.¹⁵⁵ As such, it is clear that the SP did not focus all that much on foreign servants. This may seem somewhat surprising because of the large proportion of foreign domestics within the total group of foreigners and the link that was often made between servants on the one hand and vagrancy, clandestine prostitution, theft, or infanticide on the other, all potential reasons to be expelled from the country. These results therefore suggest that the shared perception by the contemporary media and the bourgeoisie of the floating servant population posing a moral threat to society should not be confused with reality.¹⁵⁶

Although the proportion of foreign servants whose activities were closely monitored by the SP and the local police may have been small, their files nonetheless provide a lot of information about how the SP and the local police selected potentially undesirable female foreigners and how they monitored their activities. The vast majority of these female foreigners were not *domestic* servants in households – who represent our core focus during the remainder of this dissertation – but servants hired by innkeepers. One of these women was Anne Erben.¹⁵⁷ She arrived in Antwerp in June 1880 at the age of 22. She was born in Coblenz but before moving to Antwerp, Anne had lived in Bonn where her father had been born. Both Anne’s father and mother had already died by the time she arrived in the Belgian port city. In her foreigner file and the population books, Anne is registered as a *servante* or *meid*. After living in the *Kleine Kraaiwijk 2* in the city’s sailors’ district for a few months, she moved to the *Haringvliet* where the red light district was located at this time. Anne did not work in official brothels, rather in

¹⁵³ Debackere, ‘Tussen stad’, 274 and Greefs and Winter, ‘Alone’, 66.

¹⁵⁴ Coppens, ‘Tussen beleid’, 232.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 241.

¹⁵⁶ Piette, *Domestiques*, 65-368.

¹⁵⁷ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 43661; *Vreemdelingendossiers*, Algemeen Rijksarchief, 473491; and ¹⁵⁷ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

inns which regularly hired women who were identified as ‘maids’ in the population books. One of Anne’s employers during this period was Joachim Bonefski, an innkeeper and coal merchant from Wockmin in Prussia who had moved from Cologne to Antwerp in 1875 together with his wife.¹⁵⁸ Several documents in his foreigner file demonstrate that the local police monitored his establishment closely. Neither Anne Erben’s national and local foreigner file contain any information about her stay in Bonefski’s inn.¹⁵⁹ In the correspondence between the mayor, the police and the *procureur general* Bonefski’s inn is repeatedly described as an establishment with a bad reputation which is only visited by labourers and seamen looking for *des filles interlopes* who are always hanging around at the inn and often also have a room in the establishment.¹⁶⁰

District officer W. Bergent describes in great detail what happened in Bonefski’s pub in 1890:

‘Bonefski’s servants do not receive a salary and do not perform any other job than cleaning the inn. In the evening, they are dressed up and if no customers enter the inn, they go outside to lure sailors into Bonefski’s inn where they incite [the sailors] to spend their money on food and drinks and afterwards, if they have customers who have a lot of money, they take this customer to some lodging house where they spent the night together. The servants do not earn anything other than room and board and the tips they receive from customers, and what they earn by sleeping with those customers. I’ve known Bonefski’s establishment since the moment he arrived in this city and from the beginning, he has managed an establishment which was suspected of lewdness, but because the servants who live with him always spent the night elsewhere, it could never be established that anything bad happened in Bonefski’s house. In the evening, several women of loose morals also enter the inn to drink with sailors or to take the latter there.’¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 34847 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

¹⁵⁹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 43661; ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Individuele dossiers geopend tussen 1835 en 1912, T413, 473491.

¹⁶⁰ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 34847.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*. Translation of: *De dienstmeiden van Bonefski trekken gene huur en doen geen ander werk dan de herberg onderhouden. 's Avonds zijn deze opgekleed en als er geene klanten in de herberg komen, gaan de*

Another report written by the *commissaire de police* describes how after closing hours when the police had checked whether the establishment had closed, Bonefski's servants opened the windows of the first floor and invited the customers – who had loitered in the establishment's vicinity – to re-enter the inn.¹⁶² Other inhabitants in the street informed the police that it was via this method that Bonefski's establishment often remained open until the next morning. When one police patrol decided to hang around the establishment after closing hours they indeed witnessed how the servants opened the windows after half an hour to invite the customers to come back in, however the latter had noticed the presence of the patrol and eventually left.

Although a common perception was that these servants were clandestine prostitutes, but one should be careful not to assume the same too readily. There was often no clear evidence that these women had actually slept with a customer in exchange for money. At the same time these women can also not be identified as ordinary maids or waitresses because cleaning and waitressing were only part of their job description. Some contemporaries and historians suspect that many of these maids were former domestics who only worked temporarily in these types of establishments. However, the trajectories of foreign maids in the city of Antwerp and Brussels suggest that the overlap between the group of domestics and maids who worked in pubs like that of Bonefski was very limited.

Eventually the Antwerp police listed all women who had served in Bonefski's establishment in the past few years.¹⁶³ In their list, the police made a clear distinction between foreign and Belgian women. The former could easily be expelled from the country as clandestine prostitutes or foreigners without means. Catherina Hordann, born in Grosfelda

dienstmeiden uit om matrozen aan te lokken en deze naar de herberg van Bonefski te brengen om hun aldaar hun geld doen te verteren als zij dan kalanten hebben die veel geld bezitten naar hun aangehitst te hebben tot drinken gaan zij er des 's nachts in het een of ander logement mede slapen. de dienstmeiden verdienen niets als de kost en in woon en de profyten die zy van de verbruikers ontvangen, en hetgeene Zy verdienen als zij met volk gaan slapen. Ik ken persoonlijk het huis Bonefski sedert dat deze in de stad gekomen is en deze heeft altoos een huis, verdacht van ontucht gehouden, doch daar de dienstmeiden die bij hem in wonende, altyd elders gingen om te vernachten, heeft er nooit kunnen bestatigd worden dat er in het huis van Bonefski slecht gebeurde. Ook komen er verschillige vrouwen van lichte zede des avonds bij Bonefski dewelke aldaar komen om met de matroozen te drinken, of ze er naar toe te brengen.

¹⁶² *Ibidem.*

¹⁶³ *Ibidem.*

(Germany) in 1857, for example, was expelled and left Antwerp for Middelburg.¹⁶⁴ It is less clear what happened to the Belgian women from the police reports.

Bonefski himself – who was of course also a foreigner, only had to pay a fine of 10 francs for not respecting closing hours.¹⁶⁵ The police were not able to find any clear evidence of his direct involvement in a clandestine prostitution network. In their reports, the police men always underline the fact that the sailors and the *filles interlopes* went elsewhere to spend the night. Nevertheless, the existing evidence suggests that Bonefski was involved, (at least) to some degree. In both Antwerp and Brussels, examples can be found of foreign placement agents who were expelled by the SP. In January 1891, for example, the SP asked the Antwerp authorities to report on the activities of all foreign placers of domestics in the city.¹⁶⁶ The local police found four foreign placers in the city only one of whom was involved in prostitution networks, Marie Kirsch. One policeman reported that Kirsch ‘places girls both in clandestine brothels as well as in more honourable houses’.¹⁶⁷ Although the reports do not contain much more information, Kirsch and some of the foreign managers of *des lieu des prostitution clandestine* were expelled.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps, the greatest difficulty for both the police and migrant women was that there was not always a clear distinction between placement agencies for domestics and clandestine prostitutes because women like Marie Kirsch placed women in both sectors.

During the time when the police were investigating Bonefski, Anne Erben was no longer working at his inn. In November 1881, she had been arrested by the Antwerp police for vagrancy and was sentenced to three days in prison.¹⁶⁹ After being discharged from prison, Anne was expelled from the country and escorted to the train station of Herbesthal at the Belgian-German border by the gendarmerie. Only a day later, she was arrested by the local police of Liège, again for vagrancy. This time, the gendarmerie escorted her to the Belgian-

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁶ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 53832 and ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Individuele dossiers geopend tussen 1835 en 1912, T413, 319711.

¹⁶⁷ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 53832: *place les filles aussi bien dans des lieu de prostitution clandestine que dans les honores maisons*.

¹⁶⁸ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Individuele dossiers geopend tussen 1835 en 1912, T413, 319711.

¹⁶⁹ ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Individuele dossiers geopend tussen 1835 en 1912, T413, 473491.

Dutch border in Lanaeken. However, Anne kept on returning to Belgium and eventually, the SP seems to have given up on expelling her from the country. Most foreigners were expelled through administrative measures and not by royal decree (which was a more elaborate procedure and only needed for resident foreigners) and could ‘legally return, only risking to be expelled again’.¹⁷⁰

In subsequent years, Anne lived in Antwerp and was repeatedly arrested for misdemeanours such as insulting the police or threatening a woman with a revolver.¹⁷¹ She was also no longer registered as a servant but as a *filie éparsé* or a prostitute living on her own means. In 1886, she was also involved in a case of human trafficking which was investigated by the attorney general of Bonn who contacted the SP to gather information about her.¹⁷² The SP requested a report from the Antwerp police about this case. The police commissioner explained to the SP that Eva Kessler, a young German woman from Bonn, had met Catherine Erben – Anne’s sister – in Bonn and was convinced by the latter to move to Antwerp where she would be able to find work as a servant. Eva stayed with Anne Erben ten days and this latter eventually took away Eva’s possessions and placed her in a clandestine brothel, managed by Caroline Laureyssens. After a few days Eva managed to escape to her father in Germany and he filed a complaint.

It seems that Anne and Catherine Erben were never convicted for their involvement in this case.¹⁷³ Just like Bonefski, they were not penalized for their actions. Similar cases can be found in Brussels where the police were also closely monitoring the activities of suspicious placers or innkeepers but were either unable – or did not intend – to punish them. For example, in March 1911, the Dutch authorities asked the Belgian SP for help with an investigation into an abduction case.¹⁷⁴ Earlier that year, a seventeen-year old girl had been abducted from Amsterdam and was taken to Brussels. After staying in a hotel in the capital for one night, the girl managed to escape and return to Amsterdam at her own costs. With her, she carried a list

¹⁷⁰ Feys, ‘Riding the rails of removal’, 189-210.

¹⁷¹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 43661; ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Individuele dossiers geopend tussen 1835 en 1912, T413, 473491.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁴ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 59218; ARA, Ministerie van Justitie, Bestuur van de Openbare Veiligheid. Dienst Vreemdelingenpolitie. Individuele dossiers geopend tussen 1835 en 1912, T413, 473298.

of lodging houses and placers she had received from a *cafetier* and a *garçon de café* in Brussels. The authorities asked the SP to inform them about the reputation of the establishments on the list and of the hotel she had stayed in with her abductor. The SP assigned the case to the Brussels police who started an investigation into the activities of the various establishments. Among the placers and lodging holders on the Dutch girl's list was one individual who placed all kinds of people in Belgium and abroad and '*n'est pas très bien notée*' and another whose wife managed a hotel that – according to the *commissaire de police* – was '*fréquenté par les prostitués clandestines*'.¹⁷⁵ The other establishments on the list were all placement agencies, pubs, and hotels whose keepers were described as honest people who had nothing to do with the white slave trade whatsoever. None of the managers of the establishments on the list had seen a girl who corresponded to the description given by the Dutch authorities and eventually the case seems to have been closed.

Although Anne Erben was not convicted for her involvement in the case of Eva Kessler, the local police continued to monitor her activities. By 1891, she was still living in Antwerp, had married a German musician named Mathieu Beerens, and was managing a small pub in the *Braziliëstraat*. This establishment was monitored closely by the Antwerp police which reported that it was frequented by sailors and *des filles de moeurs équivoques*. Some of Anne's neighbours also testified that she was still active as a prostitute herself at times when her husband was absent.

In 1892, Anne and Mathieu left Antwerp for Dordrecht where,¹⁷⁶ eleven years later, he drowned and leaving Anne alone with two children. According to a report by the Dordrecht police, Anne mixed with prostitutes and was a renowned alcoholic until the Salvation Army placed her in an institution *voor gevallen vrouwen* in Hillegersberg, near Rotterdam. Her daughter was sent to a convent and her son to his grandparents in Germany. Eventually, Anne would return to Antwerp where she started to work as a *journalière*. In 1918, her daughter also arrived in the Belgian port city where she found a position as a domestic servant.

Throughout her life, Anne Erben's activities and movements were closely monitored by the local and national authorities in three different countries. She was expelled twice in 1881, had been fined a total of 126 francs over the years, and spent 26 days in prison. However,

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

although she continued to misbehave in the eyes of the authorities and made money as a clandestine prostitute, the Belgian authorities at a certain point stopped expelling her from the country. They simply continued to monitor her activities and movements more closely than that of other individuals. Anne was not even arrested for her role in the case of Eva Kessler. Similarly, Bonefski's establishment continued to be closely monitored by the police while he was punished only for keeping his inn open after closing hours.

Thus the SP and local police were very active in collecting information about suspicious foreigners although they had difficulties in actually constraining their activities and movements. Similar observations were also made in relation to other groups of foreigners.¹⁷⁷ It seems that the main goal of both the SP and the local police was to track foreigners (and other inhabitants) who were involved in clandestine activities and monitor their behaviour closely. The total number of expulsions from Belgium may have been high, however the above case also suggests that expelling unwanted foreigners was not always an effective measure. Both the SP and the local police lacked the manpower to implement very restrictive policies and were therefore content to monitor the activities of foreigners and collect as much information about them as possible. Finally, it is also important to stress again that the case of Anne Erben was quite exceptional. The vast majority of the foreign women who were registered as servants were not closely monitored by the local police and – as will be demonstrated in the third chapter – they worked in households rather than in establishments similar to that of Joachim Bonefski.

Non-governmental actors

So far in this chapter, the focus has been on the registration and monitoring practices of the SP and the local administrations of Antwerp and Brussels. Much of the current literature approaches migration policies in a similar vein.¹⁷⁸ Studies focus on the interplay between the central state and the local authorities but tend to overlook the role of non-governmental actors in the implementation of regulations and policies. However, the success of registration and

¹⁷⁷ Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210.

¹⁷⁸ See amongst others: Timmer and Williamson, 'Immigration Policy', 739-771; Noiriël, 'Surveiller', 77-100; Leenders, *Ongenode gasten*; Reinecke, 'Governing Aliens', 39-65; Feldman, 'Migrants', 79-104; Caestecker, *Alien Policy*; Debackere, 'Tussen stad'; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid'; Greefs and Winter (eds.), *Migration Policies*; Coppens and Debackere, 'De toepassing', 12-45.

monitoring practices often depended on the active participation of the latter. For example, non-nationals who did not intend to stay in Belgium for longer than two weeks and resided in a lodging house or hotel were not registered in the foreigners' files but in a lodging house register which was filled in by the managers of the establishments these foreigners stayed in. A copy of this register was submitted to the local administration who composed a list of foreigners staying in lodging houses in their community which they then forwarded to the SP. Without the active participation of the managers of hotels and lodging houses, this system was doomed to fail.

This may also explain why the employment record book system failed. Local authorities in Brussels were not able to convince employers to follow the regulations which were in fact designed for their benefit. At the same time, the measures were also directed against commercial intermediaries who were seen as part of the cause of the high turnover rate of people in domestic positions. However, the Brussels' authorities were not capable of getting rid of the commercial placement agencies and were therefore also not able to control the domestic service labour market. This conflict between the authorities and commercial intermediaries is not necessarily a logical consequence of the government's attempt to gain more control over migration circuits or labour markets. In the second half of the nineteenth century the US government, for example, cooperated with commercial shipping companies to increase its control over transatlantic migration movements.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, the introduction of a service voucher system by the Belgian government at the beginning of the twenty-first century stimulated the establishment of many official commercial intermediaries in the domestic service labour market thereby partly managing to get the sector out of the illegal economy.¹⁸⁰ By cooperating with private intermediaries, the central government was able to receive taxes on the wages of domestics, impose certain standards regarding working conditions, and get the domestic workers to both contribute and benefit from the social security system.

In their attempts to monitor the activities of suspicious foreigners and collect as much information as possible, the SP and local police also often had to rely on information provided by other actors. For example, in the investigations into Anne Erben or Joachim Bonefski in Antwerp or the abduction case in Brussels, the local police relied heavily on information

¹⁷⁹ Feys, *The battle for the migrants*.

¹⁸⁰ Michielsen et al., *Promoting integration*.

provided by neighbours and acquaintances of those involved. Sometimes the police took the initiative themselves to interview members of a suspect's social environment but neighbours, often, suspicious of establishments or individuals, went to the police office themselves to file complaints. Such complaints and interviews helped the local police and the SP to select those establishments or individuals that needed to be more closely monitored and could sometimes be used as evidence against them.

The authorities were not only dependent on the cooperation of commercial intermediaries and migrant networks, they also had to adapt to changes in, for example, the technological dimension. In his article 'Riding the rails of removal', Torsten Feys demonstrates how changes in the transport infrastructure (i.e. the introduction of a railway system), altered the policies of local and national authorities in Belgium towards foreigners.¹⁸¹ He also points at the interaction between the commercial providers of the railroad infrastructure, the SP, and the local authorities. In contrast to shipping companies, railroad companies succeeded in avoiding large-scale controls of their passengers.¹⁸² As a result, the Sp's centre of attention shifted from controls at the borders towards controls in the interior. Nonetheless, the gendarmerie or police kept 'an eye on the increased mobility and migration passing through' at border towns with international train connections.¹⁸³ At the same time, the railway system also provided the SP with an efficient infrastructure to deport unwanted foreigners from the kingdom. For example, after having been expelled, Anne Erben was put on a train and accompanied by the gendarmerie to make sure she crossed the border.

Conclusion

When developing instruments to monitor and register the mobility and activities of foreigners and domestic servants, local and national authorities thus needed to adapt themselves to changes in other dimensions of the migration infrastructure while also often depending on the active participation of non-governmental actors in the implementation of monitoring and registration practices. This dependency on other actors may explain why attempts by the central

¹⁸¹ Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210.

¹⁸² *Ibidem* and Feys, *The battle for the migrants*.

¹⁸³ Feys, 'Riding the rails of removal', 189-210.

state to gain more control over the domestic service labour market failed or at least why the instruments they ideally wanted to use turned out to be fairly ineffective.

While, the central state tried to implement nationwide policies regarding the domestic service labour market in the first decades of the nineteenth century, it eventually decided to leave it to communities themselves as to how they dealt with their servant population. In Antwerp the employment record book system which had been developed under French rule, was never implemented even though French regulations obliged the city to do so. Throughout the period under study, the port city considered such measures as ineffective and chose not to intervene too drastically in the domestic service labour market. In contrast, the city of Brussels made several attempts to gain more control over the floating servant population but seems to have failed due to a lack of efficient policies and cooperation with commercial intermediaries and employers. As such, in both cities, the control of national and local authorities over the domestic service labour market does not seem to have increased significantly over the course of the long nineteenth century.

The state was more successful in developing instruments to monitor the mobility and activities of foreigners. The foreigners' files provided the SP and local administrations with a significant amount of biographical data on each individual foreigner and was also instrumental in collecting information about potentially undesirable foreigners. The proportion of domestic servants amongst this latter group was very small. Only a few foreign women who were registered as domestic servants were closely monitored by the local police or the SP and in addition domestics only represented a minor proportion of the expelled in both Antwerp and Brussels. At the same time, several cases addressed in this chapter demonstrate that the local police in both cities were concerned about clandestine activities involving foreign servants and put a substantial amount of effort into investigating and following up on such cases. Servants and other actors involved were sometimes expelled but this measure was not always effective as foreigners could easily return to the city without risking major repercussions. In general, the main aim of the police and the SP seems to have been to collect as much information as possible about such cases and make sure that things did not get out of hand.

In conclusion, the impact of the authorities on the migration and settlement process of foreign domestic servants may have been significant but should not be exaggerated. The central state and the cities of Antwerp and Brussels ultimately did not have much control over the

labour market and foreign domestics were rarely closely monitored or expelled by the SP or the local police. The local police and SP did, however, produce a lot of documentation and this will provide the source material with regard to the migration and settlement process of foreign domestic servants to be used extensively in the following chapters.

2 MIGRATION CIRCUITS AND PROFILES

In September 1850, Anne Van Velthoven, aged nineteen, left her parental home in Woensdrecht (West Brabant) and moved to the Belgian port city of Antwerp.¹⁸⁴ The distance she had to travel was limited, 25 kilometres as the crow flies. Perhaps she went by foot or took a stage coach. Many other young women had preceded Anne on the road between Bergen-op-Zoom and Antwerp. Just like the *Kempen* (Campine) east of Antwerp, for over a century West Brabant belonged to the regional hinterland of the city.¹⁸⁵ Many of the female migrants who arrived in the port city eventually found employment as domestic servants. This was also the case for Anne. There was generally nothing exceptional about her migration movement. It fitted within long-standing migration traditions between the port city and its hinterland. However, because Anne had crossed the Dutch-Belgian border and was not a Belgian national, she had to register at the Antwerp police station as a foreigner.¹⁸⁶

Thirty years later, Marie Huberty arrived in Brussels at the age of seventeen.¹⁸⁷ She was born in Frisange in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg but had lived in the neighbouring village of Aspelt before moving to the Belgian capital. To reach Brussels, Marie had to travel more than 200 kilometres. Unlike Anne, Marie probably did not complete this journey by foot or by stage coach instead taking the train. An international railway system had been established in the middle of the nineteenth century and quickly became an important means of transport for the upper, middle, and lower classes of society.¹⁸⁸ In the middle of the century, Marie's migration movement would have been exceptional but by 1880, a dense migration circuit had developed between Luxembourg and Brussels and there were many young domestic servants like Marie among the Luxembourg migrants.¹⁸⁹

In contrast to Anne and Marie, Charlotte Tönnesen was the only domestic from her particular region of origin in her destination city of Brussels.¹⁹⁰ Charlotte came from a small village in Norway and moved to Brussels in September 1910, aged just sixteen. Although her migration movement was exceptional, it was also representative of the expansion of the

¹⁸⁴ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 8078.

¹⁸⁵ Winter, *Migrants*, 71.

¹⁸⁶ Debackere, 'Tussen stad', 109-110.

¹⁸⁷ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 3815.

¹⁸⁸ About the Belgian railways see amongst others: Van der Hertten et al., *Sporen*; Van der Hertten, *België onder stoom*; De Block and Polasky, 'Light railways', 312-328; Broos, 'De geschiedenis van de spoorwegen', 145-155.

¹⁸⁹ See later in this chapter.

¹⁹⁰ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 82623.

recruitment area for domestic servant of both Antwerp and Brussels. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, an increasing number of domestic servants in these Belgian cities were so-called individual migrants who moved within very thin migration circuits and moved over long distances, just like Charlotte.

The migration trajectories of Anne, Marie, and Charlotte represent different types of migration circuits but also reflect evolution over time. As discussed in the introduction, several commercial and service cities in Europe experienced an enlargement of their recruitment area for domestic servants in the second half of the nineteenth century. In contrast to much of the existing literature on domestic service, this chapter addresses this expansion in detail by studying the development of different migration circuits, comparing changes in the recruitment areas of Antwerp and Brussels, and analysing the differences and similarities in the profiles of foreign servants who belonged to different migration circuits. Finally, the relationship between the recruitment areas of Antwerp and Brussels is also addressed. The short distance between them, the good railroad connections, and the equal demand for domestics may have resulted in a gradual overlap of the cities' recruitment areas.

In existing studies on nineteenth-century servant migration, the focus is mostly on one (type of) of migration circuit.¹⁹¹ Dense and thin or long- and short-distance migration circuits are rarely compared with each other. Furthermore, while several migration historians have discussed the evolution of urban recruitment areas in the nineteenth century,¹⁹² only few have integrated former places of residence into the analysis enabling them to reconstruct the total trajectories of migrants towards the city or have focused on the relationship between urban recruitment areas. As such, by comparing the evolution of different migration circuits and recruitment areas, this chapter adds a new perspective to the existing body of literature on both nineteenth-century migration and domestic service.

¹⁹¹ Exceptions are: McBride, *The domestic revolution*; Lee, 'Domestic service', 435-460. Other studies focus mostly on either long-distance migration patterns or on the domestic service labour market of one city with specific attention to servants from the regional hinterland. For studies on long-distance migration see amongst others: Harzig (ed.), *Peasant maids*; Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*; Wehner-Franco, *Deutsche Dienstmädchen in Amerika*; König, 'Femina migrans', 93-115; Milharčič-Hladnik (ed.), *From Slovenia*; Van Rompuy, 'Levensloopenanalyse', 111-146. For studies focusing on urban servants from the regional hinterland see amongst others: Boudjaaba and Gourdon, 'Mobilité'; Higgs, *Domestic Servants*; Pooley, 'Domestic servants', 405-429; Piette, *domestiques*; De Langhe, 'Rural single female migrants', 39-60; Van Goethem, 'Dienen in de stad Antwerpen', 9-39.

¹⁹² See amongst others: Moch, *Paths*; Poussou, 'faut-il parler', 23-30; Idem, 'Mobilité et migrations', 99-143; Oris, 'La transition', 191-225; Winter, *Migrants*; Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80.

The first two sections discuss the concepts of recruitment area and migration circuits. Thereafter, the methodology and foreigners' files – which are the main source for this chapter – are addressed. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the expansion of the recruitment areas for foreign domestics of both cities and a discussion of the profiles of the servants being studied here. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

Recruitment area

In this dissertation, an urban recruitment area is defined as the sum of all regions from which individuals migrate towards a given city.¹⁹³ It is intrinsically connected an individual's action space or the mental map of an area within which a change of residence can take place in the eyes of the individual.¹⁹⁴ The position of a city within this action space is determined by the opportunity structure and economic function of the city; the situation of the potential migrant in his or her current place of residence; the distance and transport links between the current place of residence and the city; the relative geographical location of the city, the population size of the city; the knowledge and skills of the potential migrant; and the information flows that reach him or her from the city.¹⁹⁵ These factors do not stand on their own but are interrelated.¹⁹⁶ For example, the river Scheldt provides the city of Antwerp with excellent transport connections which explains its development as a port city while it also had an important impact on the information flows.

Leslie Page Moch focuses specifically on the effect of the economic function of a city on its recruitment area. She divides nineteenth-century European cities in three different types: commercial and service cities, textile cities, and cities with heavy industry.¹⁹⁷ Commercial and service cities were often centuries old and although they expanded significantly throughout the nineteenth century, they did not have similar growth ratios as cities with heavy industry such as for example, the Ruhr metallurgy centres.¹⁹⁸ Compared to cities with heavy industry,

¹⁹³ Lesger, 'Informatiestromen', 3-23; Idem, 'Variaties', 118-339; Idem, 'Migrantenstromen' 97-121; Winter, 'De microcontext' 122-147.

¹⁹⁴ Lesger, 'Variaties', 122. The term action space was introduced by: Wolpert, 'Behavioral aspects', 159-169.

¹⁹⁵ Lesger, 'Variaties', 122.

¹⁹⁶ Lesger, 'Variaties', 118-139; Winter, 'De microcontext', 126.

¹⁹⁷ Moch, *Moving Europeans*, 131-143.

¹⁹⁸ J. Jackson, *Migration*.

commercial and service cities attracted many single female migrants resulting in sex ratios below 100. Textile cities such as Roubaix in France or Verviers in Belgium also attracted many migrant women.¹⁹⁹ Unlike service and commercial cities, textile cities did not only offer women employment in domestic service but also in the textile industry. George Alter has observed that there were two different groups of women who arrived in Verviers, a Belgian textile city.²⁰⁰ One group consisted of those who arrived together with their family and found work in the mills. Their lives seem to have been more stable than that of the second group which consisted of single women who were much more mobile and often worked as domestic servants in middle- and upper-class households in Verviers.

According to Catherina Lis, the transformation of Antwerp from a textile city to a port city in the first half of the nineteenth century resulted in greater instability in terms of the employment opportunities for women who were no longer able to find work in the textile industry and increasingly had to depend on less secure labour markets.²⁰¹ Anne Winter has observed that migrant women 'appear to have steered clear of most of these adverse developments'.²⁰² While local women lost their jobs in the textile industry, migrant women profited from the growth of alternative opportunities in sectors where they were already strongly represented as in domestic service sector for example.

In Moch's typology, Antwerp and Brussels fall under the same category. However, there are some differences between port and capital cities that may have had a significant effect on their recruitment area. Because of their commercial connections, port cities often developed an extensive recruitment area from early on.²⁰³ Transit ports like Antwerp were characterized by a great influx of temporary and transient migrants. A significant proportion of its population only resided in the city for a few days, week, or months. This is true to a certain extent for seamen, merchants, prostitutes, and domestic servants. As the capital city, Brussels was the administrative and financial centre of a nation and also a residential centre for the national and international elite.²⁰⁴ It recruited many migrants from all over the country as well as elite migrants from abroad. The profiles of the migrants were thus different but also the direction of

¹⁹⁹ Alter, *Family*; Moch and Tilly, 'Joining the Urban World', 35-56.

²⁰⁰ Alter, *Family*.

²⁰¹ Lis, *Social change*.

²⁰² Winter, *Migrants*, 124.

²⁰³ Lee, 'The socio-economic and demographic characteristics', 147-172.

²⁰⁴ De Schaepdrijver, *Elites*.

information flows differed significantly. While Antwerp developed strong connections with other port cities and commercial centres, Brussels had more links with other capital cities such as Paris, London, or Berlin. These connections – which imply an exchange of information – could of course have a substantial impact on the recruitment area of a city.

Another important element is the relationship between a city's recruitment area and that of neighbouring cities. Antwerp and Brussels are not far apart and this proximity may have had two effects. On the one hand migrants often “use” a nearby town as a gateway to a more distant but larger city; on the other hand cities also act as intervening opportunities as they “compete” with each other for labour supply. A servant from West Brabant, for example, might have found work quite easily in Brussels but rather moved to Antwerp instead as it was closer to home. Few historical studies have focused on the effects of these two contradictory mechanisms.

Migration circuits

An urban recruitment area should not only be considered as a whole but also be subdivided into different migration circuits. In this dissertation, the term ‘migration circuit’ refers to the sum of migration movements of individuals with specific characteristics from a well-defined region towards a certain location. The many migrants from the *Kempen* (Campine) who – through the *naties* network – found work at the docks in Antwerp are a good example of a migration circuit.²⁰⁵ In contrast, all the migration movements from the Netherlands to Antwerp do not belong to a single migration circuit as a great deal of regional differentiation existed within the Netherlands and there were also many differences in the characteristics of Dutch migrants to the Belgian port city.

A distinction can be made between types of migration circuits. Jean-Pierre Poussou, for example, has introduced the concept of ‘demographic basin’ to refer to the area around a city from which the movements of its inhabitants were directed almost exclusively toward this city.²⁰⁶ While migration from outside the demographic basin depended strongly on the economic conjuncture, people from within this area continued to move to the nearby city both in times of prosperity and crisis. The strong links between the city and its direct hinterland

²⁰⁵ Winter, *Migrants*, 85.

²⁰⁶ Poussou, ‘Faut-il parler’, 118-139 and Idem, ‘Mobilité et migrations’, 335-353.

facilitated migration, settlement, and access to information about job opportunities but at the same time, also limited the horizons of the action space of the individuals involved.

In the early nineteenth century, the majority of the female migrants in Antwerp and Brussels came from within the *demographic basin* of these cities.²⁰⁷ Other migration circuits towards both cities often had a more specialized male character and consisted mostly of clerks, artisans, and merchants. Hilde Greefs and Anne Winter have demonstrated that this dynamic changed in the second half of the nineteenth century when an increasing proportion of unskilled female migrants came from outside the direct hinterland of Antwerp and even from abroad.²⁰⁸ The results presented in Alexander Coppens' dissertation suggest a similar evolution in the Brussels' recruitment area.²⁰⁹ The exceptional migration movements of low-skilled German men and women to both cities, for example, evolved in the 1870s into dense migration circuits.

Apart from certain characteristics such as density and the profiles of the migrants involved, the mechanisms underlying patterns of migration circuits may also differ. For example, some were directed by informal social networks, others by commercial intermediaries or by a combination of different types of intermediaries. These mechanisms will be discussed in further detail in the fourth and fifth chapter of this dissertation. This chapter focuses more on the historical evolution of migration circuits and the profiles of the foreign domestic servants.

Database foreigners' files

In order to analyse urban recruitment areas, migration circuits, and the profiles of migrants, historians of nineteenth-century migration often have to rely on census data.²¹⁰ Population censuses provide researchers with biographical information of inhabitants of a specific location or region at a specific moment in time. However, dates of arrival, previous places of residence, and dates of departure are mostly missing in these data and as such, the migrant's actual migration trajectory remains hidden from view. Fortunately, the foreigners' files in Belgium

²⁰⁷ Winter, *Migrants*, 157-182; Schaepdrijver, *Elites*, 72-81.

²⁰⁸ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80.

²⁰⁹ Coppens, 'Tussen beleid'.

²¹⁰ See for example: Moch and Tilly, 'Joining the Urban World', 33-56.

provide historians with more information about the trajectories of foreign immigrants but also about the profiles and activities of these individuals.

A detailed discussion of individual foreigners' files can be found in the first chapter of this dissertation. This section only addresses the database that was constructed on the basis of this source material. Prior the current project, a database with all the data from the *bulletins de renseignement* of the foreigners who arrived for the first time in Antwerp in 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880 or in Brussels in 1850 and 1880, already existed.²¹¹ Foreigners who arrived during any of these years but had previously already resided in the city were not included. This implies an underestimation of the number of arrivals per year. This chapter employs the Brussels and Antwerp data for the sampling years 1850 and 1880. In addition to this, the data from the *bulletins* of all foreigners who arrived in Antwerp in 1910 and of all foreign domestic servants who arrived in Brussels in the same year, have been added to the existing database. This has resulted in a sample of 1627 foreign female domestic servants in total.

The database provides the following information about each of these servants: file number, number of extra documents in the file, information about partners and children (if applicable), name, place and date of birth, marital status, information about the marriage (if applicable), address in the city, occupation, name of the employer (if information is available); names of both parents, place and date of birth or age of both parents, current place of residence of both parents, whether either parent had died, previous place of residence abroad, previous places of residence in Belgium, date of arrival in Belgium, date of arrival in the city, information about previous behaviour of the foreigner (often left blank), information about the documentation carried by the foreigner in order to prove his or her identity, whether the foreigner is a refugee or not, the expected length of stay in the city, date when the *bulletin* was created, signatures of the foreigner, police agent, and mayor.

The level of detail about each foreign domestic servant is quite unique for the period under study. The information included about the place of birth and previous place(s) of residence in Belgium and abroad mean the individual foreigners' files provide a particular good source for studying recruitment areas, migration circuits, and the profiles of international

²¹¹ For more information see: Coppens and Debackere 'De toepassing', 12-45. Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 61-80; Debackere, 'Tussen stad'; Coppens, 'Tussen beleid'.

migrants. The next section discusses the growing importance of domestic servants within Antwerp and Brussels' international recruitment area.

The expansion of the recruitment area

As already discussed in Chapter 1, there was a steady increase in the number of foreign domestic servants arriving in both Antwerp and Brussels during this period.²¹² Although a growing proportion of foreign women found work in other sectors, the group of domestic servants remained by far the largest, with almost half of single foreign women arriving in Antwerp in 1910 working in the domestic service labour market. After a feminization of international migration towards both cities between 1850 and 1880, the percentage of women among foreigners declined. However, there continued to be a steady increase in the absolute number of foreign women and of the domestic servants among them.

This increasing number went hand in hand with an expansion of the recruitment area for domestics. In 1850, 74 per cent of the foreign domestics who arrived in Antwerp had travelled a distance of less than 100 kilometres as the crow flies to reach the Belgian port city (Table 8). Thirty years later, this percentage had dropped to 39 percent as an increasing number of domestics started to arrive from more distant regions abroad. This expansion does not seem to have continued after 1880 as in 1910, once more a larger proportion of the foreign domestics came from nearby and a smaller number had travelled more than 100 kilometres. There were, however, a few more servants who travelled more than 400 kilometres in 1910 than in 1880.

While Antwerp is situated about 15 kilometres from the nearest border, there are about 50 kilometres between the capital and its closest border. This partly explains why the total number of foreign domestics in Brussels was always lower than in the port city. The growth in the number of domestics who travelled between 100 and 150 kilometres was less spectacular for Brussels than for Antwerp but there were far more servants who travelled a distance of over 200 kilometres to reach the capital. In 1910, 20 percent of the foreign domestics in the capital had even travelled a distance of more than 400 kilometres. In contrast to Antwerp, the expansion of the area from which Brussels recruited also continued after 1880. As such, both the extent and the pace of the expansion of the recruitment areas differed.

²¹² Chapter 1, p.?.

