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**‘Making a living of their own’
Household formation, gender and the transfer of property and position in the
18th and 19th century Dutch countryside**

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Abstract

The Groningen “Ommelanden” situated in the north of the Netherlands was a for 18th and 19th century standards very modern market-oriented society. How large was the social mobility in such a society and what role played inheritances, succession and gender? Hisclass did not prove an appropriate tool for analysing social structure and social mobility, pivoting only at capacities and responsibilities and not taking into account investments necessary for certain occupations. Using an alternative social stratification of five levels intergenerational social mobility proved very high, with nearly half of the individuals changing class, gender differences were small. Inasmuch as children in most cases tended to marry well before they received an inheritance, individual capacities played a mayor role. Chances on upward and downward mobility were not clearly related to order in the family, nor to the number of brothers and sisters despite equal inheritance practises. Direct succession was of only minor importance. Most new couples had to found a new household shortly after marriage, long term three-generation households seem to have been quite rare, as was partition among the heirs of the land the parents used. Rarely, one of the couples returned to take over the parental household in a later stage of life. The main transfer of farms, and presumably also of other regular positions (workshops, inns, shops etc.) was not from parents to children. For farms some one third were handed over to remarrying widows and widowers, some one third were sold, and only one third went to one of the children. Significantly more sons than daughters succeeded their parents, however, the succession of surviving sons wasn’t a rule. Although social background was very helpful in securing a good position after marriage, it was by no means decisive for chances in this very modern money economy. Presumably, personal virtues and strategies were also of great importance.

Introduction

The myths on the transfer of property and social position between generations are widespread in daily life. One of the strongest is the norm of the (oldest) son following in the footsteps of his father (Hajnal, 1965, for a Swedish example: Dribe and Lundh 2005). Daughters are supposed to have had only chances to succeed if there were no sons available. Succession from one generation to the next is suggested to be the main way property (and social positions) is being transferred (e.g. Sabeau 1990: on Recklinghausen in Southern Germany). In this way families usually lived for generations in the same building. In this article I will use the case of the relative modern rural society of the Groningen Ommelanden in the 18th and early 19th century to test this myth of continuity of lineages, which is closely related to the idea that people married late in Western Europe, because they first had to secure a livelihood (Fertig 2005).

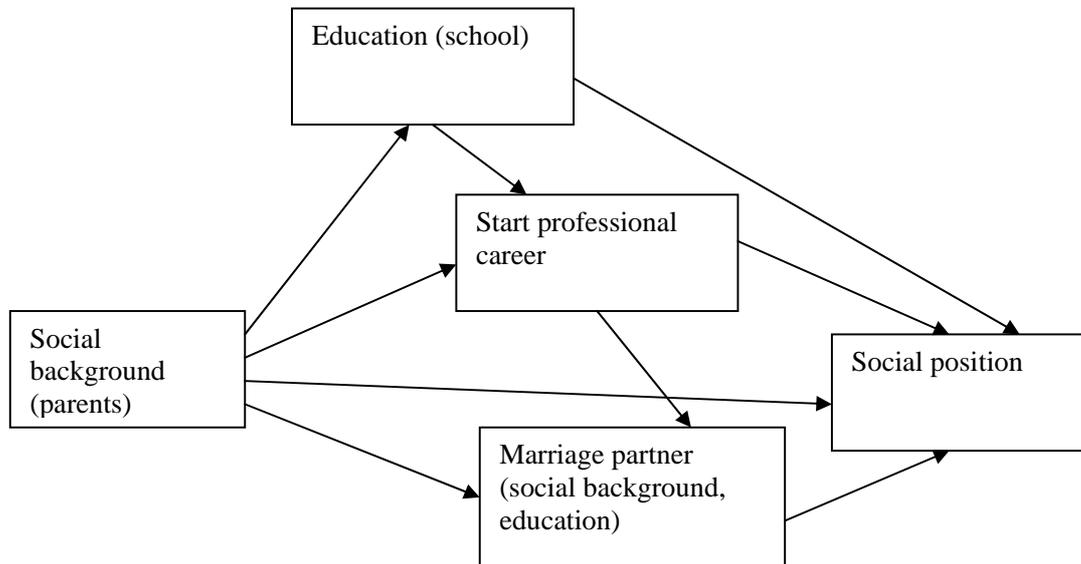
The choice for the Ommelanden characterized by very fertile clay grounds and a well developed money economy (Paping 1995) has certain consequences. The Groningen clay area is by no means representative for the European countryside. It was a – though peripheral – part of the very wealthy coastal Dutch region and characterized by capitalistic farming (mostly medium scaled farms of 10 tot 50 hectare) and a far fletching specialisation of non-agricultural activities, despite the vicinity of the large city of Groningen (23,000 inhabitants). Three important groups of households can be discerned economically: 1. farmers, 2. landless labourers, 3. artisans, shop-keepers, schoolmasters and preachers working mainly outside agriculture. The nobility (appended by non-nobles from the governing class, the so-called: “regenten”) although financially quite influential

until the beginning of the 19th century, was quantitatively negligible. Intragenerational occupational mobility after marriage was unusual. Trades and handicrafts were nearly always jobs for life, and not an ordinary stage in the family life cycle as in the German village of Recklinghausen (Sabean 1990: p. 316-3120).

