Social Networks and Urban Space
The Social Organisation of a County Town, Leicester, c. 1550-1640

by

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Abstract

The late Tudor and early Stuart period is widely considered to be a significant period of transition in English urban society. Numerous towns have been studied in the context of the social and economic difficulties they experienced. Historians have also investigated the formal social organisation structuring human relationships in urban centres. Towns have been largely described as either stable or unstable communities.

The study of urban social organisation is important for understanding urban consciousness on the basis of townspeople's everyday experiences. Recent local studies generally fail to recognise those significant social relationships which criss-crossed the boundaries of formal and informal institutions, of social and occupational groups and of town and countryside. Analysis of these aspects are particularly important in the context of middle-sized county towns, since recent detailed studies have tended to focus mainly on the largest urban centres, notably London.

This thesis attempts to analyse how a heterogeneous population's social relationships were organised in a complex urban community. The first four chapters examine a range of urban experiences in the context of the regional economy, the urban fringe, household society and poverty. Chapters five and six investigate social relationships in formal institutional settings and townspeople's reactions to these institutional structures. The final chapter demonstrates the patterns of everyday interactions in different types of urban space (as defined in the text).

Stressing the significance of informal social links in the urban community, the thesis concludes that urban space gave important structure to a range of social networks, shaping and modifying townspeople's urban consciousness. This study not only highlights the limitation of compartmentalised analysis of individual urban institutions and social groups in an urban context, but also suggests new analytical dimensions in assessing the change and continuity of pre-modern towns without alluding to the concept of stability.
Acknowledgements

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<tr>
<td>APC</td>
<td>Acts of the Privy Council of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billson</td>
<td>C.J. Billson, <em>Medieval Leicester</em> (1920)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Borough Records, Leicestershire Record Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSPD</td>
<td>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHR</td>
<td>Economic History Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMC</td>
<td>Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRO</td>
<td>Leicestershire Record Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichols</td>
<td>J. Nichols, <em>The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester</em> vol. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P&amp;P</td>
<td>Past and Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>Prerogative Court of Canterbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Record Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBL</td>
<td>Records of the Borough of Leicester, 1103-1688, 4 vols. eds., Mary Bateson and Helen Stocks (1899-23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Register of the Freemen of Leicester, ed., Henry Hartopp (Leicester, 1927)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBN</td>
<td>Records of the Borough of Nottingham being a Series of Extracts from the Archive of the Corporation of Nottingham, 1547-1702, 2vols., eds., W. H. Stevenson and W. T. Baker (1889-1900)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throsby</td>
<td>The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Town of Leicester, John Throsby (Leicester, 1791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THL</td>
<td>James Thompson, <em>The History of Leicester, from the Time of the Romans to the End of the Seventeenth Century</em> (1849)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRHS</td>
<td>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLAHS</td>
<td>Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLAS</td>
<td>Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCH</td>
<td>Victoria History of the County of Leicester</td>
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Notes
All manuscript references in the thesis are to collections in the Leicestershire Record Office unless otherwise stated. Dates used are old style except that the year is taken to begin on 1st January.
Introduction

There were about a hundred county towns in Tudor and Stuart England, constituting a significant part of the upper ranks of the provincial urban hierarchy. However, despite their importance, historians have failed to reach a consensus as to their social, economic and cultural development in the period. In their pioneering work on English provincial towns, Peter Clark and Paul Slack made a clear distinction between the county towns and the small market towns with regard to their economic, political and cultural structures and their topography. They also argued that these structures suffered badly from social and economic problems during the period. Writing nearly a decade later, Nigel Goose similarly noted the distinction between the second-rank towns and the provincial capitals, but in contrast to Clark and Slack, stressed the resilience of the county towns despite the intermittent economic difficulties they experienced. Such a positive image of middle-sized towns also finds support in studies of Worcester and Kendal, whose industrial sector largely escaped severe urban-rural competition. Given these different

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2Clark and Slack, English Towns, 25-32.
interpretations, the situation pertaining to many other county towns certainly calls for more detailed studies.

One of the reasons for disagreement is epistemological. In explaining the complex economic structure of middle-sized towns, interpretations vary according to which economic sector historians believe was the most important. It has been argued, for example, that urban industry was exposed to capricious overseas markets and economic fluctuations, but that the commercial sector was a much more resilient pillar of the urban economy. In addition, it has been suggested that the scale of the informal economic sector was also crucial for evaluating the urban economy. The use of freemen's registers and probate records, for instance, tends to underestimate the extent of the poor, female, and child labour force in an urban community. To make matters worse, there are few reliable economic indices.

Nigel Goose, 'English Pre-Industrial Urban Economies', UHY (1982), reprinted in The Tudor and Stuart Town: a Reader in English Urban History, 1530-1688, ed., Jonathan Barry (1990), 70. Although its strength became much more noticeable during post-Restoration England, the influence of the overseas trade seems to have already been felt not only at major port towns but also in the market of large inland towns by the early seventeenth century. See, for example, N. J. Williams, The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports (Oxford, 1988), 58-9.

by which we are able to accurately gauge the aggregate impact of the changing scales of different economic sectors. As with the debate over the state of late medieval urban centres, the economic analysis of Tudor and early Stuart towns tends to obscure rather than clarify the condition of urban society.\textsuperscript{7}

As we will see in this study, recent local studies have revealed the diversity of urban experiences of individuals, depending on their social, occupational and residential backgrounds.\textsuperscript{8} Such findings counsel us to choose a multi-pronged approach in assessing the social and economic development of county towns. Crisis, conflict, disorder and decline are not the only defining characteristics of a society, and their influences should be interpreted in conjunction with analysis of the social fabric of urban life.\textsuperscript{9} The impact of urban problems was felt differently by inhabitants, according to their life-cycle, their social profiles and the extent of their social networks. These were the separate factors which affected

\begin{flushleft}
\textit{in the Fifteenth Century}, ed., A.F. Thomson (Gloucester, 1988). As Swanson has argued, "there are few records of regional trade where there are abundant records of craft guilds, and placing too much emphasis on this latter group of records gives a very lop-sided view of the economy." H. Swanson, 'Artizans in the Urban Economy; the Documentary Evidence from York', in \textit{Work in Towns, 850-1850}, eds., Penelope J. Corfield and Derek Keene (Leicester, 1990), 49.


\textsuperscript{8}See chapters below.

\textsuperscript{9}This point has been effectively demonstrated in Joyce Ellis, \textit{A Dynamic Society: Social Relations in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1660-1760}, in \textit{The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600-1800}, ed., Peter Clark (1984).
\end{flushleft}
their quality of life. Recent studies have also hinted at the significance of credit relationships and informal support from kin, friends and neighbours, despite the external pressure on the household economy. Town life was not always overshadowed by acute urban problems, nor were daily routines completely undermined during the crisis years. Patterns of social and economic relationships among townspeople therefore deserve much closer attention in examining the state of middle-sized towns.

Urban experiences also varied from one residential area to another. Town walls have been described as "symbolic, a striking physical testimony to the closed unity of the county town", but the suburbs were also a significant part of the urban landscape, having different social and economic characteristics from those of the inner-wall areas. For example, studies on large provincial capitals have suggested that the impact of plague was area-specific, and, as a result, prosperous central parishes often avoided high mortality rates. Social segregation between central and suburban parishes may have been less explicit in middle-sized towns, but a similar conclusion has been drawn from the study of Canterbury suburbs in

10Paul Slack, The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England (1985), 117-86. For a fuller account of the impact, see ch. 4 below.


12Clark and Slack, English Towns, 26.

13See pp. 107, 109 below.
The suburbs of Worcester in the early seventeenth century were populous due to demographic pressure from the inner city area as well as from outside, and living conditions were poor. Such a spatial dimension was certainly different from what one might expect from a prosperous textile centre in the West Midlands.

A peculiar set of social and economic features apply to the intermediary space between town and countryside, obliging us to consider not only the geographical scope of our interpretation, but also demographic patterns. The suburbs were the area where outsiders came to share urban values with townsmen, and which townsmen escaped to avoid the rigid public controls of the civic authorities. These areas naturally attracted vigilant magistrates' attention, often being denounced as a major source of disorder. Nevertheless, public denunciations should not distract our attention from the structural importance of the suburbs vis-a-vis the manner in which they affected patterns of human mobility and the social and economic interactions of ordinary townsmen.

It should be clear by now that the state of county towns needs to be examined in the light of these diverse urban experiences of townsmen, rather than of simple economic indices and public policies. A county town was a community governed by a sophisticated administrative framework. Thus, formal urban institutions, such as gilds, wards, parishes and church, supposedly gave structure to


complex social and economic relationships. For example, civic leaders took action to tackle the problem of the poor prior to national legislation: the victualling trade was regulated; compulsory church attendance was enforced; various types of exemplary punishment took place in public; and many of the townsmen were obliged to take up local offices to implement civic policy. Nonetheless, studies of these formal civic measures often fail to take into account the range of informal structures which supplemented or complemented them. A pluralistic urban structure therefore poses many questions about the implications of governance for the practical lives of townspeople.

The social fabric of county towns was woven by a range of social and economic activities conducted outside the official framework, and therefore the structure of informal social and economic relationships was a key dimension characterising the state of the community. Nonetheless, it was by no means the only one. In reality, the urban community consisted of both formal and informal structures, and these were inseparable. In particular, the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century saw the growing power of civic government, and its influence on informal activities was undeniable. However, very few studies have demonstrated its impact on the informal urban structure in the context of provincial towns.

What was the impact of public actions on the symmetry of urban social organisation? Were there any changes in the structures organising informal social relationships as well? Historians have chosen, implicitly or explicitly, either of the antithetical terminology — crisis and order, stability and instability, growth and


18G. Mayhew, Tudor Rye (Palmer, 1987), 201. For a fuller discussion, see chs. 5 and 6 below.
decline — to explain the condition of a town. Given the duality of structure that we have seen, a town may have embraced these contrasting conditions simultaneously, and therefore such terminology may not be appropriate for describing such a complex entity as a large urban community.

This research was started in the belief that the most effective way to examine, understand and demonstrate the social organisation of towns is to identify a range of urban structures according to which social relationships were organised, and to categorise differing reactions to these urban structures. This approach has been inspired in part by a number of local studies which have drawn our attention to the impact of urban institutions in the Tudor and early Stuart period, especially those of London and its suburbs.

Compared to work on the capital, there has been only a small number of monographs on the social organisation of provincial towns, most notably the study of Coventry, a pioneering study of its kind in the historiography of English towns. Applying the theory of structural functionalism to a late medieval context, Charles Phythian-Adams has demonstrated the functions of the different levels of formal and informal groupings in the city, and how they harmonised a vast number of

20 Jeremy Boulton has shown that early seventeenth century Southwark was a resilient community with effective local government and a strong sense of neighbourhood stemming from social ties between the inhabitants in a restricted geographical area. S. Rappaport has argued that the social problems of the city were effectively alleviated by the sub-structure of the social organisation, i.e., the parish and the livery companies. In comparison, I. W. Archer has demonstrated how the community sense was generated from office-holding, poor relief and interactions between officials and inhabitants within different levels of administrative structure. Jeremy Boulton, Neighbourhood and Society: a London Suburb in the 17th century (Cambridge, 1987); S. Rappaport, Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London (Cambridge, 1989); I. W. Archer, The Pursuit of Stability (Cambridge, 1991).
heterogeneous urban dwellers. For example, the household, in his view, could be seen as a formal grouping within which the roles of each household member were determined according to age and sex. These households were related to the much wider social structure of the community through craft fellowship links. Thus, he has argued that:

\[ \ldots \text{by institutionalising the protagonists of economic competition, the majority of the population was thus subdivided into a hierarchy of small units. The system provided an ordered and decentralised framework for conflict \ldots} \]

The study also identified some aspects of informal social groups in the city, exemplified in the extended family links and neighbourhood. This organic structure of the late Medieval community was regularly and effectively demonstrated in public by religious plays, civic rituals and public ceremonies. During these occasions, a citizens' place in the urban hierarchy was clearly displayed for all to see.

The social organisation of provincial towns has been more extensively studied in the context of separate urban institutions. David Harris Sacks has demonstrated, for example, how Bristol merchants established a formal social organisation based on common interests and kinship links after the mid-sixteenth

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21 C. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1979), 117.

22 Ibid., ch.6-7, 13-4; idem, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry 1450-1550', in Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700, eds., Peter Clark and Paul Slack (1972); M. James, 'Ritual, Drama and the Social Body', Past and Present 98 (1983).
century. As for the lesser trade organisations, the studies of York and Bristol have suggested that the craft gilds remained voluntary occupational groups even after the Reformation, although their social impact in post-Reformation provincial towns has not been followed up by local studies. By contrast, the parish has attracted much more attention. Thus David Palliser has contended that "the regular meeting of the parishioners in church helped to sustain not only a corporate identity but a collective memory*, while N. Alldridge has pointed out how parishioners in early seventeenth century Chester maintained their solidarity by participating in funeral processions and taking responsibility for parish-office holding.

As has already been hinted at in some local studies, the characteristics of urban social organisation also need to be explained in informal settings. As Alan Everitt has shown, urban inns became important institutions not only for the wholesale trade outside the open market, but also as centres of local politicking for the urban and county elite. In the Middle Ages, the parish church and the churchyard were important social and communal institutions, but it has been argued that an increasing number of alehouses became significant alternative institutions.

for popular entertainment in the post-Reformation period, as such communal activities in the church were suppressed under the Protestant regime.\(^{27}\)

There is no denying therefore that late Tudor and early Stuart towns had a number of significant focal points which gave structure to social relationships in both formal and informal contexts. What has been less clear, however, are indications of the way in which these different types of institution co-existed in a single urban society. Clearly, the social relationships of townsfolk normally criss-crossed different institutions, both formal and informal, within the same community, but such patterns have not been fully demonstrated. Furthermore, recent studies have been inclined to concentrate on the social organisation of free citizens, leaving the significance of the mobile population and un-free residents under-represented in the analysis.\(^{28}\)

This study, therefore, intends to show how heterogeneous urban populations structured their social and economic relationships in both a formal and informal context. It will demonstrate how the urban community consisted of a range of different socio-economic structures reflecting the social and economic climate of the period and the social demarcations imposed by the urban government. However, it also attempts to argue that a significant part of townpeople's activities were conducted in a range of informal urban settings, thereby creating links across the


\(^{28}\)The concepts of sociology and social anthropology provide useful insights into the way we can conceptualise the complex state of urban social relationships. One of the most influential developments in the study of social relationship in an urban community is the concept of social network. J. A. Barnes has shown that a Norwegian parish, Bremnes, was composed of three social fields, a territorial, industrial and network. In the last field, social relations were characterised by a number of links which connected a person with people beyond the judicial boundaries of a town. J. A. Barnes, 'Class and Communities in a Norwegian Island Parish', *Human Relations* 7 (1954).
heterogeneous population. In short, in examining the state of urban communities, the analytical framework of this thesis questions the validity of compartmentalising the urban population into different social and occupational groups or according to residential status, and suggests that people's urban consciousness was shaped in a range of informal structures which bridged different social and occupational worlds constituting an urban community.

Although the borough of Leicester in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was a long-established county town in the East Midlands, and typifies the social organisation of middle-sized provincial towns in a number of important respects, the town has not yet attracted serious research for the pre-Civil War period. Despite Hoskin's studies in the 1950s and the general social, economic and administrative history of Leicester in The Victorian County History (1958), they reflected the earlier considerations and interests of local rather than urban historians. More recent studies of Leicester have mainly focused on specific aspects of the community. David L. Wykes, for instance, has analysed in detail the growth of the Leicester hosiery trade and its link with the rise of dissenters, especially in the late seventeenth century, but his study also gives significant insights into the earlier development of this trade in the urban economy. As for social and political aspects of the borough, A. L. Beier has analysed the Leicester vagrants together with those in other regions, while C. F. Patterson has explored urban patronage by referring to the changing relationship between the Earl of Huntingdon and the urban authorities.

The lack of research is rather surprising considering the extensive borough records and testamentary records which still exist. In particular, the chronology of administrative development recorded in the town minutes enables us to see the range of formal activities in the urban community during our period.\(^{31}\) In addition, a great number of borough court examinations and ecclesiastical court depositions, the Chancery proceedings and a series of pleadings and depositions in the Court of the Duchy of Lancaster provide significant information about the informal social and economic activities of townsman and strangers, and they will be intensively used in the following discussion.\(^{32}\) Furthermore, wills can be used for identifying the scale of social networks of relatively prosperous townsmen, although only a small number of probate inventories before the civil war have survived in Leicester. At the same time, a comprehensive study of provincial towns can rarely be fulfilled without methodological problems, and Leicester is no exception. Firstly, there are only limited population listings from which to identify individuals and reconstruct the community in any comprehensive way over such a long period. Only part of the entire urban population is normally listed in the lay subsidies returns and the muster rolls, except for certain years, while the parish registers are mostly defective for the period before 1600. Lack of any comprehensive census of the poor makes their identification extremely difficult. Secondly, evidence relating to some important urban institutions is much less satisfactory than for others. For example, records for individual craft gilds are generally poor, and parish records such as churchwardens' and overseers' accounts survive for only two of the five urban parishes, St. Martin's and St. Mary's.

\(^{31}\)See pp. 147-58.

\(^{32}\)For the problems of these records, see pp. 126-7, 230.
respectively. In addition, detailed investigation on urban wards may be hampered by the lack of presentments and indictments. Such a state of documentation inevitably causes difficulties in analysing the social function of each institution in equal depth.

Thirdly, evidence for the urban informal structure tends to be largely qualitative, since despite the significant range of social activities engaged in by the population, the amount of information derived from historical sources for one provincial town is limited. In the case of Leicester, only a limited number of depositions in the Crown courts, such as the Chancery and the Star Chamber, is available. Furthermore, no diaries and autobiographies written by the Leicester citizens are known to exist. As a result, some parts of the argument tend to rely heavily on circumstantial evidence, while other points remain speculative.

It must be stressed, therefore, that this study does not attempt to provide a definitive view of the social organisation of English county towns. Rather, it is a case study which attempts to illuminate some patterns of urban social relationships in a fairly typical second-rank town in late Tudor and early Stuart England. Notwithstanding its modest achievement, however, it is believed that the study will lay a significant stepping stone for further investigation of other urban communities with similar institutions and records.

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33See pp. 85-6, 164, 166, 222-3.
34See pp. 128-9, 196-8.
In this study, I look firstly at the social, economic and administrative context of the corporation of Leicester in the pre-Civil War period (chapters 1 and 2), and then at household structure (chapter 3) and the poor (chapter 4). The last three chapters examine the ways in which civic identities were shaped by public actions and formal institutions (chapters 5 and 6) and by social networks and urban space (chapter 7).35

35Urban values and urban identities were formed by people’s perceptions of a town which normally reflected their social, economic, political and cultural expectations. These would not necessarily have been realised in other places in the same way. The phrase public action in this study relates to the implementation of policies, laws and regulations by the urban government. For the definition of urban space, see ch. 7
Map 1: Late Tudor and Early Stuart Leicester

Note: The above is a revised version of the map in VCH, vol. 4, 340.
1. The Urban Setting

The history of Leicester goes back as early as the middle of the first century, if not before.\(^1\) Ratae Coritanorum, as the Romans called it, was the only great urban centre in the county with a rudimentary municipal organisation.\(^2\) Although archaeological findings are fragmentary, evidence of elaborate pavements, baths and the Forum indicates a relatively high level of cultural life in this ancient walled town.\(^3\) One can only infer the extent of the Roman influence inherited by the Anglo-Saxons, who subsequently occupied the area.\(^4\) Discontinuity perhaps tends to be overstated, although Leicester was probably affected by the life-style of the invaders, which was significantly less urban.\(^5\) Nonetheless, they did add an important function to the town when it became a religious centre as a diocese from about 679 until the Danes' occupation in 877.\(^6\)

S. Reynolds has argued that the changes caused by the Norman Conquest to English towns were insignificant. Leicester probably did not experience any really important administrative change, unlike the neighbouring towns of Nottingham and Northampton, which adopted the "French borough" separately.\(^7\) Yet the town was

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1. It was probably an important burghal settlement which had an important heritage of public and other buildings. VCH, vol. 1, 179.
3. There is no evidence for the existence of a garrison in Roman Leicester. Simmons, Leicester, 3-7.
4. VCH, vol. 1, 221.
6. Simmons, Leicester, 11-2, 17.
7. Reynolds, English Medieval Towns, 43.
the centre of legal administration and monetary exchange, situated as it was at the boundaries of three wapentakes, Guthlaxton, Gosecote, and Gartree, and the castle was established by William the Conqueror, who regarded Leicester as a place of strategic importance. According to the Domesday survey in 1086, there were 378 houses including those of 56 burgesses, 6 churches, the market, the mint, and the court. The next few hundred years were marked by the establishment of new religious institutions. In 1143, the college established by Robert de Beaumont beside the castle was merged into the Augustinian abbey beyond the north gate by his son, Robert the Hunchback, while Leicester had three mendicant friaries along with other towns such as Chester and Canterbury by the start of the fourteenth century. The half century before the Black Death was a particularly prosperous period for the town when it became an important industrial centre, making cloth like other centres such as York, Lincoln, and Winchester. The urban population also seems to have increased. Whereas the tallage rolls in the thirteenth century recorded less than 400 names on average, the rolls of 1342 included about 550 names, though this population probably declined in the late Middle Ages. Thus Tudor and Stuart Leicester had an impressive array of landmarks, giving visitors the appearance of a large established town. As early as the Middle Ages, High Street, Swinesmarket, and Hotgate were busy main roads surrounded by numerous houses. The medieval walls with ditches, although in ruins, were still visible during most of our period, and the four town gates were still well preserved.

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8 VCH, vol. 1, 303-4; Simmons, Leicester, 18.  
10 The ecclesiastical patronage belonging to the college also moved to the abbey. Consequently, all the churches came under the authority of the abbey except for St. Margaret's. Simmons, Leicester, 22; Reynolds, English Medieval Towns, 62.  
11 Ibid, 61; Billson, 143.  
12 Ibid, 143.  
13 THL, 98.
by the late eighteenth century. The Magazine Gate, which was the eastern entrance to the Newarke until the 1960s, still exists.

Like many other urban centres in pre-industrial England, however, the environment of the borough of Leicester was also characterised by various rural elements. Two larger parishes of Leicester, St. Mary’s and St. Margaret’s extended well beyond the borough boundaries, and they included vast areas of fields and meadows, particularly outside the town walls (see Map 2). Many traders of the borough kept their livestock in these open areas. Even the space inside the town walls maintained some rural characteristics, such as domestic animals, gardens and orchards.

It was the size and the level of concentration of larger houses which caught the eyes of outsiders when they were approaching large provincial towns. When Leland arrived at Leicester in the early sixteenth century, he observed that “The whole town of Leicester at this time is builded of timber.” Citizens’ houses, in fact, were certainly less grand and impressive than those in larger provincial towns like Exeter and York, and many of them were in decay, particularly in the late sixteenth century. When John Evelyn visited the town in 1654, he described it as an “old and ragged city . . . large and pleasantly seated, but despicably built, the chimney flues

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14Hillson, 206; Simmons, Leicester, 87-8, 117-8
15In 1553, for example, the borough authorities ordered the townsmen not to “put any manner of cattle . . . but only tow kye a piece at the most” in the Cow Hey, which was the common pasture in the South field. RBL, vol. 3, 70. Also see Levi Fox and Percy Russell, Leicester Forest (Leicester, 1984), 109-10; S. H. Skillington, ‘Star Chamber Proceedings: Part of the Evidence in a Sixteen century Suit Relating to Leicester and the Forest of Leicester’, TLAS 12 (1921-2), 137.
16BR3/18/24; RBL, vol. 4, 260; Clerk and Slack, English Towns, 27.
17For example, see John Pound, Tudor and Stuart Norwich (Chichester, 1988), 19-20. W. B. Rye, England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth and James the First (1865), 13.
18The Itinerary of John Leland, in or about the years 1535-1543, vol. 1, ed., Lucy Toulmin Smith (1964), 14.
Map 3: Leicester in c. 1600

Note: John Speed's Map can be found in Nichols between p. 8 and p. 9.
like so many smithes's forges." Although critical, the comment clearly conveys the contemporary image of buildings concentrated in a restricted area. More importantly, the view from the highways of five outstanding parish churches symbolised the image of the town. For instance, Leland also mentioned that "St. Margaret's is thereby the fairest paroche chirch of Leircester, wher ons was [a] cathédrale chirch . . . ." The Leicester castle was another obvious landmark of which many visitors, like Celia Fiennes in 1684, took notice.

Consequently, Tudor and Stuart Leicester was undoubtedly an outstanding urban centre in the region with a distinctive architectural landscape. The impact of such an environment is significant. Firstly, it provided people with a clear visual image of the town which remained in their mind. Secondly, it created a particular spatial atmosphere in the area which helped to create a set of urban values.

2. Population Trends

The concentration of a large number of population in a particular area is one of the major criteria for the definition of a town. Despite the predictable deficiency of demographic sources, some attempts have been made to estimate the size of sixteenth and seventeenth century Leicester (see Table 1.1). The earliest estimate comes from John Throsby, who, in 1791, calculated the number of deaths in the parish registers of 1558 and of 1600-5. Although his assumptions about the average death rate are

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22For the problem of demographic sources, see W. G. Hoskins, *Provincial England*, 72; Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 429-32.
## Table 1.1
The Population Estimates of Tudor and Stuart Leicester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 1524-5 Lay Subsidies</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>2653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throsby, the parish registers of 1558</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1563 diocesan return</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>2800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throsby, the parish registers of 1600-05</td>
<td>3480</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1664 Hearth Tax</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>4208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1670 Hearth Tax</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>4864</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Note:* For the estimates, a multiplier, 4.75, is used. The figure from the Lay Subsidies is multiplied further by 1.33 for the number of those who were exempt.
problematic, he produced total figures of 3,000 and 3,480 respectably.\textsuperscript{25} The earlier figure can be compared with Derek Charman’s survey of the diocesan return of 1563, which calculated a total of 591 families, including those who lived in the curacy of St. Sepulchre’s in the southern suburb.\textsuperscript{26} More comprehensive data may be available from the Subsidy Rolls of 1524-5 from which Charman counted little more than 420 names.\textsuperscript{27}

Unlike Coventry and Salisbury, Leicester did not experience any major contraction in population during the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{28} We can only make inferences about the number of the poor, the sex ratio, and the age structure of the population of sixteenth century Leicester, and the resulting figure for the total population therefore varies according to the different statistical models we adopt.\textsuperscript{29} Nevertheless, it is unlikely that this result radically alters our picture of long-term demographic trends. The borough saw a gradual population increase from around 2,500 in the mid 1520s up to about 3,000 by the end of the century.

There are no reliable tax records from which we are able to estimate population for the early seventeenth century, but it is quite clear that the population of

\textsuperscript{25}Derek Charman, ‘Wealth and Trade in Leicester in the Early Sixteenth Century’, \textit{TLAS} 25 (1949), 73.
\textsuperscript{26}By using Laslett’s multiplier, 4.75, we are able to estimate a total population of over 2,800 at the beginning of the Elizabethan period. Charman, ‘Wealth and Trade’, 73. Peter Laslett, ‘Size and Structure of the Household in England over Three Centuries’, \textit{Population Studies} 23, no. 2 (1969), 207, 211.
\textsuperscript{27}Charman, ‘Wealth and Trade’, 74. Assuming that each name represented the head of a family, he calculated the number of 2,100 inhabitants by using a multiplier of 5 for the average household size. If we use 4.75, however, the resulting estimate goes down to 1995.
\textsuperscript{28}Clark and Slack, \textit{English Towns}, 31.
\textsuperscript{29}For example, Hoskins and Charman have accepted the assumption that about one-third of the total inhabitants were too poor to be charged in the 1524-5 assessment, but more recently, Goose has argued that this ratio unduly overestimates the number of poor; comparing the military survey of 1522 to the 1524-5 lay subsidy return, he has calculated that only 10 per cent of the total population were exempt or evaded the tax. Goose, ‘Economic and Social Aspects’, 429-32.
Leicester grew during this period (Table 1.1). The Hearth Tax Return of 1664, for example, listed 886 inhabitants. The steady growth of the population can also be demonstrated in the figures we have taken from parish registers (see Figure 1.1). Occasional crises due to epidemic diseases caused short-term demographic fluctuations, but the town recovered fairly quickly due to the large number of migrants. In trouble-free years, however, the town as a whole even seems to have enjoyed natural growth with the birth rate exceeding the death rate.

It appears that the population increase of Leicester between 1558-1660 widened the gap between Leicester and the surrounding rural settlements, such as Belgrave, Braunstone, and Evington (see Table 1.2). On the other hand, most Leicestershire small towns kept pace with the growth of Leicester, reflecting the rapid population growth in the county as a whole during the reign of Elizabeth.

It seems certain, therefore, that the population of Leicester gradually increased and reached over 4,500 by the last quarter of the seventeenth century. This growth rate was not as strong as that of other middle-rank towns such as Bury St.

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30 The Muster Rolls of 1608 list 568 names, but it is uncertain how many of the townsmen evaded the return. Although they were much more comprehensive than the rolls in other years in terms of the coverage of areas, the estimate of the extent of individual evasion is still problematic. See A. Chinnery, 'The Muster Roll for Leicester of 1608', TLAHS, vol. 60, 25; A. J. Tawney and R. H. Tawney, 'An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century', EcHR 5 (1934), 29-30.

31 If we apply the multiplier of 4.75 for the average household size, the total population of 4,208 is given, although this figure excludes those who lived in the area outside the old wards of the borough such as the Bishop's Fee and the Newarke. The population continued to grow up till at least 1670. The1670 Hearth Tax includes 1,024 households, and consequently a total population of 4,864 people can be calculated, although the 1664 Return may be slightly less comprehensive. VCH, vol. 4, 156-7.

32 The aggregate analysis of parish registers cannot be made for the late sixteenth century because no registers have survived for St. Mary's and St. Margaret's. The registers in other parishes are incomplete. DE1564/1; 1D63/1; 11D62/1; 14D57/102/1; The Register of St. Mary, Leicester in the County of Leicester. Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1600-1738, transcribed by Henry Hartopp (1909).

33 See p. 111.

Figure 1.1  
Baptisms and Burials: Aggregated from 5 Leicester Parishes, 1600-1660

Sources: DE1564/1; 1D63/1; 11D62/1; 14D57/102/1; Hartopp, Register of St. Mary.

Note: The five Leicester parishes are St. Martin’s, St. Mary’s, St. Margaret’s, St. Nicholas’ and All Saints’. The keeping of the Registers during the Civil War was severely disrupted, and therefore they have no statistical value.
Table 1.2
The Growth Rate of Some Tudor and Stuart Leicestershire Settlements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Area</th>
<th>1563</th>
<th>1670</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Surroundings of Leicester**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Area</th>
<th>1563</th>
<th>1670</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aylestone</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrave</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braunstone</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evington</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Glen</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenfield</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humberstone</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oadby</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigston Magna</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Small Towns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Area</th>
<th>1563</th>
<th>1670</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashby-de-la-Zouch</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billesdon</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle Donington</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallaton</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinckley</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutterworth</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Bosworth</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Harborough</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melton Mowbray</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountsorrel</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waltham-on-the-Wolds</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish Area</th>
<th>1563</th>
<th>1670</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billesdon</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle Donington</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallaton</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinckley</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutterworth</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Bosworth</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Harborough</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melton Mowbray</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountsorrel</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waltham-on-the-Wolds</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Evidence for the town areas of some of the towns is not available. For the problem of the distinction between the town area and the parishes for the estimate, see Clark and Hosking.

Population, iv-v. The growth rate of Leicester is minimal, because the figure for the Hearth Tax was based on urban wards.
Edmunds, but during a difficult period for many middle-sized towns, it was significant enough to explain various social and economic consequences in the urban community.\textsuperscript{35}

3. The Economy

With about 130 different types of occupation recorded in the Freemen's Registers between 1560 and 1639, the degree of occupational diversity in Leicester certainly typified the urban economy of an established town.\textsuperscript{36} The scale of individual urban trades, which permitted a gradation of economic success, and a new business based on the exploitation of latent demands of a large number of population, were unique compared to the structure of the surrounding rural economy. To continental eyes, however, the economy of Leicester would have been somewhat unimpressive. During the period 1560-1639, for example, 12 husbandmen and 80 yeomen were admitted to the freedom, while husbandry was also a common by-occupation among townsmen.\textsuperscript{37} In addition, as Hoskins has depicted, Leicester was a second-rank town with no specialised industrial character. Clearly, the lack of a navigable river was one factor which limited the capacity of the economy, and Leicester did not attract any specialist trade which could have acted as an engine for economic expansion.\textsuperscript{38}

Such an overall image of the urban economy is useful for locating a town within an urban hierarchy, but it tends to gloss over the complexity of the pre-modern urban economy which influenced a range of social and economic activities. For

\textsuperscript{35}Clark and Slack, \textit{English Towns}, 83.

\textsuperscript{36}J. Patten, 'Village and Town: an Occupational Study', \textit{The Agricultural History Review} 20, pt 1 (1972), 1-16.

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{RF: VCH}, vol. 4, 99-103. For example, Thomas Swan had 200 sheep, 18 lambs and hogs, 5 oxen, and his stock-in-trade reached nearly 650 pounds in 1630. \textit{Ibid}, 103.

\textsuperscript{38}Hoskins, \textit{Provincial England}, 88, 90. See p. 37 below.
example, the service sector and distributive trades were also growing areas which significantly affected people's lives in middle-rank provincial towns. Furthermore, one also needs to consider hidden areas of economic activity which do not normally appear in our sources. Freemen's registers and probate records are undoubtedly useful sources in discovering the structure of privileged tradesmen, but they conceal as much as they reveal the scale and intensity of the informal urban economy. Goose has argued, for example, that the pessimistic picture of urban industry in provincial towns is partly due to the severe underestimate of the number of poor artisans in freedom lists and in will-making. Chinnery's analysis of the Muster Rolls of 1608 supports Goose's scepticism about the representation found in the freemen's registers. These represented the whole range of trades not only partially, but also unevenly, according to different occupations (see Table 1.3). Similarly, the trade structure derived from probate inventories tends to be biased towards successful traders and their wives. Consequently, the records severely underestimate the scale of the economic activities of females, the poor, and those who were engaged in secondary occupations.

Having said this, freemen's registers and probate records provide important information about the structure of the formal economy. In the early sixteenth century, Leicester's textile industry was significantly smaller than that of

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39See R. B. Dobson, 'Admission to the Freedom of the City of York in the Late Middle Ages', EHR, 2nd ser., 1973; J. F. Pound, 'The Validity of the Freemen's Lists: Some Norwich Evidence', EHR, 2nd ser., 34 (1981), 48-59; D. M. Palliser, The Age of Elizabeth: England under the Later Tudors 1547-1603, 2nd ed. (1992), 281-2. Freemen's registers may be unreliable in assessing the scale of the new trades developing outside the traditional gild structure of the town, such as hosiery, towards the late seventeenth century. David L. Wykes has found that the level of the representation of some of the urban traders in the freemen's registers of late seventeenth century Leicester was fairly low. Wykes, Religious Dissent, 84-5.
40Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 99.
41Chinnery, Muster Roll, 30-2.
42See pp. 92-106.
Table 1.3
The Proportion of Freemen in the Muster Rolls, 1608

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. in MR</th>
<th>No. in FR</th>
<th>% of Freemen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ironmonger</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joiner</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butcher</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chandler</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanner</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wheelwright</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whittawer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mercer</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carpenter</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>draper (woollen)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glover</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishmonger</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddler</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glazier</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innholder</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roughlayer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeoman</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbandman</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Chinnery, 'Muster Roll', 30-2; BRII/12/14a; RE.
three other Midland towns, Coventry, Northampton and Worcester. Even if we include the clothing trade, Leicester lagged behind the other larger urban centres: while the textile and clothing traders in Leicester constituted 23 per cent of the freemen, the numerical counterpart in Norwich was just less than 40 per cent, Coventry 30 per cent, and both Bristol and Exeter about 26 per cent. The picture in the Elizabethan period seems to have been similar. According to Hoskins’ study, the number of the traders related to cloth-making and retailing, such as tailors, mercers, and weavers, stagnated and possibly decreased. Mercers’ admission to the freemen of the town constituted 6 per cent of entrants between 1540-65, while they comprised only 5 per cent between 1580-1600.

By contrast, the economy of Leicester was marked by the relatively large proportion of freemen in the victualling trades. Analysis of the occupational

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43 Hoskins, Provincial, 80. Hoskins has distinguished the textile trades from the wholesale and retail clothing trades, and included the cappers and hatters of Coventry in its textile trades rather than the clothing trades; Alan D. Dyer, The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century (Leicester, 1973), 81-119.

44 These figures need to be treated with caution, since sources and categories for each town vary. Charles Phythian-Adams, ‘The Economic and Social Structure’, in The Fabric of the Traditional Community (The Open University, course A322, English Urban History 1500-1700, unit 5, part A), 16, 39-40. Palliser has found that the results of the analysis of freemen’s registers and wills generally agree in the case of Tudor York. D. M. Palliser, Tudor York (Oxford, 1979), 158, n.1.

45 The number of admissions for tailors was 32 in 1559-80, and 35 in 1580-1603. The corresponding figures for mercers were 18, and 18, and weavers were 18, and 12. See Hoskins, Provincial England, 95. Kerridge’s figure, 4.4 per cent, in 1520-59 based on inventories seems to be too low. VCH, vol. 4, 78.

46 Hoskins, Provincial England, 114. For example, after becoming the mayor in 1570, Nicholas English, Merchant of the Staple of Calais, moved to Burton Grange in the county after being dismissed by the Leicester government for not living in the town. Roll of the Mayors of the borough and Lord Mayors of the City of Leicester, 1209-1935, ed., H. Hartopp (Leicester, 1936), 71. The decline of merchants and retailers did not always coincide with an industrial decline, as in the case of Worcester, where merchants, drapers, and tailors declined despite the strong textile industry. Here, the cause of decline seems to have been the growing importance of the London market. Dyer, Worcester, 88, 90.

structure of other provincial towns shows that in the early sixteenth century, the proportion of the victualling trades in Leicester outnumbered those in Coventry, Exeter and Norwich. The prosperity of butchers in Elizabethan Leicester was exemplified, for example, by Philip Freake, whose will in 1588 amounted to a total of £624 19s. 6d. in personal goods at his death. Moreover, the establishment of a new brewing company in 1574 indicates the growing importance of inns and alehouses, where many people ate and drank, particularly in the evening. Evidence from inventories show that many tradesmen were engaged in tippling to supplement their income. When the state of the brewing industry was examined for the Queen's visit in 1585, it was reported that "Mr William Noryce, Mr. Tho. Clarke, Mr Ellys, Mr Chettell, Robert Carter, with all the rest of the brewars in Leicester will serve xlv tune weekly of ale and beare, or above if nede bee." According to the list of taverns and innkeepers in 1586, there were 37 of them in several wards.

The prosperity of victualling trades was accompanied by the growth of the leather trade in Elizabethan Leicester. According to an analysis of the freemen's registers, about 8 per cent of the entire entries were tanners. The proportion of glovers grew from 2.5 per cent in the early sixteenth century to about 5 per cent by the last quarter of the century. Journeymen shoemakers were numerous enough to

48 Whereas 25 per cent of the freemen were made up of food and drink suppliers in Leicester between 1520-39, Coventry had 21.8 per cent, Exeter, 17.8 per cent and Norwich only about 8 per cent in the same period. For the sources of these estimates and the problems of interpretation, see Phythian-Adams, 'The Economic and Social Structure', 15-6, 39-40.
51 VCH, vol. 4, 96.
53 BRII/18/2/250.
54 Hoskins, Provincial England, 114.
create "the company of the journeymen of shoemakers" in 1531/2.\(^{55}\) The relatively large proportion of leather-related trades was not atypical in provincial towns, with numerous tanners in Warwick.\(^{56}\) Unlike the Warwick tanners, however, several of the Leicester leather traders became prosperous enough to play a major role in the civic government. For eleven mayoral years during Elizabeth's reign, the office was occupied by tanners. Thus, John Tatam became mayor in 1566, 1577, and 1590.\(^{57}\)

An analysis of the freemen's registers does not show any dramatic change in the relative proportion of occupational groups in the early seventeenth century.\(^{58}\) In numerical terms, the leather trade remained one of the most important trades in the borough. The scale of the industry is reflected by the newly established leather hall in around 1600, where the distribution of raw materials was supervised.\(^{59}\) This general trend, however, needs to be qualified when we look at the level of individual traders. Evidence from probate inventories show, for example, that the economic status of individual freemen was not necessarily consistent with the general condition of occupational groups. The appendix tables present some supplementary evidence for the scale of individual occupations represented in the Registers of Freemen between 1560 and 1639.\(^{60}\)

\(^{55}\) VCH, vol. 4, 83.

\(^{56}\) Beier, Warwick, 52.

\(^{57}\) Roll of Mayors, eds, Hartopp, passim.

\(^{58}\) VCH, vol. 4, 76.


\(^{60}\) The occupational categories used in this analysis are not designed to assess the size of each occupational group, which has been studied by other historians. See, e.g., VCH, vol. 4, 76-8. The arbitrary nature of occupational classification has been pointed out in Goose's studies on Cambridge, Colchester and Reading. In particular, the distinctions made between retail, manufacture and service seem quite difficult to draw among some types of trades, if one considers the domain of informal trades. See Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 422-8; John Patten, 'Urban occupations in pre-industrial England', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers (1977).
Tanners remained one of the largest occupational groups in the leather-related trades (see Appendix Table 1). From the last decade of the sixteenth century onwards, shoemakers became the largest section of the leather trade, while the number of glovers stagnated in the early seventeenth century. This overall trend can be also seen from the occupational distribution in the Muster Roll of 1608. Among 568 traders, 48 shoemakers (9 per cent) constituted the largest occupational group, 27 tanners (5 per cent) were the 4th largest, while there were only 9 glovers (2 per cent). The high figure for shoemakers in the 1590s was derived from two larger numbers of entry in 1593-4 and 1598-9, when the total number of admissions was also exceedingly high. The prosperity of the leather-related trades should not be exaggerated, however. The security of their business was often threatened by unfranchised traders and rural competitors. The relative stagnation in the number of glovers may have been due to growing competition from traders in nearby towns such as Mountsorrel and Loughborough. Although probate inventories are biased towards the better-off, and do not necessarily reflect the entire wealth of the deceased in their lifetime, they do indicate the level of prosperity between traders in the same occupation, and it often varied significantly. According to Kerridge's analysis, the average value of the inventories of shoemakers was comparatively low in general, but a tradesman like Francis Churchmen seems to have maintained a comfortable business with a total wealth of £97 17s 2d. Tanners were much more disparate. Margery Crosby in 1606 left a total £198 6s 8d, while Hamiel Hawford left about £176. At the other end of the scale, John Tatam left only over £13 in 1588, and Robert Roberts had just over £1 in 1614.

The general growth of the leather trades was accompanied by the occupational representation of butchers, who contributed to the distribution of raw materials (see Appendix Table 2). Here, one can also find a number of different types of butcher. While prosperity was most evident among prominent grazing butchers, the cutting butchers' wealth was more comparable to other modest traders such as shoemakers. Nonetheless, strong demands for butchering provided a more favourable trade context — even for those who did not have substantial capital — than for other occupational groups. In 1634, the town also admitted country butchers to the freedom to attend markets.

Food traders in general prospered in the early Stuart period. Although their peak in our table is limited, maltsters and brewers were also thriving trades, responding to growing demand from the increasing number of inhabitants, visiting traders and travellers. In 1632, Henry Slater owned over £70 for his stock-in-trade, and left in total £415 13s. 6d. including his debts worth £167 4d., while Thomas Thompson owned £80 for his stock, and left £119 13s. 4d. The growing influence of maltsters in the early seventeenth century is exemplified both by frequent complaints about the traders who bought a large quantity of malt in the market for breweries and in also a series of regulations which attempted to restrict the trade. In 1615, for example, the maltsters in the town were restricted to buying barley to convert into malt. Around the 1620s, a report was made in the Common Hall that there were so many maltsters in the town and the Newarke that poor people in the

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64 Hides needed to be removed from animals soon after they were killed to produce better quality. See M. Kowalesky, 'Town and Country in Late Medieval England: the Hide and Leather Trade', in Work in Town, 850-1850, eds., Penelope J. Corfield and Derek Keene (Oxford, 1990), 59.
65 VCH, vol. 4, 92-3.
66 Ibid. 95.
67 RBL, vol. 4, 152.
market were not able to buy any bread corn. Nonetheless, the increasing number of maltsters was also an important sign of the prosperity of other victualling trades, such as brewing and alehouse-keeping.

The number of individual trades producing household and metal goods was not generally as impressive as other trades (see Appendix Table 3), but the modest increase in the number of smiths, chandlers, and ironmongers may reflect growing demand for household and consumer goods. Nevertheless, even such demand probably did not provide sufficient income for many of these traders. Kerridge has argued that some smiths were engaged in spinning or farming to supplement their marginal income, while others extended their trade to metal-work such as cutlering.

It has been argued that the early seventeenth century saw the decline of the English-cloth making trade due to the impact of war and international competition, but the volume of domestic consumption, which had a key role in the local economy, has been largely ignored. The condition of the textile trade in Leicester may have started to improve towards the end of the sixteenth century, as the authorities sought to re-establish the wool trade (see Appendix Table 4). In 1592, Thomas Clark in the town promised to bequeath his rent from St. John’s Hospital to make a Wool Hall where the wool, which was brought to the town, was officially weighed by the borough officers. In 1600, the Mayor wrote that "we have made a very fitt Woollhall with convenient storehouses . . . ." In addition, the town was granted by

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68BHL, vol. 4, 196. The numerical scale of maltsters should not be exaggerated, since the trade normally required large capital for the purchase of barley and fuel. VCH, vol. 4, 95. In the master rolls of 1608, there were only 2 maltsters, neither of whom appeared in the Freemen’s Registers. Chinnery, ‘Muster Roll’, 32.
69VCH, vol. 4, 97.
72Ibid, 416.
the 1599 charter the right to open a wool market when the usual fairs and markets were held.73 After being appointed a Staple town in 1618, the Mayor and his brethren wrote to the Merchants of Staple that "we have a wool hall with divers houses in the same that have locks and knies and that have bene heretofore used for to lay woolls .. ."74 As the table shows, these institutional developments, which were mainly concerned with the distribution of wool, had only a limited impact on the textile industry in the town itself. While 22 weavers were listed in the Muster Roll of 1608, representing a relatively large number, the figures for other textile-related trades are negligible.75 Tailors constituted a large occupational group in the town throughout the period concerned. According to Kerridge's study, their social profiles varied according to individuals, and many of them were engaged in secondary occupations such as farming, brewing, spinning and money lending.76

It seems certain, however, that the strongest momentum for the resurgence of the textile industry in seventeenth century Leicester came from the growing hosiery trade. According to Wykes' survey, the emergence of the modern hosiery trade in Leicester can be identified in the late sixteenth century.77 However, the trade's organisation before the Civil War seems to have been generally informal; the townsfolk who organised the trade often had a different trade at the same time, as in the case of wool and worsted spinning and weaving. Thus William Hitchcock, a gardener, seems to have organised the putting-out hosiery industry by using spinners and his family members.78 Wykes has argued that it was not until the 1640s that the industry really took off in Leicester by using pauper labour both in the town and the

73Ibid., 364.
74RBL, vol. 4, 173.
77Wykes, 'The Origins and Development of the Leicestershire Hosiery Trade', 24.
78VCH, vol. 4, 90.
Arguably, however, the foundation of the new industry might have already emerged in the early part of the century.\textsuperscript{79}

The dominance of merchant retailers, which typified the economic structure of larger towns, was to some extent hindered by the preponderance of victuallers and leather traders in Leicester (see Appendix Table 5). Although the number of mercers stagnated in Elizabeth's reign, they were the most powerful retailers, especially in the early seventeenth century. Drapers were divided into linen and woollen drapers during the sixteenth century, but they eventually found themselves under the influence of the mercers' company as the difference in the wares they sold became negligible. Although their wealth was significantly smaller than that of leading merchant retailers, the lesser retailers, whose trade probably penetrated the much lower social orders, played a major role in the urban economy. Though the number of their admissions to the freedom fluctuated, chapmen were a numerous group of retailers in the town. Among the more wealthy was John Allen, a stationer, who accumulated his wealth of about 200 pounds by supplying books from London in the early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{81}

So far, we have been mainly concerned with the commercial and industrial sectors in the town. These economic sectors largely inherited the conventional methods of production and transaction based on the market and the craft. However, there were other occupational groups, though small in number, which played a leading role in a provincial urban economy. Some historians have stressed the rise of professions in early modern England. Wilfrid R. Prest has argued, for example, that the professional class experienced "rapid expansion, diversification and consolidation" before the Restoration.\textsuperscript{82} C. W. Brooks has shown

\textsuperscript{79}Wykes, 'Leicestershire Hosiery Trade', 25.
\textsuperscript{80}See pp. 100-2.
\textsuperscript{81}YCH, vol. 4, 80, 82-3.
that the formal and informal practice of attorneys in provincial towns was significantly different from their counterparts in the capital. Furthermore, M. Pelling has adopted different criteria to measure the significance of medical practitioners in early modern England from embracing both more institutionalised and informal medicine in the later period.

It has been contended that the rise of the service sector was characteristic of the occupational structure of a thriving county town in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Palliser has argued that late Tudor York replaced its precarious industrial sector with the service sector by taking advantage of the location of the Council of the North. Barbers counted themselves among twelve leading companies of Coventry, Chester and Bristol. Benefiting from its position as the administrative centre of its county, Warwick saw the expansion of both professional and service sectors when the town grew in the late seventeenth century. Although less spectacular in terms of administrative importance than the Northern capital, Leicester was also in a position to exploit its administrative functions in the region. The Freemen's Registers offer little sign of a thriving service sector in the town before the civil war, except for a minor growth in the number of barber surgeons in the early seventeenth century (see Appendix Table 6). But these low figures in the service sector may be due to the fact that many professionals such as apothecaries, surgeons, attorneys and school masters, did not necessarily need the right and obligations of the freedom to pursue their business in the town, unless they wanted to keep apprentices

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85 Pelling, 'Medical Practice', 95.
86 Beier, 'Warwick', 50.
87 The occupational fellowship of barbers can be identified in the mid-sixteenth century. RBL, vol. 3, 78.
or to obtain urban offices. There seems to have been no formal system of training for urban practitioners in provincial towns. Physicians in the provinces were often included in other occupational groups, and many of them did not go through the process of apprenticeship. Since the service sector increasingly developed outside the formal trade structure, their presence in the documents is likely to be limited.

In consequence, the analysis of the formal economic structure of Leicester hints at dynamic economic activities among the textile, leather and victualling trades stemming from the town's distributive role in the region. The study also reminds us that the social profiles of individual traders were not necessarily determined by their occupational status. With such an array of social and economic characteristics among the inhabitants, the Leicester economy clearly had more significant feature of urbaness than might have been expected from a non-specialised middle-rank town with a limited industrial significance.

4. The Regional Hinterland and Urban Network.

In the pre-industrial period, urban society is normally characterised by a continuous interchange of people and materials between a town and its hinterland. In the early modern historiography, such an obvious inter-dependence between the town and the countryside has been largely undervalued by opposing models which stress competitive or parasitic relationships. In the case of middle-sized towns in particular, factors such as urban-rural competition, growing rural investment and the flight of the urban industrial sector to the hinterland have been stressed by a series of petitions and protests by the urban authorities and by the guilds, which were anxious to defend

88Palliser, *Tudor York*, 146.
90Pelling, 'Medical Practice', 97.
their urban privileges. However, urban economic values, and perhaps more implicitly cultural and social values, may have been more readily shared with outsiders. For example, Phythian-Adams and his followers have introduced the concept of an urban society which stresses "the common cultural heritage of the pays" at the expense of a specific "urban identity", and suggested that conflicting economic factors between the town and the countryside were less clear in smaller market towns. Although they do not investigate the urban values stemming from the complex social, cultural and political structures of large urban centres, these studies are important reminders of the close economic ties between a town and its hinterland.

Urban traders in Leicester had maintained a strong influence on the urban economy through the Merchant Guild since the Middle Ages, but at the same time, the urban economy had a strong rural aspect stemming mainly from the economic links with the surrounding countryside. As Hoskins has shown, the expansion of the leather and victualling trades marked the growing dependence of urban traders on the rural economy during the reign of Elizabeth. In such a context, the urban economy must be regarded as part of the regional economic system.

Leicester was surrounded by fertile agricultural areas with some ancient woodlands nearby. William Burton detailed in 1622 that Leicester "is scituated in a most rich, delicate, and pleasant soyle . . . ." John Nichols reported that the good

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93 On the Merchant Guild, see pp. 48, 167.

94 Hoskins, Provincial, 96.

95 William Burton, Description of Leicestershire, 160.
quality of clay in the south-east and the south-west of the county of Leicester provided suitable farming grounds, while the Wolds in the north west were also good sources of agricultural production. On the other hand, the dry clay and woodland (the Charnwood Forest) to the north-east was comparatively disadvantageous to agriculture, and the area was less populated than the eastern part of the county; with these exceptions, however, the proportion of cultivated lands in the county was extremely high. Leicestershire was a renowned mixed farming region, but the vast arable lands producing peas, barley, and wheat were also an important source of income. Hoskins has argued that "the arable constituted somewhere between two-thirds and three quarters of the whole acreage of the farm." The transition and development of the agrarian economy in Leicestershire has been discussed in detail in a number of studies. Enclosure, which was an extensive movement during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in this region, had a major impact on the economic structure of the county as a whole. As far as the urban economy was concerned, two important consequences are visible. Firstly, the changing proportion of farm produce in the hinterland may have affected the trade environment in the town, whose inhabitants were heavily dependent upon supply from the countryside. The expansion of livestock production in the county made a major contribution to the leather, woollen and victualling trades in the region, and the market towns became important distribution centres. The growing opportunity for

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100 Thus in 1634, country butchers or graziers were admitted to the freedom on market days in Leicester, and their number became greater than urban butchers by the mid-seventeenth century. VCH, vol. 4, 92.
exploiting land for live-stock benefited townsfolk directly, for prominent urban traders often held either their own lands or leases in rural areas.\textsuperscript{101}

Secondly, the change in agricultural land use affected the social structure in the region. There are two conflicting interpretations for the social impacts of the enclosure. Whereas it may have widened the social inequality between the large farmers and the lesser peasants because of unevenly distributed lands, it also has been argued that many husbandmen and small peasants were beneficiaries of enclosure too.\textsuperscript{102} It is clear, however, that Leicestershire saw the rise of yeoman who had a strong interest in the profitable exchange of their products in major distribution centres.\textsuperscript{103} For example, we hear about the yeomen who were buying between one and two hundred sheep and lambs at a time in Leicestershire markets between 1612-24.\textsuperscript{104} It was this rising economic activity in the countryside, together with increasing demand for agricultural products in urban centres, that stimulated the integration of the regional economy.

The development of the regional economy depended heavily on a good road network (see Map 4). Before the Norman Conquest, there were two major routes of importance in the county: the Fosse Way going through Leicester, and Watling Street separating the county from Warwickshire in the south west.\textsuperscript{105} P.

\textsuperscript{101}For example, Philip Freake, a prominent Elizabethan butcher in Leicester, occupied diverse pastures not only in the vicinity of the town, such as in Evington and New Parks, but also in Lowesby. Hoskins, 'An Elizabethan Butcher', 113.

\textsuperscript{102}\textit{VCH}, vol. 2, 199-201, 204; Hoskins, 'Leicestershire Farmer', 131, 135, 179. The lay subsidy of 1524 indicates that about one third of the population were cottagers and labourers who were taxed on their wages or goods worth only 20s. Furthermore, we hear of three enclosure riots, 1549, 1553 and 1607. \textit{VCH}, vol. 2, 207; Barry Coward, \textit{Social Change and Continuity in Early Modern England 1550-1750} (1988), 48-53.

\textsuperscript{103}On the aspirations of yeoman, see M. Campbell, \textit{The English Yeoman} (1942), 194-5

\textsuperscript{104}Campbell, \textit{The English Yeoman}, 204.

\textsuperscript{105}\textit{VCH}, vol. 1, 180. Simmons has indicated another route from Ratae going westwards to Manchester on Watling Street. Simmons, \textit{Leicester} (1974), 8.
Map 4: Road Networks in Medieval Leicestershire

Note: The map is taken from VCH, vol. 3, 67.
Russell has argued that communications improved under Edward I when the county saw a rise in economic activities.\textsuperscript{106} By the eighteenth century, more than a dozen roads connected Leicester with various towns and villages in the county and beyond, though the evidence for the establishment and the condition of these routes is often precarious.\textsuperscript{107}

These routes probably did not always guarantee comfortable journeys. Celia Fiennes described how difficult and time-consuming it was to travel on a country road when she took her journey from Uppingham to Leicester.\textsuperscript{108} Bad conditions did not stop speculative traders and travellers, however. Leicester traders seem to have visited the great fairs at Boston, Lynn, St. Ives, and Winchester in around 1220, while dye stuffs from Southampton were important materials for the town economy in c. 1440.\textsuperscript{109} With the expansion of inland trade, in particular, the busy traffic of the main north-south routes such as the roads to Melton, Loughborough, Welford and London was fuelled by the improvement of inland transport from the late sixteenth century onwards.\textsuperscript{110} The main commercial street was shifted from High Cross Street to Gallowtree Gate in the eastern suburb because

\textsuperscript{106}VCH, vol. 3, 69
\textsuperscript{107}Ibid. 70-9.
\textsuperscript{108}The Illustrated Journey of Celia Fiennes 1685-c.1712, ed., Christopher Morris (1982), 145.
\textsuperscript{109}Colin Platt, The English Medieval Town (1976), 95.
the town gates became too narrow for growing wheeled traffic. In 1620s, the disafforestation of Leicester Forest was strongly opposed by town inhabitants because it would interrupt the busy communication between the town and the countryside.

By contrast, Leicester lacked access to water transport: the river Soar never became an important navigable route during our period. Even William Burton had to admit in 1622 that "To parallel it with other Cities is not my purpose, but had it a Navigable river, whereby it might haue trading and Commerce; it might compare with many of no meane ranke." The river needed to be widened so that a large amount of commodities such as coal could be brought to Leicester. The frustration of townsmen was reflected in the M.P. Thomas Skipwith's petition in the 1630s: "Leicester . . . hath a river dischanneling itself into the great river of Trent, might be made fit for carring of boats or vessels which, with some good cost and charges, and without inconvenience to any." It was not until the late eighteenth century that the river transport of Leicester became important for the urban economy.

Leicester was located in the centre of a prosperous farming region, surrounded by several active small market centres (see Table 1.2). Such urban networks impressed contemporaries. Burton wrote, "this Shire is wel furnished with


112 Burton, Description, 160.

113 A similar situation can be observed in Warwick, where the river Avon did not become navigable until the eighteenth century. Beier has argued that this condition of river navigation hampered the distributive function of the town, together with the lack of major roads. A. L. Beier, 'The Social Problems of an Elizabethan County Town: Warwick, 1580-90', in County Towns in Pre-industrial England, ed., Peter Clark (Leicester, 1981), 50.

114 Nichols, clix.
Market towns, to which are brought all kinde of commodities (such as the Countrie affordeth) in great plente and abundance . . . .

At the end of the seventeenth century, Celia Fiennes still saw "a great way upon their hills the bottoms full of enclosures woods and different sort of manuriering and herbage, among which are placed many little towns . . . ." The trade links between Leicester and these small centres were clearly vital for the advance of the regional economy. These strategic links had been established as early as the thirteenth century, following the decision of the Portmanmoot to choose several market towns for collecting wool. There seems to have been busy traffic between Leicester and Lutterworth by merchants in the Middle Ages thanks to a good road connecting these two centres. It has been argued, however, that the sixteenth century saw the major development of the market town, though there were also some regional differences in the state of small towns which were influenced by complex local factors. Leicestershire's small towns were probably too remote to be much influenced by the impact of London, while they were heavily dependent upon the prosperous agrarian economy. Although their industrial specialisation had to wait another century, the large proportion of non-

116 Burton, Description, 4.
117 The Illustrated Journey, eds., Morris, 145.
119 RBL, vol. 1, 123.
agricultural occupations in these towns marked their clear distinction from villages. Furthermore, they were more clearly active distributive centres within their locality (see Table 1.4).\textsuperscript{123} Burton praised the market in Hinckley "for trading in corn, cattle, horse, swine, and all things vendable in a dry town, inferior to none in the whole county", while both Loughborough and Market Harborough were prominent sheep markets.\textsuperscript{124} Some towns did better than others. For example, Hallaton, which boasted an ancient weekly market and four annual fairs undoubtedly suffered from competition with Market Harborough, whose location was far more advantageous as a distributive centre.\textsuperscript{125}

All in all, however, the small market town undoubtedly played an important role in integrating Leicester into the wider regional economy.\textsuperscript{126} In 1613, when the towns of Leicester, Loughborough, Mountsorrel, Hinckley and Bosworth were asked by the inhabitants of Ashby-de-la-Zouche about the two new fairs opening there, they certified that they would "not bee anie waye prejudiciall or hurtfull unto us in our Markitts or faiors but rather vere beneficicall and Comodiouse by the increase of our trade and trafique . . . ."\textsuperscript{127} Leicester sustained, and even expanded its economic importance as the largest regional distribution centre. Economic activities were enhanced by many people who came to do business on three market days in week and four annual fairs, including the famous cheese and horse fairs (see Table 1.4).\textsuperscript{128} By 1600, as has been noted, the distribution of leather and wool was organised by the urban authorities. Thus, tanners and fellmongers from the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item H. T. Graf, 'Leicestershire Small Towns and Pre-industrial Urbanisation', \textit{TLAH} 68 (1994), 99, 103.
\item John Nichols, \textit{The History and Antiquities of Hinckley} (1782), 21.
\item Everitt, 'The Market Towns', 539.
\item RBL, vol. 4, 134-5.
\item Everitt, 'Marketing Agricultural Produce', 535, 537; Billson, 114.
\end{thebibliography}
Table 1.4
Markets and Fairs in Leicestershire Towns in the 16th and 17th Centuries

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<th>The Market Days of Leicestershire Towns</th>
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<th>The Calendar of Major Leicestershire Fairs</th>
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<td>8 December</td>
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<td>Tuesday after 6 January</td>
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<td>1st, 2nd and 3rd Mondays after 6 January</td>
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<td>Palm Sunday (6th Sunday in Lent)</td>
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<td>Easter Monday</td>
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<td>Tuesday in Easter Week</td>
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<td>Thursday following 5th Sunday after Easter</td>
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<td>Monday before 7th Sunday after Easter</td>
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<td>7th Sunday after Easter</td>
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<td>Tuesday in Whitsun Week</td>
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<td>Thursday following 8th Sunday after Easter</td>
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</table>

countryside were allowed to buy freemen butchers' slaughter wares in the open market on Saturdays, provided these tanners were "bringinge in to be solde in oure markitt halfe as muche tanned leyther theicre to bee solde in the Leyther Hall . . . and the fellmonger bringinge in halfe suche quantitye of wooll, to oure Wooll Hall weekelye . . ." In the same year, the Mayor wrote to the sheriff of Rutland that "wee have therefore made bold to intreate your worshipp especially, amongst some others of the cheifest growers of our good neighbors and countriemen, to creditt our Woolhall with sale of their wooll . . ."  