Table 8 Number and percentage of foreign domestic servants per distance travelled as the crow flies between the former place of residence and Antwerp or Brussels²¹³

	Antwerp			Brussels		
	1850	1880	1910	1850	1880	1910
Less than 25	14 (10)	15 (4)	37 (10)	6 (6)	18 (8)	17 (5)
Between 25 and 50	48 (34)	56 (17)	85 (24)	6 (6)	4 (2)	1 (0)
Between 50 and 100	43 (30)	61 (18)	74 (21)	23 (24)	33 (15)	29 (9)
Between 100 and 150	17 (12)	96 (29)	70 (20)	31 (33)	59 (27)	59 (19)
Between 150 and 200	11 (8)	50 (15)	21 (6)	9 (10)	58 (26)	66 (21)
Between 200 and 400	9 (6)	38 (11)	38 (11)	14 (15)	37 (17)	78 (25)
More than 400	0 (0)	19 (6)	29 (8)	5 (5)	11 (5)	61 (20)
N	142	335	354	94	220	311
Unknown	8	26	79	11	28	19
Total	150	361	433	105	248	330

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

The causes behind the expansion of the recruitment areas are manifold. The increasing significance of both cities within the national and international economy clearly had a considerable effect. As mentioned in the introduction, Antwerp evolved into an international transit port city and Brussels became the main financial, administrative, and political centre of one of the most successful industrial nations. Furthermore the population of both cities grew. According to Clé Lesger, this often had a positive effect on the reach and magnitude of its outbound information flows which could lead to an expansion of the migration field.²¹⁴ The growing importance of the merchant elites in the port city and the political elites in the capital, and the establishment of a strong middle-class in both, also generated an increasing demand for domestic servants.²¹⁵ As the domestic service labour market had always been a rather inclusive sector, the increasing demand also created opportunities for foreign women.

The growing appeal of both cities is just one part of the explanation for this development. To analyse the effect of other factors, the direction of the expansion, the evolution of migration trajectories and circuits, and the profiles of the foreign domestics all need to be addressed as well. Therefore, the following sections provide a more detailed

²¹³ The total number of foreign domestic servants is higher than in Table 1 because married, divorced and widowed servants are also included in this table. The great majority of servants is single, however.

²¹⁴ Lesger, 'Informatiestromen', 7.

²¹⁵ Winter, *Migrants*; Schaepdrijver, *Elites*.

chronological overview of the changes that can be detected in the recruitment areas of both cities for foreign domestics and focus especially on the impact of railways and regional differentiation.

1850: high levels of continuity and similarity

In 1850, 150 foreign domestic servants registered their arrival in Antwerp (Table 9). About half of these women came from the Dutch border province of North-Brabant and another 21 per cent originated from one of the two other Dutch border provinces (Zeeland and Limburg). A long, well-established migration tradition existed, particularly between the western part of North-Brabant (West Brabant) and the Belgian port city. According to Anne Winter, West Brabant already belonged to Antwerp's main recruitment area in the eighteenth century.²¹⁶ She distinguishes between a declining number of migrants from North-Brabant cities who were often employed in Antwerp's textile industry, and those who came from the West Brabant countryside and who – just like migrants from within the province of Antwerp – were mainly employed in the sectors of domestic service, food industries, retail, tools and construction, and transport.²¹⁷ Another factor which may explain the high number of North-Brabant servants in Antwerp in 1850 is the Potato Failure which struck North-Brabant harder than other Dutch regions due to its dependency on potatoes.²¹⁸

The majority of the remaining 30 per cent of foreign domestics originated from another region in the Netherlands or from Germany. In general, the concentrations in the recruitment area for domestics in 1850 displays high levels of continuity with the previous period. As discussed above, the total number of foreign domestics in Brussels was somewhat lower (Table 9). In contrast to Antwerp, no border region belonged to the direct hinterland of the capital. Some concentrations can be found in North-Brabant and Limburg which resembles the results of de Schaepdrijver for the total foreign population in the capital and again, displays high levels of continuity with the preceding decades.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Winter, *Migrants*, 71.

²¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 157 and 174.

²¹⁸ Schrover, 'The demographic consequences', 475.

²¹⁹ Schaepdrijver, *Elites*, 72-81.

Table 9 Region of birth and departure of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Antwerp or Brussels in 1850, N (%)

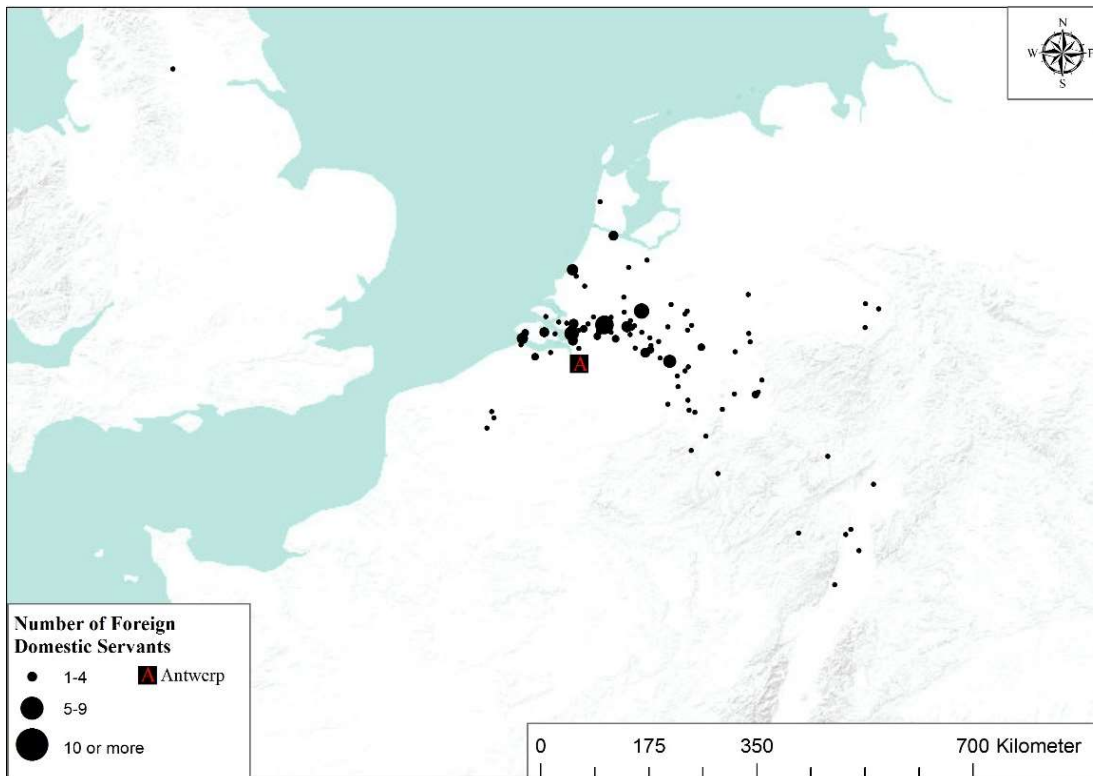
Region	Antwerp		Brussels	
	Birth	Departure	Birth	Departure
Zeeland	16 (11)	16 (11)	0 (0)	1 (1)
North-Brabant	71 (49)	56 (39)	15 (18)	15 (16)
Limburg	15 (10)	14 (10)	17 (20)	14 (15)
Cologne region ²²⁰	9 (6)	9 (6)	9 (11)	6 (6)
Rhineland-Palatinate	7 (5)	7 (5)	2 (2)	3 (3)
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (6)	1 (1)
Département du Nord	3 (2)	2 (1)	7 (8)	6 (6)
Other French border regions	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Other Dutch region	13 (9)	8 (6)	7 (8)	4 (4)
Other German regions	8 (6)	6 (4)	13 (15)	8 (9)
Other French regions	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (5)	7 (7)
Other countries	1 (1)	0 (0)	2 (2)	6 (6)
Belgium ²²¹	1 (1)	23 (16)	3 (4)	23 (24)
N	144	142	84	94
Unknown	6	8	21	11
Total	150	150	105	105

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

²²⁰ Cologne region refers to the *Regierungsbezirk Köln*.

²²¹ Individuals of foreign nationality could also have been born in Belgium.

Map 1 Birthplaces of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Antwerp in 1850²²²



Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Respectively 60 and 53 per cent of the foreign domestics moved directly from their place of birth to Antwerp or Brussels (Table 39, Appendix p.202 and Table 40, Appendix p.202). However, this does not imply that the port city or capital was their first migration destination. Hilde Bras has observed that – after they left their position – many servants in the Dutch province of Zeeland returned to their place of birth before they migrated again to another place to find employment.²²³ The most important former places of residence in the Antwerp recruitment area are the cities in North-Brabant, especially Breda.²²⁴ There are no clear concentrations in this respect in the recruitment area of the capital.²²⁵

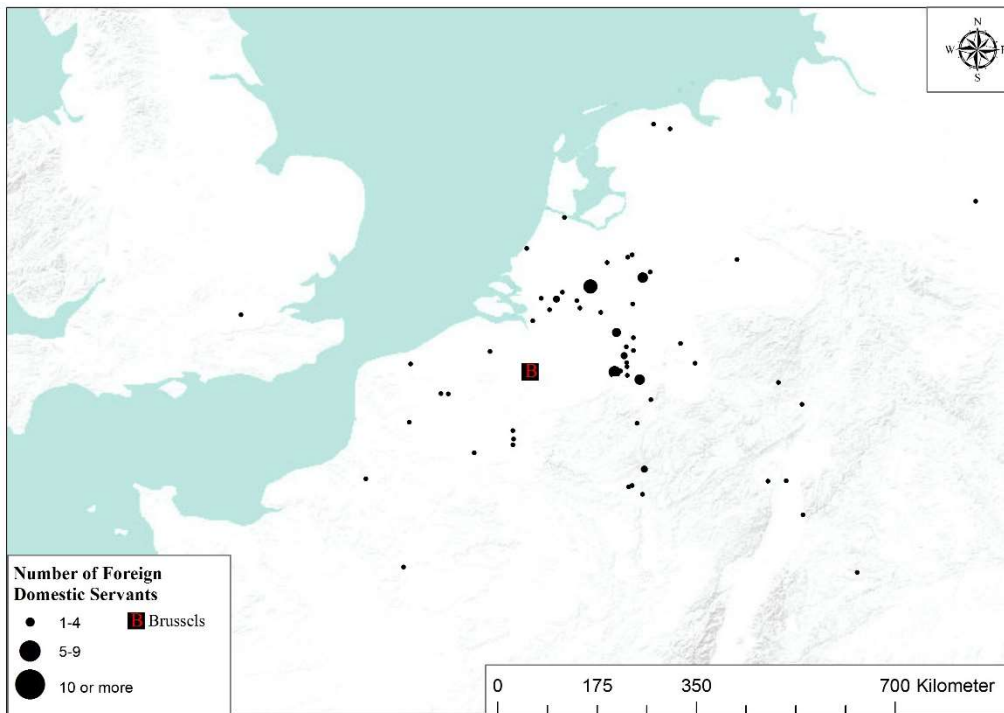
²²² Maps throughout this book were created using ArcGIS® software by Esri. ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ are the intellectual property of Esri and are used herein under license. Copyright © Esri. All rights reserved. For more information about Esri® software, please visit www.esri.com.

²²³ Bras, *Zeeuwse meiden*, 105-107.

²²⁴ Database foreigners' files Antwerp, 1850-1910.

²²⁵ *Ibidem*.

Map 2 Birthplaces of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Brussels in 1850



Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Cities in North-Brabant were not yet connected to Belgium via a railroad at this time.²²⁶ The railroads that had been established in the 1840s between the most prominent Belgian cities and the German and French border regions did not have any significant impact on the density of the migration circuits from these regions to Antwerp or Brussels.²²⁷ This is remarkable given the great importance migration historians attach to the transport revolution.²²⁸ These results indicate that especially the revolutionary character of the impact of the introduction of trains and railroads on migration circuits should not be overestimated in the case of female migrants.

The majority of servants already had some urban experience. 64 and 70 of the foreign domestics in Antwerp and Brussels respectively had either been born or resided in an urban environment (Table 43, Appendix p.206; Table 44, Appendix p.207). Inter-urban moves clearly represent a major proportion of the individual migration trajectories. Half of servants even originated from a city (Table 41, Appendix p.204; Table 42, Appendix p.205). The

²²⁶ Van der Hertten et al. (eds.), *Sporen*; Van der Hertten, *België onder stoom*.

²²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²²⁸ See amongst others: Lucassen and Lucassen, 'The mobility transition', 347-377.

exclusive focus in the literature on the lack of employment opportunities in the countryside as a driver for servant migration is thus not a true reflection of the nineteenth-century reality. Indeed, cities were also important places of recruitment for domestic servants.

Almost every foreign servant in both cities was single. In Antwerp, almost half of the foreign servants were between 18 and 24 years old and another 35 per cent between 25 and 29 (Table 45, Appendix, p.208). In Brussels, the age distribution was very similar with 48 per cent between the ages of 18 and 24 and another 24 per cent between 25 and 29. This is in line with the results of studies on regional servant migration. The vast majority of servants in the surroundings of both cities were young and single. Laurence Van Goethem has studied the migration of servants from the polder region north of Antwerp towards the port city between 1815 and 1866 and found that the median and average age of these women was 21 when they arrived.²²⁹ In her study on servants in Zeeland, Hilde Bras has observed that the median age upon entering service was 18 and the median age upon marriage was 25.²³⁰ A study by Christa Matthys indicates that the average age when entering service in Flanders was about 20 years old with a clear downward trend over the years and the average age upon marriage was also 25.²³¹ This age structure was typical for domestic servants in many northwest European countries.²³²

The origins of the servants did not have a major impact on their profiles. The percentage that had already resided in a city and the age structure was similar for most migration circuits.²³³ The 1850 sample displays high levels of continuity with the preceding decades, many similarities between the two recruitment areas and many parallels with native servants. This was to change during the following decades when the expansion of the recruitment areas took place.

1880: expansion and intervening opportunities

By 1880, the mainstay of the Antwerp recruitment area for domestics had shifted from the northern to the eastern border. 20 and 11 per cent originated from the Dutch province of

²²⁹ Van Goethem, 'Dienen in de stad Antwerpen', 18.

²³⁰ Bras, *Zeeuwse meiden*, 74.

²³¹ Matthys, *Sex and the City*, 140-141.

²³² See amongst others: McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 44-45, Pooley, 'Domestic Servants', 211;

²³³ Information about the servants' parents is lacking in the bulletins of 1850.

Limburg and the Cologne region respectively compared to 16 and 9 per cent from North-Brabant and Zeeland respectively (Table 10). Another 25 percent came from other regions in present-day Germany. There was also a significant increase in the foreign servants not originating from one of the neighbouring countries.

In previous decades, Germans had also been present in significant numbers in the Belgian port city. Geefs and Devos have observed that there were many clerks, sailors, craftsmen, students and apprentices among German men.²³⁴ German merchants arrived in smaller numbers but were nevertheless highly influential due the significance of their contribution to the Antwerp economy and the establishment and financing of many German associations in the Belgian port city.²³⁵ The vast majority of German women worked as domestic servants.

Within the Brussels' recruitment area, the migration circuits from the Cologne region and Limburg also became much denser. Brussels was home to the largest German community in Belgium. However, the social composition of this community after 1850 still needs to be thoroughly analysed.²³⁶ Apart from an increasing number of servants from the eastern border regions, there was also an exponential increase in the number of domestics from the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg who almost never found their way to Antwerp. Sandra Fratini has observed that the majority of Luxembourg migrants in Belgium were women of whom the vast majority worked as domestic servants.²³⁷ Many of these women found their way to the Belgian capital and the surrounding communities and continued to do so after the First World War. Much less is known about the occupations of Luxembourg men in the Belgian capital.

Servant migration from North-Brabant to Brussels no longer occurred in significant numbers by 1880. While in 1850, 15 North-Brabant servants arrived in the capital, this number had decreased to 7 in 1880. The number of servants from other German regions, France, and non-neighbouring countries to Brussels increased slightly but not to the same extent as was the case in Antwerp.

²³⁴ Geefs and Devos, 'The German Presence', 121-122.

²³⁵ *Ibidem*.

²³⁶ For some indications about the social composition of the German community in Brussels prior to 1850 see: Sartorius, 'Activités', 167-180.

²³⁷ Fratini, 'Les Luxembourgeoises', 343.

Table 10 Region of birth and departure of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Antwerp or Brussels in 1880, N (%)

Region	Antwerp		Brussels	
	Birth	Departure	Birth	Departure
Zeeland	29 (9)	21 (6)	3 (1)	2 (1)
North-Brabant	53 (16)	48 (14)	7 (3)	5 (2)
Limburg	68 (20)	65 (19)	27 (12)	22 (10)
Cologne region	35 (11)	59 (18)	29 (13)	32 (15)
Rhineland-Palatinate	22 (7)	12 (4)	26 (12)	16 (7)
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	4 (1)	0 (0)	40 (18)	29 (13)
Département du Nord	2 (1)	1 (0)	15 (7)	17 (8)
Other French border regions	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (2)	3 (1)
Other Dutch regions	16 (5)	17 (5)	8 (4)	11 (5)
Other German regions	61 (18)	51 (15)	32 (14)	23 (10)
Other French regions	6 (2)	5 (1)	15 (7)	14 (6)
Other countries	21 (6)	12 (4)	10 (4)	9 (4)
Belgium	15 (5)	44 (13)	8 (4)	37 (17)
N	332	335	224	220
Unknown	29	26	24	28
Total	361	361	248	248

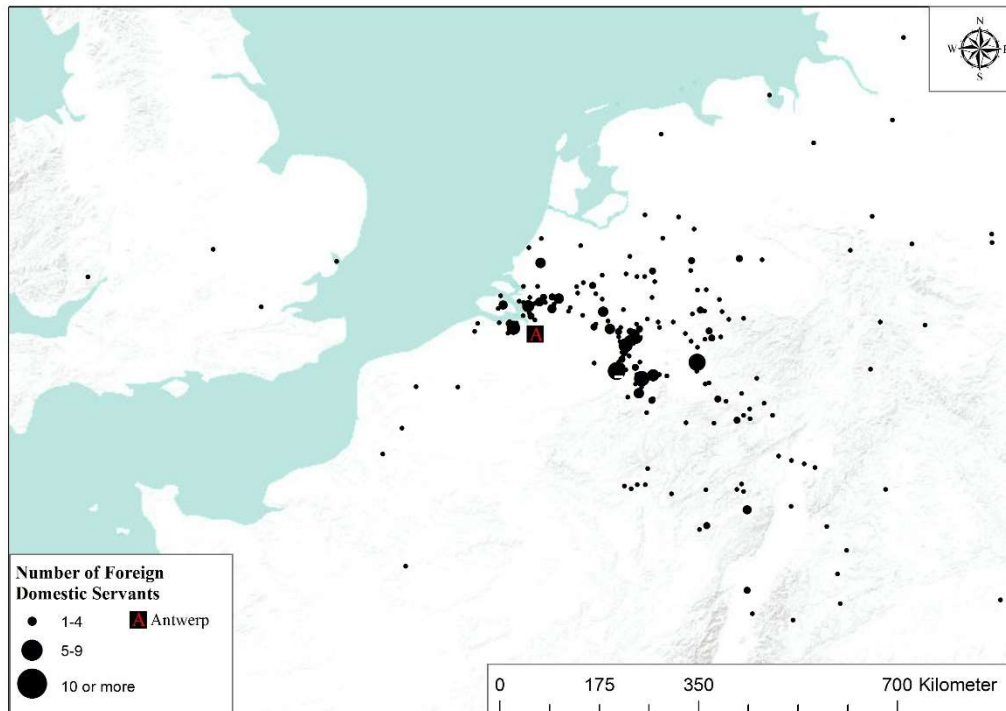
Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

The expansion of the recruitment area for domestics of both cities fits within a specific trend in the so-called nineteenth-century mobility transition. In their recent work, Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen have confirmed the hypothesis that in the second half of the nineteenth century, migration to European cities grew in numbers but also increasingly took place over longer distances.²³⁸ According to these authors, ‘cheaper and faster transport’ were the main causes

²³⁸ Lucassen and Lucassen, ‘The mobility transition’, 347-377.

for this shift. In other words, it was the introduction of railway passenger transport that made long-distance migration accessible to a larger proportion of the European population.

Map 3 Birthplaces of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Antwerp in 1880



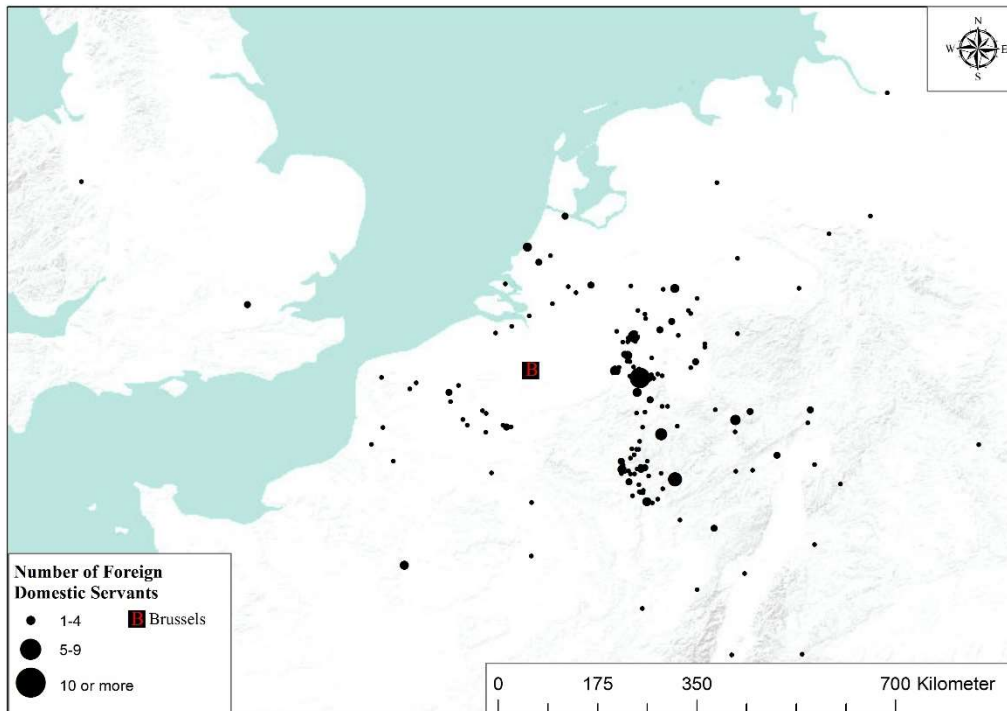
Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Railway connections had already been established between Antwerp and Brussels on the one hand and the German and French border regions in 1850 on the other, but these did not yet have a significant impact on the migration field of both cities. During the following decades, the tickets prices dropped and an increasing number of train stops were added to the railway network.²³⁹ These developments may have convinced many young women to take the train to more distant cities where they could find work as domestic servants. An analysis of the most common former places of residence of the foreign domestics supports this hypothesis (Table 11). All these cities were connected to Belgium via a railroad and none of them were important gateways for servant migration to Antwerp or Brussels in 1850. Of course, there is no direct proof that all the servants who left these cities for a Belgian city took the train, however it

²³⁹ Van der Hertten et al. (eds.), *Sporen*; Van der Hertten, *België onder stoom*.

seems very likely given the long distance they had to cross and the relatively cheap train tickets available to them.

Map 4 Birthplaces of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Brussels in 1880



Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Table 11 Most common former places of residence of foreign domestics who arrived in Antwerp in 1880.

Former place of residence	Antwerp	Brussels
Cologne	20	8
Aachen	18	12
Roermond	13	6
Maastricht	13	6
Düsseldorf	5	5

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

However, it is important to recognize that a railway connection between two places does not necessarily generate more migration movements of servants between these locations. For example, the railroads between Belgium and France did not result in large numbers of French servants arriving in Antwerp and Brussels. In the case of the port city, this was also true for French migrants in general. In the Belgian capital, however, more than 40 per cent of foreigners in the city originated from France.²⁴⁰ The lack of French servants in both cities could be the result of the greater appeal Paris and the textile industry in Lille had for French women.²⁴¹ In this way these French cities acted as intervening opportunities.

In regions such as the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, North-Brabant, or Limburg, there were fewer alternative employment opportunities for women.²⁴² Some regions were severely affected by the agricultural crisis during this period, caused by cheap American agricultural imports.²⁴³ Most cities in these regions were modest in size and did not have the capacity to employ and lodge all migrants from the surrounding countryside and mostly offered jobs in heavy industry in the case of Luxembourg.²⁴⁴ As such, the direct railroad connections to Antwerp and Brussels, along with the strong demand for domestics in these cities lured many women towards either one of them. The significant decline in the number of North-Brabant servants in Antwerp can probably be attributed to the end of the potato crisis which struck the entire population in the Dutch province more severely than the agricultural crisis had done.²⁴⁵

Women from the Cologne region could of course find employment in Cologne, which was a major commercial and service centre but relatively large numbers of women migrated from this city to Antwerp and Brussels, nonetheless. Greefs and Winter suggest that many of these women were recruited by the German merchant elite in Antwerp.²⁴⁶ This hypothesis will be tested in Chapter 3. In other cities in the Cologne region such as Aachen, women could find jobs in the woollen industry, while the booming mining, iron, steel, and glass industries probably offered fewer opportunities for women.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁰ Coppens, 'Tussen beleid', 185.

²⁴¹ See amongst others: Fuchs and Moch, 'Pregnant', 1007-1031; Lemerrier and Rosental, 'The Structure'.

²⁴² Chalmes and Bossaert, *Histoire*; Schrover, 'The demographic consequences', 451-480; Langeweg, *Mijnbouw*; Segers, 'Economic clusters', 91-118; Verbruggen and Greefs, 'Foreign domestic servants', 173-194.

²⁴³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁵ Schrover, 'The demographic consequences', 475.

²⁴⁶ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 74.

²⁴⁷ Wrigley, *Industrial Growth and Population Change*, 25-63.

Table 11 also demonstrates that Antwerp and Brussels did not represent important gateways for each other in terms of international servant migration. Antwerp was the destination of almost all the foreign domestics who came from northern border regions and Brussels was that of those who originated from the southern border regions. Servants who came from the eastern border regions migrated either to Antwerp or Brussels but almost never migrated via the port city to the capital or vice versa. In total, there were only six foreign servants who reached Antwerp via Brussels and one who made the reverse journey.

Besides an expansion of the recruitment areas, there were also several evolutions which occurred in terms of the profiles and experience of the foreign domestics. In general, there was a ruralization of the recruitment area as respectively 62 and 58 per cent of the foreign servants in Antwerp and Brussels originated from the countryside compared to 53 and 51 per cent in 1850 (Table 41, Appendix p.204; Table 42, Appendix p.205). However, these figures only take the birthplaces of the servants into account. The vast majority of foreign servants already had previous experience of living in a city when they arrived in one of the two Belgian cities (Table 43, Appendix p.206; Table 44, Appendix p.207). Furthermore, these general figures obscure significant variation between the different migration circuits. For example, while the vast majority of the domestics from the Cologne region was born in a city, those from the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg moved directly from the Luxembourg countryside to Brussels without any previous urban experience. The Dutch-Antwerp migration circuits were somewhat between these two extremes, just like many other migration circuits.

Another trend in the profiles of foreign servants in Antwerp and Brussels is that those who arrived in 1880 were often younger than those who moved to one of these cities in 1850. About 70 per cent was younger than 25 compared to about 55 per cent in 1850 (Table 45). This resembles Christa Matthys' research findings on regional servant migration in the area around Ghent.²⁴⁸ As such, this evolution does not seem to have been specific to foreign domestic servants but rather was characteristic of the domestic service labour market in general. However, again, there was a substantial degree of regional differentiation. Significantly more young women came from regions which were more severely struck by the agricultural crisis and lacked alternative female employment opportunities. In total, 70 per cent of foreign servants moving to Antwerp or Brussels were younger than 25 (Table 45), compared to 80 per

²⁴⁸ Matthys, *Sex and the City*, 140-141.

cent of the women who migrated from Limburg to the port city and 85 percent of those who moved from the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg to the capital.²⁴⁹

Overall, the social and economic crisis during this period seems to have forced many younger women to enter service and move outside their region of origin to find employment, especially in those regions most severely struck by this crisis. Despite the young age of many servants, 61 and 59 per cent of all foreign domestics who moved to Antwerp or Brussels in 1880 respectively had already lost one or both of their parents (Table 46, Appendix p.208).²⁵⁰ According to Bras, the death of a parent had a significant push effect on the decision of an individual to enter domestic service.²⁵¹

In sum, the democratization of train ticket prices, the agricultural crisis, and the growing lure of cities like Antwerp and Brussels created an expansion of the recruitment area for domestics of both cities. This expansion fits into a wider development often referred to as the nineteenth-century mobility transition. In a reaction to Jan and Leo Lucassen's study, Moch emphasizes that in addition to the above factors, the demographic transition and a shift in mentality were also important drivers of this development.²⁵²

The expansion of the recruitment area of both cities partly developed in different directions. While Antwerp was still an important destination for women from the northern border regions, Brussels attracted many more servants from the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg. Both cities seem to have functioned as intervening opportunities for each other. In a similar vein, the appeal of Paris and Lille probably explains why there were so few French servants in both cities. In general, foreign domestics were younger than in 1850 and originated from rural villages more frequently. However, as mentioned above, significant variation in this respect existed among the different migration circuits.

1910: contraction versus expansion

The results from the 1910 sample indicate that while Brussels' recruitment area continued to expand, that of Antwerp stabilized or even contracted a little bit. As shown above, there were

²⁴⁹ Database foreigners' files Antwerp, 1850-1910 and Database foreigners' files Brussels, 1850-1910.

²⁵⁰ Database foreigners' files Antwerp, 1850-1910 and Database foreigners' files Brussels, 1850-1910.

²⁵¹ Bras, *Zeeuwse meiden*, 76.

²⁵² Moch, 'From regional to global repertoires'.

fewer servants who had travelled more than 150 kilometres as the crow flies to reach the Belgian port city in 1910 than in 1880. This decline can be attributed to a decrease in the number of servants from the Cologne region, Limburg, and the Rhineland-Palatinate (Table 12). The number of domestics who migrated from these regions to Brussels decreased as well although not in a similar vein. As a result of the end of the agricultural crisis and the economic progress in these regions, young women were probably less inclined to look for work outside their home region.²⁵³

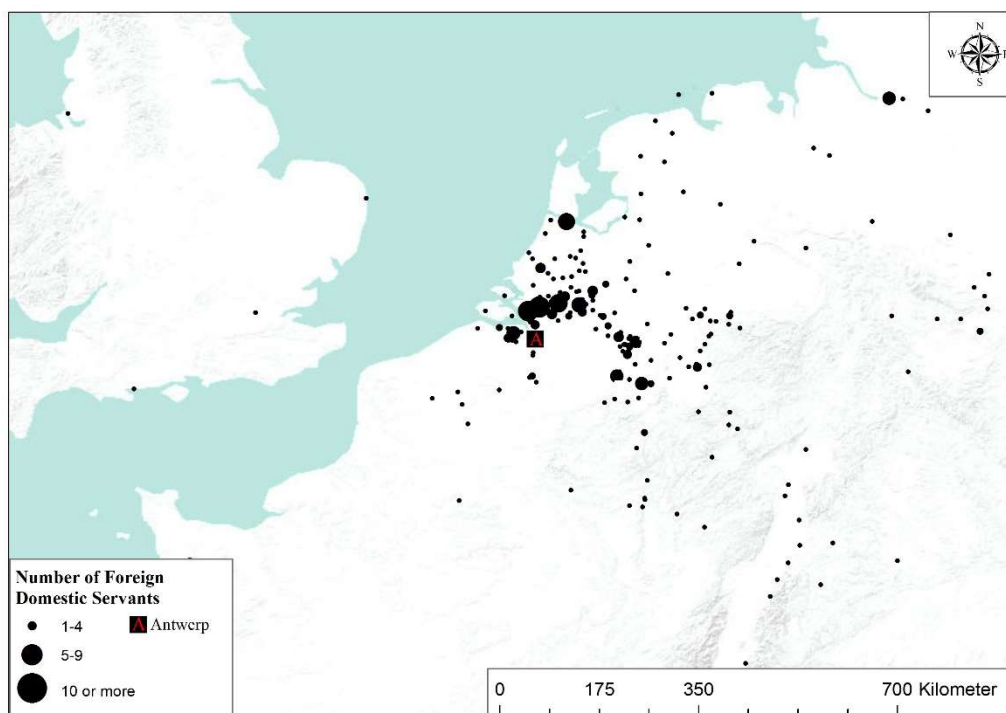
Table 12 Region of birth and departure of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Antwerp or Brussels in 1910, N (%)

Region	Antwerp		Brussels	
	Birth	Departure	Birth	Departure
Zeeland	25 (7)	18 (5)	4 (1)	2 (1)
North-Brabant	100 (27)	72 (20)	7 (2)	5 (2)
Limburg	37 (10)	38 (11)	27 (9)	21 (7)
Cologne region	21 (6)	16 (5)	24 (8)	25 (8)
Rhineland-Palatinate	7 (2)	3 (1)	8 (3)	8 (3)
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	6 (2)	3 (1)	35 (12)	31 (10)
Département du Nord	3 (1)	2 (1)	7 (2)	13 (4)
Other French border regions	2 (1)	0 (0)	4 (1)	3 (1)
Other Dutch regions	43 (11)	40 (11)	27 (9)	27 (9)
Other German regions	72 (19)	56 (16)	55 (18)	53 (17)
Other French regions	5 (1)	6 (2)	33 (11)	44 (14)
Other countries	22 (6)	11 (3)	56 (19)	44 (14)
Belgium	32 (9)	89 (25)	15 (5)	35 (11)
N	375	354	302	311
Unknown	58	79	28	19
Total	433	433	330	330

²⁵³ Chalmes and Bossaert, *Histoire*; Schrover, 'The demographic consequences', 451-480; Langeweg, *Mijnbouw*; Segers, 'Economic clusters', 91-118; Verbruggen and Greefs, 'Foreign domestic servants', 173-194.

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Map 5 Birthplaces of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Antwerp in 1910



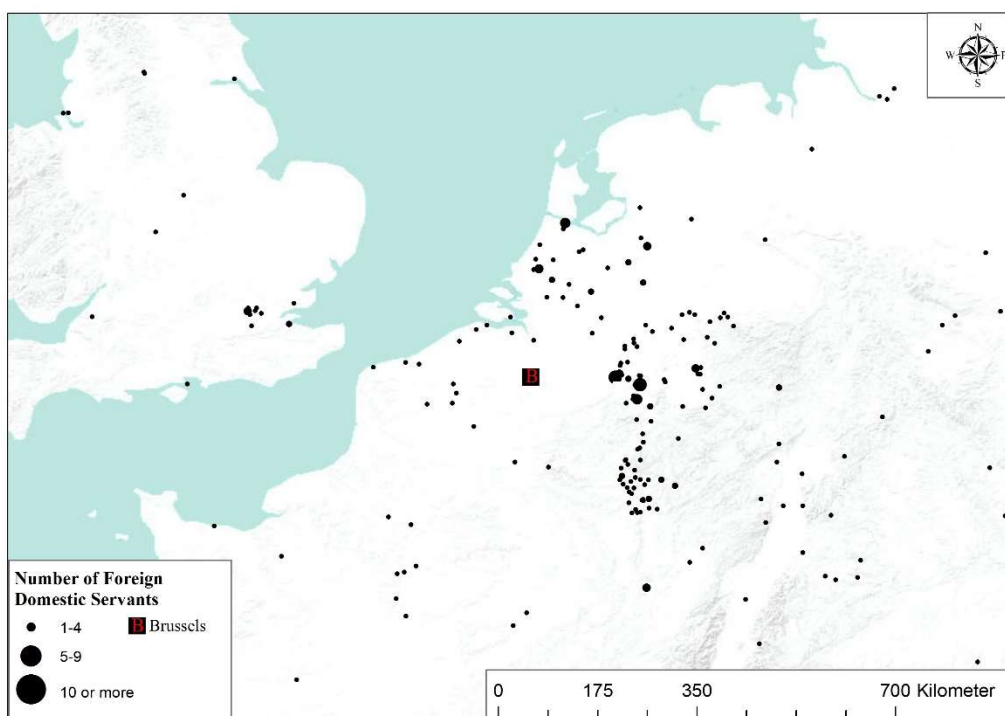
Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

In parallel to this evolution, there was an upsurge in the number of North-Brabant servants present in Antwerp, from 53 in 1880 to 100 in 1910. This development is somewhat harder to explain. The population density was not higher in this province compared to other Dutch provinces and the North-Brabant cities also experienced a period of industrialization and economic progress. However, according to Marlou Schrover, the premarital occupational possibilities of women in North-Brabant declined due to the mechanization of certain industries, the disappearance of certain proto-industrial activities, and the loss of certain female tasks in agriculture to men.²⁵⁴ The general decline in female employment opportunities within the Dutch province resulted in younger brides but perhaps also in higher emigration rates.