The Groningen clay area was a society with large economic differences within each village (Paping and Collenteur 2004: p. 94). Partly because of that, it was as will be shown a society of chances but also of great risks for individuals. Social-cultural differences, however, were - outside the noble class - far less than economic differences. In this article I want to investigate how large intergenerational mobility chances for males and females were, and some factors which possibly played an important role.

In every persons life there generally are a few crucial 'factors' which have a decisive impact on his or her fate in the future. These 'factors' comprise: 1. the social background one has; 2. the kind of education one receives. 3. the marriage partner one chooses. 4. the start of one's professional career. Clearly, all these factors are in someway or another interdependent, and all are highly influential for the social position to be obtained later in life (see Scheme 1).

Scheme 1: Relations between social background and social position around 2000.



Before the 20th century the importance of education at schools was limited, the majority of the people only received primary education or even none at all. Much more important were the capabilities juveniles developed during their teens and early twenties. The first real job is nowadays an important watershed in life, however, in the past the securing of a good position after marriage was of primary importance. Entering into marriage still can be of importance as the moment to start a new household (a consumption unit); however, in the past it also was generally the moment that people started a business of their own (a production unit). In a society characterised by nuclear households mostly conducting small firms (including farms), marriage meant that a couple had to make an inventory of their resources and decide in which house they wanted to live and how they were going to make a living. To remain working as live-in servants (in large parts of the countryside a

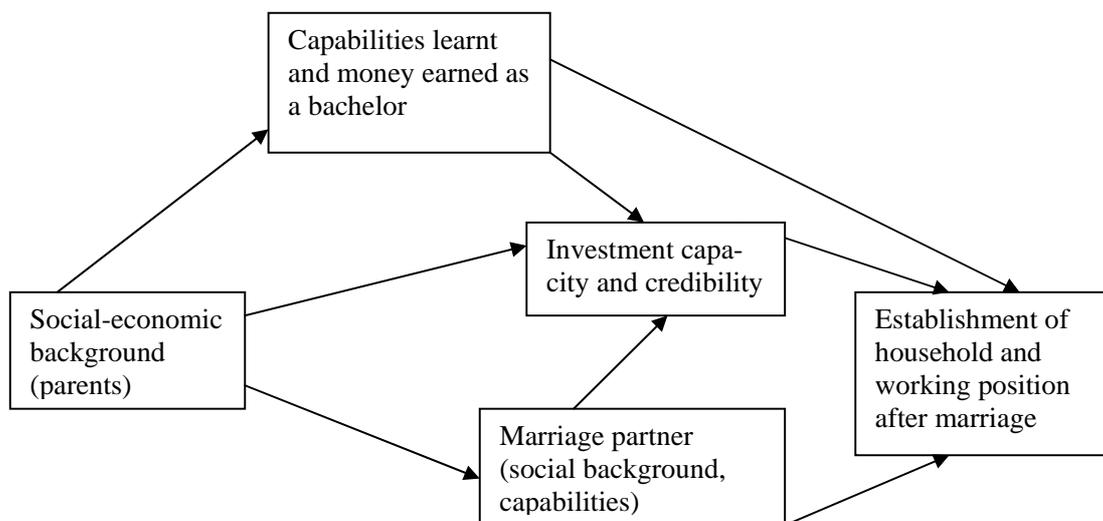
very usual phase in life for the poorer half of the juveniles) wasn't an alternative (Schlumbohm 1994: p. 337-367; Paping 2005), while on the other hand the thought of settling down or staying in one of the parental homes seemed to be very unattractive for most of the newly-wed, considering the number of nuclear households in Western Europe (Laslett 1972; Hajnal 1983).

The resources of the new couples comprise: 1. The savings of both bride and groom during their unmarried period; 2. The parental inheritances and dowries of both bride and groom (and possible other inheritances); 3. The working experiences of the groom and to a lesser extent the bride; 4. The financial credibility of the couple, necessary to borrow funds for any investment in house and firm. A newly-wed couple needed money to buy a house, workshop or farm, and the capabilities to perform their new business in an appropriate way.