As inhabitants of the largest trade centre in the region, Leicester's townsmen often maintained a presence in these small towns. In the early sixteenth century, part of the tenements in Loughborough was held by Leicester men, who seem to have had a great economic interest in the small market towns nearby. In Lutterworth, a smaller market town to the south, Leicester townsmen seem to have used their economic muscle to a large extent; Richard Billing, a haberdasher had great influence in the retail trade of Lutterworth in the late sixteenth century, setting up a shop there where he kept his stock.  

The regional urban system not only benefited the larger centre but also stimulated the economic prospects of inhabitants in the small market towns. There is some evidence to show their involvement in economic activities in Leicester from testamentary records. We know of one cardmaker in Loughborough extending his retail trade at Leicester. Traders in Melton Mowbray often visited Leicester for tanning hides, while an ironmonger in Loughborough even had his own shop in Leicester.

130 Ibid, 416.  
132 Goodacre, 'Lutterworth', 299.  
133 Fleming, 'A Local Market System', 128; Goodacre, 'Lutterworth', 297.
It is certain that the trade activities of Leicester were stimulated by the constant flow of traders to and from the neighbouring small towns. These people might become middle men for the rural producers who were unable to distribute their products directly in Leicester, partly due to the costs of transport and partly due to the special privileges required for participating in urban economic activities. A recent study of a small town in Leicestershire amply confirms its importance. As an intermediary between Leicester and the rural producers, Lutterworth was dependent on its markets which were "the most convenient outlet for farmers in the area with only few animals to sell at a time." Farm produce in the locality often seems to have been dealt with by local middlemen who had a strong connection with the tradesmen in Leicester. Thus William Dowell of Lutterworth was working as an agent for a Leicester vintner who wanted to buy wool in the area.\(^\text{134}\)

Consequently, one should not overemphasise the decline of the woollen industry in Leicester and the relative decline of urban wealth in our period. In practice, these two aspects were accompanied neither by economic despair nor by urban decay. Rather, Leicester maintained its economic stability by adapting itself to the changing economic fortunes of the hinterland. As inland trade for agricultural market products expanded, and with better trade routes and population increase, the town became an important distribution and processing centre for these products in the region. The lack of a major industry tends to be seen as an indicator of urban decline, but avoiding too much dependence on a particular industry and integrating closely with the regional economy may have contributed to the long-term stability and sound development of the urban economy in Elizabethan and Stuart Leicester.

\(^{134}\)Goodacre, 'Lutterworth', 215, 223.
1. Wealth Distribution and Residential Segregation

An articulated array of social backgrounds is usually regarded as one of the defining characteristics of urban settlements in contrast to rural ones, where social stratification is less distinct. In various local studies, historians have demonstrated the unequal distribution of wealth in urban community, and indicated that the degree of inequality differed one town from another. The following discussion attempts to analyse the degree of social inequality in Leicester, and how it reflected the residential pattern of the inhabitants. In addition to clarifying the social hierarchy of the community, it will reveal some degree of spatial segregation. We shall suggest, however, that the physical distance between people with different social and occupational backgrounds should not be exaggerated in a middle-sized county town.

There are few reliable sources to enable us analyse the distribution of wealth in the Elizabethan period, but Charman's survey of the 1524-5 lay subsidies indicates that the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small group of people characterised the social structure of early Tudor Leicester like many other major provincial towns in this period. About 14 per cent of the total number of tax payers of 402 owned 73 per cent of taxable wealth. A similar level of distribution is obtainable for other middle rank towns such as Nottingham (14 per cent-68 per cent), Reading (14


2For the problems of the records, see above.

3For details of the analysis, see Charman, 'Wealth and Trade', 79-83, 94-5.
per cent-76 per cent), Colchester (13 per cent-69 per cent) and Oxford (15 per cent-65 per cent). The concentration of wealth in Leicester was marginally higher than Cambridge, Lincoln, and Hull but this was due to the presence of a great wool stapler, William Wigston, the younger, who owned 22.4 per cent of taxable wealth on his own.\(^4\) A similar pattern can be seen in the 1544 lay subsidy, although the sample is smaller than for 1524-5, only including some 300 taxpayers. Hoskins has argued that the wealth owned by the top layer of the social hierarchy became much more evenly spread as a result of the death of Wigston. For instance, one third of the total taxable wealth was owned by 8 taxpayers in 1524, whereas the figure was 24 twenty years later.\(^5\)

As to the wealth of the lower social orders, 63 per cent of the taxpayers in Leicester were charged on either goods under £2 or wages constituting wealth only 15 per cent of total taxable wealth. The equivalent figures in Nottingham are 70 per cent-17 per cent, although a direct comparison with other towns is not feasible, because there were distinct differences in the way they assessed the lower social orders.\(^6\) It is important to note, however, that the extent of social inequality in Leicester was not as great as that in larger provincial capitals, because the richest men's wealth in Leicester was relatively modest after the death of Wigston.\(^7\) At the same time, the poorest band of the social order probably expanded rather than shrank during a period of high demographic pressure, rapid inflation, and intermittent crises years, although the lack of evidence prevents us from assessing wealth distribution in the latter half of the sixteenth century.\(^8\)

\(^4\)Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 77; Charman, 'Wealth and Trade', 80, 85.
\(^5\)Hoskins, *Provincial*, 91.
\(^6\)The Leicester figure does not include wage earners' wealth of total 12s. 5d. Unlike those in Leicester and Nottingham, the majority of them in other towns were taxed not on goods but on wages. Charman, *Wealth and Trade*, 95; Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 63, 68-72, 75.
\(^7\)Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640* 2nd. ed. (1978), 250; *YCH*, vol. 4, 98.
The next reliable data for wealth distribution comes from the 1664 Hearth Tax Return. One needs to assess the actual impact of the Civil War on the distribution of wealth before coming to a firm conclusion, but it appears that the extent of economic inequality remained consistent, and possibly expanded over 150 years. Among 934 people who were listed in the records, 337 (36 per cent) were exempt, while nearly 200 people (21 per cent) were charged on only one hearth. Thus the poorest section of inhabitants who had only one hearth or less comprised nearly 60 per cent, whereas only 34 people were assessed on more than seven hearths. The difference among the middling sort was less clear, but the data shows that the more hearths, the fewer people. There were only 12 people who owned more than 10 hearths, of whom 3 had more than 15. Consequently, it seems certain that the overall shape of the social hierarchy in Tudor and Stuart Leicester saw no dramatic change despite the great upheavals of the Civil War.

Recent studies on large provincial towns have demonstrated that the precincts of pre-Restoration provincial towns showed different social and economic profiles. Similarly, the analysis of population density in Leicester gives us an

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9 Leicester and Its Inhabitants in 1664. Original Hearth Tax Returns for the Several wards and Suburbs of Leicester for Michaelmas 1664: Taken from Exchequer lay Subsidy Rolls, ed., H. Hartopp (Leicester, 1912). The sample of over 900 people is considerably larger than the early Tudor lay subsidies, partly because the lists also include those who were exempt from the payment. Comparing these different records is a rather hazardous task, not only because the different levies adopted different criteria, but also because it is questionable to what extent the number of hearths represented the amount of actual wealth of the owners. According to Goose's study based on inventories, there was a rough correlation between the two, but at the same time, it reveals that the range of social backgrounds represented by one extra hearth could be too wide to constitute any meaningful social band. Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 337.

10 The wealth at the top of the social order may have expanded because the estimate includes the Newarke, where the richest inhabitants dwelt.

11 For example, Thomas Browne, a gentleman, had 20 hearths on his own account. Hartopp, Leicester and Its Inhabitants, 15.

12 Hibberd, 'Urban Inequalities'; Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 86.
impression that each town area had different spatial characteristics. There were four large suburban wards, although one of them at the south-east corner along Gallowtree Gate was smaller than the other three (see Map 5).\footnote{There was no ward on the west side of the town beyond the river Soar, which was mostly agricultural fields and meadows. The identification of ward divisions is based on Derek Charman, 'Leicester in 1525', \textit{TLAS} 27 (1951).} Leicester included relatively large suburban areas outside the ancient town walls. Charman estimates that 45 per cent of tax payers in 1524-5 lived in the suburbs, the eastern suburb being the most populous area outside the wall with 25 per cent of tax payers resident. The other two areas, the north and the south, were inhabited by 10.4 per cent and 9.5 per cent of the total taxpayers respectively.\footnote{Charman, 'Wealth and Trade', 74.} Again, this should not be considered a conclusive picture, for the records do not include those inhabitants who were exempt from the tax. Although direct comparison may not be valid, a similar pattern can be deduced from the Hearth Tax Return as well.\footnote{The proportion of names listed for the eastern suburbs in the Return remained at just under 25 per cent, and the northern suburbs now included more than 15 per cent of the householders. Hartopp, \textit{Leicester and Its Inhabitants}.}

Using the lay subsidies collected at the beginning of the Elizabethan reign, Hoskins highlighted the contrast between the prosperous town centre and the impoverished suburban areas in Leicester.\footnote{Hoskins, \textit{Provincial}, 92.} This contrast largely follows the picture from other provincial towns such as York, but such a rounded account tends to exaggerate the degree of pre-modern residential segregation.\footnote{Hibberd, 'Urban Inequalities'.} For example, the degree of segregation was limited in middle rank provincial towns like Cambridge, Reading, and Colchester.\footnote{Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 86-7.} In reality, some of the poor lived within the walls: servants and inmates often lived in established townsmen's houses, while many poor inhabitants...
Sources: RBL, vol. 2; vol. 3; Charman, 'Leicester in 1525'; 22-5; Chinnery, 'Muster Roll', 27.
Note: The above is based on the map in VCH, vol. 4, 340. It needs to be noted that it is difficult to accurately draw ancient boundaries, particularly in the suburbs, since the information of the borough records is fragmentary and changeable. By the early seventeenth century, for example, the north suburban ward came under the supervision of two ward aldermen. See Charman, 'Leicester in 1525'; 22-5; Chinnery, 'Muster Roll', 27-8.
resided in back streets. Hoskins has also indicated some areas of Leicester where mixed classes of inhabitants were found. As a result, the lives of the prosperous in Leicester were by no means isolated from the rest of the population, and frequent contact with paupers was spatially unavoidable.

The contrast between the central wards and the suburban wards can be shown in an analysis of wealth distribution based on the Hearth Tax Returns (see Table 2.1). The high proportion of residents who were charged on a single hearth or who were completely exempt was clearest among the suburban wards (2, 9, and 11), whereas those who were charged for more than two hearths were concentrated in the inner town wards (3, 7, and 10). One exception to this general pattern was the south eastern suburb (8). Relative prosperity here can be explained by its location on a main London route which was increasingly in use. Having said this, the extent of social segregation can be exaggerated. Although the central wards (7 and 10) included a far lower proportion of people who only had one hearth, they were nonetheless the largest single group among the taxpayers. These wards also included a good number of inhabitants who were too poor to pay the levy.

The residential pattern can also be demonstrated according to occupational backgrounds (see Table 2.2). Occupational concentration in some wards is clear. Within the walls, for example, many tailors lived in the central wards 7 and 10. Numerous butchers and a handful of glovers were living in ward 5, while a significant number of mercers can be found in ward 1. In the suburbs, by contrast, tanners concentrated in the northern ward near the Soar, while many shoemakers lived in the wards 2 and 8. In addition, one can find a number of labourers in all suburban wards. A

19 Clark, English Alehouse. 69-70. Also see pp. 73-9.
20 Hoskins, Provincial. 92.
21 For a fuller discussion, see ch. 7 below.
22 See pp. 36-7 above.
23 Allan Chinnery, 'The Muster Roll for Leicester of 1608', TLAHS 60 (1986), 31. I am grateful to Dr. D. L. Wykes for letting me use his transcript of the Muster Rolls for this analysis.
Table 2.1
The Spatial Distribution of Wealth in Leicester in 1664 and 1670 Based on the Hearth Tax Returns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>No. (%)</th>
<th>1664</th>
<th>1670</th>
<th>% of Exempt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>3 to 5</td>
<td>6 to 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22 (26)</td>
<td>27 (32)</td>
<td>30 (35)</td>
<td>5 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>135 (79)</td>
<td>14 (8)</td>
<td>17 (10)</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>39 (48)</td>
<td>18 (22)</td>
<td>18 (22)</td>
<td>7 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4&amp;6</td>
<td>55 (51)</td>
<td>27 (25)</td>
<td>20 (19)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>53 (61)</td>
<td>15 (17)</td>
<td>18 (21)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>35 (36)</td>
<td>21 (22)</td>
<td>30 (31)</td>
<td>11 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9 (24)</td>
<td>11 (29)</td>
<td>12 (32)</td>
<td>4 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>65 (71)</td>
<td>16 (17)</td>
<td>10 (11)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>36 (51)</td>
<td>10 (14)</td>
<td>15 (21)</td>
<td>9 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>44 (98)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Hartopp, Leicester and its Inhabitants; VCH, vol. 4, 159.

Note: The figures in brackets are percentages. For the ward numbers and ward boundaries, see Map 5.

There are some problems in using these ward boundaries drawn from the pre-civil war period for the analysis of the Hearth Tax, because of some change in ward boundaries over time. The most serious difference however seems to have been the boundary between wards 4 and 6.
Table 2.2
The Spatial Concentration of Traders, 1608

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward 1</th>
<th>Ward 2</th>
<th>Ward 3</th>
<th>Ward 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mercer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>carpenter</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baker</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>bellfounder</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cutler</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>chandler</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| No. Different | 22 | 24 | 17 | 25 |

Occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward 5</th>
<th>Ward 6</th>
<th>Ward 7</th>
<th>Ward 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>butcher</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glove</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>husbandman</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>draper</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joiner</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| No. Different | 16 | 18 | 21 | 20 |

Occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward 9</th>
<th>Ward 10</th>
<th>Ward 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tanner</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>tailor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>roughlayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| No. Different | 12 | 16 | 14 |

Sources: Leics. RO BRI/12/14a; RF; Chinnery, 'Muster Roll', 28, 31-2.

Notes: For the ward numbers and ward boundaries, see Map 5. The occupations listed in the table represented those who constituted more than 3 in each ward. The numbers of different occupations indicate the extent of occupational diversity in each ward. Some ward boundaries are conjectural since the ward boundaries may have changed over the period.
large number of labourers and shoemakers in the suburbs is indicative of the relative poverty in the areas. Having said this, the patterns of occupational distribution should not be over emphasised. Table 2.2 shows that both the inner town wards and the suburban wards included a variety of occupations. Even in the eastern suburb, where twenty labourers were found in our records, there were three mercers, two tailors, and one woollen draper, while in the southern suburb, there were 4 tailors and 2 gentlemen.

Thus the spatial analysis of wealth and occupational distribution supports the result from studies of other middle rank towns. The residential pattern of Leicester does not clearly reflect the extent of social inequality among the inhabitants. Part of the urban precincts showed some degree of occupational concentration, but the level of exclusiveness was weak. The relative geographical proximity of poor and prosperous inhabitants and of different occupational groups should not be under-estimated either, because people's activities often took place in different places from their residence. Such proximity had significant implications for the patterns of social relationships in a middle-rank town. This certainly does not contradict the observation that some of the urban parishes were more likely to be impoverished during crisis years than others. Nonetheless, too rigid a distinction between the rich and poor parishes makes little analytical sense, considering the frequency of social interaction between townsman from different areas.

Social inequality and residential patterns were not the only factors which influenced urban social organisation. If residential patterns were spontaneously formed as a result of the social and economic climate, they were also influenced by the power of urban government. Before exploring the structure of urban social relationships, therefore, we need to examine some aspects of the administrative development of late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester.

25See, for examples, Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 158.
26See ch. 4 and ch. 7.
2. Administrative Developments

The gradual development of the municipal government of Leicester over several centuries indicates the aspirations of civic leaders who wanted to create a strong local identity.\(^{27}\) By the thirteenth century, the influence of the governing body had been solidified: the functions of the Merchant Guilds and the borough merged around the Mayor, who now represented both the guild morningspeech and the borough portmannoot.\(^{28}\) By the fifteenth century, the town seal had come into use, and the concept of community was rooted in civic leaders' minds, as they attempted to gain freedom from tolls of fair and market imposed by the Duchy of Lancaster. It was not until the latter half of the fifteenth century, however, that Leicester saw a significant change in its administrative status. Thus, in 1464, the Mayor and four burgesses were held responsible for the maintenance of order as JPs., while in 1484, the borough jurisdiction was divided into 12 wards presided over by the aldermen and their assistants. Five years later, Leicester was formally incorporated by an Act of Parliament confirming the composition of the ruling body. This consisted of the Mayor, twenty-four aldermen, and forty-eight "conburgesses". The administrative autonomy of the borough was further strengthened by the letters patent of Henry VII in 1505, which allowed the town to be taxed separately from the county. By the time of Elizabeth's reign, therefore, the administrative structure of Leicester had already been highly developed with a good number of town officials.\(^{29}\)

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\(^{27}\) However, R. B. Dobson has argued that the achievement of corporate or county status was also regarded as a "political cure for economic ills", as in the case of Lincoln in 1409. R. B. Dobson, 'Urban Decline in Late Medieval England', TRHS, 5th ser., 27 (1977), 272.

\(^{28}\) VCH, vol. 4, 24. Such a process has been well explained by Gross. See Gross, Guild Merchant, 73-5.

\(^{29}\) VCH, vol. 4, 20-4, 27.
It is important to note, however, that the momentum of administrative change during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century was strongly influenced by the external social, political and economic climate in which local government was formed. The political and administrative interaction between the borough and external authorities accentuated this unique phase of urban administrative progress along with a greater urgency to tackle looming social and economic problems in the period. In Leicester, for example, two royal charters at the end of the sixteenth century enabled the town to reorganise and confirm its new institutional structure to deal with these matters. The Act of Parliament in 1489 enabled the town to be incorporated, but this status lacked a strict definition by the royal charter, which made the urban constitution vulnerable. The 1589 charter gave the borough control over the extensive town lands in fee farm, but the Charter of 1589 created an ill-defined framework for the ruling body. Thus, ten years later, the obligations of various high offices in the ruling body were specified in the charter of 1599, while the borough jurisdiction was expanded to "the Bishop's Fec, and within the parishes of St. Mary, St. Leonard and the Newarke . . . without prejudice to the rights of our heirs and successors and saving the rights granted heretofore to others."

Growing social anxiety clearly echoed the policies of the national government. In one respect, English municipal government was regarded as an agent of the crown to maintain peace in localities. This constitutional characteristic effectively limited the discretion of civic leaders, while at the same time it legitimised the use of their political muscle. It can be argued that our period was a time when this reciprocal relationship was most effectively exploited by the borough authorities, since the Royal power was to a large extent exercised by local magistrates, notably the JP's. According to William Lambarde, Eirenarcha, there were 173 statutes which required the work of

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30BBL. vol. 3, 248.
31For a summary and the backgrounds to these charters, see BBL, vol. 3, xvii-xxi, 359-64.
32Clark and Slack, English Town, 126, 128.
JP between 1485 and 1600, and about 43 per cent of them were introduced in the first thirty-five years of Elizabeth's reign.  

The relationship between national authority and town government was primarily carried out by two national agencies: Parliament and the Privy Council. The parliamentary burgesses of the borough were summoned mainly to ratify new taxation and legislation which the Crown tried to implement, but civic leaders occasionally gave directions to their MPs.  

By contrast, parliamentary elections tended to be overwhelmed by the influence of the urban elite, who were patronised by the county magnates and external influences, such as the chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.  

The mid-sixteenth century marked the beginning of the trend to nominate county gentry instead of townsers, providing them with honorary freedom just before the election.  

During the 1584 election, for example, the Mayor wrote to Mr. Parkyns, the recorder of Leicester, expressing his desire to choose Mr. Tamworth, who was married to the kinswoman of the Mayor, and Parkyns himself for the parliament beginning on 23 November.  

On 12 November, however, the Corporation elected Mr. Henry Skipwith,
one of the Queen's gentleman, and Mr. Thomas Johnson of Heather, after
recommendations by various private letters including those from Sir George Hastings,
a brother of the Earl of Huntingdon and Sir Ralph Sadler, the Chancellor of the Duchy
of Lancaster. Clearly, the townsfolk, who were to obtain a crucial charter five years
later, saw a greater advantage in their relationships with the Earl and the Duchy than in
what the smaller fish would be able to achieve in the House of Commons.

As well as Parliament, there were much more substantive and frequent links
between the national government and the urban authorities. The Privy Council referred
to the various Crown courts in the case of local disputes which were beyond the
jurisdiction of the borough magistrates. The large number of civil cases at Leicester in
the equity courts of Westminster in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century
symbolised the proximity of the locality to the national authorities. Moreover, local
life was frequently affected by the public policies of national government ranging from
the distribution and consumption of food and drink to religious matters. International
wars also influenced local life. Reflecting the war against Spain, for instance, the
transport of grain and corn abroad was banned by a series of proclamations from 1588-
92, while the borough had to satisfy large scale military demand from the Crown. The
Privy Council under the Stuarts, though weaker than its predecessor, continued to
interfere in local business, such as the licensing of the wine trade and the collection of
the ship money, while the Corporation remained vigilant as the Crown's agent in the
locality.

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38 PRO SP12/118/15; PRO SP16/236/66; PRO SP16/233/31; PRO SP16/77/31; 77/49; 77/52.
39 PRO SP16/233/31; PRO SP16/77/31; PRO SP16/77/49; 77/52.
40 PRO SP12/118/15; PRO SP16/236/66; PRO SP16/233/31; PRO SP16/77/31; 77/49; 77/52.
42 PRO SP16/233/31; RBL, vol. 3, 89, 245, 254, 274. About 600 men were taken to the general muster on 17
May, 1580 and four years later, the Privy Council wrote to the Mayor, asking him to return a list of
persons who were able to provide horses in the town. Ibid. 183, 206. Also see PRO SP16/77/31; 77/49;
77/52.
43 PRO SP16/233/31; PRO SP16/233/31; PRO SP16/77/31; PRO SP16/77/49; 77/52.
Along with these public laws, the influence of the Privy Council was also felt in specifically local issues. For example, when William Norrice, the Mayor, was imprisoned by the JPs of the town for falsifying coinage in 1579, the Council ordered the county magistrates to further investigate the matter, and also to appoint an acting mayor. Some actions certainly led to controversy. Thus the disafforestation of the Leicester Forest by James I was so unpopular that "certaine women and others dwelling thereabouts have in great numbers in an unlawful and riotous manner assembled themselves together, cast downe the ditches and destroyed the quicksett and hedges of the inclosures there...".

It has been argued that social policy was the area most vigorously initiated by the Crown throughout our period in contrast with Parliament and local magistrates, whose actions were sluggish, if not weak. However, the Privy Council and the borough authorities generally shared similar views. The draft petition for the charter in 1587 stressed the need for power to control growing social and financial problems in the borough. Some local public actions concerning the victualling houses, beggars and vagrants directly mirrored those of the national government. The Book of Orders in January 1631 seems to have been rigorously implemented by the civic leaders. Thus at the beginning of May 1631, they reported having meetings in the Guild Hall monthly or more often, summoning the constables, churchwardens and overseers of the poor, who had then in turn reported the execution of laws such as the implementation of the poor law, the provision of corn under the market price for the poor, and the creation of employment for young children.

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44 APC, 1592-3, 131-2; 1595-6, 89.
45 APC, 1578-80, 290.
46 APC, 1627-8, 476.
49 Ibid., 95, 201, 246.
50 PRO SP16/191/69.
It is clear by now, therefore, that the administrative development of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Leicester was closely linked to the growing concern of the national government to supervise localities. The impact of national government articulated and increased the effect of local social and economic policies, though some civic regulations and tax assessments may have been resisted, if not ignored, by the leading townsmen. At the same time, frequent orders from the government created an air of authority which would automatically attach to the formal structure of the town. The interaction between the national and local authorities was therefore an increasingly important source for the legitimacy of civic power.

Along with the influence of national government, the expansion of the borough franchise was persistently hindered by the vested interests of the Duchy of Lancaster, which owned the honour of Leicester. 51 Robert Somerville has shown that the juridical function of the Duchy Chamber had been well developed by the time of Henry VIII, as with other equity courts in Westminster. 52 The Duchy court also took responsibility for the administration of colleges and chantries in the Duchy by the Act of 1547. 53 It was here that the sources of frequent disputes concerning the King's mills and bakehouses and the market affecting the Duchy's revenue were dealt with. 54 The town frequently gave gifts to Duchy officers for their assistance in law-suits, but this was probably a useful way to win the patronage of the Duchy Chamber. 55 In addition, there were three further areas where the influence of the Duchy persisted: borough institutions, borough offices, and town lands. Although their jurisdiction was

51 However, the interpretation of the jurisdiction of the Duchy is confused due to the amalgamation of the Crown and the Duchy in the wake of the succession of Henry IV in 1399. Robert Somerville, History of the Duchy of Lancaster (1953), 142 et seq. Somerville wrote, 'Henry's position as king had no effect on the Duchy's administration, its mode of descent or its franchises. Nor was there any general principle of law by which Henry's own estate as king was altered by his possession of the Duchy.' Ibid. 145.
52 Ibid. 175-6.
53 Ibid. 296.
54 Ibid. 273-4, 345. Also see pp. 176-9, 182-3.
55 HRII/10/8/5; Somerville, Duchy of Lancaster, 328.
increasingly restricted by the borough quarter sessions, several franchisal courts continued to be held in the town. The court leet with view of frankpledge met twice a year at the castle, while the court of the portmanmoot was held every Monday by the mayor, recorder, bailiffs, or steward.\(^5^6\) The right of nominating the steward and the bailiffs continued to be a source of dispute between the borough and the Duchy until it was agreed in 1609 to nominate them alternately. In addition, the auditor and receiver of the Duchy came to Leicester every October for the collection of the Duchy's revenue, attended by the borough chamberlains. From 1587 onwards, the town embarked on a long negotiation with the Crown to secure the fee farm rent of the town lands owned in the right of the Duchy of Lancaster, including the Shambles, the Drapery, the Sheep pens, and the lands belonging to the Hospitals, the guilds and the colleges dissolved in 1547.\(^5^7\)

Although the civic leaders were increasingly anxious about the expansion of the political influences of the county in urban affairs, a close link with the county authorities was unavoidable, since it was a structural one. Requirements such as taxation and military service in the borough were normally initiated by the county authorities, namely, the lord lieutenant, the sheriff, and the county JPs.\(^5^8\) In addition, some influential county families, such as the Heyrick of Houghton, penetrated the town as many of its members became freemen and the mayor.\(^5^9\) The relationship with the Grays, in contrast, deteriorated at the end of the sixteenth century when the town defied


\(^{57}\) VCH, vol. 4, 61-4.


\(^{59}\) In 1552, for example, Nicholas Heyrick became the first mayor of Leicester from his family. After that, four members of the family occupied the mayorality, some of them more than twice. Robert Heyrick, in particular, was a prominent ironmonger who became mayor three times, and had close ties with his younger brother, Sir William Heyrick, a London goldsmith. J. Nichols, The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, vol. 2, ii, 615. Hartopp, Roll of the Mayors, 76; J. G. Nichols, 'The Heyrick Letters, Illustrating the State of Leicester in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James the First', Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society 2 (1870).
Sir John Grey's allegation that the town was trespassing on his jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{60} It was the Hastings families, however, who were the most influential in urban politics, having succeeding to the earldom of Huntingdon in 1529.\textsuperscript{61} In particular, Henry, the third Earl, left a strong imprint on the social, religious and financial matters of the town and the establishment of institutions such as the hospitals and the free school.\textsuperscript{62}

The intense involvement of the Earls in urban affairs and the attitudes of the civic elite towards them need to be interpreted in conjunction with the administrative development of the borough. Recent studies on the influence of the Earls of Huntingdon over Leicester have shown a clear contrast between the Puritan Earl, Henry, an ideal patron, and the fourth and fifth Earls, in particular, who failed to win the substantive support of civic leaders. In the disputed parliamentary election in 1601, for example, the strong opposition of George Hastings, the fourth Earl, against Mr. Belgrave was ignored by some of the townsmen who wanted him to become a parliamentary burgess.\textsuperscript{63} Thus the Earl wrote to the Mayor, "I should have been sorry to have received such an unkindness willingly from you, which would have given me just cause to have withdrawn my love and good will from you all . . ." The Corporation did not lose his patronage completely, for Belgrave was blamed.\textsuperscript{64} We should be cautious, however, about taking a monolithic view of the relationship between a prominent patron and the

\textsuperscript{60}\textit{RBL}, vol. 3, 339, 385. As a result, Edward Newcome, the Mayor, petitioned the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal to cancel the appointment of Sir John Grey as a commissioner of the subsidy in the town, because they feared that he would use his position to exact revenge. \textit{Ibid.}, 412-4.

\textsuperscript{61}Their influence was significant because of their close relationship with the Duchy. \textit{HMC, Salisbury MSS}, pt 7, 518; \textit{VCH}, vol. 4, 8, 60, 66.  I am grateful to Dr. J. D. Knowles for providing information about the Hastings Papers.


\textsuperscript{63}\textit{RBL}, vol. 3, 435-6; \textit{THL}, 316-8.

\textsuperscript{64}\textit{Ibid.}, 318; Patterson, 'Leicester and Lord Huntingdon', 49. The mayor explained to the Earl that Belgrave's election was due to his treachery on the election day, but the Earl overtly expressed his disappointment and anger with Belgrave. Subsequently, the Earl accused Belgrave at the Court of Star Chamber, which was followed by the discussion in the House of Commons. Belgrave was freed and served until 1604. \textit{THL}, 319-21.
borough authorities. The outcome of political events was less influenced by affection or friendship than by the potential advantages to be gained by from such events. The pursuit of patronage was instrumental; the town's political attitude towards the Earl was conditioned by the probability of economic and administrative improvement. It is interesting to note that the 1589 charter of Leicester coincided with the death of the third Earl, whose contribution to the political success of the town was essential. If the borough had obtained the royal charter much earlier, the relationship with the third Earl might have been different. In contrast, the fifth Earl was politically much weaker than the third Earl, who held a strong Court appointment and Puritan views. Arguably, there was no time when the Corporation did not think they needed the Earl's support, nor when they stopped thinking about expanding their political and administrative power at the expense of the Earl's patronage. As has been argued, regular gift-giving and the amicable tone of letters indicate their sound relationship, but it may be misleading to assume that this was much to do with personal affection. In reality, the attitudes of the townsfolk towards their patrons were probably invariably ambivalent behind the formal facade, and arguably, the main purpose of the highly ceremonial activities was not to show their friendship but to conceal the growing ambition of civic leaders.

67For example, the Corporation rejected a recommendation by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster concerning the appointment of new Parliamentary burgesses in 1593 after obtaining the charter. RBL, vol. 3, 290.
69For the examples in other towns, see Felicity Heal, Hospitality in Early Modern England (Oxford, 1990), 306-17.
3. The Suburban Development

The late sixteenth century, as we have seen, witnessed a major consolidation of civic government, leading to the granting of the royal charters. The administrative and political history of Leicester during the early seventeenth century was strongly characterised by the efforts of civic leaders to confirm and implement the privileges codified in these charters. The most controversial issue was the governance of the urban fringe. As the social and economic relationships between town and countryside intensified, it increasingly became not only an important intermediate space, but also the place which was most densely populated and most affected by social problems. Thus both the urban and county authorities had a special interest in the suburbs of Leicester, and as a result, they became administratively contentious areas throughout the first half of the seventeenth century.

Leicester was surrounded by vast farmlands and pastures, but as the growing number of population stimulated the demand for subsistence economy, securing farm lands around the town became a vital task for leading townsmen. However, the aspirations of townsmen were often confronted by more traditional county interests. As early as 1590, the Mayor and burgesses of Leicester complained in the Duchy Chamber about their tenants in the Braunstone pasture. They said that Henry Carer and Thomas Sommerfield had refused to pay their rent having been persuaded not to do so by Andrew Tusser, gentleman, and John Carter. The dispute over the Braunstone pasture resumed twenty years later when John Sherman reclaimed his title to the holding. These cases clearly exemplify the growing tension between the agrarian interest of the borough and the vested interest of outsiders. The efforts of the

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70 RBL, vol. 4, xxxvi.
71 PRO DL1/150/L2.
72 PRO DL1/245.
borough authorities, however, met with some success. Around 1604, a petition was presented by the borough to James I for securing the fee farm of the Newarke Grange.\textsuperscript{74} Although this was obstructed by Dr. Chippingdale, one of the lease holders of the Grange, the property was finally obtained in 1623.\textsuperscript{75}

The problem of governance, however, was most acute in the more populous urban fringe. As has been noted earlier, Leicester was divided into two separate districts, i.e., areas inside and outside the town walls, and the word "suburbs" was frequently used by contemporaries to designate the latter.\textsuperscript{76} From the administrative point of view, moreover, it is important to note that there were two distinctive areas which won the status of liberty during the Middle Ages. The Bishop's Fee, located in the north-eastern suburbs, was formerly owned by the Bishop of Lincoln, passed to the Crown in 1547, and had come to the ownership of the Earl of Devonshire around 1628.\textsuperscript{77} The Newarke, occupying the Castle precincts in the south-west of the walled area, had been the liberty since 1360, and had been the site of the religious community of the Newarke College and the Hospital until 1548.\textsuperscript{78} In addition to these two liberties, the royal charters also added the parish of St. Leonard's to the borough jurisdictions, but the area seems to have been only thinly populated, and was probably less important than the two liberties in terms of the administrative interest of the Corporation. Despite their differences in scale, history, and geographical traits, therefore, it was these two liberties which became the source of controversy, fuelling administrative tensions between the Corporation and the county authorities.

\textsuperscript{74}RBL, vol. 4, 19.
\textsuperscript{75}HMC, Salisbury MSS, pt 16 (1933), 359; YCH, vol. 4, 64.
\textsuperscript{76}RBL, vol. 4, 238. Different residential patterns within the suburbs in terms of population density and social backgrounds have been noted. See above. For the contemporary definition of suburb, see Keene, 'Suburban Growth', 98.
\textsuperscript{77}YCH, vol. 4, 353.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid. 346.
The political struggle between the Corporation and the county over the jurisdiction of Bishop’s Fee is well documented. For example, having found some ambiguity in the Elizabethan charter in relation to its jurisdiction, the Corporation tried to secure another charter between 1603-5. This provoked the young Earl, who was the Steward of the Honour of Leicester and a county JP., and who believed his privilege would be infringed. At the beginning of the 1630s, the Countess of Devon, who owned part of the liberty at the time, petitioned the Privy Council to stop the Corporation from exercising their power there, which resulted in the exclusion of civic power from the liberty.

Politics was only one element which intensified the rivalry between the civic leaders and the lords. Dispute over peripheral jurisdictions with external influences might have been an inevitable consequence of a growing middle-sized town expanding its economic activities outwards. By 1600, the Bishop’s Fee had become a part of the homogenous economic area of the town, with the steady growth of population and commerce. According to the account made by the urban authorities, the Bishop’s Fee was an important residential area for people who were concerned with economic activities in the borough. The official list of inhabitants reveals that, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were thirty-two households in the area, which included eighteen different occupations. Among twenty-two freemen, there were 3 mercers, 3 saddlers, 2 chapmen, 2 tailors and 2 shoemakers. The rest of them were un-enfranchised dwellers, including many husbandmen and labourers, but there was also one physician. The civic leaders claimed that it was more natural to be governed

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79 Patterson, 'Leicester and Lord Huntingdon', 49-58.
80 Ibid. 50-1.
81 RBL, vol. 4, 264.
82 For the case of Medieval towns, however, see Keene, 'Suburban Growth', 111.
83 RBL, vol. 4, 17.
by the borough authorities considering the type of inhabitants in the Fee and the financial obligations attached to citizenship.  

The lack of control over the liberty was considered to be a threat to public order in the community. Outside the borough jurisdiction, the Bishop's Fee attracted an increasing number of people who wanted to evade the control of the borough authorities as much as they could. There were many unlawful victualling houses which would have been suppressed, had they been located inside the walls. Just before they received the new charter in 1589, the civic leaders petitioned that in the Bishop's Fee, there were "manye typlinge houses and places of evil resorte, to the greate prejudice and annoyance of the dwellers . . . ." Decades later, the area was still described in the following terms:

... places adiacent to the towne are manie obscure and some unlicensed Alehouses where great and mannie disorders are dayly committed and especeallie in the nighte and on the Saboath dayes many notorious Thieves Cutpurses and Roagues there harbored and soe escape often the due course of Justice, the Constables themselves being manie of them alehouse Keepers and principal entertainers of such malefactors.

As the civic leaders imposed tougher regulations on urban trades, the liberty also attracted many people who tried to avoid such strict economic restriction. The latter often had strong support from county magnates and county JPs, who would benefit judicially and financially by securing their rights in the area. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, for example, Sir Henry Harrington, a kinsman of Huntingdon, championed the Bishop's Fee by maintaining that inhabitants there, including skilled

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84BR1/246/22.
86BBL, vol. 4, 259.
87PRO DL1/95/814.
workmen and gentlemen, would suffer from strict trade regulation and heavier taxes.\textsuperscript{88} Thomas Chettell, the Mayor, wrote in 1605 that "a full packe of good neighbours is verie officious in workinge our freemen in the Bishoppes fee to revolt from us . . ."\textsuperscript{89} Under these circumstances, therefore, the area became increasingly intolerable to the urban authorities. They therefore argued that securing the power to govern the Bishop's Fee "would effect a much more quiet and orderly government of the whole town . . . and be noe waye prejuditiall, but rather an ease to the Justice of Peace for the County."\textsuperscript{90}

It is important to stress here that the liberty constituted a unique social and economic space for both town and country traders, and our understanding of the area should not be overshadowed by the negative image which the official records convey. Such an area, which embraced two concepts of order, must have benefited opportunistic traders who could exploit this confusion for their own interests. For example, although they tried to evade the tougher borough regulations, the inhabitants of the Bishop's Fee seem to have preferred the lower tax imposed by the borough.\textsuperscript{91} The volatile administrative boundaries in the area were well observed by a subsidy man, Pawset of Leicester, 67 year-old saddler, who became a deponent in the Duchy Chamber in 1627. He noted that . . .

\textsuperscript{88}RBL, vol. 4, 14.  
\textsuperscript{89}ibid. 34.  
\textsuperscript{90}ibid. 44.  
\textsuperscript{91}ibid. xxxi.
suspicion persons and to apprehend such leade and suspicions persons
and to commit them to prison.  

As a tax official, and a resident in the town since his apprenticeship, his understanding
of the administrative character of the area may have been more reliable than that of the
ordinary population in the town. It is likely that many of these interpreted it in the way
which would benefit them socially and economically.  

With the legacy of the former religious institution, the social and economic
position of the Newarke in relation to the borough differed from that of the Bishop's
Fee. After being suppressed by the Chantries Act, most houses in the area were
decaying. In 1567/8, one Leicester man deposed to the Commissioners of the Duchy
that all the houses and buildings belonging to the College were in physical decay, and
that timber, doors, slates, iron and lead had been stolen from there. After 1600, when
leases in the precinct became available from the Crown, they mainly attracted the
prosperous, including county magnates like the Beaumonts. Only 12 people appear in
the Hearth Tax Return in 1664, and all of them were charged from three to ten hearths.

The distinct social character of the Newarke was not unrelated to the fact
that it was extra-parochial. As a result, it was particularly attractive for the well-to-do,
who wanted to evade poor rates and ecclesiastical controls. These privileges led
residents in this liberty to form strong resistance to the borough authorities, who were
eager to impose the assessments on them as for the rest of the borough jurisdiction.

Thus, soon after the second Elizabethan charter was granted, Henry Beaumont protested
to the town on behalf of Mrs Freeman who was assessed for the subsidy as a resident in

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92 PRO DL4/77/17.
93 PRO DL1/55/814; BRIV/9/91.
94 PRO DL4/170.
95 VCH, vol. 4, 346.
96 Ibid. 347.
97 BRIV/9/98.
the Newarke. Subsequently, the Mayor wrote that "there is no doubt of the Newark . . . to be vnyted to this incorporation . . . for that you should not take offence that it were done without your privitie."  

Unlike those in the Bishop's Fee, inhabitants in the Newarke did not pose an immediate threat to the urban economy, but the liberty was not immune to social problems in this period. There is evidence which shows a number of alehouses were built there against the borough's will. In 1580, John Page complained at the Duchy court that there were also some alehouses causing disorder among the poor many times within the gates of the Newarke Hospital close. Several years later, Andrew Yates, an almsman in the Hospital, deposed that there were two alehouses, both of which were run by widows, and there were opportunities for the poor of the Hospital to haunt the alehouses more than otherwise they should. In the 1630s, it was reported that "the Newarke . . . frequently harbored Papists non Conformists and Sectaries, they account themselves in noe parishe nor would be under anie governement. There is neither Constable nor Churchwarden to make presentments of anie offence." As in the case of the Bishop's Fee, the borough failed to obtain exclusive controls over the liberty, and its social problems probably remained unsolved throughout the period.

The periphery of the Corporation was one of the most dynamic dimensions of administrative development in the early seventeenth century, but it also showed a unique socio-economic structure which was alien to the borough jurisdiction proper. The areas were regarded as the source of social and economic ills by the civic elite, but the urban fringe was far too important to be marginalised by such an elitist view. The suburbs provided alternative social and economic space for townspeople who otherwise

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99 Ibid, 443.
100 PRO DL/64/479.
102 RBL, vol. 4, 259.
103 VCH, vol. 4, 129, 347. Except for the incorporation of the Newarke Hospital.
would have suffocated under growing formal administrative pressure within the inner-city area, while the districts had strategic importance for outsiders who wished to exploit urban values without putting down their roots in the town. No less important were the different socio-economic characteristics between suburban districts. Although our attention tends to be concentrated on controversial jurisdictional disputes in the liberties, the significant industrial area in the northern suburb and the growing commercial route to London in the south-east of the town should not be ignored.
1. Introduction

A number of local studies have revealed differences and similarities in the social, economic and demographic patterns of provincial towns, but the discussion tends to give the impression that the town was a society of adult male householders.\(^1\) In fact, this was far from reality. It was also a society of the young and old, of females, and even of outsiders, the groups who were less likely to be identified in freemen's registers and tax records. The previous discussion has established the overall characteristics of Leicester, but the picture is inevitably partial for this reason.

In this chapter, therefore, we will examine the characteristics of household structure in the parish of St. Mary's in detail. We shall analyse the extent to which the structure varied in different urban areas, and consider the social implications of the differences. The rationale for the choice of the parish is both practical and methodological. Firstly, it is the only parish with population listings detailed enough to enable us to carry out a micro-study of the community. Secondly, the parish was one of the largest in the town which covered two distinct social, economic and administrative zones — the inner town area and the suburbs.

2. Household Size and Mobility

Alongside the natural life-cycle of birth and death, human mobility was one of the most important factors which influenced the characteristics of household structure in pre-
industrial English society. The establishment of new households and subsequent changes in their structure often coincided with the arrival and departure of migrants. The household was often the first urban social domain which strangers joined. In this sense, household may be seen as an effective link between urban society and the outside world, and its structure significantly reflected the patterns of urban social relationships.

The following analysis is based mainly on the Easter Books of St. Mary's covering over 11 years in the late sixteenth century. The Easter Books are "the records of the offerings which were collected from the adult members of the church every Easter for an emolument of the priest." They normally list the names of householders, but household members are often shown either by abbreviation, such as "wife", "son", "prentice" and "maid", indicating their relationship to household heads or by simply listing their names. The records are therefore often unclear about how long individual members remained in the same household, and what their relationships were with their household heads. Furthermore, the divisions between one household and another are not always clear in the Books, and this became an even more serious problems in cases

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4 The significance and the problems of using the Easter Books have been discussed in detail by Wright. See S. J. Wright, 'Easter Books and Parish Rate Books: a New Source for the Urban Historian', UHY 30 (1985). For the example of Nottingham, see Adrian Henstock, 'Early Stuart Nottingham: New Evidence from the St. Peter's Easter Book of 1624', Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire 97 (1993).
where a widow or a single person represents each household. Finally, the records are far from comprehensive samples of the population, since they do not include those who were not of communicable age. Notwithstanding these limitations, the Easter Book is one of the most detailed population listings available, enabling us to see the demographic patterns of household members and to demonstrate the dynamics of urban community.

Table 3.1 shows the fluctuation of mean household size (MHS) in the parish of St. Mary in Leicester between 1579 and 1590. The MHS for all years, 2.76, was obviously too small for the average size of households in an Elizabethan urban community. One clear factor causing such a small figure is the fact that the Easter Books do not include children under communicable age. If we assume the proportion of these children to be one third of the total urban population, 4.12 is given, and the figure is comparable to those which have been taken from other provincial towns such as Cambridge, Canterbury, and Stafford. It is very difficult, however, to conclude anything from the gap between the figures of St. Mary's and other communities, because the records we use for identifying household structure are often very different in nature. Figures may easily have been influenced by the purpose of record-keeping, the view of the record keepers and the social and economic conditions of the area where the survey was made.

The validity of the sources can be partly strengthened by the figures taken from the Easter Books in other urban communities whose social and economic backgrounds were similar to St. Mary's. Having an estimated population of 6,500-7,000 in 1600, Salisbury was a much larger town than Leicester, but the parish of St. Thomas' in the town included a mixture of rich and poor streets as did the parish of St. Mary's. From 1582-1607, the MHS of adult population in St. Thomas' was 2.86, slightly larger

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5 Wright, 'Easter Books', 36.
7 Wright, 'Family Life and Society', 16-9.
Table 3.1
Mean Household Size in the Parish of St. Mary, Leicester 1579-1590

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MHS of adult population</th>
<th>MHS including children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1579</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1580</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1582</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1584</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1585</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.48</td>
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<td>1589</td>
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<tr>
<td>1590</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salisbury (1582-1607) | 2.86
Cambridge (1619-32) | 4.13
Canterbury suburb (1563) | 3.40
Stafford (1622) | 4.05

Sources: Leics. RO BRIII/8/24. See nn. 6 and 8.
Note: The average size of the data from the Easter Books is 153 households.

Table 3.2
Persistence of Households in St. Mary's, Leicester and Southwark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Years of Persistence</th>
<th>St. Mary's, 1580 (% in the same st.)</th>
<th>The Boroughside, 1608 (% in the same dwelling)</th>
<th>The Boroughside, 1609 (% in the same dwelling)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>--</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Leics. RO BRIII/8/24; Boulton, Neighbourhood, 210-11.
than that in St. Mary's.\textsuperscript{8} It seems likely, therefore, that, except for those who were systematically excluded according to the custom of the Easter rate, the effect of the underestimation of the MHS in St. Mary's was minimal. What is more intriguing is the fact that the MHS of both parishes fluctuated over time. The lowest figure in St. Mary's was 2.50 in 1590, and the highest figure was 3.16 in 1584, while the figure moved between 2.71 and 3.03 in St. Thomas'. As in Salisbury, there seems to be no excessive fluctuation of the sample size over the years in the Easter Books of St. Mary's.\textsuperscript{9} The data do not seem to have been affected by external conditions, either. During the period concerned, the plague hit Leicester in 1578 and again in 1583, but there seems to be no sign of crisis mortality in St. Mary's parish.\textsuperscript{10} It is conceivable, however, that the fluctuation in our figures was partly caused by the erratic record-keeping of the clerk, who may have failed to put down some of the names of householders in the parish. Some names which disappear in one year occasionally reappear in other years. Nonetheless, the number of such incidences is too small to invalidate the findings of the analysis.

While the effect of erratic record-keeping was minimal, one can assume that the fluctuation of the MHS of adult members in St. Mary's was to a large extent caused by rapid population turnover of householders and the movement of household members. Table 3.2 shows the persistence rate of the householders who were listed in 1580 over 10 years. After 2 years, about 30 per cent of the householders vanished from the list, and by 1590, more than half of the householders had disappeared. The Easter Books do not reveal whether the disappearance was caused by out-migration or death. Only three names which disappeared in 1580 are found in different areas of the parish two years after. In addition, the resulting figure does not represent the actual persistence rate of the people who started to settle in the parish in 1580, because many of them had started to

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{ibid.} ibid. 64.
\bibitem{BRIII/8} BRIII/8 24.
\end{thebibliography}

\textsuperscript{8} However, the lack of parish registers for St. Mary's in this period prevents us from producing a reliable death rate. For a fuller discussion of the impact of plague, see pp. 107-11.
live there much earlier. Among the names listed in 1580, about 35 per cent were newcomers, and they constituted about 43 per cent of the households who disappeared in 2 years. These two figures clearly show the extent of dynamism in the parish community. The figure in St. Mary's is not directly comparable to that of the Boroughside, Southwark in 1608, because, while the latter figure represents the persistence in the same dwelling, the St. Mary's figure reflects the persistence in the same street (see Table 3.2). Based on much looser criteria, however, the rate for the first 2 years in St. Mary's was very close to that of the London suburb.\footnote{11}

The fluctuation in MHS also suggests that the composition of family members frequently changed even though householders remained stable. In his study of the parish community of Clayworth and Cogenhoe, Peter Laslett has effectively described how the household structure was affected by the life-cycle of the household members, and by servants and lodgers who temporarily stayed in the household.\footnote{12} The change of the MHS of adult members in St. Mary's over time is broken down into a kin group and others including servants and lodgers in Figure 3.1. We cannot produce any persistence rate for family members, for they are not constantly named in the lists. Nevertheless, the fluctuation of both figures is indicative of the rapid turnover of household members.

The brief analysis of the Easter Books of St. Mary's suggests, therefore, that the parish community in Elizabethan Leicester was characterised by the rapid population turnover, and that the fluctuation of the MHS well reflects such dynamics in the community. The aggregate figure of MHS tends to conceal the diverse phases of householders' life-cycles, but the members of household society normally changed over time.\footnote{13}

\footnotesize{\begin{tabular}{l}
11Bootton, \textit{Neighbourhood}, 210-1. \\
13For example, see Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship'. For the critical view of Laslett's approach, see L. K. Berkner, 'The Use and Misuse of Census Data for the Historical Analysis of Family Structure', \textit{Journal of Interdisciplinary History} 4 (1975).}

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Figure 3.1
Changing Size of Kin and Non-kin Groups Composing Mean Household Size of Adult Population

Source: BRIII/8/24
If one can assume that the patterns in the turnover of householders and household members were largely determined by social and economic factors in the community, one might be able to see distinct characteristics in household structure according to different social and economic conditions. As has already been noted, Leicester showed distinct social and economic characteristics in different parts of the residential areas. In order to see the patterns of demographic movement in the parish, therefore, one needs to adopt the a spatial analysis of household structure.

Street names written in the Easter Books enable us to identify the actual streets on which chargeable householders resided. St. Mary's parish was one of the largest parishes which extended well beyond the borough boundaries, but the area which was subject to the parish Easter rate only includes 3 streets, namely, High Street, Soar Lane, and Without South Gate (see Map 1). In fact, it is not entirely clear how many of the listed householders lived in small alley ways leading off these main streets. The first two streets were located within the medieval walls. There are very few references to Soar Lane in the borough records, but it seems to have been one of the industrial areas of the town, housing glovers, smiths, and slators. High Street was a major street of the borough, extending from the High Cross at the centre of the borough. On the other hand, Without South Gate was located literally outside the South Gate, which was part of the poorest suburban areas of the town. Having been located on the major route to the South, the area had already become populous by the late Middle Ages, and had been firmly included in the borough jurisdiction, unlike the Newarke and the Bishop’s Fee. However, the area seems to have been impoverished, as the major north-south road

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14 See ch. 2 above.
15 The occupational characteristics of residents on the street is based on nominal linkages between the Easter Books and RE.
16 See pp. 58-64.
shifted to the south-eastern suburb during our period, and to have had a different social profile from the inner-town areas.\textsuperscript{17}

Along with the spatial analysis of wealth based on the lay subsidies and the Hearth Tax Returns, the relative prosperity of High Street and Soar Lane may reflect the proportion of the householders who paid the poor rate in 1592.\textsuperscript{18} The names of 62 people were listed in the overseers' accounts of St. Mary's, of which 6 names were illegible. More than half of the householders living on High Street identified in the Easter Book of 1590 contributed to the poor rate in 1592. In Soar Lane and Without South Gate, the proportion was 26 per cent and 25 per cent respectively.\textsuperscript{19} It is more difficult to positively identify the poor who received relief in the overseers account due to the rapid turnover, but at least 6 householders in Without South Gate obtained some kind of relief in 1592, whereas only two names can be found for the householders in the rest of the streets.

Figure 3.2a shows how the persistence rate differed according to the social and economic backgrounds of the areas in the parish. The most dramatic turnover occurred in the first two years in all streets, but the proportion of those householders who disappeared in the first two years differed from one street to another. About 88 per cent of householders in High Street in 1580 still remained in the same street in 1582, while 73 per cent and 64 per cent were still living in Soar Lane and Without South Gate respectively.

The drop in the first two years suggests that there were a large group of householders who resided for only one or two years, particularly in Soar Lane and Without South Gate, whereas newcomers in High Street stayed there comparatively longer. Figure 3.2b shows the rate of turnover of the newcomers in 1580. The weaker

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{VCH}, vol. 4, 371. See pp. 36-7 above. According to a list of householders in the muster roll of 1608, over 40 per cent of the occupations living in this area were labourers.
\textsuperscript{18}See pp. 44-7.
\textsuperscript{19}\textit{D59/6}. 

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Figure 3.2a
Persistence Rate of Householders in 3 Streets in St. Mary's, 1579-80

Figure 3.2b
Persistence Rate of Newcomers in 3 Streets in St. Mary's, 1580
persistence among newcomers in Soar Lane and Without South Gate is clear. It is also interesting to see, however, that the rate of turnover in these streets slackened after two years, while the turnover in High Street gradually progressed. Within 10 years, about 60-70 per cent of newcomers disappeared in the parish.

Consequently, the population turnover of 3 different streets in the parish seems to have been characterised by different proportions among 3 groups of householders. Firstly, there was a group of householders whose persistence rate in the area was relatively high. These people were probably those who had established position in the neighbourhood, often being involved in the major economic and administrative activities in the town and the parish. S. Wright has found many urban officials among those whose persistence rate was high in St. Thomas.20 Secondly, there was a much more mobile group who can be further divided into two sections. Some newcomers seem to have stayed in the community for several years, while others were much more mobile. It is conceivable that, according to the analysis of turnover in St. Mary's parish, the neighbourhoods in High Street and Soar Lane were composed of relatively large numbers of sedentary population compared to the suburb. Immigrants were found in every street, but those in the suburb seem to have been much larger in number and much more mobile than those in the other two streets.

The break-down of MHS into different streets also indicates that there were some patterns in household structure dependent on the social and economic backgrounds of each area. Figure 3.3 shows that there seems to have been some variation in the type of household members who affected the size of each household. The MHS of High Street and Soar Lane was clearly much larger than that of Without South Gate, but the relatively small size of kin group among households in High Street suggests that the large MHS of High Street was to a greater extent maintained by those who were outside kin relationship.

20 Wright, 'Family Life and Society', 83.
Figure 3.3a
Mean Household Size of Adult Population without Servants and Lodgers in 3 Streets in St. Mary’s

Figure 3.3b
Mean Household Size of Adult Population with Servants and Lodgers in 3 Streets in St. Mary’s
The spatial analysis of population turnover and household structure reveals that each area of the parish was inhabited by various kinds of household whose life-cycle showed different patterns over time. The complex development of households over time has already been demonstrated by studies on household structure in the rural community, such as that of Ryton.\(^1\) The life-cycle development of urban households was probably much more diversified, with more stratified social and occupational structures and rapid population turnover. Our records do not allow us to reconstruct biographical developments in all individual households, but one may well be able to see some patterns during the life-cycle which a large proportion of households experienced in each area by dividing household members into sub-groups, namely, servants, kin, and inmates.

3. The Patterns of Household Members

Servants and apprentices were undoubtedly one of the most significant social groups featuring in the patterns of urban social relationships.\(^2\) Scale and mobility were their hallmarks. It is largely agreed that most children left home by the age of 15, although some of them who could find jobs at home remained there.\(^3\) Despite their long-term


\(^{22}\)There has already been much attention being paid to this particular social group. For example, see P. J. Stiff, 'Apprenticeship Migration to Three Pre-Industrial English Towns' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Liverpool, 1981); I. K. Ben-Amos, 'Apprenticeship, the Family and Urban Society in Early Modern England' (Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, 1985); Paul Griffiths, 'Some Aspects of the Social History of Youth in Early Modern England, With Particular Reference to the Period 1560-1640' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1992). Since the start of this research, the last two theses have been published as Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London, 1994) and Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996) respectively.

\(^{23}\)However, see Richard Wall, 'The Age at Leaving Home', *Journal of Family History*, 3, no. 2 (1978).
contract, many apprentices had to terminate their service or change their master in the middle of their service years due to disputes with their master or his death.\textsuperscript{24} As a result, servants and apprentices were often obliged to move from one place to the next, and many of them constituted a socially unstable group of the population, significantly larger in the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{25}

The institution of domestic service had important social and economic significance. One obvious indication, for example, prerequisite for employing domestic servants, was wealth, for taking in apprentices certainly required the urban franchise, and servants could not be kept without sacrificing extra money and space in the household. From the servants' point of view, domestic service provided not only employment for youngsters, but also the first step towards settling in the community in the long term. Before newcomers expanded their social relationship in the community, it was crucial for them to be accepted by urban householders whose domestic space was much more likely to be controlled according to individual masters' own interest than collective actions by the urban authorities.\textsuperscript{26} It is important to recall that late sixteenth century Leicester became an increasingly vigilant community, and not all these migrants were officially accepted to live there.\textsuperscript{27}

The identification of servants and apprentices in the Easter Books of St. Mary's is somewhat problematic, since no further division was made among servant groups in the records other than into male and female servants, and apprentices.\textsuperscript{28} On occasion, journeymen were also listed, but their entries were suspiciously small in number. The figures for servants and apprentices are minimal, for some of them may not

\textsuperscript{24}See p. 95.
\textsuperscript{25}RII/18/14/45; Ben-Amos, 'Apprenticeship, the Family', 24; Stiff, 'Apprenticeship Migration', ch. 5.
\textsuperscript{26}See pp. 119-25.
\textsuperscript{27}See pp. 273-82 below.
\textsuperscript{28}There was some variation in the rate charged on each servant. Female servants were entered as "his/her maid", while male servants were normally described as "his man".
have been of communicable age. In addition, it is possible that an apprentice whose father was a freeman might have been regarded as a son. Moreover, the difference made between servant and apprentice was also questionable, although they were institutionally different kinds of service. For example, the contracts of male servants were much shorter than those of apprentices, and some studies have shown that recruitment was more likely to be made outside kinship relationships. In reality, servants who were employed by freemen in the long term may have been trained in the same way as apprentices, yet the records do not show such subtle differences of classification.

The following figures demonstrate the relationship between the social and economic characteristics of each area and the structure of servant-keeping households (Figure 3.4). The proportion of households having apprentices was no more than 10 per cent, and if we add servant-keeping households, the proportion was only 23.8 per cent. These figures are much smaller than those in other provincial towns such as Cambridge, Coventry, and Salisbury in the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. However, the spatial difference in St. Mary's parish was consistent with the general pattern in other communities in this period; the proportion of households with servants and apprentices was much higher in High Street and Soar Lane than in the suburban street (see Figures 3.4a and 3.4b). Predictably, the difference between the areas within the walls and the suburb becomes much more distinct in the case of apprentice-keeping households. High Street was obviously a much more wealthy street than Soar Lane, but the difference in the proportion of servant-keeping households between the two seems not to have been great. This indicates that a feature of servant-keeping households was not only their wealth, but also the type of trade in which householders were engaged, as recent studies on Salisbury

29We are not able to distinguish them according to the chargeable amount, since they were each charged 2d.
30For example, see Wright, 'Family Life and Society', 195.
31RBL, vol. 4, 186.
Figure 3.4a
Proportion of Servant-keeping Households in 3 Streets in St. Mary's

Figure 3.4b
Proportion of Households Keeping Apprentices in 3 Streets in St. Mary's

Figure 3.4c
Proportion of Households Keeping Both Servants and Apprentices in 3 Streets in St. Mary's
and Cambridge have suggested. Nonetheless, the proportion of households having both servants and apprentices at the same time was conspicuously high in High Street (see Figure 3.4c).

If there were a some link between socio-economic conditions and the proportion of servant-keeping households, one might expect some differences in the sex ratio of domestic servants between the three streets. Wright's study on Salisbury has shown, for example, a clear spatial and occupational connection in terms of the sex ratio of servant groups. It is arguable that some trades preferred female servants, such as victuallers and merchants, as opposed to other trades such as leather, metal and textiles. As Table 3.3 shows, female servants outnumbered their male counterparts in all the streets. The difference in sex ratio in each area is not clear, but if one adds the number of apprentices, males come to dominate domestic service in High Street and Soar Lane. In the three streets in question, of households with servant, the proportion keeping female servants was almost the same in each, and there was no clear difference in the size of the female servant group among these streets, either. Smaller numbers of households with male servants were, however, found in High Street and the suburb. The High Street figure rises if one includes households keeping apprentices, and the size of the male servant group in households on High Street also outnumbers that of Soar Lane and the suburb. This contrast indicates that servant-keeping households in the suburb preferred female servants to male.