²⁵⁴ Schrover, 'The demographic consequences', 451-480.

Furthermore, female migration from North-Brabant to Turnhout in the province of Antwerp dwindled due to the demise of the textile industry in this city. It is possible that several families who would have previously sent their daughters to Turnhout now chose Antwerp as a new destination.

Map 6 Bithplaces of foreign domestic servants who arrived in Brussels in 1910



Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

In the case of Brussels, migration into the city from the regions that did not share a border with Belgium became much more significant and created a significant expansion of the city’s recruitment area (Table 12). In 1880, 25 per cent of foreign servants in Brussels originated from a non-border region, in 1910 this percentage had risen to 54. Migration from France and non-neighbouring countries in particular had become much more prominent. Many of these servants reached Brussels via other European capital cities such as Paris (21 servants), London (9 servants), Amsterdam (9 servants), or Berlin (5 servants).²⁵⁵ In a similar vein, port cities like Rotterdam (12 servants) and Hamburg (8 servants) became relatively important

²⁵⁵ Database Foreigners’ files Brussels, 1850-1910.

gateways for international servant migration into Antwerp.²⁵⁶ The effect of the inter-urban network of the Belgian port city was, however, less significant than for Brussels.

Just like in 1880, almost none of the North-Brabant servants in Antwerp found their way to the capital and only a few Luxembourg domestics moved via Brussels to the port city. There was a slight increase in the number of foreign servants who moved from Brussels to Antwerp from 6 to 9 but there was still only 1 foreign domestic who made the reverse move.²⁵⁷ While Antwerp continued to attract almost no foreign servants from southern regions, the number of Dutch servants in Brussels increased significantly from 36 to 55. None of the latter, however, had previously resided in Antwerp.

As mentioned above, the period between 1850 and 1880 was characterized by a ruralization of the foreign servant population, especially in Antwerp (table 41, Appendix p. 204). This trend reversed between 1880 and 1910 as in the latter year only a small majority of 53 percent had rural origins. This is partly a consequence of the increasing proportion of North-Brabant servants in Antwerp who came from one of the growing urban centres of that region (from 34 per cent in 1880 to 59 per cent in 1910). The number of servants arriving in Antwerp from cities in Dutch and German regions not bordering Belgium also increased from 10 to 25 and 25 to 35 respectively. In Brussels, the percentage stabilized at 58 (Table 12). Again, the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg stands out as 98 per cent of Luxembourg servants had been born in the countryside. In contrast to servants from other regions, almost every Luxembourg servant also migrated directly from the countryside to the Belgian capital without having previously resided in another city.

With regard to the ages of the foreign servant population, a reverse trend can also be detected when compared to the previous period. In the period between 1850 and 1880, the proportion of foreign servant population 25 or older had declined in Antwerp and Brussels from 46 and 44 per cent to 30 and 30 per cent respectively. In 1910, this share had increased to 34 per cent in Antwerp and 44 per cent in Brussels. In sum, there was a substantial growth in the proportion of the foreign servant population who were aged 25 or over. An exception are the servants who moved from the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg to Brussels of whom only 6 per cent fitted into this age group.

²⁵⁶ Database Foreigners' files Antwerp, 1850-1910.

²⁵⁷ Database Foreigners' files Antwerp, 1850-1910 and Database Foreigners' files Brussels, 1850-1910.

In the case of Antwerp, the growing proportion of relatively old servants can be explained by the agricultural crisis coming to an end and the decrease in the number of young servants coming from Limburg. In the case of Brussels, this seems to have been the result of an increase in the number of more specialized foreign domestic servants such as governesses or chambermaids who were often more experienced than other servants. Amongst these more experienced servants were almost no Luxembourg women. The growing proportion of specialized servants in the Belgian capital is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

As the period between 1880 and 1910 was characterized by a substantial increase in life expectancy at birth,²⁵⁸ the growing proportion of servants aged 25 or over, did not necessarily result in a higher proportion of orphans amongst the foreign servant population. In fact the proportion of foreign servants in Antwerp and Brussels who had already lost one or both parents declined in this period from 61 to 41 per cent and from 59 to 53 per cent respectively (Table 46, Appendix, p.208).

Conclusion

Between 1850 and 1910, servant migration to Antwerp and Brussels evolved from an almost exclusively regional affair towards a phenomenon that gradually expanded well beyond the regional hinterland of both cities. Regional circuits with a long standing tradition continued to occupy a prominent place in the urban recruitment area, but in addition to these, a number of non-regional circuits without much tradition developed into dense migration circuits as well. Furthermore, an increasing proportion of the foreign domestics consisted of individual migrants who moved within very thin migration circuits and often crossed longer distances.

This chapter has confirmed that the course of this expansion was to a certain extent, determined by the democratization of train tickets, the social and economic conditions in both the region of origin and place of destination, but also intervening opportunities (in other words, other cities). The causal link between the social and economic conditions and the mobility transition has already been explored in detail by several other historians. However, the impact of the transport revolution and intervening opportunities still awaits a more detailed analysis. More research is also needed into the specific backgrounds of servants who originated from an

²⁵⁸ Devos and Van Rossem, 'Urban Health Penalties', 92.

urban environment. Up until now, the historiography has mainly focused on servants who came to cities from the countryside whereas, as we have seen, a major proportion of the foreign servant population in Antwerp and Brussels was not born in rural villages but in a cities. The results also demonstrate that the changes of the recruitment areas of Antwerp and Brussels were not only characterized by expansion but also by opposite evolutions, such as the decreasing number of servants who came from the German border regions after 1880 and the small number of servants from the French border regions throughout the period under study.

Furthermore, the magnitude, pace, and direction of the expansion of the recruitment areas of Antwerp and Brussels differed significantly. The disparity in the direction of the expansion seems to have been a consequence of differences in the inter-urban networks of both cities and their relative geographic positioning in relation to each other. They did not often function as gateways to each other but rather as intervening opportunities. While the expansion of the Antwerp recruitment area was more prominent at an early stage, that of the Brussels recruitment area turned out to be more spectacular by the end of the period under study. The latter may have resulted from a greater demand in the capital for more specialized servants who more often came from afar.

Finally, significant differences also existed in the profiles of servants who moved within different migration circuits. Compared to other foreign servants, Luxembourg domestics moving to Brussels were much more often born in the countryside and younger than 25. Most of them also lacked any urban experience while the majority of the other servants had already resided in a city before moving to Antwerp or Brussels. There was a particularly high level of inter-urban migration between the Cologne region and both Belgian cities. Servants from this German region were also more likely to have been born in a city. The next chapter discusses the skills and functions of foreign servants as well as their remuneration and the households in which they worked. Our attention will therefore shift from foreign domestic servants' migration trajectories to their settlement, working conditions, and careers in Antwerp and Brussels.

3 WORKING CONDITIONS

On a cold winter's day in February 1880, Gertrude Engels arrived in Antwerp, most likely by train in the *middenstatie* on the present-day *Astridplein*.²⁵⁹ Earlier that day, she had left her parent's home in Eschweiler, Germany, to start her journey to the Belgian port city which probably lasted about half a day. Aged just sixteen, Gertrude soon found a job in the household of Prosper Le Jeune, a Belgian *suikerrafineerder* who lived in the new bourgeois sixth quarter of the city and was married to Fanny Macors. They had four children together, all under five years old. In the beginning Gertrude seems to have worked as a maid-of-all-work and had to do all the household tasks by herself, perhaps with a little help from Fanny. After a couple of months, however, the family Le Jeune hired another servant called Elisa Goerres whose parents' house in Eschweiler was located just around the corner from that of Gertrude. It seems likely that Gertrude knew Elisa already before the latter moved to Antwerp and that she even helped her to get this position in the Le Jeune household.

Elisa was to stay in Antwerp only for a couple of months before returning to her place of birth. Gertrude continued to work as a domestic servant in Belgium for a longer period, however. In 1881, she left Prosper Le Jeune's household and started to work for Eugène Mertens, a Belgian merchant who already had two Belgian servants working for him and his family. Two years later, Gertrude left Antwerp for Brussels to work in the household of the renowned family Carton de Wiart. In subsequent years, this family was to produce a Belgian prime minister as well as a decorated officer in the British army.²⁶⁰ After 1889, the population registers no longer inform us about the whereabouts of Gertrude. She would have been 25 years old by then and may have returned to her region of birth, possibly to get married and start a family of her own. During her stay in Belgium she had managed to climb up the hierarchy of domestic service and eventually ended up working in the household of an upper-class family. She probably earned much more in her last position than she had at the beginning of her career, even though she shared the workload with several other servants. As such, it seems that Gertrude's working conditions improved over the years.

²⁵⁹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 44001 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

²⁶⁰ Pagnoul, *Inventaire*.

Not all foreign domestics in Antwerp or Brussels had a trajectory similar to Gertrude's. Maria Arens who arrived in Brussels and came from Bettborn in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg found a position as a governess. She worked in the household of the Comte d'Oultremont, a nobleman who had one daughter and two sons between the ages of 8 and 11.²⁶¹ Rather than cleaning or cooking, Maria was responsible for the education of these children. She had probably received a more advanced education than Gertrude and gained a higher wage than the latter. Unfortunately, the population books do not provide any information about the length of stay or Maria's further career.

This chapter compares employers' households, functions, remuneration, and the careers of foreign servants who moved within different types of migration circuits to Antwerp and Brussels. As such, it aims to assess the impact of servants' origins on their working conditions as well as the differences between the port and capital city with respect to the demand for foreign domestic servants.

The profile of a servant could have had a major effect on the type of household that hired her, the function she had within this household, and the salary she received. A woman would only be hired as a governess in an elite household if she had previously received some formal education and could speak a number of languages.²⁶² Ethnic stereotypes played an important role too. For example, Valérie Piette describes the predominant stereotype of Flemish and Walloon servants in Brussels.²⁶³ The stereotype of a Flemish servant was that of a strong Catholic maid of all work from the countryside, while the Walloon servant would have been more polite and more suited to work as a nanny for example. Similar stereotypes existed for Breton servants in Paris or Irish domestics in the United States of America.²⁶⁴

Being a foreigner could sometimes be an advantage. Many wealthy parents, for example, preferred a foreign governess to a local one because their native language would be different from the family's and, the child could therefore learn a foreign language properly.²⁶⁵ However, the demand for such specialized servants in a city depended heavily on the profile of the city's elite. As explained in the introduction, Antwerp was a city of merchants, whereas

²⁶¹ AVB, Etat civil et population, Population, Recensements de population.

²⁶² Verbruggen, 'Thuisonderwijs', 32-45.

²⁶³ Piette, 'Women', 281-282.

²⁶⁴ Moch, *The Pariahs*; Moch, 'Domestic Service', 32-53; Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*; Diner, *Erin's Daughters*.

²⁶⁵ Verbruggen, 'Thuisonderwijs', 32-45.

Brussels was home to a sizeable nobility and financial elite. Their preferences or financial capital may have differed resulting in a variation in the demand for servants.

Finally, this chapter also discusses whether the working conditions of domestics were favourable compared to those of women working in other sectors. The lack of reliable data regarding remunerations makes this a very difficult exercise. However, the information that is available does give us some indications about this. Much of the information used in this chapter is derived from the population books which are introduced in detail in the next section. This section also discusses the selection of a sample of foreign domestic servants. The chapter continues with an analysis of employers' occupations in this sample, the number of domestics in the household, and the number of children present. The following three sections address the servants' duties in the households, their earnings, careers, and eventual departure from Antwerp or Brussels. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

Population Registers and selection of the sample

Much of the research discussed in this chapter is based on data from the Antwerp and Brussels population books.²⁶⁶ These registers are structured according to addresses and are based on the censuses, which were held about every ten years. For each member of the household, these population books give the name, date and place of birth, marital status, occupation, relationship to other household members, previous place of residence, future place of residence, date of arrival and departure. This information was updated when any individual entered or left the household. In order to study the composition of the households that housed and employed foreign servants, a database was created consisting of all the information available in the population registers about the head of the household, his or her live-in family members, and the servant's colleagues. This database also contains data about the length of stay of the servant, her residential mobility, and departure from the city.

The reconstruction of households, careers, and networks via the population registers is a rather complex and time-consuming undertaking which could not be completed for all 1627 foreign domestic servants within the database. Six migration circuits were therefore selected

²⁶⁶ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

which can be divided into four groups representing different types of migration circuits (Table 13).

Table 13 Selected migration circuits (A= Antwerp; B=Brussels)

Origin	Destination	Distance (in km)	Density	Total Number	Rural/urban	Migration tradition
West Brabant	A	15<55	Dense	109	Rural and Urban	Long-standing
Cologne region	A/B	110<225	Dense	44 (A) 40 (B)	Urban	No
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	B	140<210	Dense	61	Rural	No
Individual Migrants	A/B	120<12000	Thin	38 (A) 36 (B)	Rural and Urban	No

The migration circuits were selected on the basis of the distance migrants had to travel, the density of the circuit, the servants' rural or urban origins, and either the existence or not of a long standing and strong migration tradition. The migration circuit between West Brabant and Antwerp is representative of regional hinterland migration. West Brabant did not belong to the demographic basin of Antwerp as its inhabitants did not migrate exclusively to the city, however there was a long standing migration tradition between the border region and the port city which included many ordinary female and male migrants.²⁶⁷ Their profiles and networks were probably similar to migrants from the *Kempen* (Campine area) east from the city. Women who were born in West Brabant but whose previous residence was not located in the province of North-Brabant, were not included in the sample.

Servant migration from both the Cologne region and the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg is part of migration circuits that connect the city to areas outside its regional hinterland. While domestics from the Cologne region mostly migrated from cities towards Antwerp and Brussels,

²⁶⁷ Chapter 1.

those from Luxembourg moved directly from the countryside to the Belgian capital.²⁶⁸ The latter group's lack of urban experience may have had a significant impact on their networks in the city and their skills as domestic servants. Before 1850, migration between rural villages and Antwerp and Brussels rarely took place over such long distances. Similar to the first group, those women who were born in the Cologne region or the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, but whose former place of residence is located in another region, were not included.

In contrast to the other selected groups, individual migrants did not migrate within dense migration circuits and as such, could not rely on a community of compatriots in the city. The birthplace and former place of residence of the women selected for this group must be located in regions in which the birth place or former places of residence of at most 9 other foreigners was located. For example, there is only one servant who moved from Paris to Antwerp in 1860. However, in total, there were 31 foreigners who moved from the French capital to the Belgian port city in 1860 and as such, this particular servant has not been selected. An example of a domestic servant who was identified as an individual migrant is Eleonore Phiguarova. She was born in Chili and had lived there until she moved to Antwerp in 1880.²⁶⁹ She was the only migrant who had previously resided in Chili and had moved to Antwerp in 1880 and is therefore identified as an individual migrant.

The population books enable to carefully reconstruct the composition of the households where the foreign servants worked and lived (as well as also part of their networks as will be discussed in the next chapter). Significant limitations do exist in this exercise, however, for example, it has not been possible to take 1850 as a sample year because foreigners were not yet registered consistently in the population books during that period. Fortunately it was possible to use the data from the database of the foreigners' files for the year 1860 for Antwerp.²⁷⁰ However information could only be gathered for the sample years 1880 and 1910 for Brussels.

Every foreign servant in the sample was searched for in the population registers, by using the address details in the foreigners' files (Antwerp) or the index of the population registers (Brussels). As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the majority of servants were registered in a household in which they worked as live-in domestics. All the members of the

²⁶⁸ Chapter 1.

²⁶⁹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 44429.

²⁷⁰ Database foreigners' files Antwerp, 1850-1910.

household who were not registered as domestic servants were identified as being employers including the head of the household, his or her partner, and their children and sometimes other family members or friends. Only those employers present when the servant arrived in the household were included. Every other domestic present in the same household somewhere in the period between one year before the arrival of the servant under study and one year after her departure, was identified in the database as a colleague. This process of selection means that servants who had left the household more than one year before the arrival of the servant being examined are not included in the database. This is less significant in this chapter, but becomes more important in the analyses undertaken in the next chapter where it will be addressed in more detail.

In general, the Brussels population books are more difficult to interpret than those of Antwerp. Chapter 1 describes in detail the changes in the administrative procedures concerning domestics during the course of the nineteenth century. As opposed to servants in Antwerp or Ghent, those in Brussels were subject to a specific administrative procedure, just like prostitutes or other *classes suspectées*. A separate *registres des domestiques* was created and each servant received a *livret des domestiques* which she had to carry with her at all times. These measures were taken in order to control these young, mobile women who posed a moral threat in the eyes of the establishment. While most *livrets de domestiques* can no longer be found in any archive, some of the registers remain in the Brussels city archives. However, the latter do not contain any information about the employer or residential mobility of the servant which makes them less suitable for this type of research.

A separate table also exists in the population books which contains references to the *numéros du dossier* in the *registres des domestiques* of some of the servants who had lived at the given address. Unfortunately, however, there is no information to be found in either the population books or the *registres des domestiques* about the date a servant arrived at, or departed from, that address. Ironically, therefore, the creation of a separate administrative procedure by the Brussels administration makes it impossible for contemporary historians, to follow the movements of these women in the city.

As a result, only half of the servants under study could be identified in the population books for the sample year 1880 in Brussels. Furthermore, in some households, information about certain colleagues of the servants is missing which should be taken into account when

interpreting the research results. Only when a new law in 1883 abolished the obligation for servants to obtain an employment record book, does it become possible to follow the movements of the majority of servants with the help of the population books. Nevertheless, the Brussels police frequently lost track of its mobile population and dates of departure from the city are therefore often still missing in the records. Thus, although the data for the sample year of 1910 is much better, it never reaches the level of detail found in the Antwerp population books.

The reconstruction of the households where servants worked and lived is a time-consuming and relatively complex process due to the city administration's particular practices. From the registers of 1880-1890 onwards, information about occupation, place and date of birth, and other relevant information is only provided on the folio of the first address where the individual resided in the city. When he or she moved to another address in the city, the folio of the address only mentions the name of the individual and refers to the first address where he or she resided for further details. A consequence of this is that multiple pages in different parts of the population books often needed to be consulted in order to reconstruct the complete household. Moreover, the servants who arrived either in Antwerp in 1880 and 1910, or in Brussels in 1910, had to be searched for in two registers as these were years when a new census was undertaken and the old population register was gradually replaced by a new one. At the same time, this created the opportunity to test the reliability of the population registers. As it turns out, there were only a few instances when residents had to be added to the database who had been living in the household before 1880 or 1910, after consulting the registers. This suggests that overall, the registration of the members of the households being studied here went relatively smoothly during this later period.

Households

In total, information about 328 foreign domestic servants, 895 employers, and 631 colleagues was entered into the database. Of the 328 servants, 63 (19 per cent) could not be found in the population registers (Table 14 and 15). In Antwerp, this latter group was always small in size. The situation is more troublesome in relation to servants who moved to Brussels in 1880. As mentioned above, almost half of them could not be found in the index of the population

registers. Of the 265 servants who could be identified in the registers, almost 80 per cent actually worked as domestic servants in a household at the time of registration in the population books. The remaining 20 per cent resided in hotels, lodging houses, inns or in houses with an uncertain function. Many of them were probably working as either servants or waitresses in these establishments. Some may also have worked in lodging houses or inns that were part of clandestine prostitution networks. The unhappy fate of such clandestine prostitutes is a popular topic in the contemporary media and for historians, but it only concerns a specific group within the sample under study.²⁷¹ In the remainder of this chapter, the focus will be on the women who worked as domestic servants in private households and their co-residents.

Table 14 Number of servants (per migration circuit) who were present in the Antwerp population registers residing within a household or other establishment.

	West Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants			
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total
Household	27	15	31	73	9	19	6	34	4	11	11	26
Other	5	9	8	22	1	7	0	8	0	5	2	7
Unknown	2	1	11	14	0	0	2	2	0	2	3	5
Total	34	25	50	109	10	26	8	44	4	18	16	38

Source: Antwerp population registers.

Table 15 Number of servants (per migration circuit) present in the Brussels population registers residing within a household or other establishment.

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants		
	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total
Household	16	19	35	12	13	25	3	14	17
Other	3	5	8	1	4	5	1	4	5
Unknown	14	4	18	9	1	10	7	7	14
Total	33	29	61	22	18	40	11	25	36

Source: Brussels population registers.

²⁷¹ See amongst others: Chaumont and Machiels (eds.), *Du sordide au mythe*.

The occupation of the head of the household is a first indicator to help determine the type of household where servants worked. Table 16 and 17 show that there were significant differences in this respect between the cities and years being studied. In Antwerp almost half of the servants had an employer who was active in the wholesale sector. As is to be expected in a port city like Antwerp, the majority of these employers were merchants and brokers. Servants from the Cologne region in particular tended to work for such employers (62 per cent). This can be linked to the presence of numerous German merchants in the Belgian port city.²⁷² The role of this German colony on the recruitment of German servants is discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Over time, West-Brabant women and individual migrants were also increasingly employed by merchants. In 1860, there were still many servants from West-Brabant working for an artisan or a specialized worker (37 per cent), while only 30 per cent worked for merchants. In the subsequent years, however, the importance of the artisans and specialized workers decreased significantly with merchants and brokers clearly becoming dominant as employers of foreign servants in the port city. Other important groups among employers included proprietors (9 per cent) and clerks (8 per cent). In general, by the end of the period under scrutiny, there were no major differences in terms of the occupation of the head of the household between the migration circuits under study.

The wholesale sector also represented the largest group of active employers in Brussels but only consisting of 26 per cent (Table 17). Among them were not only merchants, but also industrial entrepreneurs and employers active in the insurance sector. Other important groups were: proprietors (19 per cent), liberal professions (18 per cent), artisans and specialized workers (14 per cent), and officials (12 per cent). Among these groups were several noblemen, lawyers, and government officials, hardly surprising within the context of a national capital. As in Antwerp, the significance of artisans and specialized workers decreased over time. In relative terms, Luxembourg servants worked more often for employers active in the wholesale sector and individual migrants for officials, but these differences are too small in terms of absolute numbers to enable us to make any broad generalizations.

²⁷² Devos and Greefs, 'The German presence', 122-127; Vrints, 'De Klippen', 9-14.

Table 16 Number of servants per category of occupation of the head of the household in Antwerp, N (%)

	West Brabant			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants			Total
	1860	1880	1910	1860	1880	1910	1860	1880	1910	
Artisans & Specialized Workers	10 (37)	2 (13)	5 (16)	1 (11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (9)	1 (9)	20 (15)
Artists	1 (4)	1 (7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (3)
Clerks	1 (4)	2 (13)	0 (0)	1 (11)	2 (11)	0 (0)	1 (25)	3 (27)	0 (0)	10 (8)
Freight Handlers	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Liberal Professions	0 (0)	1 (7)	3 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (18)	2 (18)	8 (6)
No Occupation	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (17)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2)
Officials	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (6)	1 (11)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (9)	5 (4)
Other	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (17)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (9)	3 (2)
Proprietors	3 (11)	1 (7)	4 (13)	2 (22)	0 (0)	1 (17)	0 (0)	1 (9)	0 (0)	12 (9)
Retail	2 (7)	2 (13)	1 (3)	1 (11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (9)	7 (5)
Wholesale	8 (30)	6 (40)	14 (45)	3 (33)	15 (79)	3 (50)	2 (50)	4 (36)	5 (45)	60 (45)
Total	27 (100)	15 (100)	31 (100)	9 (100)	19 (100)	6 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)	11 (100)	133 (100)

Source: Antwerp population registers.

Table 17 Number of servants per category of occupation of the head of the household in Brussels, N (%)

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg		Cologne Region		Individual Migrants		Total
	1880	1910	1880	1910	1880	1910	
Artisans & Specialized Workers	8 (50)	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (7)	11 (14)
Artists	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Clerks	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (17)	1 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (4)
Freight Handlers	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Liberal Professions	2 (13)	5 (26)	3 (25)	3 (23)	0 (0)	1 (7)	14 (18)
No Occupation	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Officials	1 (6)	1 (5)	2 (17)	0 (0)	1 (33)	4 (29)	9 (12)
Other	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (33)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Proprietors	3 (19)	4 (21)	1 (8)	3 (23)	0 (0)	4 (29)	15 (19)
Retail	2 (13)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (5)
Wholesale	0 (0)	8 (42)	3 (25)	4 (31)	1 (33)	4 (29)	20 (26)
Total	16 (100)	19 (100)	12 (100)	13 (100)	3 (100)	14 (100)	77 (100)

Source: Brussels population registers.

Table 18 Number of servants per total number of employers in the first household in Antwerp, N (%).

	West Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants				Total
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	
1	2 (7)	0 (0)	2 (6)	4 (5)	0 (0)	1 (5)	1 (17)	2 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (5)
2	3 (11)	4 (27)	9 (29)	164 (22)	0 (0)	4 (21)	1 (17)	5 (15)	1 (25)	3 (27)	2 (18)	6 (23)	27 (20)
3	3 (11)	2 (13)	4 (13)	9 (12)	4 (44)	2 (11)	0 (0)	6 (18)	0 (0)	2 (18)	7 (64)	9 (35)	24 (18)
4	3 (11)	3 (20)	11 (35)	174 (23)	14 (11)	1 (5)	2 (33)	4 (12)	0 (0)	4 (36)	0 (0)	4 (15)	25 (19)
5	6 (22)	3 (20)	5 (16)	144 (19)	1 (11)	2 (11)	1 (17)	4 (12)	3 (75)	2 (18)	1 (9)	6 (23)	24 (18)
6	3 (11)	2 (13)	0 (0)	5 (7)	0 (0)	3 (16)	1 (17)	4 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (9)	1 (4)	10 (8)
7	3 (11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (4)	1 (11)	4 (21)	0 (0)	5 (15)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (6)
8	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (22)	1 (5)	0 (0)	3 (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (3)
9	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
10	1 (4)	1 (7)	0 (0)	2 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)
11	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
12	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)
Tota 1	27 (100)	15 (100)	31 (100)	73 (100)	9 (100)	19 (100)	6 (100)	34 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)	11 (100)	26 (100)	133 (100)

Source: Antwerp population registers.

Table 19 Number of servants per total number of employers in the first household in Brussels, N (%).

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants			Total
	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	
1	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (15)	2 (8)	0 (0)	2 (14)	2 (12)	4 (5)
2	3 (19)	6 (32)	9 (26)	0 (0)	2 (15)	2 (8)	0 (0)	3 (21)	3 (18)	14 (18)
3	2 (13)	3 (16)	5 (14)	1 (8)	4 (31)	5 (20)	0 (0)	2 (14)	2 (12)	12 (16)
4	0 (0)	5 (26)	5 (14)	2 (17)	0 (0)	2 (8)	0 (0)	2 (14)	2 (12)	9 (12)
5	2 (13)	3 (16)	5 (14)	3 (25)	3 (23)	6 (24)	2 (67)	3 (21)	5 (29)	16 (21)
6	7 (44)	1 (5)	8 (23)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (12)
7	2 (13)	1 (5)	3 (9)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (4)	1 (33)	1 (7)	2 (12)	6 (8)
8	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (17)	1 (8)	3 (12)	0 (0)	1 (7)	1 (6)	4 (5)
9	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (8)	2 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (3)
10	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Total	16 (100)	19 (100)	35 (100)	12 (100)	13 (100)	25 (100)	3 (100)	14 (100)	17 (100)	77 (100)

Source: Brussels population registers.

Table 20 Number of servants per total number of children in the first household in Antwerp, N (%).

	West Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants				Total
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	
0	5 (19)	6 (40)	14 (45)	25 (34)	0 (0)	7 (37)	3 (50)	10 (29)	1 (25)	3 (27)	4 (36)	8 (31)	43 (32)
1	6 (22)	4 (27)	2 (6)	12 (16)	4 (44)	1 (5)	1 (17)	6 (18)	0 (0)	2 (18)	7 (64)	9 (35)	27 (20)
2	3 (11)	1 (7)	12 (39)	16 (22)	1 (11)	1 (5)	0 (0)	2 (6)	0 (0)	4 (36)	0 (0)	4 (15)	22 (17)
3	7 (26)	2 (13)	3 (10)	12 (16)	2 (22)	3 (16)	1 (17)	6 (18)	3 (75)	1 (9)	0 (0)	4 (15)	22 (17)
4	1 (4)	1 (7)	0 (0)	2 (3)	0 (0)	3 (16)	1 (17)	4 (12)	0 (0)	1 (9)	0 (0)	1 (4)	7 (5)
5	3 (11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (4)	2 (22)	2 (11)	0 (0)	4 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (5)
6	1 (4)	1 (7)	0 (0)	2 (3)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2)
7	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
8	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
9	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
10	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Tota l	27 (100)	15 (100)	31 (100)	73 (100)	9 (100)	19 (100)	6 (100)	34 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)	11 (100)	26 (100)	133 (100)

Source: Antwerp population registers.

Table 21 Number of servants per total number of children in the first household in Brussels, N (%).

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants			Total
	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	
0	3 (19)	6 (32)	9 (26)	0 (0)	5 (38)	5 (20)	0 (0)	5 (36)	5 (29)	19 (25)
1	2 (13)	5 (26)	7 (20)	1 (8)	4 (31)	5 (20)	1 (33)	2 (14)	3 (18)	15 (19)
2	3 (19)	4 (21)	7 (20)	4 (33)	0 (0)	4 (16)	1 (33)	2 (14)	3 (18)	14 (18)
3	3 (19)	3 (16)	6 (17)	2 (17)	3 (23)	5 (20)	0 (0)	4 (29)	4 (24)	15 (19)
4	4 (25)	0 (0)	4 (11)	2 (17)	0 (0)	2 (8)	1 (33)	0 (0)	1 (6)	7 (9)
5	1 (6)	1 (5)	2 (6)	2 (17)	0 (0)	2 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (5)
6	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (7)	1 (6)	2 (3)
7	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Total	16 (100)	19 (100)	35 (100)	12 (100)	13 (100)	25 (100)	3 (100)	14 (100)	17 (100)	77 (100)

Source: Brussels population registers.

In both cities, 69 per cent of the servants worked for a family consisting of 3 to 7 individuals and in more than half of cases this included between 1 and 3 children younger than 18 years old (Table 18, 19, 20, and 21). The first household where Gertrude Engels worked, for example, consisted of Prosper Le Jeune, his wife, and their four children. Only in respectively 32 and 25 per cent of the cases in Antwerp and Brussels respectively, was there no child younger than 18 years old present. In some exceptional cases, there were even more than seven members of the employer's household. The twenty-three year old Agathe Schaaf, for example, was a *bonne d'enfants* in the household of Ferdinand de Meester de Belzenbroeck and his wife Isabelle De Foestraels, who had seven children ranging from between a few months and twelve years old.²⁷³ In contrast, Alice White from Hull in England worked as *dame de compagnie* or lady-in-waiting, for Mildred-May Rickets, a 48-year old *rentière* from London who lived on her own.²⁷⁴ This was rather exceptional, however. In total, only 5 per cent of the servants being examined worked for an employer living alone. There are no significant differences between the migration circuits in this respect.

²⁷³ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 77043 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

²⁷⁴ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 78437 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

Another important indicator of the type of household is the number of servants that these employers could afford (Table 22 and 23). One caveat being that this number could vary during the course of the servant's stay in the household. An employer sometimes arrived in the city with one domestic but after a few months hired two or more servants. Another issue is that it is possible that the moment of a servant's arrival or departure was registered in the population registers could, in fact, have been different from their actual date of arrival or departure. As such, it is not always completely clear whether two servants actually worked together or not. In order to obtain a relatively good estimate of the number of servants in any given household, the average between the minimum and maximum number of co-workers who worked at the same time in the household has been calculated. The results reveal an important degree of variation between the cities and the groups under study. In Antwerp, 32 per cent of the servants was the only servant present in the household (maid-of-all-work), compared to 19 per cent in the capital. Particularly regional hinterland migrants from West-Brabant were often maids-for-all-work, with a maximum of 52 percent in 1910. Servants from the Cologne region more often had an employer in Antwerp who could afford multiple servants. Sixty-five per cent of these women even had more than one colleague on average. The individual migrants in Antwerp were somewhat between these two groups.

In Brussels the majority of all sample groups had at least one colleague working with them. The difficulties in identifying servants in the population books of 1876 should be taken into account when interpreting these results, however. As they probably underestimate the average number of colleagues, the difference between Antwerp and Brussels may have even been larger in reality. Violette Fergusson, a governess from Sylhet in England, for example, even had more than five colleagues.²⁷⁵ Such extensive domestic staff was probably more commonplace in the *plezierhoven* in the surrounding countryside than in the cities themselves, but there are also several examples in the Belgian capital. In Antwerp, they were much more exceptional.

²⁷⁵ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 77088 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

Table 22 Number of foreign servants per number of servants in the first household in Antwerp including the servant under study, N (%).

	West Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants				Total
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	
1	7 (26)	5 (33)	16 (52)	28 (38)	0 (0)	4 (21)	1 (17)	5 (15)	2 (50)	4 (36)	4 (36)	10 (38)	43 (32)
1,5	5 (19)	3 (20)	5 (16)	13 (18)	1 (11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	1 (9)	1 (9)	2 (8)	16 (12)
2	6 (22)	4 (27)	4 (13)	14 (19)	0 (0)	4 (21)	2 (33)	6 (18)	0 (0)	3 (27)	3 (27)	6 (23)	26 (20)
2,5	5 (19)	1 (7)	4 (13)	10 (14)	5 (56)	5 (26)	0 (0)	10 (29)	2 (50)	1 (9)	2 (18)	5 (19)	25 (19)
3	2 (7)	1 (7)	0 (0)	3 (4)	2 (22)	4 (21)	1 (17)	7 (21)	0 (0)	1 (9)	1 (9)	2 (8)	12 (9)
3,5	1 (4)	0 (0)	2 (6)	3 (4)	1 (11)	1 (5)	1 (17)	3 (9)	0 (0)	1 (9)	0 (0)	1 (4)	7 (5)
4	0 (0)	1 (7)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)
4,5	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (17)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)
Total	27 (100)	15 (100)	31 (100)	73 (100)	9 (100)	19 (100)	6 (100)	34 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)	11 (100)	26 (100)	133 (100)

Source: Antwerp population registers.

Table 23 Number of foreign servants per number of servants in the first household in Brussels including the servant under study, N (%).

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants			Total
	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	
1	3 (19)	5 (26)	8 (23)	1 (8)	2 (15)	3 (12)	0 (0)	4 (29)	4 (24)	15 (19)
1,5	2 (13)	3 (16)	5 (14)	4 (33)	1 (8)	5 (20)	1 (33)	0 (0)	1 (6)	11 (14)
2	2 (13)	5 (26)	7 (20)	6 (50)	3 (23)	9 (36)	0 (0)	2 (14)	2 (12)	18 (23)
2,5	2 (13)	2 (11)	4 (11)	1 (8)	1 (8)	2 (8)	2 (67)	1 (7)	3 (18)	9 (12)
3	5 (31)	2 (11)	7 (20)	0 (0)	5 (38)	5 (20)	0 (0)	3 (21)	3 (18)	15 (19)
3,5	1 (6)	2 (11)	3 (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (4)
4	1 (6)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (7)	1 (6)	2 (3)
4,5	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
5	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (14)	2 (12)	2 (3)
5,5	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
6	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
6,5	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (7)	1 (6)	1 (1)
Total	16 (100)	19 (100)	35 (100)	12 (100)	13 (100)	25 (100)	3 (100)	14 (100)	17 (100)	77 (100)

Source: Brussels population registers.

Duties

Violette Fergusson's employers were Paul Hamoir and Henriette de Vanssay who had three young children.²⁷⁶ Apart from Violette, the family also employed several *femmes de chambre*, a French male cook, an English *dame de compagnie*, a *fille de quartier* and a male domestic, probably a *valet de chambre*. All these servants had to carry out separate specific tasks. The titles given to each of these domestics could differ between places, but the staff in most upper-class European and American families consisted of one or several *femmes de chambre* or chambermaids who were responsible for the personal care and hygiene of their employers, their bedrooms, and often also the serving of meals; a *fille de quartier* who was often younger than the *femme de chambre* and had to do the heavy work of cleaning the household; a male cook or an experienced kitchen maid sometimes assisted by a young and inexperienced *fille de cuisine*; a governess who was responsible for the children's education; a *bonne d'enfants*, often the youngest servant, who took care of the youngest children; and sometimes a male driver, gardener or *valet de chambre*.²⁷⁷ When a new child was born, some employers also hired a wet nurse or *nourrice* to breastfeed the baby but this was uncommon in Antwerp and Brussels.²⁷⁸

The head of staff in such households was typically an experienced male servant or the governess.²⁷⁹ The latter was often a daughter of a middle-class family who had received some form of advanced education. She clearly stood apart from the rest of the domestic staff and sometimes became a close friend of the family. Some governesses even stayed in the household long after the children had grown up, as a lady-in-waiting or *dame de compagnie*.

