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Family strategies and changing labour relations

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This special issue of Economic and Social History in the Netherlands (ESHN) is centred around the theme ‘Family Strategies and Labour Relations’. It is a product of one of the research programmes of the N.W. Posthumus Institute, the Netherlands Research Institute and Graduate School for Economic and Social History. This is an umbrella organization coordinating research at Dutch universities and the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

The general theme of this programme is Family Economy. A Comparative Approach to Changing Labour Relations. Economic, Demographic, Cultural and Political Determinants. The programme combines labour and family history and focuses on the complex and many-sided relations between family strategies and changing labour relations in different historical circumstances. It attempts to understand how individual and family behaviour influence each other, and how they create specific patterns of labour organization which determine work roles, migration, redistribution of income, individual life courses and demographic behaviour. Many new insights can be gained in the field of social and economic history by focusing on the micro-level of households and family networks, but that cannot be all. The programme also wants to study family labour in the wider social, economic and cultural context of labour markets, state formation, the development of institutions, and the formulation of ideologies referring to family and labour relations. In addition, it is the explicit goal of the programme to compare historical and contemporary developments, and western and non-western societies.

Of course, these ambitious goals cannot all be accomplished in this special issue. The articles should be seen as partial and sometimes preliminary results of both theoretical reflection and empirical research. Accordingly, the volume is divided in two parts: the first dealing with theory and historiography; the second consisting of case studies. Preliminary though they may be, the articles nevertheless give a clear picture of the many issues involved. In the theoretical and empirical essays, family strategies and the organization of family labour are related to developing labour markets (Ad Knotter, Gabriël van den Brink), migration (Michiel Baud, Pien Versteegh), family formation and fertility (Theo Engelen, Henny Gooren et
al.), the life course (Jan Kok), labour movements (Marcel van der Linden), and the construction of a ‘male breadwinner norm’ (Dirk Damsma, Arjan de Haan). The articles range from broad generalizations based on European and non-European historiography to micro-studies on the level of one or two small localities. They make clear that it is essential to rethink established opinions on many issues concerning the history of both labour relations and the family.

The theoretical part of this special issue is opened by David Kertzer, who was a visiting professor at the N.W. Posthumus Institute in June 1994. In a short introduction he discusses some of the crucial issues raised in the theoretical essays. Ad Knotter criticizes the concept of family economy as introduced by Hans Medick, Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, for ignoring the impact of labour markets on pre-industrial family labour organization, and presents some alternative interpretations. Theo Engelen discusses shortcomings of current explanations of changes in reproductive behaviour and fertility, that rather too crudely reduce these to economic factors only. He develops a more refined model which incorporates cultural factors. In a discussion on the importance of family networks for migrants, Michiel Baud focuses attention on some essential, but neglected aspects of family behaviour. Family networks are presented as redistributive, rather than residential units. This insight leads him to formulate questions concerning the role of the family in migration, social organization, and power relations. Jan Kok presents the ‘life course approach’, developed in American family history, as a research strategy for relating individual lives to family strategies, an issue ignored by historians of family structure. Marcel van der Linden, after a discussion of several problems of definition, reviews the relationship of households and labour movements.

The second part of this issue consists of five case studies directly based on empirical material. Arjan de Haan discusses the changing composition of the labour force in the jute industry in Calcutta, India. He shows how female labourers were gradually pushed out of this sector for economic and political reasons. The case study by Dirk Damsma relates to a similar process in the Netherlands. He discusses the debate on the so-called ‘male breadwinner norm’ waged among politicians and labour leaders. Pien Versteegh’s article links up to that of Michiel Baud. She shows the importance of family networks for migrant families, both in the Netherlands and in the US. The last two case studies look at the social and economic development in three Dutch agrarian communities. They present an implicit debate with some of the ideas put forward in the theoretical essays. Gabriël van den Brink describes the history of a small community in the Province of Brabant, Woensel. His point of departure is the idea of a peasant family economy, and as such he implicitly disagrees with Ad Knotter’s rejection of that con-
cept. Henny Gooren, Hans Heger and Paul Klep compare reproductive behaviour in several agrarian municipalities in the Netherlands. They conclude that, within seemingly similar villages, diverging labour relations rather than religious differences determined fertility and nuptiality. This conclusion qualifies the emphasis on cultural variables put forward by Engelen and Kertzer.

Michiel Baud
Theo Engelen
Ad Knotter
FAMILY STRATEGIES AND CHANGING LABOUR RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY IN THE NETHERLANDS

by

David I. Kertzer

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, family history boomed. Influenced in no small part by the work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, family history became one of the engines of the ‘new’ social history. Using various sorts of census-like and vital registration materials, these family historians - closely linked to historical demography - brought quantitative materials and statistical skills to bear on the problem of shedding light on family life of the past.¹

This movement was tremendously fruitful, opening up the history of the family lives of the masses of generally illiterate people in a way that previous approaches - tied to exemplary figures and those who left literary records - could not. As ‘myths’ of what family life was like in the preindustrial period in the west began to be shattered, excitement grew, casting new light on the history of family life outside the west as well. The dominant image of the peasant family of the past - consisting of a large, extended family household which remained in the same place over long periods of time - was shown to be based on questionable evidence at best, and total revision was called for.²

With all its accomplishments, however, what we could call the new family history began to show its limits. On the one hand, there were critics from what we might consider outside the movement itself. Proponents of more traditional methods, such as Lawrence Stone, questioned the value of the whole enterprise, suggesting that the most interesting questions in family history did not lend themselves to statistical treatment, and arguing that the kinds of materials employed by family historians were much too limited.³ Similarly, though with different motivation, feminist historians - who clearly saw the family as a ma-
major focus of their own research - have typically distanced themselves from the new family history, suspicious of its quantification and critical of its lack of attention to gender inequalities and dynamics.4

But criticism came not only from without, but from within the ranks of the new family history as well. Indeed, as the reader will see, many of these critical perspectives are set in the articles in this special issue of *Economic and Social History in the Netherlands*. Here the dissatisfaction with earlier work in the new family history is not the product of any principled opposition to the methods employed. Rather, elements of that earlier approach are seen as too limiting, as too often ignoring the most interesting questions, and as leading to overly simplistic models of family life in the past. One of the important aspects of the revisionism that is, as a consequence, being developed within the field is the development of a variety of family history that meets many of the criticisms coming from the outsiders (that is, those in my first category of critics).

As we will see in the articles that follow, a unifying theme of these new critical perspectives is the need to introduce greater complexity to our models of family history. I would like, for simplicity’s sake, to discuss very briefly three such areas in which the articles that follow shed light. These involve the introduction of greater complexity bearing on: (1) our models of family economy (2) our models of intra-familial complexity; and (3) our models relating economic causes to family effects.

1. Economic Complexity

One of the greatest limits and weaknesses of much of the early work in the new family history was a failure to place family dynamics in political economic context. Local populations were typically treated as single entities, having certain family and household characteristics. Part of the reason for this approach had to do with sources. In the influential English historical household work in particular, the kinds of census-type documents used had no information on individuals’ or families’ economic activities. The major emphasis was on contrasting preindustrial, peasant family life with industrial life (whether urban or, in some cases, in mining towns).5

Yet, as the articles in this special issue make abundantly clear, the economic activities in which rural families were engaged in the preindustrial and early industrial periods in Europe were anything but straightforward and uniform. Not only were there important economic differences between regions, but even within individual communities there was often not a simple undifferentiated peasant population. Moreover, these economic differences could have a major impact on family arrangements and demographic behaviour, leading to sharp differences even within single communities. To take an example from my own
work, in rural communities throughout central Italy in the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries, sharecroppers and agricultural wage labourers were sub­
ject to very different economic pressures and, as a result, exhibited very differ­
ent patterns of household formation and fertility.6

A number of the authors in this special issue take a critical look at Chayanov’s
influential model of peasant family economy. Ad Knotter, for example, criti­
cizes the model for ignoring social differentiation in the countryside. Rather
than portray the peasant family as a self-sufficient unit of production, Knotter
argues, we should recognize the complexity of impoverished rural families
whose members were regularly seizing on whatever employment they could
get, thus linking them directly to larger labour markets. In this context, proto­
industrialization, once viewed as a revolutionary new development, is seen as
but a wrinkle on an old pattern of labour diversification in the countryside. In
addition, as Knotter and other authors here argue, proto-industrialization itself
can no longer be viewed as a uniform development having uniform effects on
family life.7

2. Intra-Familial Complexity

This leads to another theme found in these articles, the fact that families, or
households, are not unitary actors but rather reflect the product of potentially
conflicting individual needs, demands, and perspectives. This mirrors a key
theme of feminist historians, who are critical of references to family decisions
which do not make problematic the group-level decision-making process it­
self. A number of these issues are raised, for example, in Jan Kok’s article, in
which he takes a critical look at the popular ‘family strategy’ concept. The
concept would seem to be useful only under one of two conditions: Either fam­
ily members may properly be described as being in agreement about a unitary
‘strategy’, or families have an authority structure (generally patriarchal, at least
by implication) which permits a single strategy to emerge even in the absence
of consensus. These issues have not been well worked out to date.

Aside from these issues, there is the question of the conditions under which
families are thought to adopt strategies, and the kinds of matters for which such
strategies are applied. The classic application of the family strategy model is to
questions of inheritance and partibility, but the concept is also regularly em­
ployed with respect to a host of other decisions, such as the timing of children’s
marriages and the selection of marriage partners. These are all areas where we
might in fact expect considerable conflict, not only of the gendered sort of great­
est interest to feminist historians, but along generational lines as well.

In his article in this issue, Michiel Baud takes a look at the family strategy
approach in his comparative historical consideration of migration. Baud finds
this perspective appealing, in that it allows for a more complex (and more accurate) historical understanding of migration. Utilizing a family strategy approach, in short, helps us overcome the tendency of some demographers to view migration simply in individual terms. Moreover, it allows the complex family calculations involved in deciding what family member(s) will move where, when, and for how long, to come into clearer focus. The kind of complex negotiations of potentially conflicting perspectives within families are clear from Baud’s discussion, though what I would see as the rather damaging implications of this internal conflict for the utility of the family strategy concept are not fully drawn out here.

3. The Role of Culture

Insofar as the new family historians dealt with economic forces, the model employed was typically a fairly crude economic determinist one. Age of marriages, for example, was portrayed as varying directly with economic forces such as land availability and wage-labour possibilities; the decline of fertility was thought to be a function of economic changes linked to industrialization and the advent of modern wage labour.

One of the liveliest and most important developments in family history in recent years, in this context, is the increasing recognition that simple economic models of family behaviour are unsatisfactory. This position is reflected in a number of the articles in this special issue, most notably in Theo Engelen’s critique of the economic determinist model. As Engelen notes there, dissatisfaction with the prevailing economic model comes not only from outside the historical demographic establishment, but from within as well. The most dramatic instance is certainly provided by the Princeton comparative historical study of the European fertility decline, which concluded that economic forces themselves explained very little, and that we must begin to pay serious attention to the role of culture.

Engelen’s article in this issue goes a long way in moving us in the right direction, proposing a ‘flexible model’ for investigating the relative impact of cultural and economic determinants. As he properly points out, these relationships are complex. For example, cultural forces may mold family through cultural norms that promote certain kinds of decisions (for instance, postmarital residence). On the other hand, the cultural norms themselves may be viewed as products in the long run of economic forces. In this case, to return to my Italian example, a plausible scenario is that over the centuries a predominantly sharecropping economy led to a culture favouring patrilateral household extension, and these norms ultimately influenced all members of society, including the non-sharecropping portion of the population.
Clarification of these matters is linked to another issue discussed by a number of the authors in the articles that follow, the question of rationality. Traditionally, the concept of rationality has been employed in tandem with economic models of family decision making. In this view, families are the way they are, because their members make certain decisions based on rational calculation of relative advantages in a given economic context of choices. Thus people decide whom and when to marry, where to live after they marry, whether and how to regulate the number of children they bear, what kinds of 'investments' to make in their children, all on the basis of rational calculation.

Historical demographers and family historians have recently been wrestling with the thorny problem of integrating a view of people as rational actors with the recognition that culture influences family behavior. In this special issue, Engelen and Kok, along these lines, call for a broadened concept of rationality, one that goes beyond economic factors. Kok thus argues that we should not equate family interests simply with family economic interests. Instead, we must recognize that cultural values are as important as economic factors in shaping family behavior. He maintains that this view does not deny that people are rational actors, but rather that there is a non-economic as well as an economic component to rationality. Similarly, Engelen contends that our notion of rationality should encompass non-economic factors, and refers to people who are guided by religious values, for example, as engaging in 'culturally rational behavior'.

I am sympathetic to these efforts, which call attention to the fact that motivation of human behavior is complex, and that our perceptions of the situations we face, as well as our valuation of alternative courses of action, are deeply influenced by the cultural lens through which we see them. The utility of trying to retain the concept of 'rationality' as the basis for our model of people's behavior, though, is debatable. Anthropologists and historians have seized on noneconomic rationality in part for political/moral reasons, rejecting those who would contrast 'rational' contemporary westerners with the apparently superstitious folk of classic ethnographic reports, or the irrational peasants of Europe's own past. Hence, to give an example outside the family field, anthropologists have claimed that the belief in witchcraft, and the persecution of witches, may best be seen not as irrational, but rational once certain cultural assumptions were taken into account.13

Perhaps, though, there is more to gain than to lose by cutting loose from the notion that people's behavior follows a rational decision-making model. If we are to take culture seriously, the concept of rationality is in danger of becoming circular. What of the person who sacrifices his life to avenge a phrase that someone utters that he judges to be sacriligious? What do we mean by labelling this behavior as 'rational' behavior other than providing a label for any behavior to which we can assign a motive? To take a more relevant and less inflam-
matory example, if I forbid my daughter from marrying someone because, although he is from a well-respected wealthy family, is well educated, and has an excellent job, he is from a different religion, is it helpful to portray this as ‘rational’ action?

4. Conclusions

In these brief introductory comments, I have barely begun to draw on the wealth of important themes dealt with in the articles in this special issue. They not only address a diversity of the most significant theoretical questions in family history today, but some of the most significant methodological issues as well (for instance, the role of life course analysis, and the question of the proper units of analysis and how to relate them). The geographical range - from Western Europe to India to Latin America - likewise illustrates the deep insights to be gained from a broad, comparative approach to history. The sustained analysis of the relationship of labour systems to family organization found in this special issue, moreover, contributes in a major way to the much needed integration of family and labour history.

NOTES:

1. The landmark volume in stimulating this work was Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (eds.), Household and Family in Past Time (Cambridge, 1972).
2. Here the classic work is Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost (London, 1965), reissued in a number of revised editions since then.
7. For an excellent bibliography of the proto-industrialization debate, see Knotter’s article in this special issue.


10. See, for example, the critiques offered by historians and anthropologists in John Gilles, Louise Tilly, and David Levine (eds.), *The European Experience of Declining Fertility* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).


12. For further discussion of this example, see: David I. Kertzer, ‘Political economic and cultural explanations of demographic behavior’, in: Susan Greenhalgh (ed.), *Situating Fertility* (Cambridge, 1995).

During the last twenty years or so the history of the family has advanced from a marginal and rather boring topic in the history and sociology curriculum to a subject of intense study and debate. One could veritably speak of an ‘explosion of family history’, maybe even in the literal sense that family history has been blown up and fragmented into widely diverging subjects and fields of interests. Michael Anderson’s approaches to the history of the family have not only been continued (as he expected), but have, in fact, been multiplied. Students of the economic history of the family, of family labour, work roles and income, of the history of family structure and family formation, of marriage strategies and demographic behaviour, of emotional and sexual relations, of youth, old age, or in general the life course, all seem to go their own way, only superficially paying attention to others. Family history has opened a whole new range of topics and questions about the nature and contents of past social change, but precisely because of its very success, it has tended to become integrated into other fields of social, economic and cultural history, thereby losing its internal coherence.

From the 1970s, there have been attempts to overcome this diversion by combining the economic history of the family with other ‘family histories’. Several scholars have tried to relate the evolution of the family and of family behaviour to underlying economic parameters: the changing organization of work, labour relations or ‘modes of production’. The idea of the rural ‘proto-industrial family’ with its supposedly specific social, economic and demographic behaviour has been most influential in this respect. However, in spite of its enormous impact and the ongoing research and debate, the presupposed relations remain subject to considerable doubt. The idea of proto-industrialization...
(the proliferation of rural cottage industry) as a stage in the development of industrial capitalism has been severely criticized, and a uniform relationship with marriage strategies, fertility and population growth has not, as yet, been firmly established. Several fairly recent studies reflect an urgent need to rethink some of the basic ideas of proto-industrialization. In my opinion, the relative failure of the ‘proto-industrial family’ as an integral concept was inherent in the way it was originally conceived by Medick and others in the 1970s as a stage in the evolution of the organization of work, or ‘mode of production’: the so-called family economy, characterized by the cooperative labour of the family as a unit of production. This idea of the prevalence of such a specific pre-industrial or pre-capitalistic family economy was shared by several others in this pioneering stage of the ‘household economics approach’ in family history.

The concept of family economy was introduced in the 1970s into the emerging debates on proto-industry by Hans Medick and, more or less simultaneously, into those on women’s work by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott. Their common idea was that, before industrialization, the household was a cooperative unit of production and labour. Family economy was defined by Medick as ‘a socio-economic formation that organizes and combines production, consumption and reproduction through the common labour relations of the family members’. For Medick the proto-industrial family essentially was a continuation of the peasant family. The proto-industrial family was just as much a unit of production and consumption as the peasant family, be it that its existence was no longer tied to the transmission of property through inheritance but to the possibility of founding a family as a unit of labour. However important the effects of this difference in his view were, especially on demographic behaviour, the proto-industrial family economy basically evolved directly from the peasant family economy. It was seen as a stage in the evolution from peasant economy to capitalist industrial relations.

Tilly and Scott used the concept of family economy in a much wider sense. In their view, most pre-industrial productive activity, be it in urban craftshops or on the land, was based in a household. Just as Medick referred to the idea of a ‘household or domestic mode of production’, so they defined family economy by ‘the interdependence of work and residence, of household labour needs, subsistence requirements, and family relationships’. While recognizing important differences between craftsmen and peasants, and between families with property and those without, in all cases ‘the household was the center around which resources, labour, and consumption were balanced’. Even if peasant families barely subsisted on their land, their life was organized around the property, no matter how small the holding. When ‘the industrial mode of production replaced the domestic mode of production’, the pre-industrial family economy gave way to the ‘family wage economy’, an income pooling unit dependent
on the wage labour by each of its members. In the 1987 reprint of *Women, Work, and Family*, however, Tilly and Scott appeared to have recognized some of the problems of *family economy*: ‘the household economy we depict in the pre-industrial period seems, in fact, to have been more complicated than we suggest. [...] Wages seem to have been an important part of life [...]’. Our model of the pre-industrial family economy [...] minimizes the extent to which capitalist forms of production and exchange already existed in the eighteenth century’. In both Medick’s and Tilly and Scott’s still influential original formulations, however, in the pre-industrial or proto-industrial *family economy* the majority of parents and children were supposed to have worked together in a unitary household, based in or immediately around their home. As such, the *family economy* differed fundamentally from the proletarian family wage economy, or - in a later stage - the family consumer economy.

In this essay I intend to review the historiography on the subject and to make an inventory of criticisms of the concept of pre-industrial or proto-industrial *family economy*. I do not question the argument that the labour of individual historical actors can be understood in terms of family position (daughters, wives, husbands, sons), an argument I value as a major breakthrough in both labour history and family history. However, after some twenty years of research and debate, it seems appropriate to reflect once more on the explanatory and analytical value of the concept of *family economy* and its meaning in the history of European labour relations. What appears to be most vulnerable to criticism is the inherent structuralism and evolutionism in both Medick’s and Tilly and Scott’s thinking about family labour as a phased succession of fixed structures. By focussing on the interrelationship of ‘family strategies’, household economics and labour markets, some serious deficiencies of the concept of *family economy* will be brought to light. In the process of adaptation to the opportunities and constraints of resources and employment in specific economical and ecological settings people appear to allocate and coordinate their labour within the family in much more varied ways than originally assumed. Labour markets are important in this process as far as wage labour is concerned. The more wage labour determines employment opportunities, the more labour markets determine family income strategies and the allocation of labour time of individual family members. The way people act and adapt their behaviour to changing employment opportunities can be labelled a *strategy*, defined as a pattern of behaviour consciously undertaken to achieve a certain goal, in this case simply to gain a living. This strategy is supposed to be related to, or aimed at, the well-being and the cohesion of the family as a social group, however defined; hence ‘family strategy’. This, of course, is not to deny ‘cooperative conflicts’ in family behaviour. Coping with conflicts can also be considered a ‘family strategy’ based on ‘principles that inform bargained interdependent decisions’. More than the rather static concept of *family economy*, the dynamic concept of ‘fam-
ily strategies' supposes interacting people who actively intervene in their own lives and circumstances.

1. Problems of the family economy

Origins of the concept of family economy: Chayanov and his critics

The original formulations in the 1970s of the idea of an historic family economy were highly indebted to the so-called mode of production controversy in economic anthropology and to the idea of 'peasant economy' as a specific mode of production. The theories of the Russian economist Chayanov were crucial in this respect, and his writings clearly inspired Medick as well as Tilly and Scott to formulate their ideas about the peasant, proto-industrial and artisan or, in general, 'pre-industrial' family as a unit of production and the family economy as a stage in the history of labour relations. Their work reflected the contemporary fascination of Third World sociologists with Chayanov's theories on the Russian peasantry. Many of these combined the idea of the peasantry as a special social category with structuralist notions about the 'articulation of modes of production', at that time very popular among anthropologists inspired by the neo-Marxist structuralism of Louis Althusser (among others).

It has to be said, however, that also in Third World sociology the structuralism of the concept of the (peasant) household as a 'mode of production' and its 'articulation' is being challenged by a view of household economics as a set of intentional strategies resulting in a variable mix of waged and non waged work.

There has never been an overall acceptance of the Chayanovian perspective in Third World peasant studies, as a glance through the Journal of Peasant Studies quickly reveals. Since the late 1970s the debate over Chayanov in this and other journals has acquired the dimensions of what may be called a minor industry, and among much ideological hot air some fundamental criticisms brought forward in this debate may also be singled out as being particularly relevant to the historical use of the concept of family economy. In its pure form, the Chayanovian peasant family farm is an isolated unit of production, distribution and consumption. As it is operated by the cooperative efforts of the family, without outside labour, its prevalence supposes the virtual absence of a market for wage labour. Having no objective measure of real labour costs, the peasant family tends to stress its 'drudgery' below opportunity costs, a tendency Chayanov labelled 'self-exploitation'. The peasant family would prefer working on its own farm even if marginal income from off-farm labour would be higher; in other words, even if more could be earned in alternative occupations. The peasant family balances consumption needs and resources by adding and reducing land according to family size. Differences in farm size and
amounts of land owned are primarily explained, not by social differences, but
by the changing composition of the family during the family life cycle. Inequality
within peasant society is cyclical, not structural. The extent of non-agricultural
supplementary employments in wage laboured crafts and trades is just a tempo­
rary element in the balancing of labour and consumption, not a structural
aspect of the differentiation of the peasantry. The development of a rural la­
bour-surplus, of migrant and other forms of wage labour is analysed in the con­
text of family economy, and not of emerging labour markets or a ‘wage eco­
nomy’.

Criticism of this Chayanovian approach has centred on the tendency for the
concept of the peasantry as a unified social category to incorporate many con­
trasting forms of production and social organization, and to obscure social
dynamics. The approach ignores the effects of processes of social differentia­
tion in the countryside and their impact on internal differentiation of work and la­
bour relations of family members on and off the farm, influenced by age and
gender. The crucial question is that of the allocation of labour time between
work on the farm, off-farm hired work, non-agricultural (supplementary)
employments, and leisure. If wage labour and non-agricultural work are struc­
tural rather than cyclical or additional elements of the resources of the peasant
family, it has to be assumed that the family employs a rational strategy to achieve
an optimal allocation of labour time and therefore measures real opportunity
costs. This is more likely than, and in fact incompatible with, Chayanov’s cen­
tral doctrine of ‘self-exploitation’. The Chayanovian peasant appears to be a
kind of ideal type construct, modelled on the ‘middle peasant’. In social and
historical reality, however, the poor peasant’s family is no cooperative unit of
production at all, but structurally dependent on a combination of different re­
sources and occupations by different family members, connecting the fate of
the land-poor or landless peasant family with other families and the outside
world via the operation of a market for wage labour. The poor peasant’s fam­
ily is rather a source of labour supply than a unit of production. With many
regional variations and time-lags this seems the more realistic approach for a
major part of the rural population in pre-industrial Europe, at least since the
seventeenth or eighteenth century, and, for some regions in north-western Eu­
rop e (especially in parts of the Low Countries and England), even much ear­
er. There is abundant proof that between the sixteenth and eighteenth centu­
ries, Europe’s peasantries had dissolved into very different societal complexes.

**Peasant differentiation and allocation of labour in the proto-industrial family**

In the debate over the proto-industrial family economy, the social differentia­
tion of the rural community and the internal differentiation of work inside the
family remain unsolved problems. Originally, work roles of different family members were thought to be characterized by a unified organization of family labour to maximize the productive capacity of the domestic unit. In this view the Chayanovian logic of ‘self-exploitation’ of the proto-industrial family as a production unit allowed merchants to pay extremely low wages and induced the family to adapt its demographic behaviour to enlarge its productive potential. In their latest contribution to the debate, however, Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm seemed to retreat from this cornerstone of their argumentation, admitting that ‘the cooperative division of labour did not invariably occur within the household’. In some interesting analyses of the allocation of labour time in proto-industrial families, the Swiss historian Ulrich Pfister concluded that the labour of the family was often not necessarily as cooperative as it would be in a unit of production, but could also be highly diversified, depending on the social position of the family and local circumstances. Households wholly engaged in manufacturing were perhaps rather a phenomenon of the transition to industrialization than proto-industrialization as such, he suggested. In the classical period, probably a combination of various employments was more typical, such as female spinning with male wage labour or a domestic craft and some subsistence farming, in the way of an ‘economy of makeshifts’ (Hufton) or an ‘adaptive family economy’ (Wall). In contrast to Medick’s adoption of the Chayanovian concept of ‘self-exploitation’, Pfister preferred a neo-classical approach of utility-maximizing behaviour (within certain limits): the proto-industrial peasant family aimed at an optimal allocation of its labour time to increase its earnings, flexibly adapting its labour to regional and interregional market forces.

Pfister and other researchers clearly showed that rural domestic industries could take many varied forms, from individual or cooperative family labour by poor peasants to supplementary employment in rich or middle peasants’ households. Kriedte et al. were therefore probably right to distance themselves from ideas like, for instance, Charles Tilly’s about proto-industrialization being a part or a stage of a unilinear and irreversible long term process of proletarianization. The problem is that, like proletarianization, the proliferation of cottage industry in the countryside is no uniform or unilinear process, nor stage, either. I do agree, however, with their conclusion that ‘extensive involvement in rural industry seems to have required a process of social differentiation, leading to the emergency of a stratum of small peasants or sub-peasants who had to turn to cottage industry to survive’.

In this context their subsequent reference to the concept of ‘peasant ecotype’ is important. This concept, introduced by the Swedish anthropologist Orvar Löfgren, has been developed by Michael Mitterauer as an alternative to the concept of a uniform peasant family economy. Löfgren’s peasant ecotypes were conceived as resulting from flexible strategies to cope with processes of
proletarianization, variably exploiting natural resources as these differ in regionally specific ecological settings. Mitterauer’s approach seeks to place rural labour relations in and outside the family in the context of the economical and physical specificities of the regional environment, and of ‘cultures’ of work developed on the basis of these specificities. According to Mitterauer, at least two types of family have to be distinguished in pre-industrial rural societies: those of peasants and those of ‘sub-peasant strata’ (in German: unterbäuerliche Schichten), or semi-proletarians. The concept of family economy is not applicable to the ‘sub-peasant strata’. These are clearly not definable as units of production, are more dependent on supra-regional markets and are particularly influenced by their wage relationship with the peasant strata. As far as proto-industry is concerned, Mitterauer argued that a ‘pluralism of activities is to be respected in a discussion of the proto-industrial family economy’. The activities of rural lower-class families ‘included different kind of wage work, industrial production, and cultivation of their own plots’. The growth of various types of domestic industry in rural areas was only one of several possible strategies employed by ‘sub-peasants’ to combat their impoverishment. In many cases, proto-industrialization concerned only the women; in other cases men helped in the textile industry only during the winter months. There were also proto-industrial activities that were performed predominantly by men.

Pre-industrial family economy and women’s labour

The idea of the family economy as a stage in the history of European labour relations was not only deduced from prevailing theories in Third World sociology, but also from earlier writings. Both Medick and Tilly and Scott were able to build on earlier historical work in the field of the history of the family, labour relations and women’s work in the German and English speaking countries. The elaboration of the concept of proto-industry by Medick and his co-authors Kriedte and Schlumbohm owed much to older nineteenth and early twentieth century German research on the evolution of home industries by the ‘Historical School in Economics’. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that historians belonging to this school thought of economic history pre-eminently as a phased evolution of industrial organization. Medick also related his Chayanovian conception of the proto-industrial family to Otto Brunner’s influential concept of das ganze Haus as a basic institution of production, consumption, and co-habitation, governed by its own rules of internal cohesion. However, in German social historiography, both the economic foundations of this idea and its social and ideological implications appear to be highly controversial. H.U. Wehler, for instance, considered it a ‘legend’, because it grossly underestimated the influence of market forces in peasant and artisan production.
In her recent critical inaugural lecture, Claudia Opitz argued in favour of an approach of dynamic ‘family strategies’ against the closed and static concept of das ganze Haus. In their work, Tilly and Scott essentially only reformulated the interpretations of pre-war British feminist historians in Chayanovian terms. Since the writings of Alice Clark, Ivy Pinchbeck and others, the notion of a pre-industrial family-based household economy has been well established in feminist history and sociology. In rural and urban production, housekeeping and productive functions were supposed to be integrated, and women were supposed to have an important role in family production. On the basis of this British research, it has generally been assumed that in the family economy, women’s work and female subordination differed markedly in the pre-industrial period from what was to follow. The introduction of the concept of family economy by Tilly and Scott allowed feminist historians to give these ideas theoretical support and justification.

However, empirical historical research and reflection on the household economics of pre-industrial English families have increasingly cast doubt on the usefulness of this generalized model. Though neither the first nor the only ones, Peter Laslett and Richard Wall were surely among the best known historians to criticize the idea of family economy and to argue that the pre-industrial family or household often failed to function as a ‘work group’. For Laslett, the overriding issue was, again, the degree of social differentiation. Where in consequence of such differentiation there were heads of households who had to go to work to gain or supplement the family living, that is, where a labour market existed, every domestic unit could not have been a work group: ‘The family economy of the poor was not, in itself, a work economy’. His and Wall’s objection, that ‘the family economy appears to exclude the very possibility of wage labour’, are reminiscent of the arguments against the Chayanovian construct of a ‘peasant economy’ I have already mentioned. To avoid the dichotomy of family formation based on household labour versus wage labour and to take due account of the varied strategies of those who had to survive on the proceeds of their labour, Wall introduced the concept of the adaptive family economy. This was to be particularly helpful in the interpretation of household economics in societies where household-based labour coexisted with a wage economy.

In women’s history serious doubts have arisen about the supposedly greater sexual equality in the pre-industrial or pre-capitalist economy. It has been argued that female independent participation in urban crafts was, by and large, the reserve of widows, whose position had been reached during their married life. In spite of attempts, like that of Martha Howell, to push the notion of a ‘golden age’ of at least urban women’s work in the family economy back into the Middle Ages, most studies on medieval or pre-modern women’s work show
that their disadvantaged status as workers was a pervasive feature of economic life both before and after 1500: women have generally been clustered in low-skilled, low-status, low-paying occupations. Peasant women as well as urban women lacked equal access to economic resources, and had to accommodate their working lives to the demands of men and family.46 In an historical overview of women's work and the family economy Pat Hudson and Robert Lee, while adhering to the model of a preliminary stage of the family production unit, also proved to be outright sceptical about the supposed higher labour status of women associated with it.47 The temporal sequence of organizational change from the traditional family economy to the family wage economy as originally suggested by Tilly and Scott was considered to be only of limited usefulness. Instead, they argued, women's work should be examined in the context of 'regionally divergent gender-specific labour markets and local configurations of female employment opportunities in both formal and non-formal activities'.48

These and other criticisms led Michael Anderson to conclude in a recent review of family history in Britain since the appearance of his Approaches 'that in much of England it has been a very long time since the majority of parents and children worked together in a unitary household economy, based in or immediately around their own home'.49 Instead, a large part of the population, who lived close to, or below, the margins of subsistence, had to employ varying 'coping strategies' to obtain the necessary resources, a device clearly considered by Anderson to be at variance with the concept of pre-industrial family economy. According to Anderson, since medieval times substantial numbers of British labourers had to leave home to hire themselves out to someone else, while their wives engaged in some quite different economic activity. It is also clear that a very high proportion of urban workers' wives were not engaged in the same trades as their husbands.

To sum up: many authors on the household economy of the pre-industrial European family have stressed the inadequacy of the concept of the cooperative self-exploiting family economy because it ignores the differentiation of work and labour relations in peasant, proto-industrial and artisan production, and because it underestimates the extent of wage labour and the impact of labour markets in pre-industrial society. Against the structuralist and functionalist notion of a 'household mode of production' based on 'self-exploitation', they have put forward the idea of 'strategies' of the labouring family to cope with processes of impoverishment, to adapt itself to changing resources and employment opportunities, and to (re)allocate its labour time accordingly in the most profitable way. In contrast to a powerful feminist tradition, these strategies did not create inequalities in men's work and women's work, but were built upon existing divergences. All in all, the evolutionary thinking of labour and the family as a phased succession of more or less uniform structures, like
the concept of *family economy*, should be abandoned. A consideration of flexible ‘family strategies’ is more apt to understand the spatial and temporal variations in the organization and allocation of labour in the family. In the next sections I examine these issues in more depth.

2. Peasant economy and agrarian labour markets: British controversies and continental variations

*A medieval wage economy?*

A discussion of the incidence and meaning of the peasant *family economy* in the history of European labour relations can best start from the most extreme position taken by Alan Macfarlane, who flatly denied its historic existence in England, at least from the thirteenth century. Macfarlane deliberately omitted any reference to the work of Chayanov in order to avoid ‘becoming involved in the heated debate between Populists and Marxists’, but the model of the peasant economy he chose to disclaim is clearly derived from Chayanov. The core of his argument is that a market economy of independent producers, employing wage labour rather than family labour, was already present in England in the Middle Ages. To prove this contention he focused on the existence of individual ownership and a market for private land sales. His discussion of the extent of wage labour in the medieval English countryside, however, is very limited and, in fact, completely inadequate, as his claims are very poorly documented, and servants and hired wage labourers are arbitrarily lumped together. There is no account of any dynamics of social differentiation: the incidence of wage labour is enough to prove the existence of a full blown labour market, even in thirteenth century England. In a much more sophisticated analysis of family and non-family peasant labour, however, R.M. Smith enlisted evidence of ‘an impressive array of scholars’ suggesting that in the late thirteenth century ‘between 40 and 70 per cent of holdings were too small to absorb the labour of those families resident upon them’. He argued that we could not expect to find that the family labour farm *à la* Chayanov was the norm in the more densely populated regions. Rather, there was a potential amalgam of non-paid family and wage-paid non-family labour, so that there were ‘relations of production developing through labour markets’. However, in his argument, Smith also lumped in-door service and out-door wage labour together as non-familial labour.

This view contrasts sharply with that of British medievalists of whom Rodney Hilton is the most outspoken. He depicted the medieval English village essentially as a ‘peasant economy’ in the Chayanovian sense. Servants were ex-
changed between households, and although there was a ‘division between the ploughman-husbandman and the hired labourer’, the antagonistic element between household economies was modified by a system of mutual adjustment, only partly operating through the market. Antagonisms in the village were overshadowed by the social gulf dividing peasants and landlords. There was a considerable number of servants living-in, often the younger offspring of other peasant families, who must not be confused with labourers who had their own independent households. Inequality among medieval peasants was determined by several factors with varying force at different times, but generally not by the development of markets for agricultural commodities and labour. The number of labourers with small holdings was determined by cycles of population growth and deprivation, not the development of a stratum of prosperous farmers enriching themselves through the market. Not until the fifteenth century did developments in the feudal economy allow the ‘retention of surplus on the peasant holding’, resulting ‘in a considerable degree of prosperity in the peasant economy’, ‘a regrouping of settlement’, and ‘the appearance of holdings of considerable size’; that is, a structural differentiation of the peasantry.

Whatever the merits of these conflicting opinions, the increasing social differentiation of the peasantry in the following centuries is a classical topic in British social and agricultural historiography, commonly designated as the problem of ‘the disappearance of the small landowner’. The issue is closely related to the notorious enclosure movement, which reached its zenith during the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and which has ever since sparked off vigorous political and historical debate. Later I return to the impact of the eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosures on the labour of the rural family, but at this point I want to concentrate on the vicissitudes of the peasant family economy in England in the previous centuries. There are two related questions that arise from the discussion above: firstly, in what ways did the social differentiation of the peasantry result in the development of rural labour markets; and secondly, to what extent can unmarried, living-in servants be considered to have formed a part of an emerging class of agricultural wage labourers?

Farm regions and peasant differentiation after the sixteenth century

As far as the first question is concerned, there has been a tendency amongst scholars to stress the regional diversification of agrarian systems and rural social relations in this period, as can be found in the authoritative work of Joan Thirsk. The extreme polarization, that was once thought to be typical of the whole of the English countryside was, in fact, only typical of regions of arable (or mixed) farming concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of the coun-
try. Here a class of commercial large-scale farmers, who were already prospering by the sixteenth century, were faced with an increasing number of landless or almost landless cottagers and labourers. Their ranks were being swelled by peasants who had been forced to give up their holdings, and by the natural increase of the population. In the pastoral districts in the middle and northern parts of the country, small-scale peasant farming seems to have fared considerably better. There, no completely landless proletariat emerged. Instead, population growth led to an increasing number of very small holdings. However, a division into arable and pastoral districts is a very broad generalization. In practice, many smaller farming regions with varied ways of making a livelihood can be identified. There were many areas where a kind of peasant economy persisted through the centuries well into the nineteenth century, as Mick Reed argued. Close reading of his arguments, however, may reveal that his examples could be more appropriately analysed as 'peasant ecotypes' (as will become clear below).

Both the peasant holdings described by Reed and those in the seventeenth-century pastoral districts were too small to provide a livelihood. It was the access to common or waste land for livestock pasturage, supply of fuel and other necessities that enabled the growth of smallholdings in the pastoral areas in the seventeenth century. Often, there were opportunities for small peasant families to supplement their income from non-agricultural sources as well. It was no coincidence, Joan Thirsk argued, that these northern and midland areas were to become the heartland of rural industry, and later, of the Industrial Revolution. In an important essay on seventeenth-century agriculture and social change, she compared this seventeenth-century type with the twentieth-century phenomenon of 'worker-peasants' who, until recently, continued their own way of life in various parts of continental Europe, and who have attracted much attention from social anthropologists. Running ahead of my story I may note here that Joan Thirsk is not the only historian to have done so.

The contrasting of social developments in agrarian regions challenges approaches based on national comparisons, as Robert Brenner did in his essay on the development of agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe. This becomes apparent in J.P. Cooper's contribution to the ensuing 'Brenner-debate', in which he criticized Brenner for underestimating the extent of diversity in the development in France's agrarian regions and social relations. In the grain producing areas in northern France, in upper Normandy, Ile-de-France, Picardy and Champagne, there was a great loss of peasant property and joining of holdings into larger farms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thus making these regions resemble the arable-farming areas of lowland England. What is known about the proportion of wage labour in the rural population of northern France in the sixteenth century suggests that it was almost the same as that in comparable parts of England: ca. 25%. In the
southern and eastern parts of France, pastoral farming was more important and farms were smaller. This is the same sort of contrast between arable regions with large farms and waged labour, and peasant-dominated pastoral regions that Joan Thirsk made for England. Cooper argued that it would be too rash to take the whole of France to be a peasant-dominated economy in Chayanov's sense. In many ways it was as market-dominated as England, with trends and potentials not qualitatively different.

In general, a regional approach underlining the variations of labour relations in the countryside in the early modern period seems more adequate than generalizing about a uniform 'pre-industrial' peasant family economy. The Netherlands is a case in point: in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a highly commercialized agriculture developed in the coastal provinces in the west and the north, based on specialized farms using wage labour. On the sandy soils in the eastern and southern provinces a more peasant-like economy remained in existence and wage work was much less important. The relevance of Chayanovian concepts to the eastern and southern agriculture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, is open to debate. It is clear that in the east the number of cottagers in the lower strata, who were partly dependent on waged farm labour or industrial supplementary employment, grew markedly in the eighteenth century (although no substantial landless proletariat emerged). Social differentiation in village communities increased as a result of population growth and probably also as a social effect of the increasing market orientation in agricultural production. In the light of this debate on rural economy in the eastern provinces of the Netherlands, it is rather significant that Josef Mooser in his study on the more or less similar rural society of adjacent Westphalia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was very ambiguous about the idea of a homogeneous 'peasant society'. The book's title *Ländliche Klassengesellschaft* ('Rural Class Society') is programmatic in this respect. Mooser laid great stress on the social differentiation of the peasantry, with the important qualification, however, that social divisions were not uniformly based on opposite positions in the labour market. Following the criticisms mentioned above, he considered the Chayanovian model of the self-exploitative peasant family balancing labour and resources around the property to be 'a-historical'. Like his British counterparts, he concluded that the family economy of the lower strata can be better understood as an adaptive economy of survival or 'make shifts', combining several kinds of resources.

**Servants, family economy and agrarian labour markets**

The second question concerning the position of servants is very important in the context of the operation of the peasant family farm. In his essay on the
developmental cycle of the peasant household, Lutz Berkner argued that servants were hired and dismissed with the phases of the life cycle of the family. Servants were employed to bring the labour of the family into balance with the land available for it. While in Russia the relative stability of the rural community was achieved by expanding and contracting the size of the farm and redistribution of land (as Chayanov had pointed out), in countries where the institution of service prevailed, it was achieved by the circulation of unmarried youth, who were considered to be members of the family. In the early years of marriage servants did the work for which the children were still too young. As the children grew up they replaced the servants or became servants in other households.

Berkner, and in fact all who have done serious research on the topic, understand service as a peculiar institution, a part of the agricultural labour force in the peasant family economy, but not necessarily of an agricultural labouring class, like youthful proletarians. So, in any search for evidence of increasing differentiation and the growth of a class of near landless labourers, the issue of service must be solved first. The social position of servants in husbandry in early modern England was analysed in depth by Ann Kussmaul in a remarkably elegant study. She observed that large and small farmers sent their sons and daughters into farm service, not out of economic necessity, but in order ‘to take their places in the economic life of the household’ (in the way Berkner argued). While the institution of service may not simply have been a temporary extension of the agricultural proletariat into the household of farmers, it is nevertheless highly probable that more labourers sent their children into service than farmers did from economic necessity. Increasingly, servants became part of a wage economy, not only of the family economy. This can be concluded from Kussmaul’s argument, that the farmer’s choice to recruit servants or day-labourers to do the work on the farm varied according to the tightening or relaxation of the labour market, influenced by population movements, changes in the cost of living, and real wages. The effect of population growth was to create a mass of poor adult labourers in need of wage work. In such a situation, farmers preferred labourers above servants, while in periods of stagnating or declining population and labour scarcity, they were inclined to make certain of a continuous supply of labour during the year by binding youths to annual contracts and by keeping them on the farm. So, the composition of the rural labour force was like a ‘dual labour market’: servants gave farmers a reliable core around which to shape their external labour force according to their needs.

The cycles of change Kussmaul observed were not evenly spread across the country. Because of the pronounced seasonality of work, grain production was in itself associated with the hiring of relatively more temporary wage labourers than permanent servants. Animal husbandry was associated with the hiring of relatively more servants, because the work was more continuous. In his essay
on ‘peasant ecotypes’ Mitterauer differentiated analogously between two main types of rural labour relations: those employing farmhands or servants, and those employing day labourers (Gesindegesellschaften and Taglöhnergesellschaften). He observed a remarkable correspondence between family economies with servants and cattle raising. Different types of grain farming had a mixed composition of the labour force, while viniculture worked predominantly with day labourers. So, after the requirements of the family economy, the degree of peasant differentiation, and the state of the labour market, the choice between recruiting servants or wage labourers is determined by yet another element: the regional agricultural system and ecotype based upon it.

3. Peasant ecotypes and rural labour markets: the labour cycle and gender-specific work patterns

Peasant ecotypes and gender-specific work patterns in agriculture

Even more important to the ecotype approach than the contrast between farm-regions using wage labour and those predominantly using family labour, is the emergence of a variety of labour relations in and outside the family in the process of adaptation to different ecological settings. There is no room for a uniform peasant family economy as a stage in the history of rural labour relations in this approach. The ecotype approach seeks to combine the perspective of the anthropological research tradition of ‘cultural ecology’ with social and economical developments. An ecotype can be defined as a pattern of resource exploitation, or ecological adaptation, within a given macro-economic framework, resulting in specific regional and interregional ‘cultural complexes’ of social networks, labour relations, cultural norms and perceptions. Both Mitterauer and Löfgren laid great stress on the regional variety of labour relations under the impact of different ways of ecological adaptation in pre-industrial society. To a large extent, access to natural resources such as soils of differing fertility, peat bogs or other wasteland, seas, mineral deposits, determined the development of work and local labour relations. In his research on labour organization and family forms, Mitterauer distinguished four historical ecotypes in Austria that determined the labour organization in the peasant family: ecotypes based on cattle raising, on arable farming, on viniculture and on cottage industry. While these four types were heterogeneous in themselves, the character of rural families as work-groups and the proportion of wage labour used in and
outside the family varied according to different organizational forms ranging from the isolated peasant family farm to rural activities predominantly based on wage labour, like forestry or mining.