Some tentative conclusions can be drawn. It is conceivable that many households on High Street and Soar Lane were strongly characterised by existing servants and apprentices during the life-time of a householder. More than a quarter of households on the two streets within the walls had domestic servants, while only about 13 per cent of households on Without South Gate kept them between 1579-1580. It is

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33Ibid, 104-5; Wright, 'Family Life and Society', 172. For a study of servant-keeping households and their social and occupational profiles in a late medieval town, see Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 208-11.
34See Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 208-11; Wright, 'Family Life and Society', 170-2.
Table 3.3
Average Sex Ratio of Domestic Servants in St. Mary's, Leicester, 1579-90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High St.</th>
<th>Soar Lane</th>
<th>Without South Gate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio (% male)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio including apprentices (% male)</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households keeping maid servants amongst servant-keeping households</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Size of Maid Servant Group</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households with male servants amongst servant-keeping households</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households keeping either male servants or apprentices amongst servant-keeping households</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Size of Male Servant Group</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

difficult to specify the reasons for the preference for female servants in the suburb without having detailed information about servant-keeping households there, but one cannot resist citing the socio-economic condition of the urban fringe as a possible explanation for the contrast with the household structure in the inner-town areas. For example, poorer households may not have been able to employ more expensive male servants, while many may have been engaged in occupations much more suitable for female servants.

Whereas the size of the servant group is large enough to see some spatial patterns, the sample for resident kin may be too small to enable us to make any spatial comparison, and some of the resulting figures must therefore be treated with great caution. In the Easter Books, consanguineal and affinal kin can be identified by the title of a person indicating the relationship with the household head or its members, such as "his mother", "his sister", and "his son and wife". In St. Mary's, almost 10 per cent of the householders included some kind of kin members. This figure is significantly higher than the proportion taken from early seventeenth century Cambridge. One needs to recall that this is a minimum figure, not only because there may have been some residential kin who were not at communicable age, but also because some of them may have been regarded as servants or lodgers. The spatial difference is much more surprising. The lowest proportion comes from the most prosperous street in the parish, while the suburban street had a slightly larger proportion of householders with kin. In Soar Lane, about 14 per cent of households had some kind of resident-kin (see Table 3.4).

One can also see patterns different from those in other towns, depending on the type of kin. The proportion of upwardly extended households was extremely low. In

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35 In our data from the Easter Books, those who had the same surnames as householders are not regarded as kin, unless the records specify their relationship with the household members.
37 Ibid, 110, note 133.
Table 3.4
The Proportion of Households with Co-resident Kin in St. Mary’s, Leicester, 1579-90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High St.</th>
<th>Soar Lane</th>
<th>Without South Gate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Households with co-resident kin</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households with mother</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households with brother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households with sister</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households with son and his wife</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households with daughter and her husband</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Households with aunt</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BRIII/8/24.

Table 3.5
Proportion of Households Keeping Lodgers in St. Mary’s, Leicester, 1579-90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Households keeping lodgers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High St.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soar Lane</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without South Gate</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BRIII/8/24.
St. Thomas', only 0.1 per cent of households included "father", while no such category was found in the Easter Books of St. Mary's.\textsuperscript{38} This result is largely consistent with Laslett's analysis, which has revealed that very few single men and widowers were found in the households of their children in pre-industrial communities.\textsuperscript{39} In St. Mary's, it is conceivable that some of the aged males lived either as lodgers in other households or as inmates of institutions such as the Newarke Hospital. By contrast, "mother" was the largest group of kin in households in the Easter Book, but again, there were variations according to residential area. Though all figures were larger than the case of St. Thomas' (1.25 per cent), the proportion in Soar Lane is much larger than the other two figures whose difference is marginal. The relatively low figure in the suburb might indicate that householders had insufficient resources for supporting the aged women in their houses.\textsuperscript{40} Furthermore, other types of kin cannot be found in many households in either parish. The figure for sisters in St. Mary's is relatively high, but they constituted only 3.6 per cent of the entire communicable population. The proportion of multiple households is extremely low; only 12 cases can be identified among the Easter Book population.

Finally, we need to look at the proportion of households keeping lodgers. The analysis of lodgers in the households, however, can produce only a tentative picture, because there are too many factors which cannot be clarified. Firstly, the list of names in the Easter Books does not specify the type of person in households, other than servants and apprentices. Occasionally, some people's names were followed by an expression such as "living in the house", which probably meant these people were living in the house as lodgers. But in most cases, only names are written under their family members' names. Secondly, unlike in the population census in early seventeenth century

\textsuperscript{38}Wright, Family Life and Society', 206.
\textsuperscript{39}Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love, 200.
\textsuperscript{40}However, the proportion of widows and single women as household heads in each street in St. Mary's does not show any clear difference.
Cambridge, the definition of this group of people is far from clear. We do not know how long these people stayed in one household, although they seem to have been at least recognised as parish members. Nevertheless, it is possible that the clerk included not only long-term lodgers in households, but also short-term visitors.

In the Easter Books of St. Mary's, all persons without their title and house were regarded as living in other people's houses as lodgers or inmates (see Table 3.5). Differences in the proportion of households with lodgers in our three streets is not as clear as we expected, although one in five households on High Street had lodgers. This is comparable to the figure in Cambridge, where 17.87 per cent of households had either lodgers or sojourners in the early seventeenth century. Again, female lodgers outnumbered males, and the proportion of single women was particularly large.

Although the definition of lodgers in the records is shaky, the figure seems to be an underestimation rather than the reverse, considering the mobile nature of lodgers and inmates. It is impossible to examine how long these people stayed in the same household, but if the turnover was much higher in the suburb, the extent of undercounting there may be more severe than that in the inner-town areas. On the surface, however, it would seem that lodgers were preferred to kin as members of households in St. Mary's, this tendency being most clear in High Street, the most prosperous street in the parish. Despite official antagonism against strangers, lodgers were comparatively important members of Leicester households.

4. Conclusion

As with other middle-sized towns such as Cambridge and Salisbury, the characteristics of household structure in Elizabethan Leicester reflected the social and occupational profiles

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41 Goose, 'Household Size and Structure', 112.
42 Ibid. 113.
of residential space. The analysis of the turnover of households suggests that the urban neighbourhood consisted of householders differing substantially in residential status, and, in particular, that suburban households disappeared more rapidly from the area than those in the streets inside the town walls. In addition, the degree of population turnover can also be explained by the different proportion of household members. A relatively greater number of households on the prosperous streets within the town walls had a large household size, including apprentices, servants and lodgers during the life-cycle of householders. Furthermore, the sex ratio of domestic servants indicates a link between socio-economic backgrounds and the pattern of household structure in each area. On balance, male servants were much preferred in households within the walls where the major industrial and retail sectors prevailed, while the predominance of female servants was much more clearly marked in the suburb.

The larger proportion of co-resident kin in St. Mary's over other provincial towns is slightly more surprising. However, the difference seems too small to conclude that households in Leicester were more likely to take in resident-kin than those in other communities. The result from St. Mary's also contradicts the spatial contrast of the proportion of households with resident kin in other provincial towns. It has been argued that such households were more likely to be found in the prosperous area of the town. For example, very few households with kin were found in the Canterbury suburb in 1563.43 In St. Mary's, while the difference between the most prosperous street and the poorest street in the parish was marginal, a greater number of householders living in the industrial street had mothers and sisters. It is not certain from our analysis why Soar Lane included so many households with co-resident kin, but it does suggest that, despite the findings in other towns, wealth might not necessarily be the determinant factor in explaining the high proportion of residential kin in the urban community.

The minimum figures for the proportion of households with lodgers shows that almost 1 in 5 households included some kind of lodger in St. Mary's. The figure is

slightly smaller than that for Warwick in the 1580s, but roughly the same as that for Cambridge.  One might expect the larger proportion in the suburb where many poor immigrants seem to have arrived, but the figures from three different areas in St. Mary's show little spatial difference.

Consequently, the characteristics of household structure in St. Mary's parish indicate that the intake of people into the private sphere of the community was spatially selective. Social and occupational factors were especially well reflected in the process of receiving apprentices and servants in the community, while the spatial distinction in the case of co-resident kin and lodgers was less marked. Clearly, the case of St. Mary's cannot be applied directly to the situation in other suburbs whose social and economic backgrounds were different from the southern suburb. Nevertheless, it certainly makes us consider the spatial implication of urban residents for the urban population as a whole. The distinction between the inner-town areas and the suburbs was one of the key urban values for the society of male householders, but the analysis of household structure suggests that such a spatial distinction was no less important for the rest of the population such as the young, the old, females and newcomers as well.  

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44Goose, 'Household Size and Structure', 112-3;  
45See, for example, BR2/18/14/155.
Chapter 4
The Social World of the Lower Orders

1. Introduction

The study of poverty is undoubtedly important in analysing society in that it enables us to have a better understanding of the social, economic and cultural world of the urban population as a whole. It allows us to explore a section of the society which is least represented in historical records. The study of poverty also highlights the attitudes of people caught in the poverty trap or escaping from destitution, and their symbiosis in society. Even in the late twentieth century, poverty poses fundamental and pressing questions about human nature in almost all modern societies across cultural boundaries.

In practice, clear outputs from historical studies are not readily obtainable. Lack of sources normally hampers analytical definition of poverty in a historical context. Poverty can be defined only in a relative sense, according to contemporary parameters. As Slack has admitted, however, there are only a handful of reliable censuses of the poor in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century English communities.\textsuperscript{1} The problem with these official lists is obvious; they only give us a vague idea of the definition determined by magistrates, churchwardens and overseers and the like. Historians are unable to demonstrate definitively the popular perception of poverty in early modern England.

By contrast, the causes of poverty and the reactions of contemporaries to the problem are better documented. Broad demographic and economic patterns in the period have been described as being unfavourable for the lower social orders.\textsuperscript{2} Epidemic diseases and famine also threatened the precarious household economy. Reactions to social and economic reality have been examined in the context of law and order,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Slack, \textit{Poverty and Policy}, 73.
\item Clark and Slack, \textit{English Towns}, 90, 114. Also see pp. 18-21, 42-4 above.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
migration and crime and punishment. Even here, however, the characteristics of sources normally dictate our interpretation. Churchwardens' and overseers' accounts highlight a handful of the deserving poor who were selected by parish officials. The scale of un- and under-employment can only be estimated in the context of the formal economic structure. Pre-trial depositions and examinations do not clarify the economic status of deponents and examinees. Consequently, our definition of poverty inevitably shifts, depending on the sources we use.

Such ambiguity should not invalidate our analysis, however. B. S. Rowntree drew the poverty line according to the level of subsistence, but such a definition skews our image of the poor. For our part, we are interested in not only those people who did not have enough food to live on, but also those who battled on under difficult circumstances. Floating around the poverty line was probably the experience that the majority of people had in late Tudor and early Stuart towns, with economic uncertainty and lack of financial planning. In the pre-mature cash economy, economic indices such as wage and price rates do not necessarily explain the fortunes of individuals who could rely on a variety of informal means to sustain their living. Rather than continue an inconclusive ideological struggle to find a clear definition of poverty, therefore, it seems more rewarding to examine, by using the available records, the diverse phases of poverty that contemporaries were most likely to experience.

The definition of the poor in our study, therefore, is not as clear as that of other social groups such as the gentry or the merchants. Perhaps it would be easier to define those who were not considered to be the poor. Clearly, we can include among the non-poor people such as active merchants, gentlemen, landowners, aldermen, burgesses, other senior officials and senior members of the gilds. On the other hand, male professionals such as attorneys, clerks and surgeons, and freemen may be included among the indigent depending on their economic fortunes. Since our definition is merely

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3See pp. 119-41.
4Slack, Poverty and Policy, 3.
an analytical tool, such a broad notion will allow us to proceed to our main discussion of the poor.

In the following discussion, we will explore the structure of poverty in a medium-sized urban community in the late Tudor and early Stuart period. Local experiences of poverty cannot be explained simply in terms of the rulers versus the ruled. The poor constituted a disparate body, including men and women, young and old and even some of the middling sort. Poverty was a social phenomenon, not solely an ideological construct.

2. Structural Poverty

In 1601, Richard Hallydaye became a freeman as a tailor. He was the first son of Thomas Hallydaye, who had become a freeman as early as 1584. Richard had a daughter, Anna, who was born on 2 February, 1608/9, but started to receive parish relief of 12d. quarterly in 1609. Richard died from the plague on 24 June 1610, and his wife continued to receive the pension, which had increased to 2s. by this time. The precarious social and economic condition of English people in the Tudor and early Stuart period has been amply demonstrated in a number of local studies. In addition, the extent of social inequality in urban communities has been unequivocally portrayed by snap-shots of social structure and the distribution of wealth. In fact, the economic standing of townspeople changed over time, as in the case of Richard Hallydaye. Static tables created

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5BR11/12/14a; 8D59/6; The Register of St. Mary, Leicester in the County of Leicester. Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1600-1738. Transcribed by Henry Hartopp (1909); RT: RBL, vol. 4, 29.

6The problem of the poor was strongly felt even in much more smaller towns than Leicester in the late sixteenth century, such as New Romney, Faversham, and Sandwich. T. J. Tronrud, 'The Response to Poverty in Three English Towns, 1560-1640: A comparative Approach', Histoire Sociale/ Social History 18, no.35 (1985), 11.

7See pp. 42-4.
from population census and tax assessments tend to conceal these individuals who merited the label pauper only during certain phases of their life-cycle.

The importance of such life-cycle poverty is clear. Although the aggregate impact of short-term crises on the scale of poverty is obvious, the experiences of individuals also strongly reflected their fortunes at the time of such crises. Events such as birth, marriage and migration, were clearly influenced by people’s economic and social conditions. Certainly, it is impossible to demonstrate all the different phases of poverty which individual townsmen went through. What is feasible, however, is to identify the vulnerable phases of the life-cycle most commonly shared by urban inhabitants. We can also estimate how significant these conditions were in the context of the social problems of the entire community.8

In the following discussion, the overseers’ accounts of the parish of St. Mary’s will be closely examined in order to reveal aspects of structural poverty among the sedentary population in Leicester.9 Clearly, our sample of the poor was chosen by the parish officials according to their own criteria for the deserving poor, depending on the

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9In Leicester, two people were chosen to make collection for the poor in the parish in 1562 prior to the Act of 1572 which made the collection compulsory. *RBL*, vol. 3, 101. In 1584, it was ordered in the vestry meeting of the parish of St. Mary that ‘the thirteen of the vestreemen or seven of them’ would decide the amount of levy for the poor relief. Nicholas, 308. There are only two series of surviving overseers’ accounts in Leicester parishes during the period concerned. The first and the second series cover the accounts of St. Mary’s in 1590-1611 and 1620-26 respectively. 8D59/6-7.
limited amount of poor rate they were able to collect. We know that those who received regular pensions in the principal towns in the early seventeenth century constituted only 4-5 per cent of the entire urban population. The rest of the poor may have been supported by ad hoc relief on special occasions, but their identification is much more difficult than that of the regular recipients. Consequently, the records cover only a sample of the poor whose status satisfied the view of the parish officials.

As with those in other provincial towns, pensioners in St. Mary's included a good number of widows. They constituted nearly 40 per cent of the 87 pensioners who received quarterly relief, and were listed in the overseers' accounts between 1592 and 1611, while 16 per cent of them were single females. A similar proportion was obtainable for Worcester in 1563, where about 60 per cent of those who were labelled as impotent poor were women living alone. Considering the proportion of female household heads in the community, therefore, it is clear that widows were much more likely to become pensioners than males. Unlike Slack's findings in provincial capitals, however, the male sex ratio among the pensioners in St. Mary's was also comparatively high. In Norwich, for example, 25 per cent and 28 per cent of the entire payment for the poor...

10Seeks the deserving poor, overseers of the poor in the parish seem to have particular categories of the poor in mind when they chose pensioners. They were the old, especially women, and orphan children. Slack, Poverty and Policy, 173-82.
11Ibid., 177-9.
12The study of the 1635 census of Salisbury shows that only 33 households became pensioners among the 207 poor households listed. Paul Slack, Poverty and Politics in Salisbury 1597-1666', in Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700, eds., Peter Clark and Paul Slack (1972), 176. According to the overseers' accounts and corporate records of Romney and Feversham, 4-5 per cent of the townspeople were regular pensioners, and a further 15 per cent were in need of regular aid. Tronrud, 'Response', 13.
13Slack has suggested that the assessment of overseers favoured neither the rate-payers nor the recipients, because 'Faced with pressure from above as well as from below, overseers were bound to play safe.' See Slack, Poverty and Policy, 190-2.
14Dyer, Worcester, 166.
15BRIII/3/16; BRIII/8/24.
relief went to males in 1577-9 and 1659-60 respectively. Males made up about 43 per cent of the pensioners in St. Mary's.  

Widows were prominent among those who received money from private charities in the late sixteenth century as well. During the time when Dorothy Darrell’s charity was distributed to 20 poor people between 1574 and 1585, the average number of widows, single females and males was 8, 7, and 4.4 respectively. In the same year as the Darrell charity commenced, Mr. Harrye Smyth, who was at Christ Church, Oxford, gave the sum of 10 pounds for the poor in Leicester. The lists for 1574 and 1575 show the majority of the poor who received this charity were female, and it is very likely they included a large number of widows.  

The large proportion of widows in Leicester labelled as the deserving poor by urban officials evidently reflected the general demographic trend of the period. It has been argued that the proportion of the widowed was generally high in the adult population, and that there was a larger number of widows than widowers in urban centres. While the legal system seems to have discouraged many widows from remarrying, economic and demographic factors normally worked much more favourably for widowers than widows in reconstituting households.

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16 Slack, Poverty and Policy, 180.  
17 RBL, vol. 3, 151.  
18 BRI/18/1/3  
19 This was partly because women were generally younger than their husbands in first marriage. Ralph A. Houlbrook, The English Family 1450-1700 (1984), 208-9. Also important is the point made by Laslett that widowers were more likely to live with their children or in institutions. Peter Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love in Early Generations: Essay in Historical Sociology (Cambridge, 1977), 200.  
20 For example, the number of unmarried women at the age of 61 or over was 12 times larger than that of their male counterparts, according to the Norwich census of the poor in 1570. Houlbrook, English Family, 210-1, 213. Recent findings in late Elizabethan London show, however, that the probability of remarriage was different depending on social class, age, and the existence of children. For example, relatively young widows of tradesmen and craftsmen in Elizabethan London remarried much more quickly than their rural counterparts. V. Brodsky, 'Widows in Late Elizabethan London: Remarriage, Economic Opportunity and Family Orientations', in The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social
The bleak prospects for re-marriage were also accompanied by the narrow range of economic activities in which widows were able to be involved. M. Pelling has shown that elderly women in the Norwich census continued their domestic work, notably spinning, but it is questionable whether they could earn enough for their subsistence. Despite the limited opportunities, there were only two widows entered in the Freemen's Registers of Leicester between 1558-1660. Although some fortunate ones took up alehouse keeping or informally succeeded their husband's occupational status, an absolute loss of household income was unavoidable. Positive aspects of widowhood tend to be overemphasised by records of the middling sort. In fact, there were a greater number of poor widows, whose fortunes were quite different from those of established tradesmen and craftsmen's widows. Many of the impoverished householders were not expected to give special treatment to these economically weak members of the community, even though their cyclical poverty was inevitable and easily predictable. Institutional support for poor widows, such as poor

Structure: Essays to Peter Laslett on his Seventieth Birthday, eds., Lloyd Bonfield et al. (Oxford, 1986), 123.

22 They were Margaret Style in 1566-7, and Alice Harteshome of the Newarke Grange, who paid 10s. for her fine in 1597-8. RE, 77, 94.
23 Wealth and extensive social connections, for example, enabled some widows to express their independence in the community. PR11/108/60. Ellen Timson in St. Martin's was not only able to remain prosperous, but also seems to have maintained good friendships with other housewives. PR11/45/1. Brodsky has suggested how important wider kinship networks and neighbourly sociability were for widows of tradesmen and craftsmen in London to help reconstitute new partnerships. Brodsky, 'Widows in Late Elizabethan London', 137-40, 148. The fortunes of these widows and the widowed pensioners must have made a stark contrast within the same community. In addition, there were many widows belonging to neither of these two extremes. As we have found in the Easter Books, some of them stayed in their children's household, although their existence was not necessarily welcomed by other household members. Others even initiated their business in victualling houses. A poor Salisbury widow battled to live on by providing lodging for other poor people in the town, although she frequently became a recipient of Christmas and Easter dole. Slack, Poverty and Policy, 69.
relief and hospitals, to some extent reflected how they were perceived and expected to be treated in the community.

It is clear by now that mortality was one of the major causes of structural poverty, but the household could also be impoverished due to illness. The impact of illness on the condition of the urban poor has already attracted some historians' attention. It has been argued that the disruption of the household economy through illness of productive family members had a much more extensive impact on the state of the poor than the death of household members. This point has been expanded by Pelling, who has demonstrated the scale of the sick population in Tudor and Stuart urban centres. Analysing the census population of Norwich in 1570, she has estimated that 11 per cent of adults aged 20 and over were either sick or disabled.

We are not able to conduct a similar investigation for Leicester as no comprehensive census of the poor remains, but the findings in Norwich provide us with important insights into structural poverty. Predictably, the larger proportion of the sick poor was found in the Norwich census among the elderly, and there is no reason to think that the situation was very different in Leicester. What is more important is that a fair number of the middle-aged poor also suffered from illness. This strongly supports our point. Poverty was a life-cycle event which could threaten a relatively large proportion of the inhabitants at different times, although it is questionable whether illness was the cause of poverty or the effect.

If the death or illness of productive household members was the major cause of life-cycle poverty, the birth of an extra mouth to feed could have been another negative

24 This statement somewhat contradicts Laslett's findings about the high proportion of widows living with their children, but it is important to note that we are concerned with the lower social orders. The case of Norwich in 1570 proves my point. See Pelling, 'Old Age', 44.
27 Pelling, 'Illness among the Poor', 282, 285.
impact on the household economy. The imbalance during the seventeenth century between a productive and unproductive population with a bias towards the former has been pointed out by D. C. Coleman. Indeed, there seems to have been a certain consensus among the contemporaries as to the danger of having too many dependent household members, and such a burden was frequently stressed when poor folk petitioned in difficult years.28 Cross-referencing the overseers' accounts with baptismal registers shows that the financial difficulties of pensioners may often have been caused by having an extra mouth to feed. Thus, Thomas Biddle started to receive his quarterly relief one year after the birth of his daughter. Prior to the start of receiving his relief in 1604, Arther Blackshawe had a daughter in 1601. Nicholas Whiteman also had a son in 1600 before he received the quarterly relief of 12d. in 1604. The case of Salisbury is comparable. The average number of children in poor households supported by the poor rate in St. Martin's, Salisbury, in 1625 was 2.64. Among 29 poor households listed in the 1635 census, 20 had children. John Nuby, though unemployed, had to look after 5 children, including 2 sick ones.29

It is now clear that the birth and death of household members were, together with other external factors, the most important causes of impoverishment in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester. What was the consequences of such impoverishment? Did the poor stay poor? Many people who were impoverished at the end of their life-cycle were probably unable to see any improvement before death. Other people, however, may have been able to lift themselves up by remarriage or child labour.

If the duration of regular pensions coincided with the period of impoverishment, one can estimate the length of such poverty and the consequence for the pensioners. Methodological problems are clear, however. Since the number of pensioners seems to have been determined by the amount of resources, the actual duration of poverty did not necessarily coincide with the duration of the payment. As

28BRII/18/23/449.
Slack has shown, overseers of the poor normally tried to limit the amount of payment to a tolerable level for both payers and pensioners.\(^3\) We also need to exclude 16 names (17 per cent) who might have started to receive the relief before 1592, and 18 names (21 per cent) whose receipt seems to have continued after 1611 from our sample. The largest proportion of pensioners in St. Mary’s received relief only for 1-3 years. Only 4 pensioners received the relief for more than 10 years. Our sample may underestimate the long-term pensioners whose names are excluded here. Widow Webster, for example, received the money in 1592, and was still on the list of 1611 continuously. However, her case was probably the exception rather than the norm. All in all, the average length of relief was 4 years.

We are not able to reconstruct the exact age of these pensioners, but other sources indicate that many of them were in the later stages of their life-cycle. The analysis of the 1625 listing of the poor in Salisbury is indicative of the age structure of the poor. Among 81 people who were labelled as “impotent” by the authorities, 42 were at the age of 70 or over, and 15 were between 60-69.\(^{31}\) Very few pensioners’ names are found in the marriage registers of St. Mary’s parish, Leicester, which only starts from the year 1600. Moreover, 16 names of male pensioners in the overseers’ accounts in the 1600s can be identified with those of householders in the Easter Books of the 1580s.\(^{32}\)

Although what we can conclude from the analysis of the overseers’ accounts is limited, the results indicate that the processes impoverishing the townspeople in Leicester were influenced not only by the harsh economic and social climate of the period. For those who needed to support their family economy with the collaboration of family members, as most inhabitants did, the loss or expansion of the family workforce were crucial factors influencing the level of impoverishment. Under these circumstances,


\(^{31}\) Slack has warned that the proportion of particular age groups was changeable depending on the definition taken by the different authorities. Thus, the figures of the aged in the censuses of Norwich and Ipswich were much smaller than that of Salisbury. Slack, ‘Poverty and Politics in Salisbury’, 167, 177.

\(^{32}\) BRHI/8/24.
households seem to have been less responsible for taking in economically dependent people in the community, notably widows.

In illuminating some aspects of life-cycle poverty, this section suggests two points. Firstly, deep poverty was rarely a life-time problem for the Leicester inhabitants. Almost irrespective of socio-economic backgrounds, a great number of townsmen faced the danger of a poverty trap at certain stages of their lives. Secondly, the condition of life-cycle poverty was influenced by people's wealth and the strength of their social links. The nature of our records is such, however, that we were unable to examine other significant dimensions of structural poverty. In particular, the impoverishment of the youth and young adults was also a pressing problem in late Tudor and early Stuart towns. Unlike that of the old sedentary poor, however, poverty among this age group was probably much more susceptible to the changing economic and social environment. Life events among the young such as employment, marriage and migration, were normally deliberate choices for the betterment of their lives. Moreover, poverty among the young attracted greater attention from magistrates, who were concerned with law and order. The vicissitudes of the young can be effectively analysed in the world of employment.

3. Wage Earners and Unemployment

A society where the labour supply is constantly exceeded by labour demands would in theory be free from the serious problem of large scale poverty. It has been generally argued that late Tudor and early Stuart towns failed to provide sufficient economic opportunities for poor urban inhabitants. In addition, the precarious state of urban industries generated erratic labour demands. The existing labour market and real wages were further marginalised by hordes of poor migrants who were pushed out of the already over-populated countryside. As John Pound has suggested, "it was the prospect
of employment, rather than the lure of easy pickings, which encouraged most families to emigrate to the city.\textsuperscript{33} The extent of un- and under-employment, therefore, precipitated the serious problem of the labouring poor in the Tudor and Stuart town.

Such a simple economic model often fails to take account of the complex social and economic fabric of an urban community. In reality, the economic state of the wage-earning population in late Tudor and early Stuart England is extremely difficult to assess. How many days did they work? How were they paid? In what way did they spend their earnings?\textsuperscript{34} These unanswerable questions invite different interpretations of the declining real wages in the period by H. P. Brown and S. V. Hopkins.\textsuperscript{35} What is increasingly becoming certain, however, is that various forms of employment co-existed closely with the structure of self-employed freemen in an urban community. The working conditions of employees were so varied that a single label such as wage earning class may be inappropriate to categorise the people who were involved in these forms of employment.

The fragile nature of urban economic activities with the absence of large-scale consumer markets put the majority of townsmen in a vulnerable situation, threatened by chronic unemployment. The limited capacity of the labour market was a harsh reality, especially for the young. This also applied to those who tried to earn their living within the formal economic structure. Numerous petitions for the freedom in the mid-seventeenth century indicate that such an urban franchise was still a sine-qua-non for reaching the status of self-employment.\textsuperscript{36} There is evidence to suggest, however, that

\textsuperscript{33}Pound, Tudor and Stuart Norwich, 12.
\textsuperscript{34}Palliser, The Age of Elizabeth, 181-4.
\textsuperscript{36}BRII/18/22/4; 22/11; 22/57; 22/86; 22/111; 22/112; 22/119; 22/144.
apprentices and journeymen became much more susceptible to changing economic circumstances as time progressed. The forms of payment for apprentices at the end of their service years came increasingly to resemble wages in the course of the seventeenth century.\(^ {37}\) A growing number of craftsmen had to remain as journeymen, as the number of masters reached saturation in the gilds.\(^ {38}\) In Chester, for example, only about half of leather craftsmen became freemen immediately after finishing apprenticeship, and many journeymen joiners were employed more than a year in the early seventeenth century.\(^ {39}\) Evidence for apprentices and journeymen in Leicester is thin, but we hear that the steward of the Company of Shoemakers presented as many as 30 journeymen shoemakers when they were summoned by the Justices of the Peace according to a statutory requirement.\(^ {40}\) Thomas Claxton, weaver, remained a journeyman for 24 years until he petitioned for freedom to set up his own shop.\(^ {41}\)

The registers of Leicester apprentices in 1646-50, which are the only major apprenticeship records to survive for our period, give some idea of the chances for young tradesmen to become independent masters in the period soon after the Civil War. Among 153 entries, 71(46 per cent) were identified in the Registers of Freemen. The average length of period between the start of service and enrolment in the freemen's register for 67 apprentices was nine and a half years and 41 of them took more than 8 years. These figures suggest that many of them had to extend their service, or to remain as journeymen even after finishing the required period of 7 years, although some of them were bound


\(^{38}\)Of course, many chose not to take up freedom, partly because of poverty, partly because of unwillingness to serve citizen's duties, as in the case of Norwich where more than 70 per cent of those who completed their service took one to 10 years to become freemen. See Pound, Tudor and Stuart Norwich, 49-50.


\(^{40}\)BRII/1/2/290; BBL, vol. 3, 196.

\(^{41}\)VCH, vol. 4, 105.
more than 7 years from the start, a practice which can be seen in other provincial towns.\textsuperscript{42} Albeit relying on a small sample, Table 4.1 shows some characteristics of the length of service according to different occupational groups. Blacksmiths were outstanding among those who took a relatively short time to become masters. No apprentice butchers became freemen within 7 years, but the delay was not excessive, either. Apprentices in the lesser occupation of cordwainer had much greater difficulty in becoming master tradesmen in this period.

Though evidence is fragmentary, analysis of the post-Civil War apprentice registers gives important insights into the condition of the wage-earning population. We do not know the proportion of apprentices whose indentures were not enrolled.\textsuperscript{43} Nor do the records show how long they served for their apprenticeship, and how long they remained as journeymen. Certainly, we need to know the details of the individual experiences which caused the delay. Robert Hartshorne, for example, who took more than a decade to complete his service, changed his master from Richard Woodcock, shoemaker, to Richard Cattle, cordwainer, although such a case was exceptional.\textsuperscript{44} As one can see in the case of cordwainers, the unfavourable condition of the trade after the Civil War probably had a great impact on the prospects of apprentice and journeymen cordwainers. Nonetheless, the relatively greater number of freemen's entries after the Civil War indicates that there is no reason to believe that the prospect of young tradesmen was much better in the early seventeenth century. The absence of the names of apprentices in the Freemen Registers indicates that many of them were unable to complete their services, failed to become freemen, or pursued their career outside the town.\textsuperscript{45}

It was the number of lesser craftsmen and wage labourers, however, which to a greater extent influenced the scale of the problem of volatile employment. Although

\textsuperscript{42}Woodward, \textit{Men at Work}, 55.
\textsuperscript{43}This problem has been pointed out in the case of Norwich. See Pound, \textit{Tudor and Stuart Norwich}, 48-9.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid, 370. For examples in Newcastle, York and Chester, see Woodward, \textit{Men at Work}, 58.
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid, 72.
Table 4.1
The Leicester Apprentices, 1646-50: Period Taken to Become Freemen from the Commencement of Apprenticeship

<table>
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<th>Occupation</th>
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<th>8-9 years</th>
<th>10 years&lt;</th>
<th>no.</th>
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<td>blacksmith</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>butcher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mercer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baker</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woolen draper</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

Source: EE, 369-76.

Note: The figures include the time worked as a journeyman.

Table 4.2
Building Craftsmen in the Freemen's Registers, 1560-1639

<table>
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<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1560-9</th>
<th>1570-9</th>
<th>1580-9</th>
<th>1590-9</th>
<th>1600-9</th>
<th>1610-9</th>
<th>1620-9</th>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>glasier</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joiner</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EE

*Two of the joiners were also tanners.
lack of sources prevents us from estimating the size of this group in Leicester in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, cross reference to information from the 1524 lay subsidy and the Freemen Registers gives us a rough idea. Among 403 tax payers, only 213 were identified in the Registers. It is questionable whether the registers include all who became free. Nonetheless, if one takes the number of the poor who escaped the subsidy lists into account, it is probably safe to conclude that over a half of the householders were engaged in work outside the framework of free tradesmen in early sixteenth century Leicester.\textsuperscript{46} It is hard to believe that the balance changed in favour of the proportion of freemen in the subsequent period, considering the general social and economic climate.\textsuperscript{47} With intensifying economic competition, the urban gilds probably became increasingly exclusive during the course of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{48}

Our demographic evidence in the seventeenth century suggests that the number of non-free traders was on the increase. From the Muster Rolls of 1608, 48 per cent of those listed cannot be found in the Freemen's Registers.\textsuperscript{49} Up to the middle of the century, the increase in the number of annual entries in the Freemen's Registers was marginal, despite the steady population growth.\textsuperscript{50} Comparing the assessment of Marriage Duties for the parish of St. Mary's in 1696, Wykes has estimated that freemen constituted little more than a third of the adult male population in Leicester.\textsuperscript{51} The result is consistent with the estimate based on the 1670 Hearth Tax Return. While at least 342 freemen were

\textsuperscript{46}Derek Charman, 'Wealth and Trade in Leicester in the Early Sixteenth Century', \textit{TLS} 25 (1949), 86. The large proportion of non-free inhabitants can be seen in other provincial towns as well. According to the Norwich census of 1589, the freemen comprised only 50.8 per cent of the city householders. Pound, \textit{Tudor and Stuart Norwich}, 59-60. For Exeter, see MacCaffrey, \textit{Exeter}, 73n, and for Winchester, see Rosen, 'History of Winchester', 106.

\textsuperscript{47}Charman, 'Wealth and Trade', 86.

\textsuperscript{48}See, for example, see Rosen, 'History of Winchester', 175. Also see pp. 180-1 below.

\textsuperscript{49}Chinnery, 'Muster Roll', 31-2.

\textsuperscript{50}Wykes, 'Religious Dissent', 90.

\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Ibid.}, 84.
found in the list, 319 were non-free householders and 230 were female household heads.52

Having said all this, one can probably make a tentative distinction between freemen and non-freemen in determining the scale of the wage-earning population. Some labourers could afford to pay the fine for the admission of freemen. Among 120 labourers (21 per cent) in the Muster Rolls, 12 of them were freemen, although the proportion may have been in decline towards the end of our period.53 If one includes the freemen who were employed by other substantial freemen, the wage-earning population in the town clearly outnumbered those who were self-employed even at the beginning of the Elizabethan period.54

Even if household heads did not earn wages, their household members often did. The assessment of wages kept by the local JP's according to the Statute of Artificers in 1563 provides some idea of the official view of the extent of the wage-earning population. Generally, children were already eligible to earn wages at least by the age of 10 and possibly earlier. More than 40 children under 10 were found in the list of poor working children in 1625 Salisbury.55 Females were particularly numerous in the service sector and harvest work, according to the assessments, although the importance of spinsters was heavily underestimated by the JP's.56 The official picture of wage labour cannot necessarily be reconciled with the reality, but it strongly indicates the degree to which townsmen depended on the wage-earning sector of the urban economy.

As we have seen earlier, existing sources undoubtedly understate the scale of female and child labour. Evidence in a recent study on medieval urban artisans suggests that women participated not only in the textile industry as spinners, but also in the retail trades and the crafts. For example, tailors, cordwainers, and glovers employed many

52Ibid, 94.
56Ibid, 166-8.
women and servants to cut and sew their cloth, shoes and gloves; smiths’ wives may have been engaged in some of the light work, such as sharpening tools and making clocks.\textsuperscript{57} In fact, the participation in the labour market of all family members able to work seems to have been taken for granted, particularly among the lower orders, and as a result of declining real wages during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, the marginal income of wives and children constituted a much more significant part of the household economy of the poor than in the late Middle Ages. Thus, in 1622, after complaining about being unable to work, not only Thomas Atkyn but also his wife, son and daughter were provided with work by Henry Watts, weaver and the master of the House of Correction.\textsuperscript{68} In Ipswich, the family of an unemployed father was maintained by his children’s begging and his wife’s earnings from spinning.\textsuperscript{59} The Elizabethan census in Norwich reveals that almost all females who were registered had some kind of work; 40 per cent of the female labour force was devoted to spinning white warp, while about 14 per cent were engaged in sewing, knitting and weaving.\textsuperscript{60}

Labour demand was of a varied nature and roughly corresponded with what the wage-earning population were able to offer. Wages for building craftsmen and labourers were constantly recorded in the Chamberlains’ Accounts and the church wardens’ accounts. The growing interest in the improvement of public amenities may have boosted labour demand for building workers.\textsuperscript{61} News of distinguished visitors coming to the town may have precipitated a good amount of public work for many labourers. More than £7 were spent in 1603 for work by masons and labourers “for getinge sand and gravell and stonnes and for pavinge the streets and for lyme agaynst the Queenes cominge [to the town].”\textsuperscript{62} Labour demand for public work was particularly

\textsuperscript{57}Swanson, \textit{Medieval Artisans, passim.}
\textsuperscript{58}\textit{RIBL}, vol. 4, 199.
\textsuperscript{59}Slack, \textit{Poverty and Policy}, 83.
\textsuperscript{60}Pound, \textit{Tudor and Stuart Norwich}, 16-7.
\textsuperscript{61}\textit{VCH}, vol. 4, 107.
\textsuperscript{62}\textit{RIBL}, vol. 4, 12.
strong after the damage of the Civil War. Due to sloppy record-keeping, however, we are able to recover only part of the labour demand resulting from public work. Even less documented was the expansion of labour demand for building private houses, which seems to have coincided with the growing number of the population.

In 1587, we hear that about 200 houses which had belonged to the colleges, hospitals and gilds in the town were in physical decay. The situation seems to have improved by the early seventeenth century. Although the entries in the Freemen’s Registers do not necessarily reflect the vicissitudes of the building industry due to the fact that many of the building-related traders did not take up the freedom, the relatively large number of entries for carpenters is indicative of the growing demand for the trade in the early seventeenth century (see Table 4.2). Furthermore, the labour demand derived from the freemen’s trade was an essential part of the urban economy. A number of free tradesmen employed labourers and lesser artisans for carrying and buying the materials they needed.

We do not have any occupational census for the poor labourers in the Tudor and Stuart periods, but evidence in other provincial towns indicates that many of the group of non-free townsmen and un-skilled workers had a particular occupational identity. Pound has found that the majority of the 500 or more poorest townsmen in the Norwich census of around 1570 had a specific type of employment. Some of them were particularly numerous. In the leather trade, 26 of the poor were cloggers, and 17 were cordwainers. In the building trade, masons, carpenters and sawyers were prominent. 18 tailors were identified in the clothing trade. However, the largest group was constituted by worsted weavers, whose number was 68 in total.

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63 Ibid., 377-8.
65 RBL, vol. 3, 234, 239-40; THL, 283.
As a much smaller town, Leicester's scale of employment, particularly in the textile industry, was less impressive than Norwich's. As Kerridge has argued, however, Leicester saw an increase in the number of wage earners during our period, particularly in malting, brewing, and the metallurgical industries. If employment in the textile industry was much smaller than the major textile town of East Anglia, labour demand for agricultural work seems to have been relatively strong. Examining the inventories of Leicester farmers between 1535 and 1678 to assess the scale and the type of agricultural labour demands, Kerridge has concluded that "for every score of farmers, there must have been about 100 wage-workers, while about two-thirds of the labour force were employed by about a quarter of the farmers." The number of the labour force should be added to if one includes other tradesmen who owned acres of land, like Thomas Clark, innholder, and Robert Roberts, tanner and victualler.68

The heavy dependence of the urban economic organisation on the ebb and flow of casual labour was not necessarily new in late Tudor Leicester. Nevertheless, if the piecemeal development of urban economic activities kept pace, particularly after the end of the sixteenth century, with a gradual expansion of the population, the urban economy increased its dependence on the wage labour sector. This overall trend of the labour market in Leicester may have been further articulated by a burgeoning industrial sector outside the freemen tradition. As early as the 1590s, there were signs of the development of the hosiery trade in the Leicester economy, and it was recognised by a leading tradesman in the town. For example, the urban government lent 10 pounds to Thomas Moseley, a townsman appointed by the Earl of Huntingdon to set poor children to work knitting jersey stockings.69 In his letter of 1594/5, the alderman Robert Herrick indicated his strong determination to sell "40 pair of good worsted hose, tied together in


four bunches" over £12.70 By the early seventeenth century, there seem to have been more tradesmen openly engaged in retailing knitted hose in the urban economy, like Nathaniel Tapper and William Rogers, while many of them were probably involved in the trade in a much more obscure manner, often combined with other types of occupation.71 Our evidence for the details of production is fragmented, but evidence in court records may give some idea of the employment and profitability of the trade. Katherine Goodwine told the magistrates in 1617 that she saw a young maid spinning in Thomas Measures’ house around 9 o’clock in Friday night. She also found two pairs of jersey stockings there and pawned them to Mr. John Heyrick for 5s. 6d., the amount Measure owed her.72 There is evidence to show that this informal sector continued to grow into the late seventeenth century, and in the 1640s the existence of hosiers in the town became much more evident from the records. As Wykes has argued, however, it was not until the late seventeenth century that Leicester saw a major expansion of the hosiery trade.73

The study of the development of the Leicester hosiery industry provides important insights into the condition of wage-labourers in early seventeenth century Leicester.74 Firstly, it is important to note that it was organised largely outside the structure of the formal gilds, often by leading tradesmen. They informally carried out the trades without any organisation such as the putting-out system.75 Secondly, hosiery production in Leicester characteristically did not involve knitting frames, but an abundant

71RBL, vol. 4, 268; RE, 119.
72BRII/18/12/259.
74I appreciate a useful discussion with Dr. David L. Wykes who has drawn my attention to this matter.
cheap labour force composed of women and children in particular.\footnote{Wykes, ‘Religious Dissent’, 270-9; S. D. Chapman, ‘Genesis of the British Hosiery Industry, 1600-1750’, \textit{Textile History} 3 (1972); Marie Hartley & Joan Ingilby, \textit{Old Hand-Knitters of the Dales} (1969), 8.} It is arguable that the upheavals in the formal trade structure in the wake of the Civil War prepared the ground for highlighting the comparative advantage of the hosiery trade in a town with an abundant cheap labour force. The expansion of the new trade after the Civil War was by no means free from a backlash from the conventional trade structure. Thus, there was a petition by 10 non-freemen in 1673/4 complaining about the freemen monopolising their trade which could allegedly employ 2000 people to make up 800 tods of wool a year.\footnote{In Norwich, we hear that young children earned a total of £12,000 a year by knitting jersey. Joan Thirsk, ‘The Fantastical Folly of Fashion: the English Stocking Knitting Industry, 1500-1700’, in N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting, \textit{Textile History and Economic History} (Manchester, 1973), 54, 56.} Nonetheless such an expansion probably did not take place without any foundation. Although there is a lack of evidence for the large scale employment of labourers in the urban production process in the early seventeenth century, the growing hosiery trade may have employed a good number of poor casual workers in Leicester.\footnote{Wykes, ‘Religious Dissent’, 270-2; To what extent the urban hosiery trade depended upon rural employment rather than urban labourers is certainly a debatable point. But Chapman has assumed that half of these 2000 employees were townspeople, many of them widows, children and the old. Chapman, ‘Genesis’, 35.} 

So far, we have seen the scale and type of the wage earning population in Leicester. Little has been said on the balance between supply and demand in the labour market. It is extremely difficult to trace the working patterns of the wage earners in Leicester, but the latest study on the northern towns confirms the general image of pre-industrial working hours. The working patterns of labourers and building craftsmen were irregular. The work was frequently discontinued depending on customers, the weather
and seasons.\textsuperscript{79} Out-door work tended to be terminated or shortened during the winter. The wage earners did not necessarily choose to work if they had sufficient money to live on, though the level of voluntary un-employment is difficult to assess.\textsuperscript{80} There is no reason to believe that such patterns were significantly different in the Midland towns. Similar working patterns may be seen among many agricultural labourers; labour demand fluctuated due to the fluctuating labour demands according to season, market days, and the long-term economic cycle.\textsuperscript{81}

Such working patterns of wage earners generated the large-scale under-employment in the period.\textsuperscript{82} Under-employment did not necessarily generate poverty, but certainly it put the wage-earning population into a vulnerable situation. This was especially true where there was no large industrial sector which could employ a sizeable number of workers. The changing economic environment of Leicester has already been noted. Even with a relatively large agricultural sector, the scale and continuity of labour demands in the borough of Leicester were nothing compared to the labour-intensive industrial sectors found in other major textile towns, such as Norwich and Worcester.

Insufficient job opportunities in the town were most clearly demonstrated by the continuous efforts of the urban and national authorities in tackling the problems of the labouring poor to create jobs.\textsuperscript{83} From 1610 onwards, Thomas White's charity offered 10 pounds on nine year loan to each of the 4 young Leicester traders chosen by the aldermen. These traders were required to set the poor to work knitting jersey and


\textsuperscript{81}Everitt, 'Farm Labourer', in \textit{The Agrarian History}, ed., Thirsk, 428.

\textsuperscript{82}Coleman, 'Labour in English Economy', 300-2.

weaving bonelace. Nevertheless, these actions provided nothing more than consolation for poor wage earners. In times of severe economic problems, many wage earners suffered from long term un-employment. A letter from the Mayor to the Earl in 1599 explicitly echoed the condition of the town: "we have no cloth-making, nor other exercises, to maintain our poor. . . . It hath continued above 2,000 years, and never so poor nor more distressed than now it may be." In 1630, James Browne migrated to London, since his wages for his work in the dressing of hemp were so low that he was not able to live on them. Eventually, he was admitted in the Company of Merchant Tailor in the capital. In the following year, two men petitioned the Mayor and aldermen for work. One of them said that "his great charge of children and the scarcete of work for a long season your petitioner hath been enforced to pawn all his household stuffe to divers severall parties within the said Burrough for and towards his and their maintenance."87

In the absence of reliable employment figures, however, the misery of the wage earning population should not be overstated, nor should we readily apply the concept of work in the modern sense to the equivalent of Tudor and Stuart urban dwellers. In industrial societies today, un- and under-employment not only convey a negative connotation and even social stigma, but also give effective justification for claiming social benefit. Such an image was probably shared with the authorities in pre-modern towns, who were well aware of the link between unstable employment and poverty. As to the rest of the population, one wonders if the concept of un- and under-

84 BRI/9/1-3. The details of the charity were also published in The Twenty-Eighth Report of Commissioners on Charity, vol. 22 (1834), 172-84; RBL, vol. 4, 102. It is not clear from the record how frequently the donation was distributed; after 1625, for example, 4 tradesmen were chosen almost every year. Report of the Commissioners Appointed in Pursuance of an Act of Parliament, . . . the Inquiries Concerning Charities in England and Wales (1838), 16.
85 TBL, 303.
86 RBL, vol. 4, 257.
87 Ibid, 259.
employment was widely used for self-identification. The popular concept of vocational status invites us to consider the unique patterns of work in pre-industrial societies. It was poorly defined in terms of time and specialisation. According to the impression one has from descriptions in court records, working hours were frequently disturbed by friends, neighbours and visitors who often opened a way to other economic opportunities. Many changed their work according to the seasons and availability over the year.

Recent studies have suggested that the family economy of agricultural and industrial labourers was supplemented by diverse economic sources — not only the wages of householders, but also earnings from other household members and perks. The Statute of Artificers largely accepted payment in kind in the service sector, although the custom seems to have become less prevalent during the course of the seventeenth century. Thus, in late sixteenth century Kent, part of the payment for boy servants was meat, drink, or clothing. In his study, Roberts has revealed that 15-20 per cent of authorised annual wages of servants was in general provided by clothes. In Leicester, wages in public work were often paid in kind, such as beer and bread, even in the early seventeenth century. The diversity of family income with informal forms of employment on the one hand, and an immature monetary economy on the other, were also significant aspects characterising the actual economic condition of the wage-earning

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88See, for example, Penelope J. Corfield, 'Defining Urban Work', in *Work in Towns 850-1850*, eds., Penelope J. Corfield and Derek Keene Derek (Leicester, 1990), 218-9.
90Roberts, 'Wages and Wage-earners', 143.
91*ibid.*, 221.
92*ibid.*, vol. 4, 293.
population.93

We know little about how labourers picked up pieces of employment on a day to day basis due to lack of evidence. Evidence in court records suggests that the economic activities of labourers may have covered a wide geographical area. The large number of agricultural labourers living in the town has been noted. If they could not find any employment, they looked for it in other neighbouring villages or small towns, on market days in particular, where they could stay from one to several nights and then come back again.94 The scale of the labour market in the locality, therefore, should not be restricted to the urban precincts, and should include considerable active human mobility between the town and its hinterlands.

To sum up, the state of the household economy of labourers was not as bleak as contemporary writers often depicted when they referred to the general economic trend of the realm. Social factors seem to have affected job opportunities inside and outside the town, while credit and wage in kind may have enabled households to survive during short-term difficulties. As we shall see later, the apparent lack of large scale food riots in Leicester indicates that the problem of un-employment did not reach the point of crisis during our period. Clearly, Leicester was typified by a large proportion of wage earners living dangerously near the poverty line, but such a scale should not necessarily be interpreted as economic misery. And no matter how different their life-styles were from our polite culture, they constituted a significant part of the urban values of a middle-sized county town.

93For eighteenth century Paris, Michael Sonenscher has argued that "the clear distinction between work, wages and consumption, which is assumed in any calculation of real wages, did not exist in the eighteenth century because consumption itself was not predicated exclusively upon a monetary income." Michael Sonenscher, 'Work and Wages in Paris in the Eighteenth Century', in Manufacture in Town and Country before the Factory, eds., Maxine Berg, Pat Hudson and Michael Sonenscher (Cambridge, 1983), 164.
94Woodward, Men at Work, 163-4.
4. Crisis Poverty

If life-cycle poverty and un-employment persistently or intermittently threatened townsman's lives, crisis years expanded the level of poverty both vertically and horizontally. The effect of such crises may also have been long lasting. It was a time when the underlying social and economic structure became visible, and new social attitudes were cultivated. Historians have already highlighted regional diversity in the extent of the problems caused by these crises. In an urban context, however, there were also significant similarities between regional centres in terms of their impact and the communal response.

The short-term crises were probably less frequent in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester than in some other provincial towns. Stow wrote that there was a great tempest in January 1562/3 "which uncovered 411 bayes of houses and overturned many." Little evidence exists for major subsistence crises at Leicester. Our discussion, therefore, will mainly concentrate on the incidence of the plague, which chronically hit the community over this period. In his illuminating case studies of Exeter, Bristol and Norwich, Slack has pointed out that (1) the spread and intensity of the disease was geographically selective, (2) the infection showed broad age and gender specifics, and (3) the high mortality rate was quickly compensated for by a large scale migration.

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96 See, for example, Peter Clark, 'A Crisis Contained? The Condition of English Towns in the 1590s', in *The European Crisis of the 1590s* (1985).


These points are indicative of the patterns of crisis in the context of a middle-sized inland town, which will now be examined. Furthermore, we shall also explore some aspects of the lingering social consequences caused by these epidemics and the resulting public actions.

The scale of crisis in Leicester is primarily derived from the results of the aggregate returns of baptisms and burials in the five parishes. In particular, we will concentrate on the great plague of 1610-11 whose ravages are relatively well documented. The plague of 1593 also caused extensive damage in the community, but we do not have any reliable demographic records. As to much smaller incidences, which seem to have occurred at least once every fifteen years, the mortality rate did not reach a crisis level.100

The chronology of the plague in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries has already been described in detail by J. E. O. Wilshere.101 The first sign of the epidemic in 1610-11 was seen in the South Gate area in 1609.102 An assessment was made by the urban authorities for the relief of "the visited people".103 In the following year, the economic impact of the plague was experienced, as many tradesmen fled from the town. Thus in August 1610, the authorities had to prohibit the freemen to leave the town to live elsewhere during the time of the plague visitation, unless they received license from the Mayor, JPs, and aldermen of each ward.104 At the meeting of the Mayor and a group of aldermen, the situation was described that "the Towne hath beene at such extraordinarie charge about the vyzited people viz the plague this yeere."105

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102 RBL, vol. 4, 94. Kelly has showed evidence indicating the first outbreak in Sore Lane in the parish of St. Mary's. William Kelly, Visitations of the Plague at Leicester (1877), 24.
103 RBL, vol. 4, 92, 94.
105 Ibid, 105.
Consequently, the total number of deaths during 1610-11 was estimated at over 700 by the authorities, and the total amount of relief for the victims since September 1609 was reported to be £306 2s. 2d.\(^{106}\)

Difference in the mortality ratio between the Leicester parishes at the time of the plague visitation of 1610-11 was not as clear as that in provincial capitals (Table 4.3).\(^{107}\) The difference between the figure of St. Martin's, the most prosperous central parish, and the highest figure of St. Mary's, including the poor suburban area, was much smaller than that between the equivalent two figures in Bristol, Exeter and Norwich.\(^{108}\)

The case of Leicester in 1611 was much more similar to the patterns of the visitation in Exeter and Bristol during the sieges of 1643 when the disease was dispersed by soldiers over all the parishes.\(^{109}\) At the time of the 1610-1 outbreak, the persistence of the epidemic was so strong that even a prosperous parish could not avoid severe death tolls.

Although the impact of the plague was felt equally in all the parishes of Leicester in terms of the mortality ratio, the infection in the central parishes seems to have disappeared much more quickly than in the suburban parishes. We are not able to produce any comparative figures for the mortality ratio in the suburbs, since the registers of St. Margaret's, the largest suburban parish, are too fragmentary to provide any reliable data for these years. A letter from the town government to the Recorder written towards the end of the plague years shows that there were still a number of victims on Belgrave Gate, whereas the street between East Gate and the High Cross was cleared.\(^{110}\) The topographical characteristics of the plague are much clearer here; it started off in the

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\(^{106}\)Wilshere, 'Plague', 59; \(\textit{RBL}\), vol. 4, 110.

\(^{107}\)Cf. Wilshere, 'Plague', 69.


\(^{109}\)\textit{Ibid.}, 117-8, 123.

\(^{110}\)\(\textit{RBL}\), vol. 4, 114.
Table 4.3
Plague Mortality Ratio for Leicester Parishes, 1610-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>St. Martin's</th>
<th>St. Mary's</th>
<th>St. Nicholas</th>
<th>All Saints'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 year average (1601-9)</td>
<td>36.67</td>
<td>23.11</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year average (1610-11)</td>
<td>106.12</td>
<td>100.20</td>
<td>19.19</td>
<td>53.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mortality ratio</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: DE1564/1; 1D63/1; 11D62/1; 14D57/102/1; Hartopp, Register of St. Mary.

Note: The mortality ratio of the years 1610-11 is derived from the average number of burials in the years divided by the 9 year average of the previous years.

Table 4.4
Plague Victims in St. Mary's, April-March, 1610

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Victims</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sex Ratio</th>
<th>1610</th>
<th>1600-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Children</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Wives</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Unspecified Females</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Males</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hartopp, Registers of St. Mary.
South gate, and ended in Belgrave gate, the two most impoverished suburbs of the town.\textsuperscript{111}

The burial registers of St. Mary's in 1610 allows us to examine the extent of the impact on individual households.\textsuperscript{112} The number of burials rose to 125, which was 3.41 times higher than the 9 year average of the previous years. Even if the mortality rate does not show any clear geographical pattern, the largest number of victims were obviously the lesser craftsmen and the labourers. The cross reference between the burial registers and the 1608 Master Rolls shows very few plague deaths of merchants and butchers.

The plague increased the problems of the poor, because it often hit those members of household supporting the fragile household economy. As Slack has found in Norwich, Bristol, and Salisbury, clustering of deaths in the same family is also evident in Leicester. In St. Mary's, 59 adults disappeared, 24 of whom were known to be housewives. Estimating the number of householders in the parish from the Easter Book, this means that nearly 20 per cent of the households lost at least one of their productive members. Recent studies have shown some local variation in the gender and age-specific incidence of the plague. For example, while the proportionate rise in mortality figures was invariably highest among the age group of 5-19, the sex ratios of burials varied according to the different size of towns and their occupational structure. Men were much more vulnerable in larger centres like Bristol and Exeter, while the proliferation of female deaths typified smaller towns such as Stratford-on-Avon and Barnstaple.\textsuperscript{113} Among 125 parishioners who died in St. Mary's, 65 (52 per cent) of them were children, but our result indicates that the gender-specific incidence was weak in the Leicester parish (see

\textsuperscript{111}At the time of the minor incidence of 1626, the Mayor wrote to the Justices of Assize that 'those that have died have dwelt in Backe lanes and remoate places and not in the harte of the Towne nor neare unto the place of your Lordshyp lodging . . . .' \textit{RBL}, vol. 4, 232.

\textsuperscript{112}\textit{The Register of St. Mary}, ed., Hartopp.

\textsuperscript{113}Slack, \textit{Impact of Plague}, 177-186.
Furthermore, it is important to note that the actual impact of death on the household economy does not consider the impact of the sick, whose names do not necessarily appear in our registers. Even without reliable figures for the sick and the sources of the household economy, however, it is not so difficult to imagine the economic impact on households caused by such an incidence.

It has been argued that the population deficit during the plague years normally recovered quite quickly by subsequent marriage or remarriage and new births. According to the marriage registers of St. Mary’s, the years following 1610-11 clearly saw higher marriage rates than the average of the previous years. However, this did not necessarily stimulate a much higher birth rate, as one can see a relatively stable birth rate over these years. A recent study on late Tudor and early Stuart Bristol has suggested that the large influx of apprentices typified the migration pattern immediately after the plague incidence. We do not have comparable apprenticeship registers for Leicester, but the extent of incoming migrants after the outbreak can be seen in the Freemen Registers. The first year after the plague years definitely saw the expansion of the number of entries. Among 49 newly admitted freemen, an exceptionally large number, 18 were recorded as strangers.

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114In fact, many of the names which were expressed as either son or daughter of the householders did not appear in the baptism registers. No registers are available before 1600 to check whether they were born before then. The Register of St. Mary, ed., Hartopp.
115The unusual expansion of the number of new pensioners in the Overseers’ Accounts undoubtedly reflected the extent of the impact of this short term crisis. For example, when the plague hit Leicester in 1604, there were 9 male and 7 female names on the list, whereas the average number of new pensioners in the rest of the years was about 4 people. SD59/6. Even an eminent alderman, Mr. Thomas Nixe, was devastated by the plague visiting his house twice since 1606/7. RHL, vol. 4, 204.
116Slack, Impact of Plague, 184-5.
117The Register of St. Mary, ed., Hartopp.
119On demographic impact, see Slack, Impact of Plague, 177-88.
The plague visitation undoubtedly accentuated the social problem of the poor. The lack of biographical evidence for the lower social orders prevents us from following the actual social consequences of the epidemic, but the extent of the devastation can be easily inferred from the structure of the urban poor, as we saw in the earlier sections. Many households suffered from the high mortality and morbidity rate in the community. Furthermore, the incidence of the plague had much wider social implications. Though it was not particularly new in the period, each incidence was a stark reminder for civic leaders of what poverty could do to their own lives. Slack has argued that the plague incidence clearly articulated the different attitudes of the townsmen towards the poor. Many of the middling sort "either shared the view of aldermen and councillors that vagrants, squatters, inmates, lodgers, and strangers were a cause of plague; or they shared the fate of those marginal groups whose high death rates contributed still further to the stream of poor migrants rushing to towns in search of houses and jobs."\textsuperscript{120} In Leicester, public plague policies were introduced, reflecting the social identity of the former group, and these policies affected the latter group as much as the plague. Aspects of the implementation of plague policies, therefore, effectively mirrored an array of public attitudes towards the poor.

During the late Tudor and early Stuart periods, public plague policies were mainly based on quarantine and the provision of relief for infected households.\textsuperscript{121} At the time of the serious outbreak in 1593, the Mayor wrote to Thomas Skeffington and William Cave, the county sheriffs, that more than 46 houses were sealed and were "kept and relyved with meate, dryncke, fyer, candle, water, sope, and keepers by the towne . . . ."\textsuperscript{122} In 1607-8, the town spent £8 3s.7d. on keeping the plague victims in their houses and for their maintenance.\textsuperscript{123} Similar stringent measures were introduced earlier

\textsuperscript{120} Slack, 	extit{Impact of Plague}, 188.
\textsuperscript{121} PRO DL/I/107/L4; BRII/1/3/251; BRIII/8/94. \textit{RBL}, vol. 3, 112. For similar actions in other towns, see D. M. Palliser, "Epidemic in Tudor York", \textit{Northern History} 8 (1973), 58.
\textsuperscript{122} Kelly, \textit{Visitation}, 15.
\textsuperscript{123} PRO DL/I/138/A48.
in the neighbouring town of Northampton. In 1578, for example, four watchmen were appointed in five wards to prevent visited houses from opening between 8 o'clock in the morning and 4 o'clock in the afternoon.\textsuperscript{124} Considering these inhumane policies, however, one wonders how many people voluntarily reported the visitation of the plague in their houses, even though concealing the infection was subject to a heavy fine, or disenfranchisement.\textsuperscript{125} On the other hand, it is very likely that many of the paupers were wrongly quarantined by the panicking authorities such as the case of a house sealed for two months, but where it was subsequently reported "not person sick there" in 1611.\textsuperscript{126}

The collective financial responsibility of townsmen was mentioned at the time of the visitation in 1579. Thus, the members of the Twenty-Four and the Forty-Eight had to pay 12d. and 6d. each respectively towards plague relief, while "all the commoners and others inhabiting within the towne of Leicester to be charged."\textsuperscript{127} During the critical situation of 1593, however, many of them seem to have tried to evade their responsibilities and a possible infection by leaving the town. Thus, those freemen who failed to return to the town every night after their business in the countryside were fined 40s. a week.\textsuperscript{128}

Mutual support between the town and the county elite during the plague years was encouraged even before the act of 1603, which codified the mutual obligations of boroughs and county localities.\textsuperscript{129} As Slack has pointed out, their emphasis was on special taxation, probably because it conveniently met both financial needs from maintaining stringent quarantine policies, and exhibited charitable attitudes simultaneously.\textsuperscript{130} Thus in 1593, it was reported that "we have greate number of poor.\textsuperscript{124}\textsuperscript{RBRI}, 233.\textsuperscript{125}Kelly, \textit{Visitation}, 8.\textsuperscript{126}\textit{Bibl}, 33.\textsuperscript{127}\textit{RBRI}, vol. 3, 179. A similar order was made in 1583. \textit{Bibl}, 193.\textsuperscript{128}\textit{BRII}/18/3/121; \textit{RBRI}, vol. 3, 293.\textsuperscript{129}I James I, ch. 31.\textsuperscript{130}Slack, \textit{Impact of Plague}, 210. But this point needs to be examined by comparing his argument.
about some 5 or 600... are not able to lyve without relief, expectinge daylye some relief out of the countrye." The Mayor also urged county gentlemen to contribute to the special relief for the poor in order to keep them in their houses, and stop them leaving the infected town. Thus, the county magistrates wrote to constables in East Goscote urging them to collect the relief money weekly for the poor in Leicester.