However, as mentioned above, an extensive domestic staff was rather exceptional in Antwerp and Brussels. A position like that of Dina Demmers was more common. Dina migrated from Bergen-op-Zoom in West-Brabant to Antwerp in 1910 to work for Corneel De Wandeleer, a Belgian merchant from Malines.²⁸⁰ During her stay in the household of De

²⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷⁷ See amongst others: on Belgium: De Keyzer, "*Madame est servie*", 91-106; Piette, *Domestiques et servantes*, 174-189; on the United States: Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget*, 100-106; on Germany: Wierling, *Mädchen für alles*, 103-104; on Russia: Rustemeyer, *Dienstboten*, 96-99; On France: Martin-Fugier, *La place des bonnes*, 77-86.

²⁷⁸ Database foreigners' files Brussels 1850-1910.

²⁷⁹ Piette, *Domestiques et servantes*, 189.

²⁸⁰ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 136958 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

Wandeleer, Dina had one or two co-workers. In such households, the division of tasks was often more flexible than in those of the upper-classes of society.

Other servants – like Gertrude at the beginning of her career – had to clean, cook, wash, and take care of the children all by themselves. As mentioned in the previous section, between 32 and 44 percent of servants in the Antwerp sample, and 19 and 33 per cent of the Brussels sample, worked in such households as maids-of-all-work. Their job is often considered to have been the hardest among the domestic servants' roles, although Sîan Pooley has observed that in several Lancaster households, they did sometimes share the workload with their mistresses or with the daughters of the employer family.²⁸¹ However, even when they received help, many maids-of-all-work probably hoped to work in an upper-class household as a *femme de chambre* or kitchen maid one day as such positions were more prestigious and also financially more lucrative.

Apart from the West-Brabant servants, the majority of the foreign servants studied here had at least one co-worker. Unfortunately, the population registers or foreigners' files often do not provide any information about the division of labour between servants in most households. In Antwerp especially, most domestics were simply registered as *servante* or *meid*. In 1860 and 1880, this was the case for 95 and 97 per cent respectively (Table 24). In 1910 this percentage had dropped to 83 percent as more women were registered as *bonne d'enfants* (21 or 5 per cent) or *gouvernante* (34 or 7 per cent). It is hard to determine whether this increasing differentiation during registration was the result of a more detailed gathering of information by the administration or of an actual change in the types of positions held by foreign servants in Antwerp households.

In Brussels, the degree of differentiation in the occupational titles of foreign servants was much higher (Table 25). Only half of all foreign servants were registered as *servante* or *domestique*. This could be attributed to a greater degree of diligence by the Brussels administration, but is also likely to be a reflection of the social differences between the domestic service labour markets in both cities. In contrast to the situation in the port city, there were several households in the capital who hired a relatively high number of servants. Some of the employers in Brussels were of noble descent and, as such, could not only afford, but

²⁸¹ Pooley, 'Domestic servants', 420-421.

were also expected, to have an extensive household staff which by itself implied greater levels of differentiation between staff members.

Table 24 Number of servants per occupation in Antwerp

	1860	1880	1910	Total
Servante	166 (95)	349 (97)	358 (83)	873 (90)
Bonne d'enfants	5 (3)	4 (1)	21 (5)	30 (3)
Nourrice	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)	2 (0)
Fille de quartier	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (3)	12 (1)
Femme de chambre	0 (0)	3 (1)	4 (1)	7 (1)
Fille de cuisine	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Gouvernante	3 (2)	4 (1)	32 (7)	39 (4)
Institutrice	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)
Dame de Compagnie	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Total	175 (100)	361 (100)	433 (100)	969 (100)

Source: Antwerp foreigners' files

Table 25 Number of servants per occupation in Brussels

	1880	1910	Total
Servante	145 (58)	143 (43)	288 (50)
Bonne d'enfants	35 (14)	43 (13)	78 (13)
Nourrice	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Fille de quartier	21 (8)	3 (1)	24 (4)
Femme de chambre	36 (15)	49 (15)	85 (15)
Fille de cuisine	2 (1)	5 (2)	7 (1)
Gouvernante	8 (3)	74 (22)	82 (14)
Institutrice	0 (0)	7 (2)	7 (1)
Dame de Compagnie	1 (0)	6 (2)	7 (1)
Total	248 (100)	330 (100)	578 (100)

Source: Brussels foreigners' files

Table 26 Number of servants per occupation and migration circuit in Brussels

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg		Cologne Region		Individual Migrants	
	1880	1910	1880	1910	1880	1910
Servante	9 (56)	12 (63)	4 (33)	4 (31)	0 (0)	2 (14)
Bonne d'enfants	4 (25)	2 (11)	5 (42)	4 (31)	1 (33)	1 (7)
Nourrice	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Fille de quartier	1 (6)	1 (5)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (33)	0 (0)
Femme de chambre	1 (6)	3 (16)	1 (8)	2 (15)	1 (33)	4 (29)
Fille de cuisine	1 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Gouvernante	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	2 (15)	0 (0)	5 (36)
Institutrice	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (7)
Dame de Compagnie	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (7)
Total	16 (100)	19 (100)	12 (100)	13 (100)	3 (100)	14 (100)

Source: Brussels foreigners' files

A significant number of foreign women in the capital were identified as *femme de chambre* (85 or 15 per cent), *gouvernante* (82 or 14 per cent) or *bonne d'enfants* (78 or 13 per cent).²⁸² Unsurprisingly, there was a clear relationship between the role assigned to the servant and her age. For example, while 75 per cent of the *bonnes d'enfants* in 1910 was younger than 25, 68 per cent of the *gouvernantes* was aged 25 or over. Most of the *femmes de chambre* were older than the *bonnes d'enfants* but younger than the majority of *gouvernantes*. This does not imply, however, that there were no young governesses or old *bonnes d'enfants*.

²⁸² Database foreigners' files Brussels, 1850-1910.

Catherine Stanbridge, for example, was 45 years old when she arrived in Brussels to work as a *bonne* in Prince Albert de Ligne's household.²⁸³ She was employed to take care of his two children aged 4 months and 2 years at that time. Apart from Catherine, the Prince had an extensive household staff with, amongst others, a male *valet de chambre*, a *nourrice* and a *cocher*. It seems likely that Catherine was an experienced servant and that only a wealthy employer like Albert de Ligne could afford to hire someone like her as a *bonne d'enfant* for his children. Eventually, Catherine left the household once the children were old enough to be educated by a governess.

Of the three groups in our study who moved to the capital, those from the Cologne region were employed more often as *bonne d'enfants* and the individual migrants as *femme de chambre* or *gouvernante* (Table 26). The majority of the Luxembourg women were simply registered as servants. The sample is not large enough to come to any definitive conclusions, nevertheless these results indicate that servants who migrated within less dense migration circuits to Brussels, were often those who held more prestigious positions in wealthier households.

²⁸³ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 82710 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

Illustration 6 Renée and Maximilien Donnez de Fierlant with their governess (Malines, 1907)



Source: Beeldbank Campenholt, Familiefoto's en portretten, O. Gunckel (photographer), Renée en Maximilien Donnez de Fierlant met gouvernante (1907).

Wages, board and workdays

Both the composition of the household and the chores a servant had to perform within the household played an important role in the decision of a domestic into accepting a job offer or not. In several newspaper advertisements, servants explicitly asked for a position in a household without children.²⁸⁴ Another recurring request in these advertisements is good wages. In contrast to the literature on present-day domestic work, the historiography on nineteenth-century domestic service often emphasizes the attractive financial conditions of a position in an urban household.²⁸⁵ Most historians agree that because of room and board, ‘the wages for domestic work compared quite favourably with wages for other female occupations’.²⁸⁶

However, at the same time, scholars always add that it is almost impossible to actually factor in the value of room and board in the remunerations of servants. As a result, the majority of claims made regarding the total remuneration of domestics are based on assumptions and estimates. For example, according to Sarasúa, a servant ‘knew exactly what to expect, in terms of quantity and quality, about food, clothes and housing’ but several historians and contemporaries have observed that, in reality, there was a significant degree of variation in the quality of room and board, and that many servants had to buy their clothes and other necessities themselves.²⁸⁷ Both Valérie Piette and Diane De Keyzer have observed a wide variation in the quality of servants’ room in Belgian upper- and middle-class households.²⁸⁸ Some shared their bedroom with rats or mould and in fact had more comfortable family homes of their own. Others, however, were quite satisfied with their conditions and appreciated the privacy they lacked at home where they often shared their bed(room) with their sisters. Theresa McBride describes a typical servant’s room as ‘small, with sloping ceilings, dark, poorly ventilated unheated, dirty lacking privacy or even safety’.²⁸⁹ In the words of Lynch-Brennan: ‘in actuality, board or food was not always such a great benefit for domestic servants’.²⁹⁰ Similarly, the

²⁸⁴ Database newspaper advertisements. Based on newspaper advertisements in the Belgian newspapers *Het Handelsblad*, *Le Vingtième Siècle*, *Le Journal de Bruxelles*, and *Le Soir*.

²⁸⁵ About the present-day wages of domestic workers see amongst others: *Domestic Workers Across the World*, 68.

²⁸⁶ Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Immigrant Women*, 90.

²⁸⁷ Sarasúa, ‘Were servants paid’, 527.

²⁸⁸ Piette, *Domestiques et Servantes*, 200 and De Keyzer, ‘*Madame est servie*’, 72-79.

²⁸⁹ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 51.

²⁹⁰ Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Immigrant Women*, 94.

quality of the diet also depended a great deal on employers' generosity and wealth. McBride has found testimonies of servants working for middle-class employers in France and England who 'complained about positions where "the bread is doled out by the piece, and the milk by the drop" or where "the meat was cut as if for a cat"'.²⁹¹

The range of working and living conditions complicates any attempt to calculate the value of room and board. A possible solution, one applied by some historians, is to calculate the expenditure on rent and food by lower-class households in order to estimate how much the servant saved by not having to spend her money on these things.²⁹² However, this method is somewhat troublesome. An urban family rent would not necessarily be higher when a daughter went to work in a textile factory than when she went into service. Moreover, the share of the rent of the family home that the daughter would pay for was probably quite similar in both situations, although there were of course servants who did not send any remittances back home. Only when the daughter had to leave her family home and reside elsewhere, did domestic service offer a clear advantage in terms of rent compared to factory work. Entering into domestic service may not only have been financially more advantageous to single migrant women, it was also a way of avoiding a situation where young women without a network had to live by themselves outside the "protective sphere of the household". This was probably an important reason why so many domestics were migrants while textile workers, in Antwerp for example, were often recruited from among local women.²⁹³ Domestic service may therefore have been an attractive option to migrant women but not necessarily to all women.

Moreover, the domestic service labour market was not the only sector where room and board were included for employees. Many apprentices, seamen, *filles de boutique*, nurses, and other male and female workers were also given room and board by their employers for example. An important downside of the inclusion of board and room were the long workdays that came with the types of roles offering this addition. A survey conducted by Nelly Verbeke in 1942 reveals that during this period, half of the domestic servants in the Belgian capital had to work between 15 and 18 hours a day.²⁹⁴ In a similar vein, none of the interviewees of Diane De Keyzer had workdays that lasted less than 12 hours.²⁹⁵ In German cities like Berlin,

²⁹¹ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 54.

²⁹² Buyst, 'De economische betekenis', 114.

²⁹³ Winter, *Migrants*, 90.

²⁹⁴ Verbeke, *Le problème du personnel domestique féminin*.

²⁹⁵ De Keyzer, "Madame est servie", 299.

München, and Nürnberg the vast majority of domestics around the *Jahrhundertwende* had to work more than 14 hours per day. In nineteenth-century England and France, ‘the average servant worked fifteen to eighteen hours per day’.²⁹⁶ These long hours spent working thus seem to have been a universal feature of domestic service in most European cities. In the words of McBride, ‘the workday of the servant was one of the least attractive features of domestic service since it was always long and arduous’, even by contemporary standards.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, servants had to work seven days a week, although Sunday was sometimes considered to be a partial holiday for them.²⁹⁸

A somewhat perverse advantage of these long workdays and little time off was that servants had almost no time to spend their money on leisure activities or goods. As such, servants may have been able to save a greater proportion of their wages than other female and male workers. Data from the accounts of *la Société Générale* indicate that in 1848, Belgian domestics opened a *livret bancaire* more frequently and apparently also put more money into these accounts than (mostly male) day labourers.²⁹⁹ The number of domestics and day labourers involved – 8,540 and 5,609 respectively – are, however, very low compared to the total population.³⁰⁰ As such, it remains inconclusive whether the *Société Générale* figures in fact represent a general trend. A study by Corinne Boter on the wages of domestic servants in the most well-off households in eighteenth-century Amsterdam shows that they were able to save ‘between one-third and half of the capital that an unskilled man could save in the same amount of time’ which somewhat contradicts the above.³⁰¹ Nevertheless it is clear that further research is needed to make any strong claims about this issue.

In sum, various factors complicate making any meaningful comparison between the total remuneration of servants and other workers. A last important factor is that finding information about servants’ wages often proves very difficult. Most studies cite a few references to the wages of a couple of servants in upper-class households or in institutions like hospitals or *godshuizen*.³⁰² However, these examples are not representative of the majority of

²⁹⁶ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 55.

²⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹⁹ Piette, *Domestiques et Servantes*, 229.

³⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

³⁰¹ Boter, ‘Marriages are Made in Kitchens’, 86.

³⁰² Buyst, ‘De economische betekenis’, 114; Eeckhout, *Lonen van Brusselse arbeiders*, 24; Segers, *Economische groei*, 168-178.

the urban servant population who worked in middle-class households. In the words of Carmen Sarasúa, ‘wages and remuneration in general is not a well-known aspect of domestic service history’.³⁰³ Few sources exist because written contracts were not customary in this sector.

Patricia van den Eeckhout has studied the remunerations of servants in the *Sint-Pietershospitaal* in Brussels in the nineteenth century and calculated that at the beginning of the century, 52 to 68 per cent of the money spent on servants in this institution went on clothes, food and board.³⁰⁴ However, these proportions cannot simply be extrapolated and applied to the entire nineteenth century – during which the ratio between monetary wages and the value of room and board may have shifted – and all urban servants. As mentioned above, domestics in private households did not always receive clothing or other basic necessities from their employers, often having to contribute to the expenditure on food and rent by their families back home. However, the data of van den Eeckhout on the monetary wages of the servants in the hospital do provide us with the possibility of comparing these figures with the wages of foreign women who served in private households.³⁰⁵ While van den Eeckhout only focused on Brussels, Yves Segers also included the wages of servants who worked in institutions in other cities in his study on living standards in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Belgium.³⁰⁶ Unfortunately, however, Segers does not differentiate between cities in his results but simply gives the average wage of servants in Belgium in a given year.

These average wages have been included in table 47 (Appendix, p.209) next to the average wages of other male and female workers studied by Segers.³⁰⁷ Data on the monetary earnings of foreign domestics can be found in the *bulletins de renseignement* of those women who arrived in Antwerp in the year 1860 (48 cases) and in Brussels in the year 1880 (34 cases). Additional information on wages of Belgian servants was derived from a survey undertaken in 1893 in Brussels and from the archives of the placement office of a philanthropic association (Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana) in Antwerp in 1905.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ Sarasúa, ‘Were servants paid’, 522.

³⁰⁴ Eeckhout, *Lonen van Brusselse arbeiders*, 24.

³⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁰⁶ Segers, *Economische groei*, 168-178.

³⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, 339, 564-565, and 574-575.

³⁰⁸ Survey: C. De Quéker, ‘Les femmes à gages à Bruxelles’, *Bulletin du Travail. Rapport sur les opérations de la Bourse du Travail pendant l'exercice 1892-93*, Bruxelles, 18-19. More information in: Piette, *Domestiques*, 161. Archives of Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana: KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincia S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3036, 3037 and 3041.

A comparison of the wages of these foreign and Belgian domestic servants with those of other female and male workers, indicates that being in service may not have been as profitable as is often claimed. Even if the wages were to have been double – as has been suggested by some historians when factoring in the value of room and board – servants' earning would still have been lower than that of many other female and male workers. In 1860, a foreign servant in Antwerp earned 140 francs per year on average. This was similar to the earnings of a foreign *fille de boutique* in Antwerp but 50 francs lower than the average wages of nurses and midwives in Belgian hospitals. Like domestic servants, all these women were given board by their employers and had not received any formal education to prepare them for their profession. The female servants who worked in hospitals or *godshuizen* had even higher wages. Apparently, working in an institution was more profitable than working in a private household.

Male servants did not earn much more than their female colleagues in these institutions. The former would have earned a lot more if they had worked as day labourers in the countryside or in cities. This is probably also one of the reasons why few men worked in the domestic service labour market in the nineteenth century. As has been observed by several historians, domestic service in urban households was only of interest to young men in times of high unemployment and inflation, when 'boarding became a privilege for most workers, who were ready to work simply for it'.³⁰⁹ However, for single migrant women, there were often fewer alternatives in cities like Antwerp and Brussels, and many continued to work as servants throughout the nineteenth century.

Results regarding the foreign domestics who arrived in Brussels in 1880 are quite similar. Although wages in the capital were the highest in the country, its domestics did not earn any more than nurses or servants in hospitals and other institutions throughout the country. On average, foreign servants in Brussels earned 275 francs yearly. Foreign female day labourers (*ouvrières, journalières, couturiers*) easily earned more than twice as much. Room and board could partly compensate for this difference, however servants were not necessarily better off than other foreign women in terms of remuneration. A significant number of foreign female labourers was also married and therefore able to share living costs with their husbands.

³⁰⁹ Sarasúa, 'Were servants paid', 528.

The wages of Belgian servants derived from other sources for later years indicate that the low monetary wages of domestics were not a specific characteristic of foreign servants but of the whole domestic service labour market. In 1893, a domestic in Brussels still earned between 216 and 420 francs per year while, for example, a *maîtresse d'hôtel* on a Red Star Line vessel three years earlier earned 1,164 francs on average.³¹⁰ Even an experienced and qualified governess in an upper-class household earned almost three times less than these *maîtresses d'hôtel* with similar status.

In general, it seems that going into service was not necessarily more profitable than alternative job opportunities available in the city. Perhaps the provision of room and board and the lack of opportunities to spend one's money stimulated servants to save more than their co-workers, but further research is needed to confirm this hypothesis. The increasing urban demand for domestic servants and the tradition of going into service could in reality have been more important in the decision-making process in becoming a servant than the potential earnings were. Unfortunately, it was not possible to include the wages these foreign women might have earned in their region of origin in the analysis. It is often assumed that young rural women went to cities because wages were much higher than in the countryside. However, as shown in the previous chapter, many foreign servants were actually born in cities themselves. As such, it remains unclear to what extent the prospect of higher wages played a role in the decision to migrate of the servants under study.

Careers and departure

Wages and quality of room and board did of course have an important impact on the length of time spent in a position, though the testimonies assembled by De Keyzer suggest that there were other factors that could influence length of service too.³¹¹ Agnes Degrijse, for example, describes her daily routine as follows:

³¹⁰ Looockx, 'From sail'.

³¹¹ De Keyzer, "*Madame est servie*", 89.

‘You had no contacts with other people. I was almost always alone, because madam was out of the house a lot. I didn’t have much contact with her anyway. It was working alone, eating alone, and sitting at the kitchen table alone in the evening.’³¹²

When servants had enough of such a solitary life, their families sometimes opposed their intention of quitting. Maria van Tilt remembers that one day she left her position and returned home. However when she arrived there, she was not welcomed, instead receiving ‘*een flink pak slaag*’.³¹³ Other parents – like those of Germaine Bosschaert – felt sorry for their daughter and allowed her to come back home after a few weeks.³¹⁴ In all these cases it was less the bad working conditions or wages than the solitude and homesickness that made these young women want to leave.

However, most women seem to have held on for much longer than just a few weeks or months. Hilde Bras has calculated that in the Dutch province of *Zeeland* between 1860 and 1902, the median length of service in one household was 15 months.³¹⁵ Studies by other Dutch historians have shown that in Haarlem, Delft and Eindhoven this was 16, 13, and 10 months respectively.³¹⁶ A survey of 1,864 households in London in 1899 indicates that 64 per cent of their domestics had already been working in the same household for more than a year.³¹⁷ In a similar vein, Laurence Van Goethem’s research into servants who migrated from the adjacent rural polders to Antwerp demonstrates that 58 per cent stayed for more than a year in their position in the port city.³¹⁸ Other case studies into the length of stay of servants in urban households are difficult to find. In many cities, historians have to rely on cross-sectional population censuses which do not provide any longitudinal information. Fortunately, the Antwerp and Brussels population books often mention dates of arrival and departure in the household. As mentioned above, these dates do not always correspond to the actual dates of

³¹² *Ibidem*: Translation of: *Je had geen contacten. Ik was bijna altijd alleen, want mevrouw was veel het huis uit. En met haar had ik toch al niet zoveel contact. Het was alleen werken, alleen eten en 's avonds alleen aan de keukentafel zitten.*

³¹³ *Ibidem*.

³¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 90.

³¹⁵ Bras, *Zeeuwse meiden*, 80-81;

³¹⁶ Welling, ‘Dienstboden geregistreerd’ and Woude, ‘De trek van de alleenlopenden’, 167-183.

³¹⁷ C. Collet, ‘Money Wages of In-Door Domestic Servants’, Parliamentary Papers, 1899, XCII. More information in: McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 76.

³¹⁸ Van Goethem, ‘Dienen in de stad Antwerpen’, 9-39.

arrival and departure, nevertheless they allow an overall estimate of the length of stay of a foreign servant in a household to be made.

When compared to servants from the adjacent polders, women from West-Brabant and the Cologne region mostly left their first position in Antwerp before the first year had passed, even though the differences are limited. 57 and 48 per cent of these Dutch and German women respectively left their first employer within a year, compared to 42 per cent of the women from the polders (Table 27). Petronille Couwenbergh, for example, left her position in Antwerp after only 15 days and immediately returned to Oud Gastel, her place of birth in West-Brabant.³¹⁹ Other women, like Anne Catherine Van Hoof, did not return home but looked for another position within the city.³²⁰ Individual migrants seem to have been far less mobile as 65 per cent of them stayed for more than a year in the same household and almost half of them even served the same employer for more than three years. Marie de Souza from Madeira, for example, stayed for more than five years in Jan Renis' household where she had once started as a *nourrice* for the new-born child of the family.³²¹ Individual migrants like Marie de Souza had almost no compatriots living in the city and as such may have depended more on their employer than the other two groups examined here. A similar contrast between servants who moved within dense migration circuits and individual migrants is observed in the capital where 56 and 63 per cent of the servants from the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg and the Cologne region respectively worked less than a year for their first employer compared to 13 per cent of individual migrants (Table 28). Overall, there were no major differences in the length of service in the first household between Antwerp and Brussels. In both cities, about half of the servants being examined stayed for more than one year in their first household. As such, the attempts of the Brussels' administration to lower the frequency with which positions were changed by servants does not seem to have had any major impact (Chapter 1).

³¹⁹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 17247 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

³²⁰ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 17244 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

³²¹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 43520 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

Table 27 Number of servants per length of service in their first household in Antwerp

	West-Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants			
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total
Less than one month	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (10)	3 (5)	0 (0)	1 (6)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Between one month and half a year	11 (44)	2 (20)	6 (21)	19 (30)	2 (22)	5 (31)	1 (17)	8 (26)	0 (0)	2 (29)	0 (0)	2 (12)
Between half and one year	9 (36)	1 (10)	4 (14)	14 (22)	2 (22)	3 (19)	1 (17)	6 (19)	1 (33)	1 (14)	2 (29)	4 (24)
Between one and two years	3 (12)	3 (30)	9 (31)	15 (23)	4 (44)	4 (25)	2 (33)	10 (32)	0 (0)	1 (14)	1 (14)	2 (12)
Between two and three years	2 (8)	1 (10)	2 (7)	5 (8)	1 (11)	1 (6)	1 (17)	3 (10)	1 (33)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (6)
Three years and more	0 (0)	3 (30)	5 (17)	8 (13)	0 (0)	2 (13)	1 (17)	3 (10)	1 (33)	3 (43)	4 (57)	8 (47)
N	25 (100)	10 (100)	29 (100)	64 (100)	9 (100)	16 (100)	6 (100)	31 (100)	3 (100)	7 (100)	7 (100)	17 (100)
Unknown	2	5	2	9	0	3	0	3	1	4	4	9
Total	27	15	31	73	9	19	6	34	4	11	11	26

Source: Antwerp population registers

Table 28 Number of servants per length of service in their first household in Brussels

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants		
	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total
Less than one month	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (4)	1 (10)	1 (8)	2 (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Between one month and half a year	2 (13)	5 (42)	7 (26)	0 (0)	4 (33)	4 (18)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Between half and one year	3 (20)	4 (33)	7 (26)	5 (50)	3 (25)	8 (36)	0 (0)	2 (14)	2 (13)
Between one and two years	3 (20)	2 (17)	5 (19)	1 (10)	3 (25)	4 (18)	1 (100)	5 (36)	6 (40)
Between two and three years	3 (20)	0 (0)	3 (11)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (5)	0 (0)	2 (14)	2 (13)
Three years and more	4 (27)	0 (0)	4 (15)	3 (30)	0 (0)	3 (14)	0 (0)	5 (36)	5 (33)
N	15 (100)	12 (100)	27 (100)	10 (100)	12 (100)	22 (100)	1 (100)	14 (100)	15 (100)
Unknown	1	7	8	2	1	3	2	0	2
Total	16	19	35	12	13	25	3	14	17

Source: Brussels population registers

Table 29 Number of servants per place of residence after leaving their first household in

Antwerp

	West-Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants			
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total
Antwerp	19 (70)	5 (38)	14 (48)	38 (55)	6 (67)	8 (44)	2 (33)	16 (48)	2 (50)	5 (50)	4 (50)	11 (50)
Adjacent urban area	0 (0)	2 (15)	2 (7)	4 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (13)	1 (5)
Belgium	2 (7)	0 (0)	1 (3)	3 (4)	0 (0)	1 (6)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	1 (10)	1 (13)	2 (9)
Place of birth	4 (15)	2 (15)	8 (28)	14 (20)	2 (22)	4 (22)	2 (33)	8 (24)	0 (0)	1 (10)	0 (0)	1 (5)
Region of birth	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (3)	2 (3)	1 (11)	0 (0)	1 (17)	2 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Country of birth	0 (0)	1 (8)	3 (10)	4 (6)	0 (0)	2 (11)	1 (17)	3 (9)	1 (25)	1 (10)	0 (0)	2 (9)
Other Country	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (6)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Died	0 (0)	2 (15)	0 (0)	2 (3)	0 (0)	1 (6)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Stayed on first address	2 (15)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (3)	0 (0)	1 (6)	0 (0)	1 (3)	1 (25)	2 (20)	2 (25)	5 (23)
N	27 (100)	13 (100)	29 (100)	69 (100)	9 (100)	18 (100)	6 (100)	33 (100)	4 (100)	10 (100)	8 (100)	22 (100)
Unknown	0	2	2	4	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	4
Total	27	15	31	73	9	19	6	34	4	11	11	26

Source: Antwerp population registers

Table 30 Number of servants per place of residence after leaving their first household in Brussels

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants		
	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total
Brussels	4 (33)	2 (20)	6 (27)	3 (30)	2 (17)	5 (23)	0 (0)	4 (67)	4 (57)
Adjacent urban area	4 (33)	4 (40)	8 (36)	4 (40)	3 (25)	7 (32)	0 (0)	2 (33)	2 (29)
Belgium	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (17)	2 (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Place of birth	2 (17)	3 (30)	5 (23)	2 (20)	5 (42)	7 (32)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Region of birth	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Country of birth	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)	0 (0)	1 (14)
Other Country	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Died	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Stayed on first address	0 (0)	1 (10)	1 (5)	1 (100)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
N	12 (100)	10 (100)	22 (100)	10 (100)	12 (100)	22 (100)	1 (100)	6 (100)	7 (100)
Unknown	4	9	13	2	1	3	2	8	10
Total	16	19	35	12	13	25	3	14	17

Source: Brussels population registers

The population books also often provide the locations to which servants went after leaving their first position in the city (Table 29 and 30). For the sample years 1880 and 1910, the movements of the servants studied here were followed in the population books for a period of 10 years. For 1860, the period was limited to 6 years (because the Antwerp population books of 1856 ended in 1866). As mentioned above, it is more difficult to follow the trajectories of servants in the Brussels registers than in those of Antwerp due to the complex administrative procedures in the capital. Furthermore, the Brussels administration lost track of its population more frequently. These two factors explain the large number of foreign servants in the capital for whom no data about their further trajectory could be found.

In general, only a handful of servants kept on working in the same household for more than 6 (in 1860) or 10 years (1880 and 1910). Only individual migrants in Antwerp seem to have been very loyal to their employers. After leaving their first position, about half of all the servants examined in this study in Antwerp moved to another address in the port city. Unfortunately, the population books around 1880 and 1910 do not mention an occupation after servants moved within the city. As such, it is not always clear whether women kept on working as domestics or not. Sometimes service roles are described as a bridging occupation or ‘an occupation which provides the conditions and opportunities which facilitate the movement from one occupation to another’.³²² However, few historians have actually tested this hypothesis. A study by Hilde Bras reveals that only 3 percent of the *Zeeuwse meiden* in her sample changed to another profession. Angelique Janssens studied the occupational careers of women in four Dutch cities and observed that 27 percent of her 1881-1885 cohort made an occupational switch.³²³ No clear pattern could be seen in these occupational switches except that ‘movements between domestic service and factory work were not frequent occurrences’ which ‘strongly suggests that these two important occupational groups were marked by clear social boundaries’.³²⁴ Thus, domestics apparently did not consider factory work to be a viable alternative and vice versa. Unfortunately, it is often impossible to follow the occupational switches of women after marriage as ‘for married women occupations were seldom given; according to the dominant ideology married women simply did not work’.³²⁵

Other servants immediately returned to their place of birth, 20 and 24 per cent of the servants of West-Brabant and the Cologne region respectively but only 5 per cent of individual migrants. After the total period of 6 or 10 years, 32 per cent of both the Dutch and German servants and 12 per cent of the individual migrants had returned home (Table 29). The number of servants who left Antwerp for other places in Belgium or abroad is very limited. This suggests that these foreigners did not use Antwerp as a gateway to other European cities. However, one should consider the possibility that after a return to their place or region of origin, these women emigrated again, perhaps to another city. Such movements were of course not registered in the Antwerp population books.

³²² McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 83.

³²³ Janssens, *Labouring lives*, 109.

³²⁴ *Ibidem*, 109-110.

³²⁵ *Ibidem*, 95.

In Brussels, a greater number of foreign servants moved to an adjacent municipality after leaving their first position in the capital. The bourgeois quarters in Ixelles or Saint-Gilles were an especially important destination for many domestics. This suggests that – more than in Antwerp – the number of foreign servants in the municipality of Brussels was only part of the total group of foreign domestics in the city region. About fifty per cent of servants from the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg and the Cologne region left their first position for another household in the capital or one of its adjacent municipalities. This resembles the results for Antwerp. The percentage is even higher in the case of individual migrants but the total number for this group for whom the total trajectory is known is very low.

23 and 32 per cent of the Luxembourg and German servants respectively immediately returned to their place of birth after leaving their first position in the capital, a result similar to that for the German and Dutch servants in Antwerp. Another 5 percent of the Luxembourg and German domestics in Brussels had also returned home by the end of a total period of 10 years (Table 30). Just like Antwerp, Brussels was not used as a gateway to other cities by most of the foreign servants examined in this study. As has already been observed in the previous chapter, movement between the two Belgian cities was also very rare.

Of the 133 foreign female servants in this study in Antwerp, 37 (or 28 per cent) were still living in the city after a period of 6 (1860) or 10 years (1880 and 1910). Twelve of these women were married by the end of the research period. Some had a Belgian husband while others married a compatriot. There was also a wide variety in the occupations of the marriage partners. Other women were still working as domestics or had found a job as a day labourer, shop assistant or waitress. In Brussels, only 1 out of 46 servants studied here in 1910 was still living in the capital after a period of 10 years. Perhaps the number would be higher if the adjacent communities of Brussels had also been included in the analysis but there may also be other explanations. The regional hinterland migrants from West-Brabant had probably fewer problems integrating into a society where there were many compatriots and where almost everyone spoke their language. The distance between Antwerp and their place of birth was also very small allowing them to visit their families on a regular basis. However, not just the West-Brabant women but also those from the Cologne region often stayed for a longer period of time in Antwerp. This may be due to the existence of a substantial German colony in this city. While the number of Germans and Luxembourgers in Brussels was comparable to the number of

Germans in Antwerp, their communities may not have been as well organized as the German colony in Antwerp.³²⁶ This lack of a well-organized community may have complicated the search for employment and the establishment of an informal network and as such, the integration into the urban society.

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed that there was an important degree of variation in both working and living conditions among foreign domestic servants who arrived in Antwerp and Brussels in the second half of the long nineteenth century. While some joined the extensive household staff of an upper-class family, others started as a maid-of-all-work in a middle-class household. Apparently, the political and financial elite in the capital could more easily afford (or were expected to be able to afford) an extensive domestic staff compared to the merchant elite in the port city. As a consequence, there were more foreign *femmes de chambres*, *gouvernantes*, and *cuisinières* to be found in Brussels than in Antwerp. The length of service in one household varied as well. While Petronille Couwenbergh already left her position after 15 days, Marie de Souza remained loyal to her employer for more than 5 years. After leaving their first position in either Antwerp or Brussels, some domestics looked for another position in the city, while others immediately returned to their place of birth.

Such variations can be seen within every migration circuit studied here. However, this does not imply the absence of patterns that were specific to a particular migration circuit. In Antwerp, West-Brabant women worked more frequently as maids-of-all-work for middle-class households and individual migrants seem to have been far more loyal to (or dependent on) their employers than the other groups studied here. In Brussels, many of the the German domestics were hired as *bonnes d'enfants*, and the individual migrants in the capital mostly worked as *femmes de chambre* or *gouvernante*. At the same time, there were also some similarities among the migration circuits. Most servants worked for a family with several children and worked alongside at least one colleague. Their wages were quite similar and always lower than most other female and male workers in the city.

³²⁶ Sartorius, 'Les Allemands', 173-194; Idem, 'Activités politiques', 167-180 ; Pelckmans and Van Doorslaer, *De Duitse kolonie in Antwerpen* ; Devos, 'Inwijking en integratie', 133-156. A thorough comparison between the German communities in Antwerp and Brussels has yet to be made.

In the next chapter the focus is, once again, on servants' social environment although the emphasis will no longer be on the profiles of employers or the number of colleagues. Instead it will be on the ties (both weak and strong) servants had with their (future) employers and colleagues in Antwerp or Brussels and with (potential) relatives who were already familiar with one of these cities. These informal networks are the first of a number of intermediary structures which together created the migration infrastructure which both facilitated and complicated the migration and settlement of foreign domestic servants in Antwerp and Brussels.

4 SOCIAL NETWORKS

In November 1910, at the age of seventeen, Marie Kirsch left her widowed mother in Koerich, a small village in the south west of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and moved to Brussels to work as a domestic servant.³²⁷ She took a position in the household of Albert Piérart, a doctor from Hanzinelle in the Belgian province of Namur and his wife, Marguerite Kessels from Sint-Joost-ten-Noode near the Belgian capital. At the moment of Marie's arrival, Albert and Marguerite had two sons, aged two and four. The family already had two other servants working for them, Pauline Schreiner from Ludwigshafen in Germany and Marguerite Kass who – just like Marie – came from Koerich in Luxembourg (Illustration 7). As Koerich was a small village, it seems likely that Marguerite and Marie knew each other rather well and that the former had helped Marie to get this position. In the existing literature on nineteenth-century domestic service, the importance of such horizontal ties is often emphasized.³²⁸ Similar to employers in other labour markets, it is argued that employers of servants would have often used the networks of their current or former domestics to find new employees. Contacts with friends, relatives, and acquaintances could all be essential for a servant searching a position in a decent household.