Of course, many other ecotypes are conceivable. In northwestern Europe, ecotypes based on access to the sea are immediately obvious, like different types of fishing and seafaring. In Holland we are, of course, very familiar with what Löfgren in his Swedish research designated as ‘marginal ecotypes’ of coastal villages. As the sea ‘represented an open, common property resource’, landless peasants were able to establish themselves as small-scale fishermen, combining their coastal fishing with other activities, like seafaring. Löfgren pointed to many parallels in other Swedish regions. Population growth and a shift towards a market-oriented agrarian economy in the nineteenth century forced growing groups of landless labourers and peasant smallholders to proliferate new ‘marginal adaptations’ to local economic and ecological situations. The ecological setting determined the heterogeneous outcome of what, on a macro-level, appears to be a uniform process of proletarianization: the emergence of day labourers in grain-growing plains, crofter-fishermen along the coast, cottagers in wood and heathlands, peasant-workers close to emerging industrial centres, and so on. As a consequence of the increasing differentiation in the rural community, different organizational types of household economies emerged. Löfgren set the centrifugal farmstead of the well-to-do landed peasant as an integrated production unit and a focal point for family and non-family labour, against the centripetal homestead of cottagers and farm labourers, functioning as a base of operation at the two ends of the social continuum. If, however, the poor family’s labour could be used intensively, for instance in cottage industries, the economic integration of the domestic unit could become stronger.

Löfgren detected several structural similarities in the patterns of marginal ecological and economic adaptation. First of all, they were based upon the exploitation of marginal resources with the use of family labour. Secondly, there was generally an attempt to keep up some sort of agricultural production, mainly potatoes (hence the nickname ‘potato people’). Thirdly, industrial crafts were developed that could form a basis for market exchange. Fourthly, these activities were often combined with seasonal wage labour, whether farm labour nearby, or migrant labour far away. Löfgren concluded that the households of such poor peasant families, typically engaged in ‘occupational pluralism’, had to coordinate the many short-term activities into a complex yearly production or labour cycle with marked seasonal variations within a gendered and generational division of labour.

The gender-specific division of peasant labour was, in its turn, subject to considerable local, regional, and class-specific differentiation. In spite of some interesting discussions on universal biological and socio-cultural determinants
of women’s work roles in European agriculture (for example, by Mitterauer\[85\]) women everywhere seem to have carried out a wide variety of tasks. What historical evidence is available fails to reveal any rigid or inflexible pattern, either over time or space.\[86\] Firstly, there is abundant proof (for nineteenth-century Germany, at least) that the modernization of agriculture, associated with the intensification of crops and the diffusion of new technology on the land required a reallocation of individual labour tasks within the peasant household.\[87\] Secondly, the work role of women was correlated with size of holding and family income: the influence of socio-cultural constraints on female work was necessarily weaker on smallholding and proletarian households.\[88\] Thirdly, as agricultural change and social differentiation did not develop uniformly, the regional ecotype itself appears to have been an important determinant of the gender-specific division of labour. As was to be expected, this was particularly stressed by Löfgren.\[89\] In his view, the variety of the gender-specific allocation of labour foremost resulted from a flexible adaptation of work roles to ecological and economical conditions. In this context he pointed to the yearly labour cycle of marginal peasant ecotypes, based on a plurality of activities during the year. The gender division of labour was determined by the composition of the labour cycle, that varied with regional ecotype. So, in many regions, the seasonal mobility of the men forced small peasant women to perform the presumed male tasks on the farm.

**Labour cycle and rural labour markets: migrant labour, proto-industry and proletarianization**

The way Löfgren represented the labour of the poor rural family in a yearly cycle has more than just descriptive value. The labour cycle determines how the various resources of the members of the family are combined throughout the year. The poor family’s different labour tasks are arranged in such a way as to achieve an optimal allocation of its available labour time during the year. The members of the family cannot choose their jobs at random by measuring earning differentials or opportunity costs only, as they would do according to neo-classical economic theory. They have to attune their labour among themselves and to seasonal variations in labour demand in specific economic and ecological settings. These analytical consequences of the concept of the yearly cycle of family labour become particularly clear in the study of migrant labour in pre-industrial Europe by the Dutch historian Jan Lucassen.\[90\] As each component of the cycle is equally important to generate the collective income fund, he argued, a labour cycle once established tends to become a closed system, unaffected by minor or temporary changes in the labour market. However, more permanent changes in one of its components can lead to a complete restructur-
ing of the cycle itself, sometimes even to the point where the peasant holding has to be abandoned (in which case proletarianization is completed), and migrant labour has to become permanent migration. It is important to note, however, that this is no necessary outcome of the restructuring of the cycle: other combinations of work on and off the farm or a restructuring of migrant flows are conceivable as well. There is no unilinear, progressive development of labour relations from peasant to proletarian.

In my opinion, the concept of the labour cycle, because it recognizes flexibility within structural constraints, can provide a more complete and dynamic picture of the income strategies of the early modern rural poor and their interrelationship with labour markets than can the static Chayanovian interpretation of the peasant or proto-industrial family economy. The differential nature of these strategies in the rural economies of pre-industrial Europe can be explained more adequately. To support my case I single out three aspects of the interdependence of family income strategies and rural labour markets: firstly, the development of migrant labour and its intersection with rural industry; secondly, proto-industrialization and the gender division of labour; thirdly, processes of proletarianization.

As becomes clear from Lucassen’s study, the sheer extent of seasonal migrant labour in pre-industrial Europe would refute any attempt to ignore the impact of labour markets on the income strategies of the labouring poor. In the context of a discussion on the labour cycle, the relationship of migrant labour with cottage industry is particularly interesting. Although there are instances where both were included in the family’s labour cycle, in most cases they seem to have been mutually exclusive. In another context, cottage industry and migrant labour have been differentiated as ‘continuous’ and ‘discontinuous’ peasant-worker strategies. Lucassen and Mooser concluded independently that in the German push areas of migrant labour in Westphalia, proto-industry was less developed, while in proto-industrial (weaving) areas, migrant labour was virtually non-existent. Spinning, as a female activity, could more easily be combined with male migrant labour. Pfister came to similar conclusion for the northern Swiss Alps: the market for agrarian migrant labour in the bordering German areas caused a relatively low development of proto-industry. In a somewhat different fashion the sizeable migrant labour (of building workers) in the nearby Austrian region of Vorarlberg was progressively replaced by proto-industry in the eighteenth century. Only then did the poor peasant’s family become a production unit. In other words, labour was becoming ‘familiarized’.

Migrant labour seems to have been equally absent in areas where agricultural wage labour was in great demand in the area itself. The seasonal nature of most agricultural labour, however, forced families to adopt other kinds of work to complete a yearly labour cycle. This was clearly shown by Gay
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Gullickson in her research on the French proto-industrial *Pays de Caux* north of the textile city of Rouen. She maintained that if work in cottage industries had not been available to supplement harvest wages in this grain growing area, farmers would have been forced to use migrant labour. In her work she gave evidence of the changes in the labour cycle of the people of the *Pays de Caux* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The household economy of labouring families was only partially dependent upon the cottage industry. In the eighteenth century there was a large seasonal transfer of male labour from cottage weaving to harvest field work. Spinning was almost entirely a female occupation, and with a ratio of six to ten spinners to one full-time weaver, many more women were engaged in the textile industry than men. Therefore, female spinners had to be recruited from both weavers’ families and agricultural labourers’ families. In this way the sexual division of labour in the cottage industry meshed nicely with the sexual division of labour in agriculture. The supply of female labour in the textile industry was partly determined by the male agricultural labour market and *vice versa*. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, the sexual division of labour broke down. Weavers were increasingly employed all the year round and the interaction of agricultural wage labour and male weaving lessened. At the same time, the mechanization of spinning had created a serious unemployment problem for village women. As the demand for agricultural workers and weavers increased, women moved into these traditionally male occupations and even came to dominate the weaving branch of the textile industry. At last, after 1870, when weaving had also been mechanized, cottage industry disappeared completely, resulting in a mass exodus from the *Pays de Caux* and a real shortage of agricultural labour.

That spinning as a predominantly female preserve was almost universally used to supplement earnings in rural lower class families of both textile workers and others has been shown in such diverse proto-industrial regions as the *Pays de Caux* in France, Northern Ireland, Zürich and Appenzell-Ausserrhoden in Switzerland. The sexual division of labour between spinning and weaving maintained in these areas - implying status and earning differentials as well - once again shows Medick’s assumption of a functional interdependence among the members of the proto-industrial family to be highly problematic. However, in the long run work roles in spinning as well as weaving were flexibly adapted to changing circumstances in labour demand. Research on several proto-industrial weaving areas in the nineteenth century shows a diversification of family work roles in the period of decline of cottage industry during industrialization. This may once more be taken as an indication that there was no self-evident tendency for the proto-industrial family to exploit its common labour below opportunity costs, even in extreme situations.

A diversification of work roles and a restructuring of the labour cycle enabled the semi-proletarian rural family to stay on the land, thus preventing a
rural exodus. Nevertheless, the dissolution of one of the components of the labour cycle, for example through the loss of the occupation of one of the family members, could induce poor families to migrate, as happened in the Pays de Caux after 1870. Developments in several other French regions can serve to illustrate this effect. For instance, in the Val d’Isère near Lyon the insinuation of the silk industry into rural life in the nineteenth century at first slowed down the pace of the rural exodus and sometimes even reversed it. Small farming households resisted permanent migration by sending one or more members to work in the mills, mostly females who stayed in dormitories. The feminization of the silk industry led to a new sexual division of labour with the men staying at home to run the peasant holding. Only the loss of female income through the contraction of the silk industry in the last quarter of the century forced these families to give up their peasant holdings and leave for the cities never to return. In the Stéphanois (the St. Etienne region) before industrialization, the timing and allocation of industrial activity in the family was regulated by the timing of the harvest and sowing. Adult males were allocated to agriculture during the season and were otherwise engaged in seasonal forging, and women and children were employed in year-round silkmaking, either spinning or weaving. However, when agriculture was transformed into dairy production for the urban market, providing all-the-year-round work for family members, seasonal employment in agriculture disappeared. Rural dwellers too poor to buy cattle lost an essential part of their yearly income. They chose to migrate permanently, and so the rural supply of temporary industrial labour also diminished.

As a final test to demonstrate how proletarianization was related to changes in the labour cycle, the much debated classical English case of enclosures and labour supply in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is particularly revealing. It is on this issue that recent research has encountered the dominant ‘revisionist’ approach, starting with Chambers’ criticism of Marx’s and other social reformers’ view of enclosures implicating massive proletarianization followed by a rural exodus into the industrializing towns. The ‘counterrevisionists’ argue that enclosures eroded non-wage sources of subsistence available to semi-proletarian families, leaving them increasingly dependent on wages. Before enclosures many families were able to use common and waste land to keep a cow or other livestock, and to hunt and gather for consumption or sale, minimizing opportunity costs of labour by the employment of otherwise underemployed family members, especially women and children. By eliminating non-wage resources, enclosure undermined their productive contributions to family survival. Increased dependence on wages of both men and women made proletarian families much more vulnerable to the vagaries of the seasonal agricultural labour market, as Keith Snell demonstrated. Loss of common rights or allotments forced them to apply for poor relief to replace former non-wage
resources in their family’s labour cycle. This seems to have been particularly true in southern grain-growing areas, where it was reinforced by the decline of cottage industries. Families who had formerly been employed all the year round were now unable to find employment during slack seasons in agriculture. Labour shortage and rural exodus could only be prevented by the system of outdoor poor relief that was consciously developed to replenish income for seasonally unemployed labourers. In the north, it is argued, access to and productive use of the common fields had enabled cottagers to take up some industrial craft. This cottager class with a small stake in the land was particularly hit by the enclosures. Abolition of this part of their resources forced them to give up the craft and trading part also, resulting in a growing social differentiation of the rural community. Some managed to become full time farmers or traders, others became agricultural or industrial labourers.

It may be concluded that the need to combine several resources into a yearly labour cycle was a pervasive feature of the economics of the families of both the agricultural wage labourer and the small peasant. Their economic behaviour was determined much more by this need than by an urge to work as a unit of production, regardless of ‘opportunity costs’. Predominantly because of the pronounced seasonal nature of both agricultural and industrial work, early modern social differentiation in the countryside resulted in the emergence of ‘sub-peasant strata’ of various kinds with a pluralism of economic activities. Dependence on a single source of income or subsistence would not provide a secure livelihood for a broad range of the rural populace. However, the existence of these ‘sub-peasant strata’ cannot be equated with the emergence of a modern permanent agricultural or industrial proletariat. Nor did it necessarily develop into such a proletariat. Rather, these ‘sub-peasants’ belong to social groups or classes in their own right. In this respect some of them can be easily compared to the peasant-workers of the twentieth century. The peasant-worker phenomenon has been presented as an alternative to proletarianization, which has, erroneously, generally been viewed as the inevitable outcome of the type of structural developments described above. The behaviour of worker-peasantries demonstrates that enduring dependence on wage earning and on the forces of a labour market can exist without the creation of a working class. The smallholding provides subsistence security in the face of the uncertainties of marginal wage employment; wage labour provides cash in the market economy. To achieve these ends, labour has to be coordinated among the members of the rural households. The labour of the peasant-worker’s family is in a state of ongoing reconfiguration. In the long run, peasant-worker groups did have the potential to shift their labour involvements to either side: working class formation or permanent proletarianization on the one hand, repeasantization on the other. This description seems to be also fairly accurate for what
happened in the process of social differentiation in the European countryside before the creation of a permanent proletariat in the nineteenth century. The latter must be regarded as only one of several possible developments. In the history of European labour relations, rural de-industrialization and the transformation of agriculture in the nineteenth century could result in reapasantization as well as proletarianization.¹¹¹

4. Urban crafts and industries: workshops, households and ‘familialization’ of artisan production

The notion of a pre-industrial family-based household economy in urban production, integrating productive functions at home, appears to be even more misleading than the idea of a uniform peasant or proto-industrial family economy. Apart from the ‘sub-peasant strata’, there were indeed many farms which were worked cooperatively by the peasant family. Labour in urban workshops, building sites and industries was generally not coordinated among the members of the family. The artisan workshop cannot be equalled to the peasant family farm in this respect, still less so the numerous married journeymen and wage labourers in early modern towns, whose families, like those of agricultural labourers and cottagers in the ‘sub-peasant strata’, should not be seen as units of production by definition.

The separation of workshop and household characteristically differentiated peasant and proto-industrial from urban handicraft labour.¹¹² The setting up of a workshop and the organization of labour in artisan production was not a matter of individual or family strategies to exploit common property or labour, but of collective guild rules. According to these rules the labour force in the workshop was generally based on non-kin apprentices, journeymen, and - in specific industries - female workers, excluding the master’s wife and children. Productive functions were performed in the workshop, perhaps close to, but not inside the home. ‘Household’ and ‘workshop’ were separate spheres. A fortiori this would be the case in trades performed in the open air or in the house of the customer, like most of the building trades. The non-familial character of artisan labour is further attested to by the fact that sons or daughters hardly ever performed their apprenticeship or service in their father’s workshop, even if they were trained in the same trade. This is not to deny that family income was often earned by both men and women, but these earnings were based on individual rather than cooperative labour.

These general observations, mainly derived from Mitterauer’s research on Central Europe, are clearly at odds with the use of Tilly and Scott’s concept of the family economy in urban handicrafts, as for example in Martha Howell’s research on women’s labour in late medieval cities of north-western Europe.
Following Tilly and Scott, she supposed erroneously that women’s work was part of the family’s work, because the family would have had a central role in market production. While admitting that ‘the family production unit was not necessarily physically located in the household’, she nevertheless maintained that ‘it always had the family and its coresidents as its producers’. However, Mitterauer’s research and that of others show - at least in the German speaking countries - that, if households and workshops were integrated, this was not because of cooperation of family members in the workshop, but because non-kin apprentices, journeymen and servants lived together in the household of the master artisan.

The interconnection of production, consumption and cohabitation of the artisan labour force in the way described above is at the heart of Otto Brunner’s influential formulation of das ganze Haus employed by numerous Central European social historians to characterize work and family in this area in medieval and early modern society. However, social and family relations in the handicraft mode of life only imperfectly fit this model. Firstly, the tension between the workshop economy of production regulated by the guilds and the household economy of consumption and cohabitation has been completely overlooked. Brunner was not concerned with its impact on the organization of family labour in the home or, more specifically, with the demarcation of work spheres by gender. Therefore the concept of das ganze Haus can in no way be equalled to the idea of the family-based household economy introduced by British feminist economic historians like Alice Clark, and reformulated by Tilly and Scott in their concept of the pre-industrial artisan family economy. Secondly, it has to be emphasized that the accommodation of the artisan labour force in the master’s household was only partial, as it varied from complete integration in the case of apprentices and unmarried journeymen to complete separation in the case of married journeymen. Even in the Middle Ages, the variability of both the degree of integration and the length of stay makes the picture considerably more complex than the model of das ganze Haus tries to make us believe.

Furthermore, the degree of integration of the artisan labour force in the master’s household varied considerably both in time and space. In Central European towns many, or possibly most, journeymen continued to live unmarried in their masters’ home, in what the Germans call hausrechtliche Abhängigkeit or Einbindung well into the nineteenth century. Only then did a formal wage relationship emerge. It would be wrong to assume, however, that these unmarried, living-in journeymen were fully integrated into the household, as they formed a highly mobile part of the artisan labour force. In trades which operated with much wage labour, like the building trades, married journeymen only formed a core of the labour force. Michael Sonenscher found few traces of kin-based workforces in eighteenth century France. Instead, the workforce of the
The great majority of the urban trades consisted overwhelmingly of young, single men.\textsuperscript{119} He gave no information of their place of residence. In England it seems to have been more usual for married journeymen to live in their own households and to go out to work elsewhere, at least after the sixteenth century. In the nineteenth century it was only in certain specific trades like bakers and butchers that journeymen and apprentices lived with their masters. As a consequence the age of marriage and family formation in English and Central European towns differed considerably.\textsuperscript{120}

There is no proof whatsoever that the pre-industrial artisan family (man, wife and children) had originally formed a unit of production, still less, that this unit dissolved under the impact of industrialization and proletarianization. On the contrary, it can be shown that in many cases the capitalist transformation of artisan production in the nineteenth century forced master's or journeymen's families to work together in a family work unit. The introduction of the putting-out system in urban industries in the nineteenth century tended to destroy the traditional separation of workshop and household. Perhaps the best known case is that of tailoring. In large European cities like London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Amsterdam, journeymen-tailors had always carried out their trade in their masters' shops. The basic unit of production was not the family, but a team of skilled male workers. Even if the wives of skilled tailors were employed in the garment trades, the location of their work and the nature of their tasks would be different. In the 1830s and 1840s (in Amsterdam some fifty years later) the ready-made garment industry expanded enormously at the cost of custom tailoring.\textsuperscript{121} Tailors began to cut labour costs by reducing the number of their shop workers and turning to home workers instead. These home workers mostly worked with family members in a family unit of labour. For skilled tailors, proletarianization meant a move from the master's workshop to their own household. From then on income depended on his marshalling of family labour. Similar developments can also be found in the shoe-industry.\textsuperscript{122}

Developments of labour relations in the silk industry in Lyon, Krefeld and Vienna in the nineteenth century provide another illuminating example of this process of 'familiarization' of urban production. Unlike tailoring, silk weaving had been dominated by the putting-out system before the nineteenth century. Manufacturers gave out silk to formally independent master weavers with their own work-force of journeymen weavers, often living in the master's home. In the nineteenth century, family labour increasingly replaced the labour of journeymen. By setting up a family workshop, it became possible for journeymen to leave the household of the master and to profit from the expanding putting-out industry. Small masters thereby lost the traditional method of controlling dependent labour. As silk weaving required auxiliary workers, family labour was increasingly used. Family labour, especially women's labour, provided
masters with a ready solution to the emerging labour shortage in their changing household economy. The household shop came to consist essentially of the wife working alongside her husband and some of their children. As in tailoring, these family work units in the silk industry were created, not by artisan tradition, but by the reverse: the destruction of this tradition by the establishment of the capitalist manufacturing system.123

5. Conclusion: family economy, family strategies and labour markets in pre-industrial Europe

The concept of family economy, introduced in the 1970s in the debates on women’s labour by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, and on the proto-industry by Hans Medick, had a very specific meaning derived from the theories of Chayanov on the economic behaviour of the Russian peasantry. The family economy was essentially conceived as a unit of production or a unit of cooperative labour, and was considered typical of the way pre-industrial or proto-industrial labour in Europe was organized. Supposedly, the majority of parents and children worked together in a unitary household, based in or immediately around their own home. If anything, the foregoing review of the historiography on the subject of labour in the pre-industrial family after the pioneering and path-breaking work of Medick and of Tilly and Scott has shown that these central suppositions can no longer be maintained. Firstly, the pre-industrial family, be it rural or urban, did not necessarily constitute a unit of production or labour. It is therefore misleading to generalize about the family work unit or ‘household mode of production’ as a general denominator of pre-industrial labour organization. Even in proto-industrial production the labour of the family proved to be highly diversified. Secondly, there was no universally phased evolution from one form of labour organization (family labour) to another (wage labour), nor from one form of family labour organization (family economy) to another (family wage economy). Consequently, theories that try to relate other aspects of family behaviour, like marriage and fertility, to this supposed evolution of family labour organization must also fail.

The failure of the concept of pre-industrial or proto-industrial family economy becomes evident in three problems. The first is the problem of gender segregation in medieval, early modern, and modern labour. Contrary to widespread feminist opinion, based on the work of the first generation of British feminist economic historians and essentially, though in a somewhat different fashion, adopted by Tilly and Scott, there has never been a ‘golden age’ of women’s work in the family economy. In the Middle Ages as well as in early modern, or modern industrialized times, women have generally been clustered in low skilled, low-status and low paying occupations. In spite of the integration of a part of
the artisan work-force in the household of the masters, labour in the household and in the workshop remained separate spheres.

The second problem is that, as far as rural society is concerned, the effects of the social differentiation of the peasantry in much of West and Central Europe since the sixteenth century have been ignored or, at least, undervalued. The crucial question is that of the organization and allocation of family labour time in different strata of the peasantry. The concept of family economy clearly underestimates the extent of wage labour and labour markets in early modern or pre-industrial European society, and therefore seems inadequate for describing the many forms and combinations of labour in the family. The same holds, in a somewhat different fashion, for urban production. Many day labourers and journeymen were married themselves and did not live or work in their masters’ household.

The third, closely related, problem is that in most regions, proto-industry was based not on cooperative labour by all members of the family, but on individual labour of one of them. Activities of rural lower class families were often highly diversified. They included different kinds of wage work, industrial production, and the cultivation of tiny plots of land. Also, the gender division of labour in proto-industry proved to be important, for instance between female spinning and male weaving.

Notions like ‘an economy of make shifts’ (Hufton), or ‘an adaptive family economy’ (Wall) or, in a more formal neo-classical economic expression, ‘utility maximizing behaviour’ that is aimed at an optimal allocation of the labour time of the family, seem more adequate for describing the behaviour of the pre-industrial family than the rather static concept of family economy. This is not to say that the outcome of this adaptive or utility maximizing behaviour was achieved by measuring earning differentials or opportunity costs only. The poor family’s different labour tasks had to be attuned to seasonal variations in labour demand in specific economical and ecological settings. In the process of adaptation to the alternation of opportunities and constraints, people appeared to allocate and coordinate their labour within the family in many more varied ways than originally assumed in the concept of family economy. In this context I have drawn attention to the ideas of Mitterauer and Löfgren about the influence of historical ‘ecotypes’ on the organization of the ‘family labour cycle’. What seems important to me is that this approach challenges conceptions of a phased and essentially uniform and unilinear development of family labour organization and labour relations. To a large extent the ecological setting determined the heterogeneous outcome of what on a macro-level appears to be a uniform process of proletarianization. In pre-industrial society there was no uniform working class. The contents of wage labour varied enormously: day labourers, crofters, cottagers, proto-industrial workers, migrant labourers, peasant-workers, and so on. These different types of proletarianization, or semi-
proletarianization, also influenced family organization and the allocation of family labour in different ways. Only in the nineteenth century a permanent and more or less uniform industrial proletariat emerged. That is quite another story, however.

All in all, I believe that the perception of labour and the family as a phased succession of organizational structures must be abandoned. Instead, research must be aware of, and be focused on the strategic intentions and abilities of the labouring family to cope with processes of impoverishment, to adapt itself to changing resources, employment opportunities and labour markets, and to reallocate its labour time accordingly in the most profitable way. I am convinced that this approach will enable a whole new range of fruitful research into the history of labour and the family to be started.

NOTES


3. To which, it seems, historians of family structure, including those of the ‘Cambridge Group’ are increasingly diverting their attention, as becomes apparent in their journal Continuity and Change.


8. Anderson, *Approaches*, 65-84. See also Tilly and Scott, Rosenbaum, Sieder (footnote 5).


22. There are many studies on contemporary Third World agrarian labour relations that implicitly or explicitly corroborate this criticism of the Chayanovian approach. Some outstanding ones have been written by Dutchmen, e.g. W. van Schendel, Peasant Mobility: The Odds of Life in Rural Bangladesh (Assen, 1981); J. Breman, Of Peasants, Migrants and Paupers: Rural Labour Circulation and Capitalist Production in West India (Delhi, 1985).


28. Pfister, ‘Protoindustrielle Hauswirtschaft’, 71, 94, and idem, ‘The Protoindustrial Household Economy’, 223. Robert Lee, in a review of Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm, Industrialisierung vor der Industrialisierung in Social History 4 (1979) 375-379, was one of the first to raise doubts about Medick’s adoption of Chayanov’s ‘self-exploitation model’, partly because it ‘tended to ignore such important factors as the mediatizing impact of migrant labour on the social relations between individual households, and the problem of the sexual division of labour within the individual family’. I have to add, that Schlumbohm in his contribution to Industrialisierung vor der Industrialisierung had already raised doubts about Medick’s idea of a ‘differential profit’, earned by the putting-out merchant because of the ‘self-exploitation’ of the proto-industrial family (p. 60, 112-114 and 209, footnote 36).


translated as: ‘Peasant and Non-Peasant Family Forms in Relation to the Physical Environment and the Local Economy’, *Journal of Family History* 17 (1992) 139-159. In the introductory essay by R.L. Rudolph to this issue of the *Journal of Family History*, ‘The European Family and Economy: Central Themes and Issues’, *ibidem*, 119-138, the idea of ‘peasant ecotypes’ is rightly being welcomed as ‘the most significant recent development in examining a causal relationship between economic factors and the peasant family structure’ (p. 122). Some essentials of Mitterauer’s conclusions, without reference to the concept of ‘peasant ecotypes’, however, had already been formulated in: ‘Auswirkungen von Urbanisierung und Frühindustrialisierung auf die Familienverfassung an Beispielen des österreichischen Raums’, in: Conze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte der Familie*, 53-143.


35. In this context it may be relevant to note that the conception by the Historical School of capitalism as a way of industrial organization differs considerably from the Marxist view of capitalism as a social formation.


38. *Ibidem*.


40. The popularity of this scheme was reinforced by some of the ‘classics’ of feminist sociology in the 1970’s like E. Zaretski, *Capitalism, the Family, and Per-
sonal Life (London, 1976); A. Oakley, Housewife (Harmondsworth, 1976); S. Rowbotham, Hidden from History (London, 1973). For an early criticism see Els Kloek, Gezinshistorici over vrouwen. Een overzicht van het werk van gezinshisto-
rici en de betekenis daarvan voor de vrouwengeschiedenis (Amsterdam, 1981) 32-47.

41. One of the best accounts in British history based on this perspective is Bridget
Hill, Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England (Oxford, 1989). Barbara Hanawalt also proves to be very receptive to Tilly and Scott's 'pre-industrial' family economy: see her introduction to B. Hanawalt (ed.), Women
and Work in Preindustrial Europe (Bloomington Ind., 1986).

42. P. Laslett, ‘Family and Household as Work Group and Kin Group: Areas of
Traditional Europe Compared’, in: R. Wall, J. Robin and P. Laslett (eds.), Family
Forms in Historic Europe (Cambridge, 1983) 513-563; Wall, ‘Work, Welfare and the
Family’; see also: idem, ‘Arbeit, Fürsorge und Familie. Eine vergleichende
Betrachtung von Handwerkern, Bauern und Arbeitern in Devon und Westflandern’,
in: Ehmer and Mitterauer, Familienstruktur und Arbeitsorganisation in ländlichen
Gesellschaften, 495-521.


concludes: ‘The Chayanov model will not fit the English case, and it would seem
to me to be difficult to use as a way of discriminating area from area in Europe’.

45. M.C. Howell, Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities (Chi-
cago, 1986); see also idem, ‘Women, the Family Economy, and the Structures of
and Work in Preindustrial Europe, 198-220.

46. Cf. the expert review essay by J.M. Bennet, ‘History that Stands Still: Women's
tique has been formulated in a Marxist fashion by Chris Middleton, ‘The Sexual
Division of Labour in Feudal England’, New Left Review 113/114 (1979); idem,
‘Women’s Labour and the Transition to Pre-Industrial Capitalism’, in: L. Charles
181-206; idem, ‘Patriarchical Exploitation and the Rise of English Capitalism’,
in: E. Gamarnikow, P. Morgan and J. Purvis (eds.), Gender, Class and Work (Al-

47. P. Hudson and W.R. Lee, ‘Women’s Work and the Family Economy in Historical
Perspective’, in: idem (eds.), Women’s Work and the Family Economy in Histori-
cal Perspective (Manchester, 1990) 2-47; see also M. Berg, ‘Women’s Work,
Mechanisation and the Early Phases of Industrialisation in England’, in: P. Joyce


Digby, Ch. Feinstein and D. Jenkins (eds.), New Directions in Economic and Social

50. A. Macfarlane, The Origins of English Individualism. The Family, Property and
Social Transition (Oxford, 1978); see also idem, ‘The Myth of the Peasantry;

52. Ibidem, 147-150.


68. Cf. Jan de Vries, *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age*, 1500-1700 (New Haven, 1974); J.L. van Zanden, *De economische ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse landbouw in de negentiende eeuw*, 1800-1914 (Wageningen/ Utrecht, 1985). However, the actual extent of wage labour and its relation with self-employed family labour in agriculture in different parts of the Netherlands is by no means clearly established. Theoretically it may be plausible that agricultural commercialization in the coastal provinces went hand in hand with rural proletarianization in the 16th and 17th centuries (cf. J.L. van Zanden, ‘De prijs van de vooruitgang? Economische modernisering en sociale polarisatie op het Nederlandse platteland na 1500’, *Economisch- en Sociaal-Historisch Jaarboek* 51 (1988) 80-92), but to my knowledge there have been no empirical studies that prove its extent or describe its appearances.


73. Ibidem, 73.


77. Ibidem, 76.


80. Mitterauer, ‘Peasant and Non-Peasant Family Forms’, 149.
89. Löfgren, ‘Arbeitsteilung und Geschlechterrollen’.
91. Lucassen cites literature on France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Great Britain and Ireland.
93. Lucassen, *Naar de kusten*, 42-48; Mooser, *Ländliche Klassengesellschaft*, 242. The argument is extended to localities in the eastern part of the Netherlands by


95. A.J. Fitz, *Die Frühiindustrialisierung Vorarlbergs und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Familienstruktur* (Dornbirn, 1985).


108. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth-Century Agriculture'; Holmes and Quaetaert, 'An Approach to Modern Labor'.


115. This point is particularly stressed by Quataert, ‘The Shaping of Women’s Work’, 1133-1134.


118. *Ibidem*, 187-188.


When studying the relationship between economic and demographic processes in history, in the end we have to conclude that the discussion on this subject has, from the very beginning, resulted in scientific puzzlement. John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx, for instance, simply stated that industrialization raised the demand for labour and in this way brought forward the unparalleled population growth in nineteenth-century Europe. Although many past and present researchers have shared this opinion, other theorists have argued the other way around: population pressure as such was one of the driving forces behind industrialization. In their famous study on British economic growth Phyllis Deane and W.A. Cole pointed to this problem: ‘The connection between economic and demographic change at this time has long been a topic of interest to economic historians, but the nature of the causal relationships involved remain a matter for dispute’. More than twenty years have passed since then. In the meantime the list of books and articles on the subject has grown in an exponential way and yet the dispute has not been settled.

These observations provide us with a lesson. If we want to deal with the interrelation between economic and demographic developments, we have to be cautious. It would be unwise to jump to easy conclusions. It is necessary to re-analyse the discussion that has so far taken place. What are the major theoretical and empirical contributions? What different viewpoints can be discerned? Is it possible to reconcile the opinions of the discussants, and if so, what new insights does that bring? This essay aims, on the one hand, at an historiographical overview, without attempting to be exhaustive and, on the other hand, tries to formulate a theoretical framework for further research.
The starting point of course is the ‘traditional’ theories as canonized in past decades. I refer to the homeostatic equilibrium of peasant societies, the demo-economic model as presented for the protoindustrial area and the demographic transition theory. These models provide us with the opportunity of elegantly describing economic and demographic developments from the Middle Ages on. Neither of them, however, can explain the often paradoxical results of empirical studies. Historical reality appears to be more complicated. A critical review of the theories leads to three major questions.

1. Can we look at the relation between production and reproduction the same way through time, or do various circumstances result in different sorts of relationships? Continuity or discontinuity, that is the question.

2. Can we simply study economy and demography, without asking what impact the factor ‘culture’ or mentality has on the relationship?

3. What level of research has to be chosen? The macro-approach does not seem to do justice to the complexities of reality. What opportunities do micro-level studies offer?

In the last section of this essay I attempt to integrate these three issues into one model. Special attention is paid to the possibility of using this model for contemporary non-western or developing countries. If in this way historical demography and non-western demography can be integrated, both scientific disciplines will profit.

My last remarks in this introduction deal with the definition of the concepts. ‘Family’ is used in its broadest meaning, including nuclear families as well as extended households. For ‘production’ I have not dealt with organizational, technical or financial structures and processes, but focused on labour relations. It is important to know how the ways people earn their living affect their reproductive behaviour. I have therefore narrowed demographic processes down to reproduction, and have ignored mortality and migration. I have subdivided ‘reproduction’ into nuptiality (the age and frequency of marriage) and marital fertility.

1. The ‘traditional’ theories

In the traditional theories the relationship between production and reproduction is dealt with in three separate stages. Demographic transition theory explicitly discerns a development based on these three stages. The other two approaches contain elaborate descriptions of the first two stages, agrarian society and the protoindustrial period. As all these theories are well known, this section only gives the broad outlines. However, this part cannot be left out because, in my view, the ‘traditional’ models still provide useful heuristic points of departure for future research.
In the post-feudal and pre-industrial societies of early modern Europe the lives of peasants were guided according to the rules of 'family economy'. When A.V. Chayanov presented his ideas on the family economy (the Familienwirtschaft) in 1923, he probably could not have guessed what impact his concept would have on future historians. Even today the main objective for peasants in agrarian societies is seen as having been to balance consumption and production. According to Chayanov and his successors, this attitude makes it difficult to study peasant populations with modern economic concepts. Labour, for instance, was useful as long as it generated some marginal income. A new household could only be formed if and when a farm or artisanal workshop was obtained. In most cases this was effected by inheritance, which explains the link between the peasant economy and its demographic characteristics. Only on the death or retirement of the father could the (eldest) son marry. Thus, the age of marriage was high compared to later centuries. Furthermore, the other surviving children from the original household often had to live with their married brother, as they themselves could not obtain the means to found a family of their own. This explains the second characteristic: a relatively high proportion of peasant population remained single.

For most peasants these kinds of decisions must have been unconscious. Many educated contemporaries nevertheless recognized this pattern of marriage restriction. The most famous of them, Thomas Malthus, wrote in 1798: 'In almost all the more improved countries of modern Europe the principal check which at present keeps population down to the level of the actual means of subsistence is the prudential restraint on marriage'. John Hajnal wrote his way into the references of almost every book and article on the subject when he coined this behaviour as 'the Western-European marriage pattern'. His article was the beginning of a new understanding of the pre-industrial demographic system. Until then mortality had been seen as the main regulator of population development. Nowadays, the influence of preventive checks is regarded as being more powerful than the positive checks. So, it was the decision to marry or not and, if so, at what age, that kept population in balance with its means of support. This equilibrium generated by marriage restriction was the core of the demo-economic system of pre-industrial Europe.

The social and economic setting described above was an ideal background for the emergence of merchant capitalism in the second period. Profit-maximization was a concept unknown to peasants. Input of labour in their view was logical as long as it contributed to the maintenance of the producer-consumer balance. Therefore wages were low. On top of that agrarian societies had a great deal of hidden unemployment, with seasonal peaks during the winter. Proto-industrial entrepreneurs profited from these opportunities by offering by-employment. In doing so, they structurally undermined the demographic
equilibrium. The additional income made it possible to live from subdivided smaller farms. Also, the group of landless labourers, totally dependent on the wages in proto-industry, increased. Marriage restriction in this situation was abandoned. Many people married and did so at a younger age than was customary in earlier ages. As family limitation within marriage only emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, a period of rapid population growth was the logical consequence.

I have now reached the third stage of the traditional theories. At first population pressure could be averted by employment in the new industries and by mass-emigration. Population growth, however, was also favoured by declining mortality, as food production and distribution improved, and medical knowledge found its way to the lower classes in society. In the end, traditional remedies for a fast growing population were no longer sufficient. It was at this point that birth control was introduced, and this revolutionary innovation created a new equilibrium between births and deaths, both at a lower level.

Demographic transition theory also connects demographic changes with economic development. Birth control was first used in industrialized and urbanized areas. As the children of ‘the new labourers’ did not contribute to the family income any more and, on the contrary, even became expensive when compulsory education was introduced, these labourers had to accept family limitation.

As I have already said, on a theoretical level these theories offer an opportunity to describe the relationship between productive and reproductive behaviour from the Middle Ages on. In the following sections I deal with the critical remarks made by researchers who confronted the theories with empirical findings. This is done under the three headings given above.

2. Continuity or discontinuity?

The existence of a connection between labour relations and demographic behaviour is acknowledged by all authors on the subject. When discussing the precise nature of this relation and even the direction of the causal influences, different opinions appear to be possible. One of the questions to be answered, for instance, concerns the validity of the relation through time. Is there a basic set of mutual influences, disguised only by changing objective circumstances, or do the influences themselves change when structural developments alter society? This question is the more important comparing economic and demographic structures and processes in contemporary non-western societies with those in historical Western Europe.
Discussion on this matter is not new, of course. Charles Tilly pointed at the two ways of looking at the change from an agrarian to an industrial society, each with their respective demographic regimes. In terms of discontinuous development, three sub-theories are needed. The relation between agrarian labour relations on the one hand, and marriage restriction and ‘natural’ fertility on the other hand must be explained. In this view, industrial societies need another model to link the urban-industrial labour market with neo-Malthusian reproduction. Furthermore, a theory to describe the transition from the agrarian to the industrial situation would be needed. Another way of thinking emphasizes the continuity in history. Production and reproduction are bound then by a timeless set of interdependencies. In that case, observed differences are merely superficial adaptations to new circumstances, while basically the relationship remains the same.8

A recent example of discontinuous theorizing is the concept of a second demographic transition. In 1987 the Dutch demographer D. van de Kaa introduced this notion in a special issue of Population Bulletin. Van de Kaa argued that, after about 1965, demographic behaviour had such specific characteristics, that it is necessary to think of this period as a new stage in history. He, of course, referred to the revolutionary decline in fertility, even below replacement level, and to the radical changes in nuptiality (the spread of cohabitation and the rise in divorce rates). Analytically this period has to be separated from the ‘first transition’ (1880-1930).9

Van de Kaa’s emphasis on discontinuity has been criticized because other authors rather stress the similarities before and after 1965.10 Sometimes, however, continuity-thinking and discontinuity-thinking is embodied in the same person. In 1986, Ron Lesthaeghe firmly subscribed to Van de Kaa’s new concept whereas, in 1983, he had seen the transition of fertility and nuptiality around 1900 and contemporary demographic changes as elements of the same structural historical process: ‘successive manifestations of a long-term shift in the Western ideational system’.11

Another well-known example of ‘discontinuous’ thinking in history is that of the transition from agrarian to industrial societies. In many descriptions there is not only an explicit dichotomy in economic structures, but also an implicit division between tradition-oriented, irrational peasants on the one hand and rational, calculating industrial labourers on the other. E.A. Wrigley offered a way of looking at this transition from a ‘continuous’ point of view when he introduced the concept of ‘unconscious rationality’. Wrigley was studying fertility strategies of pre-industrial societies and concluded that reproductive behaviour of individuals was guided by group-rationality. In the end society as a whole was best off with a reproductive system which was not beneficial for the individuals concerned. When birth-control within marriage replaced marriage restriction, this was not therefore the watershed it is often considered to be:
The key change was from a system of control through social institutions and custom to one in which the private choice of individual couples played a major part in governing the fertility rate.\textsuperscript{12}

Tilly would call this a form of thinking in terms of continuity. The basic relation between economic and demographic behaviour is the same through time, rationality being the important connecting characteristic. The only difference is the way in which this rationality presents itself.

Non-western demographers have reached the same conclusions. In his theoretical study on fertility decline, J.C. Caldwell used the central thesis that fertility behaviour is rational in pre-transitional societies as well as in demographically modernized societies. This rationality takes shape within socially determined economic goals and is influenced by biological and psychological restraints.\textsuperscript{13}

There is evidently good reason for using one model to treat the relation between economic circumstances and reproductive behaviour. This is especially so when studying populations in various stages of historical development, and when comparing contemporary societies in different stages of development. In my view, future research should be directed at an exact definition of this continuous relationship.

3. Economy, culture and demography

As I pointed out in my introduction, economic historians are still struggling with questions of how and in which direction influences between economy and demography run. Still, there is a more pervasive question to be answered first. Perhaps labour relations and reproductive behaviour are not directly linked, because factors such as culture or mentality play a powerful intervening part. When it comes to determining nuptiality and fertility, it might even be the case that non-economic influences dominate.

In this section I try to summarize the different points of view. I begin with the traditional economic deterministic approach which, in fact, still has its advocates. I then move on to the intermediate position of those who include mentality as well as economy in their explanatory models. Finally I present authors who believe culture to be a more powerful agent than economy. I have to admit that this subdivision was also used by George Alter in his analysis of theories about the fertility decline.\textsuperscript{14}
The economic-deterministic approach

Many historians still suppose a direct influence from changing economic circumstances on demographic behaviour. R. Schofield is one of these. He compared the long-term development of real wages and nuptiality in England during the period 1541-1871 and found that the marriage rate - with a certain time-lag - followed the changing fortunes of income. He therefore explicitly stated: 'By modifying the intensity of nuptiality and early sexual activity according to the circumstances of scarcity and plenty, the English population corrected its rate of growth, bringing it back into rough equilibrium with the development of its economic environment'.

According to Nancy Birdsall, the same connection applies to fertility, although there is no such perfect synchrony between the development of wages and fertility. In the second half of the eighteenth century, fertility continued to rise, although real wages declined. After 1815 the reverse occurred: real wages boomed and fertility declined. The logical explanation for these paradoxical movements is purely economical, Birdsall argued. She rejected the demographic explanation in terms of time-lags. Proto-industry, in her mind, fostered a consistent rise in fertility for at least two major reasons. The marginal production of children was no longer limited by the size of the parental holding, and opportunity costs of child rearing were non-existent, because women in this system worked at home. This explains why fertility did not follow the downward trend of wages after 1750.

The decline of fertility in the nineteenth century was also an answer to a change in labour-relations. Productive skills were higher in the emerging industry, so education gained importance. By the second half of the century, legislation on child labour and compulsory education further diminished the economic profit children could bring. Moreover, as women began working in factories, childbirth immediately implied a loss of income.

Initial theories on proto-industrialization were also economic-deterministic. The influence of changing labour relations on nuptiality was the core of the demo-economic model. According to Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm, for instance, proto-industry altered marriage behaviour on at least three points: inheritance was not the gateway to marriage anymore; the life-cycle earnings curve of house-producing labourers favoured young marriage; and marriage itself was attractive because the family became a unity of production.

Empirical studies on proto-industrial areas raised serious doubts about this model. In fact, proto-industry could generate young and frequent marriage, as expected, but it could also result in quite the opposite. So now the idea is left that the size of households can be predicted by the way labour is organized. Proto-industrial households, for instance, were often not units of production. Individual members of these households could perform specialized tasks, as
division of labour took place not only within the household, but also between households. Even the strict link between proto-industry and reproduction was loosened. For example, boarders could perform additional tasks when needed, instead of children.  

I end this eclectic survey of economic-deterministic historians with the ideas of Richard Wall. He, too, was confronted with empirical findings which revealed a variety of demographic responses to the same economic impulses. In his opinion, this puzzle was created by using concepts as global as proto-industrialization and industrialization. The translation of these concepts into types of family organization had the same effect. When L. Tilly and J. Scott introduced a transition from ‘family economy’ to ‘family wage economy’, they, too, simplified reality. Wall suggested that account should be taken of the flexible response of households by using matching theories. One such appropriate concept would be ‘adaptive family economy’.

Economic-deterministic trends are also found in non-western demography. When G.M. Farooq and G.B. Simmons edited *Fertility in Developing Countries* in 1985, the economic base of demographic behaviour was an axiom. The only discussion was about whether a micro-economic approach or a macro-economic one would best serve to explain differential fertility. The similarities with historical demographic research were amazing, and many independent variables and their impact were the same. The positive relationship between fertility and infant mortality was verified for nineteenth century Europe as well as for many developing countries. Historians found working women in agriculture to be more fertile than their counterparts in industry. The same relation was found to exist in Nigeria and India in 1971. The negative impact of urbanization and education that was manifest in historic Europe was also found in contemporary populations in Africa, Asia and South America.