Clearly, these public policies during crises years clarified the relationship between the fit and the sick in the urban community. What is less clear is how far civic policies were implemented. Some examples have already been given which suggest that communal obligations were effectively ignored by some townsmen. Much more draconian measures for prevention, such as the enforcement of vagrancy laws, can be explained by a variety of reactions among townsmen, as we will see shortly. As for the relief from the countryside, the Mayor had to petition Mr. Humfrey Purefoy, a county magistrate, that "there is as yet very little come in towards their relief", following the initial recognition by the Earl. Further delay led the Mayor to report to the county sessions at Bosworth that many of the inhabitants chose to go to prison rather than to pay the heavy taxation. In the end, the town had to petition the Privy Council to provide a warrant to make the county justices continue to send a sufficient amount of relief, although we do not know about the outcome of this order.

Although we are unable to quantify the scale of negligence among townsmen, there are good reasons to believe that they reacted differently to the epidemic and the policies. The negative effect of the plague on the urban economy has already been noted

132Ibid, 12.
133BR1I/5/49.
134See above.
136Ibid, 14.
137Ibid, 16-7
by many historians. Serious outbreaks such as those of 1593 and 1610-1 immediately boosted the number of households dependent on public relief. Restricted communications inevitably affected the volume of economic activities in the town. Even some of the leading townsfolk underestimated the seriousness of an outbreak. Thus the market continued to be held as usual, despite a recommendation by the Earl of Huntingdon to close it. On 4 November 1610, John Mabbes, the Mayor, wrote to the Earl, "our Towne is not soe muche infected As gives iust cause to forbid our Markitt to be kepte For blessed be God the wholl markitt place is cleere from Mistress Pilkingtons howse to the East gate and not one howse infected nor suspected ..." In the following month, it was ordered that the fair which had been held between "S. Sondaies bridge and the fourther end of the Sowth gate" would be held in the Saturday market. Others were much more cautious. Thus the Recorder of Leicester, who was supposed to attend the Mayoral election on St. Matthew's Day, cancelled his visit due to the plague. This was not surprising, since the figures for burials in St. Martin's parish had doubled in 1610.

Some of the civic leaders also opposed the transfer of major urban administrative functions to other places in the wake of the infection. When the assize was moved to Hinckley due to the plague of 1610-1, John Wood, a butcher, was prosecuted for complaining that Sir Henry Hastings of the Abbey "was an enemy to the town of Leicester, that the assizes should not be holden at Leicester." In 1612, the Mayor wrote that shifting the lodging of assize judges from Mr. John Stanford's house in the

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138 Palliser, 'Epidemic in Tudor York', 56.
139 When the plague in London reached the town in 1626 and 1636, two common carriers to London were banned, human and material exchanges between the town and outside areas were either prohibited or strictly supervised. RBL, vol. 4, 222, 224; Wilshere, 'Plague', 62-3. As early as 1603, strict surveillance was introduced to stop the spread. RBNr, 234.
140 RBL, vol. 4, 103.
141 Ibid, 105.
143 Kelly, Visitation, 30; RBL, vol. 4, 120.
town to the Newarke would be a great loss to "the In keepers victualers and tradesmen whose estates are much weakened by longe contynewance of the said sicknes . . ."144

While the urban and county elite were preoccupied with the plague policies, it was much more important for many of the townsman to secure their business and social relationships. Daniel Morris was probably such a townsman. In 1636, he and his wife, Elizabeth, were prosecuted for keeping and entertaining in his infected inn on Belgrave Gate with the sign of "Whilte Harte".145 After one of their guests died of the plague, others became sick. However, they not only concealed the infection, but also continuously entertained diverse gentlemen and others for seven or eight weeks including the company of the Earl of Stanford.

The outbreak of the plague and public actions significantly altered townsmen's patterns of social relationships. The plague years were the time when the urban community appeared to become an integrated entity; at no other time were the inhabitants more rigorously asked not to leave the town and to comply with their financial duties, often by the introduction of stringent legislation.146 Many poor inhabitants probably looked for support among families, kin, friends and neighbours. In Nottingham, for example, relief was given to Edmund Garland, a glover, who decided to take in his sister despite his knowledge of her infection in 1592/3.147 But the danger of infection might easily deter kinship aid, let alone friendship and neighbourhood support, in the name of self-protection, and many fled the infected town.148 Public policies such as quarantine policies and public relief probably gave people justification to put personal interest first.

144Ibid. 129.
145PRO SP16/342/40; Privy Council Registers Preserved in the Public Record Office Reproduced in Facsimile, vol. 4, 1638 (1968), 594.
146This view of course assumes that not many people resisted the requirement of the policies.
147RBX, vol. 4, 237.
148Slack, Impact of Plague, 287-91. See above.
Once households were quarantined, their social networking links would suffer immediately. As the urban authorities increasingly became nervous about the spread of the plague particularly in the early seventeenth century, even a small incidence of infection outside the town raised concerns about migration.\textsuperscript{149} As movement to the countryside was restricted, the life lines of the poor suffered enormously. Such a problem was recognised by the Mayor in 1593 when he wrote to Mr. Skeffington of Skeffington that "nowe dyvers of the inferiour sorte . . . crowe so poore for want of trafique, that they have more nede to be relyved than to take anything from them, which greatly greeveth me to see."\textsuperscript{150} Unlike the demographic impact, we are not able to quantify the social impact on the poor, but the implications of official policies will be more readily recognised as we clarify the pattern and significance of urban social organisation.\textsuperscript{151}

To sum up, although fragmented evidence does not allow us to draw a comprehensive picture of the plague impact in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester as a whole, our tentative analysis suggests that the frequency of the incidence of the plague in early seventeenth century Leicester was relatively low.\textsuperscript{152} We are less confident in saying anything about the scale of impact in the late sixteenth century, because of the lack of demographic sources. Even the most severe incidence of around 1610 did not produce as great a mortality rate as larger provincial towns such as Bristol, Exeter, and Norwich. If the severity of the impact had anything to do with the density and scale of poor households, as in these large towns, it is not surprising that the impact was relatively

\textsuperscript{149}It is important to note the frequency of the epidemic. Many of the freemen in 1610, for example, probably remembered the devastating situation less than 20 years before.

\textsuperscript{150}Kelly, \textit{Visitation}, 15. In fact, at the personal level, the county elite seem to have expressed much more genuine concern about their families who lived in the infected town. See the letter by Thomas Dilke, knight in 1610. Kelly, \textit{Visitation}, 29.

\textsuperscript{151}See ch. 7.

\textsuperscript{152}A substantial amount of relief money was recorded in the chamberlain's account concerning the 1607 plague, but there is no evidence for mortality crisis in the parish registers. See. Kelly, \textit{Visitation}, 22.
mild in Leicester. In terms of social structure and migration patterns, there were no factors which stimulated the spread of the disease as much as in provincial capitals.

The most severe outbreak in 1610-11 showed little sign of area specific mortality in Leicester. As a middle-sized town with only one clearly suburban parish, social boundaries between urban parishes may have been more blurred than those in the larger towns consisting of a number of socially different parishes. Wilshere points to the figures in the parish registers probably understating the actual scale of death, because those who died in pest houses, such as the one in St. Nicholas' parish, were not included.\textsuperscript{153}

So far as its social consequences are concerned, the experiences of Leicester shared many aspects with other provincial towns. The population deficit and the economic setbacks due to these crises were probably not so significant in terms of the long-term development of the community. What were important were people's reactions to the outbreak. The plague policies highlighted social divisions between the civic elite and the dependent poor. However, the actual response of townsmen to the epidemic and the public actions can by no means be explained in such a polarised manner. The reactions of the middling sort were often not dissimilar to the lower sort in the context of neighbourhood, friendship, kin and nuclear households.\textsuperscript{154} In complex layers of social structure, the diverse patterns of human behaviour appeared in various forms according to their passion and reason.

By contrast, centuries of the history of the plague also left significant social landmarks influencing the development of social organisation in the long term. The plague incidence necessarily highlighted the problem of the poor, whose existence would have been taken for granted. News of an outbreak and compulsory taxation were constant reminders to the leading townsmen of their power and obligations according to the social hierarchy of the community. In fact, throughout the late Tudor and early Stuart periods,

\textsuperscript{153}Wilshere, 'Plague', 59.
\textsuperscript{154}Stack, Impact of Plague, 284-95.
the social milieu of the civic leaders was not so isolated from the lesser inhabitants. These life threatening events obliged them to review their social positions in relation to the society in which they lived, and such a recognition also became a driving-force for implementing new social attitudes.

5. Poor Migrants

If the plague and un-employment posed typical urban social problems, their scale was significantly influenced by the degree of demographic mobility. As has been hinted at earlier, population movement was an essential urban trait, characterising the patterns of the urban economy, household structure and urban growth. In the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, however, it was not always perceived in a positive light by contemporaries. Poor migrants, in particular, were officially regarded as the cause of epidemics, poverty and disorder.

The problem of poor migrants attracted the attention of Tudor and Stuart policy makers as well as later historians. It has been argued that the late sixteenth century saw the proliferation of poor migrants, mainly reflecting the social, economic and demographic pressures of the period. The migration pattern was also characterised by a large number of long-distance subsistence migrants, though detailed local studies suggest other patterns of local migration. We now know that many of the vagrants travelled in


156 J. Patten, 'Patterns of Migration and Movement of labour to Three Pre-industrial East Anglian Towns', in Migration and Society, eds., Clark and Souden (1987); Peter Clark and David Souden, 'Introduction', in Ibid.
small numbers, and had a variety of occupational backgrounds, comprising pedlars, 
chapmen, apprentices and servants; they were predominantly single young male, but 
females also became vagrants; a large proportion of them moved from the North to the 
South and from the West to the East covering long distances; and finally, they were 
attracted to towns holding markets and fairs, and offering a range of employment 
opportunities. It has been argued that vagrancy posed serious social problems to the civic 
leaders, who were increasingly alarmed by its negative social consequences.157

The consensus of historians should not overshadow the problems of 
interpreting fragmented evidence, however. While the studies clearly establish the 
patterns of poor migrants, we still know little about their scale in Tudor and Stuart 
England.158 The evidence used for estimating the number of vagrants, for example, 
comes from the records of arrest, examinations, indictments, and passports.159 We are 
not able to distinguish between the effect of law enforcement and/or ideological change 
and the actual increase of poor migrants. Nor can we assess the number of vagrants who 
escaped arrest. Time and regional differences were also important variables. The large 
scale of immigrants compensated for the mortality crises which often hit the towns. The 
number of poor migrants also fluctuated according to the seasons.160

The problem is most serious in tracing the pattern of migration in the long 
term. If the absolute scale of late Tudor and early Stuart migrants cannot be established, 
how can we be so sure that the number of vagrants rapidly proliferated in the Tudor and 
early Stuart period? Such a question may become more pertinent as medievalists find 
similar circumstantial evidence in the fifteenth century to that seen by historians in the late 
sixteenth century, i.e., high demographic pressure and economic crises.161

160Ibid., 74-5; 222; Slack, 'Vagrants and Vagrancy', 60.
161For this point, see Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 226-33. M. K. McIntosh, 'Local Responses to the 
Poor in Late Medieval and Tudor England', *Continuity and Change* 3 (1988).
Another problem lies in the definition of vagrancy. Five aspects have been suggested, according to the official criteria for vagrants: lack of regular income, able-bodied, un-employed, rootless, and lawless. Some historians have argued that the rigorous application of these criteria to poor migrants characterised Tudor and early Stuart vagrancy as a crime of status. It is not entirely clear, however, if the policy itself increased the number of vagrants, or whether it responded to the actual proliferation of these types of people. Arguably, in the former case, inevitably the number of vagrants increased, not only because they broadened the category, but also because many arrests and subsequent expulsions led people to wander the country. Nevertheless, the loose application of the concept of vagrancy tends to oversimplify other types of poor migrants who were not vagrants.

Setting aside these problems, there is little question that poor migrants and vagrants were part of the social landscape of late Tudor and early Stuart towns. The growing concern of civic leaders about vagrancy was expressed by ordinances, by-laws and chamberlains' accounts in which the cost of enforcement was normally recorded. As early as 1511, a proclamation was made against vagabonds, while 3s. 4d. was spent in the town on writing the statutes of labourers, vagabonds and beggars in 1517-18.\textsuperscript{121} According to the King's commandment, instructions were set up in four parts of the town for the recognition that the borough authorised in executing the statute of vagabonds and beggars in 1520.\textsuperscript{122} In the ordinance of 1553, the official policy of the town to exclude a particular group of itinerants became clear. Whereas "yt shal be lawfull to all strangers communge and resorting to this towne to haue ther lawfull pastyme within the inns .. ", the reception of vagrants was outlawed.\textsuperscript{123} Although there is no way of knowing how rigorously these actions were implemented, the development of national legislation penetrated the urban policy of the borough before Elizabeth's reign.

\textsuperscript{121} RIBL, vol. 3, 3, 8.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid. 13.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid. 76.
The wandering poor constituted a significant part of the people who were arrested and examined by the urban magistrates. Unlike the records of vagrants' indictments and passports, the link between crime and poverty among examinees is not always obvious. In the majority of cases, however, the records suggest that examinees did not have stable jobs in their original place of residence, or clear business interests officially recognised by the authorities. It is safe to argue, therefore, that the confessions of those who were arrested and examined by the authorities probably give us some idea of the migration patterns of the wandering poor. In the case of Leicester, as Beier's study has shown, nearly half of the itinerants came from an area within 50 miles, while many came from the West Midlands and Yorkshire.165

The vagrancy policies of the local government, let alone statutory acts, do not epitomise the social reality of poor itinerants in the locality. A. L. Beier's study on Tudor and early Stuart vagrants suggests that poor migrants were systematically transformed into social outcasts by the ruling elite.166 While the official views and public actions are well articulated in regarding vagrancy as a crime of status, the attitudes of ordinary people towards the wandering poor remained to be explained. Evidence for the growing distrust of the mendicant and a rising antagonism against poor itinerants is normally anecdotal and quantitatively insufficient to compare with the situation in the late Middle Ages.167 Was the official concept of vagrancy accepted by the majority of the townsfolk? Did vagrants find the town an increasingly difficult place to stay?

Firstly, let us isolate ourselves from the rhetoric of the ruling elite who were anxious about the proliferation of vagrants, and assess the extent of actual law enforcement in the town numerically. Table 4.5 shows the average number of migrants who were either examined or expelled from major provincial towns due to the vagrancy laws. Though it varied according to different localities, the average number of expelled or

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165 Beier, Masterless Men, 212, 219.
166 Ibid, 6-12.
167 Clark and Souden, 'Introduction', 21-2; Beier, Masterless Men, 119-22
Table 4.5
The Number of Vagrants Examined or Expelled From Late 16th and Early 17th Century Provincial Towns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>no. vagrants expelled</th>
<th>average per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salisbury (1598-1638)</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colchester (1630-1664)</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich (1630-1635)</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>no. itinerants examined</th>
<th>average per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chester (1571-1630)</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading (1623-1641)</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick (1580-1587)</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester (1584-1640)</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Slack, 'Vagrants and Vagrancy', 50; Beier, *Masterless*, 225
suspected vagrants seems to have been relatively low.\(^{168}\) It is impossible to estimate the total number of poor itinerants who came to these towns, but the impression we have from these crude figures does not necessarily fit with the assertion that hordes of vagrants were systematically arrested and expelled from these towns.

The vagrancy law and its enforcement certainly had much wider implications than the crude figures calculated from our records. They may have had a long-term impact on townspeople's perceptions of the wandering poor. Whipping and ear-boring may well have had some symbolic effect, transforming the image of vagrants.\(^{169}\) Constables and watches may have effectively narrowed the social and economic opportunities that the wandering poor enjoyed. It is plausible to argue that they were gradually marginalised in the community during the course of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century.

What would exclude a particular social group from a society as a whole is not the legislation but town inhabitants themselves. If poor itinerants were marginalised, from whom were they marginalised? As has been hinted earlier, late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester was not only the community of established freemen. Not many were exempt from structural poverty. Nearly half of the population were un-free. Some of them had settled down recently, and many of them originated from outside the town. There is little evidence to show that these people readily complied with stringent government policies. Perhaps the signs of a marginal society can be observed in the development of the suburbs, as has been shown earlier. Even in this case, however, the effect of exclusive civic attitudes was far from complete. Cheaper rent and geographical convenience could also have played a part in their development. Vagrants came inside the walls, and hunted out illicit alehouses in the town.

\(^{168}\) However, Beier neither shows the number of sample cases in his records for each locality, nor indicates the possibility of the records being lost.

\(^{169}\) *RBL*, vol. 3, 92, 133, 195; Beier, *Masterless Men*, 159-69.
Although the official view of vagrancy stigmatised the image of the itinerant poor, vagrants were important participants in the urban economy, creating a range of demand and contributing to material supply. According to Beier's sample, well over 30 per cent of the itinerants arrested in Leicester were involved in some kind of business activities, both legal and illegal. The occupational backgrounds of poor migrants were not confined to chapmen, pedlars and servants. More importantly, evidence gleaned from this analysis indicates that the economic activities of poor itinerants took many forms, regardless of their confessed occupations. Bryan Wilson was a servant in Selby, Yorkshire. In 1600, when he was arrested in Leicester on the way back from London where his parents lived, he sold a plate which was given by his mother to be given to his sister. A silk weaver in Warwick departed the town to look for his wife with 40s in his purse on 14 August 1600. He told the magistrates that he bought his shirt band, stockings and shoes in Leicester. In 1616, William King, mariner, had recently come from Burnham in the county of Essex to sell the fustian doublet which he bought from a stranger in Bedford.

The overwhelming majority of court cases show how poor itinerants engineered urban business by using their social links. Despite the official efforts to implement the vagrancy law, the wandering poor constituted a significant part of the local social system in late Tudor and early Stuart towns. According to Beier's study, around 33 per cent of the itinerants who were examined by the Leicester magistrates were involved in business with their kin, friends and acquaintances. In 1616, a

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170 BRII/18/14/44; 18/15/347.
172 BRII/18/5/789.
173 BRII/18/4/424.
174 BRII/18/5/742.
175 Beier, Masterless Men, 220.
Wellingborough spinster told the magistrate that she had come to the Leicester market to look for her aunt.\textsuperscript{176} The wife of a Worcester yeoman came to the Leicester fair to meet her husband after visiting her friend in Lincolnshire.\textsuperscript{177}

Even if they were not able to rely on such social links, the town offered a number of social and economic facilities.\textsuperscript{178} According to Beier's study, around 50 per cent stayed either in alehouses or inns, and about 30 per cent were taken in by the townspeople below gentry rank.\textsuperscript{179} In 1603, when a poor migrant from Nottinghamshire was asked to carry some clothes to Leicester by John Green, he was specifically told to go to the sign of the White Horse near the Abbey.\textsuperscript{180}

A sample of cases examined suggests, therefore, that rapid demographic movement in the town was more structured than historians have expected. Certainly, there were many activities of the wandering poor which could threaten the urban community. Their illicit trade could counteract the formal economic structure; they could spread epidemic diseases; they could encroach on the entitlement of the local poor for public and private relief. On the other hand, poor migrants, who needed temporary lodgings and food and drink, were good customers for poor townspeople and even the lesser craftsmen. Their information on other towns was essential for the sedentary poor seeking economic opportunities.

6. The Practical World of the Poor

In the previous sections, we have examined the scale and the patterns of poverty and their social consequences in a middle-sized county town. Destitution was a matter for a greater

\textsuperscript{176}\textsuperscript{177}\textsuperscript{178}\textsuperscript{179}Beier, Masterless Men, 79-80, 223.
\textsuperscript{180}\textsuperscript{180}\textsuperscript{180}\textsuperscript{180}BRII/18/8/382.
part of the urban population, including not only the wage earners, but also the lesser craftsmen and victuallers. The experience of poverty was much wider and more dynamic than what was defined by Tudor and early Stuart legislation. Ageing, unemployment, and epidemic diseases threatened, directly or indirectly, the majority of townspeople at certain stages of their life-cycle. The condition of the sedentary poor was affected not only by inflation and subsistence migrants, but also by a series of public policies which effectively highlighted the problems of the poor, but generally failed to contain them.

How did the poor survive? Notwithstanding historians' preoccupations with issues concerning social deprivation in Tudor and Stuart England, this obvious question still remains to be answered. One reason may be that historians tend to see large scale poverty as an unusual phenomenon which needed to be corrected, and fail to interpret it as a normal state in an industrially backward society in the pre-modern world. Deprivation is discussed mostly in the context of crime and disorder. In fact, such approaches unduly narrow our analytical scope in examining poverty as a social reality.

The aim of our discussion here is to liberate our interpretation of the social organisation of paupers from the framework of illegitimacy. We will explore the social and economic lives of the indigent which had been spontaneously shaped by the circumstances created by the structure of an urban community before the Civil War. That there are insufficient historical sources for our task is certainly evident. On the other hand, one should not readily presuppose that the social history of the lower social orders cannot be written. Court records, for example, provide us with significant insights into the social and economic lives of those who would otherwise have been invisible in documents. Of course, there are no impeccable historical records. Another obvious problem is that there is no way of verifying the stories of examinees, deponents or even officials, and truth has little power in the face of belief, greed, vanity and passion.181

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Given the absence of alternative sources, however, one must exploit the strength of the records rather than unduly stress their weakness. Firstly, the records include information not only about crimes or misdemeanours, but also about peripheral activities by the accusers and the accused as well as their acquaintances. Secondly, evidence in the court records reveals the significant range of townsman's actions. There are reasons to believe that the range is significant. With increasingly vigilant authorities, some types of activities were prosecuted not because they were rare, but because they were prevalent. Additionally, recent studies on crime and litigation suggest that illegitimate activities were more prevalent than one can estimate from the number of the prosecutions in that these represent only those which crimes were discovered or persistently pursued by victims.\textsuperscript{182} Exoneration and arbitration were probably no less common than formal accusations in local and national courts. One cannot escape the conclusion, furthermore, that the townspeople probably adapted their behaviour and their concept of legitimacy to the current state of the criminal justice system.\textsuperscript{183}

(i) Crime, Trade and Entertainment

Order in towns was increasingly threatened by a growing number of the poor.\textsuperscript{184} This was the official view of the civic elite who wanted to legitimise their rule according to


\textsuperscript{184}For a general discussion, see Peter Clark and Paul Slack, eds., Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700 (1972); John Pound, Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England (1971); Underdown, Revel, Riot, and Rebellion, 9-43.
their own social and political values. Order not only facilitated their practical lives, but also gave meaning to the conscience of the elite, which claimed to be fit to govern the rest of the population. Whereas the concept of order was normally tenable for the urban rulers, it was not necessarily so for the lesser townsmen. Unlike the former, they normally had no power to justify their activities and behaviour within the context of the formal structure, which was formed and often reformed by the civic elite themselves.

What was labelled as disorderly in relation to the social problems of the poor generally took two forms in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Leicester. Firstly, there were social and economic activities which developed outside the formal civic structure. Some of them were regarded as professional or petty crime. Others constituted social and economic misdemeanours such as drunkenness, night walking, and bastardy which were increasingly exposed to new regulatory legislation during our period. Another form of disorder was less frequent but more obvious than the first group, i.e., riots and rebellion. Our task is to reinterpret these allegedly unlawful activities against the background of the social cul-de-sac of the lives of the urban poor.

It is difficult to discuss the crime statistics in Leicester, since there are no reliable judicial records, such as presentments and indictments, which would supplement our evidence from pre-trial examinations. However, considering the social and economic climate of the town, it seems likely that crime in Leicester followed the general pattern of that in early modern England. J. A. Sharpe has argued that the pattern of crime saw a remarkable continuity from the Middle Ages, with a clear predominance of property crime. The pattern was also influenced by factors such as rising state control, the religious reformation, and demographic pressure entailing social polarisation. Consequently, Sharpe has maintained that the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods saw

185 A. V. Judges has pointed out that "the improvements in the government of town and state in the early sixteenth century accentuated an existing problem by causing men to set up higher ideals of public order and security." The Elizabethan Underworld, ed., A. V. Judges (1930), xvi.

186 A series of laws against victualling houses and their customers was a notable example. RHL, vol. 3, 108-9.
the proliferation of regulatory offences and petty theft. With similar factors influencing the community of Leicester, it is hard to resist the view that paupers’ activities in the town were also increasingly labelled as disorderly.

If employment opportunities dwindled in the urban economy, abundant goods and materials in the town lured the desperate poor to illegal activities. Here, we have to confront our evidence to speculate on the scale of the misdemeanours which do not appear in our records. What is certain, however, is that the town was full of opportunities to cheat if individuals intended to. Contemporary housing structures and domestic service allowed many people to have easy access to other people’s property.

The contrasting sets of social reality constructed by the civic elite and the indigent inevitably fragmented the legitimacy of the former’s rule, though both parties probably had a good number of sympathisers who moved between the two. Such legitimacy became increasingly obstructive for the many whose living was not guaranteed in the official framework of the urban community. Clearly, impoverishment was neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for offence. Both private and public relief probably eased the situation of a handful of the poor in the community. More importantly, the fragmented income of paupers was to a large extent lawfully supplemented by mutual support from kin, friends and acquaintances. For them, social relationships were an important financial factor in surviving in an unstable, illiquid economy. Nonetheless, a growing suspicion among the ruling elite of consumption, trade and entertainment among the indigent is a clear testimony to a growing social anomaly.

Opportunistic crime also provided support. One Tuesday in April, 1594, Robert Clark, a labourer, left the town around 9 o’clock at night for a pasture ground between Cranoe and Hallaton, and he plucked the wool off the sheep he drove there with his brother Abraham. On the following Wednesday, he came back to the town, and sold

188 Tronrud has argued that some paupers in three small towns in Kent also resorted to theft or illegal trades for their subsistence. 'Tronrud, 'Response', 11-2.
the plucked wool to two housewives and earned 30 pence.  

Stealing live stock or its products was one of the typical forms of crime in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester, which was located in a major pastoral region. At first sight, the case merely gives an example of a labourer arrested as the suspect in a property crime. If one interprets the case in the social context of the urban poor, however, the information is more revealing. We have seen the scale and the hardship of the wage-earning population in our period, affecting people like the Clark brothers. This case can be seen as an example of the survival means to which the urban poor resorted.

What is significant in this case were the two housewives who bought the wool, seemingly without questioning its origin. In fact, evidence in pre-trial examinations shows that many suspects managed to sell their suspicious goods and products not only at the market place, but also to housewives and servants. In some cases, suspects seem to have presupposed the existence of people who would purchase their materials, regardless of their origin. In this context, our evidence is also indicative of the existence of private transactions which were more prevalent and structured than is usually recognised. There is evidence to show that the trade links of the poor were not confined to the town. In 1600, a labourer and his wife were examined concerning their dealings in corn. According to his confession, he had acquaintances in the countryside from whom he could obtain rye, barley, peas, and malts which he sold in the Leicester market. The wife also revealed that her husband sometimes carried knit hose, lace, points and pins to the country, presumably for his trade partners. In 1600, he sold a strike of wheat, which he had bought in the country, to Christopher Jenyson's daughter for 2 shillings.

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189BR.III/18/3/215.
192BR.III/18/5/836, 837.
Such an example indicates that economic activities at the market places give only a partial picture of the entire transactions taking place in the borough. In theory, the weekly market of Leicester developed as a place where freemen and rural traders exchanged goods and raw materials whereby the wealth of freemen and the town's revenue were sustained. Private transactions were illicit because they were considered to be carried out by the non-free, foreigners or short term settlers who did not pay the market tolls, and who encroached on the privileges of freemen. In fact, many of the poor probably gained from such activities, which they constituted a significant informal structure. Our evidence unveils only the tip of the iceberg. Private transactions can be recovered only when suspects were arrested or prosecuted by the victims, while lawful goods and suspicious goods which passed second hand could probably be circulated without being found.

The scale of informal transactions also helps us to explain the patterns of crime in pre-industrial England. Although there are some problems in quantifying types of crime, it has been argued that the majority of criminals were "unskilled, opportunistic, 

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193 A private house which took in many strangers for their food and lodging, often became a small shopping centre. In 1604, Joan Cradock came to the house of a Leicester butcher. She bought a gown from a woman called Ales Johnson, who was also in the house. She also told the magistrate that she bought a petticoat from a woman called Elizabeth at the same house for 4s. 6d. There was another gown which Cradock bought in the butcher's house a year and a half before. In this case, it is evident that the house had been a place where itinerant traders organised the distributed of their commodities.

BRIV/18/8/606.

194 BRIV/9/59; BRIV/9/72.

195 See, for example, Beverly Lemire, 'The Theft of Cloths and Popular Consumerism in Early Modern England', *Journal of Social History* 24 (1990/1).
having employment but need of supplement by theft, and involved in petty crime.\textsuperscript{196} The impression from evidence in pre-trial examinations in Leicester indicates that the most likely things to be stolen were those which could easily be carried and sold either privately or in the market in other places, such as clothes, dishes, and other commodities.\textsuperscript{197} In addition, Martin Ingram suggests that locals were less likely to be convicted than strangers, and had some advantage to disguise their intention by giving a plausible excuse.\textsuperscript{198} Thus Silvester Carr, who had a hat stolen from his shop, found it on the head of Richard Davye's wife. Thomas Green told the authorities that Gabriel Brooke, Carr's servant, often frequented Davye's house.\textsuperscript{199} Some stolen goods were undoubtedly used by criminals themselves. Without this demand for stolen goods in town, however, petty crime would have been less prevalent than historians believe it was.

If private transactions made a hidden contribution to the daily lives of the poor, their social activities were perceived as a major threat to the polite society of the town. As freemen organised their common meetings for the administration of the town at the Guild Hall, many of the unprivileged made their social and economic contacts at

\textsuperscript{196} The official definition of crime changed over time, and the number of cases in court records did not necessarily represent the actual volume of illicit activities. J. A. Sharpe, 'The History of Crime in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: A Review of the Field', \textit{Social History} 7 (1982), 188-93. J. A. Sharpe, \textit{Crime in Early Modern}, 176. The court records in Leicester give us the impression that well organised professional crime was relatively rare, unlike those found in the capital. Slack, \textit{Poverty and Policy}, 102; In medieval Paris, theft was committed mostly by servants, labourers, and artisans, 'often the consequence of a temporary need.' Bronislaw Geremek, \textit{The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris} (Cambridge, 1987), 97. Most typical were the cases of unorganised petty criminals such as John Farrar, who stole pewters from the house of a Manchester carpenter, making lots of noise and dropping the pewters on the street in 1618. 'Manchester Sessions. Notes of Proceedings Before Oswald Mosley (1616-1630) . . . and Other Magistrates', vol. 1: 1616-1622/23, ed., E. Axon (Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 1901), 71.

\textsuperscript{197} BRII/18/3/172, 18/6/99.

\textsuperscript{198} Ingram, 'Communities and Courts', 129-31.

\textsuperscript{199} BRII/18/14/37.
Alehouses and private houses. John Woodward's house in St. Mary's close seems to have been one of the venues for people from both town and countryside. Thus when a husbandman of Peckleton was arrested by Mr. Erick in 1618, he was playing seven cards for money with a Belgrave labour, a Syston whittawer, a Quorndon glover and a Mountsorrel chandler. However, it was often on such occasions that future informal economic activities were arranged, and information was exchanged. Here the line between work and entertainment was a fine one. In fact, it was often too fine to be interpreted as being legitimate by the authorities.

Historians have already described popular entertainment in alehouses and private houses as a contested territory between the views of urban authorities and common townsmen. As Slack has observed, the civic authorities regarded alehouses as "obvious centres of disorder, where stolen goods could be disposed of, whores picked up, money wasted and youth corrupted." The proliferation of alehouses in the town further encouraged and facilitated these activities, and the authorities were increasingly concerned about these places as the roots of illicit activities which would undermine the peace of the town.

As has been argued, however, the marginal benefit that paupers derived from a variety of services in the alehouse was much higher than the equivalent which satisfied the upper social orders. For example, the cheap food, drink, and temporary lodging provided there were absolutely essential for the indigent and strangers. The authorities of Sandwich in 1587, for example, openly accused the poor who they claimed "haunt the

200 See ch. 7.
201 BRI/18/13/341.
202 For a fuller discussion of this aspect, see ch. 7.
203 Slack, Poverty and Policy, 103; BRI/2/38.
204 BRI/18/13/341.
205 BRI/18/15/365; 18/15/373.
Comon alehouse and tipplinge howses. G. Salgado has described the alehouse as "a hotel, social club, information bureau, brothel, playhouse and, most important, receiving centre for stolen goods." For new comers, alehouses were the obvious place to start to build up new social relationships with townsmen, as two travelling rogues in East Kent "requested the goodman of the house [ale-house] with his wife to sit down and drink with them", and started to ask about the local priest, who had been drinking in the same house.

Nonetheless, there is plenty of evidence to show that the attraction of alcoholic drink was by no means socially specific. Thus before Edward Jackson, who was a gentleman in the town, committed violence against the Beaumonts, he was drinking together with Mr. Steward and Daniel Drakeford at Mr. Ive's house at around 8 o'clock at night. Robert Clarke, innholder of Lichfield, paid his fine, 5 pounds for the poor in St. Martin's parish, where he became drunk until he "was not himself". Our image of popular entertainment in alehouses seems to be somewhat distorted, mainly because of its association with the suppression of illicit premises and arrests for drunkenness and unlawful games. In reality, customers were not always vagrants and criminals, while there were a number of licensed alehouses where freemen and the lesser craftsmen entertained themselves. There is no convincing evidence to show, nor any reason to believe, that such respectable entertainment was significantly different from the sociability of the lower social orders in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester.

Heavy drinking was not only a problem among the adults. Apprentices and servants often gathered in the private house and the alehouse, where they drank and

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206 Tronrud, 'Response', 12.
208 Judges, Elizabethan Underworld, 75.
209 Kent, 'Attitudes of Members', 49.
210 BRI/18/12/157; Slack, Poverty and Policy, 103-4.
211 BRI/18/13/446.
entertained themselves. In 1612, William Cotes was unlicensed by the magistrates because butchers boys were dancing and piping at his house around 10 or 11 o'clock on the Sabbath day, and annoying many neighbours. Thomas Greene in 1620 told the magistrates that Francis Lacy, a servant to Thomas Basse, frequented to Richard Davye's house through a passage from his master's house over the backside of Green's house. Many of them seem to have been seduced by this kind of opportunity. Thus the apprentice of Nathaniel Potter was importuned by Davye to stay and have ale, although he was willing to go. Gabriel Brooke, servant to Silvester Carr, frequented to Davye's house, but allegedly, he was never like that before Davye came to the town.

Illicit activities gained momentum during the night. In 1553, the act of night walkers charged 12d. for the first time and 2s. for the second on those who "walke or go abroade" after 9 o'clock at night and after the curfew bell, but only a total of 1s. was recorded as fines for this offence in the year 1555-6. One needs to recall the insufficient public lights and the amateur officers who often neglected their official duties to oversee their own ward. It was the time when various forms of popular entertainment took place, and also when a number of illicit plans were negotiated and prepared. People often went from one alehouse or private house to the next during the night to see their friends, to obtain new information, to carry illicit goods, and to have another pot of ale, which did not last for long in one place.

In 1608, Hugh Hobson came to Leicester and became a servant to William Neile. Among other servants in the town, he seems to have been relatively well off, since he allegedly had a yearly annuity in Cheshire of £50 a year. However, his night life was not atypical among many poor inhabitants of the town, and his income seems rarely to have contributed to his material prosperity. One day, he received £3 10s. from his brother.

212 For the detail account for the youth culture, see Griffiths, 'Some Aspects'.
213 BRI/18/11/183.
214 BRI/18/14/57.
215 PBL, vol. 3, 74, 84.
216 See pp. 289-90.
beyond Kilby fields, but he spent most of the money within one month. He confessed that he spent 12d. at the Bull in the South Gate on one Friday. He was also outside the town until 11 o'clock on Shrove Tuesday, staying at one William Davies' house and a beer brewer's house before he came back to the town about 12. He seems to have indulged in dealing malt, as he sold it to Philip Stock's wife, but he idly spent 1s.217

For the urban authorities, this must have seemed a perfect illustration of the connection between the lower social orders and disorderly behaviour. What the case does not show, however, is the extent to which such behaviour was common among townsmen in general, and how it solidified their cultural identities.

It is now clear that the growing number of the marginal society in Leicester was a social myth which was consciously or unconsciously conceptualised by the exclusive culture of the urban elite. What they called illicit constituted an essentially significant part of the social and economic culture of the urban poor which was crystallised and structured in numerous informal and private urban institutions. The concept of marginal society is also untenable because the culture of the poor was far less exclusive and much more ambiguous than the authorities perceived. Slack is absolutely right to argue that the artificial divide between the two societies was not substantive: "Demarcation lines were imposed on them by the poor law and its implementers; they did not exist in reality, however." As he has argued, not all the convictions and activities of the impoverished population can be explained by their compliance with their own social code, which was fundamentally different from that of the well-to-do.218 For example, some of them existed under the auspices of leading freemen in the town. Others probably did not even question themselves as to which society they belonged to.

No less important was the fact that the life-style of the poor was also shared by a broader spectrum of the urban social order in contrast with the oligarchic and exclusive characteristics of the civic institutions of the town. Private transactions, heavy

217BRII/18/10/330.
218Slack, Poverty and Policy, 107.
drinking sessions, and various other types of night life as well as petty-crime were also carried out by the lesser craftsmen, the middling sort, and probably even some burgesses, often having social contact with their socially lower counterparts. A grocer of Canterbury was probably an established tradesman who brought 40s. and a gelding which cost him £8 at the Rochester fair. During his stay in Leicester in 1608, however, he lost substantial money when he got involved in gambling with diverse people such as Robert Norman, yeoman, and Christopher Austin, yeoman. In the same year, we hear of a clock belonging to a Leicester draper, Samuel Bonnet which he had left in Edward Benskin’s house by mistake before Christmas and which had subsequently gone missing. He told the magistrates at the pre-trial examination how it was unlawfully sold to diverse people since then. Thus we also hear that Gabriel Bordeman bought the clock from a stranger at his master, Thomas Allsopp’s cellar, and sold it to Thomas Chettell, a butcher of Leicester at Edward Benskin’s house. After Bonnet discovered his clock in Chettell’s “hand” when he came to the Bonnet’s shop, they seem to have solved the problem informally. Thus, both Bonnet, Chettell and Bordeman all gathered at Benskin’s house, and Bordeman promised to pay Chettell his money again. These cases vividly show that private transactions and popular entertainment were not only confined to a group of unprivileged people in the town. More importantly, however, the cases also demonstrate how they were based on interactions between people from various social backgrounds.

Having said all this, life in Leicester increasingly reminded the inhabitants of the distinction between the free and non-free with the introduction of numerous regulations, legislation, licences and assessments. Throughout our period, such a formal
demarcation constantly challenged the much more informal and ambiguous cultural frontiers among the urban population.

(ii) Riots and Rebellion

By contrast with such passive defiance against formal and public structures as we have seen so far, the lower social orders also resorted to more aggressive and direct actions to protect and maintain their social and economic position in the community. Peter Platte, a shoemaker, grumbled that Henry Watt, the master of the House of Correction, was an arrant knave and he would be revenged. His threatening words were also used against the Mayor and the JPs who tried to bind him to good behaviour. Such impulsive remarks are indicative of the people's clear perception of civic hierarchy and the representation of the power that interfered in their world. Grievances among some of the poor inhabitants could develop into collective actions in the form of riot under particular circumstances. It has been argued that the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries saw an increasing number of popular protests, though riots in England were generally small scale, and many of them probably escaped prosecution. Even in London, there was only one recorded food riot in 1628 during the Stuart period. Of course, regional differences can be anticipated. In Faversham, for example, a crowd gathered near the town to take away the corn with threatening speeches in 1595, 1606, and 1631. There was no sign of major popular protests in Leicester except at the time of the 1607 enclosure riots at Cotesbach. Having received the order from the county JPs to prevent the townspeople from joining the revolt, the Mayor of Leicester set special

223BRI/J/18/12/119.
224Peter Clark, 'Popular Protest and Disturbance in Kent, 1558-1640', EHR. 2nd ser., 29, no. 3 (1976), 366, 379.
226Trower, 'Response', 12.
watches and ordered "everye howsse holder to be carefull of his people." Nevertheless, more than 80 people from Leicester joined the crowd of about 5,000 people including men, women and children, who assembled in Cotesbach on 1st June. In response, the Privy Council accused them of "bringing weapons and other means of assistance", and the Royal Proclamation against these "levellers" arrived at the town on 6th June.

The diverse response of townspeople to this single incidence, however, illuminates some aspects of the urban social fabric. The development of the event can be examined from two perspectives. Firstly, as we have just seen, there were a good number of Leicester inhabitants who participated in the revolt. Occupational analysis of these participants shows that the group was largely composed of poor craftsmen and labourers. Among those who were arrested and enlisted according to the wards, 14 (17.5 per cent) were labourers and 13 (16.3 per cent) were shoemakers, constituting the two largest occupational groups. What is more intriguing is the range of occupational backgrounds. Though small in number, there were more than 20 different types of artisans and victuallers. A good number of apprentices and journeymen are found among the participants. Furthermore, several freemen were also in the group, some even with their apprentices. If there was any link between poverty and participation in the revolt, our list provides an excellent sample of the range of the impoverished able-bodied poor.

One needs to be cautious not to exaggerate the cultural symbolism of such actions. Interpreting common social backgrounds, we are tempted to argue that there was a kind of popular sympathy among the urban population for the poor peasants, who were exploited by ruthless enclosures due to the failure of the proper implementation of the Act

227 RBL, vol. 4, 62.
229 RIB/18/9/102-12, 115.
Thus Roger B. Manning sees "a disturbing glimmer of political awareness in wishing to involve urban artisans and apprentices in their protest." The actual number of participants, however, poses some question about the degree of popular sympathy. In the borough records, 80 people were listed by the magistrates. The figure is probably minimal, since many people, women and children in particular, escaped the prosecution. Even if we include all of them, however, they probably constituted only a small proportion of the impoverished population. In other words, the attitudes of the majority of the popular class towards the incident are unclear from our evidence.

The political and cultural interpretation of popular protests often fails to explain the perceptions of the people who did not participate in the events. In the case of the Midland Revolt, it is important to remember the geographical-limit of the social world of the urban poor in early Stuart Leicester. It has been noted that agricultural labour was one of the important sources of income for many of the Leicester paupers, while their social and economic lives were also characterised by frequent visits to other parts of the county. Although we cannot reproduce their individual social networks, some of these participants may have been acquainted with the people directly involved in popular protest in the southern part of the county. Arguably, there were greater emotional and practical reasons for them to take part in the action than among the rest of the populace. Yet unless one intends to make an overt ideological point, it is extremely difficult to interpret the motivation of participants from our evidence. At most, however, the participation of a small group of urban dwellers in this rural event by no means proves a clear social division between an angry populace and the civic elite.

The second action taken inside the town supports our view. A gibbet, which was set up in the market place on 6th June according to the Earl of Huntingdon's order,

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230 Elizabeth I, c.2.
231 VCH, vol. 2, 204; Manning, Village Revolts, 235, 246.
233 For example, see Yves-Marie Bercé, History of Peasant Revolts: The Social Origins of Rebellion in Early Modern France, 42.
was pulled down. Two days later, it was reported that Samuel Beswick, the town gaoler, his under keeper, and his prisoners "digge aboue and loosen the said Gibbett, and after dyvers boyes and Lewde people did swey and pull the same allmost to the Grounde . . . ." Subsequently, the gibbet had been kept in Mr. Mabbe's yard, in case "the same shoulde be stouline or cut in pieces", until 10th June when the Mayor forced Beswick to set up the gibbet again in the same place.234

Public attitude towards the incident is most illuminating here. It has already been noted that the town failed to prevent people from participating in the enclosure riot. The Mayor's action appears to have been no more than a formality as a consequence of a series of instructions by the Earl of Huntingdon to contain the disorder. Thus referring to the demolished gibbet, the Earl wrote to the Mayor that "I marvayle and your excuse for the same Childishe for that as you saye it was done by Children were not Leicester a place of government and to be governed by men of ripp age and not by the unruly stroke of youth."235 On the 13th June, the Earl of Huntingdon ordered the Mayor to stay in his house until 27th June, after accusing his "slacknes and Remysnes in his office in not strictly obeyinge and performinge his honors Commandment . . . for that he did not make dilligent enquire who did pull downe the said Gibbit, and did not comytt the offenders and cause the same to be presently sett upp ageyne."236

There seem to be several factors which could have influenced the half-hearted commitment of the urban elite. Firstly, the issue concerned the county, but not the urban jurisdiction. Secondly, the civic leaders were not too worried about the possible impact on the urban poor of the popular protest outside the town. Thirdly, the lukewarm public actions were a political gesture towards the county authorities, who tended to unduly interfere in matters in the town. None of these points are conclusive, but it seems certain

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234_ _RBL_, vol. 4, 62-3.
235_ _Ibid._, 59.
236_ _Ibid._, 61. The point about setting up the gibbet again contradicts the Mayor's statement.
that social division in the town was not the strongest factor in the riotous actions taken by a group of poor inhabitants.

The peace of Leicester was more often disturbed by group of inhabitants who adopted direct actions against individuals, often reflecting their political and economic rivalry rather than social dichotomy. Nicholas Gillott was an alderman of Leicester in the early seventeenth century. As an ironmonger, he rented his shop at the Saturday Market. Early one morning, the shop was violently pulled down and goods were carried away by George Howett, Sara, Thomas Howett, his son and many other people. The violent element of the incident was shown by Gillott’s who told the Court of Star Chamber that they were armed with weapons such as swords, daggers, pistols and axes. It is difficult to know what caused the struggle, but according to the fragmented answer of the defendant, it might have been something to do with the location of the shop. Both were ironmongers, and yet there was a clear difference in the status of the two: George Howett seems to have been one of the burgesses and Gillott was effectively Howell’s tenant.237

Such direct actions as that described above do not necessarily reflect a clear division between the rulers and the ruled. The record does not reveal who were many others who took part in this riot, but it seems likely that Howell did not have a great problem assembling servants, apprentices, and labourers working for him. Their participation was partly encouraged by loyalty to their master as well as grievance against his enemy, who was likely to be one of the leading townsmen. As this example shows, urban riots in Leicester exemplify the array of social relationships between townsmen which normally do not come to the surface in our historical records. Motivation for direct action was often cultivated within different interest groups whose make-up did not necessarily coincide with obvious administrative boundaries such as freedom and apprenticeship.

237PRO STAC8/157/17.
7. Conclusion

Historians have no difficulty in finding evidence for the causes of poverty in late Tudor and early Stuart towns. The birth, death and illness of household members, lack of stable employment and a large scale subsistence migration clearly caused the problem of insolvency, and the people of Leicester were certainly no exception. It is the domain of the perceptions of poverty, however, that is less clear in historical records, although much has been said about official reactions to the social problems of the period. Due to the limited amount of quantifiable evidence, the achievement of our analysis is also modest. It has attempted to present a range of perceptions and reactions within the limit of what can be deduced from our sources rather than provide a general explanation as to the implications of poverty for townsman as a whole. Nevertheless, our discussion does strongly suggest that indigence was not just a feature of an unprivileged marginal society within the late Tudor and early Stuart town. The experience and threat of poverty criss-crossed the social and occupational demarcations which normally stratified the society.

Poverty was familiar to the majority of townsman. The physical distance between the have and the have-nots was much closer than that of modern industrial society. Even if some townsman did not fall into the poverty trap, many of their friends, relatives and acquaintances probably did. It is inconclusive to argue therefore that poverty determined social and cultural demarcations. The authorities attempted to tackle the problems by articulating and denouncing the social and cultural values of the lower social orders, but, in reality, one can only find a weak sense of exclusion from their social domains. The different reactions of the indigent indicates the pluralism of the culture of the urban poor. Many made informal social and economic arrangements throughout their lives, but these probably did not constitute a marginal society or a distinct popular culture. Rather the prospect of individual paupers in urban life was significantly influenced by the extent to which they were able to exploit their social networks.
As the preceding chapters have clearly shown, Leicester was a socially stratified society with a population not only growing in number, but also replacing itself rapidly. The people's residence was partly structured according to the different spatial functions of the town, but such spatial division was not necessarily exclusive socially or occupationally. In addition, many of the urban population were not only susceptible to poverty, but also exposed to the governance of authorities. Although the authorities attempted to restrict people's reactions to their social condition, they could not entirely subdue their reactions to law enforcement. Under these circumstances, one wonders how the social relationships of townsmen were organised, and what patterns governed the daily lives of thousands of the people living in a geographically concentrated area.
Ch. 5
The Social Impact of Formal Institutions: Corporation and Gilds

1. Introduction

With increasing social problems and the growing pressure from the national authorities, there came a shift in the balance between the influences of different formal institutions whereby leading aldermen, burgesses and lesser freemen retained their identities and power. It was not so much social and demographic problems in themselves, however, which caused urban instability. Arguably, communities appeared unstable because a new set of disputes was born and inspired by a series of public actions in response to changing social and economic conditions. The urban population responded to these actions differently according to the levels of institutional structures to which they belonged.

Recent local studies have highlighted the stable aspects of urban communities by reinterpreting the structural importance of urban government as represented by the council, gilds, parishes and wards.\(^1\) It might be argued, however, that the terms stability or instability are not suitable terminology to explain the

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\(^1\) For example, it has been argued that gilds helped connect the households of gildsmen with a wider urban sphere by becoming the subordinate institutions of the urban authorities whereby their social and economic policies were implemented. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, 106, 108, 116; Clark and Slack, *English Towns*, 108-9, 116, 131. The recent debate over the social organisation of Elizabethan London has suggested that disagreement and friction between the freemen were largely arbitrated within the formal structure of the trade gilds. S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989); Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*; Pulliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, 252-3. The corporation of Worcester attempted to arbitrate conflicts between the different trade companies. Dyer, *Worcester*, 150.
dynamics of an urban community. For example, consensus reached within the formal sphere of government may have concealed any contentious elements which exited.\(^2\)

Furthermore, the concept of the stability of urban communities should also take into account the un-free inhabitants and strangers, whose number was significantly large. It is important to note that the state of formal institutions only partially explains the situation of those who were indifferent to the stability pursued by the civic elite. For them, stability might not necessarily have been imperative, because many of those who were engaged in urban business routinely faced conflicts and tensions which also constituted a significant part of their urban values and identities.\(^3\)

It needs to be noted that the ways in which their urban consciousness was formed were different from the ways in which it was pursued by the privileged. This may also explain why towns attracted sizeable immigrants with little regard to economic and social conditions.\(^4\)

The aim of the following discussion is to highlight not only a number of conflicting factors in the formal structure of a middle-sized English town, but also the

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\(^2\)The records such as town minutes tend to give the impression that various matters were agreed amicably, and that the members were all content with the results of the meetings. In fact, informal arrangement seems to have prevailed behind the formal decision. For example, a group of burgesses and constables in Nottingham informally met in the Spice Hall in order to influence the decision in the Hall next morning concerning the lease of the Tythe Haye in 1587-8. *RDN*, vol. 4, 247.

\(^3\)See Introduction.

\(^4\)This is not meant to suggest that there were not different degrees of communal integration. Like large-scale post-industrial cities, a town could remain a town even if communal sense disintegrated. It seems to me, however, that describing a town as stable or unstable tends to misrepresent reality. Such an approach also presupposes that a town would become unstable when its structure, largely protecting a dominant type or types of social and cultural values represented by civic leaders, senior gildsmen or freemen, is challenged by those who had a different set of values. In reality, however, the town continued to attract a substantial number of population regardless of the transition of dominant social and cultural values, in so far as it generated social and economic values which satisfied their desires. Therefore, the crucial point is not to label a town by the word stability or instability, but to demonstrate how a new set of values in the town affected the urban structure which, nonetheless, continued to attract a large number of population.
characteristics of the major urban institutions which helped co-ordinate complex and
dynamic social, economic and political relationships. As has been shown, Leicester
was characterised by a large-scale mobile population, as a result of its intensive mutual
economic and social relationships with the hinterlands. The social significance of the
urban formal structure has to be examined in the context of such population dynamics,
including those who were not directly involved in the formal institutions, but who
were nonetheless influenced by their power. In short, the following argument will be
presented in the hope that the influence of the urban formal institutions will be
reassessed in the context of wider social and economic activities in a provincial town
rather than simply in terms of the organisation of the privileged inhabitants. 5

2. The Common Hall

(i) The Patterns of Public Actions

Leicester's population was frequently exposed to the introduction of new regulations,
the revival of old legislation and the establishment of new social and economic
apparatus during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. Decisions and
agreements at the Common Hall often had significant implications not only for the
interests of the aldermen and the burgesses, but also for the social and economic

5 Most local studies discuss the social functions of formal institutions in the context of the social
organisation of freemen. For example, see Phythian-Adams, Desolation. Factual evidence concerning
the formal structure of Leicester has already been used by several historians to explain the development
of the governing body and the trade gilds of the town. See Billson, 123-39; VCH, vol. 4, 33-7; S.H.
Skillington, 'The Extant Certificates of Leicester Gilds', TLAS 14 (1925-6); RE. Unlike that of the
records of Coventry, evidence concerning the development of the Leicester gilds in the late middle ages
and the early modern period is not satisfactory. There is a great gap in the civic records in the fifteenth
century, and the gild records are poor for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
activities which were carried out by the urban population in general. Public actions, explicitly or implicitly, favoured one social group at the expense of another, and those in Leicester were no exception. Therefore, although it is impossible to measure precisely the extent of the short-term impact of each action on individual townsmen, one may be able to demonstrate the lingering effect of new legislation or the influential attitudes of the urban elite on the pattern of social relationships.

Whereas we are relatively well informed about the administrative development of municipal government, along with the pattern of numerous social and economic regulations during our period, not many local studies have systematically examined the ebb and flow of the implementation of urban social and economic policies over time. Historians have amply shown the major concerns among the urban elite in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century to be such issues as poverty, economic competition, food distribution, and public order. Local debate over these matters was inspired not only by legislative development at the national level, but also by the local politicking and the growing consciousness of public duties. Given these complex factors, we ought to question when a particular action was taken, how long it remained effective, and to what extent the urban rulers retained their interest in the matter over time. So far as studies on middle-sized towns are concerned, these questions remain to be answered.

On July 6, 1593, William Dethick, the Leicester town clerk, wrote, "At this tyme nothingse agreed upon worth recordinge" in the Hall Book. As this entry shows, the major administrative and legislative decisions and agreements reached by the

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6 A similar approach has been used in the statistical analysis of the cases dealt with by the borough court showing the shifting attention of authorities from one type of crime to another over time. F. F. Foster, The Politics of Stability: A Portrait of the Rulers in Elizabethan London (1977), 88-9.


Mayor, the aldermen and the burgesses were normally recorded in "the Hall Books", the minutes of the borough. As administrative tasks grew in complexity, the importance of the town clerk and his records was also enhanced. In 1572, therefore, the annual fees for the clerk were raised to 4 nobles per year, "more wages then euer hath byn paide . . .". Moreover, the careful keeping of the administrative records was ensured by ordinance three years later: the new officials, the new members of the Forty Eight, and the new freemen had to pay designated fees to the clerk for recording their names in the Hall Book. In 1585, the town clerk further swore to keep the records and evidence of the town safely. Consequently, the quality of the records was at its best from the year 1572 up to 1607 when the distinguished clerk, William Dethick, undertook the record-keeping.

For the purposes of contemporary historians, the town minutes are the most important source in unravelling the characteristics of the formal activities of the civic elite. The arrangement of entries in the Hall Books can be divided into two parts. On the one hand, the Books include the entries concerning the regular business of the borough authorities such as the assizes of candles and ale and the appointment of urban officials. The collection of subsidies, of the tenth and the fifteenth, and the administration of post horses were also regularly entered in the records, reflecting the town government as an agent of the Crown. Along with these entries, on the other hand, the town clerk kept a record of the issues which were raised, discussed, and

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9BR/1/2/209; RBL, vol. 3, 137.
10BR/1/1/414; RBL, vol. 3, 159.
11BR/1/2/414. The town minutes were often examined by the Mayor as a summary of the legislative history of the town. J. H. Thomas, Town Government in the Sixteenth Century (New York, 1969), 25.
12The record-keeping of his successors was less extensive than that of Dethick, but no explanation is given.
adjudicated at the meetings during each mayoral year in the form of order, agreement, and memorandum. It is the latter entries with which we are concerned here.\textsuperscript{13}

From the outset, one has to accept that evidence in the Hall Books does not provide a comprehensive picture of the formal meetings of the borough for two reasons. Firstly, the process of discussion and the details of the outcome of voting in the Guildhall were not normally recorded, except for the ambiguous use of words such as "majority" or "divided".\textsuperscript{14} The burgesses must have spent more time on some issues than on others; debate over controversial issues probably became extremely lively. When the Company met on 21 November, 1595, for example, while the members unanimously agreed to enforce the brewers' ordinal, no assize was declared, for the hall was split into twenty-five against twenty-three over the common rates for ale.\textsuperscript{15}

The atmosphere of the hall was often not so dissimilar to the situation in the neighbouring town, Northampton, where it was ordered that those "whoesoever of this Assemblie shall come out of their places or from off their seats more than one by one to speak", and those who made "anie noyse whiles one is in speakeinge" had to pay 12 pence fine.\textsuperscript{16} Secondly, some, though a small number, of the outcomes of the formal meetings were separately recorded in loose papers, which would be bound into the Hall Papers at a later period.\textsuperscript{17} Consequently, the limited space of the town minutes

\textsuperscript{13}The first page of each mayoral year lists the names of the mayor, JPs., the stewards of the fair, coroners, and chamberlains. This page is normally followed by lists of the aldermen and burgesses on the next pages. The names of new auditors and testers were normally recorded in the subsequent pages, together with the assizes of ale and candles. From the year 1587/8 onwards, the names of ward officials were also listed regularly. At the end of each mayoral year, the names of new freemen were recorded.

\textsuperscript{14}When the common hall rejected a recommendation by the Duchy concerning the new MP, "some fife or sixe of thelders agreed . . . But by the mooste and greatest parte, with the consent of Mr. Maior", disagreed. BRII/1/3/79; RBL, vol. 3, 290.

\textsuperscript{15}BRII/1/3/118-9; RBL, vol. 3, 322.

\textsuperscript{16}RBNr, vol. 2, 20.

\textsuperscript{17}RBL, vol. 3, lxiii-lxiv.
allowed the town clerk to put down only partial, though significant, aspects of the total business conducted at the formal meetings.

Table 5.1 shows the distribution of the issues discussed and agreed at the town council, and subsequently entered into the Hall Books between 1572 and 1607. The aim of this analysis is to see the overall trend of the urban business in which the urban elite were engaged at the most senior formal institution of the borough. The analysis does not intend to provide conclusive statistical data as to the contribution of each category to business as a whole, because the sample is too small and the criteria used for the categorisation are too arbitrary to draw any firm conclusion. A decision concerning payment for a pavement, for example, can be categorised either as "public amenity" or as "financial matters". This example leads us to another crucial methodological problem of the analysis: the issues which had financial significance for the municipal government may have been over-represented regardless of the urban elite's direct concern with the content of the issues. In other words, the resulting figures may not necessarily reflect what was at stake in the town government, but the general interest of the urban elite in the balance of the urban financial resources.

Nevertheless, the figures in the table indicate some broad patterns. The council was the place where policies concerning external relationships and internal affairs were discussed and determined, and the influence of the council extended to almost every part of civic life during the period concerned. In addition, it was also the institution which defined the rights and obligations of leading citizens, thereby constituting a kind of society of urban elite. These functions were not necessarily unique to this period, but the table clearly shows that their influence intensified around the turn of the century.

As has been noted, issues, such as relationships with the county magnates, parliamentary elections, military requirements, and the application of the new charters constituted the major concerns of the Leicester civic leaders. In particular, the royal

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18See pp. 48-56.
Table 5.1
The Pattern of Public Matters Discussed at the Town Council, 1572-1607

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1572-9 no. (%)</th>
<th>1579-86 no. (%)</th>
<th>1586-93 no. (%)</th>
<th>1593-1600 no. (%)</th>
<th>1600-7 no. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship with External Authorities</strong></td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
<td>7 (14)</td>
<td>13 (10)</td>
<td>27 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution</strong></td>
<td>22 (22)</td>
<td>24 (26)</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
<td>30 (23)</td>
<td>29 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Town Lands</strong></td>
<td>12 (12)</td>
<td>11 (12)</td>
<td>13 (26)</td>
<td>23 (17)</td>
<td>34 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Financial Matters</strong></td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>18 (14)</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom</strong></td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>8 (9)</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>5 (4)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Actions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public amenity</td>
<td>10 (10)</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>5 (4)</td>
<td>7 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban economy</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
<td>9 (10)</td>
<td>5 (10)</td>
<td>24 (18)</td>
<td>7 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor relief</td>
<td>18 (17)</td>
<td>14 (15)</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
<td>7 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public order</td>
<td>9 (9)</td>
<td>8 (9)</td>
<td>5 (10)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious life</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other legislative matters</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Actions Total</strong></td>
<td>47 (47)</td>
<td>41 (44)</td>
<td>18 (36)</td>
<td>39 (29)</td>
<td>26 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Misc.</strong></td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
<td>5 (4)</td>
<td>6 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>99 (100)</td>
<td>93 (100)</td>
<td>50 (100)</td>
<td>133 (100)</td>
<td>128 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** BRII/1/2-3; RBL, vol. 3 & 4.