In theory, the new couple created with their own household an independent family economy. However, the example of the less 'modern' village of Recklinghausen (Sabeau 1990) shows that even in such cases the new couples could be tight to their still existing parental households, especially if most of their resources (land) were originally belonging to these parental households, and their strategies were directed towards the succession of the large family farm or towards the slow accumulation of land or later on in the family life cycle, as was also the case in the Kempen in Belgium (Vanhaute 2004). Equal inheritances stimulated these kind of strategies, however, they can be seriously hampered

by the indivisibility of the larger farms, as for example in Belm in German Westfalia (Schlumbohm 1994: 54).

Scheme 2: Relations between social background and social position before approximately 1900.



At first we will concentrate on the social structure in the area under consideration. The general Hisclass social structure will be evaluated, and a more suitable alternative for this region will be put forward. Afterwards we will look at the social mobility using this alternative social structure. Then we will pivot on the importance of succession from father upon son or daughter in the formation of new households directly after marriage and in the transfer of especially farms, but also of other positions. The small role of succession will be related to the inheritance practices and the moment parental

inheritances were at disposal. At the end of this paper we briefly go into the settlement of newly-wed couples, who did not succeed their parents.



Social structure

The Groningen clay area in the North of the Netherlands knew a very specific social structure already dating from the 16th century. Due to specialisation some 40% of the inhabitants had their main occupation outside agriculture. The agricultural sector consisted of landless labourers and quite wealthy middle-class farmers. From 1750 onwards population started to grow, and this growth accelerated around 1785. Around 1830 more than half as much inhabitants were living in this region. Population growth was accompanied by heavy proletarianization. The number of farms being scattered all over the area was quite stable, while the number of farm labourer families was rising quickly. The share of the other groups remained constant (Paping 1995). A lot of villages grew in size, although the case of Oldenklooster between 1730 and 1830 as shown on the maps is a little extreme.

Within the group farmers large differences existed, which mainly had to do with the amount of land in use, although before about 1780 the amount of land which one really owned was also of importance. However, only 10% of the land was controlled by the users themselves. Some 40% was in the hand of other inhabitants of the clay area, partly nobles, but also rich farmers and salesmen. Local and urban institutions, the provincial government, and patricians from the city of Groningen made up for the other half of the land.

So 90% of the land was let to the farmers, mostly on long terms according to a specific system. The regional system of “beklemming” implied that the farm building was owned

by the farmer, while the land rented was “clinked” to the farm-stead. In general every six year the farmer rented the land once more, the rent being raised or lowered according to the economic circumstances. However, due to legal verdicts, it became increasingly difficult for the landowner to remove the farmers from the land. The land owner had to buy the farmstead from the farmer for a good price and also had to pay a high compensation for investments. A lot of farms consisted of one large indivisible “beklemming”, others comprised two till five or more pieces. However, the nucleus of most farms was made up by a relatively large and indivisible piece of land.

During the unfavourable first half of the 18th century most of the land rents became fixed. However, when the agricultural prices again began to rise in the second half of the 18th century, owners found it increasingly difficult to find legal ways to raise the rents once again. From 1770 till 1790 for most of the land contracts were concluded between owners and users which fixed the rent of the land forever, and gave the user in return for a considerable amount of money the eternal right to depose of the right to use of the land, in every way he or she wanted. In this way the land users, also because of the considerable price rises, became the actual owners of the land in the beginning of the 19th century. The position of the original land owners was reduced to holders of risk less eternal bonds. However, the division of a “beklemming” remained impossible without the approval of (and a large payment to) the land owners.

Table 1: Hisclass positions and tax payments on presumed wealth (“taxatiegeld”) in the Groningen clay area, Roman Catholics around 1730.

	Hisclass	1-1,5	2-3	4-5	6-8	9-14	18-22	N
Higher managers a.o.	1-2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Lower managers a.o	3-5	4	6	1	-	-	-	11
Skilled workers	6-7	17	12	6	2	1	-	37
Farmers	8	13	28	24	17	8	4	105
Others	9-12	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Rentiers	-1	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
N		36	48	32	20	10	5	151

Note: the amount of tax paid is expressed as the ratio to the lowest assessment. Some 50-60% of the households paid these taxes. Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset; GrA, SA 2217.

Understandably, the changes in the land market had some impact on the social structure in the Groningen clay area. However, a comparison of table 1 and table 2 makes clear that already in 1730 farmers formed the top of the social stratification. Nearly all the farmers had to pay taxes, while labourers all seem to have been exempted. Also a considerable part of the artisans were not obliged to pay this tax. Unfortunately it is impossible to link the “taxatiegeld” of 1730 precisely to fortunes, just as is the case for the municipal taxation records which have been used for table 2. The foundation of both taxes appears to have been something in between wealth and income. In both tables I have used Hisclass to socially stratify couples (Van Leeuwen and Maas 2005).