*The impact of mentality*

I now want to turn to those historians who explicitly used economic as well as cultural variables to explain reproductive behaviour. Sometimes this position was taken at the end of a process of trial and error. The theoretical base of the European Fertility Project (EFP) at Princeton University, for instance, was the demographic transition theory. Therefore, participants in this project originally looked for the economic threshold after which fertility would decline. Empirical findings in several European countries learned that this approach was inadequate. Fertility decline in economically retarded Hungary began at approximately the same time as in Europe’s industrial pioneer, England. This means that no general link between a certain stage of industrialization and neo-Malthusian behaviour existed.
Furthermore, monographs on Spain and Belgium revealed the impact of linguistic variables, even after economic variables were checked and examined. The diffusion of new attitudes and knowledge within linguistically homogeneous regions was identified as an important factor, and so cultural variables entered the model. When the members of the Princeton project summarized their findings in 1986, they explicitly pointed at culture and mentality as explaining factors. The original approach was altered, not by theoretical remodelling, but because of empirical findings.

Once cultural variables are introduced, a new question arises. What is the relative importance of economy and culture? Historians who are still firmly rooted in the economic-deterministic approach try to delimit the impact of cultural variables. When reviewing The European Experience of Declining Fertility, M.O. Shapiro had to admit that many contributors to this book convincingly showed the influence of mentality on fertility behaviour. Shapiro then defended his original attitude by arguing that these cultural variables were themselves basically determined by changes in economic circumstances.

Some years ago Rudolph Andorka offered a more appropriate way of tackling this problem. It appears, he wrote, that several ‘cultural’ answers are possible to the same economic influences. Take, for instance, nineteenth-century Europe. In France the modernization of economy led to the introduction of birth control, whereas in other European countries the same circumstances resulted in a renewed emphasis on marriage restriction. Andorka was fascinated by the fact that the same variety of reactions could be found when comparing social groups and regions within one country.

Ehmer and Mitterauer tried to do justice to this pluriformity of historic societies and developed a new theory based on the concept of ‘cultural ecology’. They argued that the dialogue between cultural inheritance and local ecological factors is influenced by technology, social organization and ideology. In their view, ecological and economic factors set the limits within which further differentiation takes place. These factors determine how many labourers are necessary in a family and how many mouths can be fed. However, there are important differences. A family of farmers displays different features from a family of landless labourers. In the first case ‘kin group’ and ‘work group’ may be identical, whereas proletarianized families have a greater flexibility of input of labour within and outside the household. For my argument, the most important discovery is that this flexibility is not only economically, but also culturally determined.

In the past decade the relative importance of cultural factors has been stressed by many authors. In his micro-study on fourteen German villages (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) John Knodel implicitly concluded cultural influences were stronger than economic influences. It is possible to deduce from his discovery that there was no clearcut difference in the marriage behaviour of the
various socio-economic groups. Furthermore, some of the villages exhibited a modern demographic behaviour, which in traditional theory was predicted only for an industrial-urban context.30

Another participant in the discussion is David Kertzer. He strongly warned against economic determinism. Of course, he admitted that economic circumstances are important when studying marriage and fertility. However, the impact of the societal normative system should not be forgotten. This is not simply a function of the demand for a domestic unit of production, but it is an essential part of the social structure of a population.31 In his review on Family Forms in Historic Europe, Kertzer stated his position explicitly. Under the heading ‘Does Culture Matter?’ he arrived at an affirmative answer. He then concluded: ‘Determining the independent impact of cultural norms, and their relationship to changing political economic and demographic forces is one of the principal challenges to family historians in the future’.32

In collaboration with Carlo Poni, Stuart Woolf directed a large research programme on ‘the family at work’.33 In this programme they rejected the conventional approach of economic historians, because of the ‘dissatisfaction on the one hand with the assumption of a linear evolution towards an ‘Atlantic’ model of mechanized industrialization, and, on the other, with the inadequacy of explanations of rational behaviour that find their origins in the classical economists’. Instead, they tried to understand the strategies of the families, a partly unconscious system of decisions, influenced both by economic and cultural variables.34

Historical demographers can be divided into those who adhere to the ‘adjustment-thesis’ (demographic modernization is an adjustment to economic change), and those who subscribe the ‘innovation-thesis’ (demographic modernization is an independent process).35 This division closely resembles the differences between economic and cultural determinists as described above. Also on this point, non-western demographers have been engaged in the same discussion. I have already mentioned the strictly economic approach by Farooq and Simmons.36 J. Cleland opposed their view. He believed that changes in demographic behaviour, also in developing countries, are not an answer to other economic circumstances, but cultural and mental innovations.37

Although I have only presented a small part of the historiography, the conclusion is clear: there is a variety of approaches to the interrelationship between economy, culture and demography. Future research should try to reconcile these approaches in one coherent model. If possible, this should be a diachronic and cross-cultural one.
4. Influence of the level of aggregation

So far I have reached two conclusions: an effort should be made to develop a ‘continuous’ theory on the relation between economic and demographic developments, and there should be an attempt to include the intermediary factor ‘mentality’. The third major issue concerns the level of aggregation. Most economic-historic studies deal with countries, provinces, regions and municipalities. This is not the result of a conscious choice, but rather has been dictated by the sources available. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been a growing concern with this level of aggregation.

John Knodel is an expert on this topic, for he wrote a monograph in the EFP with an analysis at the level of German provinces and Bezirke as well as a micro-study within villages. In the end Knodel shared the objections against aggregated studies, pointing at the danger of ‘ecological fallacy’ in the statistical procedures. The addition of individual experiences into larger entities opens the way to spurious correlations. Even when demographic processes are studied in isolation, the aggregated approach is not adequate, as ‘aggregate analysis still provides only the most basic demographic measures for a population’.

Knodel’s preference for studies at the micro-level has been shared by many others. The theorists on proto-industry, for instance, reached the same conclusion. When Kriedte et al. revised their model on proto-industrial production and reproduction, they also suggested leaving out the aggregate analysis. They argued that we need to study the life cycle and family strategies to understand the logic of demographic behaviour in a given economic, social and cultural environment.

At the beginning of the Florence programme already referred to, Stuart Woolf in the same way explicitly stated: ‘We proposed micro-studies, moving outwards from the family and the group, in order to detect what could only be identified at that scale: the changing relations between families and resources, whether economic or institutional. The family was to be studied in its cycle in order to understand its “strategies”’.

This same approach was proposed by David Kertzer. Based on his empirical findings in Central Italy he concluded that family history should focus on individuals or, in his own words: ‘Understanding household processes (including marriage and reproduction, Th.E.) requires longitudinal data which follow individuals and their coresidential experiences over their life course, relating these changing historical circumstances and various of the contextual forces - economic, demographic, social, and cultural - as they relate to the individual’.

The message is clear. Nevertheless, the micro-approach has a high price. In many cases data on individual historical actors simply do not exist. Where they do, they require very labour-intensive research. On top of that, the nature of
analyses and conclusions based on these data is rather complicated. Aggregate level analysis results in rather straightforward conclusions on relations between various structural changes, even though, as pointed out above, these conclusions may be unreliable. In their introduction to a book on fertility decline J. Gillis, L. Tilly and D. Levine formulated the issue as follows: 'When demographers study fertility at aggregated levels (the nations, or even the provinces) they seek causes in large structural changes. When the same events are studied at the village or household level, however, it is not uniformity but diversity, not one cause but many, which emerge [...] the quiet revolution is not one story but many'.44

This description not only applies to the nineteenth-century fertility decline (the quiet revolution), but also to earlier demographic processes. To gain a better insight into these processes, we need to study a variety of interdependencies. Nevertheless, John Knodel was probably right when he stated that a reliable reconstruction of the past is best served by a combination of the macro-approach and the micro-approach.45 The first provides us with the broad outlines of relations, the latter with the necessary refinements.

The level of aggregation is discussed fundamentally in non-western demography. Simmons's ideas, for example, closely resemble those of Knodel when he suggested a so-called 'complete' theory, combining both levels of aggregation. He held that macro-theories improve our knowledge of levels and development of social phenomena for society in general. But what about the variety within this broader context, and the differences between regions and classes? A micro-approach is needed for that.46

Colleagues of Simmons warned against the methodological problem of mixing levels of research. In many macro-theories, explanations are based on the decisions of individuals or households. Empirical research, however, uses aggregated data on a national, provincial or municipal level. Model and sources therefore apply to different levels. Micro-research eliminates this problem. Theory and sources both cover individual actors.47

5. Family and labour 'revisited': synthesis and proposals for future research

In this essay, I have attempted to provide the link between changing labour relations and reproduction in three separate sections, each dealing with a specific methodological or theoretical issue. The next step is to try to formulate a tentative synthesis and some proposals on how to direct future research on this topic.

My point of departure is the acceptance of the rational background of human reproductive behaviour. Now that many studies have demonstrated the manipulation of marriage and fertility, even before industrialization, in order to optimize
living conditions, it is possible to speak confidently of a *continuous* rationality. This means therefore, that the new theoretical framework has to accommodate eighteenth-century peasants as well as contemporary labourers. The amazing resemblance between the work done by both non-western and historical demographers fosters the expectation that this framework will also apply to populations in various stages of development.

What exactly do we mean by ‘rationality’? At first sight it suggests that it is only concerned with *conscious* behaviour. However, as has already been seen from Wrigley’s view on this subject, rational behaviour can be unconscious as well. The rationality behind this behaviour is internalized by individual members of society and aims at the well-being of the population in general. This complicates my interpretation of individual behaviour in the past. It is important to be cautious in attributing motives to people that they themselves were not aware of.

Moreover, rational behaviour is often thought of as *economically* rational. Clearly this is an important point when studying labour relations. In constructing my revised model, however, I kept in mind that behaviour can also be guided by non-economic motives. Take, for instance, religion and traditions. My view is that historical actors who comply with these motives are acting rationally. It is easy to understand this point of view when dealing with late-twentieth-century couples. If they behaved completely economically rationally, no child would be born anymore.

The combination of economically rational behaviour as well as culturally rational behaviour may be logical, but it also poses new complications in theorizing. What is the relative importance of both factors and how can they be made operational? Even if the main object of a study is the relation between labour relations and reproductive behaviour, these questions are still valid, for the exact impact of economic influences can only be measured by clearly discerning them from other relevant variables.

This problem is not new. R.L. Rudolph tried to cope with it when he presented a survey on the European family and economy. The solution he proposed deserves attention: ‘It seems to me that in order to make sense of the variety of phenomena associated with the household as it is affected by and affects economic matters, one should view economic factors not as causal, but as delimiting factors, that is to say elements which act as parameters within which there still remains a large area of play for other variables’. Within the limits set by economic factors, Rudolph pointed to cultural and institutional factors. His model is a system of boxes within boxes. He concluded that causal relations in the behaviour of families can only be determined within the smallest box. (See Figure 1).48
Although Rudolph's heuristic model may be inspiring, it is not convincing enough and offers poor guidance for empirical research. For instance, how is it possible to isolate the economic delimiting factors statistically and then move on to the detection of cultural delimiting factors? How do the causal links within the 'smallest box' relate to these limits? Moreover, there is an implicit order in Rudolph's model: first comes economy, then culture sets its limits and lastly institutions restrict people's free choice. The model offers no convincing argument for this order.

The alternative model that I propose here leaves more room for the cultural and mental variables. Religion, tradition or linguistic homogeneity might be autonomous variables influencing reproductive behaviour. Here, again, a flexible model is needed. Certainly, at first view, economic factors seem to be most important. The coincidence in time of both demographic and economic changes cannot be denied. Marriage restriction was economically rational in peasant societies. Later on, proto-industrialization opened up the way to loosening this restriction. Again, at that time this was economically rational. Fertility decline accompanying full-blown industrialization follows the same rationality.

These secular relations, however, are not perfect. The development is not exactly synchronous, and differences between regions and classes point to other influences. These economic impulses can be positively or negatively mediated. Caldwell was referring to this mechanism when he pointed to the 'morality' behind family relations. This morality can outlive economic rationality. This is often the case when family economy is replaced by production according to the laws of a labour market. It takes some time before demographic behaviour ad-
Lightbourne also saw motives for new behaviour in non-western demography being filtered: ‘The degree to which the social environment encourages or suppresses a given preference is critically important in determining both its strength and whether it is implemented’.50

This is the way I want to look at culture and mentality: they are partly determined by economic circumstances, but can also influence demography autonomously. The difference with Rudolph’s approach is clear. I believe that mentality can be an independent variable, not necessarily within the limits set by economy. At this point I would like to introduce the concepts ‘motivation’ and ‘acceptation’. Proletarianization, for instance, creates a motive to marry younger. Whether this really happens depends on the forces of tradition and the effectivity of social control. Only if new behaviour is socially acceptable, can new motivations generate new behaviour.51

Figure 2 The Alternative model

This alternative model is presented in Figure 2. I begin from the idea that all populations, both past and present, are motivated for a particular pattern of marriage and child rearing by economic circumstances. The translation of this motivation in de facto behaviour depends on mental conditions. In situation A,
reproduction is directly dictated by economy, as culture has no effect. Tradition or religion may, however, have an autonomous influence on the way in which population regulates reproduction (situation B). In that case, the (historical) actors have to find a solution for the possible conflicting directives. Economically rational behaviour can be delayed or altered. If, however, cultural variables lead in the same direction as economic impulses, the economic motives can gain weight. There is also a third possibility (situation C). Here, the influence of culture is fundamental and can completely block economic motivation and autonomously determine reproductive behaviour.

The acceptance of this heuristic model naturally has implications for empirical research. However, hypotheses on the nature of the relation between the organization of labour and reproduction can remain the same. Existing theories and empirical findings still provide background information on economic motivation. The testing of the hypotheses, however, does change. If economic circumstances predict actual behaviour correctly, the hypothesis is simply verified (situation A). It might also be that behaviour does not match economic rationality. This does not necessarily imply hypotheses are falsified. Motivation can be modified or even completely blocked by a (semi-)autonomous acceptation (situation B or C). Research into the interrelation between labour relations and reproductive behaviour therefore also needs a detailed analysis of cultural and mental characteristics of a population.

This method complies with the demand for a flexible model. Economic motivation for different marital and reproductive behaviour can itself be strong or weak. The mentality of the population can then strengthen or weaken this motivation, again on a graduating scale of impact. In this way every territorial unity, each period, and various classes can have their own specific combination of factors determining demographic behaviour. The motivation-acceptation model thus allows an understanding of the paradoxical findings in existing studies.

Finally, the question that still needs to be asked is at what level of aggregation this model should be used. Basically, it might serve to explain societal as well as individual behaviour. The literature presented, however, has tended to show a preference for the level of households and individuals. When studying family economy this would be a rational choice. Decisions on labour participation, marriage and reproduction are taken within families. Empirical studies therefore have to use information on individual families and all relevant variables, economic and cultural. In that way interrelations can be established at the lowest level of aggregation.

I have already mentioned the practical difficulties of doing this. Nevertheless, even if sources do not exist or are insufficient, it is still possible to profit from the insights gained here. The interpretation, for instance, of statistical re-
lations between demographic and other variables can be guided by the micro-perspective. These ecological relations have to be read from the point of view of the husband and wife, or the family in general. Labour participation of women is a good example. Traditionally this variable has been negatively correlated with nuptiality and fertility. The more women work outside the home, the higher their age at marriage and the fewer children they have. This macro-relation has to be translated into the individual choices of women in various situations. Do they work at home or in mechanized production? In what sectors of industry are they employed, and what is the relative wage compared to the earnings of their husbands? The direction of the relation also has to be rethought. Do women work because they are single, or are they single because they work? Again, the answer probably depends on the economic setting and the social background.

The second alternative for micro-research brings us back to Wrigley’s concept of unconscious rationality. If this rationality is accepted, it offers an opportunity for regional studies. Wrigley argued that, before industrialization, demographic behaviour is not the result of individual decisions, but is directed at societal well-being. From this angle use can certainly be made of data at an aggregated level, for this is the ‘decision’ level. Moreover, study of individuals in societies under this regime can only result in puzzling results, for they probably exhibit ‘irrational’ behaviour. This option for an aggregate approach, however, requires an exact definition of the territorial unity to be studied. Existing political boundaries, are unreliable as they are artificial units and do not necessarily correspond to people’s cultural environment.

This can be illustrated by two examples. A study on fertility decline in the Dutch province of Limburg revealed the existence of a regional pattern of behaviour. After examining the differences in economic characteristics of these regions the residual measures for reproduction still exhibited the same regional pattern. It has to be concluded that demographic behaviour is also heavily influenced by specific traditional attitudes in these regions. When analysing fertility decline in two other provinces, Utrecht and Groningen, Hans Hillebrand found significant differences in behaviour between linguistic subregions in these provinces. Both examples comply with the opportunity of studying the relation between productive and reproductive behaviour within a territorial unit that, through unconscious rationality, influences the ‘decisions’ of individuals.

The three traditional models on the relationship between production and reproduction as described in Section 1, provide useful ideas, but have to be adapted to meet the critical remarks made in the past decades. I cannot offer a complete alternative, but do suggest another way of thinking. Economic motivation and mental acceptation should play an important part. The changing relative importance of these influences, both in time and cross-cultural, provides a flexible
model which can be applied to historical processes as well as to contemporary
differences between several parts of the world. The comparative approach of
both fields of research could be very rewarding.

Until now, theories were heavily based on economic motives for changing
reproductive behaviour. The impact of culture or mentality has been less care­
fully studied. Charles Tilly ironical observation that we only know that ‘some­
thing called culture’ is important. Future research should probably focus on
this topic, because the relation economy-demography can only be properly
understood when this mediating factor is also included.

Recent studies have also concluded that micro-level research promises the
best results, although this should be done within the macro-setting. I introduced
‘homogeneous regions’ as an alternative research level.

If these proposals are accepted, new directions are necessary. The aggrega­
tion-level should be changed, alternative or adapted concepts have to be used,
other sources have to be found, and new reserach techniques and opera­
tionalizations have to be developed. This will certainly take time and effort,
but could also lead to new conclusions on one of the vital processes in society:
the relation between production and reproduction.

NOTES

1969) 98.

2. A.V. Chayanov, *Die Lehre von der bäuerlichen Wirtschaft. Versuch einer Theorie
der Familienwirtschaft im Landbau* (Berlin, 1923). Hans Medick provided us
with a list of further publications by Chayanov himself, and an overview of the
way in which other researchers used the concept: Hans Medick ‘The Proto-In­
dustrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of Household and Family
During the Transition from Peasant Society to Industrial Capitalism’, *Social His­

3. An interesting alternative idea on this subject is provided by E.A. Wrigley. This
author made calculations on the amount of families without surviving children
(or without sons) given various mortality schedules. It appears that almost all
surviving children could purchase a farm or workshop of their own. See: E.A.
cially 148.

-reprint from the first edition, 1798) 89.

Eversley (eds.), *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography* (Lon­
don, 1965) 101-146. In 1983 Hajnal wrote what he called himself ‘a sequel’ of
the original article: ‘Two Kinds of Pre-Industrial Household Formation System’,


16. Nancy Birdsall, 'Fertility and Economic Change in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Europe: A Comment', Population and Development Review 9 (1983) 111-123. David Levine reaches the same conclusion in 'Industrialization and the Proletarian Family in England', Past and Present 107 (1985) 168-203. He divides the industrial development of England in two stages. In the proto-industrial period women- and childlabour was possible, so young marriages and unlimited fertility were perfectly logical. When the phenomenon of the male breadwinner in factory labour was introduced, the logic of reproduction was completely changed.


26. Gillis, Tilly and Levine (eds.), *The European Experience.*


36. See footnote 21.


The study of households has been obsessed with the co-residential criterium. No one has denied the variety of household forms, but co-residence as the point of departure for the study of households has been almost self-evidently taken for granted. Anthropologists and historians have visualized households around the cooking pot, fireplace or yard. In the field of European historiography Peter Laslett’s ‘Cambridge Group’ has often been mentioned as the chief exponent of this approach. Its dogged interest in the changing composition of household over time and its desire to reach quantifiable conclusions has provoked a strong emphasis on households as institutions of co-residence.

Still, from the beginning, scholars of household and family have observed, and sometimes stressed the fact that household members may live in widely varying and spatially distant places during their lifetime, without losing their rights and duties as members of the household. The heralded but equally criticized founding father of household studies in Europe, Frédéric Le Play, already paid attention to this phenomenon, and since then, co-residential studies have been accompanied by attempts to establish categories for the study of the organization of households and family networks which allow for spatial separation of their members. These attempts have emphasized the importance of conceptual choices. They have shown, above all, that much of the co-residential bias of household studies has been a direct result of the definition of a household as a co-residential unit.

Only recently has criticism of the co-residential bias of household studies led to more concerted efforts to analyse and conceptualize the problem of spatially divided households. This has, not least, been the result of the dramatically increased international migration in the modern world. It has become clear that this migration has not severed family ties nor put an end to the transference
of goods and labour. On the contrary, migration was often a family strategy which tended to reinforce the economic links between the members of the household. This has led to new approaches of migration as a family affair, which tried to understand the logic of household decisions, the relations between families and other networks and the role of the family on the labour market. As yet, we know very little about the history of the internal organization of migration. To what extent did family networks maintain themselves over time in spite of (or because of) the migration of one or several of their members? How did migration affect the organization of labour within families and in what sense did it alter the 'political economy' of the family? The relations between co-residence, tasks and kinship within households and families are so hazy and fluctuating that they can only be studied by making the concepts and analytical tools used explicit.

In this article I try to see to what extent the existing literature allows us to answer these questions. The main focus is on the question of organization of migration within households and its consequences for the cohesion and internal power relations within families. After a short theoretical excursus, I attempt to develop a conceptual framework to analyse migrant families, mainly on the basis of the literature on Latin America and the Caribbean. Emphasis is placed on the redistribution of resources and income in migrant families. I would like to argue that one of the ways we can hope to understand the logic and viability of migrant households is to focus on the redistributive aspect of household organization. This might be a way of relating the household as a functional, task-oriented, often residential unit to varying forms of spatially separated family networks which are principally based on kinship and may lead to new categories of research, which will combine elements of co-residence with other ones such as kinship, labour organization and the redistribution of income. Although the attention is on the family, an important problem continues to be the macro-causal explanation of migration and the changing role of households. An implicit goal of this article is to investigate to what extent different types of migration can be linked to wider processes of social and economic change. Finally, some possible directions for future historical research are suggested.

1. Trends in migration studies

Labour migration has normally been explained as a factor of macro-economic variables. Social scientists who tried to account for present-day world wide migration have developed sophisticated theories in which 'push' and 'pull' factors were taken as point of departure. In their view, migration was the result of macro-economic factors which pushed people out of marginal areas and towards the 'bright lights' of the cities. They have shown how migration is a
result of the international division of labour and the economic inequality on world scale. Entrepreneurs and governments needed increasing amounts of cheap labour and migration could satisfy that demand. Some scholars pointed to the coercion which formed the corner-stone of much migration. The slave trade may be considered the most extreme example of coerced migration, but the forced migration of more or less unfree labour did not stop with the advent of modern capitalism. Sharon Stichter pointed out that this coercive migration, which was mainly a result of ‘state-engineered rural underdevelopment’, was particularly significant in colonial Africa. However, forced migration and unfree labour relations continued to play an important role in other parts of the world too.³

In these theories migrants are presented as passive puppets moved on the strings of the (world) economy. Although they rightly emphasise the influence of macro-economic determinants and the role of entrepreneurs and the state, these theories are often too simple and mechanistic. They ignore the local dynamics which form the basis of migration and cannot explain regional variations in migration patterns. In addition they tend to give a quite caricatural picture of the motivation and world view of the migrants.

Emphasis therefore shifted to the migrants themselves. Many authors stressed the progressive attitudes of migrants who ‘decided’ to break with traditionalism and who would eventually bring technological innovations and modernity to their home communities. Gradually, more attention was given to the logic of the migration decision of individuals and households. Migration was seen as the cumulative result of individual decisions based on a rational evaluation of the benefits to be gained and the costs entailed in moving. Others rejected the focus on individual decision-making and tried to account for migration on the level of the household. They conceptualized migration as the result of survival strategies by which the household actively strived to a fit between its consumption necessities, the labour power at its disposal, and the various opportunities for generating monetary and non-monetary income. There now appears to be a more or less general acceptation that migration should most appropriately be considered as the result of rational behaviour of people who, within the context of the household, reacted to changing opportunities and constraints presented by the social, economic and political environment.⁴

One of the results of this approach has been the end of a long-held view in which migration was principally considered an affair of the ‘poor huddled masses’ who, as a result of industrialization and proletarianization, were pushed out of their traditional agricultural environment through sheer poverty and destitution. On the one hand, it was demonstrated that most migrants were part of extensive migratory flows that were often a continuation of long-existing patterns of pre-modern human mobility.⁵ On the other hand, it has become clear that an important part of nineteenth- and twentieth-century labour migration
did not originate in the poorest regions and was not made up of the poorest classes, but came from the social strata which were slightly better-off and which used migration in conscious strategies of social improvement.\textsuperscript{6}

In spite of the sophistication of contemporary migration research, scholars are still puzzled by two important problems. First, migration research has been unable to account for migration over time. The diachronic analysis of migration that has been done has always been based on specific regions and their history. We still lack sophisticated models that link processes of social and historic change to types of migration and that avoid unilinear interpretations of migration as being the exclusive result of industrialization. Perhaps the most ambitious attempt in this direction has been that done by Immanuel Wallerstein and his research group.\textsuperscript{7} They tried to link forms of household composition and (migrant) labour to changes in the world economy and state policies. This allowed them to connect various forms of labour organization in the household to processes of world historical change. However, they were unable to account for the historical diversity on local and regional levels.

The strong local variation and the unequal results that migration has had for communities is thus the second unsolved problem of migration studies. Regions and villages which, at first sight, appear very similar, show quite different patterns of household change and migration.\textsuperscript{8} This variation can only be understood at the local level and by incorporating such ‘external’ factors as patterns of land tenure, level of economic development, social stratification, access to transportation and distance from other employment sources, the level of literacy and the local taxation system. But it is also necessary to include in historical analysis factors that are internal to the household, such as kinship, household composition, and rates of fertility. All these factors significantly affect the course, social characteristics, directions, goals, and intensity of migration.

As well as these two points, it is also interesting to note that in spite of the multitude of migration studies, there is still no sufficient answer to the question as to when spatial movement is called migration. Migration entails moving from one place to another for a relatively long time and implies a more or less long-term break with the area of origin.\textsuperscript{9} In an article stressing the mobility of early-modern Scottish rural society, Ian Whyte observed that around three-quarters of the migrants travelled less than ten kilometres.\textsuperscript{10} We might reasonably ask ourselves whether this very short-distance migration should be analysed as the same kind of process as, for instance, twentieth-century international migration. This query warns us for the undefined and often subjective character of the migration category. It is not unimportant to note that the decision about what to consider migration has often been taken by outsiders. Charles Tilly pointed to the political side of this labeling. He wrote: ‘From the continuous locomotion of human beings, to pick out some moves as more definitive than others re-
flects the concern of bureaucrats to attach people to domiciles where they can be registered, enumerated, taxed, drafted and watched.  

2. Households and migration: a short theoretical excursus

The consequences of migration for the internal organization of family networks have been analysed in widely different ways. The traditional approach was that the advent of modernization and industrial labour relations dealt the family a definitive blow. Proletarization and migration were supposed to have inevitably disruptive effects on the cohesion of families that lead to anomie, or at least to the falling apart of families into isolated nuclear households. This 'social breakdown' and disruption of traditional family patterns, especially the transition of the extended, three-generational family to the nuclear family household, was treated as the direct result of industrialization. The disintegration of the family and the destruction of traditional culture was supposed to prepare migrants and labourers for their insertion into the industrial, urban world. It is interesting to note that this approach can be seen in the work of both modernization and Marxist-inspired analysts and that it was applied equally to late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century western societies as to present-day developing nations.

This approach of the effects of modernization and migration on the family has been heavily criticized over the last two decades. This criticism has come from two sides. First, many authors have opposed the romantic and idealized idea of the extended or three-generational family in pre-industrial societies. They have stressed the fact that the 'traditional' family existed in many different forms and that it was in no way necessarily extended. Laslett and others first asserted that the nuclear family had been the predominant form of family organization in pre-industrial Europe. In the ensuing discussion historians identified a variety of family forms in European history.

The second point of criticism has come from authors who, in their empirical research, have not found the supposed breakdown of family cohesion under the onslaught of modernization. Migration often confirmed family relations. Many instances have been documented of family links maintaining themselves inside industrial enterprises. This continuity of kinship ties in migration and adaptation to industrial conditions can be explained in two different, but not necessarily conflicting ways. On the one hand, in many industrial sectors it was not unusual to recruit entire family groups as work units. Companies used the existing organization and loyalties of family networks to secure a stable labour force and to organize and facilitate labour recruitment and control. Family members already employed guaranteed a continuous supply of new labourers. The 'gatekeepers', as Laité called these employees, not only recruited new labourers, but also controlled their behaviour and productivity inside the fac-
Dennis Nodín Valdés showed how the ‘search for the ideal field labour’ by the agrarian enterprises in the Upper Midwest of the United States led to a conscious policy of using family labour (first Belgian, then East European, finally Mexican). It diminished the labour costs and, in addition, made the supervision of the labour process primarily the responsibility of parents rather than of corporation overseers. This example also makes it clear that, on the other hand, families used their kinship relations to secure their position on the labour market and to organize migration. Just as peasant producers and artisans, industrial labourers and migrants took advantage of their family networks to consolidate or improve their situation. It has therefore been argued that, far from destroying family links and kinship networks, industrialization and migration reinforced them.

This line of thinking has led to a discussion about the nature of the changes in household composition and their relation with broader social and economic changes. In Europe, especially, this has resulted in fierce discussions among historians, which, until now have not led to conclusive results. The understanding of the continuing importance of family, and kinship bonds in general, in modern, industrialized society has led to several new questions and directions of research. On the one hand, it has provoked a discussion about the political and economic context of kinship in the modern world. The question has been raised as to what extent the durability of family networks should be considered to be the result of the conscious manipulation by capitalist entrepreneurs, as for instance Meillassoux wanted us to believe. And, on the other hand, what opportunities have there been for family networks to ‘play within the structures’ to use Ewa Morawska’s apt term. In other words, were families successful at using their (kinship) networks in order to improve their social and economic position? It has also stimulated research into the ‘political economy’ of family networks. Under influence of, above all, feminist scholarship, it has become widely recognized that family networks contain many social and economic differences which lead to varying influences on decision-making between the sexes, generations or producers. It has become all too clear that families were not the egalitarian institutions often suggested by powerful family members and academic scholars alike. Not all members profited equally from family decisions. What remains to be properly researched is the exact foundation of these differences in power and authority.

When these ideas are applied to the problem of migration, a number of questions stand out. First of all, an analysis should be made of which members of the family migrate and how this selection fits into a family strategy. A focus on family strategies may help explain the nature and duration of migration. Secondly, it is essential to look into the mechanisms of redistribution within migration families and to ask what they tell us about the internal organization of the family network.
3. Migration as a family affair

The social acceptance of seasonal movements and the incorporation into (village) custom of particular paths of migration as viable and of proven efficiency, as well as the establishment of social networks linking prospective migrants with target areas outside the homeland already known to those who have gone before are key elements in explaining patterns of migration. This means that the motivation and organization of migration and its effects on the household and other social networks should be central to any analysis of migration. I would argue that for a social history of migration, definitions are needed that take the position and perception of the migrant as the point of departure. This makes migration a relative category. It is not what it is but what it means that makes the difference. In such a view, distinct forms of migration are classified according to the consequences they have for the migrants and their family and to how they are perceived.

From that point of view, labour migration could be tentatively defined as the moving away of one or more members of a family to another place for economic reasons, thereby making the daily sharing of food and income and regular personal contact between the migrant(s) and the rest of the family no longer possible. This can mean the moving of an entire household, but just as often it can mean that a single migrant is leaving to participate in a new household for his daily needs. The essential changes a household undergoes when one of its members migrates are the following. Firstly, there is no daily sharing of food and other consumer goods with the migrant. The consumption needs of the migrant are largely satisfied outside the household of origin and may take place in a second household which may or may not be based on kinship. Secondly, there is no daily sharing of household tasks, but the migrant is normally expected to use his special position for the benefit of the family. This may lead to specific (new) obligations for the migrant. Thirdly, the gains of the migrant’s work no longer accrue to the household on a regular basis (daily, weekly, monthly) but in a much more irregular manner, often depending on sudden opportunities for remitting money or goods. In addition, these remittances cannot be controlled by other members of the family.

It is not superfluous to add that these points derive their meaning from the fact that all members share a common ideology of belonging to the family. Migrants, as well as those who stay behind, perceive themselves as belonging to the same economic and emotional entity, based on the sharing of immaterial and material gains. They may fight - consciously or unconsciously - against the hierarchy of the household or want to escape it, they may have a different perception of what the household is or should be, but essentially the perception of the members of households or family networks determines whether someone belongs to it or not. This subjective definition of households is central to the...
interpretation of the consequences of migration. People belong to households when they are considered to be so by themselves and the other members of the household. In the contemporary English-speaking Caribbean where more than half of the families must be considered migrant families, migrants are regarded as members of the household for an indefinite period of time. The point at which they cease to be seen as household members is based on qualitative changes in the relationship with the household, rather than on any specific time limit.²²

Many observers have tended to analyse the organization of migration and its influence on the family as a relatively uniform process. Migration withdraws members from the household, thereby diminishing both the labour capacity and the consumption needs of this migrated person. The only distinctions that are made refer to the nature of migration, as is, for instance, Clark’s contrast between ‘subsistence’ and ‘betterment’ migration, or the distance and duration of the migration: seasonal, circular, chain, international.²³ However, we should be careful with the assumed clarity of these categories. The background and consequences of migration closely depend on who migrates and in what context. Apart from the duration of the migration, it makes an important difference if (one of) the parents migrates, or one or more of their unmarried children. It is just as important to take the social context of migration into account and to distinguish between individual and collective migration. In his study of Lancashire, Michael Anderson stressed that in any analysis of migration two matters need to be borne in mind: the period of the life cycle at which migration occurs, and whether it takes place individually, in the context of a nuclear family, or as part of a wider kinship group.²⁴ In the rest of this section I will try to show the importance of these points.

From the household perspective, migration by one or more members of the family may serve several purposes. The first may just be the extra income or the decrease in the household’s consumption needs. But secondly, migration may also be part of a strategy to diversify the household’s sources of income. Many authors have stressed that income diversification is a strategy that households pursue in order to minimize risk.²⁵ In the third place, migration may be a conscious strategy to facilitate education and upward mobility for (one of) the children. It is interesting to note that both poor and better-off social strata resort to this strategy. In general, it can be said that members of the household are ‘sent away’ when their labour is (or at least is considered) less remunerative in the household than outside it. Kate Young observed such a situation in the Mexican province of Oaxaca in the 1950s. The importation of all kinds of manufactured products, which before had been produced by women ‘freed’ young girls for migration. While the labour of sons was too important to withdraw from agriculture, parents increasingly sent their daughters to Mexico city.²⁶ This is not to say that the parental decision to send off one of their children was only functional. Many parents saw their children’s lives as directly connected
to their own, and tried to further their children’s welfare or upward mobility even if rewards did not accrue to them.

Although family members may migrate at any stage of their life, and although dividing lines are hazy, a clear distinction can be made between the migration of children, that of single adolescents and that of one or both parents. Each of these cases has a different rationale and may give interesting information about the organization and internal decision-making structure of a particular household. Migration of children is almost always decided on by the parents and in all but a very few cases it was the exclusive result of a family strategy. Normally this migration has economic reasons. In agrarian and proletarian families the early teens are generally considered the age when children had to contribute seriously to the family economy. In peasant societies this normally means assisting in agricultural, artisanal or domestic tasks. When agriculture becomes less important or the family needs extra cash income, this custom is adapted to wage-labour and can lead to sending children away. This can become an economic necessity and a cultural element. Anderson called the sending off of children part of a long English tradition. But more importantly, it must be considered part of the survival strategies of poor households, decided upon by the parents. This is also true in the case of present-day poor families in the developing world. In this way children become producers who complement the family income and simultaneously relieve the family of their consumption needs. Which one of these two motives for sending off children prevails depends on the economic situation of the family. I would suggest that where children work but continue to live with their parents, the additional income is the most important. In the case of migration, and thus the transference of the child from one household to another, the second is the more usual. This latter situation is clearly the motive for the migration of young girls for domestic service in the cities, such as that described by Chaney and Bunster in their study on Lima, Peru. Here young girls were given in trust to more affluent families on the understanding that they would be fed, clothed and sent to school in exchange for domestic service.

The case of migrating adolescents is more ambiguous. It could be argued that this age category is, in itself, culture-specific, and that in various societies, this stage of the life-cycle is interpreted differently or is not recognized at all. However, in many societies this intermediate stage between childhood and the establishment of a new independent household is perceived as a distinct moment in the life-cycle of individuals and households. During adolescence the potential tension between the generations comes to the fore and the struggle for authority within the household is most evident. In the case of migration of adolescent members of the family, migration may be part of the household strategy devised by the parents, or a way of escaping parental tutelage by migrating youngsters. Of course, it may be both at the same time.
The use of migration by adolescents to escape parental control is especially visible in societies where the patriarchal authority of the father (or the male head of the clan) is extremely oppressive. As long as they stay within the family and in the neighbourhood of their father, adolescents have few ways of escaping this authority. Migration offers the freedom that many youngsters long for. Old men in the Dominican Republic, when asked what their motives for migrating were when they were young, mentioned ‘adventure’ and the freedom of parental tutelage as the most important. This element is so important that in many societies in the world, migration has become some kind of ‘rite de passage’, especially for young males. To them, labour migration is an essential element in becoming an adult. It is also often an economic necessity because it is the only way of acquiring enough money or goods for a bride price. For women, migration may also open new avenues for emancipation. Although they have to work hard and, especially when in domestic service, often find substituted one form of patriarchal control for another, migration means new opportunities and often greater equality within the household they live in. Interviews with migrants in the US showed considerable differences in perception of the migration experience of women and men. While most men expressed a romantic longing for the home country, women were much more subdued, and often showed great reluctance to return to a situation of greater patriarchal control. Thus, for adolescents and women, migration often means a break with the patriarchal family and the first step towards greater freedom and sometimes the establishment of a new, separate household.

The last group of migrants consists of one or both married partners who, alone or with their family, undertook migration. When this meant seasonal migration of one of the partners (usually the man), its consequences were quite insignificant and largely similar to those of wage labour in general. When the migration lasted longer, the organization of the family could undergo considerable changes. The remaining members of the family had to continue the tasks of the household, but at the same time became to a greater or a lesser extent dependent on additional income sent by the father. The regularity and the value of these remittances determined the latter’s continuing authority. When both parents migrated, this could mean two things in practice. Either the whole family practiced a form of circular migration, returning to their place of origin each season, or the family migrated away definitively. This latter situation occurred in frontier areas where land was colonised by peasant families which often came from far away. It is interesting to note that such possibilities of frontier migration often resulted in larger families.

The migration of entire families sometimes also happened in international migration. This happened around the turn of the century, when entire European families migrated to the Americas and other parts of the world. It can also be observed in contemporary labour migration, especially those from the so-called
Third World to the industrialized countries in the world. The way this migration took place depended greatly on the historical period and the attitudes of the host governments. Only where migrants were readily accepted, was family migration a practical possibility. In other cases, it could only take place by way of gradually uniting of the family. In analysing these processes of migration we should not forget Yans-McLaughlin’s warning that 25 to 60 percent of the immigrants in the United States eventually returned to their homeland.\(^{34}\) Migration was not a one-way process, and the analysis of return migration should be an integrated part of migration studies.

These examples show that the position of migrants in the family network or household and the moment of migration in their life-cycle make important differences, both for the motives, nature and eventual consequences of the migration experience. In all these cases we should be aware of the additional differences between age and gender groups. It made a lot of difference whether a boy or a girl migrated, or a woman or her husband. Nevertheless, it is difficult to generalize about these distinctions because they are deeply embedded in culture.

The potential conflicts between the generations and the sexes demonstrate the pitfalls of explaining complex social processes such as migration. Social, economic and personal motives interact in ways that defy simple analytical models. This is especially true when we try to include historical analysis and the development of the world economy in our analysis. The logic of migration was changing over time as a result of the interaction of the family and different processes of social, economic and political change. Intra-family processes, such as the escape from parental tutelage by youngsters, can coincide and reinforce processes of change on world or national scale; but they can just as well counteract them. In the same vein, traditions of peasant mobility could support the development of a large mobile labour force in societies which were industrializing, whether this was the case in eighteenth-century England, nineteenth-century Brazil or twentieth-century Zimbabwe. On the other hand this mobility often did not follow the rules of the capitalist labour market. Labourers went back to their families during harvest seasons or religious holidays or they only worked to obtain a certain amount of cash necessary to set up an independent household. Employers therefore devised various ways to obtain more control over their labour force, one of the most popular being the recruitment of migrant labourers from farther away whom they could hence control more easily. In that endeavour employers often tried to take advantage of existing patterns of social control. In that context Jean Koopman Henn’s spoke of a patriarchal mode of production which aligned colonial rulers and native patriarchs in Africa.\(^{35}\) Although her model appears too mechanistic, it is attractive because it links intra-familial mechanisms of control to political attempts to control family labour and more general processes of social and economic change.
4. Migration and the redistribution of income within the household

The pooling and redistribution of income may well be considered the essential element of family and household organization. Charles Wood wrote: '[T]he household can be defined as a group that ensures its maintenance and reproduction by generating and disposing of a collective income fund'. Redistribution within households takes place at different levels. First, there is the daily sharing of food, second the collective buying of durable consumer goods on the market and third the partition of the property of the head of the family. This partition normally takes place on the death of (one of) the parents, but it is generally accepted by anthropologists that dowries and other gifts by parents to their children are essentially advances of this final partition.

Goody, for instance, considered the heritage as only one of the ways in which children of either sex share in the parental wealth. This is important because it shows that there is a continuum between short-term and long-term ways of sharing and of redistribution in families. The same is true for the daily sharing and more formal partition of family property.

However, this characteristic of household organization is not without its problems. The pooling and redistribution of income has often been taken as proof for the harmonious and equal relations within the household. This is why Patricia Pessar rejected the concept. In her view the redistribution of income and produce is a heavily contested aspect which, instead of a sign of harmony, reflects considerable power differences and inequalities within families. In addition, she pointed to evidence from Africa and the Caribbean where many situations exist in which there is no pooling of income whatsoever. Her critique is well-taken. The emphasis on the redistributive aspects of the family must not close our eyes to the potential inequality within families and the fact that the shares given to each member of the family may be quite uneven. Pessar's second point warns us against implicitly assuming a general logic of family organization, which is dangerous, especially in a cross-cultural context. Nevertheless, her critique does not seem to contradict the essence of my contention that the logic and nature of much migration is best shown by focusing on the redistributive character of migrant networks. It may not be insignificant that Pessar's own ideas were based on research of migration from the Dominican Republic to the United States. The organization of migration and the redistribution of income by way of remittances is a clear indication of the continuing cohesion of migrant family networks.

Actually, not much is known about the consequences of migration for the family. We may ask in what way we changes, in this sense of belonging to the household, can be seen among migrants. It will be clear that the engagement of migrants with their place of origin is not an indefinite sentiment and surely not an unchanging one. Many studies underline that only a minority of the interna-
tional migrant population appears to have planned a long or even indefinite stay in the new surroundings. For the majority it is a gradual process by which the reality of life gets the upper hand in ever-changing variations. Some find a native husband or wife, buy a house, do not have the money to return, or return and discover that they have outstayed their welcome. In any case, for better or worse, most migrants adapt to their new circumstances and experience a gradual estrangement from their place of origin.

It appears that children in general continue to take care of their parents, especially when the latter’s standard of living is much lower. This phenomenon of what we may call first-generation solidarity takes different faces according to the nature of the migration. In the case of seasonal or short-distance migration, migrants remain normal members of the household. When the distance between the two worlds is too large to facilitate regular personal contact, it is limited to the exchange of signs of affection and the remittances of money by the migrant. This is basically a reciprocal relation. Parents staying behind send small gifts and ‘traditional’ foodstuff to the migrants, and sometimes, especially in the beginning, some money to support them over the first difficult period. In other cases, the picture is less obvious. There is no doubt that within family networks mutual support is normal and generally expected, but the extent of this reciprocity is less clear. It is especially doubtful how often we can speak of a regular redistribution of income. Outside the intimate family circle (which may be defined differently in each culture), family relations of reciprocity are more a matter of option than a necessity. On the Caribbean island of Dominica people speak of ‘remembering’ or ‘forgetting’ family relations. These are options by which individuals and family networks choose which relations to honour and which to ignore.  

The essential paradox of migration is that the redistributive organization which is essential to family networks and which may be mentioned as the most important single cause for migration, is itself dramatically changed as a consequence of that migration. The act of migration immediately questions the foundation of the redistributive system of the family and invests it with a completely new character. It is when the migrants return to their home that all the emotional tensions built up during the migration experience come to the surface. The returning migrants are simultaneously members and non-members of their household and home communities. On the one hand, they send money and bring back gifts for their kin. Because of this, they can retake their position as member of the household and the community. On the other hand, they are unable to do the tasks that belonged to that position and had neglect their duties. In addition, the long separation often leads to a cultural and psychological estrangement between the returning migrant and his family.

This situation results in an ambiguous position of migrants. They are supposed to be more affluent and successful than the ones who have stayed be-
hind. At the same time they have to show that they are good members of the community and that their loyalty remains with their place of origin. Of course, in the context of the growing economic differentiation as a result of migration and the frustrations felt both by the migrants and those who stay behind, this is an extremely difficult position which, in the long run, is practically unsolvable. Michael Taussig beautifully portrayed the tensions which were the consequence of this situation. Describing the yearly return of Colombian labour migrants during Easter to their villages from the coastal plantations, he gave several examples in which the hidden tensions came to the surface. In one case this even led to a homicide as the result of a row between migrants and villagers about the question of whether the former still belonged to their community and fulfilled their village tasks. These conflicts have also been noticed in other parts of the world. Koester noted that on the island of St. Lucia, migration ‘undermines village and rural community relationships. Communal work groups and reciprocal labour services fade away, remittance receipts magnify real or imagined differences in wealth and arouse jealousy, people do not get along together as well as they did before emigration’. This quotation also stresses the romantization of the pre-migration past, observed by the individuals involved and by academics. As a sideline, it may also be noted that this causes great methodological problems in the study of migrant communities. This was for instance clear in the Baltimore Heritage project which tried to carry out a community study in one of Baltimore’s urban neighbourhoods. The collective memory and perception of the members of the community who stayed behind was so different from those who had migrated, that the researchers had great difficulty in connecting these different historical visions.