**Note:** "Relationship with External Authorities" includes issues of gifts, royal visits, parliamentary elections, charters, musters and taxation. "Institution" represents matters concerning the duties of Mayor, aldermen and burgesses, new officials, apparel, fees for officials and the contempt of the council members. Regular entries on Mayoral nominations, chamberlains' accounts, summoning ward officials, post horses and subsidies are not included in the sample.
charters of 1589 and 1599 had a great impact on other functions of the council. For example, the increasing figures for institutional affairs signified the growing self-image of the civic leaders as a result of the confirmation of their municipal independence, while economic affairs preoccupied them in 1599 when sixteen separate entries were made in the Hall Book. No less important was the high number of entries concerning the town lands. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the civic leaders were increasingly preoccupied with transactions involving urban property, and these rose in number even further in the wake of the provision of fee farm from the Queen. Taking the result at face value, therefore, it was not social policies but property dealings to which the civic elite devoted the longest time at the council during the period concerned.

Public actions concerning social and economic policies were evenly distributed over time. This is perhaps not so surprising, given that new legislation was upheld for the following years without any need of repetition by the subsequent regime. In theory, this was the case with regard to the decision taken in the Common Hall in 1570: the urban authorities reconfirmed the previous acts and ordinals of the town, and the lasting effect of the new legislation. At the same time, the Mayor was ordered to examine the previous acts for "better reformation." In reality, however, the orders with regard to alehouses, strangers, and standards and measures at the market were repeated over and over again, probably to ensure their proper implementation in the new mayoral year. The act of night walkers, for example, which

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19See p. 49.
20For this purpose, the commissioners for the survey of town lands were appointed regularly at the council. See, for example, BRII/1/2/159; 1/2/233; 1/3/77.
21If the intensity of public actions can be regarded as the growing power of the civic elite, the figures for the years 1586-93 show that the momentum of the council may have lapsed in this period. The records of the year 1586/7 are separately kept in the Hall Papers, and their quality is defective. However, we are not able to give any satisfactory explanation for these figures.
22BRII/1/2/179; RBL, vol. 3, 130-1.
had been mentioned during the Middle Ages, was declared anew at the Common Hall in 1553. Subsequently, the same act was referred to in the Hall Book four times in total before 1600. Such repetitions indicate the urgency of the matters felt by the civic elite, but at the same time, they may also imply that their attention shifted from one issue to the next.

Some figures were obviously inflated by specific events. The relatively large number of entries concerning "poor relief" between 1572 and 1579, for example, was largely due to the distribution of private charities for which the urban authorities became the trustee in 1574. Thus, two persons were appointed by the Mayor to distribute the gift of Dorothy Darell, the mother of Francis Saunders, esquire, to twenty poor inhabitants on every 23rd December for the next ten years. The lists of the names of the poor continued to be entered in the Book until this charity scheme was completed. It is certain, however, that the most relevant issues to the ordinary inhabitants, such as amenity, economy, poverty and public order, constituted the most significant part of the administrative commitment of the urban elite during the period concerned.

All in all, there is little question that the acquisition of the royal charters at the end of the sixteenth century intensified the administrative activities of the civic leaders. Their attention shifted from one matter to the next, but many of the actions probably had some cumulative effects on subsequent policies. The social, economic and demographic context of Leicester undoubtedly affected the living conditions of the urban population, but their lives were also influenced by a series of public actions constituting the second wave of social impact. No less important was the qualitative dimension. As we saw earlier, Leicester experienced growing pressure from the

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24Namely, 1572/3, 1574/5 1575/6, 1591/2. BRH/1/2/212, 3/64; BRH, vol. 3, 154, 162.
25Ibid. 151; BRH/1/2/245; 2/248; 2/263; 2/276; 2/287; 2/303; 2/325; 2/337; 2/364; 2/379.
26About 40 per cent of the total entries of our sample are concerned with public actions.
27The details of some of the individual actions have already been illustrated in the previous chapter. See above.
external authorities, and the royal charters enhanced civic leaders' awareness of stronger self-government. It is conceivable that these circumstances influenced the level of implementation and enforcement of these actions.

(ii) The social functions

In explaining the political structure of a town, one tends to conceptualise the ruling body as an integrated whole: urban government was an institution to rule, and therefore the members were perceived as individuals collectively pursuing such an objective. However, such a view of an institution often ignores contingent social functions which every institution normally has. The administration of the twenty-four aldermen and the forty-eight burgesses was not only devoted to enforcing public policies, but also to enhancing their group identity as well. The function of the institution can therefore be assessed differently if one sees the town council as a social institution, where the relationships of leading townsmen were formally organised.

The twenty-four aldermen and the forty-eight common burgesses assembled in the Guildhall at least several times during the year to discuss public matters. Considering the regular contacts between seventy-two members in a small chamber, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the council had some social functions as well. A chain of conversation about political and non-political matters there helped consolidate their identity as the civic elite. Nonetheless, even though the meetings of the Common Hall underlined the society of the seventy-two civic leaders, the institution seems to have disintegrated by the early seventeenth century. From the 1580s onwards, some select meetings, which were held separately from the Common Hall, were recorded in the Hall Books (Table 5.2). These meetings were typically held by the Mayor and a small group of aldermen, and occasionally, the chamberlains and some burgesses were also assembled. Probably for a matter of convenience, some of these meetings took place in St. Martin's church after the evening prayer. This trend
Table 5.2
The Dates of the Meetings of the 24 and the 48 in the Late 16th and Early 17th Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1572/3</th>
<th>1573/4</th>
<th>1574/5</th>
<th>1575/6</th>
<th>1576/7</th>
<th>1577/8</th>
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<tr>
<td>21 Nov</td>
<td>20 Nov</td>
<td>19 Nov</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Feb</td>
<td>5 Mar</td>
<td>21 Feb</td>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>1 Mar</td>
<td>14 Mar</td>
<td>13 Mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>12 Mar</td>
<td>25 Feb</td>
<td>16 Mar</td>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>22 July</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 May</td>
<td>9 April</td>
<td>25 June</td>
<td>12 June</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1600/1</th>
<th>1601/2</th>
<th>1602/3</th>
<th>1603/4</th>
<th>1604/5</th>
<th>1605/6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Oct</td>
<td>20 Oct</td>
<td>20 Oct</td>
<td>2 Dec</td>
<td>3 Dec</td>
<td>27 Sept</td>
<td>30 Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Nov</td>
<td>20 Nov</td>
<td>26 Nov</td>
<td>7 Dec</td>
<td>1 Jan</td>
<td>31 Sept</td>
<td>6 Mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Jan</td>
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<td>28 Jan</td>
<td>14 Dec</td>
<td>4 Jan</td>
<td>30 Oct</td>
<td>20 Mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Jan</td>
<td>18 Dec</td>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>28 Dec</td>
<td>10 Jan</td>
<td>11 Dec</td>
<td>8 April</td>
</tr>
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<td>4 Jan</td>
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<td>14 Aug</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Mar</td>
<td>13 Jan</td>
<td>10 June</td>
<td>1 Mar</td>
<td>17 Mar</td>
<td>25 June</td>
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<td>22 Jan</td>
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<td>20 Sept</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 June</td>
<td>15 June</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: BRI/1/2-3

Note: The bold dates represent the select meetings. The annual meetings on the feast days of St. Matthew's and St. Michael days are not included.
endorses the point made by Clark and Slack, who have argued that a small group of urban leaders were considered to be best suited for dealing with increasingly complicated urban business rather than a large body of the entire council membership during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.28

A more graphic example of the fragmentation of council meetings can be drawn from the nomination of the new Recorder in 1603. On 2 December, the letter from the Earl of Huntingdon recommending Mr. Cheney, the son-in-law of Sir. Thomas Cave, was openly read, but the decision was postponed because there were only ten aldermen at the meeting. Five days later, another meeting was assembled for this purpose, but the final decision was yet again postponed because only eighteen aldermen attending the meeting. When the vote was finally carried out a week later, five senior aldermen were in favour of Huntingdon's idea, while eighteen others voted for Mr. Sergeant Nichols. One alderman was absent on the day.29 It is unclear whether the delaying tactics were deliberately engineered by the members, facing a sensitive decision which could harm the town's relationship with the Earl. This was rare, however. In the majority of other cases, final decisions did not wait for the rest of the members to attend the meetings.

If the collective meetings of the seventy-two civic leaders became increasingly nominal by the end of the sixteenth century, there were many institutional devices for maintaining the corporate image of the council. Our analysis of the major activities of the Leicester council suggests that the members spent a good deal of time of organising their own institution. As we saw in the case of the town clerk, the civic leaders were also busy defining the role of officials and creating new ones for the

28BR1/1; 1/3; Clark and Slack, **English Towns**, 129-30. As Rosen has shown, many of the freemen in Winchester may have lost their political enthusiasm in the seventeenth century, which can be seen in a marked decrease in the number of attendants in the Mayoral election after 1590. Rosen, 'History of Winchester', 106-7.

29RBL, vol. 4, 5-6.
much more extensive pattern of government. Furthermore, contemptuous members were swiftly dismissed from the council; there were at least eighteen such cases over thirty-five years in our sample. Leaving aside the contentious discussion of political and administrative issues, the society of the civic elite was also characterised by various social activities often institutionalised by local acts. Dramatic companies, frequently visiting the town during this time, gave their performances at the Guildhall, which was significantly reconstructed in the 1560s. In 1555, the council required the members of the ruling body to pay for the cost of eating the venison given by the noble. Eleven years later, while admitting their over-spending for feasts, gifts to players and musicians, and noblemen's bear wards, the Common Hall agreed that the members "shall bear every one of them his and their portion", when they were summoned by the Mayor to attend the entertainment.

The recent historiography of civic rituals and ceremonies during sixteenth century England has highlighted the discontinuity of lavish public displays due to the changing religious attitudes of townspeople and the growing cost which they could no longer afford. In late Medieval Leicester, there were civic-cum-religious processions from St. Martin's church and St. Mary's church, and possibly from other two churches as well, to St. Margaret's church via North Gate on Whit-Monday. The civic leaders also participated in the ceremonies of the major religious fraternities. Thus, the procession called the Riding of the George was organised between St. George's Day

\[30\] For example, BRI/1/3/64.
\[32\] BHL, vol. 3, 83.
\[34\] In particular, the religious festivals such as church ale and processions on saints' days were generally in decline during the sixteenth century. The religious calendar was altered as activities in a festive season between Christmas and Midsummer eroded. See Collinson, Birthpangs, 49, 54; Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen'.
\[35\] Nichols, 591.
and Whit-Sunday, while the feast of Corpus Christi took place on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, involving the Mayor, his brethren and many other town officials.36

Under the Puritan regime of Leicester, however, such lavish processions may have been an anachronistic way of displaying the influence of the urban polity.37 It is unlikely, however, that the practical importance of public ceremonies was completely ignored by the urban elite. Proclamations by mayors provided ideal occasions for the Mayor and his brethren to show their existence to the public. In the neighbouring town, Northampton, the burgesses agreed in 1623 that the aldermen, bailiffs, and the Forty Eight had to take part in the Mayor's proclamations in their best apparel, and "heretofore accustomed upon the knowing of the bell three times and to continue till all bee done . . . ."38 Although we do not have any detailed information about the way in which such a proclamation was carried out in post-Reformation Leicester, we hear that on one occasion, a proclamation by the Mayor took place with the high sheriff and Lord Hastings at the Gainsborough chamber and at the High Cross, together with most of the aldermen, JPs, and gentlemen in the county.39

As in any society, power was effectively manifested in symbolic manners. The succession to the Mayoralty was symbolised in the handing over of a great mace, four little maces, the Lock Book, a purse with five keys, and the Mayor's seal and other official records including the Hall Books from Mayor to Mayor, according to the

36Notices Illustrative, ed., Kelly, 45-6; Skillington, 'Extant Certificates', 147-8.
37In Northampton, for example, the Mayors and the chamberlains normally received money for the feasts, but they were cancelled for six years after 1588 except for at Christmas or on St. Leonard's Day, since "the chamber is very poor and impoverished." In 1624, it was ordered that no mayors and bailiffs "shall hereafter keepe any feastinge in any weeokes after the saide feaste of the Nativitie yearlie as they usuallie have accustomed to doe," RBN, vol. 2, 31-3.
38The ceremony at the proclamation was taken seriously by the Northampton government. Thus it was ordered in the same year that the Mayor would be charged five pounds for omitting the proclamation. RBN, 32.
39BR22/13/246.
local act of 1551. The effect of conspicuous clothes was well understood by the Leicester authorities. There were at least seventeen entries which were solely concerned with the apparel of urban officials such as waits, mace-bearers, and sergeants. The borough ordinance of 1555 resumed the custom of wearing scarlet, which was required of every Mayor "at euery princypall feast and other tyme accustomydy . . . " such as Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Twelfth Day, Easter Day, Whitsun Day, and the Fair days. In 1575, on the occasion of the Queen's visit, the Mayor and his predecessors were to wear scarlet gowns with the rest of the aldermen donning black gowns, while the member of the forty-eight burgesses were to wear "cootes of fyne blacke clothe, and to be garded with velvitt . . . " In 1612, a spectacular procession was held by the civic leaders when they went from the town hall to the edge of the town to receive the King. Six months after the acquisition of the 1599 charter, the civic leaders agreed to wear gowns and caps for all meetings at the Common Hall, the assize, the quarter sessions and the fairs. During these special occasions throughout the year, this cluster of strikingly-clad figures must have been most impressive near the Guildhall, inns, and even on busy streets.

40 The Lock Book consists of copies of documents registered in the Court of Portmanmoot. RBL, vol. 3, 66.
41 In fact, a recommendation to maintain proper costumes came from an external influence, Robert Rochester, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, on 19 January, 1555. BRRI/1/2/316; RBL, vol. 3, 82.
43 BRRI/1/2/250; RBL, vol. 3, 158. In 1579, it was agreed that the Recorder would wear a scarlet gown. RBL, vol. 3, 180
44 BRRI/1/3/354.
The information of the formal records such as the Hall Books could be said to depict urban government in an idealised manner, both as a governing body and a social organisation. Yet our understanding of the social reality remains partial unless we know the social and economic backgrounds of the people who were involved in the institution. The overall characteristics of occupational representation in the Common Hall between 1578-1622 shows a clear resemblance to other major provincial towns such as York.\textsuperscript{46} Drapers, innholders and mercers clearly outnumbered other occupations among the twenty-four aldermen throughout the period, while the high representation of butchers, tanners, and, to a lesser extent, ironmongers reflected the local economic attributes which have been discussed earlier (see Table 5.3a).\textsuperscript{47}

One can see a similar trend in the representation of the forty-eight burgesses as well, but the exclusive character of the group of forty-eight burgesses was less marked than that of the twenty-four aldermen (Table 5.3b). The occupational representation of the forty-eight burgesses was also characterised by miscellaneous crafts, whose representation was much more irregular than other leading occupational groups over time. By contrast, chandlers, tailors and shoemakers constantly retained their representation. In particular, the large number of shoemakers was a distinct characteristic of the occupational representation of the lower structure of the Common Hall.

Thus, the Tables displays not only the different patterns of occupational representation between the aldermen and the burgesses, but also a conspicuously large number of certain occupational groups in the Common Hall. Historians have largely interpreted these common patterns of pre-Restoration town government in two different ways. It has been argued, for example, that explicitly unequal occupational

\textsuperscript{46} Palliser, Tudor York, 106.
\textsuperscript{47} See pp. 23-32.
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<th>Occupation</th>
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**Sources:** BRII/1/2-3; RF: Hartopp, *Roll of the Mayors*, RBL., vol. 3 & 4.
Table 5.3b
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Sources: BRII/1/2-3; RE.
representation in the ruling body was no more than the reflection of the social and economic hierarchy of the community. It was the community where the relatively easy access of a small group of privileged traders to power was justifiable in terms of their intensive and expensive administrative duties in governing the town.48 By contrast, the oligarchic characteristics of the local government have been stressed in order to highlight sources of conflict between the merchants and the crafts, or the civic elite and the lesser freemen, based on an assumption that the political and social values of the members were most strongly shaped according to the hierarchical structure of the institution.49 Swanson has argued that merchants effectively ruled the crafts by engineering their ordinals and their nomination for the lower circle of the ruling body in medieval cities, while Peter Clark has suggested that financial burden, kinship-ties, and long service promoted the concentration of power in a small group of the integrated civic elite.50

With the absence of the strong mercantile influence, however, both the Leicester aldermen and the burgesses also included miscellaneous occupational groups which were diverse enough to cause division within each ruling body; the large number of butchers and tanners indicates that political power was not only

48Reynolds, English Medieval Towns, 183-7; David Harris Sacks, The Widenig Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700 (1991), 192; Kerby, 'Inequality in a Pre-industrial Society'.
49See, for example, Sacks, The Widenig Gate, 85-7, chs. 6 and 7.
50Swanson, Medieval Artisans, ch. 9; Clark, "The Ramoth-Gilead of the Good", 257-9, 261-2; Clark and Slack, English Towns, 132-4. In Leicester, such a trend is most conspicuous in the patterns of the mayoral nomination, whose office tended to be occupied by members of the same families. During the period 1509-1550, there were only four families which sent their members to the office more than twice, but the figure more than doubled (nine families) in the second half of the sixteenth century. Members of the Heyrick family, for example, became the Mayor in 1552, 1557, 1572, and 1593. In the early seventeenth century, the re-election of the Mayor became common. Thus eight mayors came back to office more than twice, such as William Ive, who served the office three times during his life. Hartopp, Roll of the Mayor, 50-100.
concentrated in the merchant capital; the aldermen reflected at least 13 different occupational interests, which would multiply if their secondary trades were included. Table 5.4 displays the voting result of the members who decided whether the town should pay the composition asked by the Crown in 1607. The political division here cannot be explained by the hierarchical structure of the aldermen, the burgesses, or even the occupational groups. Such a result questions whether the horizontal relationships of the civic elite were as significant as we tend to believe.\textsuperscript{51}

Occupational analysis tends to ignore the fact that relationships among the civic elite were also dependent on other factors, such as the extent of individuals' political and personal aspirations and extensive social networks.\textsuperscript{52} Litigation in the Court of Chancery, for example, often illustrates the social position of the burgesses being separately involved in the networks of plaintiffs and defendants.\textsuperscript{53} The trust and the conspiracy presented in such litigation indicates that the complex social networks of individual burgesses, which would strongly influence their social and political values, normally extended beyond horizontal boundaries explicit in the structure of the ruling body.

Unequal occupational representation in the borough council, therefore, should not necessarily be interpreted as an adversarial relationship between the homogenous elite and the rest of the population who tended to be contentious in an age of mounting social and economic problems. Internal division in each institution was equally rife. As we saw earlier, the solidarity of the civic elite could be fictitious, elaborately covered up by public ceremonies and social occasions. Their attitudes expressed in the town hall were often too formal to reveal their private views, which would become much more influential in the process of the assimilation of urban

\textsuperscript{51}Sacks, The Widening Gate, 224.

\textsuperscript{52}Some aldermen, for instance, preferred to pay a heavy fine rather than accede to power. BRII/1/2/56; BRII/1/2/391; BRII/1/2/38; RII, vol. 3, 93, 204. For the religious factionalism, see C. D. Chalmers, 'Puritanism in Leicestershire, 1558-1633' (M.A. Dissertation, University of Leeds, 1962), 238.

\textsuperscript{53}PRO C3/310/46.
Table 5.4
Votes of the Members of the Common Hall about a Payment for the Composition to the Crown, 1607-8

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Sources: RBL, vol. 4; 66; RE.
Note: There were two absent members.
policies in the community. Consequently, although the pattern of occupational representation in the common council in Leicester broadly mirrored the social and economic hierarchy of the freemen, it is perhaps unwise to argue that consensus reached in the formal structure indicates the homogeneity of the civic elite. The informal process of dissemination may well show up much more complex relationships between the civic leaders, and reveal the different interpretations of the corporate will made by the leading townsmen.

3. The Craft Gilds

(i) The Structural Position of the Gilds

The function of trade gilds in the context of urban social organisation is undoubtedly a significant aspect to explore, because a cluster of established trade companies constituted one of the fundamental differences between the structure of large provincial towns and that of much smaller urban settlements. The rise and decline of urban gilds in early modern England have already attracted wide-ranging historical interest. In terms of economic functions, for example, historians have depicted the transition of these trade companies within the context of the rise of capitalism leading to the Industrial Revolution. Gilds have been typically described as unions of urban traders who sought for security from external influences, and pursued the stability of their trades amid the fluctuations of the urban economy. During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, however, they saw a structural transition as a result of amalgamation, growing disputes between masters and journeymen, and more frequent state intervention. Less influential gilds were absorbed by a group of large capitalist

54 Clark and Slack, English Towns, 28. Many of the trade companies in small towns seem to have been the unions of miscellaneous crafts. Palliser, Age of Elizabeth, 280.
traders who were now increasingly hostile to the idea of the self-regulated economic fraternity. It has been argued, therefore, that the significance of gilds was generally on the wane by 1700.55

The validity of such a linear view of the history of trade gilds has been challenged by a number of historians. Already, in the early part of this century, the timing of the dislocation of urban gilds was questioned by E. E. Power, who believed that the capitalist tendency of urban gilds can be identified during the Middle Ages.56 More recently, Palliser has argued that "new guilds continued to be formed in the seventeenth and even the eighteenth century, balancing the disappearance of others" in the city of York.57 Furthermore, the conventional interpretation of urban gilds puts little emphasis on wider social and political issues. Although they were the organisations of tradesmen who shared similar economic interests, gilds were closely connected with the ruling body of the town, whose concerns went well beyond urban economic life. For example, the membership of gilds was normally a necessary condition for holding offices in the local government; the formation of gilds usually required the official approval of the urban authorities; and gild members' activities were in effect under the strict supervision of civic leaders. From the urban rulers' point of view, the financial condition of the town was largely dependent on the economic prosperity of the urban gilds.58

Much more recent work has also revealed that gilds played important roles in maintaining urban social stability before the Reformation. In his study of late

57D. M. Palliser, 'The Trade Gilds of Tudor York', in Crisis and Order, eds., Clark and Slack (1972), 112.
medieval Coventry, Phythian-Adams has demonstrated the social importance of the
craft gilds in a cathedral town, and has argued that the gilds not only strengthened the
solidarity of the members by holding regular meetings and ceremonies, but also helped
connect the members with much wider aspects of urban activities. Office-holdings in
the gilds, for example, which opened the way to much higher offices in local
government, enabled citizens to confirm their status within the formal structure of the
community.59

Generalising about the functions of trade gilds has obvious methodological
problems, for the influence of the gilds certainly differed according to their modus
operandi and political and economic power. Some trades involved more social
contacts than others, while prosperous gilds normally sent many more members to the
ruling body of the town.60 The extent to which one can take such differences into
account depends on the quality of documentation in each town. Unlike those of
Salisbury, Chester and Coventry, the gild records of medieval and early modern
Leicester are too fragmentary to compare differences in the corporate lives of
gildsmen: the surviving evidence concerning the individual occupational gilds mainly
took the form of the accounts, orders and agreements of the council, rather than those
of individual gilds.61 Nonetheless, a number of points are fairly clear.

The structural continuity of occupational gilds from the late Middle Ages
onwards enables us to consider how the importance of these Medieval organisations

59Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 105-15.
60Palliser, Age of Elizabeth, 281; D. Garrioch, Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1240-1790
(Cambridge, 1986), 97.
61The trade gilds of seventeenth century Chester and Coventry are currently being researched by Philip
Knowles. Charles Haskins, The Ancient Trade Guilds and Companies of Salisbury (Salisbury, 1912);Phythian-Adams, Desolation; Skillington, 'Extant Certificates', 143; S. H. Skillington, 'The Leicester
Guild of Tallow Chandler', TLAS 15 (1927-8), 128. Skillington has shown that there are no medieval
records which reveal the internal constitution of the individual Leicester gilds except for that of tallow
chandlers.
changed in periods of social and economic hardship. Up to the mid-sixteenth century, there were parochial fraternities, which had important communal functions in the parish. In particular, the Corpus Christi Gild was the most influential fraternity including a number of leading townsmen among its members, and having a close link with the ruling body of the borough. Similarly, it has been argued that the structure of craft gilds was characterised not only by its economic functions, but also by its social institutions in which freemen's relationships were co-ordinated. The social and economic ties of Leicester gildsmen in the Middle Ages were also strengthened by communal activities usually defined in the ordinal of each gild. For example, the ordinal of Tallow chandlers required the members to meet formally on four feast days in the year, i.e., Easter, Michaelmas, Candlemas (2nd February) and "the Conception of our lady" when they chose two masters of the gild, while they also had to attend the funeral and wedding of other members "with reasonable warning of the beadle or other." The corporate identity of the members was also articulated by their awareness of the gild regulations with which they had to equally comply. In the case of tallow chandlers, their retail prices were restricted according to assizes, while their customers

62 For example, see T. C. Mendenhall, *The Shrewsbury Drapers and the Welsh Wool Trade in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1953), 83-4. The relationship between the gilds and the town government took various forms during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. C. Gross, *The Gild Merchant*, vol. 1 (1890), 117-126. In Leicester, the craft gilds were institutions independent from the ruling government, but the lack of ordinances for some fraternities prevents us from judging the extent of their independence. They may have been comparable to the organisation of Worcester gilds which saw general continuity in the sixteenth century, although evidence seems to be as thin as that for the Leicester gilds. Dyer, *Worcester*, 149.

63 In Leicester, there were the Gild of Corpus Christi, the Gild of St. George, the Gild of St. Margaret's, and the Gild of St John's. See pp. 204-5 below.

64 S. H. Skillington, 'The Extant Certificates', 146; *A Chronicle of the Church of St. Martin in Leicester during the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth with Some Account of its Minor Altars and Ancient Guilds*, ed., Thomas North (Leicester, 1866), 198-9.

were limited to those who were covenanted.66 Finally, although it was essentially an economic organisation, the corporate identity of the members was explicitly and regularly expressed in religious ways. We hear, for example, that each Salisbury gild had its own priest, and kept lights before the gild altar.67 In the case of the Leicester tallow chandlers, every master of the gild needed to pay 4d. annually to keep "a light continually to be kept and maintained in the worship of God and of our lady and Saint John the Baptist in the Church of Saint Margaret in Leicester . . . ."68

By 1600, seventeen different trade gilds can be identified in the Leicester records.69 Although it is not evident how far medieval ordinals were rigorously implemented, the extent of the continuity of social functions had significant implications for the social organisation of the borough.70 The Reformation and severe social and economic conditions may have posed obvious challenges to the traditional conviviality of trade gilds, but it was their relationship with the urban authorities that most strongly characterised their social functions within the formal structure of the town.71

66 S. H. Skillington, 'The Leicester Guild of Tallow Chandler', 130-1.
67 This was a standard practice in trade gilds in other towns. Haskins, Ancient Trade Guilds, 56; Swanson, Medieval, 111; Meodenhall, Shrewsbury Drapers, 81.
68 Skillington, 'The Leicester Guild of Tallow Chandler', 130-1.
69 Hillson, 125-6. The origin of individual craft gilds is obscure, but Skillington has explained that they were derived from the Merchant Gild as it merged with the borough government during the late Middle Ages. Skillington, 'Extant Certificates', 146. The existence of the gilds of journeymen shoemakers in the early sixteenth century indicates that there may have been other less formal trade fraternities which cannot be found in our records. As with in the case of Medieval Salisbury the gild often consisted of several different, though related, traders such as the Gild of Carpenters, including masons, coopers, tylers etc. Haskins, The Ancient Trade Guilds and Companies of Salisbury, 60-1. The Leicester records do not enable us to reproduce such a composition for each gild.
70 For example, the Company of Tailor declared in the early seventeenth century that there were 44 members and more than 200 people if they included their household members. This may give some idea of the scale of the institution in which social relationships were organised. RBL, vol. 4, 238.
71 For the decline of late medieval civic ceremonies in general, for example, see Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen'.

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The subordinate nature of the trade gilds to the ruling body of medieval Leicester remained intact even after the Reformation, but there are reasons for believing that the trade companies also underwent some functional change with the growing influence of the urban authorities. Though fragmentary, the medieval borough records clearly show the craft gilds were under the control of the Guild Merchant, which was established in the town sometime before 1118, and merged with the borough authorities in the late Middle Ages. For example, each fellowship needed to pay half of the amount of fines they incurred for breaches of rules to the Guild Merchant, while new masters had to be presented before the Mayor, and part of the fines collected from the members went to the office of chamberlain. However, the growing statutory requirements, the intensifying economic competition, and the reconfirmation of incorporation during the sixteenth century provoked a series of public interventions by the urban authorities in the activities of the gild.

72For examples of the relationships between the gilds and the town government in post-Reformation towns such as Newcastle, Hull and Chester, see Woodward, *Men at Work*, 29. The corporation of York exercised their power to punish offenders, to arbitrate conflict between crafts, and to introduce competition. Palliser, *The Trade Guilds of Tudor York*, 106-7. For late medieval Coventry, see Phyhtian-Adams, *Desolation*, 105. The hegemony of the Merchant Guilds can also be illustrated by their actions to suppress existing craft gilds and preventing the appearance of new ones. M. D. Harris, *The Story of Coventry* (1911), 83.


75RBL, vol. 3, 213. The growing power of the local government over the craft gilds can be clearly observed in Salisbury at the beginning of the seventeenth century when the city obtained the royal charter for incorporation. Haskins, *The Ancient Trade Guilds*, 77-80. In 1561, the Oxford council prohibited the crafts to charge a fee above 20s. for new members. *Tudor Economic Documents*, vol. 1, eds., R. H. Tawney and E. Power (1935), 126.
Since the Middle Ages new members of the gilds had been required to give their oath according to the ordinals of the borough, a custom which had already been confirmed in the fourteenth century.⁷⁶ Thus in c.1490, the oath was as follows:

... I shall truly do and execute all good rulez and customes contenyd and specyfyed within myne ordynall. I shalbe obbedyent to my wardyns commandement at altymes convenient. I shall truly and duly pay all suche duties and forfeytes as shalbe dew within the seid ordynall and all other good rules and customes belongyng to the seid ordynall to my knolege and power I shall meyntene and kepe so God me helpe etc.⁷⁷

The same oath was used when the borough reconfirmed this medieval custom in the 1560s, but the content was largely altered when the custom was reiterated just before the Restoration.⁷⁸ According to "The Oath of every Freeman of Leicester being of any Trade or Occupation" in the late 1650s, freemen "shall also be obedient and faithful to the Mayor and ministers of this Borough of Leicester."⁷⁹ This alteration may have been due to the existing economic turmoil as a result of the Civil War, but it is indicative of the direction of relationships between the borough authorities and the occupational gilds over a hundred years after the Reformation.

The independence of gilds was supervised by national legislation during the late Middle Ages, but now statutory requirements were implemented by the powerful urban government.⁸⁰ In the wake of the Statute of Artificers in 1563, for

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⁷⁶RBL, vol. 2, 32, 323. ⁷⁷Ibid, 323. ⁷⁸BRI/1/2/143; BRI/1/2/179-90; RBL, vol. 3, 101, 124. ⁷⁹Nichols, 431. ⁸⁰It was ordered, for example, that all the gilds and fraternities had to "bring all their Letters Patents and Charters to be registered of Record before the JPs. in the counties, or before the Chief Governors of the cities, boroughs and towns" in the Statute of 1436/7 [15 Henry VI, c. 6]. In 1536, previous medieval acts were further revised, and, as a result, new freemen were required to give oath not to set up shops without license of masters and wardens [28 Henry VIII, c. 5].
example, an agreement was reached at the Common Hall in 1572 that all apprentices had to be strictly bound by the indenture which was written by the Mayor’s clerk, and seven years later, they also agreed that this process had to be carried out within fifteen days after commencing the service.81 A letter was sent by the corporation to the justices stating that the ordinals "must be approved by the Chancellor, Treasurer or Chief Justices of either Bench, or before both the Justices of Assize."82 Moreover, as was stated in the ordinal of the Company of Gowers which was issued at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the questions concerning the articles could be referred to the justices of assize.83

Changing relationships between the urban authorities and the occupational gilds should also be seen in the particular social and economic context of the late sixteenth century. For example, the new ordinals provided for tanners and gowers clearly reflected the growing importance of the leather-related trades in this period.84 Growing Puritanism and the rise of food control during the late sixteenth century encouraged the interventionist attitudes of the authorities towards other fellowships in this period, the victualling trade in particular.85 Thus the Company of Bakers, along with the Brewers’ Company, was probably affected by civic intervention in the milling trade in 1578, when council ordered "non of the milners neither of this towne of

81BR1/1/2/205; BR1/1/2/306; RBL, vol. 3, 136, 177.
82BR1/18/4/280; RBL, vol. 3, 300.
83THL, 466.
84ln 1567, the Common Hall agreed that "the Ordinall of the occupacion of Tanners within the towne of Leicester shall for euer continewe in full force and effect within the said towne . . . ." BR1/1/2/120; RBL, vol. 3, 119. THL, 466.
85The interest of the authorities in the victualling trades was also seen in Tudor Worcester where only bakers', brewers', and butchers' companies required a license from the corporation to admit new members. Dyer, Worcester, 150. As for cases in Elizabethan London, see Foster, Politics of Stability, 49-50. The power of the corporation was articulated when the corporation dissolved the company of shoemakers in Salisbury in 1632, because the wardens admitted "an improper person" by receiving drink and a fee. The company petitioned and they were restored. Huskins, The Ancient Trade Guilds, 225-6.
Leicester, nor of the countrie, shall not buye anye malte or other corne on the markett
daye within this towne of Leicester . . . ". without the Mayor's licence.\textsuperscript{86} Observance
of holy days became a cause of grievances among tradesmen, whose economic
activities were often disrupted even in the Middle Ages, but now the practice was
much more rigorously enforced under the growing influence of Puritans in the town.\textsuperscript{87}
For example, the trade of butchers was damaged by the order of the authorities not to
trade during Lent and after 7 o'clock on a Sunday morning.\textsuperscript{88} Moreover, the attitudes
of the urban government towards the occupational fellowships were well demonstrated
in the creation of the new Company of Common Brewers in the 1570s.\textsuperscript{89} Tougher
control over the brewing industry was one of the major concerns among those civic
leaders who were anxious about the problems of drunkenness and illicit activities in
alehouses, as we can see in many other towns.\textsuperscript{90} As a result, the Common Hall agreed
that "for the better executinge hereof hit ys further agreed that the said Brewars shall
togeyther become a fellowshipp and brotherhode and to have certen orders and decrees
made amongst them by the consent of the Maior . . . ". In the early 1580s, the ordinal
was requested by the brewers themselves, and it was accepted in the early 1590s when
the master and the two wardens were appointed by the Mayor.\textsuperscript{91}

Consequently, though the nature of the fragmentary gild records may
hamper a direct comparison between the pre- and post-Reformation periods, the
evidence is strong enough to show that the Tudor Leicester craft gilds were re­
positioned in a different administrative context from their medieval counterparts. The

\textsuperscript{86}BR\textsuperscript{I}/1/2/302; \textit{RBL}, vol. 3, 174-5.
\textsuperscript{87}For the observance of holidays in the middle ages among traders, see Edith Cooper­
crider Rodgers, \textit{Discussion of Holidays in the Later Middle Ages} (New York, 1940), 93-9.
\textsuperscript{88}\textit{RBL}, vol. 3, 102, 260.
\textsuperscript{89}\textit{Ibid}, 153-4.
\textsuperscript{90}See p. 133 above. In 1574, the Common Hall agreed that no inhabitants should brew ale and beer to
sell, except for the licensed common brewers from whom they could obtain the drink. BR\textsuperscript{I}/1/2/241;
\textit{RBL}, vol. 3, 153.
\textsuperscript{91}BR\textsuperscript{I}/1/2/241; 1/2/351; 1/2/382; 1/3/118; \textit{RBL}, vol. 3, 153, 189, 199, 207, 300, 322.
experiences of the Leicester trade companies were also shared by those in other middle rank provincial towns such as Northampton, where the constitutions of most occupational gilds were amended during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century as a result of strong reference by civic leaders.92

(ii) The Social and Economic Response of the Craft Gilds

Increasingly overshadowed by the administrative expansion of the ruling body, the social importance of the traditional trade companies may not have attracted the attention of contemporary townsmen as strongly as that of their Medieval predecessor. The trade gilds, however, were still distinct entities within the framework of the formal structure, although they emerged in the records less explicitly than before. Take the admission of freemen as an example: the way of obtaining freedom indicates their independence from the ruling body. In 1575, it was ordered that anyone accepted as a freeman by the Chapman's Guild, i.e., the urban authorities, had to pay 6d. to the Mayor's clerk for the recording of his name, and "euerie one that is his fathers eldeste son to thee maior for the tyme beinge one pottel of wyne." Freedom was also granted by the effect of the ordinal of each "occupation", though payment to the Mayor's clerk was also required for "the mynistringe of the othe and recordinge of his name vid."93

92The butchers' ordinal was renewed in 1558, while a constitution was given to the tanners in 1606 for "the better government of their company and as their counsell shall advise them to be agreeable with the lawes of this land for and upon the olde Rent accustomed paise for the same." Furthermore, in 1637, the new constitution for the company of butchers was suggested by the Mayor and ten of his brethren. BRN, vol. 2, 280, 284, 298. Also see the case of the Company of the Dyers and Clothworkers in Nottingham in 1630. BRN, vol. 5 (1900), 147.

93BRII/1/2/250; BHL, vol. 3, 159; RE, 123. It is not clear from this local act, however, whether the membership of a gild would automatically provide the status of freeman. In Coventry, the definition of a freeman was still ambiguous even in the post-Reformation period. For example, journeymen were regarded as freemen in the Company of Mercers in 1608. Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 271-2, note 10.
The gilds and the authorities often took different views of the admission of freemen.\textsuperscript{94} For example, George Adams, a tailor in Exeter, had to petition for his freedom of Leicester because he could not properly pursue his trade in Leicester even after having been admitted by the Company of Tailors in Leicester, and having a freeman's daughter for his wife.\textsuperscript{95} The Company of Cordwainers had to petition to the authorities in the 1650s that there were already four curriers, and no more curriers needed to be freed in this town.\textsuperscript{96}

The corporate identity of the trade companies was sustained by a number of social occasions where the traders discussed their business and entertained themselves privately. Recent work on the Mercers' Company in Coventry has revealed that their social activities in St. Mary's Guild Hall and St. Michael's Church continued to help sustain their corporate identity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, together with the regular meetings of the members.\textsuperscript{97} The assemblies of the Shrewsbury drapers' still retained a lively atmosphere with music, food and drink during the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{98} As has been pointed out, the lack of gild records prevents us from assessing the social importance of the Leicester trade companies in detail, but the ordinal of one company in the early seventeenth century indicates that the social function of the Leicester gilds contributed to the explicit group solidarity of gild members. The ordinal of the Company of Glovers specified regular meetings of the masters of the trade "at or before the last of October, upon notice, without reasonable let [hindrance], meet together in some convenient place in Leicester."\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{94}See, for example, Phythian-Adams, \textit{Desolation}, 105. \textit{RBL}, vol. 4, 236.
\textsuperscript{95}RBI/18/23/419.
\textsuperscript{96}\textit{RBL}, vol. 4, 416.
\textsuperscript{97}The entire company met at quarterly meetings in March, June, September, and December. The officers met monthly. In addition, there were also weekly "private courts" where the masters, the wardens and others were asked to attend. Ronald M. Berger, \textit{The Most Necessary Luxuries: the Mercers' Company of Coventry, 1550-1680} (University Park, PA, 1993), 188, 202-4.
\textsuperscript{98}Mendenhall, \textit{Shrewsbury Drapers}, 95.
\textsuperscript{99}THL, 464.
This suggests that they did not have their own gild hall, but frequent meetings other than regular ones were clearly encouraged. Thus "all the said masters . . . shall meet as often as the said officers do for lawful cause so to command . . . ." Mutual help for impoverished members continued to be an important social function of the Company. Funerals and weddings, where all the masters needed to be present, also remained significant occasions to demonstrate and to recognise the strength of relationships between the members.

There is no reason to believe that the customs of other occupational gilds were very different from the practice of the glovers. In 1624, we hear that two of the major companies, butchers and tailors, frequently met at the newly built Wool Hall by paying 6s. 8d. and 10s. to the town respectively. Although they were mainly business sessions, it seems likely that they involved significant social elements, as we can see in York, Salisbury, and the neighbouring town of Nottingham, where the Company of Butchers enjoyed communal suppers.

Several decades ago, T. C. Mendenhall showed that the Company of Drapers in Shrewsbury was revitalised in the seventeenth century as a result of the growing mercantile trade after the decline of their social and religious function in the previous century. In a neighbouring town, Northampton, the Company of Bakers collectively voiced considerable frustration against the authorities concerning the growing number of foreign bakers in the town. One may find an analogy in the

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100 Ibid. 465.
101 Such an element of continuity was also evident in Coventry. See Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 271.
103 RBN, vol. 4, 197. For merchants, tailor, butchers and cordwainers in Tudor York, see D. M. Palliser, "The Trade Guilds of Tudor York", in Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700, eds., Peter Clark and Paul Slack (1972), 96. Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 110. In Salisbury, however, the company of glovers, parchment makers and collar makers used the Tailors' Hall in 1617. Haskins, Ancient Trade Guilds, 179.
104 Mendenhall, Shrewsbury Drapers, 113-4.
Leicester gilds as well. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Company of Butchers in Leicester petitioned the Mayor and the JPs. that the poor traders in the Company were losing out since "the common shambles", where they processed and sold their wares, were far away from the inns and shopkeepers "who are the greatest support of the market." They wanted to have their business at the Saturday shambles in the market place during the week days. The Company of Tailors urged the council to take action against un-free traders who "robbe your suppliants of the work . . . ." Cordwainers retained their solidarity even after the Civil War. The steward and the wardens of cordwainers petitioned the local government that 22 cobbler were following the trade in Leicester without being free. John Hall, a foreign shoemaker, was effectively prevented from working by the Company of Shoemakers, and "threaten to shut downe their shop windowes though they know that your Worshipps were pleased to graunt licence unto your peticioners to work in their saide trade . . . ." Although they were informally organised, stocking makers petitioned the town for accepting John Adcock for his freedom just before the Restoration. Thus, some of the gilds continued to pursue their own economic interests and expressed their solidarity much more clearly even if they faced coercion from the civic government. Such peaceful conflict may prove to have been the main function of the formal institutions, where grievances were contained without any violence, but it is likely that the conflict between the government and each individual gild was also accompanied by tension between different trade gilds and between individual freemen representing an array of social backgrounds and extensive social networks. In some

106 RBL, vol. 4, 238.
107 Ibid. 350, 388.
108 Ibid. 351.
109 Ibid. 455.
110 This seems rather paradoxical, but elements of integration and disintegration could co-exist simultaneously in one social group, particularly when the group was faced with strong external pressure, and if its solidarity became instrumental. Cf. Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 109.
cases, the coercive effect of the formal structure encouraged the senior members of the leading trade companies to seek the patronage of the ruling body rather than to challenge the oligarchic urban leaders. In Coventry, for example, the Company of Mercers had to rely on the power of the Mayor to challenge the defiance of a fishmonger in 1591, while the same Company also included the members who often resisted the oligarchic masters' authority. Such a division raises the question of how many freemen really supported the corporate actions of the gilds, and how many of them were content with the subsequent remedies offered by the urban authorities.

(iii) Freemen, Non-Freemen and Outsiders

While the structure of social relationships within formal institutions has been discussed so far, the situation of those who did not belong to such institutions remains to be explained. The extent of the solidarity of gildsmen and the impact of their actions certainly had wider implications for the state of urban social organisation, and social and economic relationships of non-gildsmen and non-freemen cannot be isolated from the state of the privileged trade companies.

During the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, the practice of bakers was recurrently contested by a number of ambitious townsmen. In November 1598, six senior town bakers, Ralph Chettell, Thomas Hunt and others, complained at the Duchy Chamber that diverse townsmen had got hold of the deeds concerning the Itleg er, Mercers' Company of Coventry. The introduction of the 1593 ordinance, which was intended to strengthen the administrative power of the Company, caused internal division among freemen. Ibid., 186.

112 Internal disputes were rife in the trade corporations in eighteenth century Paris as well. Garrioch, Neighbourhood, 107. Mendenhall has shown that the members of the Company of Drapers in Shrewsbury were divided into those who traded with London (trading brethren) and those who did not (non-trading brethren). This example shows one of the most clearest forms of internal division in the gilds. Mendenhall, Shrewsbury Drapers, 92-3.
lease of the six common bakehouses in the town. There is no answer by the defendant remaining, but we hear that in February, 1599, William Becket, weaver and freeman, who was one of the defendants, said that he used to bake pies, pasties, spiced bread and cakes in his own oven, but now he was ordered to bake in the common bakehouse. The Duchy Court made an injunction prohibiting the activities of Becket and other people at Easter term 1599. The intervention by the authorities in the name of arbitration was often regarded suspiciously by the lesser craftsmen, who believed that the urban authorities unfairly supported the influential gilds. Thus, although the two Barons of the Court of Exchequer and Attorney Brograve wrote to the Mayor in October granting permission for Becket and other people to bake "suche smale thinges", the Mayor, Edward Newcome, wrote back in 1600 that there was no way to arbitrate the situation, because Becket said that "vnles hee maye be suffered to bake suche sortes of bread and as mucho weekelie ... he will answere them to the lawe ... ".

Despite the efforts of the authorities for arbitration, a similar case re-occurred some ten years later. John Freak, the Mayor, wrote to Judge Parry, the Chancellor of the Duchy Court in April, 1612, that William Becket, John Cater and others were not complying with the order of the Court which restricted their trade to the Common Bake Houses. Indeed, Thomas Wright was arrested in June, for he continued to bake six and eight pence household loaves against the Assize of Bread in his own oven. In August, the authorities asked ordinary citizens, such as George Langley, paint stainer, William Newton, embroiderer and Thomas Davy, currier, for their opinions. In contrast with the view of the authorities, they believed that "his sixe

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113 PRO DL/1/201/C2.
114 RBL, vol. 3, 354. The Chancery record does not give information about the occupational backgrounds of the defendants, but many of them seem to have been free craftsmen such as currier, joiner and tailor, according to the Freemen's Registers.
115 Ibid. 395.
116 Ibid. 376, 395.
penye loves are more profitabler unto the buyers: then the ii penye howsholde loves which the Bakers of Leicester doe usuallye bake and sell to the poore people."\textsuperscript{117} Moreover, many poor people came to justify their views. Thus, 24 of them came to sign the petition to Mr. Recorder, and sent a copy which Wright exhibited to the King at Leicester on 18th August. Despite all this, the Company of Bakers further tried to persuade Wright to "come and bee A Brother of theire Companie and Submitt him selfe to there orders and bake such kinds of Breade to sell." Wright and Pestell were committed to the Fleet for contempt of the Court in November. Before long, however, the urban authorities reviewed the case, and allowed Wright to bake 6d. and 4d. loaves by the certificate of the Mayor and Brethren. Both of them were discharged.\textsuperscript{118}

Such litigation shows a clear divide between the townsmen with regard to the practical trade structure of the period. In fact, the different perceptions of the formal trade structure were not confined to the small group of tradesmen who were involved in the case. Despite arbitration in a series of disputes over baking practices in the borough, we hear the different views of bakers on the way in which the trade was organised during our period. At the Duchy Chamber in 1627, Richard King, 74 years old, Thomas Heyfield, 58 years old, and Henry Crow, 40 years old, all told the court that no person had baked any white, wheaten, or brown bread outside the Six Common Ovens and Bake Houses of the town, except for those who had reached some financial arrangement with the tenants of these Houses. However, Henry Green, a 55-year-old baker, had known Thomas Wright, who had been baking in his private oven over the last sixteen years. All of these bakers except for Henry Crow knew that the Common

\textsuperscript{117}RBL, vol. 4, 126.

\textsuperscript{118}It is not clear why the authorities changed their view. According to a letter from the town to the Chancellor of the Duchy, they found that "the said Statutes where by Authoritie is given to the Lord Chancellor and others for the settinge prizes of victualls there is an excepcion of Borrowghes and the head officers of the same, and that the authoritie of the said statute should not extend to them, And we do find that the complaint of the plaintiffs was first grounded upon an ordinance made by vertue of that Statute wherein borrowghes are excepted . . ." RBL, vol. 4, 126-9.
Bake Houses provided a sufficient amount of bread for the inhabitants. On the other hand, Nicholas Blackley, a 60-year-old baker, told the court that the Six Common Bake Houses were not able to bake all types of bread throughout the year. He also said that it would be prejudicial to the bakers and other inhabitants if they were forced to bring their bread to the Bake Houses. Valentine Davie, a 46-year-old baker, had a much more radical view. He said that he knew of no bakers who used their private ovens paying any composition to the tenants of the Common Bake Houses, and that it was more beneficial to the bakers to bake privately. Although the links between these deponents and the Bakers' Gild is difficult to establish from our records, different views expressed at the Duchy Court clearly suggest the range of perceptions the freemen and others had concerning public institutions such as the Common Bake Houses. Terminology such as stability, conformity and arbitration tends to gloss over the different reactions the townsfolk had according to their individual viewpoints.

Diverse views expressed in the bakers' case are a strong indication of the division, disagreement and grievances which existed among the tradesmen, concealed behind the collective actions of the formal institutions. It is true that many of these institutions adapted themselves to the gradual change of the formal structure of the town without being involved in disturbances. If the disobedience and protests of the gildsmen are to be seen as signs of mal-adaptation by more than a dozen independent institutional entities in the town, then it is surprising to note just how limited the number of incidents occurring in the town was over a hundred years after the Reformation. In fact, as we will see in subsequent chapters, the response of alienated gildsmen may be much more typically found outside the formal framework, suggesting that they took advantage of fragmented law enforcement. In other words, the relative stability of the formal institutions was complemented by the growing importance of the informal activities of the townsfolk, which could have been

\[11^9\text{PRO DL4/77/17. King, Crow, and Davie can be identified in the Freemen's Registers, but the relationship between the Bakers Company and these bakers is not clear.}\]
prosecuted on a large scale if the rigid controls of local government had been effectively enforced.\textsuperscript{120}

If the formal institutions often failed to achieve conformity among the lesser freemen, what was their impact on the un-free population? In the wake of a dispute between Liverpool and Lancaster over imposing a passage toll, for example, William Stout wrote with regret that "our goods were taken and kept. But as I was no freeman of Lancaster, nor could be admitted without an oath, I released my goods; but my neighbours who were freeman commenced an action against the persons who seized their goods, at their own and the corporation's charge . . ."\textsuperscript{121} Such discrimination against an un-free trader in the late seventeenth century was also experienced by numerous urban dwellers who remained unenfranchised in pre-Civil War Leicester. As our evidence indicated earlier, apprentices, journeymen, labourers and women were a sizeable group whose activities were also strongly influenced by the urban authorities during this period. Many migrants and temporary visitors also constituted a significant part of the urban population who were exposed to regulation, although verification of the actual scale of these mobile groups is difficult.\textsuperscript{122}

Our discussion so far has focused on the power struggle between the council and the gilds, and this may give us the impression that the activities of the un-free were effectively pushed to the periphery of the urban community. In fact, recent studies have amply shown that a number of spinsters and freemen's wives made an active contribution to economic activities under the auspices of freemen during our

\textsuperscript{120}Here I am distinguishing two things: on the one hand, a rigid official framework was introduced, as we have seen, but on the other hand, the aims of such framework were not necessarily implemented by an effective administrative structure. I believe these are two different dimensions which had two separate impacts on the community. The effectiveness of gild restrictions has been stressed in a study on northern towns, but remains statistically unproved. Woodward, \textit{Men at Work}, 33-4.

\textsuperscript{121}Marshall, 'Autobiography', 96.

\textsuperscript{122}BRIV/9/59. See pp. 68-72, 119-125.
period. Male, female, and child labour adopted by the freemen constituted a significant part of the Leicester economy. Our earlier discussion also suggests that the tertiary sector, such as domestic service and the victualling trade, flourished in Leicester by employing the unprivileged population. Though less established, informal transactions were rife. We have already highlighted the areas where the power of the urban authorities was limited such as private houses and the suburbs, which offered alternative urban structures that facilitated informal social and economic activities. The unprivileged reacted to the formal institution flexibly, and sometimes violently. Significant was the fact that some of the freemen also adapted to this social reality, and even mixed with a group of the unprivileged in the informal social sphere.

Despite such ambivalent views among the freemen, the demarcation between the franchised and the un-franchised was constantly drawn by the council and the gilds. During our period, this was most strongly expressed with regard to privilege based on residential status. The issue of freedom was frequently discussed at the council meetings. Thus in 1575, it was agreed that no one would be able to trade in the town except for those who were accepted by the Mayor and chamberlains, and paid £5 for freedom. The amount of fine doubled in 1607. The local act of 1579 prohibited freemen who lived outside the town more than one year without fulfilling the citizens' obligation from trading in the town until they had sworn and paid the fine  

124See pp. 95-106.  
125See pp. 27-8, 73-7.  
126See pp. 57-64, 130-2.  
127See pp. 128-43.  
128This is a specific demarcation between the free and the non-free. As we saw, in reality, there were many un-free townsmen whose residential status was tacitly accepted in the community.  
129BRII/1/2/245; BRII/1/3/7; RBL, vol. 3, 156. The same order was re-enforced in 1582 and 1597.  
130RBL, vol. 4, 65.
A more drastic action was taken in 1599 when it was ordered that freemen would be disenfranchised unless they lived in the town before the feast day of St. Thomas.

In practice, however, the gild members must have had frequent contacts with incoming country traders and farmers who provided raw materials, particularly on market days. Ordinals and ordinances were not entirely exclusive by nature, and many of the non-free tradesmen did trade, having their licence from the borough authorities. In Coventry, for example, the Corporation allowed rural chandlers to trade in the market due to excessive price increases. Even when candles became so scarce in Leicester in 1557 that the authorities banned Leicester butchers from selling any tallow from the feast of St. Michael until the Candlemas, foreign chandlers were allowed to buy tallow in the town as long as they were bound to the Mayor and two honest men in the town. The borough ordinance of 1521 allowed the supply of bread from the countryside as long as it was weighed before the Mayor or by his officers and by the wardens of the Company of Bakers. In 1599, the country butchers were ordered to bring the hide, fell, skin and tallow of the flesh if they wanted to sell the flesh itself. Furthermore, the ordinal of the Company of Glovers provided privilege for glovers and fellmongers living in market towns to trade in Leicester under licence. These are the people who were systematically accepted in the community by going through the official examination undertaken by the authorities. It is likely, however, that such official acceptance of outside tradesmen was often preceded by their establishing

131 BRII/1/2/3306; RBL, vol. 3, 176-7.
132 RBL/1/3/170.
133 Berger, Mercers' Company of Coventry, 164-5.
135 Ibid. 19.
137 THL, 465. Also see BRII/1/3/184; BRII/1/3/197; BRII/1/3/200.
138 In Winchester, the corporation accepted the trade of non-free in the ordinance of 1573, but they were liable to the tax before Christmas. Rosen, 'History of Winchester', 175.
informal contacts with individual freemen. In this way, the business networks of tradesmen in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester were loosely linked with a large number of unprivileged population in its hinterlands.\textsuperscript{139}

Close relationships with privileged urban traders which facilitated the economic activities of foreigners in the town can be inferred from the extent of their knowledge about other urban traders. Thus, in 1606, we hear that Henry Thorneburgh, a baker in Desford, was a regular visitor of Leicester, and had a reasonable knowledge of the town. He told the Duchy Court that John Walker, a miller of the Castle mill, was often a foreman of the Jury at the Duchy Court, as had his predecessors. He also said that, when he was carrying a sack of malt belonging to John Weltch, the farmer of the North Mill of Leicester, he saw Hilton, whom he knew was a servant of Mr. Ive, a farmer of the Castle Mill, take the malt of Mrs. Sheffield, who was living at John Weltch’s house, to the Castle Mill.\textsuperscript{140} The extent of his knowledge of the inhabitants of Leicester indicates that he kept intimate relationships with some townsmen from whom he had obtained such information over time. Here is a good example of a respectable tradesman from outside, integrated with one of the major trades in the town, and having close contact with a privileged urban tradesman. Some foreign traders were clearly aware of the importance of their contacts with the established urban traders to carrying out business in the town. This was particularly the case in the victualling trade, the major concern of the civic elite in our period. John Brewerne, a yeoman of Leicester, deposed at the Duchy Court that the millers of Belgrave and Aylestone might not fetch any corn out of the town to grind without having agreement with the farmer of the Castle Mills.\textsuperscript{141}

The division between freemen and non-freemen was not necessarily the most significant demarcation in conceptualising the social and economic structure of

\textsuperscript{139}See pp. 37-41.
\textsuperscript{140}PRO DL4/50/26; STAC8/143.
\textsuperscript{141}PRO DLA/497.
the urban community. This view brings us back to the initial enquiry in the early part of this chapter. Historians have argued that the formal institutions of the borough, such as the council and the gilds, were to protect the interests of the freemen. Yet one ought to distinguish the objective of the urban institutions from the views of individual freemen who retained extensive social networks for their business beyond the town boundaries. It is conceivable that, as licensing for urban trade became rigorous, informal connections between the freemen and the foreigners became much more crucial for the integration of foreign traders. Even if a series of economic regulations explicitly excluded outsiders, it may not have prevented a strong trend among the freemen to organise their business relationships informally. As has been suggested, some freemen may have pursued more lucrative economic activities outside the framework of the formal institution of the gild, in the wake of stronger official intervention and changing economic conditions.

The ambivalent impact of the formal structure can also be explained from the outsiders' point of view. In 1533, a baker in Mountsorrel complained to the Bailiff of Leicester at the Gainsborough in the Saturday market, that "if we bring in [no] bread there is a hundred persons within the said town will (fetch) in the bakers of the country for want of bread." Contrary to the view of the authorities of the borough, his remark is indicative of the possibility of the existence of a large number of population in the town and the countryside who were aware that the formal arrangement of the borough was not practical in the early sixteenth century. This seems to have been much truer in the late sixteenth century when the borough saw a

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142 The right of residence was often based on landlord's discretion. Thus in Nottingham in 1613, Richard Jowett, the landlord to William Borowes, Kegworth labourer, maintained his tenant did not need to be bound, although the aldermen did not approved. **RBN**, vol. 4, 315. This point might also be inferred from the fact that, despite tough public actions, there was a continuous increase in the number of pedlars during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries. Berger, **Mercers' Company of Coventry**, 173.

143 **RBN**, vol. 3, 34-5.
rapid expansion of the urban population. Continuous disputes over the production of bread during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries indicate that the formal structure of the victualling trade became increasingly inadequate with the urban expansion of Leicester during this period.

Disputes between urban and country fullers show what the urban formal structure meant among the people in the town and the countryside. In 1575, two wardens of the Clothmaker's Company complained at the Duchy Court that country fullers were secretly taking raw cloth out of the town to full and dress in the countryside without any authorisation of the company. The privilege of the urban fullers was stressed by the wardens of the Company by clarifying their position within the formal structure of the town and the obligation attached to their status in the town. Thus they emphasised the fact that they normally paid 7 shillings, called "the Walkers mould", to the Queen annually as an incorporated body of the town.

On the other hand, the country fullers clearly had a different perception of the effect of the formal structure of the town. The defendants argued that the country fullers had been allowed to buy raw cloth on the market days, and their position was amply proved by their deponents. In the deposition recorded in 1585, John Wodson, a husbandman in Rothley, said that John Scrivener and Robert, his son, had had a shop at Mr. Pratt's house for 30 years, and used to receive raw cloths ready dressed for their customers at Leicester on market days. Both of them were fullers in the countryside.

It is interesting to see that some of the deponents from the town admitted that there was some confusion in the practice of the trade. Thus William Green admitted there was a great contention between the Leicester fullers and the country fullers, while Henry Moseley, weaver, plausibly revealed that the raw cloths brought
to Leicester had been dressed sometimes by the town fullers, and sometimes by the country fullers, and the same cloths had been carried out sometimes openly and sometimes privately by the latter.\textsuperscript{148}

4. Conclusion

Our discussion has shown some aspects of the significant changes that took place in the formal institutions of a middle-sized county town after the Reformation, and has demonstrated their impact on the social and economic attitudes of the urban population in general. In explaining urban society as an entity of the heterogeneous population, one should not be blinded by the structure defined by formal institutions such as the council and the gilds. What is important is to conceptualise the ways in which such tangible institutions were perceived by the people, and to demonstrate the variety of social and economic values they expressed in different urban contexts. Even in the formal dimension, we saw that some tradesmen tried to adhere to the traditional and formal occupational organisations, while others perceived the hierarchical power structure of the local government with increasing suspicion with regard to their implementing rigid public policies. There was good reason for the senior members of influential trade gilds to sustain sound relationships with the local government in which they would later be able to fulfil their political and economic ambitions. But even here, our evidence shows some signs of division and political inactivity. As to the lesser freemen, outsiders and their activities in the informal context, the identification of urban values may be more difficult due to the lack of evidence. Nonetheless, considering the extent of the differences in people's views as expressed at the local and national courts, it is hard to deny that many fell back on informal social and economic

\footnotesize{148PRO DL4/33/27.}
activities with alternative urban structures from which their civic consciousness was generated.
1. Introduction

"A sophisticated political order" was one of the significant attributes of established towns. The characteristics of urban administration have already attracted substantial historical interest, while recent debate over the stability of London and its suburbs has revealed how significantly urban administrative functions gave structure to social relationships in the locality. The impact of administrative structure, however, tends to be explained according to what historians believe the structure did to urban inhabitants rather than how they perceived the structure differently. Our previous discussion questions whether the administrative structure helped generate conformity in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester. The social, economic and political lives of a county town were better explained by the ambivalent attitudes of individuals adapting themselves to formal and informal circumstances.