For a long time, historians agreed that informal networks were of the utmost importance for many migrants in the past. The use of such networks often resulted in patterns of chain migration which have been repeatedly observed by both social scientists and historians.³²⁹ In 2002, however, Lesger et al. and Moch challenged the idea that informal networks were the main intermediary mechanism in most migration circuits and individual trajectories.³³⁰ Their studies on respectively German migrants in Dutch cities and Bretons in Paris demonstrate how a major part of the migrants – among whom many domestics – had no acquaintances whatsoever in these cities and had to rely on general knowledge about their destination and on contacts with strangers to find employment and lodging.

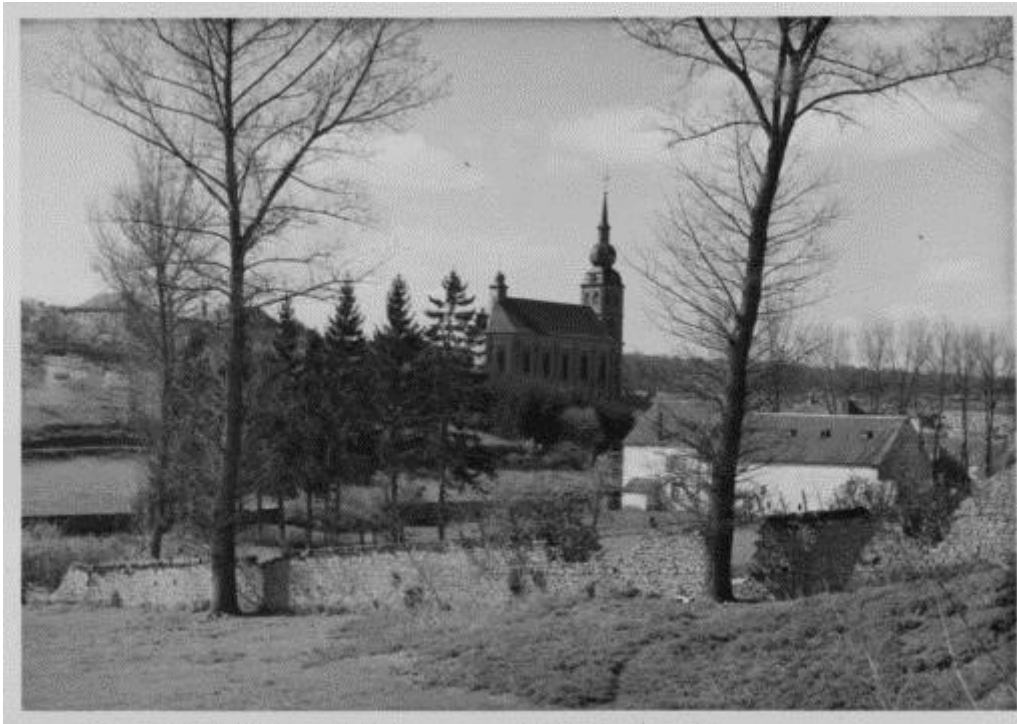
³²⁷ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 82413 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

³²⁸ See for example: Moch and Tilly, 'Joining the Urban World', 33-56; Lee, 'Domestic service', 435-460; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*.

³²⁹ See for example: Wegge, 'Chain Migration', 957-986; Alexander, 'Staying Together', 56-83; Boudjaaba and Gourdon, 'Mobilité urbaine'; Ryan, 'Migrants' social networks', 707-724.

³³⁰ Lesger, Lucassen and Schrover, 'Is there life', 29-50; Moch, 'Networks among Bretons?', 431-455.

Illustration 7 View of the small village of Koerich (Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg)



Source: Archives nationales de Luxembourg, Ministère de l'Economie, Collection photographique du Service Gouvernemental d'Expansion Economique et Touristique, Koerich, ICO-3-1-00977.

According to Lesger et al. and Rosenbloom, domestic servants had specific characteristics that separated them from other migrants.³³¹ Domestic service was 'characterized by the relative isolation of employers and job seekers from informal channels of labour market communication'.³³² Unlike many other migrants, these young single women did not have extensive personal networks but relied on basic information and indications about their place of destination.³³³ Gordon claims that this lack of contacts made migrant women desirable employees, 'since employers believed they would have fewer reasons to lark off rather than attending to their duties'.³³⁴

³³¹ Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work*, 56 and Lesger et al., 'Is there life', 45.

³³² Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work*, 56.

³³³ Lesger et al., 'Is there life', 45.

³³⁴ Gordon, *Mill Girls*, 43.

The main contribution of the articles of Lesger et al. and Moch is that they show that there was ‘life outside the migrant network’.³³⁵ However, it remains unclear in both articles what that life outside the migrant network looked like. There is no analysis of alternative intermediary mechanisms that may have helped migrants to find lodging and employment at their destination.³³⁶ Furthermore, no comparisons are made between the Bretons and Germans on the one hand, and men and women who moved in other types of migration circuits such as hinterland migrants. Subsequent studies were often less focussed on the use of informal networks or other intermediary structures. Some scholars describe in detail the different ways migrants could deal with informal networks, recruitment agencies or other intermediaries but – often due to a lack of source materials – do not estimate how many chose a specific option.³³⁷ As long as there is no clear understanding of these issues, it is not only difficult to explain developments in migration patterns and circuits, but also, for example, how migrant labour markets functioned. Therefore, the aim of the following two chapters is to analyse and compare the interactions between foreign domestic servants and the different intermediaries they encountered in Antwerp and Brussels.

Of course, direct evidence on these interactions is not easy to find and historians are often left with indications they need to interpret with great caution. Moreover, finding and interpreting these indications is often a time-consuming and rather complex process. Despite these challenges, the upcoming chapters will demonstrate that the few indications available can already tell a lot about the meso level in the migration and settlement processes of the servants under study. The results do not provide a clear-cut narrative but give more insights into the differences between the migration circuits under study and changes over time. Knowledge about these differences and changes is necessary to understand how migration worked and how it evolved during the so-called mobility transition in ways that resemble but also differ from present-day migration processes.

The focus in this chapter is on the informal networks of foreign servants. The main question is whether the case of Marie Kirsch is representative for all foreign domestic servants

³³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³³⁶ Lesger et al. do mention the potential importance of what they label organizational migration but do not include this in their research, Lesger et al., ‘Is there life’, 29-50.

³³⁷ For domestic servants see, amongst others: Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridiget*; M. König, ‘Femina migrants’, 93-115; Milharčič-Hladnik (ed.), *From Slovenia to Egypt*; Harzig, *Peasant Maids*; Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*, 46.

who arrived in Antwerp and Brussels. Perhaps her case is typical for Luxembourg servants but not for others or perhaps it is an exception, and most foreign servants were actually – in the words of Lesger et al. – ‘adventurous migrants’ without informal networks at their place of destination.³³⁸ By comparing the birthplaces and previous places of residence of the servants and their employers and colleagues, indications can be gathered on the uses of certain horizontal and vertical ties. For this purpose, the same database – created on the basis of data from the population registers – is used as in the previous chapter. This is complemented by additional research on the basis of the index of the local foreigners’ files and the files themselves which provide information on potential relatives of servants already present in Antwerp or Brussels respectively.³³⁹

Vertical ties with employers

As discussed in the previous chapter, the population registers provide valuable data with which to reconstruct the composition of households in Antwerp and Brussels. This information is useful not only to study the working conditions and careers of servants but also to analyse the use of informal networks. For example, in May 1880, Marie De Souza moved from her birth place on the island of Madeira to Antwerp.³⁴⁰ She was the only servant who originated from Madeira in the city. Immediately after her arrival in the Belgian port city, Marie started to work as a *nourrice* in the household of Jan Renis, a Belgian clerk. Jan and his wife both originated from Antwerp but their son, Joseph, was born in Funchal on the island of Madeira in 1879. As Funchal was also the birth place of Marie, it seems likely that Marie was hired by Jan Renis and his wife just after the birth of their son and that they brought her with them to Antwerp. Of course, there is no direct evidence to support this hypothesis, but the sequence of events derived from the population registers provides a clear indication.

To assess the importance of such vertical ties in the migration process of foreign domestic servants, their birth places and previous places of residence are compared with those of all employers present in the first household where they registered in the city. Lesger et al.

³³⁸ Lesger et al., ‘Is there life’, 50.

³³⁹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, index van de vreemdelingendossiers; AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Index des personnes recensées dans les registres de la population.

³⁴⁰ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 43520 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

apply a similar method in their study on German migrants in Rotterdam and Utrecht.³⁴¹ They use the population registers to investigate whether German migrants shared their place or region of birth with the heads of the household where they first registered. Overall, Lesger et al. observe a lack of similarities between the birth places of migrants and the heads of households, which leads them to the conclusion that informal networks were likely less important than often suggested in previous studies. However, the results are rather different when they also include other household members in their case study on German shop assistants in Utrecht. Many of these shop assistants had co-residents who came from the same region of origin, but these compatriots were rarely the head of the household. This demonstrates the importance to include all co-residents in the analysis. Despite the difference in methods used for the Utrecht and Rotterdam studies, the authors conclude that ‘in Utrecht personal network migration clearly dominated’ and that ‘in Rotterdam organizational and especially non-network migration prevailed’.³⁴² Amongst other reasons, they attributed this to the fact that ‘a town like Utrecht would be less likely to attract “adventurous” immigrants.’³⁴³ Port cities, such is the implication, provided more opportunities for this type of migrant.

Important differences between the methodology used in this study and that of Lesger et al. are that all members of the household were included in the analysis, and that not only birthplaces but also former places of residence were taken into account. As the importance of stepwise migration has been observed on several occasions in the analysis, including former places of residence, constitutes an important improvement of the methodology.³⁴⁴ However, the population registers do not mention all previous places of residence, but only the last place of residence next to the place of birth so that the applied method still has limitations. The focus is on the women in the sample who were working as domestic servants in the household where they registered.

³⁴¹ Lesger et al., ‘Is there life’, 29-50.

³⁴² *Ibidem*, 41.

³⁴³ *Ibidem*, 45.

³⁴⁴ About stepwise migration see amongst others: Withers and Watson, ‘Stepwise Migration’, 31-55.

Table 31 Overlap in places of former residence between domestic servants and their employer household, Antwerp 1860-1910, N (%)³⁴⁵

	West-Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants			
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total
Same Location	1 (4)	1 (7)	3 (10)	5 (7)	0 (0)	3 (16)	0 (0)	3 (9)	1 (25)	5 (45)	5 (45)	11 (42)
Other Location Same Region	5 (19)	2 (13)	2 (6)	9 (12)	1 (11)	1 (5)	1 (17)	3 (9)	1 (25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (4)
Other Region Same Country	1 (4)	3 (20)	3 (10)	7 (10)	4 (44)	4 (21)	3 (50)	11 (32)	2 (50)	3 (27)	3 (27)	8 (31)
No National Connection	20 (74)	9 (60)	23 (74)	52 (71)	4 (44)	11 (58)	2 (33)	17 (50)	0 (0)	3 (27)	3 (27)	6 (23)
Total	27 (100)	15 (100)	31 (100)	73 (100)	9 (100)	19 (100)	6 (100)	34 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)	11 (100)	26 (100)

Source: Database population registers foreign female servants 1860-1910.³⁴⁶

The results for Antwerp suggest that most foreign servants under study were not familiar with their employer, as the majority of the latter had never resided in a previous place of residence of the servant (Table 31). Most servants from West-Brabant or the Cologne region simply worked for Belgian employers whose previous place of residence was located in Antwerp or another Belgian city. This contradicts the hypothesis of Greefs and Winter that German servants were predominantly employed by wealthy compatriots.³⁴⁷ The research of Elisabeth Van Rompuy on German domestics in Antwerp in the years 1866, 1867, and 1868 provides similar results.³⁴⁸ Van Rompuy demonstrates that only 18 per cent of these German servants had an employer who had previously resided in the province of birth of the servant which is very similar to the results of this study. Her sample did not only include German domestics from the Cologne region but also from other German provinces.

³⁴⁵ Places of former residence include place of birth and last place of residence abroad and in Belgium. Not only the head of the household but also partner, children and other family member are included.

³⁴⁶ Based on: SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

³⁴⁷ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 74.

³⁴⁸ Van Rompuy, 'Levensloopanalyse', 111-146 and Idem, 'Levensloopanalyse' (master thesis).

An important exception were the individual migrants who moved to Antwerp, like Marie De Souza. Forty-two per cent of them had an employer who shared a previous place of residence with the servant under study and another 35 per cent had lived in the same country. This result illustrates the limitations of using concentrations in the urban recruitment area as an indication for the use of informal networks. Individual migrants had almost no compatriots living in the city but they had probably been recruited already in their place of origin by their employers. As such, it seems that they were not so much ‘adventurous’ as suggested by Lesger et al. as had a clear idea for whom and where they were going to work when they left home.

Table 32 Overlap in places of former residence between domestic servants and their employer household, Brussels 1880-1910, N (%)

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants		
	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total
Same Location	1 (6)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (7)	1 (6)
Other Location Same Region	0 (0)	1 (5)	1 (3)	0 (0)	2 (15)	2 (8)	1 (33)	1 (7)	2 (12)
Other Region Same Country	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (17)	3 (23)	5 (20)	0 (0)	1 (7)	1 (6)
No National Connection	15 (94)	18 (95)	33 (94)	10 (83)	7 (54)	17 (68)	2 (67)	11 (79)	13 (76)
Total	16 (100)	19 (100)	35 (100)	12 (100)	13 (100)	25 (100)	3 (100)	14 (100)	17 (100)

Source: Database population registers foreign female servants 1860-1910.

However, in Brussels, even individual migrants rarely shared a last place or even country of residence with their employers (Table 32). As such, there is little indication of any pre-existing vertical ties between employers and the servant under study. This may have been a consequence of the specific profile of individual migrants in Brussels. The majority of these women were employed as governesses or chamber maids, and were employed by upper class families. In Antwerp, individual migrants registered as a *gouvernante*, *bovenmeid* or *gezelschapsjuffer* also almost never shared a previous place of residence with their employers. In a recent article, Verbruggen has shown that the action space of governesses was much larger

than that of other domestics.³⁴⁹ Their middle class background and education in different languages enabled them to look for work in various cities throughout Europe and beyond. Some corresponded with potential employers to find a job, while others registered themselves at a specialized international recruitment agency. Their foreignness could be an advantage as employers were often keen on finding a foreign governess – preferably from England – who could teach their children her native language. Such an ‘exotic’ presence in the household also contributed to the prestige of the family. Hence, individual migrants in Brussels were more specialized than in Antwerp, and more often worked for elite households with a large servant staff. They were therefore probably less likely to depend on vertical ties with their employers to facilitate their move.

Foreign servants who moved within more dense migration circuits almost never worked for an employer who had previously resided near their place of birth or former place of residence. This suggests that vertical ties with employers were not important in the migration and settlement process of these women. There were of course some exceptions. In 1880, for example, Marguerite Mousel moved from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to Brussels to work for Julien Vanderlinden.³⁵⁰ The birth place of Julien was Merchtem in the Belgian province of Brabant, but his wife was born in Mondorf-les-bains in Luxembourg, just like Marguerite.

In some exceptional cases, the difference between vertical and horizontal ties is somewhat blurred. Johanna Musters, for example, migrated from Ossendrecht in West-Brabant to Antwerp in 1880, where she started to work for a Belgian merchant named Franciscus Coveliers and his wife, Anna Maria Musters who was not only born in Ossendrecht but also shared her last name with Johanna, which suggests that the two were related.³⁵¹ Such a case confirms the statement made by Sîan Pooley that the social distance between employers and servants was not always as large as one might expect.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Verbruggen, ‘Thuisonderwijs’, 32-45

³⁵⁰ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 2486 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

³⁵¹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 43771 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

³⁵² Pooley, ‘Domestic servants’, 416.

Horizontal ties with colleagues

In the previous section it became clear that for the majority of the foreign servants under study, pre-existing vertical ties with employers were not important for finding a position in Antwerp or Brussels. This also implies that most employers were unfamiliar with the servant they welcomed into their private sphere. This could lead to unpleasant surprises. According to McBride and Pooley, employers therefore often relied on contacts of their current or former domestics when looking for a new servant.³⁵³ Such a recruitment strategy was common not only in the domestic service labour market, but also in other sectors. For example, similar mechanisms have been observed in the recruitment of factory workers in the United States. Rosenbloom describes how American employers ‘encouraged the use of informal channels of labor recruitment when these were available and turned to active recruitment when these were not’³⁵⁴. As a consequence, it was helpful to know someone already working in the factory to acquire a position. For many migrants, such contacts were thus of utmost importance. Similar observations have been made for domestic servants in different places and time periods. Pooley, for example, argues that employers ‘often practically encouraged, and made use of, their servants’ knowledge and contacts’.³⁵⁵

This would also have been true for the servants themselves. McBride, Higgs and Lee all agree that most female servants also preferred personal contacts over other forms of intermediation to obtain information and assistance, ‘sometimes using local vicars as reliable intermediaries, but more often depending on female contacts’.³⁵⁶ Almost none of these scholars, however, estimated the proportion of servants whose informal network provided them with a job, so this hypothesis is rarely ever tested. Most of the claims on the use of informal networks by migrants are based on case studies, which – in the words of Simone A. Wegge – ‘illustrate human phenomena one cannot retrieve from data’ but do ‘not usually provide a guide to the possible degree of representation of each experience’.³⁵⁷

³⁵³ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 75-76 and Pooley, ‘Domestic servants’, 419.

³⁵⁴ Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work*, 24.

³⁵⁵ Pooley, ‘Domestic servants’, 419.

³⁵⁶ Quote from: Lee, ‘Domestic Service’, 450. Other references: McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 71 and Higgs, *Domestic Servants*, 176.

³⁵⁷ Wegge, ‘A historical perspective’, 164.

Wegge herself studied the networks of female Hessians who migrated to the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century on the basis of emigrant permit lists.³⁵⁸ This source allows Wegge to search for relatives who had already migrated to the States. In this manner, she was able to identify 48,8 per cent of the women who left Hesse-Cassel on their own as networked migrants.³⁵⁹ However, as the emigrant permit lists do not specify the exact place of destination, it remains unclear whether these women actually ever joined their family members. Furthermore, it is not possible to distinguish between women who worked in different sectors in their place of destination.

While Wegge studied the presence of informal networks from the perspective of the place of departure, others have tried to approach it using source materials from the place of arrival. In their research on the migration of domestics to the French city of Charleville, Fabrice Boudjaaba and Vincent Gourdon calculated that of a sample of 34 domestics who moved to the city, 16 could rely on the support of a brother or – more often – a sister, already present.³⁶⁰ A similar study by Sïan Pooley on 404 servants in Lancaster in 1891, reveals that ‘more than one-quarter had a close relative (usually a sister) also in service in Lancaster at the same date, although only 4 per cent worked in the same household as a relative.’³⁶¹ If more distant relatives and neighbours from the home community are included, at least 35 per cent had a contact in service in the town.³⁶² Both studies focus mostly on regional hinterland migrants who moved to a regional urban centre. In contrast, Marlou Schrover studied German migrants in Utrecht and found that ‘one in six of the [German] domestic servants had female relatives within Utrecht’.³⁶³

All the above studies focus first and foremost on the close relatives of the servants and tend to ignore the colleagues in the household where the servant worked – often due to a lack of source material. They all demonstrate that a significant part of both hinterland and long-distance migrants could rely on the support of close relatives who also lived in the city. However, at the same time, there is always an important percentage – in the case of German servants in Utrecht even a large majority – that did not have any siblings or parents living in

³⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 167-168.

³⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 173.

³⁶⁰ Boudjaaba and Gourdon, ‘Mobilité urbaine’, 48-51.

³⁶¹ Pooley, ‘Domestic servants’, 419.

³⁶² *Ibidem*.

³⁶³ Schrover, ‘Living together’, 282.

the city. The different results for the hinterland migrants in Charleville and the Germans in Utrecht also suggest that a comparison between different types of migration circuits may shed a new light on the issue of informal networks.

In the following pages, the focus is on the horizontal ties foreign servants may have used to facilitate or support their migration movement, search for employment, and settlement in Antwerp or Brussels. This section focuses on the colleagues of the servants in the first household where they worked in the city. The case of Marie Kirsch and Marguerite Kass shows how such a focus may provide indications on the intermediary role of a servant between her former or current employer and a friend, acquaintance, or relative.³⁶⁴ Marguerite Kass had already been working for some time in the household of Albert Piérart when the latter needed a new servant for his domestic staff. The fact that it was Marie Kirsch – a woman from the same small village in Luxembourg as Marguerite – who got this position, suggests that Marguerite functioned as an intermediary between her employer and Marie and helped the latter to this job. The question addressed in this section is whether such horizontal ties were indeed essential for foreign servants to find a job in Antwerp or Brussels. To answer this question, the same methodology is used as in the previous section. The focus is here on similarities between the birthplaces and former places of residence of the foreign servants and their colleagues. Only those colleagues who arrived before or with the servant in question are included in the analysis. When a colleague had left the household more than one year before the arrival of the servant in question, he or she is excluded from the sample as well. This decision was taken because the chance that an employer was still in contact with a former servant decreased over time. Moreover, while entering the data, it became clear that only a very small minority of these predecessors came from the same region as the servant under study.

The results for Antwerp suggest a change over time concerning the use of horizontal ties by foreign servants. In 1860, 48 per cent of the servants had a colleague who had lived in the same region (Table 33). Servants from West-Brabant in particular joined households that had employed a compatriot. However, it is important to note that only few shared a place of former residence with a colleague. As such, the importance of direct ties prior to the move should not be overestimated. Perhaps, servants from West-Brabant more often found a job

³⁶⁴ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 82413 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

through indirect ties, or perhaps they met each other in lodging houses or inns where they shared information. In any case, the results indicate that horizontal ties with colleagues were more important for them than vertical ties with employers.

Table 33 Overlap in places of former residence between domestic servants and their colleagues, Antwerp 1860-1910, N (%)

	West-Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants			
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total
Same Location	3 (11)	3 (20)	4 (13)	10 (14)	2 (22)	6 (32)	0 (0)	8 (24)	1 (25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (4)
Other Location Same Region	10 (37)	0 (0)	1 (3)	11 (15)	2 (22)	1 (5)	2 (33)	5 (15)	1 (25)	1 (9)	0 (0)	2 (8)
Other Region Same Country	1 (4)	2 (13)	3 (10)	6 (8)	0 (0)	3 (16)	1 (17)	4 (12)	1 (25)	2 (18)	2 (18)	5 (19)
No National Connection	9 (33)	4 (27)	9 (29)	22 (30)	5 (56)	5 (26)	2 (33)	12 (35)	0 (0)	3 (27)	2 (18)	5 (19)
No Colleagues	4 (15)	6 (40)	14 (45)	24 (33)	0 (0)	4 (21)	1 (17)	5 (15)	1 (25)	5 (45)	7 (64)	13 (50)
Total	27 (100)	15 (100)	31 (100)	73 (100)	9 (100)	19 (100)	6 (100)	34 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)	11 (100)	26 (100)

Source: Database population registers foreign female servants 1860-1910.

This seems to have changed throughout the years, as in 1880 and 1910 a much lower percentage of West-Brabant servants had a colleague who also came from this border region. Perhaps, these regional hinterland migrants by then started to rely more on newspaper advertisements and recruitment agencies. As will be explained in the next chapter, these formal intermediaries gained in importance in the domestic service labour market in this period. At the same time, however, there were still several servants who shared a former place of residence with a colleague who preceded them in the household. Of the 19 servants from the Cologne region in 1880, for example, there were still six who shared their place of birth or

previous place of residence with a colleague. A good example is Elise Goerres, who joined her compatriot Gertrude Engels in the household of Prosper Le Jeune. As the parental homes of Elise and Gertrude were only a few blocks apart in Eschweiler, it seems likely that Elise was helped by Gertrude when she was looking for a job. Among individual migrants – like Marie De Souza – such cases were rare. Horizontal ties were definitely not as important for these women than the pre-existing vertical ties they often seem to have had with their employers.

In Brussels, almost none of the servants under study had a colleague who came from the same region or country (Table 34). There are no major differences in this respect between 1880 and 1910 or between the different types of migration circuits. As such it seems that neither vertical ties with employers nor horizontal ties with co-workers were important for the foreign servants under study in the Belgian capital. The case of Marie Kirsch was clearly an exception. Unfortunately, there are no data available for the 1850 sample as foreign servants were almost never registered in the population registers in that year. As such, it is impossible to compare the situation before 1880 to observe whether there was a shift in the use of horizontal ties similar to that in Antwerp.

Table 34 Overlap in places of former residence between domestic servants and their colleagues, Brussels 1880-1910, N (%)

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg			Cologne Region			Individual Migrants		
	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total	1880	1910	Total
Same Location	0 (0)	2 (11)	2 (6)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (7)	1 (6)
Other Location Same Region	3 (19)	1 (5)	4 (11)	1 (8)	0 (0)	1 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Other Region Same Country	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (33)	4 (31)	8 (32)	1 (33)	2 (14)	3 (18)
No National Connection	13 (81)	16 (84)	29 (83)	6 (50)	9 (69)	15 (60)	2 (67)	11 (79)	13 (76)
Total	16 (100)	19 (100)	35 (100)	12 (100)	13 (100)	25 (100)	3 (100)	14 (100)	17 (100)

Source: Database population registers foreign female servants 1860-1910.

Overall then, many foreign servants started to work in a household full of strangers. This seems to contradict the above-mentioned claims made by various scholars on the use of informal networks by both servants and employers. Many of the latter had to allow an unknown young woman into their private sphere and hope for the best. The servants, for their part, may still have received help from relatives, for example, who helped them with choosing a

trustworthy recruitment agency or finding a retailer with information about open positions in decent households. The next section focuses specifically on the presence of relatives who may have provided support and information to the foreign servants under study.

Relatives

In October 1910, Elise Dusseldorf moved from Harlange, her birth place in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, to the Belgian capital.³⁶⁵ She stayed and worked there for half a year in the household of an industrial entrepreneur. Afterwards, Elise left the city centre of Brussels for Sint Joost ten Noode. In the index of the local foreigners' files, several other women named Dusseldorf and born in Harlange can be found. Marie Dusseldorf – a *journalière* – arrived in Brussels in 1892, and Françoise Dusseldorf found a position as a servant in the Belgian capital in 1899.³⁶⁶ As Harlange was not a large community, it seems likely that Elise was related to Marie and Françoise and that their migration movement not only inspired Elise to come to Brussels as well but also provided her with information and contacts that could help her upon arrival. A few years later, Elise probably provided the same kind of assistance when her sisters Marie and Catherine migrated to the Belgian capital to work as domestics.³⁶⁷

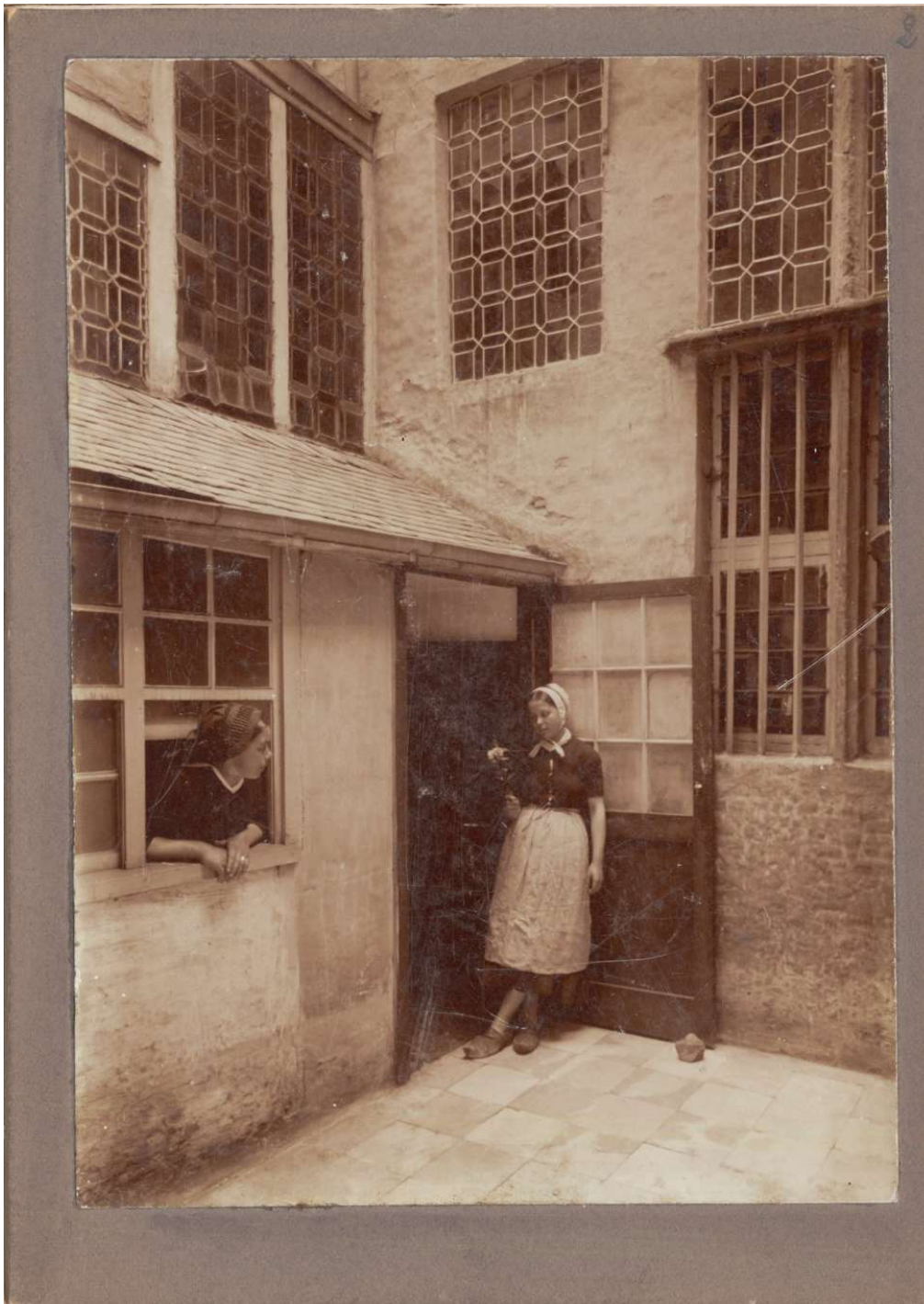
As mentioned in the previous section, similar examples are often given in the existing literature on (female) migration to support broad claims about the importance of contacts between female relatives in female migration patterns. However, it is often unclear how representative such examples are for female migration overall. In the following, the index of the foreigners' files is used to find servants' close and more distant relatives who also moved to Antwerp and Brussels. In the foreigner file of each servant, names and place of birth of the mother and father can be found. This information is used to look in the index whether either parent had a foreigner file. This would imply that he or she also resided in Antwerp or Brussels at some point in time. Subsequently, the surnames of both parents and the birthplaces of the servant and her parents is used to find the foreigners' files of other potential family members. When the mother and father of the potential family member have the same names and place of

³⁶⁵ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 81848 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

³⁶⁶ AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossier étrangers, 31854, 91280, 123592 and 12651.

³⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

Illustration 8 Monochrome photo of two servants having a chat in the courtyard of a bourgeois house in Antwerp, dated between 1890 and 1900.



Source: SAA, Beeldbank, Foto-Of # 2942.

birth as the servant, this family member is identified as a sibling.

Only those servants whose first residence recorded in the population books was in a household where they were employed as domestics, were included in the analysis. In this way, the results are directly comparable to the earlier analyses of the ties with employers and colleagues. In total, the relatives of 179 domestic servants were looked for in the index of the foreigners' files. Unfortunately, it was not possible to apply this method for the servants who arrived in Brussels in 1880, as there is no index to the local foreigners' files of the Belgian capital for this period.

Apart from this issue, the applied research method has other limitations as well. For example, it is not possible to identify grandmothers as both fathers and mothers received their surname from their father. In a similar vein, children of sisters of the father and mother of a servant can also not be identified as relatives. Moreover, apart from parents and siblings, there is no certainty about whether potential family members were truly related to the servant. With the absence of any direct evidence, historians are left with such imperfect methods, which nevertheless provide interesting indications on the importance of kinship ties.

Table 35 (Earlier) presence of servants' relatives upon arrival, Antwerp 1860-1910, N (%)

	West Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants			
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total
Close Relative	6 (22)	7 (47)	6 (19)	19 (26)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Distant Relative	6 (22)	1 (7)	12 (39)	19 (26)	2 (22)	0 (0)	1 (17)	3 (9)	0 (0)	1 (9)	2 (18)	3 (12)
No Relatives	15 (56)	7 (47)	13 (42)	35 (48)	7 (78)	18 (95)	5 (83)	30 (88)	4 (100)	10 (91)	9 (82)	23 (88)
Total	27 (100)	15 (100)	31 (100)	73 (100)	9 (100)	19 (100)	6 (100)	34 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)	11 (100)	26 (100)

Source: Database population registers foreign female servants 1860-1910.

Of all groups under study, the regional hinterland migrants from West-Brabant most often had a (potential) relative who had lived or still lived in Antwerp (Table 35). Twenty-six percent of

these women could rely on the support of a sibling or a parent. This resembles the results of Pooley on servants in Lancaster but is a lot less than Boudjaaba and Groudon found for domestics in Charleville.³⁶⁸ Another 26 per cent had a more distant (potential) relative in the Belgian port city. This proportion was much higher than that found by Pooley for Lancaster, but this may be a consequence of differences in the applied methodology.³⁶⁹ In total, indications for the importance of kinship ties were found for more than half of the West-Brabant women. Similar patterns were observed by Laurence Van Goethem for servants who moved from the adjacent polders to Antwerp which strengthens the argument that West-Brabant servant should be considered regional hinterland migrants.³⁷⁰

Perhaps the most striking examples are those of the families Visch and Poppelaars.³⁷¹ In February 1859, Jeanne Petronella, daughter of Henri Visch and Jeanne Raets, moved from Bergen op Zoom to Antwerp to work as a servant in the household of the Moorkens family. One year later, her sister Marie Cornelia found a position in another Antwerp household. In 1862, 1865, and 1867, three other sisters followed their example and finally, in 1883 their younger brother, Jean-Pierre, arrived in the Belgian port city as well, together with his wife and daughter. A similar example is that of the children of Jean Poppelaars and Adrienne Van Broeckhoven who moved from Oosterhout to Antwerp in the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1901, Paulina Maria first migrated to the port city to work in the household of Wilhelmus Verscheuren and Cornelia Van Spaendonck, who also originated from Oosterhout. In the subsequent years, seven of Paulina's younger sisters followed her example and found work as domestics in Antwerp. They were all aged between 17 and 22 years at the time of their arrival. Half of them worked in the household of Wilhelmus Verscheuren and Cornelia Van Spaendonck, which suggests that not only the strong horizontal ties between the sisters but also the vertical ties between the families Poppelaars and Verscheuren were of great importance in this case.

Such cases were rather exceptional but the results for the total group clearly indicate that West-Brabant servants more often enjoyed access to information and support provided by

³⁶⁸ Boudjaaba and Gourdon, 'Mobilité urbaine', 48-51 and Pooley, 'Domestic servants', 419.

³⁶⁹ Pooley, 'Domestic servants', 419.

³⁷⁰ Van Goethem, 'Dienen in de stad', 9-39.

³⁷¹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 113124, 115262, 137350, 157900, 153410, 130654, 134502, 21742, 15890, 19139, 16895, 56345 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

relatives than the other groups under study. No (potential) relative was found for 88 per cent of both the individual migrants and the servants from the Cologne region in Antwerp. Unlike in Utrecht, German servants in Antwerp apparently could not rely on the support of a female relative.³⁷² In Brussels in 1910, five out of nineteen Luxembourg servants had a close relative still living or previously living in Brussels, and three out of thirteen servants from the Cologne region had a more distant (potential) relative (Table 36). The individual migrants in the capital seem to have lacked any kinship network in the city.

Table 36 (Earlier) presence of servants' relatives upon arrival, Brussels 1910, N (%)

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	Cologne Region	Individual Migrants
Sibling or Parent	5 (26)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Other Potential Relative	0 (0)	3 (23)	0 (0)
No Relatives	14 (74)	10 (77)	14 (100)
Total	19 (100)	13 (100)	14 (100)

Source: Database population registers foreign female servants 1860-1910.