In this context, it may be supposed that the solidarity of many migrants with their home community dwindles rapidly. Whether this is also true for the relation with their family is a more difficult question to answer. Firstly, as far as I know, no research has been done in which the number of remittances have been studied in any long-term manner. Secondly, as we have seen, the relationship between migrants and their family is loaded with ideology. Oral history research provides much information about what people consider appropriate, but it is very difficult to obtain information about the reality of income redistribution within migrant families. It is even more difficult to obtain information about its longer term development. Grasmuck and Pessar, in their study of Dominican migrant households mentioned above, showed that close to a quarter of them received more than 234 US dollars per month in a period when the mean monthly wage in the region was 150 US dollars. Most families received less than that but even then remittances furnished a large proportion of their monthly income. A similar situation was observed in other migrant villages.

The problem is that we do not know how these remittances fluctuate according to the life-cycle of the household and the duration of absence of the mi-
grant. Another problem is the impact of the remittances on the family and community staying behind. It is generally accepted that remittances increase social differentiation, although some authors have cast doubt on this conclusion. Even if we accept that remittances are part of the redistributive mechanisms within family networks, it is obvious that they may change its social and economic balance of power. This is partly the result of the new dependency these remittances may create, but also because part of the remittances may be destined for the acquiring of property for the migrant. The houses built or the shops opened by them may help to improve their family's social and economic position, but they remain the property of the migrant and only in a limited way can be considered as signs of redistribution. These acquisitions must be considered the principal material cause for the grudges against migrants. They symbolize the new dividing lines within the community and clearly demonstrate the limits of the redistributive practice and the increased differentiation that could be the result of migration. The varying consequences of migration also explain why the debate on the consequences of migration for economic development in the contemporary Third World has remained so inconclusive. These conceptual problems make it all the more necessary to analyse the redistribution of income and the sending of remittances by migrants to their family members who stay behind, and the changes that take place in these consequences of migration over time.

5. The family as social network

The redistribution of income in migration families demonstrates that we cannot assume that migration inevitably cuts ties of kinship solidarity and that the migrant exchanges one world (often seen as the 'traditional' one) for the other (the 'modern'). One of the most uncontested results of modern migration studies is that migrants continue to participate in social networks which closely link them to their family and community of origin. To account for this phenomenon, which in more recent times has acquired an international character, several authors have tried to find concepts which do justice to the spatial division of networks created by migration. Whiteford called these networks 'spatially extended communities'; Uzzel wrote about a 'social village spread over thousands of miles'. In the same vein Goldring spoke of the 'transnationalization of the social and political space' and Ho of the 'internationalization of kinship'. All these terms try to capture the network character that lies at the base of migration and which structures the history of migration households. This point is developed in this section.

After the image of the destitute and alienated migrant had been replaced by that of a rational, socially integrated migrant, social science research found
increasing evidence in the 1980s of the social rationale of migration, especially for economically motivated labour migration. Anthropologists and historians found extensive evidence that migration was a social act, decided upon and organized within the household and executed within wider kinship and ethnic networks. A study by the US Immigration Commission, conducted in 1908-1909, demonstrated that about 60% of the new immigrants arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe declared that their passage had been arranged for them by immigrants already in the US. An even larger percentage were heading for destinations where they were awaited by relatives or acquaintances from their home towns and villages. Similar evidence shows that more than three-quarters of the migrants to Bombay in the 1980s had relatives or friends awaiting them upon arrival. These contacts were crucial for the migrant’s adaptation. They guaranteed food and lodging and were often instrumental in finding work. Boarding has always been an important phenomenon in migrant communities. New immigrants were lodged by family members or people from the same region of origin. This support was not completely altruistic. In the US, the taking in of boarders (kin or non-kin) was an important source of extra income for immigrant families who had already settled in the country and had sometimes bought a house. The boarding relationship, of course, introduced money into the exchange of goods and services, but nevertheless, close household relations often existed between host and the boarder.

Because of this, several authors tried to catch the household logic of migration by focusing on the network on which it was based. They described and analysed the organization of migration as the result of networks linking different regions (most notably rural and urban) and linking individuals. These networks had several functions, ranging from the securing of transportation to the finding of a job. They could be short-term, geared at satisfying immediate needs, or long-term. Larissa Lomnitz, for example, showed how in Mexican shanty towns kin and non-kin were linked in various reciprocal relationships based on mutual trust (confianza). Kinship played an important role in these networks, but Lomnitz stressed that kinship affiliation was neither necessary nor sufficient for network formation. Migrants also participated in neighbourhood, professional, ethnic or religious organizations. In her research on East-European migrants in the United States, Morawska found that immigrants applied a collective strategy which relied on the sustained fusion of kinship/ethnic and work/occupational roles. Judith Smith wrote in the same context of ‘circles of assistance’. She emphasised especially the mutual-benefit associations, which were often based on a shared ethnic background. They were, in her eyes, a public expression of the reciprocal culture of the immigrant community. Nevertheless, she also noted the underlying tensions present in these associations which, for instance, expressed themselves in attacks against middle-class representatives of one’s own ethnic group, and their diminished importance for the second
generation. Thus, it is important to realize that there were great differences in the stability and strength of networks. Lomnitz considered extended families who practised complete pooling of resources as the most cohesive form of networks, the cohesion becoming smaller in non-kin networks which are more instrumental and where there is less self-evident trust among their members. In another study, Nagengast and Kearney showed how networks based on kinship and ethnicity shaped the labour migration of the Mixtec population from Mexico to the US. A formerly quite dispersed and culturally diverse population created, as it were, ‘stations’ where Mixtec migrants were received and supported. In the long run, migration in this way led to a Mixtec identity which had hardly existed before. These examples show, among other things, that family and kinship relations are very important in explaining the organization of migration, but that they are by no means the only factors. I have already pointed out the social significance of the community of origin. Karin Fog Olwig noticed that the diversification of networks was essential for poor Caribbean women. A respectable and secure life depended on their abilities to build networks of mutual aid and support. Profession and work also offer opportunities for the establishment of networks. Ethnicity is another important factor in migration. Migrants from one region tend to stick together and organize themselves into their own ethnic communities. Often, as was true of the Mixtec case, these ethnic bonds are, for the major part, invented, but that does not hamper the significance and efficiency of ethnic bonds for the organization of migration.

The focus on the network character of migration opens interesting avenues for new research. It allows us to understand the importance of kinship networks for migration. Because it invites research into the relation between kin and non-kin networks, and into the comparative advantage of these different kinds of networks, it implicitly accepts an element of choice for the individual migrant and the household. It thus allows a focus on the collective logic of migration without losing sight of individual decision-making. However, the focus on the network is not without problems. It carries a clear suggestion of collective planning and harmonious interests. The question of who takes the decisions and which interests prevail within the network is often ignored. Whereas in the study of households the emphasis was increasingly placed on the internal divisions within the households, especially between men and women and between the generations, network analysis has generally overlooked the question of power and hierarchy. This question has an internal side as well as an external one. For the first, I have already mentioned that the decision as to who migrates and when, is often taken by the head(s) of the household, who send their young men or women away or go themselves, thus prohibiting the migration of other members of the family. Secondly, migration decisions are influenced by external power relations. Anderson offered evidence
that in many rural areas nineteenth-century England, landlords exercised considerable pressure to influence migration decisions of the rural population. In the African and Latin American context, local chiefs and patrons often did the same. Other important external actors influencing migration are the church and the state. They often put pressure on the families, especially on the patriarchs to follow a certain course of action. Vice versa, patriarchal heads of family networks often try to restrict the migration of female members of the family. Chauncey documented how in nineteenth-century Africa, local chiefs asked the colonial state for help in their attempt to maintain control over their women.63 This last example is particularly illuminating because it shows that network leaders often linked their fate to the interests of external powerholders. This example shows the relevance of Henn Koopman’s emphasis on the political economy of migration. It also explains why both governments and local leaders are often very concerned about the disorderly consequences of migration, and why women and youngsters often welcome migration as a way to freedom and escape of parental tutelage.

Another unsolved problem of network analysis is the changing social and economic context, especially the increasing dominance of the market. Members of a network are supposed to help and support each other because they know (or at least expect) that this assistance is mutual. Even when this is true, which in the light of the internal hierarchy is not always likely, this view does not take into account the fact that in many migrant societies, the market has become an immensely powerful force which has also penetrated within family networks. The foundation of kin-based family networks was the existence of reciprocal relations between family members. These reciprocal relations are not mediated through the market, but in the course of time, and especially with the expansion of capitalism and commodity production as the dominant social and economic force, they were increasingly influenced by the market. Networks can often not avoid the use of market mechanisms, even though they may not have been very favourable. I have already given the US example of immigrants keeping paying boarders. Although they were often kin and that the paying of rent was often perceived both by host and boarder as a normal retribution of received support, there is no doubt that this relation was very business-like and mediated through the forces of the market. In contemporary Mexico, many migrants use shop-owners as intermediaries for the remittance of money to their family. It is common to pay these intermediaries a percentage of the money, even if they are members of the family network.64 At the same time, Lomnitz’s description of the networks among the Mexican poor contains numerous examples of loans and wage labour among network members. The affective relations and shared social and economic interests of the various family members does not preclude the existence of business-like relations between them. It could even be said that these relations are a function of the market conditions. There
is no doubt that, within the network, more favourable conditions exist, but the conditions of the market, as expressed in loans, interest rates, and working conditions determine many of the intra-network relations. Especially when we take the redistribution of resources as the point of departure of our analysis of migration, it is essential to bear in mind the varying influence of the market within family networks.

6. Conclusion

In this article I have tried to show how the family has played a crucial role in the organization of the labour migration which has become increasingly important since the beginning of the nineteenth century. I opted for an analytical model which takes the subjective definition of family networks as its point of departure. I hoped that this will make it possible to explain local variations in the existence and organization of migration. It will necessarily lead to a more anthropological or micro-analysis of migration and the families involved.

An important conclusion of this article is that migration research, more than it has in the past, should focus on the mechanisms of redistribution within family networks and their durability over time. The exchange of goods between members of a family and the remittance of income by the migrants are a clear indication of the organization of migration and the relations within families. Research into the internal redistribution of families has been shown to be difficult, because it touches upon a very private and intimate territory of family relations which is often riddled with conflicts and emotions. However, it is concerned with the most concrete form in which the relations between members of the family are shaped. In addition, it can be expected that these mechanisms can be studied historically, because many transfers and moments of redistribution have been recorded. The most difficult problem will be to find the sources that will enable the study of the long-term development of these aspects of the family organization. As well as oral history, things like housekeeping books, tax records, accountancy reports may also offer information about the sources of income and redistribution within households and families.

Research into the relationship between family networks and migration may provide information about three very important, but still quite underdeveloped areas of family research. The first point is what we may call the internal cohesion of family networks and the extent to which they determine the lives and actions of their members. We may expect that through time and across cultures and regions, the content of family relations and the way they have influenced individual lives will demonstrate significant variations. We need to know more about the liabilities of family membership, about the extent to which individual members have had the freedom to choose which relations they ‘remember’,
and which they ‘forget’. The organization, but above all, the consequences of migration may provide interesting information on for how long migrants feel obliged to send back money to their family, and who in particular they support. The second point concerns the internal hierarchy and the relations of power within the family. Migration tends to disturb existing hierarchies and provokes new structures of control and loyalty. It would be very interesting to investigate these consequences of migration and to use them as indicators of changing power relations within the family. Thirdly, we need to understand the influence of the market on family networks: to discover which relationships between family members are ‘commoditized’, to use Wallerstein’s term, and which may be considered to exist outside and independently of the market. These questions are crucial to an understanding of the social and economic positions of both individuals and families. It is frequently suggested that the family and the wider market economy are two opposed poles, each with its own logic. I would suggest that it is more interesting to investigate the intertwining of the two. Many family relations are already determined or at least influenced by the market. In other instances, family networks possess a quite autonomous position. Historical research should try to explain these differences in their varying relationship.

Finally, research on family migration and the focus on the network character of families raises the question as to what the specific characteristics of family networks are and how they are related to those of other networks. What functions, economic or emotional, do and can individuals expect of the different networks in which they participate? This question may well be the crucial one in the study of both families and changing labour relations on a world scale. The relationship between households, families and other networks is also crucial if we want to understand the ways in which families and individuals are linked to the wider economy. It may provide new insights into the relationship between larger social, political and economic structures and the motives and actions of individuals.

NOTES

3. Sharon Stichter, Migrant Laborers (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge UP, 1985) 24-25. The forced character of Asian contract labour can be found in: Hugh Tinker,


Peasant Economy, Domestic Production and Labour Markets in Pre-Industrial Europe’.


17. Nutini and Murphy, ‘Labor Migration and Family Structure’.


21. This is of course completely different from a more strict definition of migration as the movement of people through geographic space. See: Michael Kearney, ‘From the Invisible Hand to the Visible Feet: Anthropological Studies of Migration and Development’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986) 331-361, especially 331.


27. It may be said that only in situations of extreme poverty or anomie, parents lose so much of their authority that children may take this kind of decisions on their own.


31 W. van Binsbergen and P. Geschiere (eds.), Old Modes of Production and Capitalist Encroachment. Anthropological Explorations in Africa (London: Routledge, 1985). It is interesting to note that African elders tended to increase the bride prices, thereby again controlling and stimulating labour migration.


33 For instance: Catherine LeGrand, Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1830-1936 (Albuquerque: UP of New Mexico, 1986). Also: Alida C. Metcalf, Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil. Santana de Paraíba, 1580-1822 (Berkeley: UP of California, 1992), who points at the contrasting meaning the frontier had for the different social classes.


40 See especially: Grasmuck and Pessar, Between Two Islands.

41 Riva Berleant-Schiller and William M. Maurer, ‘Women’s Place is Every Place: Merging Domains and Women’s Roles in Barbuda and Dominica’, in: Janet H. Momsen (ed.), Women and Change in the Caribbean (Kingston etc.: Ian Randle etc., 1993) 65-79, especially 78, note 4.


54. See: Morawaska, *For Bread with Butter*, 127-129. Also in Smith and Wallerstein, *Creating and Transforming Households*. 


57. Morawska, *For Bread with Butter*, 117-120.


65. See for instance: Metcalf, *Family and Frontier*. 
An essential part of the strategies used by families to secure their position in an ever changing social and economic environment was the mutual assignment of present and future tasks. Family members were given roles connected with domestic labour, education and careers, according to their sex, age and order of birth. These collective decisions could have far-reaching implications for marriage or migration. Family strategies structured the lives of individuals and were therefore reflected in their courses. This article is concerned with the question of whether it is possible to gain a better understanding of family strategies in the past by analyzing and comparing individual life courses. This question leads immediately to many others. Which sources and methods can be used to detect and compare patterns in these life courses? How were these patterns related to collective decisions? Were individual lives differently determined by family interests in different social groups and different historical periods? When and where did the influence of the family become weaker? Were the family strategies primarily concerned with survival, or were there long-term plans for improvement of the family situation? Did the interests of certain family members predominate? Finally, to what extent were family goals defined by rational economic calculations?

Studies which use a life course approach to analyse family strategies are scarce. Until recently, appropriate techniques for systemically studying life courses were lacking. Moreover, quite a few studies suffer from conceptual vagueness. In the next sections, I clarify the notions 'family strategy' and 'life course' in their historiographical contexts, discuss sources and techniques in life course analysis, and review the literature on specific socio-economic groups. How did different resources and needs of farmers, domestic workers and industrial labourers lead to different roles for their children? In trying to answer that question I will concentrate on marriage behaviour, migration and occupational
mobility of the family members. In the final section I look into the importance of institutional and cultural factors in shaping family strategies, and try to assess the rationality and purposefulness of the plans of individuals and their families.

1. Theoretical backgrounds, sources and methods

The notions of strategy and life course

The notion of 'family strategy' is not without its problems. Historians of the family have used the concept to criticize the view that families were only passively reacting to the forces of economic and political change. In their opinion, families were capable of adapting to these changes by redirecting their goals and energies. But the notion of strategy might just stretch this alternative view too far. The word 'strategy' refers to a rational planning of tactical steps in order to reach a long-term goal. However, does this 'militaristic' notion really grasp the idea of family decision-making? For a first assessment of the usefulness of this concept, we need to know: 1. What were families actually aiming at? 2. How rationally did they formulate their goals? 3. How did they reach decisions about these goals and the steps to take? Only after answering these questions can we ask the final one: 4. How can historians perceive family strategies?

Ad 1. In several case studies in which the notion of family strategy has been applied, the goal of the strategy is loosely defined as 'survival'. The authors are referring not so much to physical survival as to the preservation of the family unit and its living standards. In this view, short-term interests dominate. Yet, it is well known that many families were willing to make short-term sacrifices in order to reach an improvement in the long term. For instance, the decision to emigrate might well have been inspired by dreams of a better future for the next generation.

Ad 2. Many studies of family strategies concentrate on the economic rationality of individual and family decisions. For instance, Michael Anderson used an exchange theory to explain the arrangements of mutual assistance of family members. In his view, people helped their siblings or parents because they expected to be repaid in one way or the other in the future. However, economic calculation cannot explain, for instance, the self-sacrifice of young women, who chose to remain unmarried in order to take care of their parents or younger siblings. To understand this kind of behaviour, religious and cultural values have to be taken into account as well.

Ad 3. Students of family strategies often presuppose that families acted in unison and made their decisions collectively. Potential conflicts between family
members are generally overlooked. These conflicts stem from differences in economic power, knowledge and authority between generations, sexes and the rank-orders within families. For instance, it was often expected that young women would postpone marriage and hand over their incomes, so that their brothers could go to school. To understand life course patterns, there must be an awareness of the very different positions individuals could hold within their families.

ad 4. How can historians link individual behavioural patterns to family decisions? Louise Tilly provides a workable definition: ‘[...] family strategies are principles that lie behind predictable, interdependent behaviors in which one outcome is regularly favored over another’.³ To put it simply, the historian’s task is to find patterns which show a deliberate cohesion between various aspects of family life. Later on, I introduce sources and techniques which make this enterprise feasible.

Life course studies are definitively in vogue among practitioners of historical demography. However, there is no consensus about what exactly is meant by ‘the life course’. In some studies the notion of life course appears to be equivalent to the stages in the process of ageing, and to study the life course means to describe the history of youth, adolescence and old age in societies of the past.⁴ Others concentrate on individual life courses: the critical life choices of individual people (to leave home, to get married, to migrate) are charted and analysed against the family backgrounds of these individuals. In this article I focus on the latter approach.

The systematic study of life courses has been inspired by the life history techniques that were developed in the second decade of this century by W.I. Thomas en F. Znaniecki in their studies of the lives of immigrant Polish peasants in the United States.⁵ The famous Chicago-school of sociology often used these techniques, especially in the study of deviant behaviour. In the 1950s and 1960s, when social sciences fell under the spell of functionalism, biographical analysis lost its attraction. From the 1970s onwards, however, dissatisfaction with mainstream sociology’s a-historical study of societal structures on the basis of aggregated data and a renewed interest in historical developments and in the complex interaction between individual lives and social processes led to a revival of the life history approach.⁶ This did not entail a rejection of quantitative analysis. On the contrary, new statistical techniques are now being developed which will enable life patterns of large numbers of people to be analysed. The impact of individual qualities on the one hand and historical circumstances on the other can be simultaneously assessed. These new techniques have put time - individual age as well as chronological time - into the centre of the analysis. Of special importance is event history analysis in which the dependent variable is the length of time that elapses until a certain ‘event’ occurs. An ‘event’
refers mostly to a transition between one stage and the next, such as non-married to married or employed to unemployed. The probability of a transition is calculated, given certain individual and environmental factors.\textsuperscript{7}

These developments within sociology have been paralleled by and interacted with those in family history. The life course is hailed by some family historians as the definite solution to the problems of the study of family life as a process. The life course is seen as an extension of, or even an alternative to, the concept of the \textit{family cycle}. The notion of the family cycle was introduced by L. Berkner, who criticized the static analysis of household composition by Laslett and Wall.\textsuperscript{8} Berkner used the censuses to classify the information on households according to the presence and age of the children. He could thus show that changes in household composition occurred frequently. He related these changes to the developmental cycle of the family: the household was supplemented with servants or relatives, according to the age of the children. Outside the field of household studies, the notion of the family cycle proved useful in the study of poverty. The frequent appeal of families for poor relief could be related to the critical stages in their family cycle. Working-class families were particularly vulnerable when small children kept the mother at home and thus made it difficult for her to supplement the family income with wage labour. Other hard times came when the children left home or when one of the parents died.

However innovative Berkner's use of the census to create a dynamic perspective on household change was, it is now seen as insufficient. Moreover, the notion of the family cycle itself has been subjected to some fundamental objections, which may be summarized in the following four points.

1. The censuses do not reveal the way households were actually transformed. For example, a household containing three generations could have been created when (grand)parents moved in with their children, but also when married children stayed with their parents or even came back. These transformations have an immediate bearing on the interpretation of family relations.
2. The family cycles are related to the age of the children, not to the age of the parents. However, the age at which the parents married and differences in their ages could have had important consequences for the socio-economic position of the family and the timing of transitions from one stage in the family cycle to the next.\textsuperscript{9}
3. To a large extent, the different stages in the family cycle have been derived from modern experience. However, in the past, the demarcations between stages and their sequence were less clear than in twentieth century society.\textsuperscript{10}
4. The analysis ignores the experiences of those who fell outside the 'normal' pattern of a married couple with children: spinsters, childless couples, unmarried mothers and so on.\textsuperscript{11}
By now, many family historians have reached the conclusion that the dynamics of family formation and household change can only be fully appreciated if individuals rather than households are followed throughout the course of their lives. This challenge was first met by Glen Elder and Tamara Hareven, who transformed the concept of the life course into a coherent research strategy. From their studies (1974 and 1982) and those which have appeared since, we are able to gain the following impression of the 'life course approach'. Just as in event history analysis, transitions from one status to the other are of central importance. The main conditions are that the transitions can be dated (for instance, dates of marriage, birth, migration) and that the ages of those observed are known. If these conditions are met, it is possible to analyse the following relations.

- The effect of historical circumstances on the probability of people making a transition from one stage to the other, as well as the age at which they make that transition. An example of such a period-effect is the historical influences (economic crisis, war) on the frequency and timing of marriage.
- The (timing of a) transition in one field can be related to a transition in another field; for example, the coincidence of migration and occupational change or the coincidence of marriage and residence in another household.
- The (timing of an) individual's transitions can be studied for how far they coincide with those of other individuals, especially family members. An example is the relation between the early death of the father and the wage labour of his children.
- The effects of early life course transitions on transitions later in life. For instance, having to work as a child and reduced career chances in middle age.

Life course analysis appears particularly suitable for studying family strategies. Since time itself is the dependent variable, the approach is essentially dynamic. The cohesion in the timing of the transitions of family members for work, fertility and migration, reveals the extent of family coordination. In the words of Modell and Hareven: 'The examination of timing can, at least, provide insight into internal processes of family decision making'. Finally, families are not seen as autonomously acting units. The focus is on the individual - in the framework of the family.

Sources and methods

The life course approach requires systematically collected information on different aspects of the lives of a sufficiently large number of people. An appropriate source, which is also easily accessible, is the population census. This can be used in a variety of ways to reconstruct life courses. For instance, in order to reveal age-specific changes, a comparison can be made of the house-
hold situation of people aged twenty, thirty and forty years. A major disad-
advantage of working with only one census lies in the fact that historical expe-
riences of birth cohorts cannot be taken into account. The household situation
of the thirty-year-old was perhaps determined by historical circumstances just
prior to the census, but it might also have occurred ten years earlier. To a certain
extent, this problem can be met by using different subsequent censuses. The
situation of the thirty-year-old in, say, 1900, can be compared with that of the
twenty-year-old in 1890. The objection that can be raised to this solution is
that in the period between the censuses migration might have changed the com-
position of the cohort. To adjust for this, individuals have to be traced from one
census to the next. However, even this time-consuming enterprise might not be
fully satisfactory because we still lack information on the exact dating of changes
and information on temporary migrations. In fact, only population registers can
furnish all the information required for a complete life course analysis. These
registers use the information from the censuses for a continuous registration of
vital events per individual. Several European countries introduced this system
in the second half of the nineteenth century. In its earlier forms, the registers
arranged the information by address which makes the source especially suit-
able for research on households and families.

Family historians have only just begun to explore the full potentials of the
population registers. An example from the Netherlands is A. Janssens, Family
and Social Change. In this study two samples of households in the industrial
city of Tilburg are followed for forty years (1849-1890 and 1880-1920). The
book focuses on household extensions, which are related simultaneously to the
individual family cycles and to historical changes.14 The population registers
are especially suitable for the application of event history techniques. This is
shown in G. Alter’s Family and the Female Life Course.15 In this book the life
courses of women in the Belgian textile centre of Verviers are charted using the
population registers for 1846-1880. For his reconstruction of life courses, Al-
ter did not have to link the (four) different registers that were begun in this
period. To a certain extent he de-individualized the data on vital events by
transforming them into ‘person-years’. A woman whose life was followed for a
period of twenty years provided twenty ‘person-years’ and a woman whose life
could only be traced for two years (because of death, out-migration or the clo-
sing of a register), provided two ‘person-years’. The person-years were used
for duration analysis. For instance, the average time unmarried women spent
with their parents could be calculated. The next step was to count the number
of vital events (e.g. marriages or births) per observed person-year. In this way,
age-specific chances of transitions, such as the chances of an unmarried women
of twenty-five marrying within the next five years, could be calculated. Such
chances are called ‘hazard rates’. The hazard rates of cohorts are influenced by
numerous individual and social aspects and historical influences. The effect of
various variables on the hazard rates can be specified in ‘hazard models’ that apply multiple regression analysis.

The tracing of individuals in censuses and population registers is extremely time-consuming. Therefore, life course research is mostly limited to the individuals of one or, at most, two generations. Certain authors, however, have chosen a different approach, constructing complete genealogies of a (necessarily) small number of families. These genealogies enable the researcher to analyse patterns in several generations, to compare life courses of siblings and to gauge the impact of the wider kinship network. Moreover, this kind of research is feasible for the period before the introduction of censuses and population registers. An example is P. Greven’s investigation into patterns of property transmission among four generations of farmers in colonial America. Maurizio Gribaudi’s work on social and spatial mobility in Turin (Italy) is also very interesting. He concentrated on workers who migrated from the countryside to the booming industrial city of Turin in the second half of the nineteenth century. The life courses of his sample population cover four to five generations.

Research strategies are often determined by the, naturally, restricted amount of material an individual researcher is able to compile. The range of research opportunities is widened enormously if existing historical databases can be used. I discuss some of the most important of these large, computerized databases. An example of a dataset on a local population is the Casalecchio-project in which information from, among others, population registers, tax books and military registers was assembled into exhaustive files of individuals. Information on the entire population (about 19,000 people) of the rural Italian community of Casalecchio (1865-1921) was entered into the database. Information was also stored on 14,000 people outside the community, who had an important relation with the inhabitants (e.g. parents of immigrants). In France, Sweden and Canada huge databases exist which have similarly stored information on the entire population of certain geographical areas. Finally, I should mention the French and Dutch databases that consist of a sample taken from the national population. Their major asset is that these projects have managed to avoid loss of information through migration. In France, genealogies have been constructed of 3000 families whose surnames began with the letters TRA. To find out the whereabouts of these people, the first task was to collect all references to people with the surnames beginning with Tra in the decennial tables on the civil registers (1802-1902) for the entire country. In the Dutch database (Historical Sample of the Netherlands) a sample was taken from the birth registers for 1812-1922. All information on people in the sample that was found in vital registers and population registers is stored in the computer. In the future, the database will consist of about 70,000 people whose family backgrounds, occupations, civil status and geographical moves are known. The data will also be supplemented with information from military and tax registers.
These sources and techniques enable the researcher to reconstruct life courses of individuals and to relate them to the life courses of parents and siblings. In this way patterns that are indicative of collective decisions can be uncovered. Nevertheless, qualitative sources will have to be used if we want to understand the guiding values behind the choices made by individuals and families. For this reason, several life course studies have made extensive use of such things as oral history methods and government reports. For the middle and upper classes especially, qualitative material (wills, diaries and autobiographies) is abundantly present and provides insights into power relations and decision-making within families.22

A variety of sources and methods exist with which the interaction between family strategies and individual life courses can be studied. Yet, the literature on this subject is scant and highly dispersed. In the following sections I make a provisional survey of the most important results and hypotheses.

2. Strategies in their social context

It is quite evident that economic resources shaped the plans of parents for their offspring, as well as their chances of realizing them. Access to land or money opened up perspectives for long-term strategies which aimed at securing or even improving the social position of the children. In this section I elaborate this point by looking at long-term strategies and children’s life courses among farmers and industrial workers in both the Old World and the New. I also discuss an ‘intermediary’ group, the proto-industrial domestic workers.

Farmers

Family strategies of farmers in ‘open’ areas, where land was still easily available, were quite distinct from those of farmers in ‘closed’ areas. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Canadian frontiers still had a lot of space for settlers. Here, the farmers could realize their ideal of setting up each son in his own farm. For this reason, they frequently moved on to new areas where they reclaimed virgin woodland, one of the sons remaining on the farm they left behind. In his study of the Saguenay region (Quebec), Bouchard called this system the ‘reallocation model’. Among these farmers, large families were common. The reclamation demanded lots of workers and at the same time the numerous children were a strong impetus for constant pioneering.23 Small families tended to migrate less frequently to the frontiers. These families which ‘stayed behind’ in the older areas of settlement could not offer their children
social positions similar to those of the pioneers. Whereas the eldest children could sometimes reach a relatively favourable social position, the youngest often faced downward mobility. Children from large pioneering families had much brighter opportunities for upward mobility.24

In Europe, scarcity of arable land was common. Even though farmers tried to arrange as good a social position for their children as possible, their highest priority was the preservation of the integrity of the family heritage. In the multitude of regional traditions concerning inheritance it is possible to distinguish between ‘patricentric’ and ‘filiocentric’ principles. In the patricentric tradition the transfer of the family property did not take place until after the father died, whereas in the filiocentric tradition, the elder generation stepped back when the eldest son married. Arrangements for the future care of the parents were often made. The former tradition was found in the mountainous areas of southern Europe.25 In general, the system led to late first marriages, a high frequency of permanent celibacy, large numbers of illegitimate children and a high incidence of extended or multiple households. For instance, in Catalonia, the designated successor (hereu) of a prosperous farmer was appointed heir at the time of his wedding. This ceremonial transfer was to compensate him for the years of submission that awaited him until the death of his father. It is remarkable that his brothers and sisters married at younger ages. Probably their parents arranged their marriages first, before concentrating on the crucial marriage of the hereu. Youngers sons were often endowed with money, in order to start their own enterprise. Many of these younger sons became priests, which was traditionally considered a worthy alternative. Daughters were given a dowry with which they could secure a good marriage. Daughters of small farmers often ended up in a convent, which was less respected in the area than a clerical career for men.26 Many people remained unmarried (20-35%) and even stayed in their parental homes. The benefits of this were mutual. Bachelors and spinsters had a traditional right to be cared for in their parental homes. At the same time, women lent a hand in the households of their parents or married siblings, who did not have to provide a dowry. Men worked on the farm, but if needed they could procure an independent income outside the household.27

Notwithstanding the fact that in most countries partible inheritance was prescribed by law, more often than not farms were handed over integrally to the eldest sons. Often, parents could not prevent the other children from ‘skidding’ into the ranks of domestic workers and day-labourers, as for instance in Westfalia (Germany) in the nineteenth century.28 Their social position could not be maintained through a ‘marriage strategy’. On the contrary, downwardly mobile men rarely found partners from their ‘old’ social class.29 Non-inheriting children often migrated. In Catalonia they appear to have remained in the area and participated in the larger kinship network.30 In areas with a strongly commercial agriculture, however, farmers often possessed the financial means to put their chil-
dren in a favourable social position. For farmers in the Dutch province of Hol­
lrand, endogamous marriages were crucial in their strategy of acquiring as many
assets as possible, because when daughters married, they were given an ad­
vance on their inheritance. These farmers divided their property into real estate
and liquid assets. By this means they could lend their sons money to rent a
farm. In the end, it did not matter who eventually took over the parental farm.31

The situation of tenants differed in many respect from that of freeholders.
Their opportunities for long-term strategies were determined by the nature of
the tenancy. Was the farm held on long lease or was the contract to be renewed
on a yearly basis? Was it an individual contract or was it tied to a specific farm?
The situation of (Italian) tenants was studied extensively in the Casalecchio­
project. These farmers could only lease their farms on a yearly basis, which
gave them a strong incentive to maximize their household production. They
therefore attracted as many relatives and young servants into their households
as possible. For the same 'strategic' reason, their fertility remained high, even
when it dropped considerably in other social groups.32 A proportionately large
number of living-in relatives remained single. Many younger sons were not so
eager to get married, because their elder brothers had already provided for off­
spring and they were well taken care of within the extended household.33

Domestic workers

Family strategies among proto-industrial workers have been thoroughly stud­
ied. The classical view is that the slowly decreasing income from domestic
work and the cutting up of the farmland into small plots led to a strong self­
exploitation of the families. Upward mobility was far beyond the reach of these
workers. The domestic weavers of Cambrai (northern France) fit into this pic­
ture. Louise Tilly described how young children worked entire days at home or
in the fields and could therefore not attend school. In summer, the weaving
families could earn more in agriculture and therefore remained on commercial
farms in Normandy during the harvesting season. Notwithstanding their contri­
bution to the family income, children left home at an early age, either to enter
service somewhere, or to marry and start weaving themselves. Because the
number of handlooms per family was limited, older (and more expensive) chil­
dren were urged to leave the parental household.34 In the nineteenth century,
canvas weaving in Krommenie (the Netherlands) dwindled, leading to a dimin­
ished number of looms per household. This reduced the opportunities for mar­
rried women to work at home. The families reacted to this development by spread­
ing the activities of children to factory employment. In the second half of the
century, families relied more heavily than before on their incomes.35 In the tex­
tile city of Tilburg, Janssens discerned a similar development among the do­
mestic weavers. In the late nineteenth century, diminishing employment and dropping wages forced young people out of domestic weaving. Jean Quataert, who studied weavers in the Oberlausitz region (Saxony), stressed the flexibility of domestic workers in the face of reduced income from home industry. The weavers spread their risks by holding on to their plots of land and by seasonal labour in agriculture and textile factories in the cities. Families were relieved by the temporary migrations of youngsters, and on their return, their saved wages were pooled. Migration did not by any means lead to the dispersal of families, which were also remarkably flexible in their gender-specific division of tasks. For instance, during the winter season women could work in the factories while the men stayed at home to care for the children.

*Urban factory workers*

In her study *Family Time and Industrial Time* on the industrial workers in the Amoskeag textile mill in Manchester (New Hampshire), Tamara Hareven impressively demonstrated the many-sided interactions between the family strategies, the individual life courses and the company culture. Many of these textile workers were former cottagers from Quebec. The presence of kin was of paramount importance in the decision to migrate to Manchester. These relatives not only provided housing, but they also tried to arrange favourable workplaces within the factory. They used their influence with the factory foremen to obtain positions for their relatives in specific departments, where they could guide and train them themselves. To avoid mutual competition, relatives sometimes made agreements on production quota among themselves.

The decision to migrate was evidently a family decision. Because many workers intended to return eventually to Quebec, a number of relatives had to stay behind to maintain the family farm. Children were sent either to Quebec or to Manchester, without their having any say in the matter. Family strategy extended to other aspects of life as well. In many families one daughter, mostly an older or middle child, was designated to maintain contacts with all family members. In many cases, these *kin keepers* remained unmarried in order to fulfil their central task. Working children handed almost all their wages over to their parents, married women worked in the household and, on a part-time basis, also in the factory. Only at the point where more than three children were at work, could the wife forgo wage work. Many women provided for extra income by keeping boarders or lodgers. This was a common strategy among American workers, but the income gained in this way was rarely sufficient to enable the wife to remain at home.

The family strategies of textile workers seldom brought about their children’s upward mobility into the middle class. Within the factory, only a modest ascent
from unskilled to semi-skilled and from semi-skilled to skilled labour was possible. In many cases relatives proved important intermediaries in the achievement of better positions.40

Hareven's findings have, to a large extent, been corroborated by studies of nineteenth-century European textile cities. The books by Alter on Verviers, Janssens on Tilburg and Tilly on Roubaix stressed the pivotal role of the family interest in all decisions of the individual textile workers. Income pooling was ubiquitous. It was in the interest of income maximization and their future care that parents wanted to have a large number of children. They put pressure on at least one of them to stay single and to remain at home. Alter showed how, in Verviers, the presence of elder brothers improved the marital chances of sisters, because of the greater labour reserve in the household. Their opportunities for marrying increased further after one or both parents died. Alter concluded that '[...] adult daughters acted as if their parents had first claims on their labor and their actions were subject to parent approval'.41 Whereas in the interpretations by Alter and Janssens, the self-sacrifice of unmarried, living-in daughters stands out, Tilly emphasized the mutual advantages of working children staying at home. Their wages were often insufficient to sustain independence. Moreover, it was very difficult to find a room, let alone a house for themselves. Their mothers prepared their meals and washed their clothes. Finally, the family helped them to find work. Tilly stated: 'These family-linked services could only be enjoyed by co-resident children'.42

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the demand for female and child labour decreased because of technological changes in the textile industry. Also, child labour was directly restricted by law and indirectly by the introduction of compulsory education. Even more important is the fact that, because of the rise in real wages, the families themselves were less dependent on the incomes of women and children. In the textile industry, however, wage levels remained relatively low, which might explain why female and child labour continued to be of importance in this sector well into the twentieth century.43 With the additional income of children gone, the costs of education and housing soon made a large family into a burden. It is generally assumed that the loss of the economic advantage of children led to the decline of fertility among urban workers.44

These changes were accompanied by a redirection of family strategies. No longer was the survival of at least the parents the target. To a much larger extent than in the past, families strove to secure the well-being and future prospects of the children.45 And, what is perhaps even more important, these children could pursue their own objectives, which were no longer dictated by family interests. This development is visible in the changes in Dutch households which were analysed by Janssens. Around 1900, children left home at an earlier age than before, but they returned more frequently for short stays. They
returned more often because the growing interregionality of labour markets required greater mobility. They did not come back to provide for their parents, but because they needed the parental home as a temporal refuge and a ‘stepping stone’ in their efforts to find stable jobs and housings. 46

Working-class children’s individual chances of success for a long time remained determined by the family background. Demographic events could frustrate career chances. For instance, the early death of one of the parents often meant that older children had to forgo education and find a job. Too many young children could also impede schooling and social ascent. 47 Working-class families could not offer their members material assets to facilitate social climbing, but they did provide people with certain occupational qualifications and experiences, and especially with connections with neighbours and relatives. 48 Gribaudi related individual social mobility in Turin to the social positions of extended family. He found that children were more often socially mobile if the father had a more inferior position than his brothers or cousins. He concluded that higher placed relatives promoted career chances, partly because of their connections, but also because they acted as symbols of identification. 49 Social ascent of working-class children occurred mainly through evening classes connected with the company, and mostly at the cost of having to postpone marriage. For some, this even meant remaining single. 50 Some families (e.g. miners) that managed to save money could reach the middle class by procuring a shop. Often, the first step in their strategy was to buy their own house. This appears to have been a basic defence against social decline. 51

To summarize, it is possible to state that farmers who had access to land or money had the best opportunity for shaping a future for their children. Less wealthy farmers mostly allowed the eldest son to take over the farm. The family strategies of tenants, domestic workers and wage workers were designed to combine the capacities of each individual in order to survive in the short-term. According to some authors, the interests of the children were subordinated to those of the parents. The task of the children was to maximize family income and to take care of the parents in the future. However, other writers have stressed the mutual benefits of income pooling and of the prolonged residence of children in the households of wage workers. Gradually, children from working-class parents were given the opportunity of setting their own life-goals.

3. Institutional and cultural backgrounds of strategies

In Western societies, a variety of social and political developments caused many family functions to change considerably. I have already discussed the influence of laws restricting female and child labour. The spread of formal education
kept children out of the labour market. Education also gave many individuals new opportunities for rising in society. Another important institutional change was the expansion of the welfare state. Unemployment benefits, state pensions, and the introduction of old people’s homes relieved the family from its traditional task of providing for destitute and elderly family members. These developments had important effects on both strategies and life course patterns. In present societies the need for individuals to participate in collective strategies has diminished: the cultivation of family ties is no longer the designated road to social success, nor is family support the only means of coping with poverty. As for the life course, institutional changes has brought about a much clearer demarcation between separate stages in the life course. For instance, the spread of secondary education formalizes the stage of adolescence, and retirement has become the marked transition into old age. To a growing extent, life course transitions such as starting to work, leaving home, getting married and having a child, take place within narrow age-limits. This reflects the fact that individuals are now conforming more to societal expectations on the proper age and the proper sequence of education, work, marriage and parenthood. Earlier, the fact that individuals conformed more to family expectations appeared from the absence of fixed age patterns.

Family interests should not be equated with economic interests. Too often, the goals of family strategies have been interpreted solely as being directed towards an augmentation of property or income. Increasingly it is being recognized that cultural values are at least as important in shaping family behaviour. This is not to deny the rationality of that behaviour. We should be aware of the non-economic rationality of people who are ‘[...] living in worlds that are both economic and symbolic, both composed of material relations and culturally-influenced ways of viewing life’. If we want to understand the goals and strategies of families in certain areas and historical periods, then we have to discern the guiding cultural norms. For instance, when analysing and comparing strategies of workers, it is important to know that in the United States an appeal to charity was regarded with contempt, at least until the Great Depression, whereas in the Netherlands it was an accepted part of the survival strategy. Among German workers in the nineteenth century, the ultimate aim was simply to obtain a secure labour position, not to rise socially. Frequent migrations endangered this position and even carried with them the stigma of uprootedness and failure.

All kinds of socio-psychological mechanisms are at work as well. Hurt pride or damaged self-esteem might have been a motive for definitive migration. Gri-baudi suggested that definitive departure occurs relatively frequently among those who have had an experience of downward social mobility in their place of birth. The same mechanism might have kept people from returing home after an unsuccessful attempt to make a career elsewhere. Another important mechanism is social identification. People who had recently undergone down-
ward or upward social mobility had relatively small chances of marriage. They were unwilling to choose a partner from their old social group and lacked the necessary contacts in their new environment.\(^{56}\) Probably, the norms of the social group one aspired to were more important than those of the group one objectively belonged to. Gribaudi demonstrated how relatives who were higher up the social ladder acted as symbols of identification, encouraging their relatives to improve their position as well.

Our evaluation of the ways in which life courses and family strategies are interconnected, depends on our assessment of the rationality of family decision making. To what extent can strategies be thought of as rational planning? In her book, *Family Time and Industrial Time*, Hareven drew an image of elaborate long-term family schemes concerning migration and labour in the Amoskeag-mill. In her view, these strategies formed part of so-called ‘long-range life plans’. She defined this notion of ‘life plan’ - akin to the notion of ‘life organization’, coined by Thomas and Znaniecki - as follows: ‘A life plan [...] encompasses a wide range of goals and aspirations around which an individual or family organizes its life’.\(^{57}\) A life plan denotes a rational weighing up of goals and resources for the long term. In Gribaudi’s view, crucial life choices are also made in a rational manner, but he emphasized that this rationality is ‘limited’. By this he meant that people can only act on the basis of their own experience and memories and on information which might not be correct.\(^{58}\)

Earlier experiences might be of great importance for choices later in life. It is especially crucial to realize this in the study of migrants. It is well known that migrants do not adapt their behaviour immediately to their new surroundings. Gribaudi described how it was necessary for agricultural workers to have a large number of children so as to be able to spread their risks during the agricultural depression of the 1880s. But in an urban context their high fertility proved utterly disfunctional and their poverty was, in fact, prolonged by at least one generation. According to Gribaudi, becoming aware of these mechanisms forms an essential part of the urban integration of migrants.\(^{59}\) A similar ‘time lag’ is described in a study of the relationship between social mobility and fertility in a textile town in the eastern part of the Netherlands. Among the wives of textile workers fertility levels were differentiated according to the social background of the woman. The traditions and experiences in her family of origin were more important in determining fertility control than her current social position.\(^{60}\)

The information on the basis of which people acted was not always correct or up to date. For instance, during an industrial boom, more immigrants in the German city of Bochum were unemployed than during a slump. The news of potential jobs attracted too many people and this information was not duly corrected.\(^{61}\)
4. Conclusion

In past societies, as in many present ones, individual transitions into new life stages were part and parcel of family interests and family decision-making. These transitions concerned crucial events such as leaving the parental household, choosing a profession, migrating to another area and marrying. Collective purposes often determined who could make certain transitions and when to make them. By analysing the way in which these individual steps were attuned to the family interests, important new insights can be gained into the strategies employed by families to maintain their social position in a changing environment. Because of recent methodological innovations, the systematic analysis and comparison of life courses has become feasible. Firstly, there is the creation of electronic databases, which contain the reconstructions of the life courses of large numbers of individuals and their families. Secondly, and of great importance, there is the development of event history techniques, with which life courses of family members can be statistically related. Collective decisions come to light in the timing of individual steps. This kind of quantitative research enables us to examine family behaviour in the anonymous, labouring population. Comparing life courses furnishes new information on the internal power relations, the goals and the opportunities of families with differing positions in the processes of labour and production. Yet, supplementary qualitative information is still necessary if statistical patterns are to be correctly interpreted and if any conclusion can be reached as to whether or not rational ‘strategies’ were involved.

NOTES


19. See the descriptions of several databases in B. Morris (ed.), *History and Computing*, II (Manchester/New York, 1989).