In this chapter, we shall suggest a number of reasons why the formal structure played only a partial role in structuring urban social relationships. As with the studies of London, we shall investigate how the growing power of the urban authorities affected an urban population in the context of ward and parish. Although these two institutions overlapped one another in the urban precincts, their functions were different

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1 Clark and Slack, *English Towns*, 5-6.
3 See ch. 5 above.
4 However, the ward and the parish as units of social organisation have been hinted at by Phythian-Adams. See Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, ch 14.
in nature. In Leicester, the ward was a much smaller administrative unit than the parish, and its history was closely connected to the development of civic administration. On the other hand, the parish came to have half-civil and half-religious functions by the late sixteenth century, and the former became increasingly important during our period.5

2. The Structure of Urban Wards

The ward was a civic administrative unit in which the power of the civic authorities was implemented, as in many large urban centres in Tudor and Stuart England.6 The introduction of such an institution marked the sophistication of civic administration during the history of individual towns. It was no coincidence, therefore, that Leicester was divided into 12 wards in 1484 when the town was experiencing the height of its administrative development in the late middle ages.7 The wards aided the collection of subsidies, the muster, and other kind of government levies imposed on a large number of the urban population, but more significantly they helped organise the implementation of law and order at the neighbourhood level.8

For each ward, one alderman was appointed at the Common Hall "to have full power and auctorite for to correct and punysh all such people as been afore reherced, or at any tyme doing a trespace . . . ."9 Although there was no mention of constables and

5See pp. 199-224.
6For example, see RBN, vol. 4, 174; 'The Southampton Mayor's Book of 1606-1608', ed., W. J. Connor (Southampton Record Series, 22, Southampton, 1978), 9-10; MacCaffrey, Exeter, 91.
7Unlike in London, where each ward was governed by the court of wardmote, the wards in Leicester were mere administrative divisions collectively presided over by the urban authorities. Foster, Politics of Stability, 37.
8See p. 51.
9RBL, vol. 2, 305-7; VCH, vol. 4, 28. In Nottingham, for example, the aldermen had the feast in their house "on Easter Day by theyr wholl Wardes" by 1601. RBN, vol. 4, 256.
thirdboroughs at this stage\textsuperscript{10}, they had certainly become the assistants of the aldermen by Elizabeth’s reign. The number of wards was reduced to ten by this time, and the appointment of aldermen, constables and thirdboroughs undoubtedly became an important administrative task for the local government.\textsuperscript{11} According to the oath of constables in c.1489, they were responsible for making arrests, while the thirdboroughs' duties were to make presentment. Both officials also needed to supervise the watchman.\textsuperscript{12} By 1588, the constables and the thirdboroughs had begun to be summoned a few days before Ascension Day to receive their charge every year.\textsuperscript{13}

The institutional structure of wards in Leicester resembled the neighbourhood in seventeenth century Southwark: it involved the rotation of office-holding and numerous contacts between the civic officials and the inhabitants.\textsuperscript{14} All the inhabitants were subject to the same jurisdiction day and night, unlike trade institutions such as the gild and the market, whose influences were more specific in terms of time and space. It is difficult to estimate the ratio of ward officials to inhabitants in each ward, but tax records and muster rolls may give some idea. In 1608, the average number of households in each ward was around 50. This means that there was one official in every seventeen households. If one adds some minor offices such as watch and beadle, the ratio of officials to households closely approximates to the situation in Boroughside Southwark. Predictably, the figure was significantly high in smaller wards such as wards 8 and 10 whose ratios are 1/12 and 1/9 respectively.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{10}The oaths of constable and "freborrowes" (renamed as thirdborough by the sixteenth century) were entered in the oaths of borough officers recorded in c.1489, but they did not specify their relationships with aldermen in the ward. RBL, vol. 2, 322.

\textsuperscript{11}BRII/1/2/32; RBL, vol. 3, 88. The town minutes regularly list their names. The way in which these officials were chosen is not clear from the evidence in the Hall Books. BRII/1/3 passim.

\textsuperscript{12}According to their oaths, constables "shall trewe othe giffe vnto the wachman", and "freborrowes" had to give warning every night to the watchmen during the watching time. RBL, vol. 2, 322.

\textsuperscript{13}BRII/1/3/27; BRII/1/3/117; RBL, vol. 3, 245, 319.

\textsuperscript{14}Boulton, Neighbourhood, 262, 264.

\textsuperscript{15}See p. 45, Boulton, Neighbourhood, 267-8.
It has been argued that communal obligations and public duties helped maintain inhabitants' civic identities in their neighbourhood.\(^\text{16}\) Given the lack of serious disorder in the community, one is tempted to regard the implicit and explicit effects of formal institution as functions of stability. To see the extent to which the formal institutional structure helped organise the social relationships in the neighbourhood, however, one needs to examine how townsmen reacted to the structure. For this purpose, we will focus on the patterns of the office-holding of constables, the most important ward official and whose records enable us to examine the impact of the institution in detail.

While the activities of village constables have drawn much historical attention, the roles of their urban counterparts remain to be explored.\(^\text{17}\) Lack of information about these officials in provincial towns may be supplemented by a study of the capital. Describing the administrative functions of constables in Elizabethan London, Foster has shown how they undertook duties such as collecting assessments, assisting the military muster, and arresting trouble makers in the locality. The London constables were also in charge of summoning juries and assigning night watches. The police duties of constables were supported by the beadles, who were appointed by the court of wardmote.\(^\text{18}\) The case of London suggests, therefore, that the administrative responsibilities of urban constables were not very different from the duties of their rural counterparts in general.\(^\text{19}\)

This was also the case for the ward constable in Leicester. Like the constables in London and rural parishes, their responsibilities were extensive, stretching from police

\(^{16}\)Ibid, ch. 10; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, ch. 3.


\(^{18}\)Foster, *Politics of Stability*, 29-30; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, 219-10, 221. The jurisdiction of constables was somewhat complicated by the fact that they had separate roles in the ward, the precinct and the parish respectively, although they were administratively the officers in the parish. Foster, *Politics of Stability*, 32.

\(^{19}\)The detail categories of the duty of village constables, see Kent, *The English Village Constable*, ch. 2.
duties to the implementation of administrative force. According to the oath of constables for the commission of the King in 1522, their duties would cover checking the harness and assessing the value of the property of every person in the ward over the age of 16.\textsuperscript{20} In 1606, the constables and the thirdboroughs, along with the churchwardens, were ordered to call each household to collect stones in the South Fields for the highways.\textsuperscript{21} Nevertheless, there were some urban attributes in the duties of the ward constables who were under the influence of the powerful local government. In 1587, for example, they were charged to compel the inhabitants in their own wards to come to the public sermon.\textsuperscript{22}

Studies of village constables have illuminated their ambivalent roles in local communities, showing how they came under pressure both from the neighbourhood and the authorities. It has been argued that their actions were influenced not only by official demand, but by the popular expectations of neighbours, friends and acquaintances.\textsuperscript{23} In these studies, moreover, any standard picture of rural constables has been replaced by a recognition of the regional diversity in practice. As Kent has vigorously depicted, the characteristics of constableship were influenced by the social structure and the rate of demographic turnover, which were unique to each locality.\textsuperscript{24} If these findings are valid, one might expect that the activities of urban ward constables would also show a distinct social profile unique to the urban community, with their social and demographic structures being quite different from those of the village communities. Kent has found, for example, that there were a good number of craftsmen and tradesmen among constables in Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire.\textsuperscript{25} This is also likely in much larger towns like Leicester. If the practice of constables was influenced by

\textsuperscript{20}RBL, vol. 3, 21
\textsuperscript{21}RBL, vol. 4, 47.
\textsuperscript{22}BR\textit{II}/I/3/9, \textit{RBL}, vol. 3, 242.
\textsuperscript{24}Kent, \textit{The English Village Constable}, 58-63, 129, 281
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid, 119.
their neighbours as well as the governing authorities, the social profiles of constables must have had significant implications for the outcomes of their law enforcement in the urban community. As the office of constable was one of the closest to the ordinary citizen in terms of recruitment and law enforcement, a study of constables' work patterns and of popular attitudes toward their office will provide useful sources for measuring the social influence of the formal institutions of Leicester. Two factors ought to be taken into account. Firstly, the office of urban constables was firmly under the control of powerful urban authorities. Unlike the village constables, they were systematically supervised by the aldermen, whose economic and political influence was extensive in the community.\textsuperscript{26} Whereas the magistrates were largely indifferent to the quality of the officials in the countryside, the civic elite needed to keep a close eye on their activities.\textsuperscript{27} Secondly, one has to consider the social differences between wards, a diversity less marked in rural parishes.

Table 6.1 shows the results of the occupational analysis of the offices of alderman and constable between 1587 and 1606. The over-representation of some occupational groups is clear, though the sample may not be large enough to be conclusive. As one might have predicted from our previous discussion, merchants and victuallers such as butchers and innholders were clearly over-represented in the office of the ward aldermen, considering the scale of each occupational group in the town. By contrast, the occupational bias in the office of the ward constables was negligible. The office was held by diverse occupational groups, and commercial and industrial occupations were much more equally represented.

The significance of the office of constable in the community can be further portrayed by reference to other civic offices. In the sample of 113 constables, more than

\textsuperscript{26}This was also the case in late medieval Coventry. See Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 158.

\textsuperscript{27}In 1604-5, for example, the aldermen had to pay from their own pocket, if they failed to assist the constables for raising taxes. RBL, vol. 4, 24; Archer, Pursuit of Stability, 235; Kent, The English Village Constable, 65-72.
Table 6.1
The Occupations of the Ward Aldermen and Constables, 1587-1606

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<th>Aldermen</th>
<th>Distributive</th>
<th>Victualling</th>
<th>Craft</th>
<th>Others</th>
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Note: The occupational groupings are for convenience and are therefore arbitrary. There are obvious problems in identifying the occupations of the officials by using the Freemen's Registers, for it is possible that there were more than two different persons who shared the same names in the town. In such cases, we do not have any means to know if the names in the Registers were those of the officials, since the Registers are not comprehensive. In the 1608 Muster Rolls, however, only about 7 per cent of the free and non-free inhabitants had exactly the same names but different occupations. It is believed, therefore, that the risk of misidentification is minimal. One of the tanners (*) was also a bellfounder.
30 of them (27 per cent) had held the office of third borough previously, and about 30 (26 per cent) became members of the Forty-Eight in the council. Some of them became prominent citizens, such as Andrew James, mercer, and Francis Churchman, shoemaker, who reached the office of Mayor. On the other hand, not all the constables were successful. During a period of looming social and economic problems, such as in the 1590s, the social position of some of the constables was rather precarious. For example, Thomas Green, butcher, became a constable in the 4th ward as well as a meat tester in 1587. Three years later, however, he was seriously in debt.28 George Green became a constable in the same ward in 1594, but was dismissed from the council due to his financial problem five years later.29 Equally, Ralph Orton, draper, was dismissed from the council in 1599, after serving about two years in the 5th ward. Furthermore, many of them probably did not proceed to any higher offices in the civic institution. Our sample suggests, therefore, that, although the office was relatively accessible, it did not always pave the way to becoming a member of the civic elite.

There seems to have been some correlation between the duration of the tenure of office and the profile of individual constables. On average, the tenure of constables was relatively short, whereas some aldermen stayed in office throughout the sample period. Even among the constables, however, there was variation from one to five years of office. In our sample, eighteen constables stayed in office for more than two years.30 Only five of these, however, held any kind of minor civic office such as fish, meat and leather testers, and only one of them became a member of the council. This indicates that constables who stayed in the office for a long time were less likely to become senior members of the civic institution.

29BRII/1/3/103; RBL, vol. 3, 357.
30They include bakers, a chandler, a cutler, a glover, a joiner, labourers, a miller, shoemakers, a tanner, a weaver and yeomen.
In consequence, the government of the ward of late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester was formally supervised by a group of the civic elite, who normally stayed in the office of ward alderman for a long period of time, whereas their assistants' profiles reflected an array of civic and occupational identities. The office of constable provided a window through which ordinary townsmen perceived formal civic institutions in various ways. For the ambitious, it may have been a mere stepping stone for proceeding to higher civil offices. A positive relationship with an alderman probably increased the possibility of social and economic success in the community. As for the less ambitious townsmen, a long partnership with one of the most senior members of the council would enhance their awareness of the civic institutions. Some probably tried to evade such a hazardous and often unpopular office. This is hinted at by the constables in Nottingham who in 1613 petitioned that "by the lawes of this realme hee needeth not . . . to continewe in the said office aboue the space of one yeare at one tyme." One can easily fail to see such varieties of motivation behind office-holding unless one critically uses the formal records, such as ordinances, acts and minutes, in which the duties of constables are defined.

Examination of formal records also paves the way for us to argue that the practice of constables was strongly influenced by the perception and discretion of each officer. In contrast to normal procedure in the modern police force, he did not receive any rigorous training according to an official code of practice. The effectiveness of constables probably depended upon other external factors such as their loyalty to the

31 Subtle differences in the social profiles of urban constables can be compared to that of their rural counterparts which were largely recruited from the better sort. See Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, 76.

32 Kent has argued that the effect of supervision by justices, deputy lieutenants, or high constables was weak. Kent, The English Village Constable, 231-2. It is conceivable that urban constables were much more intimate with their superiors, aldermen, and this intimacy influenced their practice.

33 RBN, vol. 4, 309.

aldermen and the patronage of the aldermen. The period of office-holding seems to have had significant implications here (see Table 6.2). If one ward was supervised by the same alderman for a long period, one cannot escape the impression that practice was heavily influenced by this alderman's individual character. The same logic would apply to the office of constable. After several years of office-holding, the constable would be integrated into the neighbourhood just as much as into the local government.

Lack of evidence hinders the identification of factors affecting the nomination of constables in each ward, but our analysis suggests that the characteristics of local government at the neighbourhood level were strongly shaped by the occupational backgrounds of the officers, the duration of the individual office-holding periods, and the relationship between the aldermen and the constables. In addition, the government of the ward may well have been influenced by the wide and complex social networks of the constables with the people in the neighbourhood, the community, and even beyond the borough boundaries. This indicates that the social impact of law enforcement might have been unevenly felt in the community, depending on the discretion of different constables in each ward.

How did the inhabitants respond to such an institutional structure? The answer to this lies partly in the debate over the effectiveness of local officials based upon the levels of successful prosecution and partly the general image of the amateur officers. The defects in law enforcement mechanisms in early modern England is a much debated issue. For example, Thomas Heath, a Leicester labourer, was directed by Henry Clarke, an informer, to connive at townsmen's dressing and eating flesh contrary to the statute, if they paid him a certain amount of money. Such a case of corruption was not exceptional. There is also little evidence to show that the problems of vagrants were

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35According to the Hall Book, a number of new constables who were individually nominated by the town authorities took over the office during the mayoral year.
36Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, 76.
37BRiI/18/12/38.
Table 6.2
The Period of Office-Holding in Different Wards, 1587-1606

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Sources: BRII/1/3; RE
Note: The constables' occupations are vertically listed in the order of rotation, and the horizontal lines indicate the length of their office-holding. At times, there were overlapping years of the office-holding by different individuals, but this was resulted from the fact that the constables were often replaced in the middle of the mayoral years probably due to illness or death. There are no entries in our records for the year 1599.
effectively contained. As for petty-constables, recent studies on the ward and ward officials in Elizabethan London have re-evaluated the image of urban constables by putting the ward system into perspective. The image of constables was not only positively influenced by the fulminations of the aldermen and Privy Council, but also by the scale of social problems and the state of the government of the suburbs. Thus "the city proper had a relatively well-coordinated system of policing, and machinery was available for the close regulation of the life of the inhabitants."33

Such debate over the effectiveness and image of the officials, however, is unhelpful in seeing what the existence and actions of constables meant among the inhabitants as a whole, not only because it is inconclusive and ambiguous given the state of our relevant documentation, but also the image or effectiveness tends to highlight a view of only limited groups of urban inhabitants. Moreover, even if there were such an image of constables held by a consensus of the inhabitants, there is no proof that such an image helps explain the actions and the behaviours of the inhabitants in reality. Although our evidence is unquantifiable, the impact of constables in the neighbourhood can be most effectively understood by examining the direct interactions which took place between the officials and the inhabitants.

Order in the community was maintained so long as the inhabitants were prepared to identify themselves with the framework of formal organisation. When the thirdborough of Sanvey Gate ward (ward 9 and 11), John Jarvis, mason, appointed Christopher Platt as a watchman while the constable was away from the ward, Platt asserted with vile language that Jarvis had no authority to give him the charge of the watch.39 The constable often emphasised his authority by declaring his relationship with the national polity, of which the urban government was a part, in public. Thus when the constable of Gallowtree Gate ward (ward 8), Robert Clifton, came to Richard Yates’s house to arrest him, he summoned him in the name of the Queen’s majesty, and charged

38 Archer, Pursuit of Stability, 222, 225, 235.
39 BRII/18/12/188.
him to go to Mr. Mayor with him.\textsuperscript{40} A sample of the borough court cases indicates that constables’ actions did have some kind of authority, and that the legitimacy of this authority was recognised by the neighbourhood.

The urban identity felt by townspeople was not always accompanied by a sense of obedience to the authorities, however.\textsuperscript{41} As we shall see in the final chapter, the foundations of urban values were firmly based on a range of informal social activities in both the private and public arena. Law enforcement in late Tudor and early Stuart town government often had significant social consequences for the neighbourhood because it tended to threaten these sources of urban identity.\textsuperscript{42} Despite her husband’s presence, the wife of Richard Yates in Leicester told a constable that her husband was away when he came to arrest him in her house at around mid-night.\textsuperscript{43} As Wrightson has hinted in his studies of the rural community, the enforcement of social regulations often created new areas of conflict in the neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{44} The suppression of alehouses, for example, was a common source of contention in Leicester. Thus when a constable called at Richard Ball’s house to take him to the Mayor for the licensing of his victualling trade in 1619, William Snow shouted that the constable’s warrant was false, and a "turd in Mr. Mayor's teeth and in the constable's toe."\textsuperscript{45} A sense of solidarity and an excess of alcohol often affected people’s attitudes towards the authority of the constable. Thus when Robert Allin, the constable of alderman Pusey’s ward, went to stop people dancing at Goodwin’s house in 1620, they yelled, the "Constable was a rogue..."\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{40}BRI/18/4/410.
\textsuperscript{41}BRI/18/14/87.
\textsuperscript{42}In Colchester, for example, when the constables searched private houses without any authorisation, they were met by the strong challenge by the residents. Joel Samaha, \textit{Law and Order in Historical Perspective: the Case of Elizabethan Essex} (New York, 1974), 105-6.
\textsuperscript{43}BRI/18/4/410.
\textsuperscript{44}Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', 25.
\textsuperscript{45}BRI/18/13/482.
\textsuperscript{46}BRI/18/13/511.
The effectiveness of ward government required the collaboration of ward officials. Richard Inge was a constable of the alderman, James Andrew, who had a promising career leading to the civic elite. In 1617, on the way to bear-baiting in the market place, he saw Robert Webster and William Wood fighting. First of all, the constable took Webster to his shop, and left him with a thirdborough, Richard Seele, baker, and John Somerfielde, but William Wood had disappeared when the constable returned to the scene of the fight. Meanwhile, Webster managed to run away from the shop, and was finally caught by the constable and the thirdborough at the backyard of Crossley's house. However, Reynolde Fawsytt of the Bishop's Fee, William Carte of Leicester shearman, and Andrew Snow took Webster away from them by force, and Webster himself struck the constable. Such a graphic example helps us to unveil the latent antagonism of the people against the authorities. It also vividly epitomises the limits of the authority of the constable when surrounded by an angry populace in the neighbourhood.47

Although the nature of the court records is such that we are not well informed about the successful work of constables, a sample of cases illuminate discrepancy between official institutional values and varieties of neighbourhood values. Our evidence may be too fragmentary to produce any patterns, but it is strong enough to make us consider the possibility of a range of local reactions to such an institutional framework. The pattern of the office holding of constables is also indicative of such diverse reactions to the authorities. It is even arguable that diversity was as significant as conformity.

47BRII/18/12/234. The urban authorities were probably aware of the extent of the inefficiency in ward administration. Wrightson has argued that the some attempts were made to improve the effect of constable in the rural parishes after 1630s in Essex and in 1646 in Lancashire by holding regular meetings and ordering to produce these reports. Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', 37-9. Due to the absence of reliable constable presentments, the performance of Leicester constables is difficult to evaluate.
3. The Parish and the Impact of the Reformation

The discussion of secular activities gives only a partial picture of urban social organisation. Since the Middle Ages, of great importance had been the parish and the parish church in which people's spiritual lives were, in theory at least, collectively developed. In a town, however, such a unit of religious organisation overlapped with that of the powerful civic institutions in which inhabitants' civic identity was formed. The organic development of lay and spiritual structures was a unique symbiosis between secular and religious structures within the urban precincts, which added another dimension to the characteristics of social organisation. Moreover, religious dimension was of particular importance in the sixteenth century. The church experienced major theological and institutional changes exemplified by the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the suppression of the colleges and chantries. Many urban houses were physically in decay, and traditional civic-cum-religious ceremonies were in decline. It has been contended, therefore, that the Reformation brought about significant change in the urban landscape and in cultural activities.48

A comprehensive account of the religious impact on the town certainly deserves more than a chapter. For the purpose of my discussion, therefore, I shall limit my focus to those aspects which are most relevant to the previous discussion, i.e., changing parochial lives in the context of the urban social organisation. We shall also examine how the balance of lay and spiritual functions changed, and what kind of social consequences such change had.

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48 Peter Clark, 'Reformation and Radicalism in Kentish Towns, c.1500-1553', in Stadtbürger und Adel in der Reformation, ed., W. J. Mommsen (London: German Historical Institute, 5, 1979), 111-4; Clark and Slack, English Towns, 146-7, 149.
The five Leicester parishes had their own history. Some of them experienced significant spatial and administrative alterations during the 100 years after the Reformation. In the late sixteenth century, for example, the parish of All Saints' united with St. Peter's and St. Michael's, whose churches had already fallen into physical decay and disuse by the end of the middle ages. St. Margaret's was a peculiar jurisdiction under the authority of the Bishop of Lincoln, and the civil jurisdiction of Bishop's Fee, which covered a large part of this parish, was the subject of a bitter dispute between the borough and other external authorities. The parishes were different in wealth as well as in size. For example, the vicarage of All Saints' was just over £13 after being united with St. Peter's, while services at St. Nicholas' were usually undertaken by the vicar of St. Martin's because the parish was too small to maintain a separate curate.

These differences, however, should not blur some common structures in the social organisation which all parishes retained. Despite ambiguous administrative division, the English parish was a well organised institution to which people owed many social and religious obligations. The upkeep of the church buildings and the

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49For their social, economic and demographic characteristics, see pp. 17, 45-7, 65-81, 109-10. St. Leonard's was effectively included in the borough jurisdiction by the 1599 charter, although the number of parishioners seems to have been extremely small. In assessing the impact of the Reformation, therefore, the parish does not seem to have great importance. VCH, vol. 4, 348.

50VCH, vol. 4, 388-9. The church fabric of St. Peter was sold to Leicester by Elizabeth I in 1573 for the school building. The parish was amalgamated into All Saints' in 1591. St. Michael's appears to have been united with St. Peter's some time before. Nichols, 327-8; Janet D. Martin, 'St. Michael's Church and Parish, Leicester', TLAHS 64 (1990), 24.

51See pp. 59-62.

52VCH, vol. 4, 342; Nichols, 608.

53S. and B. Webb have described that 'The division of England into parishes was determined by no statute, and . . . by no royal decree or authoritative commission.' Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act: The Parish and the County. (1906), 9. For the early development of parochial organisation, see C. Drew, Early Parochial
payment for the cost of the utensils in the church service were dependent upon parishioners' co-operation. As with the wards, parochial obligations were automatically tied to residents. No matter what they believed, the Leicester townsmen had to live in these geographically organised areas, except for the Newarke, which was extra-parochial. In the post-Reformation period, the parish continued to be the basic unit of religious organisation. Religious misdemeanours continued to be punished by the parish authorities. Thus Edward Petty, butcher, had to show his repentance in front of the ministers, churchwardens, and other leading parishioners for uttering slanderous words to Mary, the wife of John Freake, one of the burgesses, immediately after Sunday prayers at St. Nicholas' in 1616. In 1620, Simon Carter was also in the church of St. Nicholas' after the evening prayer to confess his slanderous words against the good name of Anne Browne in the parish.

The common characteristics of the parish, which was arguably the most spatially all-embracing urban institution, tempt us to regard it as a stable community of people with a strong collective parish identity. In the late middle ages, such an image was highlighted by religious fraternities and ecclesiastical rituals involving the whole parish community. The view of a stable parish community may seem less tenable in the post-Reformation period which, as some historians have argued, saw a trend towards social disintegration, partly due to the suppression of medieval parochial fraternities. For example, the parish gilds enabled individuals to pursue and express their individual beliefs collectively, according to their personal choice. It has

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54 The structural continuity in the ecclesiastical administration was one of the most significant traits of the English Reformation. Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal, Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration of the Church in England 1500-1642 (Leicester 1976), 15.

55 Leics. RO 1D41/4/1025.

56 Leics. RO 1D41/4/1215.

57 For example, see G. Rosser, Medieval Westminster (Oxford, 1989).
been argued that such a function was replaced by the coercive framework of collective worship in the period immediately after the dissolution of the religious gilds.\textsuperscript{58} As has been shown in chapter 3, the high demographic pressure and population turnover may have spurred the disintegration of a parish community in the late sixteenth century. Social division may have been further articulated by population growth and a growing social inequality during our period, but historians have identified some significant parochial structures which continued to organise the social relationships of townspeople.\textsuperscript{59} Although the scale of the effect of these structures is debatable, some elements of social organisation are undeniable.

The problem with these views, however, is that they attempt to verify the existence of loyalty and communal sense by the functions of parochial structures such as church services, office holdings and taxation.\textsuperscript{60} Unless one demonstrates that each parishioner perceives these structures equally, such concepts as loyalty and collective identity can easily be proved or disproved depending on the sources selected by historians. In fact, we know too little about the extent to which parishioners directly exposed themselves to the effect of these institutions and their changes over time. Although historians have shown the changing attitudes of parishioners towards financial responsibilities such as tithing in the post-Reformation period, one can only infer from anecdotal evidence the proportion of the parochial population who participated in church services and ceremonies, while the analysis of the parish offices only highlights the large number of people who were unaccounted for.\textsuperscript{61} Consequently, the picture of a stable parish community is bound to be challenged by anti-structuralist theses which are normally less sympathetic to the structure of social and cultural conformity. In order to obtain a more realistic

\textsuperscript{58} Rosser, 'Communities and Parish and Guild', 44-5.
\textsuperscript{60} Alldridge, 'Loyalty and Identity', 103-6.
\textsuperscript{61} Wright, 'Easter Books', 30-1. Also see pp. 222-3.
assessment of the social organisation of the post-Reformation parish, therefore, one needs to see two different dimensions of the process simultaneously: the structural changes and continuity of the parish, and local people's perception of these changes and continuity.

The structural continuity of the post-Reformation parish community mirrored the strength of the impact of the English Reformation. If there had not been the dissolution of monasteries and chantries, and the destruction of ornaments and religious objects in churches, the English Reformation would have seemed a less dramatic historical event than historians usually claim it was. Many dramatic religious changes in European history outside England were often characterised by coercive conversion, frequently accompanied by a large scale massacre or military action. The impact of the English Reformation was probably nothing comparable to them. It was a religious change which occurred within the confines of the Christian world, partly stimulated by the reform movement on the continent combined with the domestic Lollard tradition, and partly caused by an adulterous King who was struggling to find justification for his conduct and to increase his financial resources.62

Recently, revisionists have successfully argued that the Reformation lacked popular support; the reform was carried out half-heartedly in many parishes, and the implementation of new ideas was extremely slow during Elizabeth's reign.63 In the urban context, however, such generalisation needs to be treated cautiously. As A. G. Dickens has demonstrated, the impact of the Reformation showed significant

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local diversity. While the large centres in the North such as York and Newcastle-
upon-Tyne were slow to attract Protestantism, Norwich, Bristol, and Coventry were
centres of Puritanism as well as a number of small towns in the southern counties.64
Even in the counties with a strong element of radicalism such as Kent, the
assimilation of the new ideas in urban communities was strongly influenced by
economic, social and political conditions.65 Although any conclusions are tentative
due to insufficient local studies, it seems certain that the strength of the impact
experienced by people living at the time significantly varied depending on different
geographical and urban contexts.

Institutional changes were strongly felt even in a middle-sized Midland
town like Leicester. By the time of Elizabeth's coronation, the Leicester Abbey,
fraries, and chantries were all dissolved and some of their buildings were in severe
physical decay.66 Each parish experienced some changes in the church fabric in the
mid-sixteenth century. In St. Martin's church, for example, by 1570 the altar, the
rood loft and the organ had been removed, while paintings and sculptures had
disappeared or been destroyed. A similar process was also seen in the church of St.
Margaret's.67 By contrast, the churchwardens' accounts frequently recorded the
construction or repair of the pews which were rented out to parishioners. In 1605, the
accounts of St. Martin's recorded a large amount of money paid for the pews of the
members of the borough council.68 Much more fundamental changes in the parochial
social organisation can be seen in the dissolution of religious fraternities such as the

64 A.G. Dickens, 'The Early Expansion of Protestantism in England, 1520-1558', Archiv für
Reformationsgeschichte 78 (1987), 197.
65 Clark, 'Reformation and Radicalism in Kentish Towns'.
66 The dissolution of the religious institutions provided opportunities for the corporation to possess or
repossess the property which was formally under the control of the ecclesiastical order. See Scarisbrick,
Reformation, Ch. 6.
68 DE1564/1384/324; The Accounts of the Churchwardens of St. Martin's, Leicester, 1489-1844, ed.,
Thomas North (Leicester 1884), 147.
Gild of Corpus Christi, St. George, and St. Margaret's, and the surrendering of their property and cessation of social activities. These were changes which were apparent in post-Reformation Leicester.69

Passive or indifferent attitudes towards the Reformation, however, were shared by the inhabitants of Leicester. During the religious upheavals between the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, there were only a few documented signs of defiance against the religious regime in transition. According to reports made at visitations, the church in the county was generally in a satisfactory condition up to the end of the reign of Henry VIII, while the commissioners for religious houses did not find many cases of defiance at the time of the Act of Supremacy and the dissolution of monasteries.70 We hear that only 28 people in St. Martin's parish were indicted for their scornful manner towards the sacrament at the altar in Mary's reign.71 In 1556, Thomas More, a service-man, was burnt at Leicester for "holding Zwinglian views as to the Blessed Sacrament", but the incident was probably the exception rather than the norm.72

It has been argued that, given the power of the county gentry, English civic leaders had relatively weak religious autonomy compared to their continental counterparts.73 Under the influence of the third Earl of Huntingdon, Leicester was no exception. As C. Cross has described, "The corporation showed active sympathy but there can be little doubt that the prime mover behind this scheme of Protestant

69Simmons, Leicester, 49-50; Skillington, 'Extant Certificates', 146, 152-3; The Vestry Book and Accounts of the Churchwardens of St. Mary's, Leicester, 1652-1729, ed., John Rutledge Abney (Leicester, 1912), xi-ii.
70VCH, vol. 1, 368-9.
71Cross, Puritan Earl, 132.
72VCH, vol. 4, 371
indoctrination was Huntingdon himself.74 He was particularly influential in the appointment of lecturers, the masters of the Newark and Wyggeston's Hospitals, and teachers in schools, all of which became the major institutions for assimilating the new religious doctrine.75 The situation in Leicester was comparable to developments in York, where the urban elite paid little attention to the establishment of Protestant lectureship. It was not until the 1580s that Huntingdon finally persuaded them to pay for the post.76

Assessing the impact of the English Reformation in the localities, it is important to examine change and continuity in the parish as a social organisation. Despite major doctrinal changes, the high degree of structural continuity allowed parishioners to maintain their social relationships within the parish and the parish church. As for the rest of the population, the implications of the religious changes depended on how much they expected from these institutions in structuring their social and economic lives.77 Recent studies have shown that the religious consciousness of ordinary people was not strictly tied to the dogmatic and theological traits which were normally epitomised by the structures and activities of these institutions. Moreover, even if the parish and the parish church significantly influenced people's lives, such influence was not necessarily experienced

74Cross, Puritan Earl, 132. However, there is evidence to show that the town made some resistance to the counter-Reformation. Thus the Privy Council ordered the mayor to bring the disobedient vicar of St. Martin's under his custody to the Council. APC, 1552-4, vol. 4, 338.
75Cross, Puritan Earl, 124, 132, 140-1.
76Ibid, 277.
77For example, Burke has shown that there were probably diverse reasons for going or not going to the church. Peter Burke, 'Religion and Secularization', in The New Cambridge Modern History, vol. 13, ed., Peter Burke (Cambridge, 1979), 305. For a similar interpretation, see John M. Triffitt, 'Believing and Belonging. Church behaviour in Plymouth and Dartmouth 1710-30', in Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Early Religion 1350-1720, ed. S. J. Wright (1988), 182.
religiously.78 Such views open the way for us to argue, at least in the context of social organisation, that the social effect of parochial fraternities and religious festivals was functional and could therefore be replaced by other types of post-Reformation urban institution.79 For example, although the emphasis on mutual help was not overtly expressed in the way it had been by the medieval fraternities, regular contacts in the parish church were effective enough to institutionalise the social relationships of churchgoers, and strengthened their parochial identities.80 As Palliser has pointed out, the importance of the parish church may have been enhanced by the destruction of other religious institutions.81

What is important in assessing the condition of the post-Reformation parish community as a social institution is to articulate the changing environment in which social relationships were organised, and demonstrate how local people responded to these changes. At the structural level, it is arguable that the post-Reformation parish still retained institutions which strengthened parochial identity and loyalty. The parishioners continued to be liable to support the physical structure of the church, and the maintenance of the incumbent.82 Collective worship continued to be held on every Sabbath day. It was also here that the most important events in the

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78M. D. Harris, 'Unpublished Documents Relating to Town Life in Coventry', TRHS, 4ser., 3 (1920), 110. Collinson has argued that the proper interpretation of the Religious impact was undermined by the pessimistic view of some historians focusing on social and economic calamities. Nonetheless, it seems meaningless if the religious impact is assessed with little regard to the social, economic and political development, which was at stake for the wider section of urban community. Collinson, Birthpangs, 32-6.

79Burke, 'Religion and Secularization', 305-6. This point does not imply that the effect of the reformed institutions would be exactly the same. In Bristol, for example, Sacks has argued that the form of public rituals changed, reflecting the transformation of the social and economic structure of the town. Sacks, Widening Gate, 142-6. Rather, it suggests that the post-Reformation urban community was not necessarily lacking the religious institutions in which social relationships were structured.

80Phythian-Adams, Desolation, 168-9.

81D. M. Palliser, 'Introduction: the Parish in Perspective', in Parish, Church and People, ed., Wright, 13.

82DE1564/1384; The Accounts of the Churchwardens, ed., North. Also See pp. 66-7.
parishioners' life-cycle — birth, marriage, and death — were articulated by rituals and ceremonies. The parishioners had an obligation to bring their new born child to the church for public baptism, except in cases of immediate danger of death. It has been argued that the solemnisation of marriage became increasingly common during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. Also important were the size and density of the population in the parish where these ceremonies took place. Clearly, urban parishioners lived in a geographically more restricted area than their rural counterparts. In addition, Boulton points out that the sense of anonymity was low even in the poor suburban parish of All Hallows the Green in London, which included about 250 households. As we saw earlier, the number of householders in each parish in provincial towns like Leicester was significantly smaller than in London parishes.

At the level of perceptions, however, the impact of parochial social organisation is unclear. As the previous discussion has amply shown, structure was one thing, the response was another. It is clear that the changing nature of late Tudor and early Stuart English society was a significant factor here. We have already seen that the social and economic climate of the period strongly affected the social functions of other urban institutions. As one of the basic urban institutions, therefore, the parish could hardly escape such a worldly influence. Reflecting such a condition of English society, two important developments can be identified in post-Reformation parochial life: the rise of the public sermon and the implementation of the

References:

85 Ingram, Church Courts, 132-4, 189.
87 See the note for Table 3.1.
88 See ch. 5.
poor law. The following sections will explore the social implications of these two developments in the lives of parishioners.

4. Service, Sermon and Parishioners

The social functions of Christian worship in the post-Reformation church are often assessed in comparison with church activities during the late middle ages. As has been argued, however, the parish church remained the most comprehensive and collective social institution in the town even after the unprecedented religious upheavals around the mid Tudor period. From 1559 onwards, moreover, the compulsory element of church-going was strengthened by financial penalties against the disobedient. Certainly, the implication of collective worship in the church changed, as the voluntary aspect was undermined by secular obligation. Patrick Collinson has argued that "symbolic and mimetic codes [were] replaced by a literally articulated, didactic religious discipline" in the post-Reformation period. Some contemporary moralists, like William Gouge, went further than this. For him, the church was a family, with the clergy as fathers in God. Such descriptions of the church as an ideal type, however, tends to gloss over the diverse perceptions of church-going among parishioners, and overstate the loss caused by the vanishing voluntary aspect of Christian worship. What is important is that, regardless of the change of religious doctrine, frequent social contacts in the church continued so long

89G. Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late Medieval Ages', in Parish, Church and People, ed., Wright, 44-5; Clark, English Alehouses, 34, 151.
90Palliser, Age of Elizabeth, 385.
91Collinson, Birthpangs, 55.
as people physically attended the church. Arguably, post-Reformation religious policy in effect encouraged such contacts by legislation.

The stricter observance of the Sabbath was not the only legislative change which enhanced the social function of the church in the post-Reformation town. The growing importance of services at birth, marriage and death has already been noted. The introduction of catechism classes and the confirmation service was meant to initiate the Christian faith of the young whereby the adult church community would be consolidated. In 1580, parents in Leicester were ordered that their children over the age of 8 needed to be taught "the Lords Prayer, the Articles of there beleefe, and also to answere to certen poynts of the Cathechisme . . . ." Fines and possible imprisonment were inflicted in the case of disobedience.

One of the most significant consequences of the English Reformation was undoubtedly the growing practice of public sermons in the parish church. Religious doctrine was increasingly assimilated by the public sermons organised by the secular authorities. One can certainly find medieval precedents for such public preaching, but in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, it became much more regular, and now the attendance became compulsory for urban residents. It has been argued that the introduction of sermons was rather sluggish on the whole, partly due to the shortage of well-qualified ministers. In Leicester, however, the close relationship between the town and the Puritan Earl helped set up a lectureship in the town at a relatively early stage in Elizabeth's reign compared to other urban centres like York.

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93See above.
94S. J. Wright, 'Confirmation, Catechism and Communion: the Role of the Young in the Post-Reformation Church', in Parish, Church and People, ed., Wright, 204, 206, 209.
95BRII/1/2/332; EBL, vol. 3, 183.
96The major success in continental towns such as Strasbourg and Zurich gave significant incentives to English towns. Collinson, Birthpangs, 42-3. Patrick Collinson, 'The Elizabethan Church and the New Religion', in The Reign of Elizabeth I, ed., Christopher Haigh (Basingstoke, 1984), 171.
97Collinson, Birthpangs, 41-2.
98Chalmers, Puritanism, ch. 1; Collinson, 'Elizabethan Church', 185.
Thus the urban authorities frequently announced the compulsory attendance at the public sermon every Wednesday and Friday as early as the 1560s. In 1562, it was ordered that 4d. should be paid if one in every household failed to attend the sermon. In 1566, the Common Hall agreed that the sermon would take place between 7 and 8 o'clock in the morning. The agreement of 1575 specified the church of St. Martin's as the place where the public sermon would take place. The practice was further enforced by secular officials. In 1587, the aldermen and the constables in each ward were ordered to force householders and their wives to attend the sermon.

Control over the teaching of Protestant doctrine was largely in the hands of influential laymen, and the maintenance of public lectures repeatedly posed both political and financial questions for the leading townspeople. The Puritan Earl wielded great power over the appointment and practice of resident and non-resident preachers, who were the major actors in the public sermons along with the parochial clergy. The urban authorities promulgated the official time of public lectures in 1566, according to "the advice and consent" of the Earl of Huntingdon.

Having said all this, we need to be cautious in generalising about the religious impact on the parish life, given the different characteristics of urban

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100 BRII, vol. 3, 118.
101 BRII/1/2/266; RBL, vol. 3, 162.
102 BRII/1/3/9; RBL, vol. 3, 242. This order was repeated in 1591 and 1597. BRII/1/3/64; BRII/1/3/144; RBL, vol. 3, 275, 338.
103 BRII/1/2/381; BRII/1/3/11; RBL, vol. 3, 198, 243. Chalmers, 'Puritanism', 219. By the end of the sixteenth century, the rent raised from a part of the lands in the Newark Grange was used for maintaining the preachers. RBL, vol. 3, 306; RBL, vol. 4, 9-10.
104 Ibid, 226, 261.
105 Ibid, 118.
The strongest and most effective impact of a lecturership was felt in St. Martin's, where the weekly sermons took place, and government supervision was most intensive. People came to the church of St. Martin's probably from outside the parish. Collinson demonstrates how prophesying contributed to the development of reciprocal relationships between the town and the countryside. Hence, although the introduction of weekday sermons increased the number of occasions when the parishioners were in public, this was not exclusively a parochial experience. Poor documentation hinders us in drawing clear pictures for other parishes, but there is evidence to show that some parishes were so poor that the clergy could not provide adequate service for the parishioners after the Reformation. The stipend for the vicarage of St. Mary de Castro remained £8 after the Reformation, and the maintenance of a proper minister in the parish became increasingly difficult in an age of inflation. Thus it was petitioned that "parishioners have a longe tyme byn served withe unlearned mynisters, vnable to instructe them as appurteignethe throughe the want whereof dyiverse of the younger sort are become verrie vnedwitifull, lewde and disordered."!

There is evidence to show, however, that the condition of the church generally improved in the early seventeenth century. Martin Ingram has argued that by the early seventeenth century, the quality of clergy had largely improved even in those towns which were slow to recover from the negative impact of the Reformation on the ecclesiastical situation. In 1603, the Corporation granted the Easter offering

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105For example, the civic involvement in St. Mary's parish became particularly intensified after the corporation obtained the advowson in 1606. Wright, 'Easter Books', 43.
106For example, the Mayor became responsible for examining the churchwardens' accounts of St. Martin's church in 1510. RBL, vol. 3, 2.
107Collinson, Birtha no. 46.
108The value of the vicarage of St. Mary's was higher than that of St. Martin's, which was only £3 soon after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. VCH, vol. 4, 366.
110Ingram, Church Court, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640 (Cambridge, 1987), 86, 89.
for the vicarage of St. Mary. The momentum for keeping the lectureship in the town was strong in the seventeenth century, at least among the ruling elite in Leicester. The effect of the lectureship was summarised in the letter from the town to the Bishop on 8 September 1611: "the Maior and his brethren and other the inhabitants there in regarde of the greate good that our whole Towne (and manie also of the country) have receaved by their learned and godlie sermons for the space of fortie yeares and more . . .".

Now it is clear that, as far as its institutional structure in an ideal form was concerned, the church remained a focal point for parishioners in post-Reformation Leicester. Our assessment of the social impact of the parish church, however, ought to be less dependent on this structural feature itself than its implementation in the parish community. It all comes down to the actual response of the parishioners to the institutional characteristics of the post-Reformation church. The debate into the level of church attendance has been largely inconclusive among historians. Boulton has demonstrated how the London parishes ensured a high level of communicant attendance through a token system, but elsewhere the enforcement of church attendance could much more easily be applied to respectable parishioners whose absence could be easily identified from their pews being vacant. There is no evidence to show the level of church attendance at the Sunday and weekly sermons in Leicester, except for some indirect evidence which merely indicates the range of social groups involved in worship. In 1619, Marie Wood, a spinster, was committed to the old hall for making provocative comments to Mr. Walcote, the prebend of St. Margaret's, who knelt at the Lord's prayer in the pulpit.

112Nichols, 308; VCH, vol. 4, 376.
113However, see p. 214.
114RBL, vol. 4, 115.
116Boulton, 'Limits of Formal Religion'.

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of St. Martin's church. There was also good reason for the poor to come to the church in that they received relief distributed after the monthly communion.

Although we are unable to verify the precise level of church attendance, it seems clear that the social reality of the parish community often failed to match up to the formal objectives of the new parish organisation. In 1584, William Poole answered to the magistrate that it was "partly for brevity or shortness of his sermon and partly for forgetfulness" when he was questioned why he had neglected his prayer for the Queen's Majesty. The church was as important for socialising as for religious practice. In 1615, a shoemaker believed that Marie Hopton loved him because he saw "her cast a faire countenance upon him" on a Sunday in the church. Elsewhere, we find similar examples. In 1579/80, the ecclesiastical commissioners at York imposed severe punishment upon those who talked and walked around during sermon time. In 1565/6, the same commissioners complained about those who played football within the Cathedral church. Clearly, the creation of a godly common wealth was not the priority of all the parishioners.

Furthermore, more explicit examples of non-conformity came from a group of radical Puritans, particularly in the early seventeenth century. Thus, a good number of townsmen from different parishes were presented at the visitation between 1610 and 1630 for holding conventicles and for other Puritan practice.

The social consequence of sermons must also have been felt outside the church, particularly among servants, apprentices, maids and others who became...

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117BR/18/12/462.
118DE/1564/1384.
120BR/18/12/7.
122Purvis, Tudor Parish Documents, 86.
123PRO SP16/339/75.
124Chalmers, Puritanism', 155, 193. For the examples of the non-conformist clergy and laity, see Ibid, 178-87.
temporarily free from their masters' supervision. A recent study of the youth culture in the late Tudor and early Stuart period has suggested that many of them indulged in activities which were not compatible with the pious life imposed by the post-Reformation church. Furthermore, it is important to note that the local act did not force strangers and travellers to attend the service, while their "laufull recreation" was allowed during the sermon time. Although we are unable to quantify the scale of their activities, these findings warn us not to ignore the implications of sermon time for many of the urban population who had little to do with the weekly religious service.

The frequency of sermons increased the amount of time during which the people had to adjust their activities to the inflexible official time table. The act of 1600 fined those who stayed in alehouses, and alehouse keepers who kept customers during the sermon 12d. and 3s. 4d. respectively. The legitimacy of such measures probably had little appeal to those who had already established their own life style outside the formal, rigid spiritual realm. Collinson has shown how the introduction of the new Christian values were only superficial in Canterbury, where a group of people in an alehouse asked the incoming neighbours who had just come back from a sermon, "Where have you been you three good husbands, not at the sermon I trust?" At Leicester in 1616, John Taylor went to Thomas Mabbs's house with Robert Price to drink a jug of beer after taking his master to church in the morning. There, he also found Thomas Watkinson, a fellow from Northampton and others all drinking during the service and sermon time. When John Taylor went back to

128 Collinson, Birthpangs, 38.
Mabbs's house during the evening prayer, he again found Robert Price and a Thomas Shawe there.¹²⁹

These examples suggest the extent to which new social and political values imposed by the church, the State and civic authorities could be disruptive for the ordinary urban population. Although our evidence is inconclusive, it is hard to resist the view that many of them were absent from church, and still more did not pay any attention to the didactic messages proclaimed there.¹³⁰

5. The Impact of the Poor Law

One of the crucial consequences of the English Reformation was clearly the development of the poor law, since the implementation of this new legislation undoubtedly precipitated significant changes in the fabric of urban parochial life.¹³¹

The poor law was essentially concerned with the lowest sections of the social hierarchy, but its political implication was also strongly felt among the urban governing class, who now became anxious to extend their administrative power more widely with spiritual legitimacy.¹³²

The parish relief was by no means a new welfare system of post-Reformation England, but it now became much more institutionalised with the direct

¹²⁹BRII/18/12/118.
¹³⁰The attitudes of participants are debatable. See Ingram, Church Courts, 108-9.
¹³²Collinson, Birthpangs, 40-1. Alldridge has argued that "To the parish's pastoral role of spiritual instruction and inspiration the state added administrative and charitable functions." Alldridge, 'Chester Parishes', 88.
influence of the town and national government. Parochial relief in the late Middle Ages was often carried out on festive days such as church ales, while funerals were occasions when the poor could expect the bequests of the deceased. By the mid-sixteenth century, public relief in the parish of St. Martin’s came from the money collected in the so-called poor man’s box. However, looming social problems transformed the social values and attitudes of the policy makers, and they preferred a much more organised system of parish relief by increasing a compulsory element at the expense of the voluntary nature of late medieval charity.

With the introduction of a compulsory poor rate, the structure of parish relief in late Tudor Leicester was increasingly influenced by the policy of the town government during Elizabeth’s reign. Up to the mid-sixteenth century, the parish had never been the major administrative unit of the urban authorities: tax assessment, law and order were largely administered through the wards. The collection of the poor rate was ordered as early as 1562 in each parish. In 1568, the Leicester parishioners were ordered to pay for the poor at their weddings and the churchings of their wives according to their status. The new Protestant attitudes of the authorities also tempered the lavish social functions of the church. It was ordered, for example, that "there shal be no feastes made at any churchings within the said towne savinge only one competent messe of meate provided for gosseps and mydwyves" in order to stop "the superfluows charge and excesse of the inhabitantes" and to provide better

133 Leonard, The Early History, 7-10; Slack, Poverty and Policy, 114-5.
134 Nichols, 305, 569; Miri Rubin, Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge (Cambridge, 1987), 260-1; Slack, Poverty and Policy, 114-5.
135 Accounts of the Churchwardens, ed., North, 49.
136 Certainly, Christian charity and civic humanism were significant factors in this development, but it is undeniable that the new system helped draw a line which would provide legitimacy for many to limit their traditional social and moral obligations. Slack, Poverty and Policy, 113-4.
137 See p. 85.
138 The members of the Twenty Four were charged 2s. 8d., the Forty Eight were charged 16d., "every commoner of the best sorte", 8d., and "every second commoner", 4d. BRII/12/128; BRL, vol. 3, 121-2.
relief for the poor. Some actions by the parochial authorities echoed local government policy. Thus, on 13 December 1584, thirteen members of the government of St. Mary's warned the able-bodied poor in the parish that they would be excluded from the relief if they failed to come to public sermons on Wednesdays and Fridays.

In the early seventeenth century, the growing role of the civic authorities in the parish clearly reflected the administrative improvement of poor law in the period. The duties of overseers in each parish were clarified in the Common Hall, while the collection and distribution of relief money were much more strictly supervised by the mayor and the JPs. The influence of the authorities in the parish can be illustrated by the collaboration between ward and parish officials. In 1634, for example, the overseers in the parish of St. Nicholas informed the Mayor that William Clarke, a labourer, was "destitute of habitation", while the authorities found that James Kirke, the father-in-law of Clarke's wife, had kept "an idle fellow" in his house without the consent of the magistrate. As a result, the Clarkes were allocated a room in Kirke's house at the discretion of the ward alderman and the overseers of the parish of St. Nicholas, while Kirke seems to have been provided with another residence elsewhere or committed to the House of Correction.

In these circumstances, it is no surprise that parochial politics became increasingly entangled with the civic leadership. As the parish became a secular institution, the growing administrative tasks of parish organisation prompted political awareness among leading parishioners. Parochial offices had probably been sources of loyalty to the church and political power since the late middle ages, but the late
sixteenth century saw the intensification of these functions. Little is known about the administrative structure of Leicester parishes after the Reformation, except for the evidence that survives for the closed vestry of the parish of St. Mary de Castro, which was formed in 1577. At a parish meeting on 22nd December, a decision was made to choose thirteen parishioners "to set order for such things as shall be done for the church behoof." They included several eminent citizens such Mr. Worship and Mr. Ludlam, the aldermen of the borough. There were four new members in the list at a meeting 7 years later. In principle, nothing could be done without the consent of the 13 men, and their influence over parochial lives was clearly powerful. The order of 1584 at the meeting indicates their responsibilities for the procedure of Sunday services, the collection of parish rates, and the distribution of poor relief.

In 1610, a contest took place in St. Martin's for the election of a churchwarden following the refusal of Mr. Hollingeworth to continue in office. The civic and parochial leaders of St. Martin's were divided; Mr. Hollingeworth, supported by four aldermen including the Mayor, was defeated by William Smith, who was backed by 12 other leading parishioners. The election of churchwardens, overseers and other parish officials preoccupied many leading parishioners before Easter. The political significance of the office of churchwarden was explicit in the fact that the majority of churchwardens also became either burgesses or aldermen during their life time. Moreover, the churchwardens were able to exercise their powerful influence in favour of their allies and against their enemies. In the post-Reformation period, in particular, the ordering of church pews, often decided by the churchwardens, was a significant social and political symbol highlighting

144Nichols, 308; VCH, vol. 4, 375.
145PRO DL44/922; Nichols, 308.
147DE1564/1384/395. However, the details of the backgrounds of this contest are not known.
parishioners' status. Thus, it also became a contentious issue, unveiling latent political conflict among parishioners. At St. Margaret's church in 1612, Mr. Francis Tirringham, a gentleman, not only thrust Edward Turner, a yeoman, from Tirringham's seat, "but also two several times with his heels having spurs on stove at the shins of the said Turner and drew blood on him so that he presently fled from the seat where he was." In the 1570s, the right to rearrange the order of church pews became controversial in the church of St. Martin's. At the Archdeaconry court, Ralph Chettell defended his actions as a churchwarden with Mr. John Stamford 8 or 9 years before, when they had moved parishioners' wives without the consent of the minister. According to other deponents at the Archdeaconry court, the power of the churchwardens was accepted by the custom of the parish.

Parochial politics were affected not only by the ambitious. In the early seventeenth century, in particular, many people tried to evade the office of churchwarden by paying fines. Part of the reason was probably that they increasingly became responsible for supplementing the deficit in parish finance, which had become the norm by the early seventeenth century. In 1611/2, the parishioners of St. Martin's agreed that churchwardens themselves had to pay if they failed to collect the fees for burials. As with civic offices, the burden of parish office-holding often moderated the political and social ambition of parishioners.

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149 BRI/18/11/213; RBL, vol. 4, 124.
150 Ingram has argued that disputes over the allocation of pews reveal the strong attachment of parishioners to their local church. See Ingram, Church Courts, 111-2.
151 D41/4/113.
152 Whereas payment exceeded revenue only in 1562/3 between 1558-1566, it did so every year between 1600-1608 except for 1602/3. DB1564/1384.
153 Accounts of the Churchwardens, ed., North, 156.
Thus, the new secular functions of the parish organisation enhanced the political awareness of the parish elite. Though hard to document, this did come to the surface at the time of crucial decision-making. In 1591, for example, a proposal to amalgamate the parish of St. Peter's with the parish of All Saints posed a significant challenge to the position of leading parishioners. The explicit parish identity of leading townsmen, together with their overt political consciousness, was demonstrated at a meeting in the town hall. Among 55 aldermen and burgesses at the meeting, only about 14 gave consent to the proposal with the result that the Mayor declared, "so many as wold not consent thereunto should goe forthe of the hall or parlor." Subsequently, all left the parlour except for the Mayor and about fifteen people, one of whom, Mr. John Stanforde, said, "yt ys agreed, for . . . here ys the greater parte." However, "after Mr. Mayors departure outhe of the parlor, there was some [confusion] and altercacion for that the other syde or parte viz. Mr. James Clarke and they of St. Martyns parishe said they were the greater part."!

While the growing secular function of the parish invaded parochial politics, the impact on the lesser parishioners remains to be explained. Arguably, entitlement towards public relief enhanced loyalty to the parish among the poor, though parochial relief was provided for only a small number of the deserving poor for relatively short periods. At the same time, parish administration may have become distanced from many parishioners, with the increasing financial burdens of

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154Towards the better maintenance of the church and its incumbent, a number of parishes were amalgamated in the wake of the statute of 1545, which proposed the union of impoverished parishes in localities. In fact, the scale of such rearrangement was less strongly felt in Leicester than other towns, such as York, Winchester and Lincoln, whose parishes overlapping their city jurisdiction were much greater in number. D. M. Palliser, 'The Unions of Parishes at York', The Yorkshire Archæological Journal 46 (1974), 93-4.
156See pp. 84-92.
office-holding and the emergence of a select vestry. As with the cases of the council and the gilds, structure often disguised the social reality.

An occupational analysis of the parish officials of St. Martin's may help us to estimate the impact of these institutional changes on parishioners as a whole.\textsuperscript{157} As Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show, the growing role of the merchant class underlines their general political and civic importance. In the case of the churchwardens, the trend is much clearer in the early part of the seventeenth century. The growing influence of prosperous merchants, however, was only part of the picture. In terms of social organisation, it is also important to understand the range of occupational groups which were involved in parish offices. The Tables show that they were also open to less prominent occupational groups, such as craftsmen and victuallers. In the case of sidesmen, who were the assistants of the churchwardens, citizens from 27 occupations held the office, notably shoemakers, bakers, chandlers and fellmongers.\textsuperscript{158}

The social implication for the parish becomes much clearer, if one considers the pattern of office-holding in detail. Except for the office of overseer, a single person did not normally hold office more than once. The office of churchwarden was normally served for two years consecutively, and only one officer was newly nominated each year. Many churchwardens held other offices during the course of their lives. For example, before John Norrice, tanner, held the office of churchwarden in 1617, he was one of the sidesmen in 1606, and a collector in 1611. He also became an overseer in 1623. William Henshawe, apothecary, was a churchwarden in 1625, but he was also a sidesman in 1615, and became a collector in 1618. The sidesmen were relatively junior officials, many of whom were either

\textsuperscript{157}The churchwardens' accounts provide the names of officials nominated for the following year before Easter. The names of churchwardens were normally entered throughout our period. As for the other officials, the names were not consistently given in the late sixteenth century. DE1564/1384.
\textsuperscript{158}These parish officials often shared formal social occasions. For example, 7d. was spent on the two churchwardens and sidesmen at the visitation dinner in 1610-1. DE1564/1384/392.
Table 6.3
The Occupations of the Churchwardens in St. Martin's, 1560-1640

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Table 6.3 (continued)
The Occupations of the Churchwardens in St. Martin's

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>barber surgeon</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>unknown</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**        | 44      | 46      

*Source:* DE1564/1384; RE.

*Note:* The occupational groupings are for convenience and are therefore arbitrary.

See Table 6.1.
### Table 6.4
The Occupations of Overseers, Collectors, and Sidesmen, 1605-1629

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overseers 1605-1629</th>
<th>Collectors 1605-1629</th>
<th>Sidesmen 1605-1629</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mercer</td>
<td>mercer</td>
<td>mercer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woollen draper</td>
<td>linen draper</td>
<td>shoemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ironmonger</td>
<td>ironmonger</td>
<td>baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linen draper</td>
<td>tanner</td>
<td>chandler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td>woollen draper</td>
<td>fishmonger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>baker</td>
<td>woollen draper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baker</td>
<td>pewterer</td>
<td>tailor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gentleman</td>
<td>apothecary</td>
<td>beer brewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grocer</td>
<td>chandler/slatter</td>
<td>feltmaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innholder</td>
<td>cooper</td>
<td>ironmonger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanner</td>
<td>fishmonger</td>
<td>pewterer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vintner</td>
<td>innholder</td>
<td>saddler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>musician</td>
<td>stranger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td>tanner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>apothecary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- horse gelder: 1
- husbandman: 1
- jersey comber: 1
- joiner: 1
- linen draper: 1
- musician: 1
- painter stainer: 1
- turner: 1
- weaver: 2
- unknown: 27

Source: Leics. RO DE1564/1384; RF.
young or new-comers, and not all of them progressed to the senior offices. Nonetheless, the majority of them shared their office with future churchwardens and overseers, and such a pattern of office-holding may have helped create a network of political links even among the lesser parishioners. When a churchwarden, Samuel Webster, was a sidesman in 1608, he was accompanied by William Stretton, shoemaker, William Speachley, musician, and Richard Bradley, turner. While Bradley never occupied any other parish offices subsequently, Speachley became a collector with John Norrice, tanner, three years later. In 1612, Mr. William Chamberlyn, a woollen draper, who became a churchwarden in 1616, shared the office of sidesman with Richard Elliot, chandler, Thomas Basse, worsted weaver, and Symon Cowper, husbandman. While none of the three appeared in the churchwardens' accounts afterwards, Chamberlyn became an overseer in 1623 and again in 1631.159

Despite all this, we are still unable to clarify the institutional impact on poorer parishioners. Evidence in the churchwardens' accounts shows that fees were regularly paid for a sexton who needed to call the parishioners to come to parish meetings to discuss the relief of the poor and other parochial issues. As in the Middle Ages, the maintenance of the church fabric depended upon parishioners' casual labour. Nonetheless, the evidence is not strong enough to indicate that the post-Reformation parish added a new dimension to the social lives of the poor.160 Perhaps it is arguable that the rise of parish poor relief had a limited impact upon the majority of poor parishioners, whose social institutions did not have a firm root in the territory of the parish.161

159DE1564/1384.
160There is no evidence to show that there were social guilds of poor parishioners in the late middle ages, whose disappearance would have had a significant social implication. Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', 35.
161See ch. 7.
Overall, there is little question that the parish, and the parish church in particular, remained a major institution which structured a significant part of the social relationships of townsmen. Most conspicuously, its growing secular nature inspired new social and political relationships within the parish which added to those inherited from the Middle Ages. It is important to note, however, that the process was selective; not all the social relationships of the parishioners can be explained by the newly implemented secular function of the parish organisation.

The secularisation of the parish, moreover, may have had other long-term consequences. Unlike the structures before the Reformation, the Puritan church set an overt moral agenda which the people had to accept, confront, reject or ignore. The new interpretation or interpretations of Christian values certainly stimulated the social and political awareness of the urban population one way or another. The process was piecemeal. Despite the social hierarchy of society, cultural and economic values among the people were probably not excessively polarised throughout our period. Protestantism inspired a group of morally conscious civic leaders to exercise their Christian belief through regulations, poor relief and the promotion of didactic lectureship. This spiritual elite urged others to convert their social and cultural values to their own; ambivalence and pluralism became increasingly unfashionable. Protestantism may have been much more effectively used by some rulers who preferred the idea of conformity than by the ruled, whose social values were diverse.