Siblings, parents and more distant relatives seem to have been important sources of information and support only for hinterland migrants and less so for women who came from beyond the regional hinterland. Although Luxembourg servants arrived in significant numbers in Brussels and German servants did so in both cities, neither group could rely as much on their family members while searching for employment and lodging in their new environment as the Dutch border migrants. This demonstrates that concentrations in the recruitment areas of cities such as migrants from the Cologne region in Antwerp are not necessarily good indicators for the presence of informal networks and that one should be cautious when speaking of an enlargement of the regional hinterland of a city or the decrease of the relative distance between places. Migrating to Antwerp or Brussels in 1910 was probably still a very different experience for the German and Luxembourg servants than for those who came from the Dutch border regions. These results also demonstrate that the cases discussed by Wegge and others that give

³⁷² Schrover, 'Living together', 282.

clear indications of chain migration over long distances by studying migrants and their relatives are thus very much bound to the given context and not a reflection of more universal mechanisms.

Although the cases of the families Visch and Poppelaars are not representative for the total group of foreign domestic servants in Antwerp and Brussels, they do demonstrate an important gender dynamic in the migration networks of servants that needs to be addressed as well. In both cases, almost all children who migrated to Antwerp, were young female servants. Jean-Pierre Visch was the only exception to this rule. Within the total group of servants under study, twenty servants had a sister who was living or had lived in Antwerp or Brussels and only six servants had a brother who had preceded them. Due to the low wages and several other reasons, domestic service was no longer a popular sector among young men in the nineteenth century. As such, the brothers of the servants almost always searched employment in other sectors and seem to have been less attracted by the opportunities offered by the Antwerp and Brussels economy.³⁷³ The migration circuits in which servants moved, as such, seem to have been very gender specific.

When a brother of a servant under study did move to Antwerp or Brussels, he almost always followed the trajectory of his sister and not the other way around. This suggests that female servants were often pioneers within their families and as such, were the ones who provided help and support to their brothers and sisters. This hypothesis is confirmed by the number of servants with a sibling who followed their migration trajectory to Antwerp or Brussels. While 26 women of the total sample had a brother or sister who had previously migrated to Antwerp or Brussels, 37 servants had a sibling who later came to one of the two Belgian cities as well. Again, the majority of these siblings were sisters.

While the women who moved within dense migration circuits were sometimes joined by close or distant relatives, this was definitely not the case for individual migrants. There are no indications that they were in any way pioneers in the development of a migration circuit. Although those who moved to Antwerp often followed an employer who shared a previous place of residence with them, these servants do not seem to have 'embodied the main link in

³⁷³ A more detailed analysis of the opportunities for male foreigners in both cities can be found in the first chapter of this dissertation.

the chain that connected high-end pioneers with followers lower on the social ladder' as is sometimes suggested in the literature.³⁷⁴

An important group among the close relatives that needs to be addressed as well are the parents of the servants. In only five cases, at least one of their parents was also residing in the city at some point in time. Catherine Bemelmans and Jeanne Henriette Kivits, for example, migrated together with their parents and all their brothers and sisters from West-Brabant to Antwerp in 1860.³⁷⁵ In such cases, it seems reasonable to assume that the parents played a prominent role in the search for a position for their daughters. However, parents did not have to reside in Antwerp and Brussels to continue to exercise some form of parental control. For example, the administration of *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana* – a philanthropic association in Antwerp which offered placement services to domestics and is discussed in more detail in the following chapter – shows that some Belgian servants were accompanied by one of their parents until they had found employment.³⁷⁶ In such cases, the daughter and her father or mother probably found temporary lodging with a friend or relative or in a lodging house. As a temporary visitor the parent in such cases was never registered in the population registers. This practice was probably less common when the migration took place over longer distances, but it is possible that some West-Brabant servants were accompanied by one of their parents or another relative who helped them to find a position in a household and then returned home. When it was not possible to accompany their daughter or ask someone to do this, some parents wrote letters to acquaintances, recruitment agencies or philanthropic associations in the city to ask for a position for one or several of their daughters. In this way, they tried to maintain some control over the fate of their child.

However, many parents probably lost control over the decisions made by their daughters at some stage in the migration process. For example, the great majority of the servants who used the placement services of *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana* were not accompanied by their parents and contacted this organization all by themselves.³⁷⁷ Parents

³⁷⁴ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 74.

³⁷⁵ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 16973 and 17338.

³⁷⁶ KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincie S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3036, 3037 and 3041.

³⁷⁷ KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincie S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3036, 3037 and 3041.

still tried to maintain contact with their daughters and at least wanted to be informed about their whereabouts. This is illustrated by an example found in the foreigner file of Anne Cornélie Hagedaars from Wouw in West-Brabant.³⁷⁸ Both she and her sister Anna Maria worked in Antwerp as servants in the 1880s. At a given moment, Anne Cornélie wrote to her mother, Johanna Clarijs, that her sister had resigned from her last job and that she had since disappeared. Johanna was of course worried but as she lived in Bergen-op-Zoom, she could not do much herself. Therefore, she decided to write a letter to the Antwerp authorities in which she expressed her concern that her daughter might have ended up in prostitution. She asked the authorities not only to look for her daughter but also to ‘order’ her to return home. Unfortunately, the records do not mention whether the daughter of Johanna was ever found. Writing to the local authorities was rather exceptional, but this example illustrates how parents tried to maintain control over the decisions of their children, even after the latter had emigrated to a foreign city.

Corresponding with their daughters on a regular basis – sometimes with the help of others – will probably have been a more common practice. During her research on Irish domestics in America, Margaret Lynch-Brennan found several examples of correspondence between servants and their family back home.³⁷⁹ If this happened regularly over such long distances, it seems very likely that it also occurred quite often over the limited distances that separated the foreign servants in this study from their relatives. The material found by Lynch-Brennan includes photographs of servants or their relatives as well as clippings from American and Irish newspapers, and demonstrates how keeping a close connection with the homeland was of the utmost importance to many Irish servants. Apart from corresponding with their close relatives, many also wrote letters to their friends in Ireland. In this way, the latter often became convinced to move to the New World as well. An important precondition to enable such extensive correspondence overseas was the existence of well-functioning international postal services, which are often forgotten in the literature on long-distance migration but are a significant part of the technological dimension of the migration infrastructure. Lynch-Brennan describes how ‘failure to receive return correspondence from the family in Ireland certainly occasioned much anxiety in the Irish girls in America’.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 44408.

³⁷⁹ Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridiget*, 121-127.

³⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 123.

It seems likely therefore, that many foreign servants in Antwerp and Brussels corresponded with their relatives and friends in similar ways. When far away, many wanted to regularly read writings from a close friend or relative describing familiar situations at home. Such correspondence did not only meet emotional needs but might also enable parents to maintain some sort of parental control and protection over their daughters. For other servants, however, finding employment far from home was an opportunity to escape an unhappy family situation, and correspondence with relatives or friends may have been limited. Rather than keeping close contact with their family and planning to return home in the future, these women may have hoped to start a new life in Antwerp or Brussels.

Is there life outside the network?

When studied in isolation, the contacts servants had with future employers and colleagues or with relatives present at the place of destination, may seem to have been relevant only for a minority of the servants under study. However, taken together, the results paint a different picture. The strongest indications that could be found for the use of social networks were a shared previous place of residence with an employer or colleague and the presence of a close relative in the city. Such indications were found for 36 per cent of the West-Brabant women, 29 per cent of the servants from the Cologne region in Antwerp and 42 of the individual migrants in the port city (Table 37). In the case of Brussels, only the year 1910 could be included in the analysis due to a lack of source material on the presence of relatives in previous years. The percentages are lower than in Antwerp with strong indications found for 26 per cent of the Luxembourg servants, 8 per cent of the servants from the Cologne region and 14 per cent of the individual migrants (Table 38). The results for the German servants in the capital are similar to those who moved to Antwerp in the same year. The difference between the individual migrants to Antwerp and Brussels reflects the lack of vertical ties among those who moved to Brussels, as has already been discussed above.

Table 37 Strong and weak indications on the use of informal networks, Antwerp 1860-1880, N (%)

	West Brabant				Cologne Region				Individual Migrants			
	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total	1860	1880	1910	Total
Strong Indication	8 (30)	7 (47)	11 (35)	26 (36)	2 (22)	8 (42)	0 (0)	10 (29)	1 (25)	5 (45)	5 (45)	11 (42)
Weak Indication	13 (48)	3 (20)	12 (39)	28 (38)	2 (22)	2 (11)	3 (50)	7 (21)	1 (25)	1 (9)	2 (18)	4 (15)
No Indication	6 (22)	5 (33)	8 (26)	19 (26)	5 (56)	9 (47)	3 (50)	17 (50)	2 (50)	5 (45)	4 (36)	11 (42)
Total	27 (100)	15 (100)	31 (100)	73 (100)	9 (100)	19 (100)	6 (100)	34 (100)	4 (100)	11 (100)	11 (100)	26 (100)

Source: Database population registers foreign female servants 1860-1910.

Table 38 Strong and weak indications on the use of informal networks, Brussels 1910, N (%)

	Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	Cologne Region	Individual Migrants
Strong Indication	5 (26)	1 (8)	2 (14)
Weak Indication	2 (11)	4 (31)	0 (0)
No Indication	12 (63)	8 (62)	12 (86)
Total	19 (100)	13 (100)	14 (100)

Source: Database population registers foreign female servants 1860-1910.

Weaker indications (employers or colleagues who had lived in the same region and the presence of more distant relatives) were found especially for the West-Brabant women and to a lesser extent for the servants from the Cologne region in both cities (Table 37 and 38). When these weak indications are included it becomes clear that a significant part of almost every group under study could probably rely on the support of a relative, friend or acquaintance in Antwerp or Brussels. In the port city, no indication was found for 26 per cent of the West-Brabant servants, 50 per cent of the women from the Cologne region and 42 per cent of the individual migrants. In Brussels, the situation was somewhat different. No indications were

found for more than 60 per cent of the servants of each group under study in the Belgian capital. This is partly a consequence of the absence of hinterland migrants among the foreign servants in Brussels, and of the fact that only the year 1910 could be included in the analysis.

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from these results. It is clear that the regional hinterland migrants from West-Brabant could rely far more often on horizontal ties with relatives and colleagues than the other groups under study. German and Luxembourg servants may have moved in a dense migration circuit as well, but the mechanisms that provided them with the means and motivation to move were probably different from the regional hinterland migrants. Migrating in migration circuits without a long standing tradition probably required the use of other types of channels of information and support than hinterland migration. The results of this study clearly indicate that in the case of Antwerp (and probably also Brussels), the different migration circuits functioned differently. Apart from discussing these general patterns and the differences between the groups, it is also important to stress that there was always an important degree of variation within the migration circuits as well. Not every servant from West-Brabant, for example, had contacts with friends and relatives in Antwerp.

The hypothesis that the individual migrants among the servants may have formed an important link between wealthy and skilled pioneers and unskilled workers has not been confirmed in this chapter. In the case of Antwerp, many of them did follow an employer with whom they shared a previous place of residence but the individual migrants themselves were almost never joined by a relative in the city in subsequent years. They remained exceptions in the recruitment areas of both cities.

In the next chapter, the alternatives for the social networks are discussed: commercial intermediaries and philanthropic associations. Some results in this chapter already indicate that these alternatives may have become increasingly important during the second half of the nineteenth century. For example, there was a clear decrease in the number of West-Brabant servants who had a colleague from the same region of origin. This suggests that these servants may have relied increasingly on recruitment agencies or newspaper advertisements to find employment, probably with the help of their relatives on whom many West-Brabant servants probably continued to rely. Furthermore, the increasing number of servants who moved over

longer distances to Antwerp and Brussels often lacked any contacts in these cities and as such, probably needed to rely on formal intermediaries as well. Could it be that there was a formalization of the domestic service labour market in this period?

5 COMMERCIAL AND PHILANTHROPIC INTERMEDIARIES

In September 1871, Florentine Landmann moved from the *Wallgasse* in Cologne to the *Schrijnwerkersstraat* in Antwerp.³⁸¹ In the Belgian port city, she worked as a maid in a hotel belonging to James Barber, an Englishman from London. Florentine was born and raised in Cologne. Her father had migrated to the United States but her mother still lived in Germany. When she arrived in Antwerp, Florentine was twenty years old and had probably been working as a maid for some time. Her colleagues in the hotel were mostly Belgian, Dutch and German men and women who were about the same age as Florentine. Florentine was identified as a maid in the population registers but in her foreigners' file, she was registered as a governess which suggests she did not want to be seen as a common maid-of-all-work. After a year she returned to Cologne where she married a French clerk named August Lepeinteur a few years later. This Frenchman had lived in Antwerp continuously from 1867 onwards so the two had probably met each other during Florentine's stay in the Belgian port city. After their marriage, they returned to Antwerp where August continued his work as a clerk and Florentine established a placement agency under her husband's name. As a placer, she had to mediate between female domestic servants from a modest background on the one hand and employers from the middle- and upper-classes of society on the other. She was probably able to use the contacts and experiences she had gained as a servant in previous years but also likely profited from her husband's professional network. Despite the bad reputation placers had and the competition they faced from cheaper newspaper advertisements, labour exchanges and philanthropic associations, Florentine managed to stay in business for at least thirty years.³⁸²

Both the historiography on domestic service and the literature on nineteenth- and twentieth-century migration have largely ignored the activities of commercial intermediaries and philanthropic associations and their role in the migration process and recruitment of female servants. Like Marlou Schrover states, 'observations in the literature on how domestics found employment, and on how mistresses found servants, spring more from logic than from evidence'.³⁸³ The previous chapter focused on the role of horizontal ties among colleagues, vertical ties between employer and servant, and family networks. However, Theresa McBride

³⁸¹ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 29765; SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters, 1866-1890.

³⁸² *Ibidem*.

³⁸³ Schrover, 'Hidden Professions?', 167-181.

claims that during the nineteenth century, ‘the enormous increase in urban migrants and the frequency of job-changing necessitated some kind of intermediary’.³⁸⁴ In modern society, informal networks seem to have been insufficient for servants for finding employment or for households to find servants. Some historians seem to agree with McBride that there was a formalization of the domestic service labour market but almost no scholar has truly analysed this process.

In this chapter, the focus is on the evolution of the role of placers, newspaper advertisements, and philanthropic associations, in other words, the commercial and humanitarian dimension of the migration process and the recruitment of servants. The chapter proceeds with an analysis of the (potentially growing) importance of commercial intermediaries and philanthropic associations in the domestic service labour market in Antwerp and Brussels between 1850 and 1910. The role of commercial or profit-driven intermediaries (placers and newspaper advertisements) is discussed separately from that of non-profit driven intermediaries (labour exchanges and philanthropic associations). The results are always compared to the scarce information available for other European cities. The next section is devoted to the question of whether there is a relationship between the formalization of the domestic service labour market and the increasing number of foreign domestic servants moving to Antwerp and Brussels. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

Commercial Intermediaries: Placers and Newspaper Advertisements

Commercial intermediaries in migration studies

‘Recruiters sent by placement agencies were hanging around the train stations. They were ready to benefit from the naivety of the new arrivals. If they took the latter to a placement agency to find her a position as a domestic, she could count herself lucky. In general, however, they placed them as prostitutes.’³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 77.

³⁸⁵ Translation from Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*, 46 : *Autour des gares rôdent des racoleurs envoyés par les bureaux de placement. Ceux-ci cherchent à profiter de la naïveté des arrivantes. S'ils emmènent dans un bureau de placement pour leur trouver une vraie place de domestique, elles peuvent se considérer heureuses. En général, c'est plutôt comme prostituées qu'on veut les engager*

This description of the arrival of single rural women in the Montparnasse train station in nineteenth-century Paris by Anne Martin-Fugier resembles that of many nineteenth-century commentators.³⁸⁶ There was a general anxiety about the fact that so many women were coming to the booming capital and commercial cities to earn a living as domestic servants. Their ignorance about city life made them easy victims of placers who are often described as ‘hungry urban predators’, waiting for their chance to pounce in the crowded train stations.

Commercial intermediaries, like placers, are mostly ignored by migration historians and frequently linked to acts of fraud and blackmail by contemporaries. This is not only true for the literature on servant migration however, since migrant agents and bankers on transatlantic migration routes as well as crimps in the maritime sector, are also mostly described as crooks who deceived their clients. In contrast to social networks, they were and still are often seen as unreliable and undesirable. Nevertheless, some literature does exist which emphasizes the importance of such middle men.

Jared N. Day, for example, describes how important migrant bankers were for European immigrants in the United States.³⁸⁷ Migrant bankers were usually former migrants themselves ‘based within other traditional trades and commercial enterprises, like groceries, bakeries, saloons, booksellers, boarding houses, and pedlars’ carts’.³⁸⁸ They provided a wide variety of financial services to migrants and although legislators, reformers, and reporters mistrusted these migrant bankers, they were held in high regard within immigrant communities. In contrast to regular banks, these middle men spoke the migrant’s language, had contacts with their home region and ‘did not care how their customers dressed’.³⁸⁹ It was the combination of the different services they offered along with their familiarity with the lives of migrants which made them successful. While Day mostly focusses on the services provided to migrants after their arrival, Torsten Feys demonstrates how middle men were also important before and during the migration movements of Europeans to the United States.³⁹⁰ In his book on Transatlantic shipping, Feys describes how a complex network of migrant brokers and agents interacted with the large shipping companies and how migrants, as well as the shipping companies themselves, depended heavily on these middle men.

³⁸⁶ Schrover, ‘Feminization and Problematization’, 103-131.

³⁸⁷ Day, ‘Credit, capital and community’, 65-78.

³⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 65.

³⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, 71.

³⁹⁰ Feys, *The Battle*, 71-118.

In a similar vein, crimps in the maritime sector were essential middle men between sailors and shipping companies and did not always act as crooks or fraudsters who deceived drunken sailors. Graeme J. Milne for example, describes the crimping system in the maritime labour market as follows: ‘if the extreme end of the crimping spectrum involved violence and kidnapping, there was evidently a large element which consisted of a working compromise between seamen and crimps’.³⁹¹

In the case of female migration, most historians link middle men primarily to clandestine prostitution networks.³⁹² An exception is the research of Marlou Schrover who has studied female placers in nineteenth-century Dutch cities.³⁹³ Using address books, tax registers, newspapers and other source material, she has carefully reconstructed the profiles and activities of female placers. Unlike nineteenth-century commentators and many historians, Schrover does not focus on their role in clandestine prostitution networks. Instead, she describes placing as an opportunity for women to become entrepreneurs. Female placers in Dutch cities were often former domestic servants who had married a man with a middle-class profession. Their own experience as domestic servants, the network they had built up in this sector, and their husband’s contacts were of vital importance to being successful. According to Schrover, placers and employment agencies eventually disappeared in Dutch cities as they could no longer compete with another, cheaper commercial intermediary: newspaper advertisements.

Just like placers, newspaper advertisements were not a nineteenth-century phenomenon only. Studies by Carmen Sarasúa on wet nurses in Madrid and of Ulrike Krampl on servants in Paris show that already in the eighteenth century, advertisements were used in the domestic service labour market.³⁹⁴ After the 1870, newspaper advertisements became cheaper in most European cities for a number of reasons. The abolishment of a tax (*zegelrecht*) was significant in the Netherlands, but in Belgium this tax had already been abolished in 1848.³⁹⁵ Other factors were equally important, like the increasing number and variety of advertisements, technological improvements, a decrease in the price of paper, and the larger number of literates among the population.³⁹⁶ Similar to the internet today – newspapers evolved into virtual

³⁹¹ Milne, ‘Maritime City’, 92.

³⁹² Martin-Fugier, *La Place*, 60-62 and Piette, *Domestiques*, 153-154 and 414-418.

³⁹³ Schrover, ‘Hidden Professions?’, 167-181.

³⁹⁴ Sarasúa, ‘Leaving home, 29-59; : Krampl, “‘S’adresser à M. le Clerc, Huissier, rue S. Honoré...”.

³⁹⁵ Schrover, ‘Hidden Professions?’, 178; De Bens and Raeymaeckers, *De Pers*, 32-33.

³⁹⁶ De Bens and Raeymaeckers, *De Pers*, 32-33.

market places where houses were sold, products were advertised, and people found employment. This all happened within the advertisement pages which were often essential for the financial survival of a newspaper.³⁹⁷

Placers and newspaper advertisements in Antwerp and Brussels

Evidence of the importance of placers and newspaper advertisements in the domestic service labour market is rare. Overall, data on the period preceding the First World War are scarce. According to Schrover, placers lost their function in Utrecht (the Netherlands) from the 1870s onwards due to the growing importance of newspaper advertisements.³⁹⁸ Their numbers decreased from ten in 1869 to one in 1899. A similar evolution is described by McBride for nineteenth-century England although placement agencies remained more important there than in the Netherlands.³⁹⁹ In France however, placers seem to have increased their control over the domestic service labour market.⁴⁰⁰ For example, in 1909, there were 203 placement agencies in Paris alone.⁴⁰¹

The address books in the city archives of Antwerp and Brussels give an idea of change in the number of placers in both cities in the second half of the long nineteenth century.⁴⁰² Address books list all inhabitants ‘who wanted to advertise their profession’ and provide the last name of the professional, his or her profession(s), and the address details.⁴⁰³ It seems plausible that not all placers paid to be listed in these address books but at least, this source gives an indication of the number of placers in both cities. In Brussels, placers were mentioned in the address books from the 1850s onwards. There were already seven placers in the capital in 1854. By the end of this decade, this number had risen to more than ten placers. At the turn of the century, the number of placers had doubled and by 1910 there were 43 placement agencies in Brussels (Figure 1). In this period, agencies established by philanthropic associations such as the *Ligue des femmes chrétiennes* were also mentioned in the list but the great majority of the agencies was still profit-driven. It is not always possible to make this

³⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, 33-34.

³⁹⁸ Schrover, ‘Hidden Professions?’, 178.

³⁹⁹ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 76-81.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

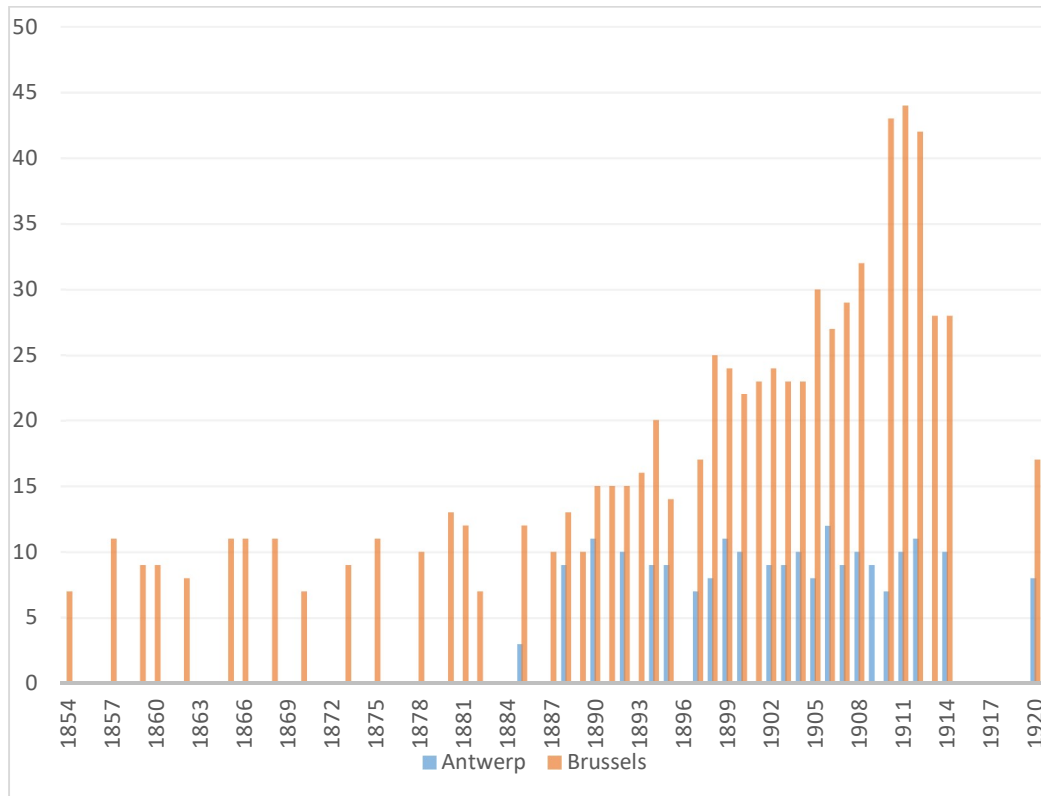
⁴⁰¹ *Ibidem*, 77.

⁴⁰² *Adresboeken Ratinckx*, Ratinckx, Antwerpen, 1838-1920 and *Almenachs de commerce*, Bruxelles, 1820-1920.

⁴⁰³ Quote from: Schrover, ‘Hidden Professions?’, 173.

distinction on the basis of names and addresses. However, it is clear that in general, the non-profit driven agencies made up a small minority of the total number.

Figure 1 Number of placers mentioned in the address books per year



Source: Database Address Books Antwerp and Brussels 1854-1920.⁴⁰⁴

A comparison of the number of placers with the number of servants in the capital provides some interesting indications about the importance of these intermediaries in the domestic service labour market. The detailed censuses of 1846 and 1910 organised by the local authorities give an indication of the total number of servants in the capital. In 1846, the census mentions 7,598 *domestiques et concierges*.⁴⁰⁵ Eight years later, the address book in Brussels lists seven placers which means that there were more than a thousand servants for each placer.

⁴⁰⁴ Based on: *Adresboeken Ratinckx*, Ratinckx, Antwerpen, 1838-1920 and *Almenachs de commerce*, Bruxelles, 1820-1920.

⁴⁰⁵ *Recensement général du 15 octobre 1846*, Bruxelles, 1849, 443-445. More information in: Piette, *Domestiques*, 60.

In 1910, there was a total of 12,682 domestics in Brussels and 43 placement agencies.⁴⁰⁶ As such, there were 295 servants for each placer in this year. These estimations are problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, several agencies not only placed servants but also waitresses and sometimes even prostitutes. Secondly, as mentioned above, not all placers paid to be mentioned in the address books. Thirdly, the reliability of population censuses has often been criticized as it is often unclear who is included in each category.⁴⁰⁷ Nevertheless, this analysis is useful as it provides at least some indications about the importance of placers in this particular labour market. The years between 1908 and 1912 may have been somewhat exceptional with a very high number of placers. The average number of placers between 1901 and 1910 was 25. The total number of servants remained stable in this period. This suggests that there were about 507 servants per placer during this period. As there are no archives left from commercial placement agencies, it is necessary to look into those of non-profit driven organisations to see if 507 servants per placer was high or not. The agency of *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana* in Antwerp, for example, received 4,987 job offers and 1913 demands and effected 1,376 placements between 1909 and 1912.⁴⁰⁸ Clearly, not all commercial placers received as many job offers and demands as *Het Werk*. Furthermore, in contrast to philanthropic associations, most placers worked alone or together with their husband or wife and sometimes combined their work as placer with another job. Still, the above analysis suggests that placers were handling an important proportion of the placement of servants in the capital and became increasingly important as time progressed.

The address books published by Ratinckx in Antwerp only mention placers as a separate category from 1885 onwards. In that year, three placers were listed (see Figure 1). Three years later, this number had risen to nine which is probably a more reliable indication of the number of placers in the city. In 1890 there were about 8,255 domestic servants in Antwerp which indicates that there were 917 servants per placer. Throughout the period being examined here, the number of placers in the port city remained relatively stable with a maximum of 12 placers in 1906 and a minimum of seven placers in 1897 and 1910. At the same time, the number of servants increased from 8,255 servants in 1890 to 11,382 in 1910 which suggests that the

⁴⁰⁶ *Recensement général de la population 1910*, IV, 344-347, More information in: Piette, *Domestiques*, 62.

⁴⁰⁷ Ashkpour, Merono-Penuela, and Mandemakers, 'The Aggregate Dutch Historical Censuses', 230-245.

⁴⁰⁸ KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincie S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3035.

relative importance of placers in Antwerp declined.⁴⁰⁹ As such, placement agencies seem to have been more important in the capital than in the port city.

In comparison with Utrecht, the number of placers in both cities remained relatively high, but this does not necessarily imply that newspaper advertisements remained unimportant in Antwerp and Brussels.⁴¹⁰ By the late nineteenth century, newspapers became increasingly important in several European cities where they – as in Utrecht – surpassed placers as commercial intermediaries in the domestic service labour market. The *Liverpool Mercury* had over 50 advertisements each day in the 1870s and a newspaper in Amsterdam had ‘1,271 advertisements from servants asking for work in the month of January [1898] alone’ or 41 advertisements per day.⁴¹¹ In other European cities, newspaper advertisements never became that important to recruit servants. In Bremen for example, ‘the reliance on newspaper advertising [...] was never as extensive’.⁴¹² Also in France, newspaper advertisements never became as important as placement agencies in the domestic service labour market.⁴¹³

The number of advertisements in Belgian newspapers increased from the 1870s onwards. In *Le Soir* in Brussels, there were over 80 job offers for servants each day in 1900 and more than 120 in 1910.⁴¹⁴ The number of job demands by servants in both years was about half of the number of job offers. As some servants and employers placed the same advertisement repeatedly for several days or even weeks, the number of unique advertisements will have been lower. Still, a significant proportion of employers and servants in Brussels used *Le Soir* as an intermediary. In other newspapers such as *Het Handelsblad* in Antwerp or *Le Vingtième Siècle* in Brussels, the number of advertisements was much lower. In 1890, *Het Handelsblad* had about 3 advertisements each day while *Le Vingtième Siècle* had 8 advertisements per day ten years later.⁴¹⁵ After 1900, the number of advertisements in these newspapers became even lower. Not all newspapers were thus filled with advertisements to

⁴⁰⁹ On the number of servants in Antwerp see chapter 1.

⁴¹⁰ Schrover, ‘Hidden Professions?’, 167-181.

⁴¹¹ Lee, ‘Domestic service’, 450; Schrover, ‘Hidden Professions?’, 179.

⁴¹² Lee, ‘Domestic service’, 450.

⁴¹³ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 79.

⁴¹⁴ Estimations based on the number of advertisements that appeared in *Le Soir* at the first edition of each month in 1900 and 1910. These editions of *Le Soir* were consulted via the online collection of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, to be found at <https://belgicapress.be>, last consulted on 27/03/2019.

⁴¹⁵ Database Newspaper Advertisements 1850-1920. Estimations based on the number of advertisements that appeared in *Het Handelsblad* and *Le Vingtième Siècle* in the first edition of each month in the given years. These editions were consulted via the online collection of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, to be found at <https://belgicapress.be>, last consulted on 27/03/2019.

recruit domestic servants. Furthermore, no newspaper was found in Antwerp with a similar amount of advertisements as *Le Soir* in Brussels.

Overall, commercial intermediaries such as placers and newspaper advertisements seem to have been more important in the capital than in the port city. The case of Brussels is interesting because it demonstrates that the increasing significance of newspaper advertisements did not necessarily make placers redundant. Rather, the results for the capital indicate that what took place was a general formalization of the domestic service labour market. This may also partly explain why, in the previous chapter, less evidence was found of the use of social networks by foreign domestic servants in Brussels than in Antwerp for the 1910 sample. Employers in the capital could perhaps more easily recruited their servants via a commercial intermediary than in the port city. This does not necessarily imply that servants in the capital did not rely on their social network, however. It may very well be that the friends and acquaintances of servants in Brussels were also more inclined to recommend a placement agency instead of mediating directly with an employer.

The strong presence of placers in the capital could also explain why the local authorities in Brussels – more so than in Antwerp – tried to gain control over the domestic service labour market (Chapter 1). The literature on nineteenth-century domestic service often refers to complaints by employers and servants about the power of commercial intermediaries over the labour market.⁴¹⁶ As mentioned in the first chapter, these complaints were taken seriously by the Brussels' authorities who attempted to establish an official placement agency and an employment record book system, not only to monitor the behaviour and mobility of servants but also to weaken the placement agencies in the city. In Antwerp, such measures were never taken by the local authorities, perhaps because placement agencies were less dominant in this city.

The intermediary function of placers and newspapers

As mentioned above, the Brussels' case is also interesting because it shows that an increase in the number of newspaper advertisements does not imply that the number of placement agencies declines by default, as is often suggested in the historiography. The following pages show that

⁴¹⁶ Martin-Fugier, *La place des bonnes*, 60-62; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 70; Piette, *Domestiques*, 65-94.

the intermediary services offered by placers and newspapers were different in character but at the same time complementary, which partly explains why placers remained important middle men in the domestic service labour market. Little research exists on the profiles of placers and the variety of services they provided to employers and servants. It is essential to know who they were and how they worked in order to make statements about their importance for servant migration and recruitment. A placer was a man or a woman who mediated between employers looking for a domestic, on the one hand, and domestics in search for employment on the other. Apart from domestic servants, some also placed waitresses and waiters or other employees. Many combined their activities as placer with a job as innkeeper for innkeepers often had an extensive personal network which was essential to becoming a successful placer.⁴¹⁷

Apart from placement services, innkeepers were also able to provide domestic servants with food, drinks, and lodging. This combination of services offered by these innkeepers/placers was advantageous yet also one of the reasons why placers were sometimes seen as unreliable.⁴¹⁸ In the short term, it seemed more advantageous from a financial point of view for this type of placers to keep domestic servants unemployed for a while and continue to earn money by offering food, drinks, and lodging. If they ran out of money, these young women would often have been so desperate that they were willing to take on any job often ending up working in prostitution as a result. In the long term, however, these practices could result in the placer getting a bad reputation and, in turn, the loss of potential customers. Schrover claims that placers could only compete with informal networks 'if they had a good reputation'.⁴¹⁹ Research into other types of middle men has also shown that although some were indeed fraudsters, many knew that their trustworthiness was one of their most important assets.⁴²⁰

Another group of placers were those former domestic servants who had married someone with a middle class profession. Florentine Landman, for example, was a former servant and married to a French clerk who probably had many contacts within the Antwerp middle-classes. As such it was less difficult for her to get in touch with both potential servants (her own network) and employers (her own and her husband's network) looking for a maid.

⁴¹⁷ Scott Haine, *The World*, 118-149.

⁴¹⁸ Piette, *Domestiques*, 153-154.

⁴¹⁹ Schrover, 'Hidden Professions?', 168.

⁴²⁰ Day, 'Credit', 65-78; Feys, *The Battle*; and Milne, 'Maritime City', 88-108.

Placers with similar profiles were found by Schrover in Utrecht and were also present in Brussels.⁴²¹ Finally, there was also a significant group of placers who acted as middle men in other sectors as well. Alexander Crispyn, for example, was a real estate broker, sold shares of various companies, and even helped people to write petitions, letters and poems.⁴²² Besides all these activities, he also placed domestic servants.

All these types of placers had an office of sorts where employers and domestics would go to in order to register their job offer or their availability for work. In general, there seem to have been three ways in which placer mediated between employers and servants. Sometimes, the placer would select several servants whose profile seemed to correspond to the demands of the employer.⁴²³ The employer would then get the opportunity to meet and question each of these servants individually at the placer's office and eventually select the one who seemed suitable. Another possibility was that a servant who applied for a job, simply received the address of an employer from the placer after paying a registration fee.⁴²⁴ Subsequently, the servant had to go to the address alone to present herself and convince the employer that she was fit for the job. A good placer would again take into account the profile of the servant and the demands of the employer. This improved the chances that the employer would hire the servant. However, it happened that servants were sometimes rejected by employers after having paid a substantial amount of money to the placer, ending up without decent employment.⁴²⁵

Sometimes, placers placed advertisements in order to find employment for a servant or a domestic for an employer. *Agents d'affaires* seem to have been the first to use newspaper advertisements as they already had experience of placing advertisements to sell houses, shares and other goods. Typically, *agents d'affaires* were not so much competing with newspaper advertisements as using them to their own advantage. Crispyn, for example, regularly placed advertisements in the Antwerp newspaper *Het Handelsblad* in the 1870s.⁴²⁶ Like address books, newspaper advertisements provided intermediaries like the *agent d'affaires* with the opportunity of making their services known among potential clients. After a while it was, not

⁴²¹ Schrover, 'Hidden Professions?', 174-176.

⁴²² Database address books 1850-1920. *Het Handelsblad*, 6-6-1872 and 7-2-1874.

⁴²³ Martin-Fugier, *La Place*, 58-60.

⁴²⁴ D. De Keyzer, "Madame est servie", 50.

⁴²⁵ *Ibidem*, 53; Martin-Fugier, *La Place*, 60-62 ; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 79.