40. Hareven, Family Time, 284ff.
46. Janssens, Family and Social Change, 86, 92-93, 224.
47. Gribaudi, Itinéraires, 97.
51. Crew, Town in the Ruhr, 98.
53. Kertzer and Hogan, Family, 175.
57. Hareven, Family Time, 359.
58. Gribaudi, Itinéraires, 27, 139.
VI

HOUSEHOLDS AND LABOUR MOVEMENTS

by

Marcel van der Linden

Workers' lives comprise at least two poles that are generally separated by both time and space. While these poles consist of their places of work and their households,1 labour movement historians tend to concentrate their research on the workplace. Even when historians are receptive to the importance of family life, as revealed by women's history, these scholars continue to use the workplace as an approach for studying the family.2 This approach runs counter to historical logic because the daily life of those who join social movements and organizations involves far more than wage labour. To understand the true causes of collective resistance among workers, it is necessary to explore the private sphere behind labour protests as well. While this reverse perspective may not prove a panacea for all problems associated with studying labour history, it will provide insight into the rather obscure motives of the working class for deciding whether or not to support the development of workers' movements. Furthermore, as Jean H. Quataert wrote, examining working-class households makes it possible to keep 'in focus at all times the lives of both men and women, young and old, and the variety of paid and unpaid work necessary to maintain the unit'.3

To the best of my knowledge there has been no effort to establish a systematic link between working-class families and labour movements. While this short paper is by no means an exhaustive discussion of this unexplored field, it does attempt to examine the relationship between labour activism and other strategies for survival and improvement in working-class households.

1. Principles (I)

Up to this point I have used 'families' and 'households' interchangeably. The meanings of these terms, however, are not identical, as kinship forms the pri-
mary basis for families, whereas households are mainly economic units based on income pooling. This paper is about *households*. This concept is rather ambiguous and has been subject to extensive terminological debates.\(^4\) To avoid a digression into this issue, I will use the description in McGuire *et al.*, which states that households are ‘those sets of relationships, historically variable yet relatively constant, that have as one of their principal features the sharing of sustenance gained from the widest possible variety of sources’.\(^5\) This description is loose enough to cover a wide variety of situations. It stresses the budget-pooling aspect of households, an approach that serves the purpose of my project.

The following reservations apply to using the designation of households:
- Households do not necessarily consist of two or three generations of one family. They may include several families, other types of biological kinship (such as siblings), or members not related by blood or marriage.
- Households do not necessarily entail co-residence, not even according to Donald Bender’s definition that calls for ‘a proximity in sleeping arrangements and a sentiment similar to that expressed in our folk concept of home’.\(^6\) For example, at least one member in a household of seasonal migrants is likely to live elsewhere for months at a time and will nevertheless contribute substantially to the household budget. (In the absence of co-residence, it is possible to form what I will call secondary households.\(^7\))
- This focus on economic aspects should not diminish the role of households as culturally significant units shaped by symbolic processes.\(^8\)
- Rather than being predetermined, the composition of households is a product of negotiations. Factors affecting the composition of a household may include income, marriage prospects for men and women, employment opportunities, and government factors such as legislation and taxation.\(^9\)
- Households should not be considered anthropomorphic entities through being designated as products of collective will. Members do not necessarily work for the common good of the household; on the contrary, they may be driven by selfish motives. Conflicts of interest are also possible, as well as oppression and resistance against oppression.\(^10\) Both dependency and authority may vary according to the member of the household. Laslett pointed out that infants and children have the greatest stake in the household’s survival, ‘since their life chances depend almost wholly on its existence and persistence, on their being accepted and retained as members. But children also have the least power to affect the household’s decisions and none whatever to carry them out’.\(^11\)

This statement about influencing household decisions implies that while we should not arbitrarily ascribe a collective will to households, members nevertheless try to find (a variety of) ways to control their fate whenever possible. To this end, they negotiate to devise a strategy for generating and allocating the common budget.
2. Principles (II)

In their negotiations, household members must take various aspects into consideration. Contrary to the assumptions of economists constructing models, research in social sciences and history suggests that motives are very rarely purely economic, but are usually based on meaningful orientations. Three of these interdependent motives keep reappearing.

First comes the need for security. Students of the working class have confirmed James Scott’s statement that ‘for those at the margin, an insecure poverty is far more painful and explosive than poverty alone’. To maximise the size and stability of their budget, members of households may pursue good employment contracts and social benefits, distribution of risks by diversifying their sources of income, and/or earning part of their income through self-employment. These circumstances justify Rolande Trempe’s observation that ‘[t]he workers of Carmaux preferred to earn less as miners while continuing to do work (whether independently or for an employer) that provided for a substantial portion of their needs and provided some security against hunger during the all too frequent hard times including strikes, unemployment, and periods of deprivation or inflation’. A recent study of rural ties among urban workers in Enugu, Nigeria contradicts the theory of modernisation by revealing how these ties have become stronger rather than weaker over the past thirty years. This tendency results from the virtual absence of a social security system covering illness, disablement, and old age, thus forcing those with low incomes to continue to rely on their villages for their security.

The second motive for attempting to control the household budget is the drive towards dignity and respectability. People are not mere objects. Rather, their innate value is characterised by its non-negotiability. While social historians frequently limit discussions on respectability to the more affluent workers of nineteenth-century England, a more general application of this term refers to Barrington Moore’s ‘decent human treatment’.

The third motive for these household negotiations is a desire for justice, which involves the need for reciprocal relationships with other parties and may apply to ‘social relationships in the institutional areas of authority and social coordination, production, and distribution, or more commonly in all three’. Expressions of this desire for equality may range from a collective struggle for emancipation through individual attempts at self-improvement to envious behaviour designed to drag others down a notch.

These three motives are clearly social constructs subject to various interpretations by different members of a household (especially according to differences in gender and age) and must always be viewed in terms of their specific social, economic, cultural, and political contexts. Furthermore, the three motives are closely intertwined. Reinhard Bendix mentioned the link between self-
respect and security. Julian Pitt-Rivers introduced an aspect of reciprocity with his description of honour (dignity, respectability) as 'an evaluation of self in the terms which are used to evaluate others - or as others might be imagined to judge'. Finally, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge convincingly argue that workers are also trying to act on behalf of justice when they go on strike for wage increases.

The existence of a link between the three motives does not mean they are always in harmony with one another. Conflicts may result both from different interpretations by various members of a household and from possible cases of incongruence. Households, like individuals, may face a choice between respectability and economic security (for example if members are forced to do degrading work).

3. Income and Expenditure

Households' social budget pooling function entails income and expenditure. This process need not be exclusively monetary: it may also consist of goods and services.

The pattern of expenditure in independent households is composed of at least five types of expenses:

- Support of household members involved in productive labour;
- Support of these same individuals during periods of disability or unemployment;
- Support of older household members who used to be involved in productive labour;
- Support of younger household members not yet involved in productive labour;
- Means to make payments to third parties (such as taxes, duties, and payment of debts).

This list includes the possibility of economies of scale arising from common use of certain goods. (Whether a household consists of two members or five, its members can make due with one vacuum cleaner.)

The income of independent households is derived from at least seven sources:

- Means obtained through labour remunerated in wages or in kind.
- Means obtained through non-commercial labour (directly consumable goods), including homemade clothing, raising domestic animals such as pigs and poultry, and gathering rubbish for direct reuse.
- Means obtained through petty commodity production or petty commerce, including manufacturing cottage-industry textiles, raising livestock for sale, peddling, and professional scavenging.
- Means derived from providing resources such as land, tools for labour, accommodations, and money. These means may include income received from renting out beds or rooms.\(^{31}\)
- Means obtained through transfer payments received without immediate reciprocal exchange of labour or commodities, including support from friends and acquaintances in times of need, charity, and social benefits.
- Means obtained from theft, including both conventional methods of stealing and especially pilfering at the workplace.\(^{32}\)
- Means obtained through credit, including billing in instalments, deferred payments, or pawning personal property.\(^{33}\)

Working-class households (the major focus in this paper) entail households where the first source of income (remunerated labour) prevails in importance. This statement does not exclude the role of other sources of income. On the contrary, working-class households usually rely on a variety of sources of income, virtually all members generate a reliable income, and individual members (especially over the course of their entire lives) tend to provide income from numerous sources. While these observations do not imply the absence of a clear correlation between age and gender on the one hand and revenue-producing activities on the other, it is likely that the degree of correlation varies according to the source of income.\(^{34}\)

4. Strategies for Improvement

Working-class households’ satisfaction with their material circumstances depends not only on whether their income covers basic necessities. Other significant issues include the reliability of the sources of income (the lack thereof may lead to insecurity), the question of whether this income stems from work considered undignified, and the question of whether the acquisition of income involves the commitment of basic injustices.

All these questions determine a household’s strategies for survival and improvement. I will start by examining the means for self-improvement at the disposal of individual households. First, they might move to another neighbourhood, city, or country in the hope of finding more satisfactory conditions. Millions have already chosen this option. Second, they can take advantage of better times to take precautionary measures for the hard times that lie ahead. These measures may include saving money\(^{35}\) or purchasing a house.\(^{36}\) Third, households may reduce expenses through measures such as living (still more) frugally, not paying their debts, and expelling non-productive members. Fourth, they can change the way they obtain their income, for example by seeking other work or through diversification or curtailment of their sources of income.
In addition to measures for households to try to improve their living conditions independently, there are several strategies involving help from outside sources. First, households may appeal to relatives. Many authors have indicated the value of kinship for household survival. Tamara Hareven wrote that to many American immigrants and urban workers, kin were ‘the main, if not the only, source of assistance and survival. In the absence of public welfare agencies and social security kin were the exclusive source of social insurance. Kin assistance was crucial in handling personal and family crises (such as childbearing, illness, and death), and in coping with the insecurities imposed by the industrial system (such as unemployment, accidents, and strikes’). Furthermore, ‘[s]trategies for kin assistance required both short-term and long-term investments over the life-course. Short-term investments entailed assistance in the workplace, in housing, in loaning money or tools, and trading skills, goods, or services. Among the long-term investments, the most pervasive exchange was that between parents and children, - old-age support in return for childrearing’.

Kinship relations outside one’s immediate surroundings often proved especially important. An interesting method of distributing the risks involves mutual assistance between rural-agrarian and urban relatives. Heidi Rosenbaum described an example of this system when she mentioned the importance ‘of family support from relatives in the countryside’ for workers in Linden (Germany) in the early twentieth century. Jean Peterson showed how the reverse currently holds true for Philippine peasantry by writing that ‘some families explicitly plan to establish some siblings [...] as wage-earners in the city’ to generate revenue in cases of crop failure or poor harvests.

A second source of relief lies in personal communities. These communities consist of informal networks based on companionship, emotional aid, and small services in daily life. While the networks may be locally based (neighbourhoods), this restriction is not essential to their operation. Personal communities also include kinship networks and require the same investment as strategies for short-term kin assistance (relatively small and readily available skills and services). Personal communities have always appeared gendered, although their focus varies depending on the time, the place, and the culture. There is often a fluid line between blood relatives and personal communities, as proved by frequent transformations of friendships into fictitious kinship relations, such as with compadrazgos (fictitious parenthood usually involving the relationship between parents and godparents to a child) in Latin America and the selection of Taufpaten (godparents) among the nineteenth-century German working class.

Acceptance of patronage is a third strategy. Whereas the first two forms of social insurance are generally horizontal (the actors pertaining to similar social classes), this approach is clearly vertical. As Y. Michal Bodemann wrote, it involves ‘a form of class rule and class struggle and at the same time its con-
Weak subalterns seek protection from higher, more powerful individuals who help them in emergencies in return for material or other types of services. This relationship is not merely economic but sociocultural as well, as patrons receive their clients’ loyalty and esteem in return for their protection and help. Forms of patronage may vary from political clientelism to patriarchal enterprise.  

A fourth and final strategy for social insurance involves joining or founding social movement organizations to bring about overall improvement in the conditions of (segments of) the working class. Examples of this strategy are mutual aid societies, producer or consumer cooperatives, trade unions, political parties, and combinations of these movements.

At least eight ways exist for households to improve their circumstances, whether they do so independently or with outside help. How households devise their strategy is of course crucial. Several factors come into consideration. The preceding description is taxonomic in that it covers opportunities that may arise over time. The various options are actually limited to specific historical contexts. Paternalism, for example, is less likely in highly developed industrial societies than in less developed ones. Each actual situation will therefore present fewer opportunities than those described here. On the other hand, each strategy consists of several options: those who wish to join social movement organizations can sometimes choose from a wide range of possibilities. It is also possible (and even common) to use several strategies at once. Furthermore, the strategies described here are interrelated and can alternatively undermine or reinforce one another. Frequent geographical mobility can work against the establishment of powerful unions in some cases, whereas it might actually form the basis for organizations in other cases. Strategies may even intermingle. Extremely close non-kin relationships can for example be transformed into fictitious kinship relations. Alternatively, kinship and personal communities may provide a valuable basis for a social movement organization.

5. The Logic of Working-Class Organization

Focusing on the logic of household reproduction places all forms of working-class collective action in a slightly different perspective. Our inventory of survival strategies immediately yields two suppositions:
- Workers’ households not involved in labour activism are not necessarily apathetic or loyal to their employers, as suggested by some authors. They may use several other strategies to alleviate their situation.
Workers' households that are involved in labour activism do not necessarily abandon other survival strategies as a result. In fact, this scenario is unlikely.

These suppositions put the genesis and development of labour movements in perspective. The next step in this analysis should involve establishing the conditions for collective organization among (members of) working-class households. Clearly, this issue is highly complex, and it would be preposterous to claim to resolve it in a few lines. My following statements are therefore primarily speculative.

First, the likelihood of self-organization among wage labourers increases when: (i) wage labour becomes more important to the household, for example in terms of the number of household members performing wage labour, its proportion of the total wage income compared to other sources of income, the outlook on upward social mobility, and so on; (ii) more organizational resources become available (money, networks of communication, organizational experience, etc.); (iii) the three basic motivations described above (security, justice and dignity) become a stronger incentive for protest.

These three aspects form a general breeding ground for working-class collective action. Next, I believe it would be helpful to scrutinize the concept of labour movements. Three types of organizations should be distinguished: household, enterprise, and state-centred labour organizations. Household-centred organizations entail measures taken by wage labourers to accomplish more with the material means at their disposal without necessarily eliciting confrontations with entrepreneurs or the authorities. Mutual aid societies, which use a communal fund from several households to provide some protection in cases of unemployment, illness, old age, or death, are one example of this type of activism. Consumer cooperatives that purchase goods for several households at once are another. Enterprise-centred organizations involve efforts to alter the economic balance of power between workers and entrepreneurs. Changes may occur either through battles against capitalist industry for higher wages or improved working conditions (traditionally the unions' job), or through attempts to establish and maintain producer cooperatives. Finally, state-centred organizations aim to guide or obtain improvements from the state that would be impossible (or far more difficult) to arrange through household- or enterprise-centred activism. The most obvious organizational instruments for this purpose are, of course, political parties, although it is possible for other organizations to focus their efforts on the state.

Once again, these forms of activism overlap. Mutual aid societies have often become unions, and consumer cooperatives have at times become actively involved in national politics.

Based on this brief characterization of organizational types and sub-types, which each possess their own contextual repertoire of collective action, we can
examine how they relate to the issue of reproduction of households. The first question is where the freerider problem surfaces, or which organizations make it attractive to benefit from them without joining. As mutual benefit societies, consumer and producer cooperatives offer direct advantages only to the households involved, they do not have a freerider problem. Trade unions and political parties are a different matter, however, as their activities can also benefit non-members. 53

It is common knowledge that organizations can try to solve the freerider problem through selective incentives (second order collective goods), such as providing goods and services (e.g. free legal aid) to members only. This approach may make it considerably more attractive to join an organization. 54

Next comes the degree of risk associated with participation in an organization and its actions. Membership of mutual benefit societies or consumer cooperatives generally entails a smaller financial risk than participation in producer cooperatives, as households involved in the first two kinds of organizations invest - and therefore risk losing - small sums, whereas their stake in producer cooperatives is far greater. Repression by the state or entrepreneurs is another major factor. Substantial repression through an acute danger of imprisonment or unemployment will obviously be a far greater deterrent to joining an organization than more tolerant conditions. It seems plausible that repression of household-centred organizations (and producer cooperatives), which tend to avoid conflicts, is almost always less than repression of trade unions and workers' parties. At the same time, repression of consolidated unions and parties integrated in capitalism can decrease considerably. As the threat of repression increases, the financial risk to households rises. Table 1 summarizes a few of the considerations briefly described here.

Table 1: Workers' Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Freerider Problem</th>
<th>Financial Risk</th>
<th>Repression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual benefit</td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Enterprise</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Union</td>
<td>Enterprise</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low-High</td>
<td>Low-High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers' Party</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low-High</td>
<td>Low-High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mutual benefit societies and consumer cooperatives were the easiest kinds of associations for households to join, it is understandable that they were by far the largest working-class organizations (even though their relative size was sometimes exceeded by unions with selective incentives in welfare-state conditions). Because workers' parties rarely offer selective incentives, their membership is usually small, even if they receive a high percentage of the vote, unless trade unions are also party organizations (as in Great Britain and Sweden until recently). Producer cooperatives never seem to have appealed to more than a small minority of the working class, which suggests that the permanent substantial financial risk that this organization entails is a major barrier. 55

Even the most comprehensive organizations have never succeeded in organizing all wage labourers in households, except in situations involving economic or legal force. There always seems to be some segment (whether large or small) of the working class that opts for survival strategies different from those offered by labour movements. Examining these non-organized groups can enhance our understanding of the motives of the organized segments.

NOTES

* This essay is a slightly revised and expanded version of my ‘Connecting Household History and Labour History’, in: Marcel van der Linden (ed.), The End of Labour History? (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), pp. 163-173. It was translated by Lee Mitzman.


4. It is difficult to provide a generally valid definition of households. Attempts to find ‘a precise, reduced definition’ have been unsuccessful, as households are ‘inherently complex, multifunctional institutions imbued with a diverse array of


18. ‘In the realm of ends everything has either a PRICE or a DIGNITY. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent. But what is raised
above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity. [...] but that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be [an] end in itself, has not a mere relative value, that is a price, but an intrinsic value, that is dignity'. Immanuel Kant, ‘Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten’ ['Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics', translated by Otto Manthey-Zorn (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938) (1785), *Werke in Sechs Bänden*, vol. IV (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983) 68.


25. This distribution is based in part on Claude Meillassouxs’s three categories of reproduction costs: ‘The value of labour power is derived from three factors: supporting workers during periods of employment (retaining the existing work force), maintaining workers during periods of idleness (such as unemployment or illness), replacing workers by providing for their progeny (known as reproduction)’. Claude Meillassoux, *Femmes, Greniers & Capitaux* (Paris: François Maspero, 1975) 152.


30. Alain Faure, ‘Classe malpropre, classe dangereuse? Quelques remarques à propos des chiffoniers parisiens au XIXe siècle et de leurs cités’, *Recherches*, No. 29 (December 1977) 79-102; Chris Birkbeck, ‘Self-Employed Proletarians in an


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48. The discussion of personal communities provided some examples of this transformation. It may also occur with patronage -patrons and patronesses can become godfathers or godmothers respectively - or self-organizations. Emily Honig’s example of female textile workers in Shanghai during the first half of the twentieth century illustrates this point: ‘After working together for several years, six to ten women would formalize their relationship with one another by pledging sisterhood. Once they had formed a sisterhood, the members would call each other by kinship terms based on age: the oldest was “Big Sister”, the next oldest “Second Sister”, and so forth. [...] Often the sisterhoods functioned as an economic mutual aid society’. Emily Honig, ‘Burning Incense, Pledging Sisterhood. Communities of Women Workers in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919-1949’, Signs, 10 (1984) 700-714, 700-701. Better known than this case of surrogate kinship among women are the countless fraternal organizations that have sprung up in workers’ movements over time. For examples, see Mary Ann Clawson, Constructing Brotherhood. Class, Gender, and Fraternalism (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989).


54. The Swedish union movement is a good example, as its unusually strong organization results primarily from its arrangement with the state that entitles it to provide services that include unemployment benefits.

55. The negative correlation between the number of producer cooperatives established annually and the economic situation also reflects their low appeal. Economic deterioration and rising unemployment seem to decrease reluctance to join this type of organization.
TOWARDS A SINGLE MALE EARNER: THE DECLINE OF CHILD AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN AN INDIAN INDUSTRY

by

Arjan de Haan

At present, large-scale, registered industries in India employ almost exclusively adult men. This is a recent phenomenon, however. During the early period of India’s industrialization - from 1850 onwards - women and children formed a substantial part of the labour force. They have been excluded from these industries for different reasons: labour legislation which prohibited child labour and made women more expensive, rationalization of production accompanied by a myth of unsuitability of women, an increasing labour surplus which made their dismissal possible, and finally the spread of an ideology according to which women are supposed to stay in the home.

This paper describes the exclusion of women and children, focusing on the jute industry in and around Calcutta. The jute-processing industry was the largest industry in the area, and the largest employer of unskilled labour. The industry started in the 1870s, expanded rapidly around the turn of the century and, by the late 1920s, was employing over 300,000 people. Rather than employing local, Bengali labour, the industry attracted migrant labour, mainly from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh. Migration has remained circular, particularly for migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, implying that the migrant’s regional background has remained important for patterns of living and working in the city.

The research on which this paper is based was a combination of archival research in the UK and in India, and field-work and oral history. I carried out the field-work in 1991 in an industrial area of Calcutta - in Titagarh, an industrial enclave with seven jute mills, one large paper mill, and inhabited almost entirely by migrants - and collected the histories of about 80 families.1

The article is structured as follows. The first part describes changes in employment in the jute industry. Secondly, I describe the decline of child labour
since the 1920s, and thirdly the decline in female employment. The last section forms the conclusion.

1. Demand for labour: the figures and the workers' stories

During my fieldwork, I was surprised to hear that the problem of finding a job was of relatively recent origin. People stated that until the 1970s, it had not been difficult to get a job. Mills used to invite workers, and even in the 1960s loudspeakers called workers to come to the mills. The crisis in employment started somewhere in the late 1960s or early 1970s. This was in contrast to what I had assumed. It is generally supposed that the shortage of labour disappeared after the beginning of the century. In 1931, of the 300 000 workers, 60 000 were dismissed. In the 1950s, production was rationalized and labour reduced by about 25%. While employment in the mills had been over 300 000 just after independence, it had declined to 208 000 by 1960.

From 1880 till 1930 employment expanded almost continuously, as Table 1 shows. In 1906, Foley concluded that employment had expanded rapidly, that no recruiting on a systematic scale had been done, and that wages had not risen, but that there was still sufficient labour: 'industry is to be congratulated [...] the Jute Mills of Bengal [...] are so popular that they spontaneously attract an immense stream of labour'. The existing shortages were mainly of a temporary nature. The Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908 (hereafter ‘IFLC’) concluded that the supply of labour was inadequate, but that the scarcity was mainly seasonal, in April, May and June. Unemployment was considered to be non-existent. Only the middle class was thought to suffer from this.

Table 1 Employment in the jute industry, 1880-1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bengal</th>
<th>West Bengal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>42 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>111 000</td>
<td>285 585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>280 321</td>
<td>208 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>328 177</td>
<td>223 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>284 720</td>
<td>246 529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td></td>
<td>225 151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA), Annual Reports.
At the end of the 1920s, the industry employed over 340,000 workers, but in 1931 about one-fifth of the labourers was dismissed. After that, with the exception of the war period, a general shortage of labour was no longer observed. After 1933, employment slowly recovered. During the Second World War, the pattern was irregular and at times labour was scarce because of employment opportunities in American military camps and because of the bombing of the industrial area by the Japanese air force. Also, workers left the area because of religious tensions.

With independence and the partition of India, the industry encountered large problems. Because of partition, it was cut off from the supply of cheap and high-quality jute. New mills built in East Pakistan implied increasing competition for India's jute industry. But despite these problems, employment in 1948 was higher than in any year since the crisis of 1931. The rationalization in the 1950s resulted in a reduction of labour by 25% to about 200,000, while production did not decline. After that the number of employed remained more or less the same. During the first half of the 1960s, employment and production increased. The number of workers declined in the second half of the decade, and there was a trend from retrenchment to closure: workers were thrown out of employment on a mass scale between 1967 and 1970. In the mid 1970s, employment was again on a relatively high level. In the second half of the 1970s, it first decreased, then increased again because of a temporary recovery of the industry, and declined rapidly in the 1980s.

The yearly figures conceal the fact that trends in employment in jute mills have always been very irregular. Because of production agreements within the Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA) output varied. The IJMA took recourse to the 'sealing of looms', and hence to the dismissal of labour. But in the long run, the most important trends were the crisis of 1931, the rationalization of the 1950s, an expansion in the early 1960s, and a decline after 1980.

Workers' stories about opportunities for getting a job are in remarkable contrast to the figures for the decline in employment. The crisis of the 1930s does not feature in their stories. The war gave various employment opportunities because of the presence of American camps, and because many workers left when the area was bombed. Two people said that after the war it became difficult to get a job, but most people maintained that it remained easy for a long time. In earlier times, they said, work was sufficiently available; in fact, there was a shortage of workers: us time admi lok milta kaha? Admi lok nei milta tha ('where did one find people then?; one did not find people'); kam jaldi jaldi mil jata ('one found work quickly'), and crisis chilo na ('there was no crisis').

Anybody willing to work could join, and people could even choose their mill. A migrant arriving at the station had no problem in finding a job. Sardars (headmen, labour recruiters and foremen) and babus (mill clerks, generally local Bengalis) fought at the station to draft arriving migrants. When the train ar-
rived, sardars and babus were already waiting. They approached workers, asked from which district they came, and if a worker came from the same district and did not have relatives to go to in the city, the sardar would tell him to come to his mill: kaha se aiyा bhai, chaliye ("where do you come from brother, let's go"). Mill people tried to recruit people living in the city. If a young person was without work, a sardar would try to recruit him or her, and the English managers (sahibs) came into the workers' lines and tried to persuade people to join the work-force at the mill. A worker said that, one day in 1957, he was in bed when a friend came to see him and asked him to come to the mill.

There are a number of points which qualify the idea that work was easily found. The interviews show that the workers tend to idealize the old situation, and probably play down the problems they encountered in finding a job. There is also the question of waiting time, about which I do not have systematic information. Some people said that they arrived one day and got work the next, and most suggested they got work quickly. It is possible that many of the people able to work, did not work for quite some time, until work was offered. Also, the demand for labour fluctuated: the demand was highest from April to June during tana time (when workers returned home). This is still the period when most badli (substitute) workers are registered and get work. Throughout the period, surplus and shortage of labour were seasonal phenomena. Also, the demand for labour was not spread evenly over the different departments and the son of a weaver or spinner found it easier to get a job in that department than in most others.

Although people told us that they could get a job easily, they also said that they had to offer something to the person who helped them get the job. Sometimes, sardars gave the worker an advance which had to be repaid. Workers also offered small things to sardars and babus. A worker from Orissa said that, just after the Second World War, there was no problem in finding a job if you offered pan (betel nut), tea, or five or ten Rupees - still a considerable sum since his weekly income was two Rupees (Rs.) when he started work. However, this offering was not a bribe: the workers said that the sardars or babus did not ask for the gift, but that they themselves offered it. At that time, the workers said, bribes were uncommon, although offering something was socially acceptable. The practice of bribing began only later, when it became difficult to get a job.

It was not equally easy for everybody to get a job. For women and children, for the aged and the disabled, it was more difficult, and they were more prone to be exploited by a sardar or babu than an able male adult worker. A retired female worker, originally from Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh who joined before 1920, said that getting the job was easy. As a child she was in the mill, helping her father and mother. A sahib found her, asked whose child she was, and registered her name. Nevertheless, she had to pay the sardar two annas a week (one Rupee is 16 anna). If a woman applied for a job, she had to pay backshis
(or jalpani). This practice continued, she said, until Jawaharlal Nehru came to power.12

The foregoing still leaves unexplained the fact that the crisis of 1931 and the declining employment opportunities in the 1950s do not figure in the workers’ stories. Two factors are mainly responsible.13 In the first place, many people maintained a link with their village, and remained, as an official of the colonial government put it, ‘agriculturalist at heart’.14 Migrants, the richer as well as the poorer, tried to maintain their possessions in the villages, and continued to return there. This link made sudden unemployment less problematic, because people returned to the village and waited for the next opportunity. Nowadays the link with the village is still there, but the workers have in general become more settled and more dependent on industrial work. The crisis nowadays, therefore, hits the workers harder than it did in the past.15

Second, the reduction in employment did not affect all people equally. It hit the adult male worker less hard than it did the working population as a whole. Child labour decreased from 10% of the labour force in 1920 to almost zero in 1935, and later female labour was reduced, from over 50 000 in 1930 to less than 9 000 in 1962. The two sections below describe these changes in child and female labour, implying important changes in family strategies.

2. Decline of child labour

During the first decades of the industry’s history, children formed an important part of the labour force. Two stories in the report of the Indian Factory Commission (1890), for example, show that it was quite common for children to start working before the age of ten.

Shama, a Muslim boy of 10 or 11 years, ‘native’ of Calcutta, had started work when he was 7 or 8, and had always worked full time, 9 hours a day, from 5.30 AM till 9 AM and from 12 till dusk. In the working week of four days, he earned 14 anna.

Sukni, a girl from Patna, of weaver caste, 8 years old, had worked for two months in the mill with her parents. While her parents earned one Rupee per week each, she earned 10 anna. She was married. Her husband remained in the village, and she gave the money she earned to her parents. She also worked from daylight till 9 AM and from 12 till the evening.16

In the late nineteenth century child labour, like female labour, was made subject to legislation. The Factories Act of 1881 is one of the first labour laws introduced in India, and the textile interests of Lancashire had a profound influence on this. The law dealt primarily with child labour and fixed the minimum age of employment of children at seven years, and children between seven
and twelve were not allowed to work more than nine hours. A new act was introduced in 1891, one year after the International Labour Conference, which raised the minimum age from seven to nine, and the maximum working period for children between nine and fourteen to seven hours. In 1911, the maximum working day for children was limited to six hours, and in 1922 - when for the first time the working hours for adult male workers were restricted - the minimum age of child workers was fixed at twelve years old with a six-hour day for children aged between twelve and fifteen (‘half-timers’).¹⁷

In the 1920s, the number of children working in factories started to decline, as Table 2 shows. In 1925, there was still a complaint about the shortage of children working as half-timers, but this was caused by mothers and children leaving the area because of religious tensions.¹⁸ In 1930, the government still thought that there might be a reversion to employment of children, but the managers had already decided to do away with the labour of children and ‘adolescents’ (children between twelve and fifteen).¹⁹ The crisis of 1931 gave the final impetus.

Table 2  Children in the jute industry, 1912-1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>As percentage of the total workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>23,007</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>26,606</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>28,521</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>26,474</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>11,646</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Labour Investigation Committee (Govt. of India), Report on an Enquiry into Conditions of Labour in the Jute Mill Industry in India, Delhi: Manager of Publication, 1946; Annual Report Factories Act, various years.
Note: Children are defined as under twelve years. In 1934, the category ‘adolescents’ was added, which was for people aged from twelve to fifteen. In 1935 they numbered 2,152, but this number decreased afterwards.

Legislation was not in itself sufficient to achieve this decline. There are numerous stories of violation of the laws.²⁰ Employers as well as the government, and especially the Government of Bengal, were generally against the legislation, which they deemed unnecessary and impractical in the Indian context.²¹ It
was also argued that children defied the laws by working two shifts in two different factories. Two changes during the 1920s contributed to the decline.

In the first place, the 1920s witnessed a change in labour relations, or at least the perceptions thereof. There was an increase in labour unrest. An important factor for the change in labour relations was the changing political climate, the growing strength of the Nationalist Movement, and the Congress and Communist parties. In this period also, the sardar came under attack: it was considered necessary to limit the power of the middleman. Gradually, formalized systems for the registration of workers were introduced, and this made employment of young children more visible. For example, the government stated that managers dispensed with the services of adolescents in order to avoid conflict with the law: ‘the necessity for certification is going to affect the employment of adolescents in much the same manner as it affected the employment of children, although perhaps to a lesser degree’.

A second change was perhaps more crucial for the decline in child labour, and was merely coincidental. In the second half of the 1920s, the mills gradually changed from multiple to single shifts. The long working days and multiple shifts created a demand for half-time workers. The complex system of overlapping shifts - in which, ‘in some mills at 22 different times of the day workers were coming in or going out of the mill’ - was also responsible for the lack of control on labour affairs, as many reports noted. In 1926 there was a change from multiple to single shift in most mills, but they remained operating for 13.5 hours a day. In 1931, because of the economic crisis, the working week was restricted to forty hours in four days, and one shift. This change ended the demand for half-timers. It also made control easier. In 1930, the government still thought that children could continue to be employed:

‘The reluctance to employ children is undoubtedly due to the abuse of their employment by sirdars and clerks, the responsibility for which has to be Shouldered by the manager. The possibilities of abuse on the single shift system are limited, and, in consequence, there seems to be no reason why the employment of children should not continue. Children, on account of their height, are more fitted than adults for the shifting work on spinning frames, and there may be a reversion to the general employment of children when the control possible under the single shift is appreciated and managers’ anxieties with regard to their regular employment under the Act somewhat relieved’.

But the managers decided to do away with child labour:

‘With the introduction of Single Shift and the dismissal of all surplus workers the opportunity was taken to dispense with all juvenile labour. The Half-Time Shifters were paid off at the expiration of the Multiple Shift System and only Full Time Shifters were engaged which is a more satisfactory arrangement’.
The decline of child labour was not welcomed from all sides:

'Taking into account the present standard of jute mill labour in Bengal, the lack of schools, and the considerable period which must elapse before elementary education can become compulsory, this depletion in child labour is a mixed blessing'.

'Children under fifteen years of age are not employed in the jute mills and simply waste their time. The establishments of free primary schools for the children is desirable. Out of six mills, in one only there is a free primary school, with 30 or 35 students'.

But the change was irreversible and child labour disappeared from the jute industry, unlike what happened in many other industries in India.

During the period in which this change occurred, education became more important. Before the thirties, as long as there was a scarcity of labour, employers had not been in favour of education for the children of workers. In the thirties, child labour was no longer needed and the political and social climate had changed in such a way that education was given greater priority. After independence, this was reinforced, and opportunities and levels of education increased. The number of schools in the industrial area increased. This is reflected in the stories of the people. The elderly said that in the past people were not interested in education, and that nowadays many boys go to school, and often finish Class 10. Most people said that the younger generation has much more education, and that in the past it was not seen as important.

The withdrawal of children from the labour market was thus accompanied by an increase in education, which was not valued negatively. This provides a partial answer to the question why the decline in employment was not felt more strongly. A similar change occurred in the case of female labour, which is described below.

3. Decline of female labour

Migration towards the industrial area was dominated by men, which is reflected in a highly unequal sex ratio. The majority of the interviewed men said that their wives did not work outside the household, and many stated that this had been so the in the past as well. For many of the men it was clear why women should not work in the mills, although the reasons given were formulated differently. The concept of honour (izzat) is of central importance here, both among Muslim and Hindus.

Traditionally women were not entirely absent from the work-force. At the turn of the century, women constituted a considerable part of the jute labour force. During the first decades of this century, they formed about 15% of the
Towards a Single Male Earner

Labour force. A survey taken in 1931-32, shows that 40,556 women were employed, of which more than half worked in one department, preparing the jute, and large groups worked in sewing and batching. More than 50% of the women were Hindus from North India, 18% were Muslims, 14% were from Andhra Pradesh, and 4% were Bengalis. At the time of my visit, however, there were almost no women working in the jute industry. The decline in female labour was caused by a combination of factors: female-specific legislative measures which made women less attractive to employers; the disappearance of a labour shortage which made women dispensable; and a change in perceptions about female labour.

Little is known about the participation or non-participation of women in the jute mills, and figures are scarce. It is known that relatively few women came to the industrial area, which has been interpreted as part of a long trend in the devaluation of women's activities. The early reports give few references to the reasons for employing women or not. Curjel, who carried out a major inquiry of female labour in the early 1920s, noted that women were employed because they were cheaper, because there was a shortage of male workers, because women were steadier, and because their presence could 'keep the men content'. But the references are contradictory, and Sen concluded: 'some managers appear to have preferred a few women for their 'docility' while others held diametrically opposite views. In neither case were managers particularly concerned'. The older workers confirmed that in the past many women had worked in the industry. Geli Patro, a woman from Ganjam in South Orissa, said to be over 100 years old, told that when she worked, there were a lot of female workers, with different regional backgrounds. A 93-year-old man, who started working in 1914, said that women had formed about one-third of the work force in his mill at the beginning of this century, and that they came from all areas. Bengali women also worked there, including in the weaving department, which was male-dominated.

Before I describe how women disappeared from the industry, it is essential to note that different patterns of female labour participation existed. These are indicated, in simplified form, in the following Table.

Table 3 Schematic representation of women working in jute mills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of origin</th>
<th>Bengal</th>
<th>North India</th>
<th>South Orissa</th>
<th>Andhra Pradesh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High caste</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low caste</td>
<td>no ?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among local Bengali labourers, only poor and lower-caste women worked: ‘The Bengali female workers in Calcutta’s jute and cotton mills who gave evidence to the Indian Factory Commission of 1890 were all widows or deserted women without children to support them. They all claimed that no Bengali woman would work in the factories unless she was truly ‘unfortunate’. The specific position of Bengali women in the industry is related to the decline of Bengali participation in jute labour in general. Bengalis left industrial labour for various reasons, including the idea that jute labour had a low status. If jute labour in general was thought to have a low status, this was likely to apply even more for women.

Perceptions about female labour were different among communities with different regional backgrounds, and the earlier working or non-working of women was often determined by cultural conventions rather than economic necessity. There was a clear North-South divide in the conceptions about female labour, which cannot be explained by different economic backgrounds or recruitment policies of management. People from North India, from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and northern Orissa generally said that women should not work, and I think that, in many cases, they indeed did not do so. Migration from North India was generally that of single men. Upper-caste Hindu men did not want their women to work outside the home, and the practice of purdah, the seclusion of women (litt. veil) was widespread. For lower-caste Hindus the situation was different. Many women of lower castes, from different areas, had worked in the past and they said that there was a need to work and that there were no objections. Foley’s report indicates that 21% of the work-force of a mill were women from the North.

Among the people interviewed, it was the Muslims who most strongly stated that they did not permit their women to work outside the house. For example, a weaver from Bihar stated that his family - wife, mother and grandmother - had been in the weaving business in their house, but the women did not work in jute mills: amader system nei (‘it is not our system’). Women stayed and worked in the house, and men earned the family income. Nevertheless, there were Muslim women who worked in the mills. In 1902, 32% of all workers in the Victoria Mill were Muslim. The report does not mention the percentage of Muslim women, but in the women-dominated preparing department there were at least 108 Muslim women.

In contrast, many women from the South, from South Orissa and Andhra Pradesh (‘Telugus’, i.e. Telugu-speaking) migrated and worked outside the home. Objections against this were much fewer: ‘we came here to earn money, so why should women not work?’, a worker replied to our question. And Curjel wrote: ‘Telugu workers bring women with them, often in addition to their wives, all of whom work in the mills’. In the case of the people from North India, working women were often associated with degraded women. Among people
from the South working by women was the norm. A seventy-year-old woman from Andhra Pradesh said that, in the past, there had been many female workers, mostly from the South. She said that people with problems in their village took up industrial work, and that her husband had not objected to her working in the mill. And a Telugu woman running a tea stall said that many women from her village worked in jute mills, although work was not available at that time. She said that women were willing to work in mills, and that her husband did not object to her running the tea stall.

There were also differences among the two groups from the South we interviewed - the Telugus, generally of low castes, and the Khandait from Ganjam in South Orissa - but this confirms the picture of the North-South divide. The pattern of a group of Khandait from Ganjam was especially surprising, since they belonged to a higher caste and from the interviews I concluded that they were economically not very badly off when they migrated. The first migrant from Ganjam came with his two wives and while he began a tea shop, the women started work in a jute mill. They belonged to the upper strata of their village rather than to the bottom. It was generally agreed that there were no objections to women working. A retired sardar from Ganjam said that they were glad to see Khandait women working in mills. They were not forced to send family members to the jute mills -but nevertheless they did. The Telugus, however, were generally worse off. A worker from Andhra Pradesh, whose wife had worked after they got married, stated that people from his area, unlike the Biharis and the Bengalis, had no objections against women working. He also said that a family could not survive on the income of only one earner. Biharis, he thought, did not have this problem, because they left their family in the village and owned some land. However, I would argue that the property of Bihari families was often so small that this can hardly be considered to be an alternative possibility. Also, women from the South with more land or other property in the village worked, though it was not so urgent. Economic need did, of course, determine how many members of a family migrated and worked, but the differences between North and South India were mainly culturally determined.

Table 4 shows that employment of women in the industry declined rapidly after 1930. As in the case of the decline of child labour, legislation was important but this in itself did not cause the decline. Female employment diminished when the disappearance of a labour shortage made the dismissal of women possible. When employment recovered after the crisis of 1931, men were preferred above women, and women finally lost their position when rationalization was carried out in the 1950s.
Table 4 Female labour in the jute industry, 1912-1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women (number)</th>
<th>Percentage of total workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>31 329</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>44 545</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>52 144</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>37 749</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>36 640</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>38 789</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>35 944</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>22 375</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>9 419</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>8 700</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Whereas before, employers and government had not been bothered by the question of whether and how many women worked, the number of women working received explicit attention after the war.

'It is significant to note that the proportion of women workers to the total factory population dropped at a fast rate immediately after the Bengal Maternity Benefit Act, 1939, was put on the Statute Book and again when the provision for maintenance of a creche by the employer was incorporated... Women labour were previously employed and are still employed mostly for the reason that they are cheaper than their male counterpart. Progressive labour legislation ... has made women labour costlier these days. Hence the general attitude of factory management regarding employment of women is to “do away with the women labour with a view to avoid in future expenses on special welfare benefits for women”.'

In the 1960s, there was a drive to reduce the number of female workers in the mills of Thomas Duff & Co. The Chairman of the group told the labour officers ‘that Victoria and Angus [mills] could do a lot better, especially when Victoria had about fifty surplus female workers to their requirement’. A few months later he told the labour officer of Victoria Mill that ‘he should ensure that the remaining nine [women] should also resign as early as possible’.
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There is little information about the way women were dismissed, but it was generally stated that it was achieved through 'natural wastage' and voluntarily. For example, the Chairman of the Duff group asked the labour officers to prepare a list of workers aged 55 years and older with a view to retiring them, and since two of the mills had surplus female workers, the women who were old enough to be superannuated had to be retired quickly. The Manager's Report for Titaghur No.1 of 1960 noted that there had been no retrenchment, but that six female workers 'retired voluntarily and were replaced by male workers...'

In the same year, Samnuggur South Mill was closed because of problems with the boilers. Most of the workers were transferred to Victoria, and '[a]bout 650 workers, mostly old people and female workers resigned'. Personal influence seems to have been the main channel through which women were made to leave, just as personal networks were the most important way for recruitment of workers. It is noticeable that this did not give rise to organized protest by the women, which is not surprising since they were not members of trade unions. In fact, from conversations with local trade union leaders I got the impression that they were more likely to be in favour of the dismissal of women rather than to protest against it.

What were the reasons for the decline of female employment? As in the case of child labour, a combination of factors was responsible. The precondition for the decline was created by the development of a labour surplus, which started with the crisis of 1931, but did not immediately take on a structural nature because of large fluctuation on both sides of the labour market during the 1930s and 1940s. Further, legislation altered the position of women. The first piece of female-specific legislation, introduced in 1891, prohibited night work by women, made maternity leave compulsory, and limited their working day to eleven hours. But this had little effect, because of infractions and the government's practice of exempting particular mills. The question of female labour resurfaced in the 1920s, partly under the influence of international pressure and because of the changed political circumstances in India. In 1922, the working hours of women were further restricted. Individual mills started with the provision of maternity benefits in the twenties, often unsuccessfully. A system of maternity benefit was recommended by the IJMA in 1929, and in the early 1930s, systems of maternity benefit were in force in 53 mills, and welfare centres were in operation in a large part of the mill area. In 1932, small children, whom the women used to take with them during their work, were prohibited from being in the mills, which raised the demand for child-care provisions. In 1939, the Maternity Benefit Bill was introduced. As indicated above, however, this legislation did not result directly in the exclusion of women. For example, restrictions on night work became a problem only when double shifts were re-introduced in the 1950s. More generally, it was only in the 1950s that employers started to argue that legislation had made female employment too
costly, and that the restrictions on carrying weights and on working in specific occupations made it a problem to employ women.

A second factor which changed the position of women was an increasing official concern about their presence in the industrial area. In the 1920s, female labour became defined as a 'problem', particularly because of their 'irregular' lives. Balfour wrote that social conditions were a problem because many men left their wives in the villages:

‘This leads many of them to form temporary alliances with other women, whom after a time they may desert, leaving the women to support any children that may be born. The women [...] may be said to fall into 3 classes. There are the wives of male workers, some of whom work in the mills and some of whom do not. There are widows or women apart from their husbands led by necessity to seek for work and these are too often forced or persuaded into temporary alliances. Lastly there are the prostitutes. It is the middle class who are struggling to support themselves honestly for whom great sympathy must be felt [...]’. Welfare work among women would probably do more than anything else to improve the moral conditions.57

Reports suggested that the women were often not the wives of the men with whom they lived, that the women did not return to their villages, that many of the women were ‘degraded’ or prostitutes, and that they handed over their wage to the man. This official concern provided the rationale for legislation. It may also have functioned, although this is merely a hypothesis, as a legitimization for the exclusion of women later on.

A third factor responsible for the disappearance of women was the rationalization of production carried out in the 1950s, although more research is needed to determine whether this did not just form an excuse to do away with women. Because of this rationalization, employment decreased by almost one-third in ten years: in 1948 there were 315 000 workers in the industry, and in 1961 a low of 197 000 was reached. The modernization of the production process affected not only the spinning department - which was not the department with a large concentration of female workers - but also the preparing department. Whereas before, employers had not objected to women working, they now considered them unfit for factory work, especially when the new machines were introduced:

‘...modern high speed preparatory machinery has been installed in the Preparatory Department. Work on these machines is unsuitable for women workers as such work needs more physical exertion’.58

Now women were thought to be ‘less suitable’, not able to handle the new machines, and their productivity was thought to be lower than men's.59 Also, changes in production were said to be a problem when women were employed.
As I have stated, more research is needed to determine how the changes in the production process altered the demand for labour, but the remarks about the unsuitability of female labour seem to be too arbitrary to be accepted as a sufficient explanation for the decline of female employment.