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162p. Collinson, Birthpangs, 43. Scarisbrick has argued that, in large towns in particular, "civic pride, a sincere concern for law and order and for the problem of poverty, plus zeal for the Gospel, could also animate a magistracy." Scarisbrick, Reformation, 174.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, it is clear that both the ward and the parish were significant urban institutions where the social relationships of the Leicester people were structured and negotiated. Each institution showed different patterns of office-holding and law enforcement, and not many people could totally evade the influence of these functions. The parish church, in particular, continued to be a focal point of a large number of urban dwellers throughout our period. Nevertheless, although the ward and the parish were designed to enhance collective responsibilities and mutual obligations, participation in and exposure to these formal urban institutions cannot in themselves be evidence for communal identity, social stability or social integration. The structure of the institutions further confirmed the urban identity of the civic elite, although office-holdings were not necessarily socially exclusive. Even for those who willingly participated in these institutions, they did so for a variety of reasons, while law enforcement was judged differently by the inhabitants according to different circumstances.
1. Introduction

In previous chapters, the patterns of people's social and economic relationships have been described partly by examining the development of legislative and administrative structure, but more importantly by highlighting the range of townsfolk's responses during the course of such development. A series of public actions in effect showed up the diverse interests of individual townsfolk who did not necessarily welcome the regulations imposed by such actions. It was necessity rather than the rule which often urged people to act in the way they did. In particular, I have stressed that, as a consequence, a range of social and economic activities prevailed outside the civic institutions. The precarious equilibrium of social hierarchy was threatened not only because of external social and economic conditions, but also because of the internal legal and administrative structure which increasingly tried to marginalise these informal activities.

Our discussion has also pointed out that the social links of townsfolk were by no means exclusively sustained within a formal civic institution; rather they normally criss-crossed different institutions and town boundaries. For this reason, social relationships cannot be explained by loyalty to a specific formal institution, and this further illustrates the fact that trying to understand urban social organisation by examining the formal settings is of limited value.

The study of informal aspects of urban life therefore is undoubtedly one of the most significant objectives which historians need to pursue. The documentation for

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1Urban space is used as a generic term to refer to a variety of urban locations where social and economic interaction took place. Such sites would include the house, the street, open areas and buildings/institutions.
informal activities is not always as organised and detailed as for formal settings, such as town minutes and act books, but some of the analytical tools which can be used, in exploiting modern social sciences, may provide important insights into the patterns of human activities in informal settings. This chapter will explore the characteristics of informal social relationships and their structure in the context of a middle-sized English county town.

2. The Scale of Social Networks

It is believed that the patterns of informal social relationships can be effectively studied and understood by examining people's social links, taking examples from both direct and indirect interactions. The importance of such an approach has already been recognised in the pioneering study of the rural community of Terling by Keith Wrightson and David Levine. They have suggested, for example, that the significance of kinship ties was weak, particularly outside the nuclear family, and that the relative isolation of families was partly due to high population mobility and geographically exogamous marriage. The study has further revealed that "experience and behaviour in these respects varied little with social position, but were influenced by the developmental cycle of the nuclear family and by demographic fortune. No change in behaviour of any significance could be discerned over the period studied."2

Such local studies enable us to make some comparisons with the situation in a relatively large urban centre, such as Leicester, where the social fabric of the community was significantly different from its rural counterpart. According to the evidence from a sample of Leicester wills in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, about 80 per cent of executors had kinship relations with the testators, thus resembling the figure

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in Terling (see Table 7.1). The ratio is completely reversed in the case of overseers in Leicester: only about 20 per cent had kinship ties with the testators. Furthermore, we are able to identify some geographical patterns in their external social links. According to a sample of the apprentice registers and a sureties list of the mid-seventeenth century, the townspeople were likely to have links with those living in settlements within a twenty kilometre radius and small market towns, although some apprentices came from outside the county, such as Astley, Warwickshire and London (see Figure 7.1). Links beyond the county boundaries were not uncommon among the well-to-do. A sample of the Leicester wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury shows that some testators had relationships with people in Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Middlesex and Surrey. Among 377 of Leicester men and women who can be indentified in the existing marriage licenses between 1600 and 1640, at least 10 per cent married their partners from outside the county.

An analysis of probate records, apprentice registers, sureties lists and marriage licenses shows the scale and complexity of urban social networks, but the weakness of the approach should also be born in mind. The records only represent part of the entire social links that individuals created and lost during their life-cycle. Death and marriage were hardly the ordinary events that townspeople experienced during their lives.

3PROB11, Register Copy Wills, 1558-1660; Leics. RO Wills, 1590-1610.
4The limited time for the present project only allows us to examine the social links of the Leicester inhabitants on a small scale.
5BRII/9/1; BE.
6PROB11, Register Copy Wills, 1558-1660.
8Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, 75-8. A similar method has been used in other local studies. See Charles Phythian-Adams, ed., Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History (1993).
Table 7:1
Kinship Links in Late 16th and Early 17th Century Leicester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Executors</th>
<th></th>
<th>Overseers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kin</td>
<td>Non-kin</td>
<td>Kin</td>
<td>Non-kin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wills (PCC)1560-1620 no.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48 (77%)</td>
<td>14 (23%)</td>
<td>16 (22%)</td>
<td>56 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wills (LRO) 1590-9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600-9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total no.</td>
<td>65 (84%)</td>
<td>12 (16%)</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td>72 (84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: PROB11, Register Copy Wills, 1558-1660; Leics. RO, Wills, 1590-1610; Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, 99-100.
Figure 7.1
A Sample of the Social Networks of Leicester Townsmen in the County, 1646-1660

- Towns
- Rural Settlements

Sources: BRII/9/1; RE.

Note: Settlements shown indicate a sample of links evidenced either in the apprentice registers or the lists of sureties for the Leicester tradesmen who received Thomas White's charity. Each settlement may have had more than one link.
Evidence in wills is normally biased towards the relationships with kin, while the lists of sureties may give stronger evidence for vertical social relationships. One wonders, therefore, whether a picture based on the records used in our study genuinely represents the tangible social links which townsmen experienced routinely. Perhaps a much more serious problem lies in the fact that the evidence does not normally identify the quality of the relationships in the records. We know for certain that a group of townsmen had social links with somebody sometime in their life-cycle, but it is unclear how long they lasted, or how the relationships characterised their social and economic lives.9

Thus, there are two important questions which remain to be answered in recent local studies. Firstly, if social networks were significant in explaining the state of the community in Tudor and Stuart England, how important were they? For example, when Richard Neale was desperate to find a bed for his sick brother in Southampton, after visiting diverse places they finally met a group of people who knew John Neale, Richard's acquaintance. After they showed him the victualling house where John Neale lay, Richard managed to get his brother a bed in the same place.10 The benefit of social links described here cannot necessarily be reproduced by probate records. If we do not know the way in which people developed and retained their relationships, how can we show the significance of their social networks and how they influenced their practical lives and the social organisation of the community?

In analysing various small communities in both industrialised and primitive societies, sociologists and social anthropologists have proposed various patterns of social links which individuals create and sustain according to their affection, consensus, interests, and obligation.11 It has been suggested that the patterns of social networks are

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9Probate records often unveil the extensiveness of social networks of individual townsmen, but owing to the static nature of the evidence, we are not able to know how important these social links were for testators, their relatives and their friends in their urban and rural connections.

10The Books of Examinations and Depositions, 1570-1594, ed., G. H. Hamilton (Southampton Record Society, 9, 1914), 86.

characterised by the content, durability, intensity and frequency of relationships. These elements become important criteria for historians as well in assessing the significance of informal social relationships in the context of individual lives, because, unlike relationships based within formal institutions, these relationships were formed, maintained and ended without an explicit and stable framework or any normative rules. The limitation of the use of the records, such as wills and sureties lists, precisely lies in this point: the records do not give us sufficient information about the quality of relationships.

The weakness of the records can be overcome by using samples of court records, which typically include information about various social interactions. In particular, the records of pre-trial deposition or examination provide useful evidence for the quality of social links; deponents or examinees who were summoned as witnesses or suspects were likely to reveal their contacts or interactions with the people involved in the cases. The major strength of the records is that, with concrete examples of their interactions, they shed light on the wide-ranging social links townspeople had outside formal settings. Clearly, these examples are only samples of the interactions taking place in the community, but we may perhaps interpret how frequent and prevalent these interactions were dependent upon context.

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13 Both historians and sociologists have accepted the limited scale of networks that they are able to record and analyse. A. Macfarlane, Reconstruction of Historical Communities (Cambridge, 1977), 20. One may question whether the information only highlights the informal, if not unlawful, aspects of urban lives which might not have represented ordinary social relationships. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the confession of examinees can be biased towards magistrates' views. The use of such records, however, can be justified by two reasons. Firstly, the confessions of examiners often included various lawful social and economic activities which happened around the time when the actual crime or misdemeanour was committed. Secondly, even if activities were illicit, the ways in which the suspects co-ordinated their social contacts still provides useful evidence for examining the pattern of social interactions under normal circumstances. T. Harris, 'Problematising Popular Culture', in Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850, eds., T. Harris (1995), 9.
Informal social networks can be loosely defined as the links of social relationships which were created and maintained outside the framework of civic and ecclesiastical institutions, such as the council, the gilds and the church. The definition has to be loose because it also includes the relationships which were created in a formal institution, but which continued outside the formal setting, and vice-versa. However, our sample of social interactions representing these informal social links is invariably drawn from informal settings. Just as formal relationships can be defined in the context of each civic and ecclesiastical institution, in the same way the different types of informal social relationships can be categorised into business and family networks, friendship, neighbourliness and paternalism. In fact, these distinctions are somewhat arbitrary in the sense that it is not always clear from brief descriptions in the records of court depositions and examinations whether the basis of such interactions lay in business, blood relationship, or friendship. As some modern social scientists have pointed out, social relationships normally involve "various elements such as enjoyment of interaction, intention, non-instrumentality, lack of constraint . . . which do not necessarily relate to one another in any consistent manner." This problem will be partly solved by having a clear definition for each category, and by indicating the strongest element which determined the characteristics of each interaction. If one can set aside these ambiguities, categorising miscellaneous interactions has an obvious advantage; it helps in comparing our samples to recent historical findings concerned with each category.

Another aspect which recent historical work on urban social networks fails to demonstrate is closely related to the first one. If various social interactions took place outside the formal settings of the urban community, to what extent were they structured? In Leicester, collective activities and sociability were typically maintained in public institutions, such as local government, the gilds and the church, with mutual help and

15In other words, our emphasis is on the content or purpose of each interaction rather than the origin of the relationships, which in many cases probably preceded the actual interaction described in our records.
responsibilities. As has been pointed out, social relationships there were structured by normative rules and regularity, so that people had some idea of what was expected in such institutions. Some sociologists have suggested that such structures were also applicable to a much wider range of social interactions which would characterise, and be characterised by, the urban environment in which such interactions took place. It has been pointed out that humans share a propensity to regulate social interactions according to their perception of territoriality in order to control their personal security, self esteem, and self-identity. Of course, it is impossible to demonstrate objectively the individual perception of territory in a historical context. As Alan Macfarlane has pointed out, historians normally have difficulties in demonstrating why people behaved in the way they did despite a large amount of information about how they interacted. Nevertheless, this does not deny the existence of broad patterns in social interactions which were repeated by the people who occupied a particular urban space.

The structure of informal interactions can be examined by identifying the patterns of the interactions in relation to the particular urban space where such interactions took place. The analysis will be given a framework by taking heed of three major hypotheses which broadly characterised the patterns of social interactions in urban space. First of all, there seems to have been conceptual pluralism in relation to urban space among contemporary urban dwellers; they perceived, consciously or sub-consciously, the functions of urban space differently from the normative functions explicitly attached to each space, such as markets, streets, and church. Secondly, gender and social

16Sociological concepts about the relationship between human behaviour and environment have been introduced by E. Goffman and Giddens. See Peter Dickens, Urban Sociology: Society, Locality and Human Nature (Hemel Hempstead, 1990), ch. 1; P.M. Blau and W.R. Scott, Formal Organizations: a Comparative Approach (1963), 1.


19 Also see Dickens, Urban, ch. 1.
profiles were important factors sometimes affecting the structure of social interactions in a particular space. Thirdly, people's perception of space was strongly influenced by the sense of what was called public and private. This conceptual dichotomy has been seen to be rather problematic, for the same social space can often be perceived as either public or private, or both, according to individual and temporal viewpoints. Nevertheless, in an increasingly vigilant community in terms of morality, crime and disorder, it is hard to imagine that such a spatial dichotomy was totally irrelevant to townspeople's behavioural patterns. In the light of these hypotheses, the second half of the chapter will demonstrate how the physical structure of the town was reconciled with the diverse interests of a heterogeneous population who chose to reside there.

3. The Patterns of Social Networks

(i) Business Relationships

Social relationships in the context of a pre-industrial urban economy have been largely described in formal settings, such as gilds and markets. Yet while the characteristics of formal productive relations have attracted much attention, informal business relationships between urban and rural traders have not been sufficiently explored. Some historians have already hinted at the significance of informal trade activities. Swanson's study emphasised the role of women's work in the industrial sectors, and of secondary occupations among craftsmen in Medieval towns. In the Tudor and Stuart periods, while Everitt has shown the growing importance of trade outside the market place, for example in inns, Goose has drawn our attention to the scale of artisans and female

20See ch. 5.
21Swanson, Medieval Artisans, passim.
workers in the urban industrial sectors who were not registered as freemen. Moreover, W. Thwaites and S. Wright have shown the active roles of women in victualling, retailing and nursing in early modern provincial towns like Oxford, Salisbury and Ludlow. Although these studies have successfully illuminated the existence of informal dealings, we still know very little about how these were structured alongside formal institutions.

In late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester, as has been hinted earlier, informal economic links were as important as the formal occupational solidarity of freemen, whose structure was usually codified in trade ordinals and covenants. They looked less organised than those arranged in the civic institutions, but were much more flexible, adapting to the changing urban social and economic climate of the era. The following discussion demonstrates how informal economic activities were carried out by the townsfolk by use of their extensive social networks. It tends to show the types of social relationship which can be observed in a business context; the evidence often does not show the duration and intensity of such relationships. Moreover, the term business relationship is not used exclusively here, since other social relationships, such as kinship and friendship ties, also involved frequent economic transactions in pre-modern society.

Informal business contacts include all the transactions which would not be allowed or were not formally defined in the context of the urban economy according to gild ordinals, municipal by-laws and statutory requirements. In addition, our definition of informal business links does not exclude cases where business relationships in the

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formal civic institutions were exploited for informal transactions. In short, informal business contacts in our samples took two different forms: firstly, the privileged traders developing their business relationships outside the institution they belonged to, often involving the unprivileged population, and secondly, business links being developed completely outside the context of the formal institutions by the unprivileged.

The intensifying mutual economic dependence between the town and the hinterland, with a growing distributive function and demographic expansion, increased the volume of townsmen's business in our period. Although it is impossible to quantify the entire business network in the town due to its magnitude, recent studies have shown how persistent and repetitive a single business contact could be. Frequent business interactions stemmed partly from the way in which people managed their transactions. As Craig Muldrew has recently argued, economic transactions in early modern England were widely carried out on credit. This means that one transaction often involved more than two contacts between the people concerned. As Muldrew has rightly pointed out, the transactions were often based upon a relationship more than that of mere sellers and buyers because they were interested in each other's reputation and place of residence to ensure their credit relationships. Thus, Richard Yates, a blacksmith of Leicester, was one of the typical tradesmen in the town who had extensive business contacts outside the borough. In 1602, he told the Mayor that he met two smiths and one customer in Billesdon, Houghton and Allexton respectively, either to collect his money or to boost his business between 5 and 8 o'clock in the morning. Ten years later, when Walter Wells, a gentleman in Staffordshire, sold five beasts in the Lutterworth market to a man from

25See pp. 32-41.
28BR11/18/6/31.
Bromkinsthorpe, he asked a Narborough yeoman in a shop there to be a "voucher" for the beasts. 29

One cannot escape the impression therefore that the Leicester freemen maintained extensive economic links within and without their community, and that these ties were no less important than the occupational affiliations which were formally defined by by-laws and ordinances. Given the scale of the trade activities of leading tradesmen, for example, the protection of the town and the gilds may often have been ineffective, and they needed to depend on their own business affiliation both inside and outside these formal institutions. 30 There is reason to believe that the household economy of the lesser freemen was hardly secure without alternative business affiliations, not only inside the town, but also in the countryside. 31 Medieval urban artisans, for example, often expanded their business interests to other types of trade, and were engaged in more than one type of occupation at the same time. 32 Even under much stricter official supervision by local government during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, freemen's diverse interests in business remained the norm. 33 A business contact with a freeman who often engaged in business other than his official trade probably multiplied opportunities to obtain information and to retain routes of distribution. Furthermore, informal business links helped obtain cash when it was needed. Thus, being offered the chance to purchase a plate by a stranger in his shop, John Woodward, goldsmith of Leicester, had gone to Mr. Heyrick, ironmonger, with this man to borrow some money because he did not have enough to pay.

29 BRII/18/11/136.
30 PRO DL1/102/81; BRII/15/11. The business contacts of townsfolk often went beyond the direct hinterlands, such as London, and may have intensified with the expansion of the inland trade in the country as a whole. PRO C7/467/32; VCH. vol. 4, 80-2. Also see p. 102.
31 PRO DL/14/9/7; BRII/18/5/53; BRII/18/5/542; BRII/18/5/567.
32 Swanson, Medieval Artisans, 21, 48.
33 A recent study on the credit relationships of townspeople in late seventeenth century King's Lynn has proved this point. Mildrew, 'Credit, Market Relations', 313.
If informal business links supplemented the business activities of the freemen, they provided life lines for those who did not belong to any formal civic institutions. Expanding their business interest outside the town, poor tradesmen also needed to secure their business opportunities in the town as well. The best way of doing this was to have a link with one of the freemen. Thus, Abraham Clark, probably a non-freeman, was employed by Robert Roberts, tanner and a freeman, to help him drive 6 sheep, which were stolen by Roberts from St. Margaret's fields, to his house and kill them. On the following day, Roberts took the carcasses and skins to the Melton market, sold them for 24s., and gave 6s. to Clark. In 1602, Giles Harrison, a glover and a freeman, told the Mayor that Richard Yates, probably a freeman, came to his house with a soldier whom Harrison had met on three or four occasions, and asked him to keep three quarters of mutton ready dressed and also a sheep skin in his house. The following morning, Harrison's wife carried the goods to Yates's wife, who subsequently took them to one Burley's house. Furthermore, William Churchman, a labourer of Laneham told the Mayor that the mutton and the sheep skin were in fact taken from the sheep which Yates, the soldier and he took from the fields beyond Aylestone together. Subsequently, lively business talks continued in Rychard Dickins's house. Although these people were suspects in a crime, they do give some hint of how informal relationships, involving freemen, non-freemen, and foreigners, were formed and used to achieve business objectives.

Women and servants normally played a secondary role in the formal structure, but they were indispensable agents for business links in informal settings. Joanne Wood, wife of a Leicester pedlar, and his daughter-in-law were busy helping him in his job at fairs and markets in the Midlands in 1598. A Leicester labourer was

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34BRH/18/4/461.
35BRH/18/6/31, 33.
engaged in the distribution of corn in 1600, together with his wife. He asked Abraham Clark to sell wheat to Well's wife, who refused to buy. Clark himself sold his wheat to a journeyman shoemaker in his neighbourhood, who was also a customer of this labourer.\textsuperscript{38} We find similar instances elsewhere. In Southampton, for example, a servant was involved in the selling of a cake of wax for a man staying with him in the White Horse in the same town in 1576.\textsuperscript{39}

Women played crucial roles in co-ordinating business links among the poor who did not own shops, and normally moved around for their business.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, Margery Crew, housewife in Southampton, managed to sell her goods to several other housewives in 1577.\textsuperscript{41} Many goods and materials were directly sold to wives and maid servants, who were more likely to stay in their houses.\textsuperscript{42} In addition, some women in the community seem to have played pivotal roles in terms of co-ordinating social relationships. Some women in early seventeenth century Salisbury became pawn-brokers and money lenders by using their position as alehouse keepers and innkeepers.\textsuperscript{43} In 1597, the wife of William Ludlam, an established innholder, was asked by a woman in Leicester to pawn a handkerchief for 12d.\textsuperscript{44} Midwifery was another female business activity which closely related with neighbourhood and beyond, as we shall see shortly.\textsuperscript{45}

Evidence from a sample of pre-trial examinations shows up informal business relationships, linking not only the established and leading freemen, the lesser artisans and

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item\textsuperscript{38}BRII/18/5/837.
\item\textsuperscript{39}Books of Examinations', ed., Hamilton, 15.
\item\textsuperscript{40}For example, spinners independently sold their products not only in markets but by visiting from home to home. Swanson, Medieval, 31. 'Books of Examinations', ed., Hamilton, 16.
\item\textsuperscript{41}Hamilton, Books of Examinations, 54.
\item\textsuperscript{42}Charles, 'Introduction', 15. Also see pp. 130-1 above.
\item\textsuperscript{43}S. Wright, 'Charmaids, Huswyfes and Hucksters: the Employment of Women in Tudor and Stuart Salisbury', in Women and Work in Pre-industrial England, eds., Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (1985), 111
\item\textsuperscript{44}BRII/18/4/392.
\item\textsuperscript{45}See pp. 252-3, 278.
\end{thebibliography}
labourers, housewives and servants, but also revealing how these townsmen did business with the people outside the borough. Given the town's important distributive role in the region, they were able to expand and maintain such relationships according to the supply and demand of their customers, retailers, and wholesalers. In addition, our sample of records strongly suggests that social networks were essential when townsmen needed to borrow money or to earn extra cash in an age of economic uncertainty. What is important here is that patterns of informal business contacts were not necessarily socially and occupationally specific. The objectives of such relationships were often surprisingly similar between different sorts. Our discussion suggests that, so long as their mutual benefit was sustained, contemporaries did co-operate with one another regardless of occupational and gender differences. The evidence hints at an element of pragmatism which townsmen commonly applied to their livelihoods regardless of the distinctions of different social profiles.

(ii) Kinship Networks

Since Lawrence Stone suggested in the 1970s a long-term transformation during the early modern period from extended families to nuclear families at the expense of neighbours and kin, the patterns of family and kinship relationships have been widely explored. As a result, the linear development suggested by Stone has been challenged. As we saw earlier, for example, the co-habitation of consanguineal and affinal kin was not a typical household structure in Tudor and Stuart England. Such an overall pattern also needs to be qualified according to different social backgrounds. It has been argued that the higher the social status, the more likely a man was to have closer kinship links outside the nuclear

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The patterns of relationships between nuclear family members, which have been conventionally characterised as patriarchal, differed according to social status. Partnership in conjugal relationships has been emphasised in families of the middling sort, while it has been suggested that parental influence over siblings was relatively weak among the mobile poor. In the urban context, it has been argued that kin relationships were a crucial asset for urban oligarchy and the hegemony of a merchant community in provincial towns. In Leicester, families such as the Stanfords, the Heyricks and the Newcombes, exploited influential kinship networks in their political and economic lives. Kinship links often provided an opportunity for a townsmen’s successful career. Thus, while Elias Ashmole was still a young saddler in Lichfield, it was his kinsman, Thomas Pagit, who paved the way for his new career in London. As to the urban populace, some local studies have suggested that kinship operated “as a significant social force in the neighbourhood”, though it was much looser in terms of density than in rural communities.

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50 John Stanford, butcher, who became the Mayor in 1576, got married to Elizabeth, daughter of Alderman John Heyrick. Before his first Mayoralty in 1580, George Tatam, tanner, married to Alice, daughter of Alderman Robert Newcombe in 1560-1. Robert Heyrick, ironmonger, who became the Mayor in 1584, married to Elizabeth, daughter of Alderman, William Manby in 1567. Thomas Chettell, woolen draper, who became the Mayor in 1604, married to Anne, daughter of Thomas Newcombe in 1583. John Freake, butcher, married to Catherine, daughter of Thomas Stanford. H. Hartopp, *Roll of Mayors*, 72-4, 76, 82, 84.
Although the lack of detailed population listings hampers us in reconstructing kinship ties in the neighbourhood unlike the studies in Canterbury and Southwark, one is struck by numerous social interactions based on kin relationships in examining a large number of borough court cases. Certainly, such an impressionistic view does not undermine the validity of the conclusions derived from other local studies. Nonetheless, it does raise the question of whether the results from probate records and population listings underestimate the significance of kin involved in the extensive social network of townsfolk. Clearly, evidence from probate records has a bias towards the prosperous. But the problem also lies in the interpretation of kinship ties. Several points need to be reconsidered. Due to fluid social relationships in an urban community, one cannot properly assess the extent of kinship ties by analysis at a fixed point in time; distance did not necessarily devalue the quality of kin relationships; the value of kinship

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53 Attempts at nominal linkages between the Leicester wills, the 1608 Master Rolls and the Subsidy Lists of 1592-3 proved unsuccessful. Calendar of Wills and Administrations Relating to the County of Leicester, Proved in the Archdeaconry Court of Leicester, 1495-1649... Previous to 1801, transcribed and indexed by Henry Hartopp (1902); BRII/12/14a; Huntington Library, Manorial Box 49. I am grateful to Prof. P. Clark for providing this reference.

54 See pp. 227-8.

55 Wrightson has explained a weak kin recognition among the rural community by inductive reasoning, arguing that the simplicity of kinship terminology and "the lack of exclusive criteria of kinship meant that kinship groupings lacked structural persistence over time." Nonetheless, this point is unproved. In fact, the use of "kinsmen" or "kinsfolk" often appears in the court records. Unlike the upper-social orders, it may well be the case that the majority of people did not need to specify their kin relations over the issue of inheritance. But this does not mean that they were not aware of the extent of kin relationship. Wrightson, English Society, 45-8. A recent study on kinship and community in Yorkshire re-emphasises the effect of kinship support in urban and rural parishes, including distant kin as well as spiritual kin, i.e., godparents. W. Coster, Kinship and community in Yorkshire, 1500-1700. (Ph. D. Thesis, University of York, 1993).

56 David Cressy has argued that "what mattered was not how far apart you lived or how often you saw each other, but what the relationship was worth when it came to the crunch." David Cressy, Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England, P&P 113 (1986), 49. Also see Martine Segalen, Historical Anthropology of the Family, trans. J. C. Whitehouse and Sarah Matthews (Cambridge, 1986), 92-3.
support could not always be replaced by neighbourliness and friendship; the extent of the social network of an individual person was such that a single kinship link should not necessarily be undervalued. The following discussion will demonstrate some aspects of kin relationships and reassesses their significance in the context of urban life.

Evidence from court records revealed the significant kinship ties of the mobile poor which are most unlikely to be recovered from static population listings and probate records. Thus in 1623, John Palmer came to see his sister, who worked as a maid in Southampton, to give her a silver ring, which had been pawned to him. A tailor's wife in the same town told the magistrate that she had visited Salisbury and sold the "hallen" to her sister, who was a servant. The urban business of townsmen and visitors was often supported by affinal and consanguineal kin living outside the town. When a Cambridge couple were arrested at Leicester in 1597, they were on the way to Lincoln to see the husband's brother, a chapman, who owed him £5. Before coming to Leicester, they met the wife's brother at Shenton, another brother at Long Compton, and her sister at Coventry fair. In 1622, a servant of Simon Cooper in Leicester went to Beeby, where his father lived, together with his acquaintance and stayed their one night. Walter Williams, a chapman from Dunchurch in Warwickshire, came to see his mother-in-law who was in Leicester in the following year.

The existence of kinsmen in the town seems to have provided some kind of security for the mobile poor whose status was not confirmed in the community. More

57 Wrightson has maintained that the emotional support from kin could be substituted by that of neighbours and friends. Wrightson, English Society, 49-50.
58 The Book of Examinations and Depositions, 1601-2, with a List of Ships Belonging to Southampton in the Year 1570-1603, ed., R.C. Anderson (Southampton Record Society, 14, 1926), 21
59 The Book of Examinations, 1622-1644, vol. 1 ed., R. C. Anderson (Southampton Record Society, vol. 29, 1929), 29
60 BRII/18/4/414.
61 BRII/18/11/124.
62 BRII/18/13/310.
63 Boulton, Neighbourhood, 259.
practically, the provision of lodging places was one of the most important functions of the kinship networks. Often arriving in towns late at night, many itinerants resorted to their kinsmen’s abode, where they may have been able to receive hospitality or at least avoid being prosecuted. Thus in 1603, when a man from Yardley, Northamptonshire, arrived at Narborough, he went to his brother’s house. Although he was not able to receive the hospitality of his brother and sister, who had already gone to bed, he managed to sleep in his brother’s barn until next morning. On the following day, he came to Leicester, where his mother was an inmate of Wyggeston’s Hospital, in order to look for work after being there 6 weeks before.

Kinsmen’s houses were not only used for temporary stays, but also for obtaining useful information in order to make the most of the town as a stranger. Kinsmen’s lodgings seem to have been particularly important for those who were engaged in unlawful business under the intensifying surveillance of the urban authorities. One has to recall that the authorities were increasingly concerned with excluding strangers in our period. Kinsmen’s abodes provided a shelter and a place to prepare for illicit business. In 1597, a labourer in Leicester not only provided supper for his cousin, but also allowed him to leave the sheep which he had stolen from the Knighton Field with a young fellow who was also at the table that night.

The different social implications of kinship ties according to social and migration status should be noted. Bronislaw Geremek has argued, for instance, that the mobile poor were characterised by loose family ties in medieval Paris. On the other hand, kin living in the neighbourhood may have had much stronger influence because of

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64 BRIV/3/97.
65 BRII/18/6/117.
66 BRII/18/4/455.
the vested social and economic interest they retained in the community.68 This is not to say, however, that the kin relationships of the sedentary population were much more important than that of the wandering poor.69 The different nature of kinship support between these two groups was such that it is misleading to judge its significance only in terms of the distance between kin members and the intensity of their contacts.

As for urban inhabitants, particularly those whose economic position was precarious, the benefit of kinship support was as important. Many young tradesmen in Tudor and Stuart towns probably depended on kinship support until they were able to employ servants and apprentices.70 Kinship ties encouraged the informal business arrangements on which many artisans, labourers, servants and women relied outside the framework of the urban gilds. The existence of kin in the community increased security.71 The case of a Leicester weaver provides us with a useful insight into how townspeople used kinsmen's influence to pursue their secondary business. In 1611, he bought a pair of sheets from a soldier for 12d. on Thursday at around 10 o'clock at night on Sanvey Gate between his house and his father's house. Saturday night, his sister came to his house on Sanvey Gate, and he asked her to sell the sheets. She went into the house of Harry Brown, tailor in Leicester, and sold the sheets for 2 shillings, but she told her brother that she only got 20d. for the deal.72 As one can see in this example, it is wrong to assume that family networks were always characterised by conscience and

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69For the latent functions of kin relationship, see Segalen, Historical Anthropology, 92-3.


71John Moscock, a Coventry mercer, was fined in 1596 because he had allowed his brother to work in his shop before completing his apprenticeship. Thomas Lovett, another mercer in Coventry, was fined 21s. 6d. for employing his brother as his servant over 6 months unbound in the1620s. Berger, Mercers' Company of Coventry, 170.

72BR II/18/6/92.
honest attitudes in the interests of mutual support. Nevertheless, both brother and sister
did earn a certain amount of money from their co-operation.

Townsmen often resorted to a kinsman in order to borrow money. Like many
other townsmen in this period, Simon Cooper in Leicester was heavily dependent upon
his financial debts to various people, and he asked his wife's brother, Thomas Smith, in
Queniborough to be bound for his debts. In addition, he also owed Thomas Smith £20.
In 1600, Thomas Smyth, a servant to Thomas Eyrick of Leicester, mercer, asked his
sister who was living in Brinklow in Warwickshire to send him 30s. in order to buy 6
sheep from one Bacon in Leicester, which would cost him 5s. each. He asked his
brother, Francis, who lived in Leicester, to go and get this money for him, which he
did.73 However, financial relationships between kinsfolk, consanguineal kin in
particular, often generated conflicts between members. Thus, Alice Smith, the wife of
Thomas, complained in the Court of Chancery about Simon Cooper and his wife who
tried to deceive her concerning the financial arrangement made between Cooper and
Smith.74 Many conflicts were caused by the death of one of the people concerned. The
amicable tone of relationship and intimacy could suddenly change to distrust and betrayal,
which might linger throughout the rest of their lives. Richard Elliott, a saddler in
Leicester, married a house-keeper and a kinswoman to James Andrew, a mercer in
Leicester. Before the marriage, Elliott had promised, in the event of his death, to assign
his property in High Street to his future wife, while James Andrew had promised to pay
Elliott £100 as a dowry, of which he paid £40 initially. The exchange of such properties
symbolised the closer relationships between the new kinship relations, but when Elliott's
wife died soon after her marriage, Andrew refused to pay the rest of the money, and
Elliott brought the case in the Chancery in 1619.75 Naturally, many similar kinds of
dispute do not necessarily appear in our records. Still more financial arrangements were

73BRI/18/7/17.
74PRO C3/381/26.
75PRO C3/307/15.
fulfilled without any trouble. In particular, the economic arrangements between people in the lower social orders are seriously under-represented in our documentation.

It is wrong, however, to explain kinship ties in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester only according to economics. Emotional commitment among kin is always difficult to assess, but there is evidence which indicates that kinship ties provided stronger security than other kinds of social relationships. Thus, when Ales Pole, spinster of Leicester, was about to have a bastard child in 1593, all her neighbours and midwives refused to look after her, yet her cousin and her aunt stayed with her.76

The quality of kin relationships was difficult to replace. As Cressy has contended, borrowing from kinfolk seems to have been much more secure than owing somebody who was not related, because debt was more likely to be cleared at the death of the person concerned.77 Thus, even among more successful urban tradesmen, kinship ties secured important sources of financial support which can be frequently observed in kinship networks in the urban community.78 When a widow of Richard Davy made her will in 1590, she cleared the debt of £40 owed by her son-in-law by giving the sum to her daughter, Elizabeth, his wife. She also cleared other debts similarly owed by her two son-in-laws by providing the amount to her two daughters (i.e. their wives).79

Unfortunately, we do not have any evidence to demonstrate a gradation of such emotional attachment to kin depending upon different social profiles. Arguably, the wealthier citizens were in a much better position to give financial support for their kin. On the other hand, kinship links gave an important structure to paupers' business, which often extended beyond town boundaries. One needs to reiterate, however, that the amount of evidence does not do justice to the extent of the role played by temporary

76BR II/18/3/173.
77Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction', 52.
78This point has also been stressed in a recent study of rural communities. See Peter Spufford, 'Les Liens du Crédit au Village dans l'Angleterre du XVIIe Siècle', Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales, nov.-dec., n° 6 (1994), 1369-70.
79PRO PRB1/76/56.
lodgings, goods, information and money which were exchanged between poor townsman and their kinsmen.

(iii) Neighbourliness, Friendship and Patronage

At the beginning of the Jacobean period, a dispute between the county authorities and a group of townsman occurred at the Blue Boar inn. The struggle started over the arrest of Thomas Davie, the tenant of the inn, who was prosecuted for neglecting to pay his fees to a county gentleman for the land he rented. On November 9th, Thomas Davie and his wife, Robert Tompson and nine others from diverse occupational backgrounds, armed with swords and daggers, gathered in an open street of the town, and went into the Blue Boar together. When Thomas Preston, the deputy sheriff, tried to enter the inn with his assistant to arrest Davie, the group in the inn attacked these officials and seriously injured them.80

This is the description of the incident given at the Court of Star Chamber by Devereux Aston, a gentleman in Wanlip. The case exemplifies the tension between county landowners and town citizens whose financial interests often became a source of dispute in our period.8i What is at stake in our discussion is not the cause of the struggle, however. Rather it is the extent of support which one townsman was able to muster in a difficult situation. Although individual motives for participating in the riot were complex, the event illustrates the strength of the social relationships which were structured not only according to horizontal social and occupational profiles, but also through vertical social connections. Nor is this one isolated example. In 1597, when the under-sheriff arrived at John Flamson’s house in Leicester to arrest this haberdasher, there was a good number of people who helped resist the arrest, including his three servants, a butcher’s wife and

80PRO STAC8/44/19.
8iIt needs to be noted that Star Chamber cases often involved violence as a part of the procedure. Richard Crompton, Star-Chamber Cases, 1630, reprinted in The English Experience, no. 723 (Amsterdam, 1975).
other women, a haberdasher and a husbandman in Grantham. It is these social values — neighbourliness, friendship and patronage — with which we are concerned here.

In his work on social relations in the rural community, Wrightson has urged the need for systematic studies of social organisation in an urban context. In his view, the rural community was structured around the reciprocal relationships of equals and unequals in terms of social status. Neighbourliness and friendship typified the relationships between the socially equal, whereas patronage and paternalism cemented the social links between the unequal. The mutual recognition of social obligations was the key element in all of these relationships. In practice, all of them were considered to promote mutual support and the exchange of favour. Were there any marked differences in structure between urban and rural communities?

The preceding chapters have suggested a number of social dimensions which were characteristically urban: rapid population movement, complex layers of social and occupational structure, established formal institutions. Given such circumstances, the balance of social relations frequently changed over time. Volatile social relationships were soon replaced by new encounters. Even among the same occupational group, there was a range of skills and wealth which could influence people's power relationships. Social status also changed during the life-cycle. The rhythm and patterns of urban social interactions were such, therefore, that the definitions of neighbourliness, friendship and patronage used for the rural community may be too static and simplistic in describing urban social organisation.

There are some methodological problems in examining the extent of neighbourliness, friendship, patronage and deference. Predictably, they are more ambiguous concepts than kinship. The meaning of friendship and neighbourliness varied in different social contexts. As Felicity Heal has shown, for example, the civic elite often

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82BRII/18/4/419.
83Wrightson, English Society, 51-61.
used these words to denote their relationships with the external power. Often evidence from court cases is vague about the nature of the relationship between the people concerned. Expressions, such as "companied" or "acquainted", are not helpful in determining the strongest element which linked people. Using modern terminology, they could have been friends, partners, acquaintances, kin, superiors, lovers or even strangers. Added to this, our evidence is not normally concerned with the end results of partnership and co-operation which would help clearly conceptualise varieties of social links. Interpreting the type of relationship from such limited information may therefore involve some risk.

It is certain that contemporaries did make distinctions between friends, neighbours, families and relatives. To some extent, occupational backgrounds characterised neighbourhood relationships in the town, for the urban precincts often had distinct social and occupational patterns. Slightly after our period, the late seventeenth century ironmonger, William Stout in Lancaster, stated, for example, that the people in the household opposite his shop were "very neighbourly to me, permitting me to set my boxes of candy and confectioner goods by their fire." When John Marshall, neighbouring ironmonger, gave up his trade, he allowed Stout to take "most of the goods in his shop." His next door neighbour, Augustin Greenwood, was a merchant and wholesale grocer, and was "my good customer in the ironmonger way and an..."

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84 Heal, *Hospitality*, 303, 311.
86 For example, see Garrich, *Neighbourhood*, 100-2.
encourager in the rest of my trade." The example can be compared with similar occupational links in the butchers' shamble and the northern suburbs where numerous tanners resided in Leicester.

The tone of Stout's description of neighbouring tradesmen can be contrasted with his comments about his close friends. Thus, he was often visited by his friend, John Bryer, who encouraged him during his long illness. He was living in Stout's neighbourhood, but much more significantly, they were both born "in one week, sprinkled or christened at Boulton together, and bound apprentices" to different traders in Lancaster at the same time. Again, the description of a late seventeenth century townsman can be compared with the attitudes of Leicester inhabitants adopted in their social relationships, though there are no diaries for the town enabling us to cite similar examples.

There is reason to believe that friendship, a close relationship which could be retained without geographical proximity, was particularly important for some social groups in the town. The friendship network was often surprisingly wide, particularly among a mobile group. A person like Thomas Davy, baker, who told the magistrate that he had been travelling up and down the country among his friends since he came from Bedford, was probably not atypical during this period.

The concept of friendship is much more readily applicable to the youth, since the concept of neighbourliness was more a feature of an adult community from which the young were often exempt. As we saw earlier, apprentices and servants were significant agents characterising urban social organisation in the late Tudor and early Stuart towns. Nevertheless, their social contacts are less visible in the records than those of the adults, simply because they were not eligible to become bondsmen, creditors or taxpayers — at least in a formal sense. Nor did they usually leave any wills on which we can rely to trace

89Ibid. 105.
90Ibid. 88, 91.
91BRII/18/8/400.
92See pp. 73-7.
the breadth of their social relationships. Friendship between apprentices and servants certainly deserves more attention than our records indicate, however. Although the adolescent joined the adults' world much more quickly than those in the modern industrial world, one should not readily apply the same criteria for assessing the social relationships existing between adults as those of the young. The young also created their own social networks within and outside the community. Though they were from diverse family backgrounds, the social and political profiles of the families may not have been so important in characterising the relationships of the young. Unlike the relationships between adults, their power relationships were less explicitly influenced by wealth and formal authority.

Like many other adults, servants and apprentices also depended upon the support of their acquaintances. As recent studies have shown, apprentices and servants constituted one of the largest groups of customers in alehouses. A young fellow confessed to the Mayor in 1608 that he asked Samuel Yates, a servant of Mr. Hollingworth, to take a saddle outside his mistress's gate, and received it there and carried it to the house of Ralph Chetell's former wife. He also revealed that he borrowed about £10 from Samuel, and £4 from Francis Husband, another servant of Mr. Hollingworth, which he gave to a tailor. The amount of money dealt with here seems to be exceptionally large for apprentices and servants. As one can see in our examples, material and money exchange between servants was carried out without any formal procedures. One needs to accept that friendship among the young must be one of the least visible social links in our historical records.

The social contacts of the adolescent were by no means confined to the town. There is reason to believe that newly arrived servants probably had much stronger

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93BRII/18/15/453. This point has been amply shown in a recent study on the youth culture. See Griffiths, 'Some Aspects'.
94Clark, English Alehouses, 126-7. Also see the discussion in Griffiths, 'Some Aspects', ch. 4.
95BRII/18/10/310.
networks with people outside the community, partly because of their mobile nature and partly because of limited social links with townsmen.96 In 1605, an apprentice of William Ludlam, a Leicester butcher, went to Loughborough and met a Syston butcher. When they drank at the house of one Stevens there, they made an exchange between his gelding and a mare. They travelled together to Belgrave where they drank together again at Miller’s house, and then went to Syston where they finally departed at the town end.97 Under their masters’ strict supervision, many apprentices were probably not able to leave their masters’ house for any extended time. However, due to expanding economic interests in the region, masters often needed to ask their older apprentices to do business on their behalf outside the town. Thus, in 1608, an apprentice of a Leicester ironmonger became very intimate with a maid servant living in Desford. They seem to have met each other when she was still living with Alan Backhouse in Leicester 4 years before. This apprentice confessed that he went to her master’s house in Desford many times when he travelled for his master’s business.98

Adult women were likely to have their own social network, though the conceptual distinction between neighbourliness and friendship was not as clear as that of servants and the mobile poor. When two housewives and a spinster in Southampton saw the Parson of All Saints’, one of the housewives said to the other that “they call him master Plomer, but wee may well be master for I am sure wee pay him, hee gets more by his tongue then we by our labour.”99 Women’s relationships were often institutionalised on occasion, such as through nursing and midwifery. The role of midwives in provincial urban communities is an aspect which is severely understudied, but recent work on licensed midwifery in seventeenth century London has demonstrated that midwives played a significant role in creating the social network of housewives in the local

97BRII/18/8/391.
98BRII/18/10/334.
community. According to the study of testimonial certificates given by clients, licensed midwives were continuously appointed by the same clients, and were also called by clients from diverse social backgrounds. Furthermore, the links of the London midwives extended beyond the parish and city boundaries.\textsuperscript{100}

Unlike blood relationships, neighbourliness and friendship were relatively volatile, especially in an urban context, though they tend to signify the positive image of social relationships. In the context of the rural community, for example, Wrightson has argued that "a neighbour should at the least live peaceably and harmoniously . . . " and that "neighbourliness involved recognition of the obligation to render aid and support . . . and a willingness to accept the neighbours as a reference group in matters of behaviour and to promote harmonious relations among them."\textsuperscript{101} Neighbourhood and friendship in the urban context, on the other hand, can be more adequately defined as involving elements of friction, deception and conspiracy as well as harmony. One has to distinguish the opportunities from the consequences of social interactions. Social links would expand opportunities, but they would not always guarantee the satisfaction resulting from them. Economic and social lives were normally difficult to carry out without some elements of deception. Relationships would break down and often be re-established. The ideal type of such social links does not always need to be harmonious.

Here we need to reiterate the problem of identifying subtle distinctions between neighbourliness, friendship and even acquaintances in historical records. Our evidence is not normally strong enough to articulate transition in these different layers of human relationships.

While the concept of neighbourliness and friendship is difficult to isolate in historical records, relationships between the unequal were relatively clear. As Wrightson has pointed out, reciprocal relationships embodied in concepts such as patronage and

\textsuperscript{100}D. Evenden, 'Mothers and their Midwives in Seventeenth-Century London', in The Art of Midwifery, ed., H. Marland (1993), 13, 15, 17. Also see BRiI/18/10/317.

\textsuperscript{101}Wrightson, English Society, 53-4.
paternalism, still played important roles in the social networks of the urban population. In fact, such relationships were often liable to be abused by the people involved, mainly because the social obligation on which these relationships were based was arbitrary and ambiguous. In towns, such cases can typically be seen in relationships between masters and apprentices, although evidence for the abuse of paternalism should not conceal the abuse of deference. In 1622, Francis Smith, a Southampton saddler, told the magistrates that on St. Andrew's Eve, he had supper with his man and went to work in his Hall where they drank a cup of beer together. Next morning, however, when he woke up, "perceiving himself bloody and wounded", he said to his servant "You Rogue will you murder me." His servant answered that "never use man soe againe for my sake", and ran away. Clearly, a series of such court proceedings shows the juxtaposition of paternalistic and youth culture, as has been demonstrated recently. What is not clear is the scale on which townsmen adapted themselves to paternalistic values.

Although evidence is weaker than in the master-servant relationship, the patron-client relationship was a significant aspect of urban social organisation as well. A good relationship between the landlord and the tenant might be considered the equivalent of social welfare. Thus, a tailor's wife in Southampton told a wife of a serge weaver that her husband's landlord, an woollen draper, gave her a cast suit to make clothes for her children, and allowed her to eat and drink in his house as freely as in her own house.
As we have seen, the economic activities of county people in the town were often supported by county authorities, their leaders. In 1599, Sir Thomas Cave wrote to the Mayor to request him to allow William Browne, who wanted to trade in the town to maintain his family. Such relationships were also found on a much more personal level, however. Such was the case of a relationship between Henry Turvile of Aston and a servant whose son was in custody in 1584. With great sympathy for his poor servant, he wrote to the Mayor asking him to release the man's son, "In truth you know by that wisdom which God hath given you how intolerable it is to an honest father to have a dissolute child, and also the brittle state of our lyfe that no man lyving, be he never so perfecte, canne guarantee the conditions and fortune of those which succeede him."

4. Public spaces

(i) The markets and other communal facilities

The community of Leicester consisted of extensive social networks — business links, kinship ties, friendship, neighbourhood and patronage relationships — that the inhabitants maintained. Although those social networks were given some structure by the formal institutions, such as the council and the gilds, they also reveal the diverse forms of social interactions which did not necessarily adapt to the normative rules set by the urban authorities. In short, urban social organisation was not only composed of these formal institutions, but of other types of institution which similarly gave structure to numerous social interactions.

Informal social interactions were most likely to take place in those areas to which the largest number of people had simple means of access. Adapting to the social

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108BRII/5/2; RBL, vol. 3, 197.
and economic activities of town and country folks, such public spaces were one of the significant features of urban life. The inhabitants and regular visitors to the town knew intimately about these places not only with regard to their facilities, but as places where they were likely to see their friends and enemies. In effect, urban values were formed, consolidated, and transformed according to the nature of social and economic interactions in these public spaces.

Despite signs of economic individualism, urban dwellers in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century needed to obtain some of their necessities, such as water and bread, from communal facilities. For example, four public wells at St. Martin's church, the High Cross, St. Margaret's Churchgate, and Saturday market were known in Leicester, and heavy demand for their water invited tighter public control.109 Thus in 1578, the borough authorities had to ban people from washing clothes in these wells, while, six years later, two well reeves were appointed by the aldermen from each ward to keep them in good condition.110 Five town mills were other typical communal institutions which the inhabitants routinely visited to grind their corn.111 Furthermore, the common bakehouses were places where many women came to bake their household bread.112 A husbandman and his wife in the Bishop's Fee deposed at the Duchy Chamber that, when they were young, both of them used to go to the common oven with

109Ibid. 93, 201, 275. To conserve the water supply of the common conduit, the urban authorities deliberately restricted the time when the townsmen were able to use it in Elizabethan Manchester. Thomas Stuart Willan, Elizabethan Manchester (Manchester, 1980), 120.
110BR1/1/2/30; BBL. vol. 3, 177, 212; BBL. vol. 4, 372.
111Namely, the King's Mills, the Newark Mills, the North Mills and the Horse Mills. PRO DLA/49/7; BR1/1/18/10; BRIV/9/40; BRIV/9/57.
112According to Medieval records, four of the six bakehouses were in the centre and the west part of the town, while the other two were in the suburbs, outside the North Gate and in the Bishop's Fee respectively. VCH. vol. 4, 43.
their mothers, where they had seen many women living nearby come to bake their household bread.\textsuperscript{113}

Though direct evidence for social intercourse at these communal public institutions is sparse, it is hard to resist the picture of frequent meetings between friends and neighbours at the facilities and nearby. As was the case of the bakehouses, the presence of women and the young was probably not uncommon.\textsuperscript{114} These communal institutions not only provided materials for subsistence, but also gave space where the populace structured their social relationships in late Tudor and early Stuart towns.

The existence of a large-scale market place was no doubt one of the distinctive characteristics of urban communities in the pre-industrial period, but it has been rarely explained outside of an economic context.\textsuperscript{115} In fact, an economic explanation only sheds partial light on the importance of the institution in the urban community. There were two important dimensions here. First, predominantly economic exchange in the market often simultaneously promoted the development of social relationships. As has been noted, extensive transactions based on credit in the market had significant social importance, involving buyers, sellers and witnesses at the time of oral transactions.\textsuperscript{116} People often socialised in the market place as well. For example, when a Narborough yeoman was waiting for the market to be opened in Lutterworth in 1612, he conversed with Richard Pole, a Leicestershire man, about their business prospects that day.\textsuperscript{117} Similar examples must have been seen in the Leicester market, which had an

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113}This common oven was called the Lord's oven or the White Horse in the Bishop's Fee. PRO DLA/77/17.
\item \textsuperscript{114}Willan, \textit{Elizabethan Manchester}, 120-1. N. Castan has noted that "Lack of space and comfort forced people to leave home in search of water, warmth, and light. Women went to the washhouse, the fountain, the oven, and the mill" in France in the ancien régime. Castan, 'The Public and the Private', 413.
\item \textsuperscript{115}Edith Ennen, \textit{The Medieval Town} (Amsterdam, 1979), 2.
\item \textsuperscript{116}Craig Muldrew, 'Credit and the Courts: Debt Litigation in a Seventeenth-Century Urban Community', \textit{EHR}, 46 (1993), passim; idem, 'Interpreting the Market', \textit{Social History} 18 (1993), 173-4.
\item \textsuperscript{117}BRI/18/10/136.
\end{itemize}
Moreover, the market was the place where people expected to see their friends, relatives and trade partners, as in the case of a Wellingborough spinster, who came to the Leicester market to look for her aunt, a seller of small wares. The scale of the institution was not the only feature of the market place; it was also the most open institution in the town. The exclusive characteristics of the urban market have been often described by historians in terms of people's right to join the transactions in the area. Nevertheless, such characteristics should not undermine the fact that the market was regularly participated in by secondary sections of the urban population, such as women, servants and apprentices, either as small customers or agents for freemen. No less important was the fact that, whereas the urban authorities introduced a series of measures to protect the economic interests of the freemen in the market, very few of them specifically deterred social activities in the market area. This indicates that a wide-range of people, both townspeople and foreigners, men and women, were effectively able to use this institution for their social interests.

The market place of a major town was the only official focal point of the local population which transgressed civil and ecclesiastical boundaries, and large towns normally had more than one principal market places in their urban precincts. In York, for example, two market areas, Thursday Market and Pavement, flourished during the Middle Ages up to 1836. Two principal markets in Leicester, the Wednesday Market and the Saturday market, were opened around the High Cross and at Saturday market place respectively. Having been located at the junction of four major streets, the actual

118 RBL, vol. 2, 155, 291. Transactions in the market place were not allowed until the bell rang at 10 o'clock in the morning, according to the Medieval custom. It is not certain, however, whether the situation was also the same for the Wednesday Market.

119 RRII/18/12/111; 18/15/368; 18/373; 18/15/379; 18/18/13.

120 RRII/18/8/697; RRII/18/10/122. In eighteenth century Oxford, as Thwait has shown, a large number of women were engaged in small scale marketing of victuals. Thwaites, 'Women in the Market Place: Oxfordshire c. 1690-1800', Midland History 9 (1984).


122 Hillson, 117-122.
space of the Wednesday Market seems to have been fairly restricted. It was also the place where basic foods, such as bread, eggs and butter, were distributed by country people. On every Wednesday, and probably on Friday, therefore, the High Cross became the place where social interactions between townsmen and countrymen most intensively took place, both deliberately and accidentally. Due to its vast area, by contrast, one might expect less frequent casual encounters in the Saturday market place located at the south east corner of the walled town. Nonetheless, it was a more comprehensive market in terms of the commodities and materials traded there, and the area therefore temporarily became the most densely populated public space. Thus, when George Coe came to the Saturday market in 1610 to sell his swine, he met his acquaintance, a Kibworth tailor, who then helped Coe to keep the swine together in the market. He himself came to see his friend to buy some mercery wares. Some people arranged to meet at the market place. Thus a Coston husbandman promised to meet an Amington tailor at the Leicester market. 

There were two important factors in the structure of sociability in the market place. First of all, the large space occupied by urban markets was often divided into sub-areas according to materials and commodities on sale. Secondly, there were several common land marks in the area.

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123 Due to the congestion of the market place, the urban authorities banned the setting up of up shops and stalls in the market place in 1584, while, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, they protested to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that the market place was "straytened . . . by buildings of manye shoppes by mercers, fisheors pettie chapmen and suche other lyke trades men . . . ." BRI/1/2/403; RBL, vol. 3, 212; RBL, vol. 4, 43. Such a complaint was not uncommon in this period. Even in a much smaller centre like Manchester, we hear that "the Market at the conduit is soe filled with the stalls of Foraigne butchers and otherwise to the greate Anoyance of the neighbourehood and hinderance and stoppinge of the high way vpon Markett dayes." G. H. Tupling, 'Lancashire Markets in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries: Part II', The Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, 59 (1947), 16.

124 BRI/18/10/466.

125 BRI/18/11/189.
The necessity for effective supervision over economic transactions promoted the division of the market area.\footnote{Tupling has contended that such an arrangement was "possibly for the convenience of the buyers, but more probably to facilitate inspection and the collection of tolls." Tupling, 'Lancashire', 12.} Large urban centres, such as York, had developed completely separate market areas spread all over the town, such as the Fish Market on the King's Staith, the Malt Market on Coney Street and the Butter Stand on Micklegate.\footnote{Richardson, Medieval Fairs. 22.} In the case of Leicester, the re-arrangement of market areas progressed mainly within the Saturday market place. For example, the Sheep market, which was originally located on present-day Silver Street in the north part of the Saturday market, was moved inside the market area in 1506, while Butchers' shamble was founded in the north western part of the market place during Elizabeth's reign.\footnote{Billson. 120.} The establishment of the Wool and Leather Halls has already been noted. From 1587 onwards, woollen and linen drapers in the town and the country were not able to buy and sell woollen and linen clothes in the Housewives' market, but only in the Drapery.\footnote{RII/1/2/119; RBL, vol. 3, 118; Billson, 120.} The market place was not only divided into different occupational areas, but it also extended into streets nearby. Thus in 1597, it was ordered that the beast markets were to be kept in Cow Lane, Canck Street and Losby Lane, but not in the Saturday market.\footnote{RII/1/3/9; RBL, vol. 3, 242-3.} The evidence shows, therefore, that miscellaneous trade activities in the vast market area of Leicester were increasingly put into order in the late Tudor and early Stuart period. If this was a device for urban officials to regulate illicit trade in the market, it also made it easier for other people to identify where to see or avoid particular individuals.

The Women's or Housewives' market, which occupied part of the Saturday market in Leicester, also significantly characterised the social function of the market.\footnote{RIII/1/3/144; RBL, vol. 3, 338.} A study of eighteenth century Paris has revealed that female stall-keepers in the central

\footnote{The precise location of the women's market is not clear, however.}
market area constituted a significant trade community, often with having family and
neighbourhood ties. The evidence for activities in the Women's market in Leicester is
fragmentary, but it is certain that it was still busily functioning even after the
Restoration.

Sociability in the market place was also characterised by social contacts at
common landmarks in the area. In Leicester, a large elm-tree, which stood on the
western side of the Saturday market, furnished some seats underneath, while an
octagonal conduit was constructed by the early seventeenth century. Market Cross
was also one of the obvious common landmarks. In Winchester, Chichester and
Salisbury, for example, the market cross was often large enough to be used as a shelter
from rain. At Leicester, a decision was made in 1577 to build a new, spacious cross
on High Street, which was called the Market House. The cross was not only large
enough to shelter the market-women, but was also used for miscellaneous purposes by
the inhabitants. As a result, the urban authorities agreed in 1584 to charge 12d. against
those who "either dust, dresse or wyndowe anye malt, or other come in the Crosse, or
hange any cloathes, or other thinges in or vpon the said Crosse." The cross was also
one of the common meeting points in the town, as with the case of Valentine Scott who

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133 BRII/18/15/379; RBL, vol. 3, 240, 426; RBL, vol. 4, 484.
134 Ibid., 275.
135 H. Taylor, *The Ancient Crosses Holy Wells of Lancashire with Notes on the Pre-Reformation
Churches, Monastic Institutions, and Superstitions of the County Palatine* (Manchester, 1906),14;
Valiance, Aymar, *Old Crosses and Lyshpecies* (1920), 133.
136 The actual cost of the cross was £78 4s. 4d. It was paid to Mr. John Stanford who took charge of the
construction. He promised the chamber to complete his work before the next Michaelmas. BRIII/1/2/277;
BRIII/1/2/288; RBL, vol. 3, 168, 170-1. According to Billson, the new cross stood "at a little distance to
the North" near the cross roads. Billson, 117-8.
137 Billson, 117.
138 BRII/1/2/382; RBL, vol. 3, 199.
waited at the High Cross for a gentleman who was supposed to let him stay in his house that night.139

(ii) Churchyard and Street

Both Anna Osborn of St. Nicholas', and Maria Johnson of St. Mary's were in Shamble Lane near St. Nicholas' churchyard with many strangers when William Coates called Ann Norrice a whore with a loud and angry voice. This defamation case, heard at the ecclesiastical court for Leicester Archdeaconry, provides a good example of churchyard being used as a public venue.140 The churchyard and the vicinity were another important public space which can be labelled as an informal social institution in late Tudor and early Stuart towns.

Churchyards have not always been depicted as open and public areas by historians. Thomas has argued that the vernacular perception of the churchyard as a sacred space was maintained partly by popular superstition and partly by legislation in the late Middle Ages and after.141 It has also been contended that traditional popular entertainment in the churchyard was suppressed by the Puritan regime, while the canons of 1603 clarified the duty of churchwardens as supervising the maintenance of the churchyard, which should be "well and sufficiently repaired, fenced and maintained with walls, rails or pales."142 Moreover, recent studies on the social implication of burials

139BRR/18/14/175.
140Leics. RO 1D41/4/XXVI/141.
142Quoted in F. Burgess, English Churchyard Memorials,(1963), 23.
have shown that the position of burial grounds had significant social meanings, reflecting the status of individuals, and excluding the lower social orders.143

There is evidence to show, however, that the sacred image of churchyard and burial grounds failed to convince all urban dwellers. In London, various trade activities extended into the churchyards of St. Paul's, situated near the market place, while the churchyards in other London parishes were used by the parishioners for drying clothes.144 The churchyard provided an important social space for the audience who came to see the plays which were often staged in the churches of Leicester, at least in the early part of Elizabeth's reign.145 These examples warn us that the sacred and closed image of the churchyard should not be overstated in the post-Reformation urban communities.

If the social function of the church was enhanced by the compulsory attendance of householders at services after the Reformation, the importance of the churchyard as a space where the worshippers met before and after the service remained.146 When John Angier, a minister of Denton, published An Help to Better Hearts, for Better Times, in 1647, he condemned parishioners for "whispering one to another in time of prayer, singing, reading, or preaching", and "smiling or laughing of some particular persons", and "standing up to gaze about... to see whom of our friends we can espy, or who comes in, or what apparel others wear."147 Such activities probably continued after the service, and increased in church yards. M. Ingram has argued that "church and churchyard were important as places where neighbours met not only to worship and for the rites de passage, but also to gossip and to transact parochial

144Harding, 'Churchyards', 6-7; Palliser, Age of Elizabeth, 389.
145Kelly, Notices Illustrative, 14-5.
147E. Axom, 'Oliver Heywood's Life of John Angier Denton' (Chetham Society, vol. 97, 1937), 140-1.
and personal business.\textsuperscript{148} When Mrs. Clark, the wife of a Leicester innholder, went to Cradock's house to collect the rent, she asked Christopher Beck, a Leicester shoemaker, who she met standing at the church yard of St. Nicholas, to go with her.\textsuperscript{149} In a sense, sociability in the churchyard was much more structured than other public spaces, for the regular schedule of services enabled the parishioners to know when they would be able to see a particular person at the church.\textsuperscript{150} As with the example at the opening of this section, however, social interactions in the churchyard were by no means restricted to the same parishioners.