⁴²⁶ See for example the editions of *Het Handelsblad* of 6-6-1872; 6-2-1873; 8-1-1874.

only *agents d'affaires*, who used advertisements for this purpose but other placers started to do so too. Most of the time, they referred to a general demand for domestics:

‘Wanted, domestics of all kinds, letter of reference is required.’⁴²⁷

Sometimes, placers used a more detailed description:

‘To mistresses and maids, opening of a lodging house and placement office exclusively for domestics on June 1st, Isabellalei 130 [...]. From now on, mistresses can choose maids of their liking. Modest prices and fast service. Office hours from 1 to 4 in the afternoon.’⁴²⁸

Occasionally, however, a placer wrote an advertisement for a specific vacancy:

‘Wanted, a maid with knowledge of the bourgeois cuisine. For the countryside, preferably someone who speaks French and a skilled kitchen maid for the city, as well as a chamber maid, capable of ironing and embroidering.’⁴²⁹

Employers and servants could, of course, always place an advertisement themselves without the help of a placer. They could go to the newspaper office or to a shop (often a bookstore) which cooperated with the newspaper. The similarities between all advertisements suggests that either the newspaper employee or the shopkeeper helped servants and employers write their advertisement. The costs were relatively low compared to certain placement agencies. In June 1895, an *aanvragen van posten* in *Het Handelsblad* cost 1,5 francs.⁴³⁰ If the

⁴²⁷ *Het Handelsblad*, 22-6-1872. Translation of: *Men vraagt dienstmeiden van allen aard, voorzien van goede getuigschriften.*

⁴²⁸ *Het Handelsblad*, 29-5-1892. Translation of: *Aan dames en meiden opening met 1 juni aanstaande, van het logement en placement uitsluitelijk voor dienstmeiden, Isabellalei 130. [...] Van heden af kunnen de Damen naar keus er meiden bekomen. Gematigde prijzen en spoedige bediening. Spreekuren van 1 tot 4 ure 's namiddags.*

⁴²⁹ *Het Handelsblad*, 12-12-1888. Translation of: *Men vraagt een meisje kennende eene burgerskeuken. Voor den buiten, liefst iemand die fransch spreekt en eene bekwame keukenmeid voor de stad, alsook eene bovenmeid, kunnende goed strijken en mazen. Te bevragen Mutsaardstraat, 12, bij A. DUBOIS tafeldienaar.*

⁴³⁰ *Het Handelsblad*, 12-6-1895.

advertisements were longer than five lines, an extra 0,30 francs had to be paid per extra line. In the same month of the same year, an advertisement in *Le Soir* cost 0,40 francs per line.⁴³¹ For servants, this would have been a significant amount of money. According to a questionnaire taken in 1893 in Brussels, servants could expect a wage of between 18 and 35 francs per month.⁴³² As such, a servant had to pay a daily wage or more to place an advertisement in a Belgian newspaper. In comparison, however, most placers demanded an inscription fee and/or a percentage of the servant's monthly wages. According to McBride, the inscription fee in France 'could range as high as 2 francs, the equivalent of an average day's wage for a female worker'.⁴³³

No indications were found about the kind of fees demanded by commercial placers in Antwerp or Brussels. If the fee was similar to that in French cities, it would have been similar to the cost of placing an advertisement in a newspaper. However, if a servant was placed by an agency, she also 'owed the agency a percentage of the first month's or first year's wage'.⁴³⁴ Schrover claims that placers in the Netherlands sometimes even demanded the first three months full salary.⁴³⁵ As such, if a servant was successful within finding a job via an advertisement in a limited amount of time, it was a much cheaper option. Advertisements also made vacant positions or job seekers' requests more widely-known than placers.⁴³⁶ Costs could increase, however, when servants had to place the same advertisement several days or even weeks in a newspaper in order to find employment. Moreover, the intermediary role of newspapers was very limited. In contrast to placement agencies, they did not actively match job offers and demands. Employers and servants had to react to advertisements themselves. Unlike newspaper advertisements, a good placement agency removed the trouble of finding a decent employer or servant oneself.

When finding employment or recruiting a servant proved difficult, servants and employers probably used various intermediaries at the same time. Evidence about this can be found in the administration of a certain philanthropic association in Antwerp (which will be

⁴³¹ *Le Soir*, 12-06-1895.

⁴³² C. De Quéker, 'Les femmes à gages à Bruxelles', *Bulletin du Travail. Rapport sur les opérations de la Bourse du Travail pendant l'exercice 1892-93*, Bruxelles, 18-19. More information in : Piette, *Domestiques*, 161.

⁴³³ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 78.

⁴³⁴ *Ibidem*, 78.

⁴³⁵ Schrover, 'Hidden Professions?', 177.

⁴³⁶ McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 79.

discussed in more detail later in this chapter).⁴³⁷ There are several references to servants who asked the association to help them find employment but eventually got a job via a placement agency, advertisement, or their informal network. This could also partly explain the relatively low percentage of ultimately successful placements by placement agencies. The *Office du Travail* in France published the results of a questionnaire about the placement of employees, labourers, and domestics and found that placement agencies throughout the country were capable of effecting 349 520 placements per year or about 35 percent of the total number of requests by servants and less than half of the job offers by employers.⁴³⁸ As such, the effectiveness of placers seems to have been relatively low. This does not necessarily imply, however, that the servants involved did not find employment or the placer was not doing his or her job properly. It could simply have been a consequence of the fact that servants and employers used a variety of intermediary structures simultaneously. This again emphasizes the importance of understanding the interplay between the different dimensions of the migration infrastructure.

Philanthropic Associations

At the turn of the century, commercial intermediaries were joined by philanthropic associations in their mission to find roles for domestic workers. Few historians have analysed the development of these institutions and their role in servant migration and recruitment. Initially, they were a reaction to the white slavery scare.⁴³⁹ Their goal was to protect migrant women from fraudsters and crooks who tried to lure them into prostitution. These associations did not only protect and help migrant women, they also supervised them to a certain extent. The goal was less to provide women with better jobs and wages than to keep them from what Protestants and Catholics characterized as immoral behaviour.⁴⁴⁰ As such, philanthropic associations seem

⁴³⁷ KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincie S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3036, 3037 and 3041.

⁴³⁸ Office du Travail, *Enquête sur le placement des employés, ouvriers, et domestiques à Paris, depuis la promulgation de la loi du 14 mars 1904*, Paris, 1909. More information in: McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 79.

⁴³⁹ Henkes, *Heimat in Holland*, 42-46.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 42-46 ; De Keyzer, 'Madame', 55-63.

to have taken over the role of national and local authorities in monitoring the behaviour of domestic servants.

Philanthropic associations were mostly established in the late nineteenth century by women and men from the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and religious institutions. Even so, concerns about young female migrants looking for jobs as domestic servants in cities has existed for much longer. As described in the first chapter, already under French rule, the authorities in Brussels had tried to prohibit the activities of commercial intermediaries and replace them with public employment offices.

At the end of the nineteenth century, so-called labour exchanges appeared in both Antwerp and Brussels. The idea for such *Bourses du Travail* was launched in 1843 by Gustave de Molinari to improve the living conditions of wage labourers in Europe.⁴⁴¹ From 1885 onwards, the mayor of Brussels, Charles Buls tried to convince several partners to open such a *Bourse du Travail* in the capital. It took him four years to get it off the ground and eventually it was created as a charitable organization rather than being run by the local authorities themselves.⁴⁴² *La Bourse* was not established specifically to mediate between domestics and their employers but in the early 1890s, it did receive many job offers for servants. However, the number of servants who applied for these jobs were much lower. This imbalance can partly be explained by the competition of similar initiatives.

On December 2nd 1889, *La Bourse du travail des femmes* was opened in Brussels by *La Société de Moralité* under the direction of Joseph Hoyois.⁴⁴³ According to an article written about this organization in *Le Journal de Bruxelles* in 1890, 'labour exchanges such as this one [...] help to make an end to employment agencies, those nefarious and evil institutions'.⁴⁴⁴ The author of the article claims that within 23 weeks, the agency had received 655 job offers and 1,370 demands and effected 483 placements.⁴⁴⁵ The difference between the number of jobs offered on the one hand and demanded on the other diminishes when only domestic servants are included: 670 applicants for 521 job offers. With 15 jobs for 64 applicants, governesses faced the biggest challenge finding jobs. As explained in other chapters, this was characteristic

⁴⁴¹ Deslé, *Arbeidsbemiddeling en/of werklozencontrole*, 39.

⁴⁴² Piette, *Domestiques*, 425-430 and Deslé, *Arbeidsbemiddeling*, 45.

⁴⁴³ Piette, *Domestiques*, 430-432.

⁴⁴⁴ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 27-06-1890. Translated from: *des Bourses de ce genre, [...] aideront à tuer les bureaux de placement, ces « institutions » néfastes et mauvaises.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

of their position in the labour market in general. Both Belgian and foreign servants were helped by *La Bourse du travail des femmes*. In 1902, the organization decided to join forces with *la Maison des Servantes* which had been established in 1894, and from which time they assisted about a thousand servants each year. An organization similar to *La Bourse du travail des femmes* existed in Antwerp under the name of *Beurs voor Vrouwenarbeid*.⁴⁴⁶ It was located in the *Nationalestraat* in the city centre. Unfortunately, there is almost no information to be found about the functioning of this organization.

Apart from these local labour exchanges, international philanthropic associations were established throughout Europe by Protestants and Catholics to protect migrant women from the white slavery trade.⁴⁴⁷ Socialists were focused on the fate of factory workers and were less involved in the establishment of associations for servants.⁴⁴⁸ In 1877, the protestant *L'Union Internationale des Amies de la Jeune Fille* was established, quickly followed by *L'Œuvre Catholique pour la Protection de la Jeune Fille*.⁴⁴⁹ These international organisations had branches in all major European cities. Barbara Henkes has described the different stages of care performed by these associations in the period after the First World War.⁴⁵⁰

During the first stage or *voorbereidende zorg*, women were informed via newspaper articles, pamphlets or local authorities about the dangers of migrating and searching employment as a domestic servant in an unknown city.⁴⁵¹ Sometimes, women who wanted to migrate could receive addresses of reliable intermediaries in their preferred place of destination. During their journey, migrant women were helped and protected by so-called *stationsdames* from the local branch of *L'Union* or *L'Œuvre* active in the train stations of big cities and important transit points.⁴⁵² This was the second stage or the *begeleidende zorg*. The *stationsdames* wore yellow and white-coloured fabric around their upper arm in order for the servants to recognize them. If migrant women were not able to find a *stationsdame*, they could still rely on the information provided in pamphlets that could be found in all major European

⁴⁴⁶ *Het Handelsblad*, 23-3-1897.

⁴⁴⁷ Henkes, *Heimat*, 42-46; De Keyzer, 'Madame', 55-63.

⁴⁴⁸ Gesquière and Van Rompaey, 'Het femomeen dienstpersoneel', 56-57 and Keymolen and Van Molle, 'Feminisme', 169-170.

⁴⁴⁹ Henkes, *Heimat*, 42-43.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 42-46.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 42-46.

⁴⁵² *Ibidem*, 42-46.

train stations and provided the address details of reliable lodging houses and placement agencies.

The case of the *stationsdames* is a good illustration of the interaction between the different dimensions of the migration infrastructure. When railways gradually became the main means of transport for female migrants, it created new opportunities for labour intermediation. Commercial placers started to position themselves at train stations in order to meet female migrants as soon as they arrived in the city and convince them to use their placement services.⁴⁵³ Over time, this strategy became associated with clandestine prostitution networks and philanthropic associations such as *L'Union* and *L'Œuvre* were established to organize a counter movement of *stationsdames* to save migrant women from the hands of commercial placers.

Once servants were settled and had found employment, they were often invited to join local associations for young women which allowed them to spend their leisure time in a “protective sphere”.⁴⁵⁴ This was the third stage or the *nazorg*. These initiatives were explicitly aimed at keeping women from immoral behaviour during their days off.

As was the case in most European cities, there were also local departments of *L'Œuvre Catholique pour la Protection de la Jeune Fille* in Antwerp and Brussels. In Brussels, an office was opened in March 1901 in the rue de Berlin 33.⁴⁵⁵ It is unclear when exactly *L'Œuvre* opened a similar office in Antwerp. In 1911, was located at *Vleminckxveld* 47 in the third quarter of the city.⁴⁵⁶ It was open every day from 10 to 12 o'clock in the morning, except on Sundays. Female servants and their parents could ask for help in finding employment in Belgium or abroad free of charge. Employers were also helped in their search for reliable servants but had to pay a fee for this service.

An article in *Le Vingtième Siècle* in November 1903, describes the *begeleidende zorg* performed by *L'Œuvre* in Brussels. The author of the article first describes the work done in the train stations:

‘Inspired by the generous example of German noble and bourgeois Christian women, these ladies organize a daily watch when the trains arrive in the Gare du Nord and the

⁴⁵³ *Ibidem*, 42-46.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 42-46.

⁴⁵⁵ Piette, *Domestiques*, 423.

⁴⁵⁶ Database Address Books, 1850-1920.

Gare du Midi from 7 in the morning to 7 in the evening. Every young girl who either through her behaviour, clothing or gait, appears to have arrived in Brussels for the first time, in search of a position, will find help and protection from the ladies who can be recognized by the yellow and white ribbon that is attached to their corsage.⁴⁵⁷

The author continues by describing how *Les Dames* are helped by the station staff but also have to deal with the lack of interest from other passengers and the hostility of *des « rabatteurs » de la traite des blanches*. To know whether or not a female migrant needed their help, *Les Dames* asked a number of questions. When the servant had no safe place to go, she was accompanied to *la maison de l'oeuvre* at the *rue de Berlin* in Ixelles:

‘At the house of l’Œuvre, rue de Berlin, young girls are provided with room and board and in addition to that, there is also a placement agency. It should be noted that the protégés of Œuvre are not only recruited in the train stations. Every young girl without a position can find shelter at the rue de Berlin. The house that we visited is very well managed. The offices and refectory are on the ground floor, and the dormitories, upstairs are arranged in the manner of boarding school dormitories.’⁴⁵⁸

Despite their humanitarian goals, *l’Œuvre* did not offer its services free of charge. Placement services were paid for by the future employers of the domestics and servants still had to pay 1,5 to 2,5 francs each day themselves for lodging, food and drinks.⁴⁵⁹ This was more than a daily wage for most domestic servants at the time. However, they only had to pay up front for the first day and night. Subsequent days and nights were withheld from a servant’s first salary.

⁴⁵⁷ *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 29/11/1903. Translation of : *Imitant le généreux exemple donné surtout en Allemagne par les femmes chrétiennes de la noblesse et de la bourgeoisie, ces dames ont organisé, chaque jour, dans la gare du Nord et la gare du Midi, de 7 heures du matin à 7 heures du soir, un service de surveillance à l'arrivée des trains. Toute jeune fille qui par son attitude, sa mise et ses allures, paraît débarquer pour la première fois à Bruxelles, en quête d'une place, trouve aide et protection auprès de ces dames qu'un ruban jaune et blanc attaché au corsage, distingue de la foule.*

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibidem*. Translation of: *les jeunes filles ont gîte et couvert ; de plus, un bureau de placement y est organisé. Il est à remarquer que ce n'est pas seulement dans les gares que se recrutent les protégées de l'Œuvre. Toute jeune fille sans place peut trouver asile rue de Berlin. La maison que nous avons visité, est admirablement tenue. Au rez-de-chaussée, se trouvent les bureaux et le réfectoire ; aux étages, les dortoirs, disposés à la façon des dortoirs de pensionnats.*

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

To receive supplementary contributions, *l'Œuvre* also organized 'a raffle to raise much-needed resources. The jackpot is a house. The tickets cost no more than one franc'.⁴⁶⁰

In the following years, several concerts, theatre plays, and operas were organized by *les femmes chrétiennes de la noblesse et de la bourgeoisie* to finance this and other philanthropic associations in the capital.⁴⁶¹ As such, these philanthropic associations also became a way for the women of the nobility and bourgeoisie to spend their leisure time. At the same time, associations regularly organized international conferences to discuss the 'servant problem' with each other⁴⁶².

Apart from *l'Œuvre*, there were also other philanthropic associations in Brussels. Like *l'Œuvre*, *La ligue des femmes chrétiennes* also had numerous international.⁴⁶³ *La Ligue* not only set up a placement agency for servants but, amongst others, also a union for female workers in the factories in Cureghem, a *société de secours médicaux et pharmaceutiques aux femmes en couches*, and a *dispensaire* which took care of 636 sick women in 1896.⁴⁶⁴

In Antwerp, there were at least two other Catholic organizations: *De Mariakrans*, and *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana*.⁴⁶⁵ While *De Mariakrans* was more concerned with the placement of men and women in other sectors, *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana* effected 1,376 placements in the domestic service labour market in the period between 1909 and 1912.⁴⁶⁶ *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana* was established in Ghent in 1900 and was managed by *het Comiteit van de dames van de Derde Orde*. It opened an office in Antwerp a few years later at the *Oever 10*. This office was open on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 3 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Unlike *l'Œuvre*, *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana* only offered placement services rather than lodging, food and drinks. Soon after its establishment in Antwerp, the association received an offer from *l'Œuvre* to join their association which was refused by *het Comiteit*.⁴⁶⁷ According to the reports of *het Comiteit*, it

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibidem*. Translation of : *Une tombola pour se créer les indispensables ressources. Le gros lot est une maison. Le billet ne coûte qu'un franc.*

⁴⁶¹ *Le Soir*, 6-12-1895; 11-12-1896; 28-11-1896; 19-01-1898; 26-01-1904; 04-04-1906; 10-01-1907.

⁴⁶² *Journal de Bruxelles*, 01-06-1897; *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 30-08-1910; *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 08-09-1912.

⁴⁶³ *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 30-08-1910.

⁴⁶⁴ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 01-06-1897.

⁴⁶⁵ KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincie S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3036, 3037 and 3041.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

continued to receive such requests in the following years but decided every time to continue to work on their own.

The success of all these philanthropic associations is demonstrated by the high number of employers and servants who used their placement services each year. At the same time, however, like the local authorities, they were not capable of banishing commercial intermediaries from the urban landscape. In fact, as some of these associations also asked a significant amount of money for lodging or placement services from either employers or servants, the difference between profit and non-profit driven organizations may not always have been so clear.

By the end of the nineteenth century, servants could choose from a variety of different intermediaries when looking for employment, lodging, and other necessities. The next section focuses on the effect of this evolution on foreign domestic servants and on the presence and absence of commercial intermediaries and philanthropic associations in both cities which specialized in the placement of foreign domestic servants.

Foreign Domestic Servants, Commercial Intermediaries, and Philanthropic Associations

The results of the previous chapter indicate that there was a significant difference in the use of social networks by the different migration circuits studied here. In Antwerp, West-Brabant women seem to have relied on horizontal ties and individual migrants on vertical ties. Servants from the Cologne region more did not have any contacts in the city. Over time, the importance of social networks remained relatively strong. As mentioned above, servants in the Brussels sample may have relied more on formal intermediaries because there are almost no indications to be found in the population registers about the use of social networks by these women and the number of placement agencies and newspaper advertisements in the capital seem to have been much higher. A question that remains, however, is whether there were profit and non-profit driven intermediaries who focused more specifically on placing or assisting foreign domestic servants.

Placers

Trust was an important feature in the relationship between migrant and placer. It did of course help when the latter came from the same country or region as the former. Luxembourg women for example, may have trusted a Luxembourg placer more than one who was born and raised in Brussels. A compatriot could perhaps also help her to keep in touch with her home region. As such, it comes as no surprise that there were also foreigners among placers in Antwerp and Brussels.

In 1888, for example, nine placers were found in the Antwerp address books eight of whom can be identified in the population registers.⁴⁶⁸ Six of them were foreigners themselves or had a foreign marriage partner. Most of these foreign placers were German like Florentine Landmann. Some ran a placement agency successfully for several years. Many of these German placers emphasized that they had contacts in Germany. For example, Louise Begoden from Lier (Belgium) who had a German husband, explicitly mentions in an advertisement in *Het Handelsblad* that she was in contact *met Duitschland voor het plaatsen van Duitse Meiden*.⁴⁶⁹ A German placer named Hedwig Dannehl, was the local representative of an international agency which had its headquarters in Berlin.⁴⁷⁰ She resided in Antwerp and successfully specialized in the placement of trained domestics, like governesses, in bourgeois and noble households in several places in Belgium. Some of her advertisements in *Le Soir* were even written in German instead of French.⁴⁷¹ Another example is that of Marie-Christine Kirsch who – according to a police report - ‘places girls in clandestine brothels as well as in decent households’ and ‘has contacts with placers in Germany’.⁴⁷²

These contacts between intermediaries in different cities and villages across Europe may have been important vehicles for servant migration in the second half of the long nineteenth century. Crossing borders and moving over longer distances probably became more accessible thanks to the assistance of such intermediaries. The examples above illustrate that it

⁴⁶⁸ Database Address Books, 1850-1920.

⁴⁶⁹ *Het Handelsblad*, 18-06-1875.

⁴⁷⁰ SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 481#110040.

⁴⁷¹ *Le Soir*, 21-05-1911; 20-03-1911.

⁴⁷² SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Vreemdelingendossiers, 481#53832. Translation of: *place les filles aussi bien dans des lieux des prostitution clandestine que dans les bonnes maisons*’ and ‘*est en relation avec des placeurs d’Allemagne*’.

is possible that several German women may have found a position in Antwerp with the help of an intermediary in their region of origin who was in contact with a placer (or employer) in the Belgian port city.

While there were several placers who referred to their contacts in Germany, almost no references were made by placers in Antwerp to their networks in the Netherlands or in any other country. Despite the relatively high number of Dutch servants, there also seem to have been few Dutch placers in Antwerp. Petronella Vande Ven from 's Hertogenbosch in North-Brabant was an exception.⁴⁷³ She had moved to Antwerp to work as a domestic servant herself and after marrying a Belgian inn keeper, opened a placement agency under her husbands' name.

The difference between the number of German and Dutch servants can easily be related to the results of the previous chapter on the use of social networks. For about half of the servants from the Cologne region, no indication on the use of informal networks could be found compared to 26 percent of the West-Brabant servants. As such, it seems that servants from the Cologne region relied more frequently on other intermediary channels such as German placers, for example.

Compared to Antwerp, information about placement agencies in Brussels can be found for an earlier period. The placers who were active in the capital in the 1850s all seem to have been Belgians.⁴⁷⁴ Foreign placers only arrived later in the century when an increasing number of foreign servants reached the capital as well. August Delabrière for example, was born in La Cerlangue, in France.⁴⁷⁵ His wife, Catherine Mangers, was from Wilwerwiltz in Luxembourg and had previously worked as a servant in Brussels herself. Delabrière was registered in the population registers as an innkeeper but from 1899 to 1914 he was also identified as a placement agent in the address books. Other examples of foreign placers in Brussels were Barbe Daum from Germany, Albert Antoine Sivignon from France, and Henri Knaff from Luxembourg.⁴⁷⁶ While Daum and Sivignon were inn keepers, Knaff was active as an *agent d'affaires*. Overall, placers in Brussels came from a greater variety of places than those in Antwerp which partly reflects the more scattered pattern of the Brussels' recruitment area

⁴⁷³ Database Address Books, 1850-1920 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

⁴⁷⁴ Database Address Books, 1850-1920 and SAA, Archieven van de stad Antwerpen, Bevolkingsregisters.

⁴⁷⁵ Database Address Books, 1850-1920 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population; AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Dossiers étrangers, 17365.

⁴⁷⁶ Database Address Books, 1850-1920 and AVB, Section Fonds administratifs, Recensements de population.

(Chapter 2). The use of formal intermediaries may as such also have been less linked to one specific group.

Not only might placement agencies in Antwerp and Brussels have played a role, but agencies from abroad did too. Sometimes, a foreign placement agency from abroad also placed an advertisement in a Belgian newspaper to find work for a servant, such as in *Le Journal de Bruxelles* of 20 September 1865:

‘A young German maid, well-mannered, looking for a position as housekeeper or as *demoiselle de café*, either in Belgium or in France. More information from the large placement agency *UNTER GROTESGNADEN*, 23, in Cologne.’⁴⁷⁷

An advertisement from a placement agency in München appeared in the same newspaper, offering training activities for women who wanted to become a governess or a teacher.⁴⁷⁸ The agency claimed to have contacts in France, Switzerland, Italy, England, Russia and Spain. Again, this demonstrates the international scope of this elite segment of the domestic service labour market (in Brussels).

Newspaper advertisements

The examples above demonstrate how placers used newspaper advertisements to recruit servants internationally or to find employment for a servant abroad. Some employers or servants used similar means without the assistance of a placer. Employers looking for a foreign servant, could, of course, simply place a newspaper advertisement themselves. Several examples can be found in *Le Soir*:

Wanted, maid-of-all-work with culinary skills, letter of recommendation required, preferably a Luxembourg or German girl, Avenue Fosny 19.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 20-09-1865. Translation of: *Une jeune Allemande, bien élevée, désirerait une place de ménagère ou comme demoiselle de café, soit en Belgique ou en France. S’adresser au grand bureau de placement UNTER GROTESGNADEN, 23, à Cologne. (4181)*

⁴⁷⁸ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 22-7-1874.

⁴⁷⁹ *Le Soir*, 23-05-1897. Translation of: *On dem. fille à tout faire sachant cuisine, références exigées, de préférence luxembourgeoise ou allemande, 19, avenue Fosny. 1377*

Occasionally, the advertisements were even written in the native language:

*Tüchtige Köchin in gutem Bürgerhaus gesucht. Muss Theil Hausarbeit uebernehmen, Delescluzestraat, 20, Berchem.*⁴⁸⁰

Employers who wanted to hire a German servant could make use of the *Antwerpener Zeitung* which was published by the German community in Antwerp and had readers in the Belgian capital as well.⁴⁸¹ This newspaper regularly contained job offers, for example:

‘Wanted, a modest maid who knows how to take care of a newborn child.’⁴⁸²

Another strategy was to place an advertisement in a foreign newspaper. Several vacancies can be found for positions in Antwerp or Brussels in Dutch newspapers (but probably also in German and Luxembourg newspapers), for example:

‘Maid. Wanted by May 1st in Brussels, in a small family, a modest second maid, P.G., capable of sewing, embroidering, ironing and washing: letters of reference required.’⁴⁸³

An important difference with advertisements in Belgian newspapers is that employers in Dutch newspapers often explicitly asked for either Protestant (P.G.) or Catholic (R.K.) domestic servants, also when those employers resided in Antwerp or Brussels. This preoccupation with religion reflects the historical legacy of Reformation in the Netherlands, while Belgium was almost exclusively a Catholic nation.⁴⁸⁴

Like placers, newspapers may have enhanced the recruitment of foreign domestics to Antwerp and Brussels. It became relatively easy for employers to reach out to a broad audience

⁴⁸⁰ *Het Handelsblad*, 12/6/1895. Translation: Skilled cook wanted in a decent middle-class home. Must do some household work as well, Delecluzestraat, 20, Berchem.

⁴⁸¹ *Antwerpener Zeitung*, consulted in the Erfgoedbibliotheek Conscience, Antwerpen.

⁴⁸² *Antwerpener Zeitung*, 06-01-1891. Translation of: *Gesucht. Für r. März ein einfaches deutsches Mädchen das die Behandlung eines neu-geborenen Kindes kennt. Näheres Exp. Ds. Blattes.*

⁴⁸³ *Nieuws van den dag: kleine courant*, 22-02-1882. Translation of: *Werkmeid. Gevraagd tegen 1^o. Mei, te Brussel, in een klein Gezin, een eenvoudige Tweede Meid, P.G., goed kunnende Naaien, Mazen, Strijken en met de Wasch omgaan; van goede, getuigen voorzien. Adres fr^o., lett. N K 539, N.v/d Dag.*

⁴⁸⁴ Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland.*

via advertisements. However, it is not clear how successful such recruitment strategies actually were. As mentioned above, unlike placers, newspapers did not actively match up job offers and demands. Servants had to read the newspaper or hear about the advertisement and subsequently contact the potential employer themselves. As such, many employers may still have preferred to use a placer or an informal intermediary when looking for a domestic from abroad.

Foreign servants themselves also placed advertisements in Belgian newspapers. Already in November 1850, an English governess called Palmer placed an advertisement in *Het Handelsblad* to find employment in Antwerp.⁴⁸⁵ In the same year and newspaper, a *burgermeisje* from North-Brabant asked for a position as a maid-of-all-work.⁴⁸⁶ Some foreign women placed advertisements before they migrated to Antwerp or Brussels but most had already arrived in Belgium. A woman from Germany for example, went to a bookstore in Antwerp to place the following advertisement in *Het Handelsblad*:

‘Notice! A German girl of 24, Catholic, already resident here for several months, is looking for a position as chamber maid or governess, preferably with a German family. Please address your correspondence [...] to the bookseller H. SCHEEFHALS, 43, Koepoortstraat, Antwerp.’⁴⁸⁷

It is important to point out that this advertisement is exceptional in its length and detail. Most foreign women do not refer to their religion or preference of working for compatriots. For example, a woman from Luxembourg who stayed in Brussels placed the following advertisement in *Le Soir*:

‘Luxembourg woman, 33 years old, 7 years of service, looking for a position as *fille de quartier* or kitchen maid, 42 r. des Chartreux.’⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁵ *Het Handelsblad*, 02-11-1850.

⁴⁸⁶ *Het Handelsblad*, 02-12-1850.

⁴⁸⁷ *Het Handelsblad*, 04-05-1870. Translation of: *Attentie! Een duitsch meisje van 24 jaar, R.K. godsdienst, eenige maanden hier ter stede woonachtig, zag zich gaarne zoo spoedig mogelijk geplaatst, liefst bij duitsche lieden als boven- of kindermid. Reflecterende gelieve zich te adresseren met franco brieven onder de letters A.B., bij den boekhandelaar H. SCHEEFHALS, 43, Koepoortstraat, Antwerpen.*

⁴⁸⁸ *Le Soir*, 31-10-1902. Translation of: *Luxembourgeoise 33 ans, 7 ans [...] serv. dem. pl. fil. De quart ou fil. cuis., 42 r. des Chartreux.*

Shorter advertisements were of course much cheaper to place and it seems plausible that many foreign servants chose not to mention their nationality. Servants from North-Brabant, for example, may not have considered this to be an important factor. It is therefore impossible to estimate how many foreign servants used newspaper advertisements to find employment. Examples of Dutch, German and Luxembourg women who explicitly mention their nationality can be found in *Het Handelsblad*, *Le Vingtième Siècle* and *Le Soir* but it is unclear how representative they are.

Governesses may be important exceptions in this respect. As explained in other chapters, it could be an advantage for these women to have a different native language from their employers.⁴⁸⁹ German and English governesses therefore often emphasized their nationality and knowledge of their native and other languages. This makes it easier to distinguish their advertisements from those of their Belgian colleagues. For example, in 1905 and 1906, at least seven English and fifteen German governesses placed one or several advertisements in *Le Vingtième Siècle*.⁴⁹⁰ These numbers are relatively high for this niche in the domestic service labour market. It was not easy for governesses to find employment at that time because there were more applicants than job vacancies potentially available to them. Newspaper advertisements were one of several information channels they used to find jobs. Unlike other servants, however, their search was not limited to one or a few places but often extended to a larger number of cities or regions in Europe.⁴⁹¹ Several of the individual migrants in the capital worked as governesses and may have found a position in a Brussels' household via a newspaper advertisement.

Philanthropic associations

With regard to assisting foreign servants, philanthropic associations in Antwerp and Brussels can be divided into three groups. International organizations such as *l'Œuvre* or *La Ligue* were very much concerned with providing assistance to foreign women. Unfortunately, the archives of the Belgian departments of these associations have not been found so there is not much

⁴⁸⁹ Verbruggen, 'Thuisonderwijs', 32-45.

⁴⁹⁰ Database Address Books, 1850-1920.

⁴⁹¹ Verbruggen, 'Thuisonderwijs'.

detailed information available about these associations. In an article in *Le Vingtième Siècle* on the activities of *l'Œuvre*, it is claimed that:

So far, especially young foreign women, German or English, have resorted to the hospitality of *l'Œuvre*. It is they, who are often easy victims of these crimps.⁴⁹²

In this passage, foreign women are described as being the most vulnerable female migrants and the ones needing the protection of *l'Œuvre* the most. This description can easily be linked to the police's specific focus on innkeepers and placers who had many foreign female clients, an issue which is discussed in the next chapter. Both the State and Church authorities considered the long-distance migration of women to be undesirable. In 1867, a priest in Brussels claimed *qu'il y a une masse de domestiques et de jeunes ouvriers allemands qui viennent se perdre dans la capitale*.⁴⁹³ In a similar vein, the author of an article in *Zelandia*, a regional Dutch newspaper stated:

'Although we don't recommend that young girls from our region move to Antwerp to find a position there at all, it is impossible to stop migration to the *Scheldestad*.'⁴⁹⁴

These quotes are a good reflection of the vision of philanthropic associations like *l'Œuvre*. The general idea was that women should not migrate across long distances to foreign cities. However, if so many foreign women did indeed make use of the services of these philanthropic associations, the latter may have actually strengthened the tendency towards long distance migration among women.

This argument relates specifically to international associations such as *l'Œuvre* or *l'Union*. Associations like *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana* which were not organized on an international but rather on a national or local level were far less focused on

⁴⁹² *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 29/11/1903. Translation of: Ce sont surtout des jeunes filles étrangères, allemandes et anglaises, qui ont eu recours jusqu'ici à l'hospitalité de *l'Œuvre*. Ce sont elles, du reste, qui étaient pour bon nombre la proie facile des « rabatteurs ».

⁴⁹³ Piette, *Domestiques*, 78.

⁴⁹⁴ KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincie S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3035 Werk van de H. Francisca Romana Verslagen (raadsvergaderingen). Translation of: *Hoewel wij volstrekt niet aanbevelen dat de jongemeisjes uit onze streken zich naar Antwerpen begeven om daar betrekkingen te vervullen, is het niet mogelijk de trek naar die Scheldestad tegen te houden*.

foreign servants. Most of the servants who applied for jobs at the office of such associations came from the countryside surrounding the city.⁴⁹⁵ In the administration of *Het Werk van de Heilige Francisca Romana*, it was only Dutch women from the border regions who were foreigners. This again shows that the latter can be identified as hinterland migrants. In the association's 'book of maids', we find, for example:

Marie Jeurissen, Nervierstraat 10, Maid-of-all-work, 18 years old, tall, with some experience, claims to be Christian, originates from Stevensweert close to Roermond.⁴⁹⁶

In 1911, *Het Comiteit* was even contacted by *Zelandia* a regional newspaper from the Dutch border region of *Zeeland*.⁴⁹⁷ The publisher of this newspaper was concerned about the fate of young Dutch women who migrated to Antwerp to work as domestic servants. He proposed to cooperate and share information about Dutch women who applied for jobs at the office of *Het Werk*. He also published an advertisement about *Het Werk van de H. Francisca Romana* in his newspaper.⁴⁹⁸ Soon afterwards, several Dutch women applied for work, but *Het Werk van de H. Francisca Romana* never became an international organization similar to *l'Œuvre* or *L'Union* and continued to focus on the placement of hinterland migrants.⁴⁹⁹ Even Dutch servants were rarely found among the servants helped by *Het Werk van de H. Francisca Romana*.

The (Protestant) German colony in Antwerp established its own association to support German women in the Belgian port city. In the years 1910 and 1911, the *Duitsche Frauenverein* provided lodging for 90 female domestic servants over a period of two years.⁵⁰⁰ These numbers are very high given the fact that in 1910, 100 German domestic servants arrived in Antwerp for the first time. It is not specified whether or not they also provided placement services although this seems likely, even if not for all domestics. Similar associations focusing

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹⁶ KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincie S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3041 Werk H. Francisca Romana Aanbod Meiden, 1965; 627. Translation of: *Maria Jeurissen Nerviers st 10 Meid voor alles 18 jaar, is groot wat gediend, zegt christelijk te zijn, is van Stevensweert bij Roermond*.

⁴⁹⁷ KADOC, Organisatiearchieven, Religieuze Instituten, Archieven Minderbroeders (OFM), Archief van de Provincie S. Ioseph Sponsi BVM in Belgio (1833-), Residentie- en kloosterarchieven, Antwerpen, 3035 Werk van de H. Francisca Romana Verslagen (raadsvergaderingen).

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰⁰ *Gemeentebld der stad Antwerpen*, Antwerpen, 1912.

on other nationalities were virtually non-existent or much less active. Once again, German servants in Antwerp turn out to be an exception.

This was probably due to prevalence of German organization in Antwerp at the time. Hilde Greefs, Greta Devos, and Antoon Vrints describe how by the end of the nineteenth century, there were more than 50 German societies in the Belgian port city.⁵⁰¹ There were many protestants, but also Catholics and Jews among the German elite. A German protestant school was established in 1842 which had 811 pupils on the eve of the First World War.