Parallel to the decline in female labour participation was a change in the ideas about whether women should work. Over time the regional cultural differences in female labour tended to disappear, and objections against women working outside the house became more general. The idea that women should not work but be exclusively confined to taking care of the family gained ground among more groups. The North Indian higher-caste ‘ideal’ of non-working women spread to lower castes. Within one family it was considered normal that the older generation of women had gone out to work and that the younger did not, but stayed at home.

An old woman from Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh told how she had started working as a young girl and had continued after marriage. She said that in her department only women worked, so there were no problems. She had never been criticized for working, and she had not observed purdah. Yet her daughter did not work because, she stated when asked, her husband worked.

The idea that women should not work also gained ground among groups from the South. It was said that women just could not get jobs, but the permission given by the men was relevant as well.

Tarini from Andhra Pradesh said that women had worked in the past, but that they did not do so any more. His wife had worked in a mill for sixteen years and he had not objected. His son stated that his wife did not work. The first reason he mentioned was that she did not have time for this as well as her work in the household, but he also admitted, after some hesitation, that he does not want her to work outside the household.

For people from South Orissa it was also self-evident that although the women from the older generation had worked, the younger generation of women did not. There was no need for women to work and the men did not allow them to.

The withdrawal of women from the labour market had consequences for the households’ income, and explains the workers’ complaints about decreasing purchasing power. In 1953, it was set down that the decline in female employment led to dissatisfaction about family incomes, wage disputes and strikes. Managers’ Reports described unrest as a result of the dismissals, but, as suggested above, this occurred only occasionally. In the longer term, the withdrawal of women was also made possible by increasing real wages. From the mid 1960s, the real wage started to increase rapidly and by the end of the 1980s, the real wage was almost twice as high as in 1960.
Thus, initially, industrial labour provided new opportunities for women, but these opportunities were lost after the introduction of women-specific labour legislation, combined with a diminishing labour shortage and changes in the production process. The fast decline in employment opportunities, which started in the 1930s but gained momentum in the 1950s, hit the adult male worker less hard than it did the working population as a whole. Women became increasingly confined to the home. The forced decline in female industrial labour was accompanied by a change in norms about the desirability of women working outside the home, and regional differences in these converged. This made the declining employment less visible or felt: the decline of female labour was not seen as something entirely negative.

4. Conclusion: towards a single male earner

This paper began with the observation that there are no women and children working in today’s India’s large-scale, organized industries. This should be taken quite literally. Women and children do form an important part of the labour force, in agriculture, in the so-called informal sector and in the factories which do not adhere to official regulations. The conclusion about changing household strategies are relevant only for those households which have been able to secure a foothold in the registered industries, in which conditions have improved. Because of industrial stagnation and the labour-extensive character of the industrial development, the percentage of households which obtains an income from this industry has hardly grown, if at all, during this century.

In contradiction of images of an indefinite labour surplus in Third World cities, I found that the supply of labour was, in fact, very ‘elastic’: supply was not unlimited but was adjusted to the demand. This elasticity was probably not caused by alternative opportunities in the industrial area. A first reason for the elasticity was the continuing link with the land. Because of this, turnover or circulation of labour remained quite high and people continued to return to their villages of origin in times of crisis. The continuing link with the land functioned as a security valve in case of unemployment and saved the urban labour market from more and earlier over-filling.

Also, the supply of labour was adjusted through a change in family strategies. This century has witnessed a change from a situation where many family members worked, towards a pattern with a single male earner. Families withdrew women from the labour market. This was forced by changing recruitment strategies following female-specific labour legislation and the development of a labour surplus. But the decline was embedded in a middle-class or upper-caste ideology that restricted the mobility of women outside the household. Children were also withdrawn from the labour market, and were sent to school.
for a longer period. The main trend was towards exclusive adult male employment. Children began to work at an older age, staying at school for a longer period, and women became increasingly confined to the home, a trend made possible by increasing real wages in this industry.

Developments in the labour market were not only determined by fluctuations in demand, in this case the industry. The decline in employment opportunities did not lead to a proportionate increase in unemployment, or to an even growth of a labour ‘reserve army’. Individuals or families decided whether to offer their labour on the market. In a context of poverty, these decisions might seem obvious, but this is only partly so, and I found many instances where the choices could not be explained by reference to economic factors. Within one family, one person might go out to work - the man, or more people, including women and children. These decisions were the result of a complex of factors, of economic necessity, of opportunities for employment, and of cultural factors, like ideas about who should work and who should not.

NOTES:

1. The research was carried out while I was employed by the Erasmus University Rotterdam. The field research was made possible by a grant from NWO, the Dutch foundation for scientific research. Fieldwork was carried out with the indispensable assistance of Gautam Sanyal.

2. In the case of the jute industry, the destruction of the hand-loom industry was not very important: the growing industry captured new markets rather than the existing one. But there had been a flourishing hand-loom industry in the region, the hereditary occupation of the Kapali caste, which lost in the competition with the new mills. Cf. Government of Bengal, Department of Agriculture and Industries, Report of the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee (Alipore: Bengal Government Press, 1940); K.P. Chattopadyay, A Socio-Economic Survey of Jute Labour (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1952).


4. Report of the Government of Bengal Unemployment Enquiry Committee 2 Vols. (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Depot, 1925). In 1922, the Government said it was not aware of any exceptional degree of unemployment among poorer classes. Government of Bengal, Commerce Department, Commerce Branch, March 1922, 1Q, Progs. A 15-16 (the archives of the Government of Bengal are located in the India Office Library and Records in London [A proceedings] and in the West Bengal State Archive in Calcutta [also B proceedings]). In 1934, the Secretary of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce finally recognized the problem: ‘The unemployment problem is so frequently looked upon as a problem distinct from the general problem of trade and industrial organisation ... [but] it involves the whole economic, social and educational problem of the community. The immediate prob-
lem is no doubt one of finding work or means of subsistence for the unemployed among Anglo-Indians, Bengal Bhadralog and the agricultural and labouring classes [...]'. Govt. of Bengal, Comm., Comm., April 1934, 2E-1, A 3-6.

5. Average daily employment decreased from 328 177 in 1930 to 268 289 in 1931 and 254 314 in 1932. Total industrial employment in Bengal decreased from 563 887 to 480 439 and 454 007. Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act in Bengal (1932). ‘For some time past owing to the abolition of multiple shifts there has been some surplus labour in Kankinarrah and no necessity is felt for any improvement in recruiting [...] The question of unemployment is not very acute in Kankinarrah but it is reported that about 8 per cent. to 9 per cent. of the total labour strength are idle and in search of employment.’ Kankinarrah Labour Union, in: Report of the Royal Commission of Labour in India (RCLI) (1931), Vol. 5, pt.I, 262.


7. According to Roy, the workers’ complement decreased to 150,000 in the early 1990s, but no recent IJMA figures are available to confirm this. Biren Roy, ‘Jute Mill-Owners’ Offensive against Workers’, Economic and Political Weekly (5 September 1992) 1893-4.


9. In Indian historiography the sardar has been portrayed as a lackey of management and exerting almost unlimited power over the workers. I do not agree with the general drift of the argument, as I have described in my thesis: A. de Haan, Unsettled Settlers. Migrant Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Calcutta (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994).

10. When employers spoke of a shortage, they meant a shortage of skilled and efficient workers, especially of spinners and weavers. For example, in 1951, the manager of Sammuggur North Jute Mill wrote: ‘A shortage of weavers was experienced during an exceptionally long, severe hot season and frequently resulted in looms standing idle [...]. The position improved with the coming of the rainy season but the shortage of experienced Spinners and Weavers persisted to the end of the year.’ Even in the 1970s, the manager of Victoria Jute Mill complained about a shortage of labour in specific departments. References from the company archive of Thomas Duff and Co., Managers’ Reports to Directors, 1930-1974, at the University of Dundee, Archive Department, MS 86/V/8.


12. In this interview, carried out by Samita Sen, the woman contradicted herself. When it was stated that she thus had to pay Rs. 5 to get a job, she answered: ‘Yes, when you came from the village, the sardar would come to you and say, come I will give you work. He would give you some money. And they would get work.’ It
seems that in this case the *sardar* gave an advance, which put the women into debt. The meaning of *jalpani* (lit. water-water; to appease somebody) is not unequivocal: on the one hand it has the meaning of bribery, on the other hand it is a gift for, f.e., promising students. *Backshish* means tip, gratuity.

13. New opportunities may also have developed outside the jute industry, but it is not very likely that this changed the fate of the workers much. Although industrial employment expanded, industrial labour as a percentage of the urban labour force declined after 1951 and it is thus not likely that many opportunities were available in the urban environment. The workers’ accounts also do not suggest that there was much mobility towards other sectors.


15. The link between the village and the returning migration also implies that there is a bias in the research data. I have only interviewed the people who had jobs and did not return. It is well possible that the stories of the people who went back to their villages are different from the ones who stayed.


18. *Annual Report Factories Act*, 1925. The Certifying Surgeon noted: ’I am told [the shortage] is due to Hindustani labour refusing to allow their girls to work in mills as half-timers in the spinning departments [...] The majority of the girls now working in jute mills in all districts belong to the Oriya and Madrasi class.’


21. In 1933, Stuart, who had been Magistrate in jute mill areas, still wrote: ’The provisions as regards limitation of hours for men and women and children are very often defeated by imperfect means of identification. The organisation of the jute mills is such that it is possible for men to work as “badlis” (substitute labour) without the knowledge of responsible authorities, and with the connivance of lower supervising ranks.’ Govt. of Bengal, Comm., Comm., 1933, 1A-21, Progs. A 5-37. The question of certification of age remains to be investigated. In the absence of birth registration, establishing the age of children was at best an estimate. Chabila, an ex-jute mill worker, told us that he started work when he was ten or twelve years old and worked in two mills at the same time. It was the task of a ’certifying surgeon’ to determine the age of children in the mill, and Chabila told that he was checked to see whether he had changed his teeth. See Ghosh,


23. The Report of the Committee of Industrial Unrest of 1921, (Government of Bengal, Comm., Comm., July 1921, 2R-67, Progs. B 40-45), and the Report of the RCLI of 1931 were a reaction to this. Both conclude that it was necessary to get into close contact with the workers.

24. Annual Report Factories Act, 1935. In that year, of 513 199 employed in all industries in Bengal, there were 10 879 adolescents (2 152 in jute) and 2 328 children.

25. Subdivisional Officer of Barrackpore, Govt. of Bengal, Comm., Comm., Feb.1933, 1A-21, Progs. A 5-37. He wrote: ‘Many other difficulties arising from the working of the multiple shift system in the jute industry do not seem to have been taken into account. The managers were never able to shut the gates of their mills. During times of strikes and agitation in the mills agitators could enter the mill compounds and pass unnoticed in the general movements inwards and outwards of the shifts [...]’ (my italics).

26. The Annual Report Factories Act, 1925 stated: ‘[T]he difficulties arising from the exploitation of child labour by time-keepers and sirdars have resulted, in some mills, in this labour being dispensed with altogether, and in others, in a reduction of the number employed.’ The same report of 1934 noted that until 1930, labour worked ‘on the much-criticised system of “overlapping shifts.”’ This system was responsible for a tremendous amount of over-employment and a number of other abuses, and the Act was powerless to stop it, but the trade depression which commenced in 1930 effectively put a stop to it, the mills being forced, for economic reasons, to adopt shorter hours and to change over to the single-shift system. Since then, it may be said that, over-employment and irregular working in jute mills has absolutely ceased...’


28. Duff & Co., Managers’ Reports, Titaghur No.2, 1931, 3. The Annual Report Factories Act of 1931 noted a decrease of children from 11 646 to 3 462: ‘In addition to the natural consequences of an unprecedented year of bad trade and the change over to the single-shift system of working, this heavy slump in the employment of children is mainly the result of the continuance of the policy of substituting adults in place of children. The supply of labour now exceeds the demand, and in view of the restrictions imposed by the Act on the employment of children, mill managers now affirm that adult labour is more economical and less troublesome.’


31. Some reports, like the one by the IIC 1916-18, stated that no steady and skilled class of operatives would come into existence without education. But employers were against it. Schooling was thought to create ‘Babu aspiration’ (to become a clerical worker) and employers argued that schools established by mills were not taken advantage of. Cf. IIC 1916-18, Vol.II, witnesses no.162 and 166; and the comments by Adams, Parliamentary Papers. The Annual Report Factories Act, 1927, stated that some mills complained that the school to which they contributed was not visited well, and that those children who attended had no inclination to enter mill service. The lack of education is reflected in the age of joining of the people interviewed: one-fifth joined before they were sixteen years old; one-third when they were between sixteen and eighteen. Of the workers interviewed, 42% (of 53) said they had had no education; while 28% had had some education, but less than Class 5.

32. In Titagarh in 1981, 55% of the men and 34% of the women were literate; in 1991 this was 60% and 42% (figures Census of India). In 1991, according to the municipality, there were 38 approved primary schools and 9 approved secondary schools in Titagarh (plus about 20 unapproved).

33. In the 70 interviews with men, there were 56 clear answers. Thirty seven men stated that their wives did not work outside the household, and 24 of them also stated that their mothers had not worked. Seven men said that their mothers had worked, but that the present generation of women did not. In 12 cases, the wives of the men worked, 5 of whom provided the principal or only income.

34. See Samita Sen, ‘Women Workers in the Bengal Jute Industry’.
36. Sen argued that women have been marginalized during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many of the female occupations declined. Whereas most of the up-country migrants were single men, women in the villages were economically active. Sen, ‘Women Workers in the Bengal Jute Industry’, 97-8.
39. Figures for his mill show that four women were working in sacking weaving, but it does not say where they came from. Foley, Report on Labour in Bengal.
41. See De Haan, ‘The Jute Industry and its Workers.’
42. Singh described the cultural differences within India, which she labelled the North-South distinction. There was more migration by unmarried women, widows and

43. Pandey described the difference in status, between sharif (respectable) and razil (of labouring people). One indicator of this was whether women went out to work. Gyan Pandey, 'Rallying Round The Cow. Sectarian Strife in the Bhojpuri Region, c.1888-1917', Subaltern Studies, Vol.2 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986) 60-129.

44. My interviews showed that there were specific objections to working in the city, compared to the village. People first said that women in the village worked only in the house, but this often included work on the land. People said or admitted hesitantly that women also worked on other people's land. But when it comes to the city, a barrier seemed to be crossed. Women were not supposed to work, not in the factory, not on the market, but only inside the house. The city seemed to contain more risk to honour than the village.

45. Foley, Report on Labour in Bengal. There were 607 adult workers in this department; 74 men, 182 Muslims. If all men in this department were Hindu, there would be 108 Muslim women. 'A certain number of Mohammedan families emigrate from Northern Bengal when faced by want in their own homes; these people usually keep together, and husband, wife and children may be found working in a group.' Women's Labour in Bengal Industries, 6-7.

46. Curjel, Women's Labour in Bengal Industries, 6.

47. I disagree with Banerjee, who concluded that women failed to claim their position in the industry (Banerjee, ‘Working Women in Colonial Bengal’). Her use of figures in this article are debatable and in one case wrong. Banerjee (personal communication) agreed with this.


49. This information was obtained from the Labour Office of Titaghur No.2 Jute Mill, ‘Minutes of the SMLO’s’, 1952-63, Minutes of March 30, 1963 and August 17, 1963.


53. For example, a maternity benefit scheme was introduced in Kelvin, providing benefit for two weeks before and three weeks after the birth, but without success. It was argued that they abuse the privilege by taking employment in other mills.’ Govt. of Bengal, Comm., Comm., Dec.1924, 1F-40, Progs. A 40-54.

54. Maternity clinics in Titaghur and Kankinarrah were the pioneers and some mills introduced creches. Annual Report Factories Act, 1927. In 1931, the number of benefits given was 2 380 (50 000 women were working in the industry). Ibid., 1931.

55. ‘The economic need for the employment of women in industry is acknowledged, consequently, as all women labour in this country is married labour, the welfare
activities of all factories employing women should include provision, in some form or other, for the care of children whilst their parents are at work.' Annual Report Factories Act, 1932.

56. ‘Under the Maternity Benefit Act 1939, every woman employed in a factory for not less than nine months immediately preceding the date of her confinement is entitled to receive from her employers maternity benefit at the rate of her average daily earnings [...] for a period of eight weeks; i.e. four weeks immediately preceding and four weeks immediately following the birth.’ Duff, Managers’ Report, Titaghur No.1, 1958.


60. Ibid.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of a family wage, a wage sufficient to maintain a (male) breadwinner with wife and children, had struck strong roots in the labour movement in the Netherlands. The English term living wage even became Dutch usage, but more often it was called gezinsloon (family wage), a word introduced in the 1890s by Catholic theologians. Like their British counterparts, social-democrats and trade unionists preferred terms like standaardloon (fixed wage) or minimum-loon (minimum wage). All these terms got their specific meaning in the last decade of the nineteenth century, a time of rapid economic and social change in the Netherlands. Looking back, it is surprising to see how much the wage question became a subject of public and political debate in those years.

In this article I want to explore the development of the most important ideas and debates on the issue of family wage by the parties concerned, as well as the practical results at a local and national level. As an example of the former, I have chosen the city of Amsterdam, because it initiated the first municipal legislation in the field of minimum wages, and later on also in the field of family wage policy. The introduction in Amsterdam of the ‘breadwinner norm’ in municipal legislation even set an example for the rest of the country. Ever since, the concept of gezinsloon, as defined almost exclusively by the denominational unions, came to stand for a modest minimum wage plus children allowances.

1. Family wage and the ‘male breadwinner norm’

The interest in the issue of the family wage came from quite different directions. In 1887, liberals, almost exclusively of ‘bourgeois’ breed, spoke for the first time of the ‘inadequacy of men’s wages with respect to the maintenance of
One year earlier, the first statistically based workers’ budgets had been published. The so-called Radicals in Amsterdam municipal politics cited them at length in the debates held in the city council of Amsterdam in 1892 on the fixing of a minimum wage for municipal workers and workers employed by contractors dealing with the municipality. The conservative majority in the council appeared sensitive to their arguments, but was as yet unwilling to decide favourably. Most council members, however, had to acknowledge that current wages were far too low to maintain a family properly. The idea of a family wage was thus commonly accepted, as was - with more hesitation - the ‘ethical’ task of the local administration to set an example in this field.

Trade unions of building workers, gas workers and the like urged for legislation in this field. They were supported by an important section of public opinion, and even by some employers, who stressed the need of public regulation of wages and working hours to fight unfair competition. More interesting still are the arguments about ‘national efficiency’ advanced by some employers and economists, who argued in favour of shorter working hours and higher wages because of the supposedly higher productivity of a labour force that was better cared for and more motivated by a stable family life. Ethical, economic and also political motives, as well as foreign precedents, especially British, all these played a role in the eventual introduction of a minimum wage by the city of Amsterdam in 1894.

The labour movement had been divided from the beginning and was still very weak. Perhaps that is why it took great interest in the public regulation of wages. In Amsterdam and other towns, union after union petitioned the authorities to bring in a ‘living wage’ for those employed by the municipal authorities directly or indirectly, ‘sufficient to maintain their families properly’. They hoped that the example given by local administration would lead to a certain standardization of wages generally. Budgets made up by the unions themselves or by experts demonstrated the shortcomings of earnings. By espousing a family ideal, for which public opinion was highly susceptible at that time, they were able to rally strong support for their demands. Directly linked to this ideal, perhaps even as an intrinsic part of it, were the efforts made by the unions to limit or sometimes even prohibit the entrance of married women into the labour market. The exclusion of women from the labour market was indeed, as Jane Humphries argued, ‘one of the few tactics that could be accompanied by a supportive mobilization of bourgeois ideology’. Perhaps not surprisingly, up to this point there is a remarkable similarity to the attitude of the British labour movement at this time. If it is possible to judge the effects of such a policy from the participation of married women in outdoor work, the resemblance between the Dutch and the British situation is striking, since in both countries no more than 10% of married women held officially registered paid jobs at the turn of the century.
In the Netherlands, where female labour had never been as common as in Britain, the ideal of a *family wage* was closer still to generally accepted practice. Outside agriculture, family systems of labour, so common in British coal mines, cottage industries and early textile factories, were unimportant or even non-existent. According to Wally Seccombe in his analysis of the origins of the ‘male breadwinner norm’, it was precisely these four major strands of the British proletariat-in-formation that had been opposed to the exclusion of women. It is only in the fifth of these strands as distinguished by Seccombe, the artisanal households of the skilled trades, that he found ‘the material conditions for the flourishing of an exclusive male breadwinner ideology’. He attributed the exclusion of women from the skilled trades by craft unions to a ‘residual patrilineal tradition’, which ‘bolstered the expression of masculine breadwinner pride’. The ‘stabilization’ or better restructuring of patriarchal relations by excluding women, and the propagation of a *family wage* could, in this neo-Marxist reasoning, only be the result of collusion between working class organizations, dominated by skilled labourers, and the bourgeoisie. However, in view of the much more complicated nature of gender relations, such an analysis appears to see all too much of a conspiracy to be able to explain the overall acceptance of a ‘male breadwinner norm’, both in Britain and in the Netherlands.

The present state of Dutch research makes it impossible to identify any particular ‘strand of the proletariat-in-formation’ as a decisive social force in the construction of such a norm. It can be argued, however, that the ideal of a *family wage* became part of the trade union struggle because it fitted in so well with bourgeois ideology. Unlike in Britain, the link was constructed by denominational trade unions, which eventually succeeded in dominating the debate on the wage question. Almost from the start in the nineties, the character of the debate became much more ethical, not to say theological, than in Britain and other countries. Perhaps as a seemingly inevitable result of the specific Dutch *domineescultuur* (‘clergy culture’), it became part of an ongoing struggle between the denominational and the neutral and social-democratic forces in the labour movement and, for that matter, in society at large. In the course of the debate on the *family wage*, the non-denominational elements found themselves in an untenable position. At the turn of the century, when reproduction and thus the family, became a central aim of social policy, they showed themselves incapable of defining a family policy of their own. While the denominational organizations seized the opportunity to incorporate wage policy within the field of family policy, the others, especially the social democrats, were forced onto the defence. In the early twentieth century, it was precisely this field that became a battleground of class and gender, largely dominated by the denominational organizations which were always eager to demonstrate their love for the family. How convincing they were when the time came to make their ideals
work, is another matter. Whatever the practical results of family policy at a local and national level were, and however meagre the results may have been, the denominational organizations succeeded in presenting themselves as the champions of family life. In the end, the social democrats had no option but to follow this policy.

2. Dilemmas of denominational wage theory

The first important contribution to the debate on the family wage came from conservative Protestants. At the request of Patrimonium, a Protestant mixed labour union, a Protestant Social Congress (Christelijk Sociaal Congres) was convened in 1891. At this congress, a number of clergymen, all of them leaders of the conservative Protestant political party (the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij) and churches (the Gereformeerden), solemnly condemned liberal 'Manchester' wage theory. Not supply and demand, but the right of workers to a decent living (menschwaardig bestaan) should be the determinant of a just wage, or as Reverend A. Wiersinga put it: 'Holy Scripture indicates, although it does not directly mention the wage question, that wages have to be related to the cost of living (read: 1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Cor. 9:14; Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7)'\textsuperscript{16} The representative of the Utrecht branch of Patrimonium, J. Herdes, unsuccessfully tried to get a more substantial resolution from the congress by demanding a wage rate fixed by the government, 'high enough to provide the most necessary needs of a family of man, wife and four or five children'.\textsuperscript{17} H. Bavinck, a man of great authority in conservative Protestant circles, opposed such an outspoken statement by arguing that objective and subjective factors, the value of labour and the needs of the worker, never could be accommodated.\textsuperscript{18} For many years to come this kind of argument was to determine the attitude of the Protestant social movement: a lot of biblically justified ethics, but very little practical advice.\textsuperscript{19} The Protestant labour movement advocated a breadwinner wage, without ever solving the theoretical problems behind the introduction of the factor 'need' in the definition of (minimum) wages.

The Catholics and their trade unions succeeded much better in constructing such a theoretical base. They started a search for a Catholic wage theory soon after the publication of the papal encyclical Rerum Novarum in 1891. The Dutch Catholics were not alone in this search. For 'the application of ancient Christian principles to modern industrial society' they could look to the Belgian, French, German and even British Catholics.\textsuperscript{20} Even more than conservative Protestant opinion, Social-Catholic opinion was strongly shaped by theologians. In 1895 one of them set the tone:
'The family wage [...] is not only one of the greatest, no, it is the greatest question in the whole religious and social field. In the denial of the family wage lies the acceptance of the modern state, with complete emancipation of women, with equal right to work for men and women alike, with dissolution of holy matrimony, with state education for children'.

In his plea for a *family wage*, patriarchal sentiments ('the husband has to stand again at the head of the family') were as important as anti-socialist ones. Catholic theorists often used the idea of a *family wage* to expose the socialists as enemies of the family. As it was based on Scripture and sanctioned by the Pope and Catholic tradition, the idea became a rallying point for the Catholic labour movement. In the words of the leader of the Catholic Social Campaign, *(Katholieke Sociale Actie)*, P.J.M. Aalberse, its tasks were 'above all to create the facilities for an orderly family life'. Socialists were a threat to the patriarchal order, as were feminists and, worst of all, neo-Malthusians. The Catholic labour movement fought them all by sticking to the *family wage* as a triple-edged weapon. Because of his obligation to procreate, every male worker had a natural, or 'strict' right to a *family wage*, and by right of 'strict justice' this had to be absolute; only then it could lay claim to the predicate 'just wage'. However, this statement, made in 1904 by the Jesuit P.B. Bruin, was almost immediately followed by a reference to 'great economic and financial problems' as an excuse for a - temporary - exception to this absolute rule.

The weak spot in the Catholic theory of the just wage *(rechtvaardig arbeidsloon)* was the level to be set for such an absolute *family wage*. Pope Leo XIII said that it should be sufficient to provide for the family needs of an 'honest and saving worker', but the moralists had trouble defining the right size of that model family. Most of them sought the solution in a hypothetical mean number of dependent children: three or four, sometimes even five. These numbers were rather accurate as a mean, but at the same time meaningless because so many families, especially Catholic families had many more children. The average number of children born into the families of Catholic labourers married between 1919 and 1928, when the Catholic birthrate was already somewhat decreasing, still amounted 7.5. An absolute minimum, valid for all workers above a certain age, could never provide for the needs of these 'true Catholic large families'.

The Catholic labour unions, growing in strength after the turn of the century, increasingly became aware of these shortcomings. For instance, one of their leaders, W.C.J. Passtoors, demonstrated convincingly that family needs were almost twice as high as the current wage level. Admitting that a realistic living wage was unattainable for the time being, he stated that he was content with a minimum in accordance with a 'standard wage'. His realistic attitude was shared by P.J.M. Aalberse and other experts on social policy, assembled in the
Fabian-inspired Central Office for Social Advice (Centraal Bureau voor Sociale Adviezen). Their advice and regular reports had certainly been a great help to the administrators of a growing number of communities, provinces and even government departments who were willing to introduce public regulations of minimum wages and maximum working hours. However, as Passtoors and Aalberse had to admit, the predominantly Catholic communities in the southern part of the country were, as yet, shamefully reluctant to introduce such schemes.27

3. Amsterdam interlude: discussions in the city council

It was in Amsterdam that a possible solution for the problems related to the absolute family wage was found. In 1906 for the first time the idea of a relative family wage came to the fore in the debates on the minimum wage for city employees.28 Because of the important role played by the trade unions and the Dutch Labour Party (Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij or SDAP), these ample debates offer a good opportunity for looking at the different opinions and various tendencies in the labour movement. The provisional introduction in 1904 of a minimum wage for skilled and unskilled employees of the city and its public utility companies had not satisfied the trade unions. In numerous petitions Protestant, Catholic and social democratic unions alike all demanded further raising of the minimum.29 It is interesting to note, that the minimum asked for by the Protestant, and even more so by the Catholic unions surpassed the demands of the social-democratic unions.30 The reason has to be sought in the degree of adherence to the family wage. The Protestant Union of Council Workers (Christelijke Gemeente Werkliedenbond) and the Catholic union St. Laurentius argued that the current minimum ‘came far short in providing for even the modest needs of a family’. The Catholic union was even more outspoken by stating that ‘it is no matter of dispute when a head of the family wants a wage that will enable him to maintain his family’. The social-democratic unions did not mention the family at all, but were the only ones to stress the equal rights of women workers to earn a minimum wage.

The SDAP councillors P.L. Tak and J. Loopuit supported these demands, without, however, mentioning the demand for equal pay. Right at the start of the debates, Tak used a budget of a family of man, wife and three children (amounting to 13,19 guilders) to demonstrate that the current minimum (11,40 guilders) was not enough ‘to live here in the town of Amsterdam with a family’.31 However, this well documented budget played no role of any importance in the debates in the years to come, that were dominated by the question of family allowances.32 The denominational and neutral unions also had their spokesmen in the council. J. Douwes, leader of Patrimonium, and J.W. Smit,
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president of the Amsterdam branch of the Dutch Roman Catholic People’s Union (Nederlandsche Roomsch-Katholieke Volksbond), together with P. Nolting, for many years president of the Amsterdam branch of the neutral General Dutch Workers’ Union (Algemeen Nederlandsch Werklieden Verbond) defended amendments with were very much in line with the proposals of the SDAP. Douwes even made a plea for full pay for women workers.

Until then there was not much difference of opinion between the representatives of the denominational and non-denominational labour movements. They all based their demands implicitly or explicitly on the needs of a family and thus on the male breadwinner norm. Things changed, however, when it became clear that a general rise of the minimum wage was not acceptable to the majority of the council. At that moment an amendment, submitted by the radical liberal Z. van den Bergh, was presented as an alternative. It stipulated that the minimum wage should only be raised in cases where ‘the worker older than 23 years had become head of the family’. As is clear from the minutes, this proposal was finally accepted as the second best solution by all, denominational representatives and socialist representatives alike. The halfheartedness of the support for Van den Bergh’s proposal is surprising, however, because he strongly appealed to the solidarity between ‘those whom we are calling progressives and those who are calling themselves Christians’. He further argued, that his proposal was in accordance with ‘ethical, and for that reason true Christian principles […] by helping the big families’. When the council voted in favour of his amendment by a narrow majority, it was said less clearly that the payment of such a small premium limited the costs for the city purse, but this was certainly also in their minds.

4. Family allowances: confessional initiative, socialist response

The city of Amsterdam had now set an important example. Soon after 1906, marital subsidies, especially children allowances, became popular themes in denominational propaganda and politics. The Catholic and, more reluctantly, the Protestant labour movement gave up their preference for an absolute minimum wage and opted for a relative family wage. This change of policy was rather a pragmatic conclusion from all the talking about a ‘just wage’ and the real needs of large families (groote gezinnen) than a change of principles. The denominational unions and political parties were able to take the initiative in the debate by making themselves champions of the cause of large families. The social democrats, who propagated collective forms of support for mothers and children, and who sometimes even spoke of the ‘solution of the family’, were all too easily able to be depicted as ‘endeavouring to destroy the family, and trying to give the child in custody to the state, the parents to production’.
When in about 1912, the denominational offensive became strong enough for the successful introduction of children allowances for some categories of government employees, the social-democrats had to react. F.M. Wibaut, together with Frank van der Goes, one of the leading theoreticians of the party, took up the challenge by defending the socialist 'principles of wage formation'. In a well documented preliminary report (praeadvies) delivered at the annual meeting of the prestigious Society of General Economics and Statistics (Vereeniging voor Staathuishoudkunde en Statistiek), he argued that, theoretically, the limits of a minimum wage should be determined by 'the average labour productivity under normal production conditions'. Socialists should therefore aim at the enforcement of a minimum wage by law in accordance with this basic condition. He pointed to the British coal-miners and their successful struggle for a minimum wage at the highest possible level as an example to be followed by the Dutch labour movement. Wibaut did not make it clear, however, if such a minimum had to be a family wage. Nor did he mention equal pay or women's right to work. Most interesting are his statements about the acceptability to the socialist labour movement of family allowances. In the treatment of this sensitive subject Wibaut showed himself to be a shrewd politician. Knowing perfectly well how much the denominational organizations favoured this kind of relatively cheap family policy under the attractive slogan 'wage to the needs', he was fully aware of the difficulties a total rejection would cause. However, he had to reckon also with the government employees' unions, which, with the exception of the Catholic ones, unambiguously opposed any such scheme. These were the unions that happened to form a stronghold of social democracy in the trade union movement. It was impossible for Wibaut to ignore their objections. He therefore argued that, for the time being, family allowances would impede a much needed general pay rise, break the solidarity between family men and single workers, and reduce the readiness of wage action by part of the workers. For socialists, family allowances would only become acceptable if there was also a standard wage high enough to cover completely the costs of bringing up children. Under those conditions they could even get a 'very true anti-capitalist meaning'.

I have given so much attention to Wibaut's arguments because, for many years they were more or less the touchstone for official social democratic and union policy on this issue. Subtle enough to hold together Marxists and pragmatic socialists, as well as male chauvinists and feminists, this policy came to accentuate more and more the divisions between the social democratic and the denominational labour movement on this issue. The introduction of motherhood care (moederschapszorg) in the SDAP-programme of action proved insufficient to break the religious dominance in the field of family politics. The lasting emphasis on collective arrangements set social democracy apart from mainstream Dutch public opinion. Its policy was, moreover, theoretically un-
clear and, in practical terms, not very consistent. In the Amsterdam city council, Loopuit and Tak had voted in favour of the amendment by Van den Bergh mentioned above, and in 1912 Frank van der Goes had lent support to a family allowance scheme in the council of Hilversum. In the same year, however, SDAP parliamentarian J. ter Laan opposed the introduction of a similar scheme for teachers and spoke of a ‘premium for breeding’ (fokpremie). While this statement was to become notorious, his simultaneous plea for a minimum wage high enough ‘to live respectably as a family’ was to be long forgotten.

In 1912 the question of the relative family wage thus proved to be more important than ever before. The dividing lines between the denominational and social democratic tendencies in the labour movement were clearly drawn and time and again publicly demonstrated. Again in 1912, A. Kuyper, the political leader of the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij, criticized the Protestant teachers’ unions for joining a protest meeting organized by the ‘Marxists’ against the introduction of family allowances. The denominational unions closed their ranks and in the eventful years directly following the end of World War I reopened their offensive with still greater strength. In 1920, a coalition government of denominational parties introduced a child allowance scheme for all government employees, and in 1921, in response to an initiative from the Catholic labour representatives Haazevoet and Kuiper, it promised a serious study into the possibilities of a general scheme on the basis of public insurance. At that time various forms of wage subsidies had become widely accepted, while the fast growing system of unemployment benefits also included provisions for children and other dependants.

What was most threatening to social democratic wage policy was the successful effort by the Catholic union of textile workers to incorporate a child allowance scheme into the collective wage agreement of 1919. The socialist-led federation of trade unions, the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen (NVV), convened a special ‘congress against the family wage’ in reaction to this Catholic offensive. The resolution adopted by this congress reiterated Wibaut and Van der Waerden’s objections: family allowances were a threat to solidarity and, as such, an impediment to the class struggle. The demands of the NVV were just as predictable as its arguments: collective wage agreements had to be based on the principle of equal pay for equal work, with a minimum wage ‘on which all the employees with their families could live in a reasonable way’. F. van de Walle’s speech to the congress demonstrated how much the policy of holding on to the absolute family wage had forced the social-democratic labour movement into the defensive. Depicting the denominational supporters of family allowances as old-fashioned ‘wage depressers’, he accused their trade unions of playing into the hands of the employers by evading the struggle.

The tone of Van der Walle’s speech is a perfect illustration of the sharpness of the divisions between the denominational and the non-denominational ten-
dencies in the labour movement on this important issue. How difficult the defence of a socialist wage and family policy had become is demonstrated by the refusal to cooperate with the feminist Committee against the Family Wage (Comite van Actie tegen het Gezinsloon). It looked as if the socialists were as afraid of the feminists as they were of the denominational organizations. The very interesting debate held two years before in De Socialistische Gids between two leading social-democratic feminists hardly had any response. The ideas put forward in this debate by W. Mansholt-Andreae might otherwise have been a possible basis for a new departure. She advocated a ‘mother wage’, payable by the state to all mothers with young children as a way out of their economic dependence, as well as their material problems. Mothering had to be recognized as an important service to society and as such to be valued in money. Women entitled to these benefits should be left entirely free in how they spent the money, and they should never be compelled to do outdoor work or to use collective facilities.

Some years later, the Belgian union leader, Frans Engels criticized the unwillingness of the Dutch social democrats to support a relative family wage. His arguments were much in line with those of Mansholt-Andreae: a family wage paid to the man ‘enlarged the economic dependence of the woman, [...] placing her even more outside the whole society’. In contrast to this, the relative family wage would promote the emancipation of women. It was, moreover, a matter of social justice, because it ‘reckoned with the natural unequality existing in the case of fertility’. However, just like their British comrades, the Dutch social democrats held on to the idea of an absolute minimum wage. It was not until 1939, somewhat earlier than in Britain, that they were prepared, however reluctantly, to accept a general family allowances scheme, which remarkably enough covered only male workers and excluded unmarried mothers.

5. Conclusion

After 1906, the dividing character of the idea of a family wage became prominent in the Netherlands. The option by denominational unions for a relative family wage split the labour movement into two opposing camps: one unambiguously in defence of the male breadwinner norm and one never making clear what its choice for an absolute minimum wage in this respect could mean. The social democratic labour movement was pushed into a defensive position, since it never felt at ease in family politics. Its politics in this field were confined to a refusal to give serious attention to possible alternatives. The dominance of denominational organizations in family politics in the Netherlands was greatly favoured by the one-sided emphasis laid by the socialists on collective arrange-
ments. In the end, most of collective experiments undertaken proved a failure, not in the least because of the unwillingness of their own supporters.

In the Netherlands, the restructuring of the patriarchy (for which in Britain the trade union movement is held responsible) was much more the work of the denominational unions. Perhaps they could appeal to the patriarchal sentiments alive in almost every ‘strand of the proletariat-in-formation’. But the family policy as shaped by them served their material interests: for the numerous large families, especially in the still very religious countryside, family allowances were of greater and more direct importance than the collective solutions proposed by the socialists. Together with a steady rise in wages and social security, for which perhaps we may credit the wage struggle led by the socialist trade unions, the family allowance schemes initiated by the denominational unions helped to create a better material base for working class marriages, so much under the strain of low and uncertain wages and, in the Netherlands, so much burdened with children.

NOTES

* This article is based on a paper presented to the 8th British-Dutch Conference on Labour History, Manchester 1992. I thank Ad Knotter for his valuable advise.

1. The first was J.F. Chrétien, Voor of tegen Familie-loon? (Utrecht, 1895).
3. Published in Bijdragen van het Statistisch Instituut 3 (1886) 22-28, and 7 (1891) 143-180.
5. For instance J.C. van Marken, ‘Normale werkdag en minimumloon’, Werkmansbode 16 (1891); J. Th. Mouton, Voorschriften omtrent minimumloon en maximum arbeidsduur in bestekken (1894); M.W.F. Treub, De ontwikkeling der staathuishoudkunde tot sociale economie (Amsterdam, 1896).
6. Rapport over geschiedenis, inhoud en werking van bepalingen betreffende minimumloon en maximum arbeidsduur in bestekken van bouwwerken (Amsterdam, 1901).


23. P.B. Bruin s.j., Leiddraad bij de studie der Sociale Qaestie (Nijmegen, 1904) 204.


25. Damsm, Van hoeksteen tot fundament, 216 (mean number of children per family in 1899 en 1909: 2.47). The Statistiek der huwelijksvruchtbaarheid in Nederland (‘s-Gravenhage, 1934) enables us to calculate the percentage of children living at
any time in families of seven children and more, namely: 67%. See: Dysselbloem, De gezinstoeslag, 54.


29. The petitions in: Gemeentearchief Amsterdam (‘Municipal Archives Amsterdam’), archival nr. 5174, *Arbeidszaken* 1907/134; the shortened contents in: *Gemeenteblad* 1905, afd. 1, 129-146.

30. The Christelijke Gemeente Werklieden Bond asked for a minimum of 12,60 guilders for unskilled and 13,80 guilders for skilled workers; de Catholic union *St. Laurentius* for respectively 13,20 and 15,80 guilders, while the Bond van Gemeente Werklieden (led by social-democrats) demanded not more than 12,00 and 12,60 guilders with two-yearly pay rises.


32. In Britain, by contrast, the British Society for Family Allowances, led by Eleanor Rathbone, constantly encouraged research in the field of malnutrition and income distribution to demonstrate the inadequacy of wages and the needs of mothers and children. Cf. Macnicol, *The Movement for Family Allowances*.


34. *Ibidem*, 1008 and 1011.


44. *De Standaard*, 05-03-1912.


46. *Tiende Verslag van den Toestand en Verrichtingen van het NVV* (1922), 33/34.

47. *Ibidem*, 35.
48. ‘Verslag van de rede, welke door F. van de Walle op het gemeenschappelijk congres van 16 jan. 1921 van NVV en ANV is gehouden’, *De Vakbeweging* (1921) 125.
50. W. Mansholt-Andreæ, ‘De Vrouw in het Gezin’ I, II and III, *De Socialistische Gids* 3 (1918) 241-250, 353-369 and 448-465; M. Wibaut-Berdenis van Berlekom, ‘De vrouw in het gezin’, *ibidem*, 808-830. The discussion was brought before a wider audience when *Het Weekblad*, a theoretical weekly attached to the socialist paper *Het Volk*, published a critique by Carry Pothuis-Smit (12-07-1918), a reply by Mansholt-Andreæ (26-07-1918), and a last word again by Pothuis-Smit (13-08-1918). No one, however, really replied to Mansholt’s arguments and for many years to come the socialist press remained totally silent on this issue.
In 1928 Victoria Sobieski’s husband left Chrosnica, a small village near Poznan in Poland. She stayed behind with her three young children. Her husband had to leave his home and family as he could not find any work in Poland. Accompanied by a friend, he went to the mines in Limburg, a province in the Netherlands, because, as the woman told me, ‘they had heard you could make money there’.

This short story is only one of the countless examples of people who, because of difficult local circumstances were forced to leave their homes in hopes of finding better economic opportunities elsewhere. Sometimes they found work in the next city, sometimes they had to cross international borders. New opportunities were found not only in the expanding industrial areas of Europe, but also in the New World.

There were migrants of all kinds. Some of them migrated alone, and many of these subsequently married and started a family. On other occasions, heads of the household, spouses and children migrated one after another, more or less maintaining the original household in the process. It also happened that complete families migrated together to a new environment. Migration was a family decision, although it influenced the family organization in many ways. L.P. Moch formulated it as follows: ‘General studies of the behaviour of peasants and proletarians in Europe suggest that the family dimension of migration lies at the heart of decisions to move, choice of destination, and both work and social behaviour at the new location’. It is evident that the relation between family organization and migration is a complex one. The following issues seem particularly important: 1) the role played by the family in the migration process of its members; 2) the social and economic relations that existed between the
movers and the stayers; 3) the ways the family organization was affected by migration.

In this article, I want to discuss these issues, taking the experience of the Sobieskis as the point of departure. The order is as follows. It starts with the story of the Sobieskis. On the basis of the pattern that can be discovered in their experiences, I then discuss the effect of migration on family organization. I conclude by trying to answer the questions above. The category ‘family’ is used not only in the sense of parents, children and siblings, but also for uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and family-in-law. The focus on labour migration implies that political and religious refugees and women who had left home to get married are excluded. The article focuses on the peasants and proletarians from Europe who left their home to go to the west. After a restricted overview of the relevant literature (mainly concerned with immigration in the United States), I try to draw a general picture of the relation between labour migration and family organization.

1. The story of the Sobieskis

Mr Sobieski had heard rumours at the local market that labourers were needed for the mines in Limburg. He was so eager to find work that he took the risk of leaving his home and family in order to try his luck in this unknown and far-away province of the Netherlands. The Sobieskis were in debt. They even had to borrow money to pay for their children’s diapers. Mr Sobieski could not find work in his homeland because Poland was experiencing increasing economic problems. When he heard of new opportunities in the Netherlands he wrote to the Polish consul who took care of all the papers he needed in order to go. During his first two years in Limburg, Mr Sobieski boarded with a Polish family. Mrs Sobieski stayed in Poland on her parents’ farm. She survived on the earnings from the farm and the money sent by her husband. The plan was that she would join her husband after he had found a steady job and their debts had been paid. They had expected this reunion in the Netherlands to take place after about four years, but Mr Sobieski found a house within two years and she was able to join him then.

Mrs Sobieski arrived in Brunssum with the wife of the companion her husband had had in 1930. Two years later, Mr Sobieski’s sister and her husband also came to Limburg. Mr Sobieski and his brother-in-law both worked in the State Mine ‘Hendrik’ in Brunssum. Other members of the family went to mines in Bochum in the Ruhr region. Although Mrs Sobieski did not live with her parents any more, she and her husband continued to support them. Other relatives in Poland were also supported with food packets.
At first, Mrs Sobieski had problems becoming accustomed to the new environment and she was homesick. Before coming to Limburg she had never been away from her village in Poland at all. Soon after arriving in Limburg she met other migrants who had also migrated from Chrosnica. They were a big help in making her feel at home in Limburg. Informal Polish leisure institutions were also very important in helping her to get used to life there. She described the function of these institutions as follows: ‘The atmosphere was very sociable. We danced and sang together. But it was not only sociable there, this way we saw each other’. The contact between the Poles was very important in creating a Polish community. Polish family life continued to take place within this community.