If townspeople's social interactions in markets, mills, bakehouses, and churchyards were affected by set times for spiritual and material dealings, streets were featured by continuous social contacts throughout the day and even at night. Typified by busy traffic, wider thoroughfares, permanent shops and a much smaller number of residents, the street in large cities in the modern industrialised world may give us a much more commercial image than the street in pre-industrial towns. In fact, the street in early modern towns were sociable.\textsuperscript{151} D. Garrioch has noted, for example, that the streets of eighteenth century Paris were the urban space where locals and foreigners could share and mould common urban values through their regular contacts. Thus, he has argued, "in street . . . ties formed through work . . . not within the same trade but across a wide

\textsuperscript{148}Ingram, \textit{Church Courts}, 111; BRRI/18/15/460.
\textsuperscript{149} BRRI/18/5/635; \textit{BRII}, vol. 3, 370-1.
\textsuperscript{150} For example, see W. J. Shells, \textit{The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1558-1610} (Northampton, 1979), 120.
\textsuperscript{151} As F. Pick has elaborately depicted, "Life got into the streets. On fine evenings, before there were parks, the people took the air in the streets. The shops opened directly upon them; the workshops too. The house doors had a porch and a seat, for gossip. The windows of the houses gave upon them and were built out with quaint irregularity for the better observation of what passed by, which became a topic of conversation, a source of entertainment. . . . Through the streets the church processions took their way on saints' days and festivals, and once or twice a year the fair filled them with its babel and tomfoolery. Every week there might be a market and the market cross was set up to be a centre for chaffering." Frank Pick, 'The Street', \textit{Architectural Review} 74 (1933), 215.
spectrum of Parisian society . . . were central in the development and maintenance of local communities.¹⁵²

The social impact of street life has been vividly illustrated by Corfield in the context of eighteenth century English towns. She has stressed the openness of urban streets which accepted men and women equally, and even trouble makers.¹⁵³ Streets were also important for circulating news and information which were often badly needed by newcomers.¹⁵⁴ The image of urban streets was not only visual and intellectual, but also musical, with a band of town waits and minstrels. The positive image of urban streets seems to reflect the so-called urban renaissance in Georgian England, but many of these traits also seem to have been applicable to street life a century earlier.¹⁵⁵ If townsmen's social contacts were formally arranged in places like the gild hall and the parish church, streets can be seen as an effective informal urban setting where people met one another regardless of social backgrounds, gender and citizenship.

Clearly the street was more than a route for physical movement, and its function varied according to its size, location and relation with surrounding buildings and public institutions. As Corfield has pointed out, time is also an important factor influencing the function of streets. The streets might also suddenly become violent space. For example, the Duke of Wirtemberg warned in 1592 that xenophobic apprentices and street-boys could attack foreigners on London streets, while the disorder on streets and highways was stressed by the Royal Proclamation in 1600.¹⁵⁶ The use of these public spaces also changed according to the annual calendar. Festivals and fairs added different

¹⁵²Garrioch, Neighbourhood, 121-7.
¹⁵⁴Corfield, 'Walking the City Streets', 141-2.
functions to the street during particular times of the year. These factors undoubtedly affected not only people's image of the town, but also their social environment and experiences in the streets.

The development of one of the most public settings did not always allow openness. As in other public spaces, social and economic activities in the street were subject to frequent public interventions. With the tougher public policies against vagrancy during the period, the streets were not always open to everyone; pedlars and hawkers often found it difficult to pursue their street trade due to the authority of the constable and the watch. Moreover, recent studies of the highway systems of Somerset and Gloucestershire towns have suggested that the open space of streets could be encroached upon by the extension of existing buildings or the construction of new ones.

The diverse functions of streets inevitably cause problems of definition. As F. Bedarida and A. Sutcliffe have pointed out, courts, alleys and closes, both public and private, also needed to be considered as part of the street, since their functions often resembled those of sizeable thoroughfares. Streets were readily used for market places, while church yards might be used for passage ways. According to Speed's map of Leicester in c. 1600, the divisions between major streets and houses on the streets are generally clear-cut, and there are no signs of small alley ways connecting the street and open spaces surrounded by houses (see Map 3). The map is by no means accurate,
however, evidence in court records occasionally reveals the use of such passages by inhabitants moving from one area to another. Evidence in court records occasionally reveals the use of such passages by inhabitants moving from one area to another.

Even if we ignore these unrecoverable paths and alleyways to simplify our definition, streets were by no means identical in terms of width, length, and most importantly, the quality and density of surrounding pieces of architecture. Observing the street scenes of late eighteenth century Leicester, Throsby described:

...The best buildings stand near the bridge. HIGH-CROSS-STREET... this street is a medley of good and bad buildings. SOUTHGATE-STREET... the buildings, in general, are tolerable. SAVIS-GATE, a broad way leading to St. Margaret's church. This has not buildings of consequence. SOAR-LANE,... A few houses stand on the left. HIGH-CROSS STREET... This street is not so wide as many of the streets; but it is, in general, better built. PEACOCK-LANE, and RED-CROSS-STREET, all narrow passages. HORSE-FAIR-STREET, is a passage made up on each side with dirt walls, a few little dwellings, a malt-office, and a large wool ware-house. CHURCH-GATE... In general but indifferently built, but spacious. GALLOWTREE-GATE,... Here are the principal inns. BELGRAVE-GATE, and HUMBERSTONE-GATE, two very open streets. The former is well built, the latter... in it are more very good houses, and others very indifferent. SWINE'S MARKET, a

162 Referring to the situation in pre-industrial Norwich, T. Sharp has stated that "the buildings that were applied to it showed no more recognition of the street than that it was a necessary passageway between houses." T. Sharp, 'The English Tradition in the Town: the Street and the Town', Architectural Review 78 (1935), 181.

163 BR/18/8/354.

164 Influential factors determining the atmosphere or the reputation of each street seem to have been the density, scale and type of architecture, existing public institutions, the social, occupational, and political backgrounds of residents, ceremonial activities and major past events which had taken place there. For example, the north-east part of a walled city, Brescia in the Venetian state, consisted of a preponderant number of aristocratic dwellings, primarily medieval in origins up to the sixteenth century. This district, called Citadella, is arguably "the oldest and perhaps most prestigious part of the city." F. M. Ferraro, Family and Public Life in Brescia, 1580-1650 (Cambridge, 1993), 19.
narrow street, ... it might now, with some propriety, be called Market-
street, as it leads directly into the market, and the Pig-market is moved
thence. SILVER-STREET ... it is narrow, but in it are some good
dwellings. ... LOSEBY-LANE, ... here are two or three good houses.165

The description certainly indicates the variety of street environment, and how the
inhabitants perceived the different types of street constituting late eighteenth century
Leicester. Although the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries undoubtedly
changed the topography of the town, we can easily assume similar diversities in late
Tudor and early Stuart Leicester. South Gate, High Cross Street and North Gate were the
busiest streets in the borough, where many newcomers first arrived. Swinesmarket and
East Gate were other lively streets markets and inns in the vicinity.

The popular perception of the street contrasted with the official view of public
space. J. Thomas has argued that Tudor and Stuart municipal towns saw a major
improvement in the condition of the street, with a series of legislations concerning street
pavements166. At the Council meeting in Norwich in 1559, for example, the Mayor
"stated that the streets of Norwich had been so well kept that they maintained the health of
the citizens and won the praise of strangers."167 As with other municipal authorities, the
maintenance of streets was one of the major concerns of the Leicester government, and
their concern was particularly strengthened before the Royal visitation.168

Notwithstanding the official view of public space, however, the street undoubtedly
continued to suffer from human waste and wood blocking it.169 As T. Sharp has

165Throsby. 404-7.
166Thomas, Town Government, 39-57; Slack, Poverty and Policy, 115-6.
167Thomas, Town Government, 44
168BRI/1/3/1/19; RBL, vol. 3, 324. One can see intermittent public actions concerning street pavement
and clearing at the meetings of the Common Hall. See pp. 151-2, 158.
169BRIV/7/7-9; Willan, Elizabethan Manchester, 106-7; 'Diary of Robert Benke, Mayor of Coventry,
1655-56', ed., Fox, 114.
described, as a consequence, "the streets then functioned as open sewers as well as thoroughfares. They were unpaved, uncleaned, and unlighted."\(^{170}\)

The nature of social interactions in the street have to be examined in the light of temporal changes.\(^{171}\) Falkus has contended that street lighting policy, mainly motivated by keeping public order in the town, did not improve the condition of public thoroughfares before the eighteenth century.\(^{172}\) Day time commercial activities on the streets were not legally and practically possible at night, and social contacts certainly became less frequent then.\(^{173}\) However, the night remained attractive for people who pursued informal social and economic activities, let alone for the criminal orders.\(^{174}\) J. Thompson has noted that "The streets of Leicester were then scenes of frequent violence, and when the darkness of winter concealed the peace-breaker from the eye of the constable, they were the resort of numerous thieves and desperate men."\(^{175}\) In early modern Rome, for example, one of the informal popular street rituals, house-scoring, normally took place at night so that participants could hide their identity.\(^{176}\)

Streets inside the walls were perceived differently from those in the suburbs.\(^{177}\) Evidence from the borough and ecclesiastical court records indicates that people were clearly aware that some types of social contacts were undesirable in the urban streets.\(^{178}\) It was not a coincidence that suburban streets, such as Belgrave Gate,

\(^{170}\)Sharp, 'English Tradition', 181.

\(^{171}\)Corfield, 'Walking the City Streets', 146.


\(^{173}\)See pp. 135, 152-3.

\(^{174}\)Corfield, 'Walking the City Streets', 146.

\(^{175}\)THL, 247.


\(^{177}\)See chs. 2 and 3 above.

were said to have been "the scene of frays and bloodshed, and, in ancient times, of
frequent death by violence." As the order within the town was tightly supervised by
constables and watches by the early seventeenth century, the people often met in the
highways outside the borough. In 1598, John Wood told the magistrates that, after he left
his father's house near the Talbot, he went out from Leicester towards Mountsorrel with
a poor man who had just been released from the gaol. He had left the poor man at the
Belgrave bridge where this fellow had stayed and waited for John Wood until he came
back in the afternoon. There is evidence which shows that townsmen indulged in
various illicit and immoral activities outside the town walls. In 1597, Abraham Clark
deposed to the magistrates that he and Robert Roberts, a Leicester butcher, drove 6 sheep
from the St. Margaret's field through the field at the back of the town to the South Gate at
night. When they got there, Roberts asked Clark to drive them by himself through the
town (presumably through High Street) while he would wait for Clark at a house near the
North Gate. In 1620, when James Cross went towards Finedon in Northamptonshire
to play his bagpipes, he met Alice Sheene, wife of Richard Sheene of Leicester, in a
close which was off the highway towards Oadby in suspicious circumstances. Their
intention to avoid public eyes in the town was obvious. Unfortunately, they were not
aware that they were seen by Anna Blithe of St. Margaret's, and two other women.

Social contacts in streets may appear less structured than those in other public
spaces, such as markets and churchyards. For those who had strong expectations from
urban street life, however, the street was an effective social institution. Social and
economic lives in the town very often started from both expected and unexpected
encounters on the street. A servant of a Leicester weaver told the magistrate that he
met John, another servant to a haberdasher, when he was walking the back lane, and

179th., 111.
180BRII/18/4/479b.
181BRII/18/4/461.
182Leics. RO 1D41/4/1215.
183BRII/18/15/333.
went to Widow Wales's house to drink together. When Alice Davis, a nine-year-old girl, met a nailer's wife on Butcher's row in Southampton in 1577, she told her "if thou canst bring me pewter or Lynnen I will give thee as much money as any will." The wife of Thomas Rawson in the same town came to see Elizabeth Syvier when she was "awashing of a buck of clothes at one cisterne in the streate", and said to her, "I am within now and am able to give you a pot of beere or two, for I have mony enough." Examples of other provincial towns suggest that people often met on the streets close to typical urban buildings. For example, the space near the entrance of private houses was a typical arena for street sociability. In 1635, when John Reade, an apprentice shoemaker, met two youngsters, John Marlow and John Rose, in the street near the door of Widow Rose's house in Southampton, they arranged to fight on the Castle Hill, because Marlow's schoolmate had been beaten up by Reade. Town gates, dividing the inner town areas and the suburbs, also accentuated street sociability. With busy traffic, they may have attracted many street traders like those in eighteenth century Paris, functioning as "the strategic centres of sociability." In 1593, William Awder, a travelling scholar collaborated with a man whom he met on the way to Southampton to sell his wool. Thus, he was asked to see a woman at the East Gate and give her the wool, according to the arrangement he had made with her the day before.

Hence, numerous examples in borough and ecclesiastical court records suggest that the frequent social and economic encounters in the street helped develop some kind of pattern in townspeople's minds. In the informal social and economic sphere, the knowledge of such patterns was crucial to obtaining economic opportunities.

184BRIB/18/15/334.
186Ibid., 77.
189Garrioch, Neighbourhood, 121.
Interrogated about his suspicious goods by the Southampton magistrates, a Newbury upholsterer said that he had bought a band and napkin from a chapwoman he had met by chance on the high street, and also deposed that he had been asked to sell a band by a young woman he had met in the street.\footnote{The Book of Examinations, 1622-1644\textsuperscript{1}, ed., Anderson, 102.} Although the truth of such a statement is questionable, his knowledge of the form of street trade is illuminating. There is little evidence to show the way in which casual employment was arranged in late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester, but an example from eighteenth century Paris is indicative of the effective use of a street as a meeting place of labourers. Many street labourers had their fixed places on the street where employers could choose a man.\footnote{Carrick, Neighbourhood, 123.} The arrangement of lodgings was often made on the street, as the experience of Rychard Johnson, a tailor in Leicester, shows at the beginning of the seventeenth century. When he was sitting in the street near his house on Saturday night, three strange women came to him to ask him for lodging, and one of them told him that she would pay for a penny worth of straw for their lodging.\footnote{BRII/18/7/198.} Given that lodgers brought important sources of supplementary income to poor households, and that there were high demands for lodgings, it is hard to believe that such a case was an isolated example.

Consequently, observation of the street lives of late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester suggests that there were some patterns in social contacts on the streets. Searching for customers, pedlars and hawkers may have preferred to be in busy thoroughfares rather than narrow streets where they would find only many deserted houses, small alehouses, and impoverished customers. Streets where a cluster of inns and alehouses were in business, such as Swinesmarket and Gallowtree Gate, enhanced the sense of anonymity, but also provided better chances to encounter friends and enemies, customers and lodgers. Many residents along the streets seem to have been aware of such patterns, with neighbours regularly commuting to their work place or
carrying food and water, and hawkers and pedlars shouting their slogans. Newcomers had to find this out. Eventually, however, they also formed their own image of each street according to their needs and experiences. Just as the council, the gilds, and the church can be regarded as institutions in which social relationships were given a structure, the streets can also be seen as an urban structure where informal social links were organised.

5. Private Space

The history of domestic lives in the early modern period has been studied from two points of view. Firstly, historians have examined change and continuity in domestic lives in conjunction with women's roles and status during the process of Industrialisation. Secondly, changing material culture in the domestic sphere has attracted considerable historical interest looking at emerging consumerism and class consciousness. However, the division between public and private space in the context of early modern towns has been generally underplayed in comparison with that of Victorian cities. For example, explaining the separation of the domestic sphere and public life in nineteenth century England, L. Davidoff and C. Hall have argued that "the desire and the ability to adopt such a life-style was growing in all sections of the middle class, perhaps most unambiguously in towns..."
Such an interpretation gives us the impression that the concept of private space typically emerged in the nineteenth century when a clear pattern of segregation occurred. In fact, the types of value that townspeople put on private space has shifted over time. In the modern city centres of industrial countries, for example, private space is often created mainly to reduce public conflict, and to increase the safety of persons and property. Such elements are not comparable to the class consciousness which the Victorian townsmen embodied in their domestic environment. In late Tudor and early Stuart towns, we have little evidence to show that these efforts were consciously made according to different class values as explicitly as in the nineteenth century.

There are good reasons to believe that privacy was an important social value among Tudor and early Stuart townsmen in pursuing particular forms of social relationships. The degree of openness of the formal institutions, such as the council and the parish vestry, has become a major subject matter of early modern English social and political history. It has been largely argued that these institutions increasingly preferred a closed structure during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. A similar tendency can be observed in market places, too, where some types of transaction increasingly took place privately in alehouses and inns. These aspects of transition from an open structure to a closed one were a consequence of conscious efforts by townspeople responding to changing social and economic environments.

The distinction between open and closed was also important at the level of informal social lives. Frequent social contacts were not only characteristic of public

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199It was agreed that those who leaked the secret of the common hall would be fined £5 in 1564, and the order was repeated in 1593. BRII/1/3/90; BRII, vol. 3, 110, 291.
space, such as markets and streets. Innate human characteristics, such as guilt and shame, often forced townsmen to hide particular forms of social activities from the public eye. Philippe Ariès has argued that increasing wealth in the society induced social disintegration in which "people sought to win the approval or incite the envy of others", and privacy became imperative to protect one's honour and save face in the community. Other social and economic developments also help to understand why contemporaries perceived private space the way they did. We have already seen that the urban authorities became increasingly anxious to interfere in social and economic activities in the public domain. Arguably, private space became more important for some kinds of social and economic activity, as public intervention in public lives intensified.

What do we mean by private space? The problem of defining private space lies in the fact that the perceptions of historians and those of contemporary townsmen do not necessarily coincide with one another. One can identify private space either legally or physically. For example, a front room and a yard were legally private, but they were not necessarily concealed from the eyes of nosy neighbours. Thus, a Leicester saddler saw a husbandman of Great Glen and the wife of a Leicester joiner at Widow Yates's house kissing on the bed in the parlour in 1598. In 1577 the conversation of a Southampton housewife with a stranger in her chamber was seen by three women looking through a hole in the wall. Conversely, although the street in front of a house was public, one may also consider it as private. People's spatial perceptions could also vary depending on the circumstances. In a typical patriarchal household, for example, the authority of household head had as strong an influence on the domestic sphere as the urban authorities had on the public sphere. For him, therefore, his home was his own private space. However, for the rest of the household members, such as wife, apprentices, and

\begin{footnotes}
201 BRIII/18/4/505; RBL, vol. 3, 344.
\end{footnotes}
servants, their privacy may have been reduced significantly even in the domestic environment.203

In our analysis, we will focus on social interactions in private houses. It is believed that the domestic sphere of individual households represented the most typical private space in pre-industrial towns in the absence of business premises owned by private companies as in modern industrial cities. According to Hoskins' studies of the Leicester probate inventories between 1557-1612, private houses in the town were rarely built above two floors unlike those in larger cities, such as Exeter. The majority of them consisted of two rooms, the hall and the parlour, on the ground floor. Many more houses for the poor probably had only one room, though they are not recoverable from our records. Naturally, divisions of private space were more complex among much larger houses owned by leading townsmen, such as William Manby and Philip Freake, including chambers, buttery, kitchen and cellars. Domestic space in the period also had economic functions, i.e., as shops, brewhouses and workhouses.204 Predictably, therefore, the patterns of social interactions in private houses may have differed depending on the type of house, if they were arranged according to the different functions of each room. Unfortunately, our sample of court records is not detailed enough to quantify each pattern according to different rooms, but the problem does not invalidate our objective. The aim of our analysis is to see the contrast between the patterns of social interactions in public and private space rather than to demonstrate the different functions of individual rooms in private houses.

Social contacts in private space were generally based on intimacy. Naturally, it was the space which was typified by the conviviality and social discourse of household

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203Pargue, Fragile, 108; Clark, English Alphouses, 148. N. Castan has argued that “At the time the meaning of different spaces was subject to continual reinterpretation, and there was ambivalence about public and private role” in ancien régime France. Castan, ‘The Public and the Private’, 403.

204For the detail descriptions of the Leicester houses, see Hoskins, Provincial, 102-8, 111-4; For the case of other provincial towns, see Willan, Elizabethan, 106-23; M. Laithwaite, ‘Totnes houses 1500-1800’, in Transformation of English Provincial Towns, ed., Peter Clark (1985), 68-86.
members. The domestic lives of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century towns were not only characterised by intimate family relationships, but also by the structuring of social links with friends and neighbours. As on other social occasions, social contacts were very often accompanied by the consumption of victuals and gossip. The story of Maria Darlington in the Newarke gives us a good example of sociability in the private sphere in our period. One day in the late 1570s, she was drinking with John Walker in front of the fireplace of her house in the Newarke. Such circumstances provided an ideal condition for exchanging information and opinions about other townsman's affairs. When John Walker started to reveal that Mr. Ludlam should match his daughter to John Rogers, Maria Darlington responded that she did not support such a match, but believed that he should have his eldest daughter with John Rogers. Such harmless gossip tended to lead on to the revelation of more risky allegations in private spheres. Thus, John Walker went on to say that she (probably the eldest daughter, Agnes) had an unlawful child. It was a surprise for Maria Darlington because she had never heard anything other than that the girl was a good housemaid. This conversation was also overheard by Darlington's maid, Margaret Wilcocks, as well.205

It is difficult to exactly specify the nature of the relationship between the two here, but one can assume from the tone of their conversation that they were closely acquainted with each other. The interaction did not need to be hidden from the civic authorities, but it would have been scandalous if the conversation had been overheard by neighbours. The case provides us with a typical example of social interactions in the private space of an established house, participated in by people close to the occupier, namely, her friend and her servant. In such an environment, people confirm their intimacy by sharing their privacy.

The level of privacy could be significantly different according to social status in the period. Despite growing official restrictions, lodgers were commonly taken in. Supper was regularly served in private houses as was the case of a labourer in Leicester, 2051D41/4/267.
who took his cousin into his house for a meal in 1597, while there was also a young man having supper there.206 The houses of the poor were often transformed into unlicensed alehouses to secure supplementary income.207 In 1602, there was a socially mixed group of people in the dwelling house of a Leicester saddler. According to Mr. George Byller, a gentleman in Burstall, who was one of them, among those present were a yeoman and a Leicester shoemaker, who were drinking together there.208

Although there may have been some differences in the level of privacy depending upon the time as well as on different social groups, it is meaningful to isolate some of the significant common elements which characterised the domestic social environment. Whereas sociability in victualling houses was pursued predominantly by men, there were other occasions for direct interactions between men and women, or women alone in a private sphere with little regard to their social backgrounds.209 Thus, at child bearing times, only women were present. Adrian Willson has suggested that a chamber became an exclusively female social space for a mother and her friends, nurses and a mid-wife around the time of birth, and that the same practice was pursued regardless of the status of the mother. Though child birth was hardly a daily routine, the custom indicated the special nature of private space by contrast with public space.210

Social contacts in the private sphere were selective according to the will of householders and their members. The sense of anonymity was far less strong than that in the alehouse. The housewife of the Pagits, where Elias Ashmole lived during his stay in London in the 1630s, did not like any guests at her husband's table.211 In Leicester,

206BRII/18/4/455.
207Clark, English Alehouses, 73.
208BRII/18/6/71.
209See above.
Robert Tompson met John, a stranger, in the borough court when he was there for debt and John for felony. When John came to his house for his lodging in 1612, he utterly refused to give him any abode.\textsuperscript{212} When a wife of Robert Bone in the Bishop's Fee was with some strangers in her house, a Saddington yeoman came. She told him not to go up into her rooms freely until she knew him better.\textsuperscript{213} In contrast, social relationships in the domestic sphere were often formalised, as was the case of Bartholomew Nidd in 1598. One Sunday morning, one Dunne and his wife, and Richard Dickends, a Leicester parchment maker or a glass man and his son were drinking at Nidd's house. Their relationships were established, for Nidd had been teaching Dunne's boy to read English since a fortnight before, and Nidd's maid was Dickens' daughter.\textsuperscript{214} The pattern of interactions in private space was not only determined by the occupiers' choice of the people who were allowed to share the space, but also by individuals' moral consciousness. William Stout confessed in his memoir that he suffered from temptation as a result of the attitude of a neighbouring woman with an absent husband who 'took all opportunitys in conversation and other insinuations to allure me to her bed, or to introduce her selfe into myne.'\textsuperscript{215} It was the degree of individual choice that made a significant contrast between private and public space.

The intention and power to control domestic space had a practical importance for townsmen. As has been suggested earlier, burgesses and gildsmen often met privately to discuss the political and economic issues which they wanted to hide from their fellow inhabitants as well as the public as a whole.\textsuperscript{216} We hear that several radical Puritans used their houses for conventicles in the early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{217} Moreover, private space

\textsuperscript{212}BRIL/18/11/181.
\textsuperscript{213}BRIL/18/13/489.
\textsuperscript{214}BRIL/18/4/499; BRIL, vol. 3, 342-3.
\textsuperscript{215}Marshall, 'Autobiography', 103.
\textsuperscript{216}See pp. 146, 172-3.
\textsuperscript{217}Chalmer, 'Puritanism', 186. For secret meetings in private houses, also see HMC, Hastings MSS, vol. 4, 219.
was also important for those who needed to organise their trade outside the influence of the urban authorities. The function of private space was not only for conviviality but also for productivity. It is a commonplace to argue that the pre-industrial economy was largely based on domestic economic activities, and that the household was a unit of consumption as well as production. Individual houses were used by master craftsmen, journeymen and apprentices, while many victuallers, such as butchers, bakers and brewers, seem to have engaged in most of their production processes at home. The difference with private business was that it sought to conceal itself from the eyes of neighbours and the civic authorities.

Everard Pepper, for instance, was a servant to Mr. Alan Backhouse who lived in the Swinesmarket. According to his confession, at the end of the sixteenth century, he stole his master's barley from his house and carried it to his Mistress's house called the Bull Head. In the yard, he sold the barley to two cobblers, William Dent and John White. William Dent revealed that they took the barley to Robert Newbold's garden where he was gardening, and Newbold's wife gave him 2s. 6d., 15d. of which he gave to John White. After their business, they stayed in the alley, and drank and ate bread and cheese. William Dent also told the magistrate that Pepper, about three months before, asked Dent to carry his barley to Young Nedham's house where Pepper sold the barley to the wife of Young Nedham for 2s. This example shows how private space was used for informal trade in barley by 3 townsmen who seem to have obtained their daily subsistence from this business. The systematic use of private space for the informal business of a townsman is revealed by a servant, John Brucks, who had been living with his master for a year. He told the magistrate that there was a back gate to his master's

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218 See, for example, Chapman, 'Genesis of the British Hosiery Industry', 39.
220 See pp. 130-2.
221 BRI/18/4/484.
house, and he normally shut up and locked it every night with a boy in the house, but his master or dame unlocked the door when many goods were brought in at night.\textsuperscript{222}

If domestic space facilitated varieties of illicit trade carried out by poorer sections of the townsmen who tried to evade the eyes of the authorities, privacy was also important for those who attempted to hide their morally prohibited activity from masters and neighbours. In the patriarchal domestic environment, finding private space for sexual activities was probably an urgent matter for servants. Isabell Troeman and Thomas Eglin, for example, used the chimney corner of their master's house and the entry against the wall of the house.\textsuperscript{223} It is interesting to find that much sexual activity took place in the houses of relatives and acquaintances.\textsuperscript{224} Thus, Margery Moyse and John Nurce, a miller, used a bed in the hall of her father-in-law's house, while a spinster and Mr. Stubbs, an attorney at the law, used the chamber of Henry Clarke's house in 1615.\textsuperscript{225} Similar cases can be found in other provincial towns. In Southampton in 1602, for example, when her husband's cousin committed adultery in her chamber, Margery Watson "concealed them and locked them vpp in suche privatt sorte at all times." The twenty-three-year-old wife of a carpenter, who witnessed it, told the magistrate that "they could not be more conversaunt than they were in privatt sorte."\textsuperscript{226} In 1623, Dorothy Graunt bore an illegitimate child on the floor of her master's shop, "the dore of the said shopp being shutt & made fa st. . . ."\textsuperscript{227}

Despite some problems of definition, a sample of borough and ecclesiastical court records enables us to identify some distinctive patterns of social interactions in private space. It is argued that the existence of women and the degree of individual choice were significant common features of sociability in private space. Additionally, the use of

\textsuperscript{222}BRII/18/5/551.
\textsuperscript{223}BRII/18/13/450.
\textsuperscript{224}BRII/18/14/15; 18/15/466.
\textsuperscript{225}BRII/18/12/3, BRII/18/8/535.
\textsuperscript{226}'The Book of Examinations', ed., Anderson, 50.
\textsuperscript{227}Ibid, 25.
private space was not socially specific at certain levels. For example, gossip and promiscuous relationships typified social interactions regardless of different social profiles. On the other hand, we have also seen the varying degree of privacy depending upon the structure and the use of houses for particular objectives. The extent of privacy in a two-story building lived in by an established mercer must have been different from that of a poor labourer who frequently took in a stranger and opened an illicit alehouse. Civic leaders may have held informal meetings in a burgess' house, while some lesser craftsmen arranged informal business in their own houses.

6. Mixed Space — shops, inns and alehouses

With clear social expectations derived from different types of urban space, townspeople's informal social relationships were undoubtedly structured both publicly and privately. As with other social concepts, however, such a bi-polar model is often unhelpful in interpreting such a dynamic social world in the middle-rank county town. In fact, English towns were not communities whose social domains were rigidly divided into public and private space. There was also a social milieu where private and public values overlapped.

T. S. Willan has pointed out the unjustifiable neglect of the function of shops and shopkeepers in Tudor and Stuart England. The point is clearly important for the studies of large provincial towns, because shops and shopkeepers undoubtedly played significant roles in the expansion of inland trade from the latter half of the sixteenth century. We are told, for instance, that "in 1555, Chester had at least seventeen drapers, 9 mercers, 8 butchers and 6 ironmongers; in 1569, Norwich had 150 grocers, 48 mercers and 29 butchers." Some attempts have been made to estimate the scale and the characteristics of provincial shops and workshops, mainly by using probate

229 Ibid, 59.
Nevertheless, our knowledge of transactions at a cluster of premises in provincial towns is generally fragmentary.

If we take a loose definition of shop by including craft workshops, the number of shops and shopkeepers in provincial towns became certainly much more significant. Willan's study of the probate inventories of craftsmen has shown that craft-retailers were not uncommon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While tailors did not keep stocks, shoemakers, saddlers, pewterers and goldsmiths often engaged in retailing by themselves, using their own stock. Again, we know little about the proportion of such craftsmen in large provincial towns, nor about the way in which transactions were carried out. It seems likely, however, that the volume of retail trades outside the traditional markets may be grossly underestimated.

Shops and craft workshops had important social functions providing ideal social space for urban sociability. The structure of shops and work shops is important here, for they were accessible private space in the community. The limited space of premises often forced shopkeepers to expand their business into the street, such as a Leicester wheelwright, who kept various items on the street in front of his shop. Such an example echoes the description of workshops in eighteenth century Paris.

Overlooking the street as it did with its windows open, its journeymen carried out their work in front of the rest of the district, who passed comment and criticism, gossiped or remained indifferent. The narrowness of the streets also made for close encounters of a mischievous

230 See, for example, Ursula Priestley and P. J. Corfield, 'Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 16 (1982), 109-10.
232 A number of print series of trade and craft illustrations show that there were always more than two people sharing a working space in Early Modern Europe. See Balkenstein, Marjan, 'The Place of Textile Production in the Hierarchy of Trades and Crafts: Some Print Series from the Middle Ages, Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries', in *Occupational Titles and Their Classification: the Case of the Textile Trade in Past Times*, eds., Herman Diederiks and Marjan Balkenstein (Göttingen, 1995).
233 *RBL*, vol. 3, 334.
or cheerful nature but in either case, as neighbour or competitor, one saw
and was seen.234

A. Farge has elaborately described the workshop there as a space "that was constantly
disturbed by comings and goings and the disruptions caused by various hiring and
firings", with mobile apprentices and journeymen.235 In a similar context, the work
environment in an urban community has been described by Garrioch, who has suggested
that the regular sociability of tradesmen in the workshop, the victualling house and the
market developed a closely-knit trading community outside the occupational solidarity of
gilds.236 As has been indicated in the study of Paris, historians tend to describe the
condition of urban tradesmen only in the context of their occupational solidarity.237
However, space in provincial shops was also significantly characterised by social
contacts between different social and occupational groups.238

Before describing the social function of the shops and workshops of
Leicester in detail, one has to consider the number and types of these premises. It is
difficult to know how many shops and workshops were in Leicester during this period,
but many were probably concentrated in the area of the Saturday market. The
Chamberlain's Accounts in 1648-9 list 21 shops which were fined, while a few shops
were also found on Gallowtree Gate and High Cross Street near the High Cross.239

Servants, apprentices and maids were important actors in social interactions
in provincial shops. They moved from one premise to another according to the

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234Farge, Fragile, 111.
236Garrioch, Neighbourhood, 100-2.
237Ibid, 96.
238See, for example, Muldrew, 'Credit, Market Relations', 303-4.
239John Pearce owned a shop on Gallowtree Gate between 1596-1601. BRIII/3/8, 39. Ralph Orton had a
shop near the High Cross in the late sixteenth century. BRIII/3/13. Robert Norrice had a shop on
Gallowtree Gate in the early seventeenth century. BRIII/3/18; RBL, vol. 4, 390-1.
instructions of their masters. In eighteenth century Paris, servants and journeymen were often asked by their masters to do things, such as "taking letters, going to fetch a jug of wine for the master, running errands, fetching the master from the cabaret." Such was the time for them to be involved in social interactions in the community and the neighbourhood, and they often took advantage of such freedom for their own benefit. Thus, a servant of a Leicester pewterer came to the shop of Samuel Yates, a Leicester cutler, in 1619, and bought a girdle and a pair of knives for his dame. However, he also cunningly tried to use this occasion to sell the pewters he had bought from a country woman to his dame. Thus, he asked Yates' wife to go and tell his mistress that she had left £5 worth of pewter in Yates' shop two days before.

Shopkeepers played a pivotal role in providing an important social space in the neighbourhood. Visitors were not always there as customers, but often as friends and acquaintances, and shops often resembled victualling houses. The case of Daniel Shaw, a carver, who worked at the shop of a Leicester joiner in 1622 is a good example. While he was at work, Katherine, the wife of John Goodwin, came to his shop, and asked whether he could work on stone, to which Shaw agreed. When she came back again next day, she asked him to drink and play a game at a table, and after drinking they went into a back room to play. As with the alehouse, the shop often became a place where the latest news about neighbours was revealed. In 1589, Christopher Needham, a locksmith in Leicester, deposed that he was in Thomas Burstall's shop on High Street, with another fellow, and heard this fellow say that Mary Wright was a whore.

If shops and work shops provided space for casual social interactions, victualling houses, such as inns, taverns, and alehouses, offered much more comprehensive social space than major informal social institutions in the town. Recent

240Farge, Fragile, 109-10.
241BRII/18/13/464.
242BRII/18/14/157.
2431D41/4/452.
studies have amply shown that late sixteenth and early seventeenth century English society saw a proliferation in the number of victualling houses up and down the country. In particular, it has been argued that alehouses became significant informal institutions for the urban poor whose financial and social insecurity deteriorated during this period. Thus, the alehouses became "a communal nexus of popular society", providing multiple services — not only cheap drink, but also food and abode, money lending and informal trade, local information and popular entertainment.

As with shops and work shops, victualling houses included both public and private elements. While popular demand stimulated the proliferation of alehouses, they also became the target of vigilant urban authorities in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. In late sixteenth century Leicester, alehouses were required to obtain an official license, and their trade activity was strictly supervised by the urban authorities under the 1552 Act. In theory, therefore, victualling houses were public institutions which were open to everybody, both townsmen and outsiders, though predominantly men. The sense of anonymity was relatively high. Clark points to the over-crowded premises on busy market and fair days. In the warm summer, the door of the premises was left open, and drinking activities often extended to the street in front of the premises and its yard. Legally, physically and customarily, therefore, victualling houses could be regarded as public space.

At the same time, victualling houses had a private context. Premises were privately run either by landlords or their tenants. The stratification of the types of victualling house is testimony to how customers were selected according to a variety of services and drinks, and the view of landlords and regular customers. The sociability

244 Clark, *English Alehouses*, 132-3.
245 Ibid., ch. 6.
246 Ibid., 67.
247 Ibid., 68.
248 Rosen, 'History of Winchester', 185.
of nobles and the local elite at established inns is well known. Robert Beake, the Mayor of Coventry, wrote, "I went privatly to the Starr to Major General Whaley, he having desire to see mee." In Leicester, the Blue Boar was famous for accommodating Richard III, while the Angel at the north-east corner of the Market place was the hub of the local elite where the audit was often held. We also hear that the county sheriff held a meeting at the Crane in 1642. The Bell and the Talbot lay on the busy High Cross Street. Compared to established inns and taverns, alehouses were more numerous, and probably socially less exclusive. There may have been, however, much more subtle signs of exclusion by both landlords and customers. Access to the premises was to some extent influenced by alehouse keepers, who decided when and who to accept as customers. They could control the atmosphere of the house by tacitly excluding some groups of people from their premises with the help of regular customers. Small illicit private alehouses also prevailed in small back lanes and the suburbs, avoiding growing official supervision.

The mixture of public and private elements was a crucial factor in making the social space in victualling houses different from other forms of urban space. With chances to develop relationships with locals, they provided a good introduction for visitors to social and economic opportunities in the community. Norwich magistrates were aware of the function of alehouses, and tried to arrest those who offered such chances. Informal trade was also rife in victualling houses. As with growing trade activities in urban inns, people used alehouses for their trade outside the open markets on

249 BRII/18/12/191; BRII/18/13/512; Everitt, 'English Urban Inn', 113.
250 Fox, 'Diary of Robert Beake', 115.
251 VCH, vol. 4, 56, 63, 365; Simmons, Leicester, 54.
252 CSPD, 1641-2, 267; BRIII/3/30. The Kings Head was on Swinesmarket. BRIII/3/30. There was a victualling house called the Unicorn on Belgrave Gate. BRIII/3/8.
253 The Edwardian act restricted the number of taverns to two in each town [7 Ed. VI c. 5]. Kent, 'Attitudes of Members', 58.
254 Clark, English Alehouse, 69-70.
255 Clark, English Alehouses, 136.
a much smaller scale. There they could trade "out of the wind and the rain and there was no effective regulation: purchases could be made outside the strict market hours and in smaller quantities than the market permitted; goods might also be stored on larger premises."

As in the case of private houses, some victualling houses also attracted illicit trades, often involving townsmen as well as outsiders. Thus in 1603, one John Green was committed to the gaol, on suspicion of having paid 4d. to an Upton man in Nottinghamshire, to carry three sheets, six table napkins and other types of cloths to the White Horse in Leicester. Another important economic activity was prostitution, whose link with the alehouse was expanding in our period with the large surplus of female population and the high level of female unemployment.

As with other urban social milieus, gossip and backbiting were the most significant source of entertainment in the mixed space. In 1641, when William Scarborough, a parishioner of All Saints', was in Anthony Cook's brewhouse in the parish, William Ashwell came to them and revealed that John Day never had a child with his wife, Elizabeth, but with another woman. The story was also heard by William Simpson of the parish. He told the court of Leicester Archdeaconry that Ashwell said that John Day was a whore, or some equivalent epithet, although he himself believed that John Day was a man who had led an honest life. When a yeoman from the Newarke was in High Street near South Gate, he heard a Syston yeoman who was drinking at the Talbot say that he did not recognise the king as the king until he became crowned. The same words were also heard by a tanner and a yeoman, who happened to be in a parlour of the Talbot.

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256 Ibid., 138.
257 BRIF/18/8/385.
258 Clark, English Alehouses, 149. Unlike that in London, however, evidence for prostitution is thin in Leicester, and there are no signs of organised prostitution in the town. Archer, Pursuit of Stability, 211-5.
259 1D41/4/XXVII extra/38.
260 BRIF/18/6/97.
Food and drink were crucial elements in affecting social interactions in victualling houses. The effect of food and drink at social occasions was twofold. Firstly, it created a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Secondly, it often enabled people to express their favour, deference, and patronage by treating their partners. A Portsmouth mariner chose the Dolphin in Southampton to meet his opponent, saying "I will give him a quarter of wynne," and there "they agreed to have nothing more to do with each other." Welcome customers were often offered free drinks by the alehouse-keepers. The social function of victualling houses had strong parallels with the external environment, for it was often complementary to other urban institutions and social space. Some landlords certainly exploited this by setting up their premises near great inns, market places, cock pits and bear wards. As has been noted, Leicester and other provincial towns saw the proliferation of unlicensed alehouses outside the town walls serving paupers and outsiders. Even in the town centre, many victuallers tippled in alleyways and back-lanes attracting many craftsmen, labourers, servants, apprentices and visitors. Moreover, casual contacts on the street, at a market place or at town gates often led to prolonged sociability in victualling houses. It was common to move from one premises to the next, in order to change atmosphere, to meet new company and to get cheaper drink after heavy spending. Sociability in victualling houses was often preceded or followed by continuous social intercourse in private houses. Robert Bowne, a merchant in Leicester, revealed what was probably a typical social and business meeting in victualling houses in Leicester. According to his information, Richard Momford, a gentleman in Leamington, Warwickshire came to see Bowne on Monday 21st Feb. 1597, because he owed him some money. It was not until the next day, about four or five o'clock in the afternoon, that Momford saw Bowne because Bowne was not at home on
the 21st. On that day, as Bowne told the JPs, he saw Momford standing near Thomas Pollard's house door in the South Gate and had a drink with him, but Bowne did not stay there very long because he was on the way back to his home. That night, he came back to Pollard's house at about 7 o'clock to see Momford again, but he was told by Pollard's wife that Momford had gone to the Talbot. When he came to the Talbot, Momford was in the middle of his supper with four other people, so Bowne also decided to join them. During this occasion, certainly, they got along with one another, and decided to go to the Tavern. It was already around 9 o'clock. Bowne had to part from them on the way to the tavern because he needed to see William Fryer who was about to leave the town.

The social and business networks of townsmen maintained in victualling houses are also common in other provincial towns. In 1593, for example, when Richard Large, a sailor, and one Hardinge, a smith, came to see Nicholas Evered, tapster, who was serving in the George in the town of Southampton, he asked him to pawn a doublet for 5s. Evered refused, because Large had already been indebted to him, but he agreed to buy his nag if he brought it to the town. Later, however, Mr. Thompson also came to the George, and told Evered and his master that his mare and gelding had been stolen by them. He also asked Evered and his master to tell his brother, Thomas Thompson, a shoemaker in the town, of the news. Two days later, Evered went with Large and his company to the Tapphowse, where his master's brother drew the wine, and drank half a dozen beers. Knowing the news, however, he did not forget to ask his master's brother to inform his master that they were there. Later his master also came to the Tapphowse, and drank with them for half an hour. As these examples vividly illustrate, the social space of the victualling house was often linked to other informal institutions.

Consequently, social space in shops and victualling houses was an indispensable urban asset in structuring dynamic and complex urban social relationships which not only extended beyond the town boundaries, but also criss-crossed different institutional structures. The presence of mixed social groups was the distinguishing

characteristic of such mixed urban space. Nothing stopped servants, housewives, freemen and non-freemen from indulging in social activity, let alone economic transactions, in shops and workshops. Demand for the services provided by alehouses was not necessarily socially specific. A good number of alehouse-keepers were recruited from respectable social groups, while people's choice of drinking places may have been affected by the location of premises in the neighbourhood, the nature of casual contacts, the character of alehouse-keepers, and incomes which were always changing. Clearly, such social space did not only help lubricate relationships. On the contrary, separations, divisions, and conflicts were also important attributes of social intercourse there, and were also part of the overall character of urban social relationships. Nevertheless, although divisions and conflict influenced the characteristics of this social space, they rarely detracted from their role as significant institutions, serving sections of the urban population.

7. Conclusion

There was undoubtedly a significant structure in the social relationships of townspeople outside the formal settings of a middle-sized county town. Highlighting the significance of day-to-day interactions and the mobility of the urban population, the study indicates that people's links — either friends, neighbours or kin — were much more extensive, complex and changeable than historians generally acknowledge. This structure helps organise such different levels of human relationship, just as the formal institutions organised the relationships maintained according to the social hierarchy of the community.

268 Ibid., 64-5, 77.
The structure of informal social relationships accounted for the range of social and economic expectations that people had of different types of urban space. Although such expectations cannot be examined quantitatively, the evidence suggests that there were some patterns of social interaction which were dependent on different spatial contexts. In particular, our study indicates that public, private and mixed spaces were important distinctions to make vis-a-vis urban lives for co-ordinating complex and changeable social networks extending both vertically and horizontally in a social hierarchy.

Social and occupational differences may conveniently explain different spatial views among townspeople, but there was also significant overlap in what people expected from each social space. This finding is significant and strongly supports the view that urban social relationships were organised not only by the institutions which articulated stratified urban values, but also by those which accommodated the values which commonly attracted people irrespective of their social and occupational profiles and migration status. It was the greater number and diversity of such informal institutions that widened the range of people's social and economic choices, and hence characterised and strengthened their urban identities.
Conclusion

A range of significant structures in urban social relationships revealed in the middle-sized county town of Leicester not only inspires us to place particular focus on urban society in historical studies, but also suggests an effective and realistic framework for analysing an urban community and the relationship with its hinterland. As this study has shown, one cannot see the significance of informal social relationships and the structures in which such relationships were organised, if historians compartmentalise the analysis of social organisation into individual institutions or social and occupational groups. At the same time, the significance of such structures cannot be known unless historians demonstrate the patterns of concrete activities — social interaction, consumption, transaction, work and entertainment — conducted in different structural areas. Recognising these methodological pit-falls, this case study has shown that people's social networks were created and maintained not only in established formal institutions, but also across a range of urban social space, and that townspeople's urban identities were formed and modified at these different levels of formal and informal interactions.

Although the history of the town reveals some significant features of governance, of human relationships and of the material world in English society, the town was by no means just a small-scale mirror of English society as a whole. Being dependent heavily on its regional hinterland, late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester more directly reflected the regional social and economic climate than large métropoles and coastal centres. In the opening chapter, I have emphasised the significant links between Leicester and the surrounding small towns, showing how they constitute a local economic system. The analysis of business connections has also indicated much wider

1See ch. 7.
economic links beyond the county boundaries. Despite the poor state of the navigable river, busy road networks connecting these centres were the life lines for the economy of Leicester as a major distribution centre in the region. Nonetheless, Leicester was also a unique society in its own right, consisting of a sizeable heterogeneous population exploiting both materials and people in various ways. Its population size was well above that of the other market towns in the county, while its sophisticated administrative structure was unique in Leicestershire.

The community of late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester consisted of a range of different socio-economic structures reflecting an array of urban values enjoyed by the townspeople. As has been suggested in chapter 2, the town provided people with different social and economic areas in which to go about their daily business, such as residing, producing, buying and selling, although rigid residential segregation should not be overstated. In particular, the suburbs constituted alternative urban districts for many who preferred to stay on the periphery to avoid strict regulations and enjoy a cheaper lifestyle. Moreover, detailed study of the population listings has shown that population turnover in the suburbs was significantly higher than in the inner-town areas. Similar suburban development can be found in other middle-sized towns which were typified by sophisticated administrative structures inside the town walls. The Forgate and the suburb of St. John’s in Worcester, Stoke near Coventry and the jurisdiction of the Bishop, extending beyond the southern and eastern walls of Winchester, are good examples. Significantly, as has been demonstrated in chapter 3, the contrast between the urban

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2pp. 124-5, 227-8, 236.
3pp. 32-41.
5pp. 45-7, 57-64
6pp. 68-73.
fringe and the inner-wall areas was felt both inside and outside household society: the values of the alternative residential zones were appreciated not only by male householders, but also by servants, kin and lodgers.8

Poverty also contributed to the co-existence of many different social worlds in the urban community. Social titles, such as vagrant, prostitute and thief, were effective labels, officially differentiating the society of the destitute from that of ordinary inhabitants and a small group of deserving poor. In chapter 4, however, I have maintained that the experience of poverty among the townspeople was much more wide-ranging than suggested by official recognition of the destitute. Poverty threatened many at certain stages of their life-cycle; more than half of the urban population depended precariously on irregular employment.9 Migration and short-term crises also separated the fortunes of townspeople, and obliged many to adopt different social and economic lifestyles from those imposed by the authorities.10 It has been argued that alehouses provided not only food, drink and lodging, but also the means of subsistence for poor men and women. Nonetheless, I have also stressed that economic transactions in domestic houses were also of prime importance in poor people's everyday lives.11

The urban consciousness of Leicester men and women was also shaped in a much more formal context. In chapter 5 and 6, I have demonstrated how civic identities were formed at the different levels of institutional structure of the town government. The council, the trade gilds, the ward and the parish had significant functions connecting the inhabitants to each institutional structure and the urban polity, often accompanied by rituals, ceremonies and internal politics. The corporate will and political power of the civic leaders continued to be displayed in ceremonial ways on public occasions, such as proclamations and royal visits, while the wearing of special apparel at official meetings

8See ch. 3.
9See pp. 84-106.
10pp. 107-44.
11pp. 130-4, 236-9, 280, 286-91.
according to status was frequently ordered at the Common Hall.\textsuperscript{12} The social function of trade gilds also survived throughout our period; the gildsmen held their meetings regularly and often exercised their occupational solidarity to protect their vested interests.\textsuperscript{13} As has been shown in chapter 6, office-holding in ward and parish government involved a large section of freemen and helped enhance their awareness of formal institutions.\textsuperscript{14}

At the same time, detailed analysis of the formal institutions also helps identify the diverse perceptions of both the town government and the many who did not associate themselves with the formal institutions. The occupational profiles of the council members and the patterns of office-holding in the ward and the parish show up an array of social backgrounds and political ambitions.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, the conflicting views and defiant actions of the lesser freemen, women, the young and outsiders illustrated in court depositions and examinations strongly remind us of the existence of diverse social and economic worlds outside the urban polity.\textsuperscript{16} Although religious life generally continued to revolve around the parish church after the Reformation, one cannot ignore a significant scale of urban existence which remained outside the church during the time of sermon and services.\textsuperscript{17} Evidence relating to parochial politics and the patterns of parish office-holding normally leave the religious and political affiliations of many of the parishioners unexplained.

Despite all this, rescuing the identity and role of a particular social group in historical studies is not the aim of this study. Rather it has attempted to demonstrate the structures of an urban community which accommodated a variety of different societies and people, including those who did not express and were not restrained by a particular

\textsuperscript{12}pp. 154-8.
\textsuperscript{13}pp. 165-75.
\textsuperscript{14}pp. 188-95, 219-23.
\textsuperscript{15}pp. 159-62, 188-95, 219-23.
\textsuperscript{16}pp. 126-40, 176-85.
\textsuperscript{17}pp. 199-216.
social and political identity. Taking such an analytical objective, this study has shown that, despite a range of different dimensions in which people shaped their civic consciousness, the urban population was by no means divided up into clusters of separate societies, institutions or classes. On the contrary, there was also a set of important structures which bridged these societies and overlay people's allegiance to a particular institution and culture. As has been discussed in chapter 4, for example, evidence from Leicester normally thwarts us in our attempts to draw substantive social demarcations among the urban population on the basis of poverty.\textsuperscript{18} In fact, it is more likely to suggest that the life-styles of the poor, exemplified in informal trade, alehouse haunting and even petty-crime, also attracted many who had escaped destitution. Violence and riots might be led by respectable freemen and their associates.\textsuperscript{19}

Although the sophisticated governing institutions gave some structure to people's relationships, they constituted only a part of urban social organisation: they do not fully explain the informal social networks of individuals and relationships in the world of the lower social orders in particular.\textsuperscript{20} As I have suggested in chapter 7, informal social links — business relationships, kinship, neighbourliness, friendship and patronage — had much more significant roles in the urban context than historians normally believe. Social networks were a prerequisite in winning the urban survival game because whether one could make use of credit, sureties, economic opportunities, chances of migration and promotion heavily depended on these social networks, and this was probably applicable to almost all the different societies which co-existed in the urban community.\textsuperscript{21} Significantly, there were also types of structure which helped organise such relationships. In Leicester, I have categorised various social areas into three dimensions — public, private and mixed space — in which people conducted their social

\textsuperscript{19}pp. 127-44.
\textsuperscript{20}See chs. 5 and 6.
\textsuperscript{21}See ch. 7. Penelope J. Corfield, 'Defining Urban Work', in Work in Towns, Penelope J. Corfield and Derek Keene Derek, 213.
and economic interactions. Broad patterns of social interaction were clear enough for us to deduce people's specific social expectations. To take some examples, both deliberate and accidental encounters were likely to happen in an open public space, such as busy markets, streets and churchyards. Physical landmarks, such as market crosses, town gates and different types of street both inside and outside the town walls, also gave structure to people's meetings in public arenas. People may have chosen private space in the domestic house to develop relationships with clearer objectives, such as conviviality, business negotiations, reception, departure, and immoral or illicit interactions. Mixed space shared many of the functions of public and private space, but sociability in shops and workshops was often affected by the presence of servants and apprentices, while food and alcoholic drink added extra spice to social and economic activities in victualling houses. Inns and alehouses also offered an ideal meeting place for newcomers and those who were unable to use any private space in the community. Limited evidence in a single town prevents us from showing many other kinds of similar social space, such as the river side, the prison and the school, but findings in Leicester are indicative of significant patterns of social interactions there.

One of the significant features of urban social space in Leicester was the presence of people from different social and residential backgrounds. Public and mixed space was obviously much more accessible than that of the formal social organisations, such as the council and the gilds. In such relatively open space, social labels, such as alderman, freeman, constable, master or apprentice, which were defined in the context of the formal structure, did not necessarily signify social exclusion or explicit group identities. The use of private space is much more difficult to generalise about, since it was influenced by the views of individual occupiers. As has been noted, the use of private space often became gender specific or socially exclusive. Nonetheless, even here the level of social exclusion was often compromised by the presence of servants and lodgers.

23pp. 273-82.
informal economic transactions, and frequent social intercourse. The concept of urban space, therefore, is effective in explaining the structure of urban social relationships, normally criss-crossing different institutional and social boundaries, both formal and informal.

The significance of such social space can be readily compared with similar structures in other provincial towns: busy markets, bakehouses, mills, churchyards and streets of various sizes were common in all large provincial towns, while shops, alehouses and a variety of private houses also typified their urban landscape. Furthermore, the concept of urban social space is also important in assessing the extent to which urban society changed over time. Recent debate over late medieval towns, for example, has shown a marked shift from economic discussions to the assessment of urban social organisation, but a majority of local studies continue to draw a line around the mid-sixteenth century as a turning point in the fortunes of English towns. However, there was also a number of similar socio-spatial structures, such as markets, mills and workshops, in medieval towns in which the patterns of social interactions can be compared to those of post-Reformation urban centres. To take some examples from recent local studies, the sign of "informal, friendly and undocumented credit" used in transactions at the market and the victualling house had already been recognised in late fourteenth century Colchester, while a good number of shops concentrated near the city gates and lanes extended towards the cathedral in medieval Exeter.

As for the post-Restoration period, the recent historiography of English towns has been strongly influenced by views stressing the overall transformation in the

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24pp. 73-9, 125, 130-2, 276-82.
social, economic and cultural climate in the period. Peter Borsay has argued, for instance, that growing cultural activities characterised the condition of post-Restoration towns in stark contrast with that of their Tudor and early Stuart predecessors, which supposedly lost their social and cultural vitality after the Reformation. The vulgar and idiosyncratic urban landscape of the mid-seventeenth century was transformed into one of the polite culture in which civility and sociability were consciously pursued, though the timing of these changes has been questioned by some local studies. Similarly, Clark has focused on the emerging voluntary societies, which replaced religious gilds and complemented traditional alehouses, as major centres of sociability not only for merchants, gentlemen and professionals, but also for "people from a wide range of middling or artisan trades". One cannot ignore the type and size of different urban centres, but it has largely been argued that provincial towns had become much more urban by the eighteenth century than in the period a hundred years before the civil war.

How does the picture of late Tudor and early Stuart Leicester fit this view? For many historians, the social and economic foundation of urban society was much more vulnerable in the pre-Restoration period; towns were threatened, if not devastated, by a series of crises not only because of their severity but also because of the lack of


28See, for example, Barry, 'Popular Culture', 76-80; Peter Borsay, The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in The Provincial Town 1660-1770 (Oxford, 1989).

29Peter Clark, Sociability and Urbanity: Clubs and Societies in the Eighteenth Century City (Leicester, 1986).

30Borsay, English Urban Renaissance, ch. 1; Clark, Sociability and Urbanity, 4. For diverse experiences of eighteenth century towns, see Penelope J. Corfield, Impact of English Towns 1700-1800 (Oxford, 1982).
resilient urban economic structure. As this study has shown, however, the image of the community in a state of crisis was largely the official view of civic leaders who were prone to identify themselves within the framework of the formal institution of the borough. In reality, despite the wide-spread fear of deadly epidemics and public outcries about social deprivation, no county towns failed to attract sizeable immigration. If we assess an urban community from the viewpoint of the townspeople whose social and economic activities were heavily dependent on informal social milieus, the significance of urban renaissance may become only relative, because whether late Tudor and early Stuart towns were less urban than their post-Restoration counterparts depends upon which urban values one believes most important. In Leicester, the essence of urban lives cannot be exemplified only by organised formal institutions, public order and elegant architecture but social and economic activities in crowded market places, busy streets, noisy alehouses, shops and private houses. These dimensions, therefore, should not be ignored as evidence for social change and continuity. For example, despite the growing significance of specialised shops and established inns in post-Restoration Leicester, the Saturday market place remained the major distribution centre for weekly markets and fairs even at the end of the eighteenth century.

It is difficult to demonstrate from our qualitative evidence clear changes in the patterns of social interactions in urban space, but some implications of the legislative and social changes for the use of urban space in the late Tudor and early Stuart period should


32pp. 48-56, 128-9, 147-162.

33pp. 92-3, 111, 119-25.


35I am grateful to Prof. P. A. Clark for letting me read his unpublished paper on the development of eighteenth century Leicester.
be taken into account. As has been argued, order in different types of urban space was clearly one of the major concerns of the civic authorities. For example, the access of particular social groups, such as pedlars and the vagrant poor, to the streets and alehouses was often defined by a series of laws, while the time available for social and economic activities of townspeople were increasingly restricted by the civic authorities’s Public interference in domestic houses may have intensified as the greater controls over the taking in of strangers to the house and over compulsory church attendance was implemented. It is conceivable that these public actions influenced people’s perceptions of urban space. Thus, the range of social interactions in socially accessible space, such as markets, streets and traditional victualling houses, may have been eroded as sociability in these public domains became less important for some social groups, and trade and commerce were increasingly organised in private and specialised domains by the late seventeenth century. If, therefore, there was a piecemeal, but significant, change in the pattern of urban social organisation over the period, the interplay between the formal and informal structures in a community was clearly one of the significant factors causing such transition. In this respect, changes in the social organisation over the period, the interplay between the formal and informal structures in a community was clearly one of the significant factors causing such transition. In this respect, the realisation of complex structures in a middle-rank town is clearly vital for our interpretation of urban communities. Firstly, it forces us to reconsider the validity of the standard periodisation of urban history in the early modern period, based as it is on the major political and economic events of the time. Secondly, the significant of urban social networks, organised in these urban structures, enables us to conceptualise an urban community within a wider geographical setting. As this study has indicated, urban experiences in Leicester were not monopolised by a sedentary population.
with privileged burghal rights. With intensive demographic movement between Leicester and other urban centres, the experience was also shared by many who lived elsewhere. Such an observation leads us to see how Leicester developed in conjunction with its hinterland whose inhabitants were involved in the social networks of Leicester men and women, and demonstrate the social, economic and cultural roles of the town in a wider regional context.

Last, but not least, the framework developed in this study paves the way for examining a variety of social and economic activities which prevailed outside the official recognition of the urban authorities. For instance, the critical use of the records, such as court depositions and examinations, diaries and autobiographies, in other towns of various size will be immensely useful in revealing the great variety of informal interactions which took place. The revelation of such activities not only encourages us to reassess the spectrum of social and economic choices that townspeople made, but also enables us to avoid a blinkered approach in studying urban communities. These findings oblige us to confront differences between contemporaries' perceptions of urban structure and those of our own.
Appendix Tables

The following tables show the number of admissions to freedom between 1560-1639.\(^1\)
The freemen are classified into different occupational groups according to either the type of goods, materials or practices employed in each trade.\(^2\) However, such a method inevitably oversimplifies the nature of some trades which involved a variety of materials and activities.\(^3\) Thus, a great number of artisan-retailers, for example, craftsmen such as tailors and shoemakers, may be classified as "Wholesalers and Retailers" (see Tables 1, 4 and 5).

It needs to be noted, therefore, that the tables provide only one way of understanding the patterns of occupational structure. Although they may not be suitable for comparison with the structures of other provincial towns based on different types of classification model, they are designed to show not only changes in the size of each occupational group, but also the key occupations in that grouping so that one can make different levels of generalisation in order to explain the features of a complex society. Thus, the following tables give further occupational breakdowns which tend to be concealed by a simple occupational classification. No occupational classification can avoid some arbitrary distinctions made by the classifier, but the tables at least enable measurement of the effect such distinctions have on the overall picture of the urban economic structure.

\(^{1}\)For building craftsmen, see Table 4.2 above.
\(^{2}\)See Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects', 422-8.
Table 1
Leather Related Trades in the Freemen’s Registers, 1560-1639

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<th>1590-9</th>
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Source: RF

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### Table 2
Victualling Trades in the Freemen's Registers, 1560-1639

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<th>1590/9</th>
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**Source:** RF
## Table 3
Household Goods, Metal and Miscellaneous Trades in the Freemen's Registers, 1560-1639

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<th>1600-9</th>
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</table>

**Source:** RP

- a. One of the chandlers was also a haberdasher.
- b. Four of the chandlers were also slaters.
- c. One of the chandlers was also a slater.
- d. Five of the chandlers were also slaters.
- e. These bellfounders were also tanners.
- f. This includes gentlemen, labourers, agricultural trades and miscellaneous craftsmen, such as coopers, fletchers and gardeners.
Table 4
Textile and Related Trades in the Freemen’s Registers, 1560-1639

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<th>1590-9</th>
<th>1600-9</th>
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Total                   | 33     | 21     | 27     | 30     | 34     | 38     | 26     | 29     |

Source: RF
Table 5
Wholesalers and Retailers in the Freemen's Registers, 1560-1639

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Source: RE.
* Other than victuallers.

Table 6
Professionals and Service Related Trades in the Freemen's Registers, 1560-1639

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Source: RE.
Bibliography

Manuscript Sources

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C3/307/15 Proceedings
C3/310/46
C3/381/26
C7/467/32

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E134 Depositions
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DL4 Depositions and Examinations
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SP16/77/52
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SP16/236/66
SP16/339/75
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PROB11, Register Copy Wills, 1558-1660

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Willis 85 16379/2
Carte 78 10524

Leicestershire Record Office

Borough Records
BRI/2/46/22  Loose Papers
BRII/1/2  Hall Book, 1553-1587
BRII/1/3  Hall Book, 1567-1708
BRII/5/4, 49, 110  Loose Letters
BRII/9/1-3  Charities Books
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