Illustration 9 Hansa Huis, property of the German entrepreneur Wilhelm Arnold von Mallinckrodt on the left corner of the *Ernest Van Dijckkaai* and the *Suikerrui* in Antwerp (1907)



Source: SAA, Beeldbank, FOTO-OF#8329.

⁵⁰¹ Devos and Greefs, 'The German presence', 122-127; Vrints, 'De Klippen', 9-14.

German Catholics attended mass conducted in German at the Jesuit church, Protestants were divided into two Evangelical church communities, and Jews went to the city's main synagogue. The Protestant congregation in particular was very active in providing aid to German immigrants. German domestic servants were able to benefit from the services of this well-organized German colony which may explain the relatively high number of German servants in Antwerp. Servants from the Cologne region may not have predominantly worked for German employers, but it is certain that many were helped in their search for lodging and employment by the associations set up by this German elite.

Conclusion

The analyses above suggest that some commercial intermediaries and philanthropic associations were instrumental in establishing information channels between employers and servants over long distances and as such, may have stimulated the democratization and feminization of long-distance migration to Antwerp and Brussels. There are significant differences between the two cities in this respect, however. In contrast to the situation in the port city, the number of placers in the capital increased significantly, even in relation to the growing number of servants. At the same time, the number of advertisements placed in the Brussels' newspaper *Le Soir* started to rise substantially after 1870. In the capital foreigners from various countries could be found among the placers and they may have helped compatriots find positions in Brussels' households. In Antwerp, it was German placers in particular who seem to have played a similar role. Dutch servants most likely found employment via their informal networks. By the end of the period under scrutiny, German philanthropic associations were probably also instrumental in recruiting German domestics for Antwerp households.

In contrast to what has been suggested in the literature, the growing number of newspaper advertisements did not make placement agencies redundant in either Brussels or Antwerp. Rather than competing with each other, these two types of commercial intermediaries in reality may actually have been complementary. In both cities, commercial intermediaries were certainly important, however, they seem to have been responsible for a larger proportion of placements in the capital than in the port city.

At the turn of the twentieth century, these commercial intermediaries were joined by philanthropic associations which strengthened the formalization of the domestic service labour market. First and foremost, these philanthropic associations were established as a reaction to abuses by some placers and innkeepers. Their main aim was to outcompete the commercial intermediaries and to monitor the behaviour of the many female migrants in the city. In Brussels, they seem to have taken over the role of the local authorities in this respect (Chapter 1).

These and other observations confirm the importance of the interaction between the different dimensions of the migration infrastructure in order to understand the formalization of the domestic service labour market and its divergent impact on the development of international migration circuits to Antwerp and Brussels. These and other issues are at the forefront of our focus in the conclusion which links the results discussed in the different chapters above so as to address this study's main research questions.

CONCLUSION

Changes over time

The growth of the urban population and of the middle-classes in particular caused a steady increase in the demand for female domestic servants in Antwerp and Brussels throughout the period under scrutiny. As many local women preferred alternative employment, migrant women were able to profit from this increasing demand. As a consequence, a growing number of young single women arrived in Antwerp and Brussels between 1850 and 1910. Amongst them was also an increasing number of foreign women who were at the centre of attention in this dissertation.

In the years between 1850 and 1910, the migration process undertaken by foreign domestic servants towards Antwerp and Brussels underwent several changes. Innovations in the transport and communication infrastructure (technological dimension) changed the strategies of many non-migrant actors, such as: the national authorities (regulatory dimension) who shifted their attention from the borders to the interior (Chapter 1); placers (commercial dimension) who started to position themselves at the train stations in order to come into contact with female migrants as soon as they arrived in the city (Chapter 5); and philanthropic associations (humanitarian dimension) which organized a counter movement of *stationsdames* to outcompete profit-driven intermediaries (Chapter 5). The introduction of a continental railway system not only changed the strategies of actors within the different dimensions of the migration infrastructure, but it also altered the domestic servants' migration patterns (Chapter 2). Trains made journeys safer, cheaper, and quicker which enabled young single women to travel for longer distances than ever before. This does not imply, however, that families in every region connected to Antwerp and Brussels via a railway sent its daughters to these cities. Chapter 2 demonstrates that the Antwerp and Brussels' recruitment areas not just expanded between 1850 and 1910. They were in fact also characterized by developments counter to expansion such as the decline in the number of German servants in Antwerp and Brussels after 1880, or the small numbers of servants from the French border regions throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, regional migration circuits continued to take

a prominent place in the urban recruitment area. The number of West-Brabant migrants in Antwerp actually increased between 1880 and 1910.

Meanwhile, especially in Brussels, the domestic service labour market underwent a process of formalization with the establishment of an increasing number of commercial intermediaries – such as placement agencies and newspaper advertisements – and philanthropic associations offering placement services to (foreign) domestics (Chapter 5). In contrast to statements in the scarce literature on this topic, the growing importance of newspaper advertisements in the capital, did not actually make placement agencies redundant. Chapter 5 demonstrates how these two intermediaries were in fact rather complementary to each other, each offering a different set of services to both servants and employers. In a similar vein, the formalization of the domestic service labour market does not necessarily imply that social networks (social dimension) became less important as an intermediary structure for domestic servants. For example, the results in the fourth chapter on the West-Brabant migrants in Antwerp indicate that many hinterland migrants continued to use informal networks as their main channels for information and support. Furthermore, as a rule, commercial placers also depended heavily on their social network for their success. This may explain why so many combined their activities as placers while at the same time running an inn or pub.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the formalization of the domestic service labour market intensified due to the rise of local, national, and international (religious) philanthropic associations which offered placement services, lodging facilities and organized leisure activities for female servants. Their aim was not only to outcompete commercial intermediaries but also to turn domestic servants into exemplary citizens. As such, they took over the role of the authorities in monitoring the behaviour of the servant population to some extent.

A more general result of the formalization of the domestic service labour market was that servants and employers could choose between a variety of intermediary structures when looking for a position or a servant. The administration of *Het Werk van de H. Francisca Romana* includes several references to employers and servants (or their families) who used a number of different intermediary structures at the same time. This observation problematizes the distinction made by Lesger et al. between personal network migration and organizational

or non-personal network migration.⁵⁰² In reality, migrants probably used personal and non-personal networks in combination with each other. It also seems likely that migrants relied on recommendations of friends and acquaintances with regard to placement agencies or lodging houses.

Differences between Antwerp and Brussels

In addition to these changes over time, there were also significant differences between Antwerp and Brussels. Chapter 2 shows how the magnitude, pace, and direction of the expansion of the recruitment areas of both cities differed substantially. While the expansion of the Antwerp recruitment area between 1850 and 1880 is especially notable, the capital's recruitment area expanded more spectacularly after 1880. The number of individual migrants who moved within thin migration circuits in 1910 was also far greater in Brussels than in Antwerp. Moreover, as time progressed, the overlap between the recruitment areas diminished. Servants from northern border regions moved almost exclusively to Antwerp, women from the southern border regions to Brussels, and those from the eastern border regions to either the port or capital city but never to both. At no point in time did these cities function as gateways for each other, despite the short distance and good transport connections between them.

Some of the differences between Antwerp and Brussels in terms of servant migration could be related to their function as a port and capital city respectively. For example, the Belgian capital attracted greater numbers of elite migrants than the port city did, which resulted in a larger demand for specialized servants (Chapter 3). These women came from far way more often and, as such, the higher demand for specialized domestics in the capital partly explains why the expansion of the Brussels' recruitment area was more spectacular than that of Antwerp.

Another observation which seems to be less related to the function of the cities, is that although both cities were located in Belgium, their policies with regard to the domestic service labour market varied significantly. Other studies of the regulation of the domestic service labour market focus on (national) legislation and rarely compare the implementation of this

⁵⁰² Lesger et al., 'Is there life?', 29-50.

legislation with the development of policies by local authorities.⁵⁰³ In the early nineteenth century, the Brussels' administration established an official placement agency and implemented an employment record book system (introduced by the French regime) to monitor the behaviour and mobility of servants and to weaken commercial intermediaries. These measures were a response to complaints received from employers by the authorities. The official placement agency did not meet expectations and closed after a few years but the employment record book system continued to be implemented in the Belgian capital until the 1880s. It was designed as a means for employers to check up on the previous behaviour of a servant before hiring her, and perhaps also to constrain the mobility of servants who frequently changed positions. However, the Brussels' authorities were not able to convince employers to follow the regulations which were actually designed for their benefit and, eventually, the local administration gave up its policies in the 1880s.

The central state had already retreated from direct intervention in the domestic service labour market around 1840, and in contrast to the Brussels' authorities, the administration in Antwerp never took any measures to gain greater control of the domestic service labour market. Although the employment record book system was obligatory under French rule, the port city never actually implemented it. This variation in policies between the capital and port city does not seem to have had much effect on the migration and settlement of foreign servants. For example, one of the aims of the Brussels' employment record book system was to lower the frequency of position changes by servants but there was no significant difference in this respect between the capital and the port city among foreign servants.

As far as migration policies are concerned, the SP and the local police did not seem to have focused much on foreign domestics. Only a small number of foreign women who were registered as domestic servants and involved in clandestine activities, were monitored more closely by the local police and sometimes even expelled by them or the SP. Nevertheless, expulsions were not always an effective measure as those expelled could easily return without major repercussions.

The variation between Antwerp and Brussels in terms of the degree of the domestic service labour market's formalization had a more profound impact on the migration process

⁵⁰³ See amongst others: Sogner, 'The Legal Status', 175-188; Martin Casares, 'Domestic Service', 189-210; Nagata, 'Domestic Service', 211-234; Sarti, 'Freedom and Citizenship', 127-164.

and especially the search for employment by foreign servants. The results from Chapter 5 indicate that the number of placers and newspaper advertisements increased significantly in the Belgian capital and stayed more or less stable in the port city. This suggests that employers and servants in Brussels made more use of formal intermediaries than they did in Antwerp, which may also explain why fewer indications regarding the use of social networks were found in the capital than in the port city (Chapter 4). At the same time, the influence of commercial intermediaries in Brussels may have spurred the capital's administration in their attempts to gain more control over the domestic service labour market due to the generally bad reputation of placement agencies (Chapter 1).

Differences between migration circuits

The analyses of the profiles and working conditions of foreign servants in Antwerp and Brussels revealed some remarkable differences as well as similarities between different migrant groups. The majority of foreign servants was younger than 25, which is in line with the results of earlier studies on hinterland migrants among servants. Especially the Luxembourg servants in Brussels were often still very young. In 1910, no less than 94 percent of them was younger than 25 years old. An equal percentage of Luxembourg servants in the capital was born in the countryside. This seems to justify the exclusive focus in much of the literature on servant migration between countryside and city. However, results for other migration circuits have revealed that inter-urban servant migration was much more significant than is often assumed by historians. A substantial proportion of the total foreign servant population was born in cities and the great majority had previously already resided in a city. This was not only the case for long-distance migrants but also for hinterland migrants from West-Brabant to Antwerp.

A major proportion of the servants in this study ended up in a household with one or two colleagues. However, there was an important degree of differentiation among the migration circuits examined here. While West-Brabant women in Antwerp mostly worked as maids-of-all-work, servants from the Cologne region and individual migrants more often had one or several colleagues. This suggests that the latter were more often employed by upper class households than West-Brabant servants. As mentioned above, there was a higher demand for specialized servants in the capital. Women from the Cologne region often found work as a

bonne d'enfant and individual migrants as governesses or chamber maids. Finally, the young women from the Luxembourg countryside were mostly hired as non-specialized domestics with one or more colleagues.

Several of the changes and differences described in the previous sections concern the interplay among the different dimensions of the migration infrastructure. One of the main arguments of this dissertation is that the effect of these developments and variations differed among different types of migration circuits. Six sample groups were selected on the basis of differences in terms of the distance migrants had to travel, the density of the circuit, the rural or urban origins of the servants, and the existence or lack of a long standing migration tradition.

The results of Chapter 4 indicate that West-Brabant servants relied on their social network throughout the period under scrutiny, and especially on horizontal ties with family members and other compatriots present in Antwerp. Almost no Dutch placers or philanthropic associations of any significance existed in Antwerp. The administration of *Het Werk van de H. Francisca Romana* suggests that West-Brabant domestics were also not receiving much support from “Belgian” philanthropic associations.

While changes in the migration infrastructure seem to have had a rather limited effect on the migration process of West-Brabant women, they had a major impact on German servants from the Cologne region. The majority of the latter originated from a city or at least had already resided in a city before moving to Antwerp. The opening of railway connections between Cologne and Antwerp was probably one of the main causes for the increasing number of German servants migrating to the Belgian port city from the 1870s onwards. Greefs and Winter's hypothesis that a major proportion of these German women were recruited by compatriots was not confirmed by the results in this study.⁵⁰⁴ In fact, the majority of the employers of these women were Belgians. In their work, Greefs and Winter also suggest that German placement agencies may have been important in the recruitment of German servants to the Belgian port city. The analyses in chapter 5 confirm this hypothesis showing how several German placers were indeed present in the port city already at the moment when the number of German servants in Antwerp started to increase. The limited size of the German servant population suggests that these placers may have had a major role in the servants' migration movement to Antwerp. The advertisements of some of these placers indicate they had contacts

⁵⁰⁴ Greefs and Winter, 'Alone', 74.

in German cities who could help them recruit German servants. German associations such as The *Deutsche Frauen-Verein* were established some years later when servant migration from Germany to Antwerp was already declining. However, the significant number of servants who were supported by these associations is exemplary for the importance of the German colony in Antwerp. The advertisements in the *Antwerpener Zeitung* are another example of the dynamic nature of this community.

In contrast to West-Brabant servants and women from the Cologne region, the individual migrants among the foreign servants in Antwerp had moved within very thin migration circuits. Lesger, Lucassen, and Schrover have identified this type of female migrant as ‘adventurous migrants’. However, in Antwerp, a major proportion of the individual migrants who were servants, actually shared their previous place of residence with at least one of the members of the employer household which suggests they had already been recruited by their employers prior to their move to Antwerp and, as such, their migration movement was based on vertical ties and not solely on a quest for adventure. The growing number of individual migrants in Antwerp, as such, can therefore probably be related to the increasingly international character of the Antwerp elite but also to the introduction of a continental railway system. It is much less clear, however, how many of these individual migrants could rely on assistance provided by commercial intermediaries or philanthropic associations. International associations such as *L’Œuvre* may have provided some kind of support to some individual migrants, but no direct proof has been found relating this specific issue.

As Brussels was located farther away from the Belgian borders than Antwerp was, there were no regional hinterland migrants within the city’s foreign servant population. The northern border with West-Brabant was closest but women from this region migrated almost exclusively to the port city. By 1880, there was a significant number of servants in the Belgian capital who originated from the Cologne region and the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg. While the former – just like in Antwerp – originated from cities and were often employed as *bonne d’enfant*, the latter came directly from the Luxembourg countryside and mostly worked as maid-of-all-work. The analyses in Chapter 4 with respect to these women generated neither many strong nor weak indications regarding the use of informal networks. Similar observations were made for individual migrants in the capital. In contrast to those in Antwerp, they did not often share a previous place of residence with a member of the employer household. Their profile was also

different. As mentioned above, the capital attracted more specialized foreign servants with many individual migrants who may have relied more on formal intermediaries in their search for employment among them. Some of the large numbers of placers in Brussels also originated from, or had contacts, in Germany or Luxembourg, although their numbers were far lower than those of the German placers in Antwerp. Some philanthropic associations seem to have supported (especially German) foreign servants, but no evidence was found regarding the activities of a German or Luxembourg association in the capital. As such, it seems that servants from the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg and the Cologne region could not expect the same kind of support from either the Luxembourg and German community in Brussels respectively as German servants in Antwerp could from the German colony. However, the lack of indications regarding the use of informal networks and the degree of the formalization of the domestic service labour market in the Belgian capital suggest that German and Luxembourg servants also used formal intermediaries in their search for employment.

In contrast to existing literature on nineteenth-century servant migration, this dissertation has analysed changes over time in combination with differences between cities and migration circuits. The main contribution of this comparative approach is that it leads to a more complex understanding of the divergent effects of changes at the meso level of the migration process. It did matter whether you moved to Antwerp or Brussels, within dense or thin migration circuits, or over short or long distances. In part, the results are of course specific to the case studies of this research but they also allow for certain hypotheses potentially applicable to other contexts to be put forward.

With regard to the social and commercial dimension of the migration infrastructure, there was an important degree of differentiation between the types of migration circuits which may also be applicable to other contexts. Throughout the second half of the long nineteenth century, West-Brabant servants relied strongly on the support and information provided by relatives, friends, and acquaintances. The long-standing migration tradition may have played a major role in this respect. Overall, changes in the general migration infrastructure did not have any drastic effects on the migration behaviour of West-Brabant servants. Other studies that focus on the social networks of any significant number of regional hinterland migrants among

servants are scarce. Even so, existing results suggest that the strong reliance on social networks throughout the period under study is a more general pattern among this type of migrant.⁵⁰⁵

The development of dense migration circuits over longer distances in the second half of the nineteenth century was a shared characteristic of several commercial and service cities in Europe.⁵⁰⁶ The results of this study suggest that this was not only related to innovations in the transport and communication infrastructure but also to the formalization of the domestic service labour market in this period, even though significant variation exists between servants from the Cologne region in Antwerp and the Luxembourg and German servants in Brussels. The absence of a strong migration tradition, and therefore of a social network at the place of destination may be important factors in this respect. However, further research is necessary to assess whether this link between the formalization of the labour market and the development of dense migration circuits over long distances is specific to Antwerp and Brussels or whether it represents a more general pattern.

Apart from the development of new dense migration circuits, the international recruitment areas for domestic servants of both cities were characterized by an increase in the number of individual migrants. This growing proportion of thin migration circuits within the total migration field has also been observed in nineteenth-century cities more generally. Furthermore, according to social scientists, the so-called superdiversity of present-day cities is also the result of the increasing significance of individual migrants within the total recruitment area of these cities.⁵⁰⁷ As most migration research has focused on the establishment of dense migration circuits, these developments pose new challenges to migration scholars from different disciplines, including that of history.

Previous research on migrant networks sometimes uses the density of a migration circuit as an indicator for the use of social networks however the observation that individual migrants in Antwerp relied on vertical networks with employers reveals the flaw in such an approach. A combination of different methods is necessary which enables contacts, not only between family members but also among friends, acquaintances, colleagues, as well as between employers and employees, to be studied. Another important observation to be made in terms

⁵⁰⁵ Boudjaaba and Gourdon, 'Mobilité urbaine', 48-51.

⁵⁰⁶ See amongst others: Lesger et al., 'Is there life?', 29-50; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*; König, 'Femina migrans', 93-115.

⁵⁰⁷ On superdiversity: Vertovec, 'Super-diversity', 1024-1054. On individual migrants and superdiversity: Wessendorf, 'Pathways', 270-286.

of methodology is the added value of studying the interplay between different intermediary structures facilitating and constraining migration instead of focussing solely on one intermediary structure (the migrant network, for example). The infrastructural approach provides a framework for addressing this interplay that is applicable to both a present-day and nineteenth-century context.

This study has focused on the migration process and infrastructure from the perspective of two destination cities whereas other studies have concentrated on the places of departure or the migration journey itself. A next step in historical research into nineteenth-century migration is to use an infrastructural approach to connect these three perspectives. This would bring to the fore a longitudinal perspective on developments in migration infrastructures and provide a better understanding of the functioning of migration patterns in both past and present societies.

APPENDIX

Table 39 Percentage of foreign domestic servants who migrated either directly or indirectly from their place of birth to Antwerp by region of origin

Region	1850			1880			1910		
	Direct	Indirect	N	Direct	Indirect	N	Direct	Indirect	N
Zeeland	94	6	16	52	48	29	65	35	23
North Brabant	55	45	69	49	51	51	53	47	99
Limburg	79	21	14	56	44	68	61	39	36
Cologne region	67	33	9	70	30	33	33	67	21
Rhineland-Palatinate	43	57	7	41	59	22	17	83	6
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	100	4	50	50	6
Département du Nord	33	67	3	100	0	1	67	33	3
Other French border regions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	2
Other Dutch regions	54	46	13	44	56	16	40	60	43
Other German regions	43	57	7	30	70	61	37	63	71
Other French regions	0	0	0	40	60	5	0	100	5
Other countries	0	100	1	35	65	17	35	65	20
Belgium	0	100	1	33	67	15	54	46	28
Total	60	40	140	46	54	322	46	54	363

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Table 40 Percentage of foreign domestic servants who migrated either directly or indirectly from their place of birth to Brussels per region of origin

Region	1850			1880			1910		
	Direct	Indirect	N	Direct	Indirect	N	Direct	Indirect	N
Zeeland	0	0	0	67	33	3	25	75	4
North Brabant	87	13	15	43	57	7	43	57	7
Limburg	69	31	16	62	38	26	71	29	24
Cologne region	33	67	9	57	43	28	58	42	24
Rhineland-Palatinate	50	50	2	65	35	23	63	38	8
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	25	75	4	61	39	36	74	26	34
Département du Nord	50	50	6	60	40	15	43	57	7
Other French border regions	0	0	0	50	50	4	50	50	4
Other Dutch regions	33	67	6	71	29	7	46	54	26
Other German regions	42	58	12	35	65	31	37	63	54
Other French regions	67	33	3	50	50	14	18	82	33
Other countries	0	100	2	67	33	9	26	74	53
Belgium	0	100	2	43	57	7	62	38	13
Total	53	47	77	56	44	210	45	55	291

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Table 41 Percentage of foreign domestic servants in Antwerp who had an urban or rural birthplace per region of origin⁵⁰⁸

Region	1850			1880			1910		
	Rural	Urban	N	Rural	Urban	N	Rural	Urban	N
Zeeland	38	63	16	86	14	29	84	16	25
North Brabant	63	37	71	66	34	53	41	59	100
Limburg	33	67	15	68	32	68	57	43	37
Cologne region	56	44	9	34	66	35	52	48	21
Rhineland-Palatinate	86	14	7	68	32	22	86	14	7
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	0	0	0	100	0	4	83	17	6
Département du Nord	33	67	3	50	50	2	67	33	3
Other French border regions	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	2
Other Dutch regions	15	85	13	38	63	16	42	58	43
Other German regions	63	38	8	59	41	61	51	49	72
Other French regions	0	0	0	67	33	6	80	20	5
Other countries	100	0	1	71	29	21	59	41	22
Belgium	0	100	1	47	53	15	56	44	32
Total	53	47	144	62	38	332	53	47	375

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

⁵⁰⁸ Definition of urban is more than 5,000 inhabitants in 1850 according to Paul Bairoch, Jean Batou, and Pierre Chèvre, *La population des villes européennes, 800-1850: Banque de données et analyse sommaire des résultats* (Genève:Droz, 1988). Population figures were checked for later years as well to identify villages that developed into cities.

Table 42 Percentage of foreign domestic servants in Antwerp who had previously resided in a city per region of origin

Region	1850		1880		1910	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Zeeland	63	16	43	28	35	23
North Brabant	61	69	62	50	74	98
Limburg	62	13	59	68	69	36
Cologne region	67	9	88	33	76	21
Rhineland-Palatinate	57	7	73	22	100	4
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	0	0	75	4	50	6
Département du Nord	67	3	100	1	50	2
Other French border regions	0	0	0	0	100	2
Other Dutch regions	92	12	69	16	86	37
Other German regions	43	7	84	61	74	58
Other French regions	0	0	60	5	100	1
Other countries	100	1	65	17	85	13
Belgium	100	1	79	14	74	27
Total	64	138	69	319	73	328

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Table 43 Percentage of foreign domestic servants in Brussels with an urban or rural birthplace per region of origin

Region	1850			1880			1910		
	Rural	Urban	N	Rural	Urban	N	Rural	Urban	N
Zeeland	0	0	0	100	0	3	100	0	4
North Brabant	40	60	15	71	29	7	43	57	7
Limburg	47	53	17	44	56	27	59	41	27
Cologne region	44	56	9	41	59	29	50	50	24
Rhineland-Palatinate	100	0	2	46	54	26	50	50	8
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	80	20	5	98	2	40	94	6	35
Département du Nord	86	14	7	60	40	15	86	14	7
Other French border regions	0	0	0	75	25	4	25	75	4
Other Dutch regions	43	57	7	13	88	8	22	78	27
Other German regions	38	62	13	53	47	32	55	45	55
Other French regions	50	50	4	60	40	15	70	30	33
Other countries	100	0	2	50	50	10	57	43	56
Belgium	33	67	3	38	63	8	33	67	15
Total	51	49	84	58	42	224	58	42	302

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Table 44 Percentage of foreign domestic servants in Brussels who had previously resided in a city per region of origin

Region	1850		1880		1910	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Zeeland	0	0	33	3	75	4
North Brabant	73	15	43	7	71	7
Limburg	75	16	81	26	46	24
Cologne region	78	9	75	28	75	24
Rhineland-Palatinate	0	2	57	23	63	8
Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg	50	4	22	36	26	34
Département du Nord	33	6	67	15	43	7
Other French border regions	0	0	50	4	75	4
Other Dutch regions	67	6	100	7	92	26
Other German regions	91	11	77	31	76	54
Other French regions	33	3	64	14	70	33
Other countries	100	2	67	9	69	32
Belgium	100	2	86	7	77	13
Total	70	76	62	210	66	270

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Table 45 Age distribution per destination

	1850					1880					1910				
	<18	18-24	25-29	>29	N	<18	18-24	25-29	>29	N	<18	18-24	25-29	>29	N
Antwerp	6%	48%	35%	11%	143	14%	56%	21%	9%	331	12%	54%	17%	17%	344
Brussels	7%	48%	24%	20%	83	8%	63%	18%	12%	224	9%	47%	25%	19%	295

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Table 46 Percentage of foreign servants of whom one or both parents had died at the time of arrival in Antwerp or Brussels (1880-1910)

	1880					1910				
	Both Death	Father Death	Mother Death	Both Alive	N	Both Death	Father Death	Mother Death	Both Alive	N
Antwerp	26	17	18	39	235	13	14	15	58	374
Brussels	21	24	14	41	182	16	23	13	47	290

Source: Database Domestic Servants 1850-1910.

Table 47 Average nominal wages per occupation (1846-1913)

Jaar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1846	183	183				163	149									
1847	183	183				163	149									
1848	183	183				163	149									
1849	186	183				175	149									
1850	186	183	279	562		175	149									
1851	186	183				175	149									
1852	186	183				175	163									
1853	186	183				175	163									
1854	186	183				175	163									
1855	186	183				175	163									
1856	186	183				175	163									
1857	193	183				180	163									
1858	196	183				184	163									
1859	199	219				187	163									
1860	205	219				187	188	140		845						
1861	205	219				194	188									
1862	205	219				194	201									
1863	205	219				194	201									
1864	205	219				194	201									
1865	201	219	388	811	880	194	201									
1866	207	232				194	251									
1867	212	239				204	287									
1868	244	276				241	312									
1869	244	276				241	312									
1870	244	276				241	312									
1871	244	285				246	312									
1872	264	293				246	306									
1873	282	327				261	306									
1874	282	372				261	306									
1875	282	372				261	306									
1876	325	421				294	332									
1877	331	428				303	358									
1878	354	431				308	384									
1879	354	431				311	384									
1880	354	445	462	1036	1190	311	410		275		1288	635				
1881	365	455				311	410									
1882	365	455				311	410									
1883	365	455				311	410									
1884	365	488				311	572									
1885	365	492	450	1076	1300	311	572									

1886	377	498				311	572		
1887	377	502				311	572		
1888	377	502				333	624		
1889	377	502				333	624		
1890	377	526				333	624		
1891	397	606				333	624		
1892	397	647				373	624		
1893	397	643				373	624	216	420
1894	416	656				373	624		
1895	448	656	442	1115	1312	373	624		
1896	448	656				373	624		
1897	457	656				373	624		
1898	457	656				373	624		
1899	457	656				373	624		
1900	457	701				373	624		
1901	479	701				373	624		
1902	507	747				386	650		
1903	507	747				399	650		
1904	507	792				399	650		
1905	507	792				399	650	313	359
1906	522	837				390	650		
1907	543	837				390	650		
1908	543	850				390	650		
1909	562	850				390	650		
1910	600	850	554	1238	1760	400	650		
1911	619	850				410	650		
1912	638	850				419	650		
1913	667	850				439	650		

Source: Database foreigners' files; Segers, *Economische groei*, 339, 564-565, and 574-575; De Quéker, 'Les femmes', 18-19 ; *Archief Werk H. Francisca Romana*

1) female servants Segers; 2) male servants Segers; 3) rural labourers Segers; 4) day labourers manufacture Segers; 5) day labourers construction Segers; 6) nurse Segers; 7) midwives Segers; 8) foreign domestic servants Antwerp; 9) foreign domestic servants Brussels; 10) foreign male day labourers Antwerp; 11) foreign male day labourers Brussels; 12) foreign female day labourers Brussels; 13) minimum wage domestic servants Brussels Verbeke; 14) maximum wage domestic servants Brussels Verbeke; 15) minimum wage domestic servants *Heilige Francisca Romana*; 16) maximum wage domestic servants *Heilige Francisca Romana*

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ENGLISH SUMMARY

In the second half of the nineteenth century, female domestic servants were no longer moving exclusively within regional traditional migration circuits but started to explore new migration paths crossing longer distances. This transition towards increasing levels of long-distance servant migration is intrinsically linked to a general democratization of long-distance migration. Due to innovations in the transport and communication infrastructure, long-distance migration became an option to a growing share of the European population. The main aim of this project is to compare the formation and development of different types of international female migration circuits during this period and analyse the role of various human and non-human actors within these developments. Three levels of analysis return in each chapter: a comparison between different types of migration circuits, an analysis of changes over time, and a comparison between two types of cities. More specifically, the focus is on international servant migration to two Belgian cities: Antwerp, an international commercial hub, and Brussels, the capital and largest city of the country. Existing research has revealed a democratization and feminization of long-distance migration towards both cities which has been connected to an increasing number of foreign domestic servants. As mentioned above, Antwerp and Brussels share this evolution in their migration field with other European cities which makes this study not only relevant to scholars interested in the social history of Belgium, but also to those who want to gain insights into the effects of the nineteenth-century transformations on overall female migration patterns.

The analysis of the Antwerp and Brussels' recruitment areas demonstrates that they not just expanded between 1850 and 1910 but were in fact also characterized by developments counter to expansion such as the decline in the number of German servants in Antwerp and Brussels after 1880, or the small numbers of servants from the French border regions throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, regional migration circuits continued to take a prominent place in the urban recruitment area. The number of West-Brabant migrants in Antwerp actually increased between 1880 and 1910. As time progressed, the overlap between the recruitment areas of Antwerp and Brussels also diminished. Servants from northern border regions moved almost exclusively to Antwerp, women from the southern border regions to Brussels, and those from the eastern border regions to either the port or capital

city but never to both. At no point in time did these cities function as gateways for each other, despite the short distance and good transport connections between them.

Migrating in migration circuits without a long standing tradition required the use of other types of channels of information and support than hinterland migration. The analysis of the personal networks of foreign domestic servants and the role of commercial and philanthropic intermediaries reveals significant differences between the migration circuits but also between Antwerp and Brussels. The number of placers and newspaper advertisements increased significantly in the Belgian capital and stayed more or less stable in the port city. This suggests that employers and servants in Brussels made more use of formal intermediaries than they did in Antwerp, which may also explain why fewer indications regarding the use of social networks were found in the capital than in the port city. The use of commercial and philanthropic intermediaries in Antwerp seems to have been more specific to particular migrant groups. Especially German servants could rely on a well-organized network of German placement agencies and philanthropic associations in the Belgian port city. Hinterland migrants from West-Brabant more often had personal contacts who provided information and support. Individual migrants who moved within less dense migration circuits were often recruited by their employers already before they migrated to Antwerp and were therefore less adventurous than expected.

Finally, the results of this study also highlight the high degree of interaction between the various actors involved in the migration process of foreign domestic servants to Antwerp and Brussels. The local and national authorities' policies and the strategies of commercial and philanthropic intermediaries can only be understood when focusing explicitly on their interaction. The conflicts and collaborations between these actors resulted in a complex migration infrastructure which is often considered by social scientists to be characteristic of the contemporary period.

DUTCH SUMMARY

In de loop van de tweede helft van de lange negentiende eeuw arriveerde een steeds meer diverse groep dienstmeiden in verschillende Europese steden. Dienstmeiden kwamen niet langer uitsluitend uit het omliggende platteland van de stad maar steeds vaker ook uit verderaf gelegen regio's. De bestaande historiografie met betrekking tot de migratie van dienstmeiden in deze periode heeft tot nog toe weinig aandacht gehad voor de mate waarin het verloop en de uitkomst van de uitbreiding van het rekruteringsgebied verschilden tussen verschillende typen steden; en de vraag hoe deze groeiende diversiteit in migratiepatronen zich verhield tot andere evoluties binnen de arbeidsmarkt voor dienstboden. Daarnaast worden de verschillende actoren die betrokken zijn bij de migratie van dienstmeiden te vaak afzonderlijk van elkaar bestudeerd.

De resultaten van deze studie geven nieuwe inzichten in de feminisering en democratisering van lange-afstandsmigratie in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw maar ook in veranderingen in de migratie-infrastructuur tijdens deze periode. Uit de analyse van de evolutie van het rekruteringsgebied voor dienstmeiden van Antwerpen en Brussel tussen 1850 en 1910 blijkt dat er niet enkel sprake is van een uitbereiding maar ook van tegengestelde evoluties. Zo daalde het aantal Duitse dienstmeiden in beide steden tussen 1880 en 1910 en breidde het Antwerpse rekruteringsgebied in dezelfde periode nog amper uit. In tegenstelling tot de verwachtingen overlaptten de rekruteringsgebieden van beide steden elkaar ook steeds minder. Het aantal dienstmeiden dat via de ene de andere stad bereikte, is ook opvallend laag. Nochtans blijkt uit verschillende analyses dat dienstmeiden wel vaak via andere steden Antwerpen of Brussel bereikten.

De analyses van de persoonlijke netwerken van buitenlandse dienstmeiden en van het belang van commerciële en filantropische bemiddelaars tonen significante verschillen aan tussen migratiecircuits maar ook tussen Antwerpen en Brussel. Een belangrijke conclusie is dat zeker niet alle dienstmeiden gebruik konden maken van persoonlijke netwerken en dat sommige groepen zelfs eerder beroep deden op plaatsingskantoren, krantenadvertenties of filantropische organisaties. In Antwerpen behoorden vooral de Duitse dienstmeiden uit de Keulse regio tot die laatste groep. Zij konden steun en informatie vinden bij de Duitse plaatsingskantoren en

filantropische organisaties in de havenstad. De individuele migranten die over lange afstanden een uitzonderlijk migratietraject naar de havenstad aflegden, waren minder avontuurlijk dan oorspronkelijk gedacht en hadden waarschijnlijk vaak reeds contact gehad met hun toekomstige werkgever vooraleer ze naar Antwerpen trokken. Hinterlandmigranten uit West-Brabant vertrouwden dan weer vaak wel op hun persoonlijke contacten in de stad. In Antwerpen was er dus zeker geen sprake van een eenduidige formalisering van de arbeidsmarkt voor dienstmeiden. Het waren specifieke groepen die gebruik maakten van de diensten van commerciële en filantropische bemiddelaars. In Brussel waren de verschillen minder groot en lijkt de formalisering van de arbeidsmarkt een grotere impact te hebben gehad. Er waren opvallend veel plaatsingskantoren in de hoofdstad en de Brusselse krant *Le Soir* stond aan het einde van de onderzoeksperiode vol met advertenties van werkgevers die een dienstmeid zochten.

Uit deze studie blijkt ook de hoge mate van interactie tussen de verschillende actoren die betrokken waren bij het migratieproces van buitenlandse dienstmeiden naar Antwerpen en Brussel. Het beleid van de overheid en de acties van commerciële en filantropische organisaties kan enkel begrepen worden als ook hun onderlinge interactie bestudeerd wordt. Zo trachtte het Brusselse stadsbestuur in het begin van de negentiende eeuw de opkomst van commerciële plaatsingskantoren tegen te gaan maar moest ze uiteindelijk de commercialisering en formalisering van de sector accepteren omdat zowel werkgevers als dienstmeiden van de diensten van plaatsers bleven gebruik maken. Uit dit soort conflicten en samenwerkingen kwam een complexe migratie-infrastructuur voort die door sociologen vaak als karakteristiek wordt beschouwd voor de hedendaagse periode maar dus een veel langere voorgeschiedenis kent.