Mrs Sobieski had intended to stay in Limburg for only five years. However, she died in Limburg after having lived there for 65 years. All of her children had remained in Limburg and had eventually married Dutch people. There were two reasons why the Sobieskis did not return to Poland. Firstly, living conditions in their homeland were very poor. Secondly, they became so accustomed to life in Limburg, they did not feel comfortable in Poland any more. Even after her husband had died, Mrs Sobieski did not want to return. She had become a member of the Dutch society and most of her friends were Dutch. She felt at home in the Netherlands.

Certain characteristics of the experiences of this Polish family stand out. First, migration was not an individual decision but was mediated in networks of family and friends. Mr Sobieski did not migrate alone but with a friend. Later he was joined by his wife, his sister and her family. Second, networks of friends and family helped the newly arrived migrants settle in their new location. Migrant institutions were also instrumental in adapting to the new circumstances. Third, social and economic relations between movers and stayers did not disappear and continued long after the migration process. While Mrs Sobieski was still living in Poland she received money from her husband, and after they were reunited, they continued to send money and goods to the family who had stayed behind in Poland. Fourth, they stayed much longer in Limburg than they had originally expected to. The Sobieskis had wanted to return to Poland, but this never happened.

2. Family networks and migration

Mr Sobieski did not find work through his family, but he helped his brother-in-law to get a job in the same mine as the one where he worked. This indicates the importance of family networks through which jobs were found and obtained. This happened everywhere in Europe. Thousands of young people followed their family, friends and compatriots to urban settings where they hoped to find
a livelihood. The domestic servants in Nîmes and Amiens in France are only two examples of migrants who used their family connections in the same city to help them migrate and adjust to the new setting. Migration to the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was also often done in the context of family and friends. Family networks were often very important in obtaining work. Family ties directed European immigrants to particular cities and neighbourhoods in the United States. Before they left their villages in Europe, they already knew where and with whom they would work, and for what wages. They received their information from letters sent to them from family members already in the United States. How important the family was in the migration process is illustrated by the following figures. Just after 1900, 94% of the immigrants that arrived in the United States were going to join relatives or friends already there. Many migrants even had the money for their passage sent to them by family or friends who had already established themselves in the United States.

So far I have only discussed those migrants who were heads of families. However, children were also sent out. This type of migration was quite common among the rural families of early modern Europe. Children were sent out to earn money elsewhere in order to sustain their family at home. The parents decided who was to leave and where they would go. D. Hoerder puts it this way: ‘The “objective” economic and social push and pull factors are operationalised by families, “subjectively” charting the best course for survival or improvement’. Children also left as part of peasant family strategies to maintain and perpetuate their landed property. In such cases the family sent its members out in order to preserve its property and to be able to continue its peasant existence. Decisions to emigrate should here be considered a collective strategy designed to realize the optimum good for the family.

In general we can say that family contacts were decisive in processes of migration, especially when there was a limited number of work opportunities. Individuals or households used the aid provided by family to migrate from one place to another through a set of social arrangements in which friends, family and institutions at the destination provided aid, information, and encouragement to them as newcomers. This is called chain migration. An example of this type of migration is the migrants who followed their relatives to the United States. Another form of migration within family networks is circular migration, which commonly rests on the maintenance of households at home. In the latter case, a regular circuit is created in which migrants keep contact with their home base and routinely return to that base after a period of activity. Many Polish seasonal workers in Germany in the nineteenth century fitted this pattern.

Mr Sobieski’s brother-in-law found work in the same mine. This is an example of how the family could instigate socio-economic advancement for newly
arrived members of that family. J. Bodnar demonstrated how the family members of Polish and Italian immigrants gave information to other family members about occupational opportunities in Pittsburgh before and after their arrival in that city.\textsuperscript{21} The family not only provided information, but also essential contacts for getting jobs. The fact that black immigrants in Pittsburgh who were not able to establish these networks had much more difficulty finding a job only stresses their importance.\textsuperscript{22} These contacts resulted in occupational clustering and in residential grouping of families. Bodnar explained this as such: ‘Newcomers most often resided for a short time with those responsible for their migration to the city. They usually established their own residence in the same neighborhood’.\textsuperscript{23} Newcomers stayed with family and often found housing through the support provided by these family members.

Family networks also helped the newcomers to become accustomed to the new environment. T. Hareven concluded that ‘individuals and families migrating into cities or already living in them relied on relatives or former townspeople as sources of support or sociability’.\textsuperscript{24} E. Morawska viewed this process as an adaptive strategy to help the incorporation of immigrants into the host society.\textsuperscript{25} The family also functioned as a safety-net for the newly arrived, who felt lost in their new environment. The family was important for the identity of the migrants. Their uprooting was given meaning by their identities as family members.\textsuperscript{26}

Mr Sobieski supported his family in Poland for as long as he could, sending both money and food. Migrants in the United States also helped their families at home by sending money.\textsuperscript{27} Often the head of the family left his home to work elsewhere and supported his family at home. Sending money to the family members left behind was one of the major reasons for emigrating. Migration in this way extended the survival opportunities of the family.

In other instances, children left their home to work as servants in other households in order to lighten the burden of feeding them. Some of what they earned was also sent home. Migration was then embedded in family patterns of money-earning and the parents decided who should leave.\textsuperscript{28} Members of the family were sent away to make money elsewhere. Although the relatives were spread over several countries, they still functioned as one family and their income was pooled. When the head of the family or children left, the family kept on functioning as an economic unit in which all of the income-generating capabilities of the family members were combined.\textsuperscript{29}

The family thus played an important role in the process of migration. Scholars have repeatedly stressed the significance of ‘kinship colonies’ in influencing settlement patterns and community creation.\textsuperscript{30} Social institutions, the most prominent being the church, were formed around homeland ties of nationality, region and family.\textsuperscript{31} In this way the family helped the newly arrived to get used to their new location. Family became part of the adaptive strategies of the mem-
bers to cope in the host environment, particularly in helping the incorporation of newcomers into the new society. 

3. Changing values and the decision to return

Although the Sobieskis’ original intention was not to stay in Limburg, they eventually did. This seems to be a general pattern, as the experience of Hungarian migrants in the United States testifies. They always planned to return to their community of origin and to the kinship members still living there. In practice, however, things did not turn out that way. Only half of these Hungarians remigrated while the other half remained permanently in the United States. Those migrants who stayed in the new country married or had their family come over. Just like the Sobieskis, they changed their mind. In spite of this undeniable reality, returning home continued to be the goal of most migrants and even among those who stayed in the United States, the dream of returning home to establish independent farms persisted.

Those who returned did so for various motives. Migrants remigrated because they had saved enough money to buy a farm or land at home, which was a positive reason to return. Bodnar mentioned some other, less positive reasons. A sample of Finnish farmers listed homesickness and family obligations, such as farm responsibilities as their main reason for returning. Unemployment was always another important cause for return and implied failure because the American Dream of success had not come true.

The Sobieskis stayed in Limburg after all, because they themselves had changed in the process of adapting to their new surroundings. They no longer felt at home in Poland. Migration meant changes, and not only because the migrants went to new places with different cultures from their own. They mostly had an agricultural background and ended up working and living in an urban industrialised environment. Migrants developed new ideas and patterns. In his study of Italian immigrants in Pittsburgh, J.W. Briggs reported a growing desire among migrants for educational and social improvement for their children, instead of allowing them to leave school at an early age in order to contribute to the family economy, as had been common before. Moch showed how in France migrants began to marry later and tried to limit the size of their family in order to be able to educate their children.

After a while the Sobieskis mingled with the natives more and more. Mrs Sobieski became a member of Dutch institutions and all of her children married Dutch partners. The marriage patterns of Hungarian immigrants in the United States also fit into this mould. The first generation of Hungarian migrants married only within their community, the Szamosszegeans. The second generation normally found partners among Hungarians, but the third generation married migrants of other nationalities.
Another consequence of migration could be a change in the traditional husband-wife roles. This mostly began when the husband migrated and his wife stayed behind in the homeland. She was forced to manage on her own, which could cause problems when the family reunited. She was used to making her own decisions and the husband could be surprised by her emancipated wife. In some cases, the husband might become more traditional in the new environment, clinging to his culture and not developing new values. His wife, already used to more freedom, was then confronted with a man who was more rigid and limiting than he had been before he had left. Migration of women had even more impact on the husband-wife roles. Turkish women were hired as low-paid workers for electronics, textile, and garment work in Germany after 1960. These women were encouraged by their husbands in Turkey to migrate, because they could obtain jobs and visas for them in Germany. When the men arrived fresh from their villages, their wives had already learned the ways of the new country. The husband’s dependence on his wife’s knowledge and networks could affect their relation. These issues have hardly been studied by historians. Sociologists and scholars who work in the field of women studies have given this matter more attention. However, they focus primarily on present-day migrant groups, like the Turks and Moroccans, and have shown little interest in the historical development of these processes.

4. Effects of migration on family organization

An obvious effect of migration on family organization was the changing composition of the household, but this could be temporary. In the long run, the composition of the family did not usually change when the head of the family migrated. In many cases, migrants came back to their families and, if not, they tried to have their family come over to them. Nevertheless, the family system could be threatened by migration. Families were put under pressure by the surrounding wage economy and urban structure which could undermine family systems. Nineteenth century reformers in France feared that migration would destroy the family. They were mostly concerned about the bad living conditions in the cities which provoked alcoholism and high rates of infant mortality and tuberculosis that could result in unstable and unhealthy family life.

Although family ties were maintained after migration, it is possible that the family economy changed. Bodnar denied this: ‘The immigrant family economy survived and flourished among newcomers in industrial America because new economic structures actually reinforced traditional ways of ordering life’. Bad living conditions did not destroy family ties. On the contrary, their social relations helped urban working class people to survive; something which was often overlooked by these reformers. Michael Anderson argued that migration
to industrial Lancashire actually led to an increase in the importance of family ties. Other historical studies have also shown that migration was not destructive to family associations. Migration did not break family ties, since many had moved with and sent for family members. The Hungarian migrants in the United States described by J. Puskás show us that the original labour organization of the family did not change after migration. The husband worked in the mine, the wife kept boarders, and the family sold home-brewed brandy to the boarders. Savings were used to buy land or to open a shop. Puskás argued that the original family economy was not affected by migration.

Was the family not affected at all by migration? Early historians thought family forms could be altered as part of a transition from traditional to modern cultural values. More recently, historians have made a case for the stability and continuity of the immigrant family values. Although new values, work patterns and family relations were created, a measure of continuity was maintained. J. Smith concluded that immigrant families were not doomed in American cities, nor did they remain unchanged by the world they found there. Marriage and residence patterns, job careers and education changed especially for the second generation migrants although this did not result in the total decline of family life that had been feared. Family lives were refashioned while, at the same time, cherished traditions were preserved.

Up until this point, the family seemed not to be affected by the movement of its members. However, when children left home to migrate, the composition of the family could be changed forever, especially if they left to protect the patrimony and were not able to return. The way migration could influence the family is discussed by S. Model. She investigated why nowadays more black urban families are headed by women than European urban families. She argued that migration was one reason for this. Black men and women did not necessarily have the same job opportunities and their paths therefore separated. They settled down in different places, and this was one reason why men and women separated. Moreover, black men could not rely on the family in order to find work, as Bodnar has pointed out. Black women, however, could assist each other in finding jobs, which were mostly domestic, so they stayed in their network. Model argued that these matters caused Afro-American family ties and marriages to be weaker. Also families did not function as economic units, and therefore today, twice as many Afro-American families are headed by women as European families.

Migration affected family organization in other ways too. Immigrants needed a place to stay, which resulted in the boarding system. Households were complemented with these non-family members, as happened in the Limburg situation. The Polish miners who came alone found a room in the houses of local people or were put up in boarding-houses. Lodging with local people caused many problems. First, although the owners tried to take as many lodgers as possible,
the dwellings were too small. One extreme example of this situation is a household that housed seven lodgers.\(^5\) Second, male lodgers sometimes showed an undesirable interest in the wives or daughters of the landlord. Third, if family members of the migrant came over there was not enough room to house them. Mr. Sobieski could let his family come over only because he had found a house. It was very common within family networks for boarders to find a place with their family. This was very usual in the United States.\(^6\) Taking in boarders was part of the survival strategy of the family. Bodnar showed how boarders in Polish households became superfluous when children began to contribute earnings.\(^9\)

In general, it appears that migration did not influence the family organization as much as might be expected. However, the effect was not the same for every migrant group. Mr Sobieski was a reliable husband and he supported his family in Poland as much as he could. This, however, was not always the case. Sometimes the husband did not support his family and ‘forgot’ them. Because of the vulnerable position of the family which stayed behind, strategies were developed to protect it. The Polish consul was the initiator behind these strategies, which were necessary because of the pressure on family organization after the migration of its members. Where the husband did not take care of this need, the Polish consul in the Netherlands took care of the family in Poland. This was arranged in the labour contract of the Polish miners.\(^6\) If the head of the family did not support his family in the homeland, a share of his wages was retained and sent back to it. The consul decided what amount of money was withdrawn from the worker’s salary and took responsibility for sending it home. The fact that this was explicitly put into the labour contract indicates that more than one Polish miner ‘forgot’ his family. The labour contract also arranged for the Polish employees to return to Poland when important family matters demanded their presence. They were allowed to do so without being obliged to pay a penalty.\(^6\) Naturally, the miner had to show the consul some proof of these important family matters.

Another way of keeping the family functioning was to stimulate family reunification. For this purpose housing was built by the mining company in ‘colonies’ which arose around the company. The mine directors were in favour of family reunion because it was a way of stabilizing the supply of labourers. Moreover, their children were the miners of the future. Consequently, family reunification was stimulated by the mine directors who provided housing and supplies to make living in these colonies pleasant. Mill owners in Roubaix favoured family life, too. They tried to hire labourers who were accompanied by their families who were needed in the mills too.\(^6\) The family was cherished by the employer because it was in his own interest, and it was for this reason that strategies for maintaining the family were developed.
In this article I have explored some aspects of the relation between family organization and migration. The first was the role of the family in the migration process. As was common in migration to the United States, many migrants moved to places where other members of the family had already gone. They went there because a job or housing had already been arranged by family or friends. This could result in settlement clustering. Family ties directed the migration patterns. When children left the family to work as servants, farm labourers and apprentices, they were sent out in order to protect the patrimony or to supplement the family economy. In both cases, migration was a survival strategy of the family which extended the economic opportunities for its survival.

The second aspect I looked at was the social economic relations between the movers and the stayers. When the head of the family left home he normally continued to support the family which stayed behind by sending money. When children left, the family was supported too. The migration of children relieved the household of the need to feed them and they could provide some extra income. Family members pooled their income. There were also social relations between movers and stayers. Migrants abroad arranged jobs and housing for newcomers. The family also had an important role in the new settlements, family members helping the newly arrived to become used to their new location. The family functioned then as a safety-net.

Finally, the implications of migration on family organization were also examined. It seems that family organization was not affected by migration as much as might have been expected while, in most cases, family economy was kept intact. In addition, family ties were strengthened through the family contacts described above. Although family members did not live at home, the family kept on functioning. Also the stability and continuity of the immigrant family values were retained. However, this might not have been true for all migrant groups. Model showed how black migration influenced family organization. Husband-wife roles could be affected by the separation of the spouses as well. Further historical research is needed for a better understanding of this matter.

In all, there was a strong connection between labour migration and family organization. Migration can be seen as a survival strategy of the collective which fits into the collective approach of migration. However, the family made migration and settlement easier. I would like to conclude this article with the following:

'Dear Brother Waclaw: ... I inform you about an offer from which you will perhaps profit. My old boss told me today that he had much work, so perhaps I knew some carpenters, and if so I should send them to him. I told him that I had a brother carpenter (i.e. you) who was working, but if the work would be steady, I could bring
him. He answered that he hoped to have steady work. So, I advise you to come dear brother ... we could live here in the foreign land together.\textsuperscript{65}

NOTES

1 Sobieski is a pseudonym. The story of this Polish family is based on: P. Versteegh, “Ik was van plan vijf jaar te komen en het werden er zestig”. Interview met een Poolse mijnwerkersvrouw\textsuperscript{6}, in: A. Dassen, C. van Eerd, K. Oppeland (eds.), Vrouwen in den vreemde. Lotgevallen van emigrantes en immigrantes (Zutphen, 1993) 138-143 and on an interview with her youngest daughter, June 20, 1994.


4 Versteegh, “Ik was van plan\textsuperscript{6}”, 139-140.

5 L.P. Moch, Moving Europeans. Migration in Western Europe since 1650 (Bloomington, 1992) 105.


42. Bodnar et al., *Lives of their own?*, 89-90.


44. Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 84.


55. Other reasons were that black men were more likely to die young, the almost equal wage rates for men and women weakened commitment to marriage and a smaller number of children in black urban families, which also weakened the marital bond.


60. The Polish consul made a draft of a labour contract for the Polish employees of this mine. It is not sure whether the management accepted it. See: ‘Correspondence from the Polish consul, June 25 1929’, in: *Tewerkstelling Polen 1927-1936, 1945-1957*, Archief Oranje-Nassau Mijnen J9, Rijksarchief Maastricht.

61. ‘Correspondence, June 25 1929’.


FROM FATHER TO FACTORY: THE CHANGING POSITION OF ADULT DOMESTIC WORKERS IN WOENSEL (1700-1900)

by

Gabriël van den Brink

Whereas the social, political and cultural aspects of patriarchy have received ample treatment, the economic basis of patriarchy has been almost neglected. Yet paternal authority in pre-modern times can partly be explained by the fact that, as head of the household or family, the father had a number of adult workers at his disposal. There have been several anthropological studies on this subject for African societies. In this article I discuss it for rural East Brabant, in the Netherlands. To do this, I made use of existing literature on the region, the numerical data are the result of my own research on the history of the Brabant village of Woensel. Although this article focuses on the period 1700-1850, I also briefly discuss the changes in the second half of the nineteenth century.

1. Labour and class

My first step was to see who belonged to the group ‘adult workers’. To do this, I consulted a number of poll tax records from the first half of the eighteenth century. They are a remarkable source, as all members of the household are mentioned by name. Moreover, they specify whether the person in question is a father, mother, child, male or female servant, living-in relative or someone else. Children are classified as being over or under sixteen. Finally the records specify whether a household is solvent, insolvent or poor. This last fact is particularly important because it gives an insight into the social hierarchy of the time. For each of the three classes I calculated the average size and composition of the households. The results are shown in Table 1. The table distinguishes between family members (parents or children) and living-in non-family members (servants, relatives or other people).
Table 1 Average size and composition of the household related to social class in Woensel, 1716-1734

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Solvent</th>
<th>Insolvent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Aggr.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parents</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>children &lt; 16</td>
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<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>servants</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relatives</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family members</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>living-in members</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household size</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that the average household size in Woensel was 4.10 people, which is rather small. There appears to have been a connection with social class, as the solvent households are considerably larger and the poor households are markedly smaller than the Woensel average. This difference was determined not so much by the size of the family as by the living-in members of the household. Solvent households had the largest number of resident non-family members, they were present to a lesser extent in insolvent families, and hardly or not at all in poor households. A striking feature is that there were by no means always two parents in each household. The average number of parents in the Woensel data was 1.62 per family, which means that there must have been many families without father and/or mother. This was most common among the poor households. The number of children scarcely varied between the different classes, two being the average. The table does show, however, that poor families did have relatively more younger children, whereas in the solvent families the proportion of children over 16 was somewhat higher. I come back to this point later. The greatest variation was in the number of living-in servants. It is immediately noticeable that the number of male and/or female servants was class-dependent. They were frequent in solvent households and highly unusual among poor households, while insolvent households took an intermediate position. Living-in relatives were rare in all classes. This also holds for ‘other’ living-in household members, although they were more frequent in the more prosperous households.

Which of these people were adult workers? It goes without saying that the parents belonged to this group. In rural Brabant the division of labour was based
on sex and age, which meant that both parents carried out their own more or less complementary tasks. As a rule children had to do all kinds of jobs from an early age, but only after the age of sixteen did they count as full-time workers. From that moment, too, full poll tax had to be paid for them. This corresponds to the age at which most children left home to go into service with someone else. Finally, with few exceptions, servants, relatives and other living-in household members took part in the labour process and, in most cases, were probably over sixteen. Although it is not absolutely exact, I class all those over 16 as producers. Their significance is determined on the basis of the 'age rate', that is the proportion of adults as a percentage of the total number of household members. From the figures in Table 1 it can be concluded that this rate, too, correlated with social class. For solvent households it was an average of 71%, for insolvent households of 63%, and for poor households, of 57%, whereas the average for Woensel was 63%.10

In this period it was usual for unmarried boys and girls of about 16 years old to be sent into 'service'. They left home to work as servants in other households. They were paid mainly in the form of board and lodging, and counted as full members of the family for the term of their service. After one or two years they left work for another employer until they married and set up their own households. It is clear that this system was advantageous to all parties. In the first place, the well-to-do inhabitants of the village were assured of a supply of workers who could care for their children or carry out farm duties at relatively low cost. But the system was also advantageous to the workers and their families. Poor families, particularly, were able to get rid of their 'redundant' children in this way. For the servants in question, going into service partly functioned as a marriage market. They were also able to learn a trade. For the village community as a whole, 'service' embodied a form of regional and social mobility through which the labour market was geared to economic needs. This phenomenon was by no means unique for Woensel. It was common in many places in Western Europe and connected with other typically Western phenomena such as late marriage and a high mobility. My analysis of rural Brabant shows that service was mainly common in well-to-do households. Partly as a result of this, paternal authority was stronger in the solvent households than in the others. As head of the enterprise, the husband had more adult workers at his disposal, both in an absolute and in a relative sense.

2. Labour and family cycle

Although social class had a great influence on the character and size of production capacity, it was not the main factor. The development cycle of the household appears to have been no less important. I determined this on the basis of a
poll tax record from 1791. The record showed that in the first twenty years of marriage, the average number of people in a household grew from 3.75 to 6.25, and then decreased to 3.44 people. Only in the last marriage phase did the household grow again (partly because of an increase in living-in non-family members). The same pattern could be seen in the tax records for other places. Within the household the proportion of adults also showed a cyclical pattern. In the first twenty years of marriage the proportion of adults decreases from 75 to 52%, to increase subsequently to 91%.

It is remarkable that this dynamic applied to all three classes. In solvent households the process was somewhat different from that in poor or insolvent households, but in each of the three groups, the proportion of adults first decreased and then increased again. This is clearly shown in Table 2, in which the households have been divided into four groups on the basis of the duration of marriage: 0-10, 10-20, 20-30 and 30 years or more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>&gt;0</th>
<th>&gt;10</th>
<th>&gt;20</th>
<th>&gt;30</th>
<th>aggr.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>76</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insolvent</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
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<td>aggregate</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, these households show the same pattern. The proportion of adult workers was lowest in the second phase, between 10 and 20 years of marriage. This is, of course, because in the second decade of marriage the number of young children at home was relatively large. In the third phase the age rate increases again and reaches its maximum in the last phase. Consequently, households were most productive after thirty years of marriage, when there were only a few young children left, and almost every member of the household was able to contribute to the family business. However, the absolute magnitude of the age rate appears to differ according to class. For instance, in poor households, the rate appears to be well under the Woensel average in the first two phases, whereas in the last two phases it is considerably higher. This is because, in most cases, poor households consisted either of young families with numerous children or of elderly couples whose children had left home.
Thus all households went through a cyclical movement, the first phases of which were dominated by the care of young children, and later phases by an increased production capacity. This picture can also be found in literature on the area Woensel is situated in, the Campine area, or Kempenland. As a rule, the first years of marriage were not considered to be easy ones, especially if the children were born close to each other. The wife could not devote herself fully to her duties in the family business and she was often not strong enough to work. Yet this initial phase would not have been seen as something negative. In the long run, the disadvantages of a large family were outweighed by the advantages. As the Dutch etnologist avant la lettre Barentsen wrote:

‘After the first difficulties comes, to use a popular way of saying, the time when the older children earn the bread for their younger brothers and sisters, and finally all children for their parents. Then the whole family prospers and, at an advanced age, the parents are financially independent of their children’.22

Peasants often expanded their farms during this phase, so that there would be sufficient work for all members of the family. After this came a period of stabilization.

‘As soon as the farm has a certain size and there is no more work for several children, it is not expanded any further, but children who are not necessary in the family business are hired out to others. When the older children marry, the younger ones often return to their parents’ home. The wages of children who work outside the home are always handed over to the parents [...]’.23

The marriage of the younger children marked the beginning of the last phase.

‘As the family grows smaller by the marriages of the children, the farm shrinks. Redundant cattle and land are sold. This enables younger families to expand their farm. Often one of the children does not marry and stays with the parents [...]’.24

Later I return to the relationship between this development cycle and the size of farms. For the moment I simply conclude that all households - also those of craftsmen, weavers and day labourers - could use extra help during the phase when there were young children. As a result, the phenomenon of living-in household members was mainly restricted to this phase. Other studies have already shown that the presence of non-family members was concentrated in the first seven years of marriage, probably to take over some of the duties from the young mother.25 In Woensel I found a similar pattern. As the 1791 record does not further specify resident servants, I calculated the proportion of living-in domestic workers for the years 1716 and 1830. Analogous to the term age rate,
we will indicate the proportion of non-family members by ‘rate of residence’. Table 3 shows the average per marriage phase for both rates.

Table 3 *Age rate and rate of residence (in percentages) related to duration of marriage in Woensel in 1716 and 1830*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&gt;0</th>
<th>&gt;10</th>
<th>&gt;20</th>
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<th>aggr.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1716</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A rate</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R rate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>64</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>R rate</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences between the figures for 1716 and those for 1830 show that some change took place in the course of time. For 1830 the proportion of adults is slightly lower than a century before, and quite a lot lower during the second marriage phase. Moreover, for 1830 the proportion of resident non-family members is higher in all phases than in 1716. Even more important is that in both years the average number of living-in members of the household corresponds to the development cycle. During the second phase, when the proportion of the young children is highest, the percentage of living-in servants and/or relatives is also highest. The figures for the next phase show that, as the children grow older, the proportion of living-in people sharply decreases. In the last phase this increases slightly, but never reaches the level of the second phase. In households where the parents have been married for at least thirty years, the children would have left the home, and some extra help or care would have been needed.

It has to be remembered that there are purely demographic factors like the number of years that households exist and the age of the children at work here. In 1716, 1791 and 1830, the households of all three social groups clearly went through a cycle in size and composition. Moreover, there is a direct link with the question of whether, and if so, how many extra workers were taken into the home. These points illustrate that the authority of the father developed over time. His authority over the young children was, of course, great, but he could do little with it. He had great control over living-in servants, too, but only temporarily. Only when the household had existed for some time and his own children shared in the work, was the father able to completely exert his authority as head of the family enterprise. This is particularly the case in the third and fourth
phases, when the adult children have not yet left the home. This was possibly one of the reasons why parents were against their children marrying at a young age. It would be a loss of labour for them. Nevertheless, their influence was not fully overruled by such a step, because, after marriage, the children remained dependent on (a portion of) the future inheritance. However, in the earlier phases before the children married, the older ones joined in the work at home. What consequences did this have for two sorts of rural enterprise, farming and cottage industry?

3. Farming

On the sandy soil of Brabant the agricultural sector was totally dominated by family farms. Work was divided over the sexes and generations. As a rule, the hard farm labor was done by adult men. The various forms of tillage, such as ploughing, harrowing and digging were men’s work, as was the cutting, collection and transporting of peat to the farm. At harvest time, men were responsible for reaping and threshing grain. There were also numerous other activities like chopping and sawing wood, and working with horse and ox. However, the task that required the most effort was cutting manure and loading the dung cart in the deep litter house, transporting the manure to the fields and spreading it.

‘The production of manure was the basis of farming and the peasants were busy with it every day. Moreover, cleaning out the stable, loading, unloading and breaking the manure were among the heaviest chores’. Finally, it was men who were engaged in the (first) processing of flax. Looking after the cows, calves, pigs, chickens and children was women’s work. The most important task connected with this duty was the preparation of cattle feed. For a peasant’s wife the slop bucket (opketel) was the pivot of her activities. In East Brabant soup was fed to the cattle throughout the year: three times a day in winter and twice a day in summer. The importance of this task should not be underestimated.

‘Without feed no cattle, no manure, no harvest, no profit. This crucial element of farming rests with the wife, who toils for her cows from early morning till late at night and one should not blame her for spending little time on her own home, for she needs this time in or for the cow shed. She lives there, it is her only pride [...]’. Furthermore a typical job for women was dairying. Most of the milk was reserved for the production of butter, churning being generally done by hand. Once the butter was ready, the wife took it to a shop or to a market in town.
All in all, a peasant’s wife had a busy life, which was described by Barentsen as follows:

‘The wife does all the work in and around the home. She takes care of the vegetable garden, of the cooking and of preparing the feed brought in by her husband, of milking and dairying, of feeding and clothing the members of the household and, at busy times, she helps the husband in the fields and cow shed. Time which is over is spent in getting the house straight and raising the children [...] When she is not asleep the wife is always working and, what is more, even in her sleep she is often disturbed by the young children. The husband concerns himself with the children only in cases of absolute necessity [...]’.

In rural Brabant it was absolutely normal to use children from a very early age to do all kinds of jobs, which at first had a complementary character. Later their contribution became more substantial, and was based on the sexual division of labour. Sons went with their fathers, while daughters did all sorts of work in and around the home under the guidance of their mothers. Farm-hands and maids also did gender-specific work. The male servant worked under the supervision of the peasant, the maid assisted the peasant’s wife in housekeeping, cattle feeding and dairying. Sometimes a distinction was made between a ‘first servant’ [baasknecht] and a common servant, which was reflected in their wages. All servants considered themselves full members of the family. They ate at the same table as the peasant and discussed the state of the farm with him. They talked about our folk, our land, our horse and the like. All farms of significant size hired a male servant and a maid, sometimes even two. However, as the children grew older, they took over the place of the servants. It goes without saying that this applied particularly to the well-to-do peasants. In insolvent and poor peasant families the work had to be done by the family members only.

All this only relates to the qualitative aspect of family labour. Quantitatively the development cycle was again evident. The size of the farm and production capacity needed to be kept in balance. This balance could be roughly achieved in two ways. Firstly, by acquiring or getting rid of cattle and land, a process which was based on the number of available productive workers. Secondly, by taking on or diminishing producers, a process which was based on the size of the farm. It is obvious that both could be done at the same time. Whether the size of the farm was adjusted by means of buying or renting land is less relevant in this respect. Nor does it matter whether the producers were hired servants or the peasant’s own children. What is significant is that the size of the farm and the number of labourers were geared to each other. Since we know that one of these two variables - production capacity - is subject to cyclical fluctuations, it is not surprising that the size of farms also changed in a more or less cyclical pattern. This situation was tersely formulated by Barentsen:
Thus the farm is a family business. Its size is, to a great extent, dependent on the size of the family. Anyone who has many children tries to expand his land ownership or rent land, and only if this is impossible will he let his children work for someone else. Anyone who has no or few children and does not like the idea of hiring labour, tries to find compensation in hard work. If, for instance, as a result of an inheritance, he has too much land, he will rent part of it to others, who can cultivate it better. So, to a certain extent, the size of the farm is determined by the size of the family, but it is always expressed by the number of cows in the shed.

Farm size and labour capacity could therefore be adjusted to each other in various ways. In Woensel they were actually geared to each other. By using the poll tax record for 1791, I determined the average livestock per phase. I also calculated the average size of the land per phase for the year 1830 and I worked out the number of producers for the same year. In this way I could estimate the average labour intensity, that is, the number of hectares per adult producer. The fact that there was a period of several decades between the two years was not insuperable, as substantial changes in farming did not occur until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Table 4. Average number of livestock and area (hectare) per development phase of Woensel peasants in 1791 and 1830

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&gt;0</th>
<th>&gt;10</th>
<th>&gt;20</th>
<th>&gt;30</th>
<th>aggr.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>head of cattle</td>
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<td>4.95</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>area of land</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>producers</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intensity</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table suggests that the number of livestock changed only a little through the years. For the late eighteenth century, the peasants in Woensel have an average of 4.56 head of cattle; in the first phase of the household a few less, in the last phase a few more, but the difference is small. However, the development of the average area of land is much clearer to see. This increases from an average of 2.10 hectares in the first decade after the marriage to 3.94 hectares after thirty years of marriage. This means that it almost doubled. The same is true for the number of adult productive workers on the farm which grows from well over three in the first phase to nearly six in the last. This confirms Barentsen’s opinion that both production capacity and farm size increased through the years. Moreover, the figures in the last line show that producer and area balance each other. Labour intensity is almost equal for nearly all phases, an adult worker
working an average of 0.76 hectares of land. It should be noted that the last figure is fairly rough, because I counted all people over sixteen as producers. In reality only the peasant, his sons and his male servants worked the land, whereas the women were primarily busy with the livestock. Therefore the double number of hectares per male producer can be considered a more realistic estimate. However, this does not alter the conclusion that in the course of the development cycle, the farm size varied with the number of producers and that the farm reached its maximum size in the third and fourth phases.

4. Cottage industry

A similar pattern can be seen among the weavers in cottage industry. This mode of production persisted long in rural Brabant. For example, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Woensel firm of J. van der Velden still employed 430 domestic weavers. As the wage records from 1857 have been preserved, we are able to see what weavers were working for this firm during this year, what the size and quality of their production was and how much pay they received for it. In the following discussion I confine myself to the 62 male and 8 female weavers who lived in Woensel. In 1857 they wove a total of 69,425 square metres, which amounts to an average of 992 square metres per person. There appears to have been a difference between the sexes, in that the average production for men was 27% higher than that for women. There was a discrepancy in pay, too. On the whole, female weavers earned 49.63 guilders per year, whereas the wages of male weavers averaged 72.63 guilders. This discrepancy was not only because the men produced more fabric, but also because they received 7.73 cents and the women 5.99 cents per linear metre.

It would be easy to see these differences as a sign of discrimination, for in almost all sectors women’s wages were considerably lower than men’s. However, the accurate administration of the Van der Velden firm shows that the discrepancy in pay had a technical rather than a social background. In the first instance, the wage level was not dependent on the weavers’ sex, but on the quality of their products. This quality was based on two elements. Firstly, the closeness of the weave, indicated by the number of threads per centimetre. Secondly, the weight of the thread, indicated by a thread number, in which a high number referred to relatively heavy-quality thread. The wages paid per square metre were dependent on a combination of these two factors. As a rule, there was a fixed relationship between weight and closeness of weave: The heavier the thread the smaller the number of threads per centimetre of fabric. However, this was not always true. There were weavers who managed to reach the same closeness of weave while using heavier thread. Consequently, they received higher wages. Similarly there were weavers who, with the same close-
ness of weave, used lighter threads and who therefore received lower wages. It is evident that the wage level was a question of arithmetic, in which quantity and quality of the work were the decisive factors. That is why the Van der Velden firm had such a meticulous administration. In farming this would make little sense; in the textile industry, however, it was crucial.

Peasants and home weavers were not only different because of their actual labour process but also socially. Weavers had only a little land. Moreover, their livelihood was much more precarious than that of peasants. Even a small recession could bring the looms to a standstill. Therefore there were more poor households among the weavers. Nevertheless, peasants and home weavers did have one point in common. In both groups the character and size of production was strongly determined by developments within the family. This is shown by what can be inferred from the data of the 1857 administration. The necessary demographic data were recovered for half of the weavers who lived in Woensel. In many of these families, several people worked as weavers. This could have been a father, assisted by his son or his servant, but it could also have been a fatherless household in which a brother and sister had to earn the bread. Consequently, there were, on average, 1.59 weavers in these households with a total of 5.73 household members. When the households were classified on the basis of marriage duration, in the same way as had been done for the peasants, a gradual increase in the average number of weavers from 1.00 in the first phase to 1.86 in the last could be seen. Apparently in weavers’ households, too, as children grew older they contributed to the labour process and thus to the income of the family unit.

In order to analyse this connection in greater detail I calculated the quantity and quality of the fabrics, as well as the income in money per phase. The first is shown in Table 5 which gives the average closeness of weave (threads/centimetre) and weight (thread number) of the fabric, as well as the average wages (cents/metre, guilders/year, respectively). The table also shows the total area of the fabric (in square metres).

My conclusion is that the quality of the fabric increased as the household existed longer. For the first phase, the average number of the threads used is 17, and for the last phase 27. The closeness of weave also increases. For the first phase weavers use an average of 14 threads per centimetre and for the last phase this is 21 threads per centimetre. This explains why their pay per linear metre shows an increase from an average of 5.71 cents in the first phase to 9.17 cents in the last phase. The table also shows an increase in quantity. For the first ten years it averages 657 square metres and for the last ten years, 2 156 square metres. As a result of both developments (pay per metre and area) the average total annual pay also increases, albeit not always equally sharply. Households in the first phase earn an average of 36 guilders a year, whereas for households
Table 5 Average quality and quantity of fabric in relation to the development phase of the household in Woensel in 1857

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>6.83</td>
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<td>657</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>2156</td>
<td>1622</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in the second phase, this is 109 guilders. There is a slight drop for households in the third phase but for those in the last phase the annual pay once more increases to an average of 184 guilders. It is clear that for weavers’ households, too, the economic situation depends on the development cycle of the family. With advancing years the prospects of the household apparently improved. Partly because the children joined in the weaving, partly because of the growing skill of older weavers. The latter is clearly shown by analysing the development per weaver. Theoretically this could be deduced by combining the data in Table 5 with the average number of weavers per phase. The result of this estimate is presented in Table 6. However, production and income per weaver has also been measured directly, as a check on the reliability of the estimate.

Table 6 Average production and wage level per weaver in relation to the development phase of the household in Woensel in 1857

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&gt;0</th>
<th>&gt;10</th>
<th>&gt;20</th>
<th>&gt;30</th>
<th>aggr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>number of weavers</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>estimated area</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>1159</td>
<td>1020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measured area</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>11061</td>
<td>972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>estimated wages</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measured wages</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results are remarkable. After an initial increase the total quantity of fabric per weaver remains almost constant. With the exception of the first phase, a
weaver produced approximately 1,000 square metre a year. The deviation between the measured and the estimated value is small, but whereas the quantity almost remains the same, the quality of the fabric gradually increases. This was already evident from the average number of threads and the thread number for the households as a whole (see Table 5), but now it also appears to be the case for individual weavers. Growing skill led to higher wages per linear metre and so to higher annual wages per weaver. In the last phase a weaver is shown to be earning more than twice as much as in the first phase.

5. The old regime...

The foregoing indicates the existence of a ‘family economy’, in which the development cycle played a decisive role in the character and size of family labour. In the preceding pages I have shown that the production capacity of the household grew through the years because the children joined in the work of their parents. This occurred in both well-to-do and poor households, and not only in peasant families but also in weavers’ families. A striking feature is that the labour intensity hardly changed during the course of this cycle. The average amount of land worked by an adult producer remained almost the same throughout the various phases. The same is true for the average amount of fabric produced annually by a weaver. Moreover, total production of the family business developed in three ways. Firstly, it expanded. The number of hectares worked by a peasant family in the last phase was twice the number worked in the first phase. The number of square metres produced by a weaver’s family in the last phase was three times larger than that in the first phase. Secondly, the quality of the product increased. This was particularly true of the weavers. As weavers grew older they produced fabrics of closer weave and heavier quality. The quality of production in peasant families probably also improved through the years. The skill of the children was partly determined by their age. Thirdly, the income of the household gradually increased. In the last phase a weaver’s family earned almost three times as much as in the first phase. The income of peasants cannot easily be compared with it, but on the basis of the increasing livestock it can be assumed that this also grew.

There was a certain parallel development in the authority of the father. As head of the family he disposed of a growing number of producers. Moreover, the character of paternal authority changed. In the first years of marriage it mainly extended over his young children and his wife. If there were servants living in, they were only temporary. However, in later phases, the work was mostly done by his own children, who were subjected to their parents’ authority until their own marriage. This throws a different light on the late age of marriage. Although there is no doubt that this was mainly caused by purely
demographic reasons, power relations also played a role. A marriage could not be concluded without parental agreement. Quite often children with (early) marriage plans were put under pressure by their parents to delay it. The latter also tried to prevent relationships between boys and girls. Consequently, the adult work-force lived under the authority of their parents for a long time - on average from the age of fifteen to the age of thirty. The father was the head of the family. Thus the family economy naturally resulted in a patriarchal constellation. However, the existence and operation of this economy is by no means evident. It was only possible under a specific demographic and economic regime, which was based on three presuppositions.

Firstly, rural Brabant had a high population pressure for a long time. Agriculture produced so little that there was always a danger of overpopulation. This was the main reason why people in Kempenland married late. Normally peasants did not marry until a farm was available. The same was true for craftsmen, tradespeople and other men who were to become the head of an independent family business. Moreover, a great number of people never married. The West European marriage pattern described by Hajnal applied to Kempenland until the late nineteenth century. Barentsen's descriptions show that people not only married late but also that not everyone got married. In this way population growth could be moderated without birth control.

"That the living standard does not drop to the level of food shortage is caused by the fact that people marry late or even not at all, as a result of which the population roughly accommodates itself to produce".

My research shows that this phenomenon was also true for Woensel. From 1700 till 1860, the population remained almost the same or grew only moderately. This was mainly achieved by a late age for marriage. In 1850, this was, on average, thirty years for both men and women. It was the population pressure, in the first place, which forced men and women to remain single for a long time and work in their parents' enterprise. In this respect family labour was partly determined by the demographic situation.

Secondly, business and traffic were hardly developed in this region. This was especially so in agriculture. Naturally, the land, cattle and other production means had to be bought for cash, just as taxes had always been paid in money. However, for the rest, money was scarce among the East Brabant peasants. Payment in kind was still very common around 1800. Servants were partly remunerated by being given board and lodging, rent and tithes often had to be paid in kind. Craftsmen were wholly or partly paid for their services in kind. In general, peasants tried to be as self-sufficient as possible. They cultivated rye for bread, buckwheat (for pancakes and porridge), potatoes (for dinner and supper), cabbage, carrots, beans and other vegetables (for stew). In
addition, they used their own meat (mainly pork), fat, milk, buttermilk, butter, (rapeseed) oil, eggs, fruit, fuel, flax and wool. Among the few articles they had to buy were salt, soap, vinegar, syrup, coffee, tea, tobacco and beer. Occasionally they bought furniture, pottery, kitchen utensils and footwear. This does not mean that there was no market production at all. Large farms regularly sold a surplus of grain and almost all peasants sold butter and other dairy products at the market. Nevertheless, it would go too far to speak of a ‘market economy’ in this respect. In the first place, these sales were primarily meant for local food supply. In the second place, the family enterprise was not oriented towards maximum profit but towards subsistence and the avoidance of risks.

The third presupposition relates to the significance of the agricultural sector for the local economy. In a region like Kempenland about half of the working population was active in agriculture until the middle of the nineteenth century. Although as a rule the farms were small, most certainly if compared to the cattle farms in the provinces along the coast, peasants usually owned the means of production. In Woensel, peasants had on average three to five hectares of land and four to five cows, while they also owned the necessary implements, such as ploughs, carts, harrows, and a slop bucket. Tractive power was provided by an ox or horse. In many cases they owned their farm. Outside the agricultural sector in the narrow sense of the word, many people were engaged in farming, too. Weavers and craftsmen usually had a small patch of land, which made them partially self-supporting. As a result of this, wages were very low in this part of Brabant. As a consequence, the distinction between peasants, labourers or craftsmen was often unclear. There were labourers who had their own farm but who hired themselves out as field hands for a few days a week. Some people worked on farms as day-labourers during summer while engaging in a form of cottage industry like weaving and basketry in winter working their own patch of land in between. Sons of peasants also worked as day-labourers. Occupational segregation was flexible and seldom permanent.

So far I have given a brief outline of the demographic and economic regime which existed in rural Brabant before 1850. It is important that the question of the family economy be seen against this background. Therefore I now want to say something about the changes that occurred after 1850.

6. ... and modern times.

The limited extent of the use of money and the role of farming as a secondary trade meant that wages were well under the national average. This was one of the reasons why, in the middle of the nineteenth century, industrialization rapidly developed around towns like Tilburg, Helmond and Eindhoven. It did not involve traditional forms of home industry, but a mode of production which
GABRIËL VAN DEN BRINK showed all the characteristics of modern industry: production on an unprecedented scale, the use of new sources of energy (steam power, gas, electricity), a strong orientation towards the market, and a class fully dependent on wage labour. For some time the old family economy existed alongside the modern economy but, in the long run, it was undermined by it. This development had far-reaching consequences for adult workers who were freed from the grip of their parents by the operation of the market. Three processes strongly connected with each other played an important role in this development.

In the first place the composition of the labour force changed substantially, the proportion of the agricultural sector dropping considerably. In a place like Woensel 37% of the adult workers were still active in agriculture at the beginning of the nineteenth century but, by 1890, this had fallen to 14%. However, during the same period the proportion of factory workers grew from 15 to 36%. Most of them worked in labour-intensive industries like textiles, cigar production and, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the incandescent lamp industry. At first there was much child labour in these factories, but this gradually decreased. In this way a substantial part of the adult labour force, which had formerly been dependent on the agricultural sector, was absorbed by industry. As I have already said, this process first took place around a number of larger places. In fact, a process of ‘separation’ started, in which industry left the villages to concentrate in urban areas and the country was automatically marked as an agricultural setting. However, the effects of this process were not restricted to the urban area. The higher wages that were paid in industry also led to an increase in the rural wage level. Moreover, there were also mental changes, that particularly expressed themselves in demands for a better life.

The second development was the expansion of the labour market and its consequences for the composition of the household. For instance, the number of living-in servants sharply decreased. After about 1870, peasants took in fewer servants, mainly because the wages had increased to a prohibitive level. Instead, their own children were more often put to work. Meurkens speaks of ‘familisation’ (familiarisering), which means that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, farming had become almost exclusively the field of family members. It is possible that the patriarchal constellation was maintained in this sector, but most households were confronted with quite another dynamic. The adult children who earned their money in the factory or as maids in town were no longer prepared to hand over their wages to their parents. They wanted to keep it for their own use. Some laid money by for a future marriage, some preferred to spend it. The boys went to the pub more often, the girls showed more interest in clothes. Moreover, both sexes had more contact with each other. All this was a steady development, as a result of which work outside the home became a common phenomenon.
‘The children have few scruples about leaving the home. There is more to do, there is more fun elsewhere. The opportunity for earning their own money is greater there than at home where they work but see no money [...]’.

This process was not only the result of an improved functioning of the labour market. In general geographic and social mobility had increased considerably. The improvement of the road system and the introduction of new means of communication, like trains, trams, bicycles, as well as telegraph and telephone contributed a great deal towards this.

The third development was that people married at increasingly younger ages. Whereas in the middle of the nineteenth century the average age at marriage in Woensel was still 30 for both men and women, by 1910 it had fallen to 27 for men and 26 for women. This implies a substantial extension of the fertile period which, because contraception was unusual and breast-feeding was on the decrease, led to a sharp population growth. In the old situation this would have caused enormous problems, because there was not enough work in agriculture. However, in the new situation the labour surplus was easily absorbed by the growing industry. As a result, the resistance to younger marriages gradually became weaker. A man no longer needed to be self-supporting before he could marry. Moreover, the young couple were able to lay money aside for their marriage. As a result, people not only married younger but also more frequently. They could no longer fall back on farming as a secondary trade and were fully dependent on wage labour in a factory. This meant that many ended up in dire circumstances. In Woensel, the proportion of poor households, which had formerly only been just over one third in times of acute crisis, grew considerably. From 1860, it fluctuated around 60% only falling to the old level at the beginning of the twentieth century. This is an indication of a process of proletarianization which also expressed itself in other ways. However, these developments did not slow down the trend of marrying at a younger age.

All this strongly affected the traditional balance of power between parents and children. Because the grown-up children more often worked outside the home, kept a larger part of their wages to themselves and married at an earlier age, their position of power within the family strengthened considerably. Certain mental developments, such as a different attitude to leisure and a higher level of education among the children had a similar effect.

‘All circumstances contribute to make young people more independent and freer from the old generation. The old-time organization of production has largely disappeared. The common interest of all family members in co-operation is felt less. The children feel less dependent economically and the parents lack the means to maintain their authority. The mental basis of authority is undermined by the knowledge gap as a result of improved education, working under the supervision of strangers, different life-styles and the formation of peer groups [...]’.
So says Barentsen in his description of the developments in Kempenland at the end of the nineteenth century. That these developments occurred somewhat earlier in Woensel is not important. What is important is the direction of this development, which can only be interpreted as a gradual but constant erosion of the old family economy. Both generations had to pay a price for this development: the younger generation, because paternalism had lost its productivity and rationality, the older generation, because the advantages of a large family no longer outweighed the disadvantages. It remains open to discussion how this development should be valued. From a contemporary point of view, the grown-up children can be seen as victims of an authoritarian father. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that the decline of paternal authority was something of a tragedy, too.

7. Epilogue

In this article I have argued that the rural regions of East Brabant had a family economy at least until the middle of the nineteenth century. However, perhaps the whole line of thought should be reversed by assuming that this economy was only pursued as an ideal. This would radically change the whole issue in two ways. First, it would enable a theoretical definition of the family economy, leaving aside for the moment the question of whether it actually existed. Second, the question could be asked as to where, when, in what way and by whom this theoretical model can be materialized or at least approximated. This article has tried to offer some arguments on both these aspects. I have shown how much economic action is influenced by family circumstances. In particular, the development cycle has turned out to have been important, not only for peasants but also for weavers, both in poor and solvent families. In this respect the family economy can be seen as the struggle to make the family operate as effectively as possible. The authority of the father, the sexual division of labour, the co-operation of the children, the living in of servants, the ownership of the means of production, the solidarity of the generations, the honour of the family, and mutual help are elements of an ideal model in which the economy inherent to family life is optimized.

The second aspect, no less crucial to historians, refers to the conditions which help or hinder the realization of such a model. In this respect, this article offers some suggestions, too. It has become clear that one of the main conditions is social class. If there was a family economy in rural Brabant, it was mainly common among the well-to-do. The duration of marriage also played a role, because the phase of an all-productive family was only reached after many years. Further, the feasibility of the model is dependent on the economic situation. In prosperous times, the households were bigger, with a relatively large number
of servants. In times of a downward economic trend or depression, they had to fall back on the labour of the nuclear family. And finally, the economic sector is important as the model can be applied particularly to peasants, less in domestic industry and hardly at all to wage-labourers dependent on the labour market. Application of the model in this way could produce a differentiated picture. It is necessary to investigate under what circumstances and to what extent production showed the characteristics of a family economy. Doing the same for a market economy prevents both types of economy being opposed as homogeneous blocks.

Thirdly, this approach provokes new questions to be asked which can be the subject for further research. These refer particularly to the changing connections between economic behaviour and political or cultural development. For instance, what is the connection between the struggle for a family economy on the sandy soils of the south-east of the Netherlands and the acceptance of the exertion of ‘paternalistic’ authority? The north-west of the country, which had had intensive communications and a developed monetary economy for a long time, has politically been characterized by more ‘egalitarian’ relationships. What importance should be placed on the fact that the population of these sandy soils remained largely Roman Catholic, whereas the north-west of the Netherlands, which was Protestant became more liberal? These types of questions cannot be solved as long as demographic-economic and political-mental processes are interpreted as two autonomous spheres. In reality, values and ideals, dreams and concepts penetrate into the ‘hardest’ economic and demographic behaviour. Though this is equally true of the market economy, it appears much more apparent for the family economy. In this respect my research into the past might also be helpful for the present.

NOTEN

* This article was translated by Mrs. Jeske Nelissen


2. This involves research for a Ph. D. which I have been doing at the Social Sciences Research School in Amsterdam for the past four years. Results will be published at the beginning of 1995 in De Grote Overgang. Een Lokaal Onderzoek naar de Modernisering van het Bestaan. Woensel 1670-1920.

3. Regional Archives Eindhoven-Kempenland, Gemeentearchief Woensel, inv.nos 299-308.
4. A household was called solvent if it was capable of paying the poll tax assessment. If a household lived on charity, it was called poor and exempt from poll tax. Insolvent households were in between and only had to pay part of the poll tax.

5. A further explanation of this question can be found in G. van den Brink, 'De structuur van het huishouden te Woensel 1716-1739', in: G. van den Brink, A van der Veen, A. van der Woude (eds.), Werk, kerk en bed in Brabant. Demografische ontwikkelingen in oostelijk Noord-Brabant 1700-1920 (s-Hertogenbosch, 1989) 33-52.

6. The affinity to the English household is clear. This had an average of 1.63 parents, 2.03 children, 0.63 servants, 0.16 relatives and 0.30 others, which resulted in a total household size of 4.75. See: P. Laslett (ed.), Household and Family in Past Times (Cambridge, 1972) 83.

7. The relationship was two-fold. In poor households the husband was often forced to work as a seasonal labourer, as a result of which he was (temporarily) absent. However, households in which the husband was absent either through death or for some other reason mostly fell into poverty.

8. See Note 11.

9. These exceptions refer to a single adult boarder or a living-in child.

10. Cf. the values for 1791 in Table 2.

11. Little is known about the quantitative aspects of this phenomenon for the Netherlands. A study of households in the second half of the eighteenth century in Alphen shows that children who left home (for the first time) were on average 15.5 years old. See: A. Lindner, 'De dynamische analyse van huishoudens te Alphen 1753-1803', in: Van den Brink, et al. (eds.), Werk, kerk en bed, 53-82, especially 69 and 75.


13. In Alphen, servants generally remained with the same employer for over two years. However, more than half of all servants did not stay any longer than this in the same household. Before they married, most servants had lived at 5 to 7 different addresses. This points to a high degree of geographic mobility. See: Lindner, 'De dynamische analyse', 70-71, 75.


16. Lindner, De dynamische analyse, 71-73, 75.


18. Regional Archives Eindhoven-Kempenland, Gemeentearchief Woensel, inv. nos. 277-278. The list does not record dates of marriage. These have been taken from the Marriage Register (‘Trouwboek’) for the Sint Petrus Parochie in Woensel.

19. This is one of the assumptions in Chayanov’s theory of the peasant economy. A concise summary of this theory is presented in G. van den Brink, ‘De arbeid is alles, de mensch niets... Aard en ontwikkeling van het boerenbedrijf in de Kempen 1800-1900’, Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis 17 (1991) 50-72, esp. 52-55. Also: Ad Knotter, ‘Problems of the family economy’ in this issue.


22. P. Barentsen, ‘Het gezinsleven in het oosten van Noord-Brabant’, in: Van den Brink et al. (eds.), Werk, kerk en bed, 17-31, 29-30. Although Barentsen’s observations were made in the beginning of this century, I am convinced that they give an accurate view of the situation in an earlier period.


26. Barentsen, ‘Het gezinsleven’, 29. However, this was not the major motive for the late age of marriage in Kempenland. See section 5.

27. Barentsen, ‘Het gezinsleven’, 31; idem, Het oude Kempenland, 126-127; Crijns and Kriellaarts, Het gemengde landbouwbedrijf, 83, 92; Meurkens, Bevolking, 87.


29. Crijns and Kriellaarts, Het gemengde landbouwbedrijf, 177.


32. Ibidem, 263.
33. W. van Iterson, Schets van de landhuishouding der Meijerij, ('s-Hertogenbosch, 1868), 85; also 99.
34. Crijns and Kriellaarts, Het gemengde landbouwbedrijf, 67.
35. Barentsen, Het oude Kempenland, 127; Deckers, De landbouwers, 188.
40. Van Iterson, Schets, 15.
41. Deckers, De landbouwers, 242; Crijns and Kriellaarts, Het gemengde landbouwbedrijf, 85.
42. This is also one of the assumptions in Chayanov’s theory of the peasant economy. Farm size and labour volume can also be adjusted by working more or less hard. See further: Van den Brink, ‘De arbeid is alles’, 52-55, 61-65.
44. The data are taken from the Kadaster and the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths (‘Burgerlijke Stand’), Regional Archives Eindhoven-Kempenland.
46. Regional Archives Eindhoven-Kempenland, Archief Firma J. van der Velden en H. van Gennip, inv.no. 127 (‘Register houdende opgaven van werkzaamheden van thuiswevers en weefloon 1857’).
47. I would like to thank Mr P. van Gorp from Tilburg who kindly gave me technical information about the weaving process.
48. The average amount of land owned by weavers in the Cadastral register for 1830 was 0.53 hectares. However, many weavers did not own any land at all, so that the average was actually even lower.
50. Harkx gives comparable figures for Helmond. According to him the average annual production of a linen weaver around 1830 was 1260 ells or 882 metres. This would mean that between 1830 and 1857, productivity increased by approximately 12%. This sort of growth does not seem exaggerated: W. Harkx, De Helmondse textielnijverheid in de loop der eeuwen. De grondslag van de huidige textielindustrie 1794-1870 (Tilburg, 1967) 125.
51. In order to obtain cash money, most peasants had to sell butter and other dairy products. Thus, a general increase in livestock will have lead to a higher income. See: Crijns and Kriellaarts, Het gemengde landbouwbedrijf, 96; Barentsen, ‘Het gezinsleven’, 19.
59. Migration also played a role. In the nineteenth century, more people left Woensel than arrived. Afterwards this rapidly changed to a positive balance of migration.
61. Crijns and Kriellaarts, Het gemengde landbouwbedrijf, 94; see also Van Iterson, Schets, 14 en Barentsen, Het oude Kempenland, 133.
63. Ibidem, 94; also 193.
66. Meurkens, Bevolking, 66, 75.
67. For the typical cattle breeding regions in Friesland, North Holland and South Holland, farms of 16 hectares, 19 hectares and 27 hectares respectively are mentioned: J. Faber, Drie Eeuwen Friesland. Economische en sociale ontwikkelingen van 1500 tot 1800 (Wageningen, 1972) 209-210; A. van der Woude, Het Noorderkwartier. Een regionaal historisch onderzoek in de demografische en economische geschiedenis van westelijk Nederland van de late Middeleeuwen tot het begin van de negentiende eeuw (Wageningen, 1972) 282; D. Noordam, Leven in Maasland. Een hoogontwikkelde plattelandssamenleving in de achttiende en het begin van de negentiende eeuw (Hilversum, 1986) 53.
68. Deckers, De landbouwers, 249.
70. Van Iterson, Schets, 12.
71. Around about 1855, in Eindhoven and the surrounding area 47% of all factory workers were still children. In 1895 this had fallen to 15%. However, these data were not based on the criterion of an age limit of 16.
73. Crijns and Kriellaarts, Het gemengde landbouwbedrijf, 259; Barentsen, Het oude Kempenland, 332.
75. Deckers, De landbouwers, 243, 248.
76. Barentsen, Het oude Kempenland, 335.
77. Meurkens, Bevolking, 60, 63; Crijns and Kriellaarts, Het gemengde landbouwbedrijf, 112, 256-257, 259.
84. Ibidem, 332.
85. In 1880 as many as two-thirds of the households in Woensel did not own a single patch of land.
89. Meurkens, *Bevolking*, 115-116, states: ‘The economic system had largely lost its paternalistic and familial features. It had become authoritarian [...].’
90. ‘It is hard to lead a large family, the members of which are exposed to all sorts of differences and are very independent. The economic advantages of having children have relatively decreased and other objections have risen [...]’. Barentsen *Het oude Kempenland*, 332.
This short paper develops a particular theme within the general framework of the Posthumus Programme on the subject of changing labour relations and family formation. Broadly speaking our aim has been to gain a better understanding of the interaction between agricultural labour and its prevailing reproductive behaviour in various social and economic settings. Recent statistical research on fertility in provinces and communities in the Netherlands since 1880 has been based on a few variables. They are of use in the more recent period, but give unsatisfactory explanations of regional variations of fertility in the period 1880-1910. Evidently a model for this latter period has to work in a relatively non-homogeneous social, economic and mental space, and therefore, unmeasured ‘regional culture’ is considered to be a crucial variable. Since through hard work much more detailed socio-economic information could be made available, two questions arise. Firstly, what kind of information would provide variables that are likely to be more successful in increasing the explanatory power of existing statistical analysis? And, secondly, to what extent does the explanation still need a crucial ‘cultural factor’? In order to detect new explanatory variables we have analysed detailed descriptions of the economic, social and demographic systems of agricultural villages in 1888. In this paper most attention has been given to ‘labour relations’, while the use of ‘religion’ as an explanatory variable is criticized.

1. Results of recent fertility research in the Netherlands

To explain differences in levels of marital fertility and nuptiality between countries, provinces and communities, considerable statistical research has been done on various sets of economic, cultural and demographic factors. In cross-sectional
as well as in dynamic analysis the relative size of agriculture in society often plays an important role. In their work on the modernization of fertility in the Netherlands, Engelen and Hillebrand used a mix of ‘economic conditions’ (producing a motivation for fertility change), ‘mentality’ (determining the degree of acceptability of new reproductive behaviour), and ‘infant mortality’ (producing an extra supply of children). Mentality was measured by the percentage of Roman Catholics and Gereformeerden in the population (the latter being a rather conservative group within the Protestant population), while economic conditions of provinces and communities were measured by the percentage of men working in agriculture and other variables.

The factor ‘agriculture’ was used by Engelen and Hillebrand to measure the relative importance of the agricultural ‘family economy’. Theory claims that in this type of economy, children are rather important net contributors to the income of the family. The strong parental demand for children has to be fulfilled during rather short periods of marriage, since the age of marriage and the mortality rate are high. Therefore, in agricultural villages marital fertility is expected to be high and close to ‘natural’ values. If communities with low percentages for employment in agriculture are found, this is considered an indication that a process of ‘modernization’ or ‘industrialization’ of the economy has taken place, leaving only a few agricultural households. In such a situation the need for ‘high quality children’ with a good level of education and a high expectation of life leads to reduced levels of marital fertility.

The dynamics of this process of fertility decline is thought to be driven by economic forces that transform the agricultural economy into a non-agricultural one. Nevertheless, the reduction of marital fertility can be delayed in some communities by a temporary increase in the demand for children (in proto-industry, for instance), which will eventually disappear as soon as the net wage contribution of children to the family budget declines. Moreover, conservative or progressive mentalities seem to be important in explaining the long-term regional pattern of development or delay of modern reproductive behaviour. This ‘mentality’ factor - the inclination to accept or decline new behaviour - is considered to be important to explain why some countries, provinces and villages show a slower process of modernization of fertility than others.

Statistical studies by Engelen, Hillebrand and others have used a parallel reasoning in explaining changes in nuptiality. High values for agriculture indicate Hajnal-like worlds in which the younger generation has to wait for the right moment to set up their own household. The availability of land is a crucial factor here. Low values for agriculture refer to economies in which modernization and industrialization have increased wage labour much more than the number of independent producers. Basically, the reasoning is that as soon as a family’s budget can be financed by earned wages alone, a delay of marriage till the age of 28 or older is no longer necessary, and the age of marriage
declines rapidly. Nevertheless, here again a conservative mentality may cause a reluctance to accept newly developed impulses for high nuptiality and low marital fertility.

Cross-section analysis on the level of Dutch provinces shows that ‘mentality’ (that is: religion) is the main explicative factor of geographical variations in the Netherlands. For areas with a homogeneous mentality, however, such as the province of Limburg, there is an interesting analytical problem. The ‘mentality’-factor as measured by ‘religion’ seems to be logically out of the question, and the explanatory factors seem to be reduced to ‘economy’ and ‘infant mortality’. Does this deduction hold in a cross-section analysis on the level of communities?

Engelen’s cross-section analysis of the communities of the Roman Catholic province of Limburg resulted in two interesting conclusions. The first concerned 1879 and 1889, the very early phase of the fertility transition. This period is regarded as still being ‘traditional’ or ‘Malthusian’. Nevertheless, for these years, local values of nuptiality and marital fertility fluctuated within a wide range. Engelen found no consistent cross-sectional or dynamic relationship between nuptiality and marital fertility, and no convincing systematic relationship between those values and the factors ‘economy’ and ‘infant mortality’.3

In his dynamic analysis of the 1879-1889 period nuptiality was the main regulating mechanism of fertility. On an additional and incidental basis, people used methods to reduce marital fertility. However, this was neither a consequence of a new behaviour of marrying at a younger age nor a reaction to a higher supply of children caused by lower infant mortality.4

Engelen’s second conclusion concerned later periods of observation. After 1909 a systematic relationship between marital fertility and nuptiality was observed: the demographic transition had started. What then were the most important factors that explained differences between communities in this homogeneous Roman Catholic world? Engelen found that ‘economy’ was the strongest explaining factor for the years 1909, 1930 and 1960, although it was rather weak for 1909. He used two combined proxies for ‘economy’ for this year: percentage of male occupational population in agriculture (high values should show high marital fertility and a low percentage of married women) and percentage of female occupational population outside agriculture (high values should show low marital fertility).

However, contrary to what could be expected, agricultural villages often had a lower fertility than non-agricultural ones, while the relationship between marital fertility and nuptiality was weakly negative. Female labour showed almost no relationship to marital fertility, and a modestly negative one to nuptiality. Although the explicative value of the model was little for 1909, it improved when more recent observations were analyzed. This was explained by a process of overall secularization. The economic motivation already present in
1909 was thought to have been held back less and less by a conservative mentality.

Interestingly enough, the analysis of residual values of fertility led to geographical subregions within Limburg, suggesting that there must have been some other factor causing the rejection or acceptance of new reproductive behaviour. Engelen referred to this as the influence of 'regional cultures'. The question that arises is what these cultures exactly were. Would it be possible to specify the cultural factor more exactly? Or would the apparent importance of this cultural factor be the result of approximations of various local economic conditions that were not accurate enough?

2. Various worlds of agricultural labour

The theme 'changing labour relations and family formation' may be thought of in terms of relating fertility to elements belonging to the complex of labour relations. Such elements include the relative distribution of independent labour and wage labour within the economy, the distribution of property, the openness of the land market, and conditions of the labour market, like the level of wages and the incidence of wandering labour. Our suggestion for investigating the implications of such factors is to reduce the number of possible explanatory factors by holding one of them constant. This is what Engelen did for Limburg. By choosing this Roman Catholic province, he entered a world in which the mental factor, at least for the 1880-1910 period and as far as it was measured by religion, could be considered to be universally present. By doing this he was able to concentrate on other factors. We follow a similar procedure taking 'percentage of men working in agriculture' and not 'religion' as the constant.

Anyone who has worked comparatively with detailed information on the economy and demography of agricultural villages knows that their economic, social and mental structures can differ widely. Using a simple agricultural percentage of the occupational population representing the same economic motivation for children and the same conditions for marriage may be too crude a variable. Even in a small country like the Netherlands, a high percentage of agricultural families hides quite different agricultural worlds, ranging from high wage level agriculture with 'modern' labour relations to low wage agriculture in which the families of labourers are small-scale producers for a substantial part of their time. This seems to imply that their potentiality for fertility change will also be different. Our contribution therefore deals with two questions. First, if the variable 'percentage of male population working in agriculture' is held constant at the highest level, what is the variability of the demographic system? Second, to what extent can specific 'labour relations' explain this variability?
The selection of 'agriculture' for investigating further labour-related factors was possible thanks to an interesting source that has not yet been used very much: a well documented description, partly in quantitative, mostly in qualitative terms, of 94 agricultural villages in the Netherlands about 1888, just after the Agricultural Depression, called in short-hand the *Uitkomsten*. Since the data for many of the cases involved are not complete, a statistical analysis of the *Uitkomsten* will have to wait for additional research. Realizing that it would be efficient if we knew which factors might be the most rewarding, we selected two villages with a different type of agricultural economy to find out which crucial factors related to 'labour relations' would best explain the differences in their demographic system.

3. *Finsterwolde and Grubbenvorst: an analysis*

**Finsterwolde**

In 1888, the structure of the agricultural economy and the reproductive system of Finsterwolde (623 families, province of Groningen, clay, coastal area) was quite different from that of Grubbenvorst (285 families, province of Limburg, sandy, inland area). See also Table 1 in which some data are presented. In Finsterwolde, only 12% of the families exploited a farm, usually of a large scale. This indicates a highly unequal distribution of land. A particular system of tenure, called *Beklemrecht*, made fragmentation of land almost impossible. The 77 farmers used their costly clay land for the production of wheat. Since the early 1880s their profits had been declining. Land availability for most of the other families was restricted to the opportunity of renting parcels of land (somewhere between 5 and 50 ares) in order to grow fruit and vegetables and to keep a pig. It was a deliberate policy of the farmers to extend this type of land, thereby providing some of the families of labourers with employment and income in kind. The government was required to support this policy.

Compared to the 1870s, local demand for wage labour at the farms was at a much lower level in this period. After the 1850s and again during the Agricultural Depression since the late 1870s, farmers had restructured their mix of output and innovated their payment system. They decreased the number of servants and increased the demand for regular and occasional labour living outside the farm. What the implications of this transformation were for the age of first marriage is not reported. This is unfortunate, because it might be an important cause of changes in nuptiality.

In 1888, the local demand for labour was partly stable during the year, but it was, to a considerable extent, also seasonally very unevenly distributed. Farmers had (a mean of) two servants living in, one regular labourer living outside
during the year and three harvest labourers during the summer. Normally the labourers worked till 2 p.m., but during the harvest, they had to work the whole day. During the winter there was much less work, partly because threshing machines had come into use.

Servants were reported to be expensive, farmers paying a mean of 87 guilders for male and 56 guilders for female servants, including many children and adolescents. The best 25% of the servants earned about 125 and 75 guilders respectively. Given the short working day, wage levels were high: 4.20 guilders for 42 hours regular labour a week plus 2 guilders a week in kind, and 4.50 guilders during the harvest period. Harvest workers earned between 7 and 12 guilders a week. Although farmers' profits and food prices declined, the wage standards did not change. The explanation for this is that, during the summer, local supply of labour could not meet the demand. Farmers really needed the labour. In search of high earnings, many local labourers left the village for the harvest in Friesland or to work in peat areas. Afterwards they returned and during the winter there was a lot of unemployment. Some regular labourers considered emigrating to America. Apart from wages earned at the local farms, the family budgets of regular labourers included their own production (vegetables, milk, meat) and the advantages of owning their house. They are said to have a propensity for saving money and not to rely on poor relief during the winter. The wandering harvesters and peat labourers earned relatively more during the summer but seem to have spent their money, seem to have had much less of their own production, did not own their houses and had to rely heavily on poor relief during the winter.

In this village of rich farmers and a large population of labourers, the 623 households of at least two people lived in 450 houses, while the mean size was not particularly small compared to other villages dominated by families of labourers. The population of Finsterwolde was mainly Protestant. Nuptiality was high compared with many other agricultural villages in the Netherlands: 36% of all women were married. Modernity also seems to be visible in the age of marriage. About half of the women marrying for the first time (in the 1882-1887 period) were younger than 24 years. It is interesting that most of the marriages are qualified as enforced. Compared to Dutch rural standards, illegitimacy was high, as it was in other villages in Groningen. This kind of procreative behaviour is reported to have been recently developed by a number of the labourers, as a consequence of very high wages earned by them at big projects in the sixties and seventies.

Small property of a house and some cattle is said to have very crucially influenced several aspects of the behaviour of labourers, such as the choice of the age of marriage, the propensity to save, the reliance upon poor relief and the well-being of the family. Labourers with property and a propensity to save, traditionally married late. It is reported that in 1886-1888 more than 70% of
labourers with parents who owned a house, were at least 25 years old when they married, while almost 90% of the labourers with parents who did not own their house married at a younger age.

The level of marital fertility was not really modern: 0.331 (measured by births per 1000 married women, between 15-44 years). The infant death rate was not particularly high (145), but it was the highest in the region. This may indicate that most babies were breast fed, but infant deaths are said to be high in those families in which the mother worked for wages. Wives of regular labourers worked about ten weeks in the year for wages; the wives of day labourers worked more.

The utility of children for own production or services at home seems to have been high. Annual non-attendance at school was about 18%, and about 25% during July and August. The older children (10-12 years) worked or had to look after their brothers and sisters while their mother went to work in the harvest. The local council developed a strong policy against this practice.

In 1909, nuptiality in Finsterwolde had increased slightly from the 36% of 1888 to 37%, while marital fertility had decreased rather sharply from 0.331 to 0.250, just as in the other agricultural villages of Groningen. A decline in infant mortality from 145 in 1889 to 122 in 1909 certainly contributed somewhat to an increased natural supply of children, but the demand for children by parents might have been decreased more, because it cost more to keep them, as costs of housing, food and education had increased. Another factor that caused a decline in the demand for children might have been the further increase in real wages and a more developed exposure to market goods. After 1888 children seem to have become less and less crucial to survive in this area.

Grubbenvorst

Just as in most of the other villages of the southern and eastern, sandy area of the Netherlands, in Grubbenvorst (in the province of Limburg) most of the families exploited a farm. About 28% of them were indicated to own at least one horse. Most of them had less than 20 hectares of land. In this sandy area, land was not very productive and therefore it was cheap compared to land in Groningen. The farmers produced fodder (such as rye, oats, potatoes), and they sold young cattle, butter and pigs. Tenant farmers were reported to be unable to make a profit unless they used their own children for labour.

Land availability for small producers was much better here, both for renting and buying. The majority of the families of labourers had small exploitations between one and three hectares, and kept an ox or a cow. They sold butter and pigs. Most of the other labourers used at least about half a hectare for potatoes,
Table 1  Labour relations and fertility, Finsterwolde and Grubbenvorst, 1888 (1889, 1909, 1912)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land:</th>
<th>Finsterwolde</th>
<th>Grubbenvorst</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>type of land</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>sandy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rent of best land (yearly, f/ha)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arable land</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small parcels gardenland</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distribution of land:
- families with a farm: 12% (Finsterwolde), 28% (Grubbenvorst)
- labourers with an exploitation: 35% (Finsterwolde), 37% (Grubbenvorst)
- labourers with some land/garden: - (Finsterwolde), - (Grubbenvorst)
- labourers without any land: - (Finsterwolde), - (Grubbenvorst)

Distribution of small exploitations (%), 1912:
- 0.5-2 ha owned | 3 | 3 |
- 0.15-0.5 ha owned | 6 | 12 |
- 0.05-0.15 ha owned | 2 | 2 |
- 0.5-0.15 ha hired | 33 | 32 |
- 0.15-0.5 ha hired | 12 |
- 0.05-0.15 ha hired | 2 |

Structure of demand of wage labour:
- mainly family members or wage labour?: hired | 1/3 | 0.4/0.25/0.4 |
- seasonal imbalances of demand: big | | small |

Supply of wage labour:
- during the summer: too low | | enough |
- during the winter: too high | | enough |

Wage standard (f/hour):
- regular labour: > 0.10 | 0.065 |
- harvest labour: 0.10-0.16 | (0.065) |

Poor relief:
- strong | weak |

Non-attendance at school:
- 18% (Finsterwolde), 18% (Grubbenvorst) | small |

Tendency to emigrate:
- moderate | not |

Mean household size, 1889:
- 4.6 (Finsterwolde), 5.5 (Grubbenvorst) |

Number households/100 houses, 1889:
- 138 (Finsterwolde), 100 (Grubbenvorst) |

% married women (female population):
- 1889: 36 | 29 |
- 1909: 37 | 29 |

% married women 15-44 years < 26 years, 1889:
- 16 | 5 |

% first married women < 24 year, 1884-1888:
- 49 |

Children born/1000 married women 15-44 years
- 1884-1888: 0.331 | 0.410 |
- 1908-1911: 0.250 | 0.394 |

Illegitimate births (% births)
- 1880s: 5 | 0 |

Age of marriages of labourers of parents (not) owning a house, 1886-88
- < 25 year: owning a house | 5 (14%) | n.a. |
- > 25 year: owning a house | 16 (44%) | n.a. |
- not owning a house | 13 (36%) | n.a. |
- not owning a house | 2 (6%) | n.a. |
vegetables and goats. Most of the families owned their own dwelling and (part of their) land.

The demand for labour had a completely different structure from that in Groningen. Most of the agricultural labour (maybe 70-80%) was done by family members themselves, working hard in their farmhouse and on their land. The demand for wage labour was rather stable during the year. On average each farmer hired only 1.4 servant, 0.25 regular labourer and 0.4 harvest labourer. Servants and labourers were reported to be very expensive. Farmers paid almost as much as in Finsterwolde: a mean of 85 guilders for a male servant and 52 guilders for a female servant, but they employed older, more experienced servants. Wages were much lower than in Finsterwolde: 4.80 guilders for 75 hours regular labour a week, that is 6.4 cents an hour compared to at least 10 cents per hour in Finsterwolde. Harvest workers in Grubbenvorst did not earn much more.

Supply and demand of wage labour roughly balanced each other. Labourers did not suffer from winter poverty, thanks to their work on their own small farms. The modest family budgets of the labourers, including production for their own consumption and for the market (butter, pigs) balanced out. Since wage earnings were low, exposure to new consumption goods must have been much less intense than in Groningen. There was neither a seasonal movement of workers into or out of the village, nor emigration to America. Some small farmers tried to do so in earlier years, but did not succeed.

In Grubbenvorst, each of the 285 families of at least two people had their own dwelling, while their mean size was 5.5 persons (4.6 in Finsterwolde). The population was Roman Catholic.

Nuptiality was low, 31% of the women being married. Land fragmentation caused by inheritance was taking place. At the same time, agriculture intensified, especially by the production of butter, the raising of pigs, and arboriculture. The average age of marriage was high: in 1889 only 3% of the married female population was recorded as being under 26 years. Illegitimacy was called ‘rare’, and marital fertility was high: 0.10, with an infant death rate of only 0.097.

The wives of farmers and labourers worked their own land. Many of them produced butter. Non-attendance of children at school was described as ‘small’ and the ability of the population to read and write as ‘good’. The local council did not pursue a policy in this matter. Nevertheless, in this area it was considered normal for children of 11-12 years of age to be regularly absent from school. It was reported that children in Grubbenvorst whose labour had been free in earlier years, were now earning 1.50 guilders a week plus food to look after the cattle of the labourers who were short of fodder. This indicates that the economic utility of the children of labourers had increased in these years of a growing demand for meat and butter.
In 1909, nuptiality in Grubbenvorst had not changed very much from what it had been in 1888, while marital fertility had declined only slightly from 0.410 to 0.394. Since economic conditions improved but did not change the structure of the economy - the processes of land fragmentation and economic intensification were still going on - the family budget continued to depend on family labour. We may hypothesize that the economic utility of children was still important.

4. Discussion

The two cases described above offer a detailed picture of the socio-economic and demographic system of two villages. Now we return to our two questions. First, if the variable ‘percentage of male population working in agriculture’ is held constant at the highest level, what would be the variability of the demographic system? And, second, to what extent do specific aspects of ‘labour relations’ explain this variability?

If wage income was structurally too low to have a decent living, economic conditions forced labourers to produce goods, not only for own use, but also for the market. Age of marriage was relatively high in Grubbenvorst because most of the labourers used to start a small exploitation. This type of marginal labour intensive exploitation in the sandy area was favoured by the fast growing demand for butter and meat since the seventies. These labourers needed land to be assured of employment and income. They therefore had a strong propensity to acquire property of their own.

This position of the labourer as a ‘marginal independent producer’, combining wage labour with the exploitation of his own land, brought him close to the Hajnal-position of the peasant: he needed to have some land and a family to help him exploit it. Because he had to wait for an inheritance, or had to pay (too) high a price on the land market, he tended to postpone his marriage. The demand for family labour and for wage labour of children was sustained by the general market developments, and an important number of the families in the village continued to run marginal independent exploitations. As a consequence, the impulse to decrease the natural supply of children would have been weak and marital fertility would have continued to be high.

A structural problem of this type of economic agrarian and demographic development is that a real class of full-time wage-earning labourers is almost unable to develop. These marginally independent producers were ready to accept a marginal wage. They spoiled the local labour market for full-time wage labourers and, indirectly, forced their numerous family members to work on farms with a low labour productivity. The main alternative was to leave the village in search for a higher income, mostly in an urban labour market. The
local land market was also spoiled, since the marginal producers will have offered prices that were too high compared to those offered by the ‘real’ farmers.\textsuperscript{7}

The *Uitkomsten* of 1888 also indicates that a high wage level does not automatically imply a low age of marriage of labourers. In the high wage area of Finsterwolde, the regular labourers demonstrated a will to acquire property too. Their propensity to save was a strong impulse for the continuation of a relatively high age of marriage. A low age of marriage was found among the wandering harvest labourers, characterized by high summer earnings, no property, a very small production for their own provision and a reliance on poor relief. They are reported as being discontent and as normally having bad relationships with the farmers.

The results for Finsterwolde suggest that the incidence of wandering labour might be a structural force in fertility change, at least in this type of a high wage economy. Other villages seem to show that wandering labour from a low wage economy based on small holdings tends, to reinforce traditional ways of peasant farming and corresponding ways of family formation.\textsuperscript{8}

The conclusion of this limited comparative analysis confirms the impression that, in 1888, in the early phase of fertility transition, the same percentages of employment in agriculture hide quite different procreative behaviour. The most important factors that underly these differences seem to be the level of wages and the incidence of property in the labouring population.

In this paper we will not present our analysis of other high and low wage agricultural structures in the Netherlands in 1888, although this would be interesting. Nevertheless, an additional remark can be made about the need of a strong tendency towards modern fertility in high wage areas. In 1888, Protestant as well as Catholic villages with labour intensive types of agriculture in high wage areas, including horticulture and arboriculture, had a rather traditional family formation system (high ages at marriage, continuing high levels of marital fertility). This was mainly true were labourers of the village wanted to acquire their own exploitation. Evidently, family labour continued to be important for them. If the labourers did not have market oriented activities (and did not produce at all, or only a little for their own winter provision), the procreative behaviour of these market dependent labourers in high wage areas was often quite ‘modern’.
5. The cultural factor: religion

Catholicism

So far we did not discuss the fact that the population of Finsterwolde was Protestant, that of Grubbenvorst Roman Catholic. To explain differences in population fertility between both villages in 1888, or in the development of fertility between 1888 and 1909 we focused upon 'labour relations' and we seemed simply not to be in need for the 'mentality' factor. Without claiming to be able to say the last word on the subject, it is nevertheless interesting to look at the agricultural and demographic structure of Catholic villages in high wage areas which have various labour relations.

Existing statistical analyses predict system of high fertility, restricted nuptiality, and high ages of marriage for Roman Catholic areas. Moreover, adherence to Catholicism should sustain a high desire for children, and therefore should have weakened the economic impulses that would have modernized fertility in the 1889-1909 period. Therefore, the first question might be: does this prediction hold in Roman Catholic villages in a high wage area with a proletarian labour force without any market production of their own? We found several relevant cases of villages with a strong majority of Roman Catholic families.

Less than 10% of the families of Beverwijk (North Holland) were reported to be farmers (producing crops) or independent market gardeners (vegetables, fruit). Most of them rented land. The land market was very active. Because of the high prices of land, families of labourers did not use land for market production or even for their own provision. Formerly, a very high demand for labour had attracted many labourers to Beverwijk at high wages, but in 1888 the supply of labour exceeded the demand. Relatively small numbers worked regularly or occasionally on the farms, while large numbers worked in adjoining villages. Outgoing, wandering labour did not exist. The few regular labourers earned 8 guilders a week. During the summer, occasional labourers earned 12 guilders a week, in accordance with the region as a whole. A number of families bought some winter provision, but many of them needed poor relief during the winter. A lot of money was spent on education, and school attendance was reported to be very good; in the June-August period only a small number of children worked in the gardens. The demand for child labour seems to have been small compared to the potential supply. Therefore, in this agricultural economy the mean economic utility of children should have been rather low.

In Beverwijk nuptiality was quite similar to Finsterwolde, though perhaps slightly less 'modern'. In 1889, 32% of all women was married (not too high), but 47% of the recent brides (1884-1888) was younger than 24 years. Illegitimacy was 2%, an unusually high percentage in Catholic villages. Marriage fer-
tility was slightly higher compared to Finsterwolde, 0.376, with an infant mortality of 255. Just as in Finsterwolde, in 1909 this Roman Catholic community showed a strong decline in fertility, 0.274 (-0.102), with an infant mortality of 186.

The second case is the village of Blokker (North Holland), where the population was also mainly Roman Catholic. Families of farmers were relatively numerous (40%). Their wives and daughters produced a lot of cheese. The farmers owned expensive land or even more expensive vegetable and fruit lands and gardens. Fragmentation of farms and a shift from agriculture to horticulture was taking place. About 60% of the village population consisted of labourers. In earlier years they had earned much more money and had become used to luxury: exposure to market goods must have been strong. In 1888, they were earning 6 guilders per week, not a particularly high sum, but they nevertheless did not produce their own food. Instead, many of their wives worked outside the home as daily help in other households and earned 2.30 to 3 guilders per week. Winter poor relief was general.

In the 1884-1888 period, 50% of brides marrying for the first time was younger than 24 years of age. Nevertheless, it is explicitly reported as a special phenomenon that the families of labourers only rarely consisted of more than five children. Therefore, it is not surprising that, between 1884-89, the fertility of married women (15-44 years old) was only 0.273. The population had a high level of education. Infant mortality was not low: 229. In 1909, Blokker had a modern marital fertility of 0.198 (0.75) and an infant mortality of 130 (-99).

The last case is Wassenaar (South Holland), another Catholic village in the high wage area in which labourers did not produce for the market. Between 1884 and 1888, we find 45% of the brides marrying for the first time to be younger than 24 years old. In 1889 marriage fertility was still high, 0.371, but then declined rather sharply: in 1909 it was 0.293. Since infant mortality declined spectacularly from 216 to 86 (-130), the increased supply of children in a world of a stable or declining economic utility of children may have also been a strong fertility-reducing stimulus.

These three cases show that Roman Catholic villages with high wages and a 'proletarian' labour force could have low ages of marriage and low and sharply declining levels of marital fertility. In these circumstances, it is not plausible to suppose a strong mental force that would act as a brake on the development of new procreative behaviour.

Now a second question arises. Can we find high wage Roman Catholic villages that did not have a proletarian agrarian structure, but instead had many small producers? The `labour relations' approach would expect to find (in spite of high wages) much family work and therefore a high, sustaining level of fertili-
ty. If the labourers had to save for property and land, we might expect a high age of marriage too.

A well-described example is Grootebroek (North Holland), again a village with a strong activity in small-scale and specialized horticulture, in this case producing all kinds of cabbages. About 40% of the families farmed independently. Labourers earned 9 guilders a week (in horticulture for additional hours even 15 cents an hour, that is 50% more compared to Finsterwolde) and had the use of seven ares of land from the farmers for their own provisioning. Many owned a property, farmers as well as regular labourers (35% of the families owned about 3 ha each). Occasional labourers (ca 15% of the families) did not have any property or land at all. Women did not perform wage labour. Young boys of thirteen years earned 2.40 to 3 guilders a week with work in the fields. This was much more than boys earned in other villages as servants or occasional labourers.

Nuptiality was again high: in 1889, 36% of the women of Grootebroek were married and 47% of the brides marrying for the first time in the 1884-1888 period were younger than 24 years. It is not reported whether these young marriages were those of occasional labourers. There were no illegitimate births. Marriage fertility was 0.325 in 1888 and 0.331 in 1909. Independent family production of regular labourers was high enough to characterized these as family economies. The high 1909-figure for fertility is consistent with a substantial economic utility of older children.

In conclusion, our investigation confirms that Roman Catholicism was not necessarily accompanied by traditional patterns of fertility. Some changes in fertility were developing so fast that a relevant influence of Roman Catholic conservatism is not plausible: the changes must have been provoked by ‘labour relations’. A high wage level accompanied by a low preference for one’s own production and a proletarian social structure without much property were - just as in the case of the Protestant village of Finsterwolde - closely connected with a demographic system with a low age of marriage and a high potential for a fast fertility decline. A traditional element such as the continuation of high fertility again seems to have been related to a broad category of small producers working with family labour, and a considerable economic utility of elder children in terms of family labour and wage income.

Protestantism

A last test is concerned with the supposed ‘progressiveness’ of Protestantism. If we look at the low wage area, we find in most of the Protestant agricultural villages in the east a level of nuptiality that is a little higher than in the Catholic villages in the south. Many of these cases indicate that in the Protestant vil-
LAGHER RELATIONS, CULTURE AND FERTILITY

lages the social structure was somewhat more ‘proletarian’ than in the Catholic ones: there was less small landownership and there were more wandering harvest or peat labourers. As far as marital fertility is concerned, in 1889 some Protestant villages in low wage areas showed a high (and afterwards sustained) level of marital fertility (about 0.350). In others, somewhat lower fertility rates are visible (about 0.280), that declined afterwards (0.210). Sometimes the influence of special aspects of ‘labour relations’ is visible, such as wandering labour and restricted local ownership by labourers (Laren in the province of Gelderland) and a high degree of land availability for the younger generation because of extended and complex family formation (Staphorst).

In the high wage part of the Netherlands there were also villages in which Protestantism was not accompanied by full ‘progressive’ fertility. Although in 1888 in most cases the age of marriage was ‘modernizing’, there were places in South Holland where marital fertility was still high in 1888 (0.380) and also in 1909 (0.310-0.340). These were Protestant villages with horticulture, arboriculture, or flax culture (Katwijk, Boskoop and Barendrecht).

Therefore, Protestantism is not an unambiguous progressive factor. Although further research is necessary, elements of the local ‘labour relations’ seem to be a more convincing explanation for an important part of the observed variability in fertility systems, both in low wage areas and in high wage areas.

6. Conclusion

This explorative paper shows the importance of local differences in ‘labour relations’ to any understanding of why there were important differences in fertility systems in Dutch agricultural villages in 1888. It also shows the potential of these relations to explain fertility change in the 1889-1909 period. The relevance of mentality as measured by adherence to the Protestant (Hervorm-de) or Roman Catholic denomination in explaining cross-sectional differences between villages is severely called into question.

Detailed information of local conditions - to be extended and analyzed more thoroughly in future research - sustains the hypothesis that the overall level of wages and the extent of small ownership and land availability are crucial variables, and that small family farming, child wage earnings and wandering labour are also important explaining factors in cross-sectional and dynamic differences of the fertility of the population in the villages involved.

‘Culture’ or ‘mentality’ now seems to take forms of specific preference, such as the propensity among labourers to save money and buy property, what is described as ‘unthoughtful’ marriages and the right to get poor relief, a greater taste for luxury goods caused by increased wages and by an increased exposure to new market goods, the acceptance of wage earning mothers and of bot-
tle feeding babies instead of breast feeding them, and the development of a local policy intended to reduce non-attendance at school. In a proletarian high-wage socio-economic structure, the existence of wandering labour might be a strong preference-innovating factor.

We might speculate as to which extent the same aspects of ‘labour relations’ that seem to explain differences in local demographic behaviour can also be used to explain differences in the development of early local labour movements or the lack of them.10

NOTES


3. In this particular case Engelen measured the factor ‘economy’ by a set of 5 variables: (1) percentage of male occupational population in agriculture (‘family economy’); (2) percentage of wage labourers working outside agriculture (‘modernization’); (3) percentage of children under 16 with an occupation (‘utility of children’); (4) percentage of working women over 16 (‘opportunity costs’); and (5) percentage of men over 16 without occupation (‘unemployment’). See: Engelen, Fertilité, passim.


5. Uitkomsten van het onderzoek naar den toestand van den landbouw in Nederland, ingesteld door de Landbouwcommissie benoemd bij Koninklijk Besluit van 18 September 1886, No.28, 4 Vols. (Den Haag, 1890).


7. For an analysis of such a process of ‘uneven transformation’ of the economic and demographic system and a criticism of the ‘family economy’ concept see: P.M.M. Klep, Bevolking en arbeid in transformatie. Een onderzoek in Brabant 1700-1900 [The Transformation of Population and Economy. A Study in Brabant, 1700-


9. Rent may give an indication: farmers’ land 130 guilders per ha and vegetable and fruit lands and gardens 220 guilders per ha.

10. For urban differences in the early local labour movement between a high and a low wage city see: P.M.M. Klep, ‘Breda en Amsterdam, 1855-1875’ in: *De kracht der zwakken. Studies over arbeid en arbeidersbeweging in het verleden* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1992) 139-167.
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