Table 2: Hisclass positions and tax payments on presumed wealth (“hoofdelijke omslag”) in the Groningen clay area, Roman Catholics around 1810.

	Hisclass	1-1,99	2-4,99	5-9,99	10-19,99	20-39,99	40+	N
Higher managers a.o.	1-2	-	1	4	3	3	2	13
Lower managers a.o	3-5	6	13	11	9	9	2	50
Skilled workers	6-7	33	43	23	9	3	-	111
Farmers	8	-	9	13	27	34	22	105
Lower-skilled workers	9	4	2	1	-	-	-	7
Unskilled workers	11	6	1	-	-	-	-	7
Farm-workers	10, 12	38	10	-	-	-	-	48
Rentiers	-1			1	1	4	2	8
N		87	79	53	49	53	28	349

Note: the amount of tax paid is expressed as the ratio to the lowest assessment. Some 80% of the households paid these taxes. Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset; GrA, AGB.

As the tables make clear, specific historic conditions make Hisclass a quite useless tool for the measurement of social mobility. We have to improve the Hisclass tool considerably to fit it into the reality of this modern Dutch coastal region in the 18th and 19th century, as I suppose will have to be done in every case one wants to use Hisclass. The ambition to make a general tool which can be widely applied in history seems to be rather naïve, ignoring the enormous differences in social structure which existed in history. This is not to say that a tool which translates occupations into social positions is completely useless. However, to develop such a tool one has to take local conditions into account. Unfortunately, using regional and time specific measurement tools of course results in diminishing possibilities to make comparisons of the differences in social mobility. On the other hand, measuring upward social mobility where there is in reality downward mobility is also scientifically quite meaningless.

Of course it is impossible to measure social status exactly with only information on occupations. However, we can, using the taxation registers of 1730 and 1810 and other information do a far better job for the Groningen clay area than Hisclass does. Looking at tables 1 and 2 it is first clear that large farmers have to be placed somewhere on top of the social stratification. Secondly a division between lower-skilled workers, unskilled workers and farm-workers seems to be quite meaningless, so we might put them together.

Fortunately, we know the size of nearly all the farms, and this information can be used to split the amorphous group farmers in several categories. About a quarter of the farms had a size of between 5 and 15 hectare .About a third of the farms was between 15 and 30 hectare, while some 40% was above 30 hectare (Paping 1995: 71). If we look to the taxation records of 1730 and 1810 than only some large salesmen (wholesalers), with a few renters, noblemen and higher officials paid the same tax as the large farmers (30 hectare or more). Comparable to the group of medium-sized farmers were millers, physicians, large inn-keepers and also artisans and shopkeepers which used a considerable amount of land. The poorest farmers with 5 to 15 hectare paid about equal taxes as small inn-keepers, shopkeepers, bakers, smiths and other artisans with some kind of workshop or trading business. Very low taxes or even none at all were mostly paid by artisans without a real workshop and also by weavers. The few farmers using less than 5 hectare (mostly labourers and cottagers with some land at their disposal) can also be placed in the same category. The general idea behind this social stratification is that social position was based not only on the capabilities a certain position required, but also on the amount of financial investments necessary to perform this position in an adequate way.

A social stratification of heads of households for the Groningen countryside in the 18th and first half of the 19th century

- A. 1. Large farmers (30 hectare and over), land owners, nobles .
 2. large salesmen, higher officials, large factory owners; Physicians, millers
 etc .controlling more than 5 hectare.

- B.
 - 1. Medium-ranged farmers (15 to 30 hectare).
 - 2. Middle ranged salesmen, large shopkeepers and inn-keepers, physicians, millers, small factory owners, priests, medium-ranged officials, ship-captains, medium-ranged officials; artisans and others controlling more than 3 hectare.
- C.
 - 1. Small farmers (5 to 15 hectare).
 - 2. Artisans with a workshop (bakers, smiths, cartwrights, glaziers, coppersmiths, silversmiths, shoemakers), trading business or owning a piece of land, small shopkeepers and inn-keepers, master of a barge, lower officials.
- D.
 - 1. Crofters and farm labourers controlling 1 to 5 hectare, milkmen, gardeners.
 - 2. Artisans without a real workshop (tailors, carpenters, seasonal butcher), weavers, pedlars, commission agents, carriers without land, veterinarians, police men.
- E.
 - 1. Farm labourers.
 - 2. Lower skilled subordinate workers in handicrafts and services: servants, paupers, soldiers.

Social Mobility

Table 3 shows the social mobility for male and female Roman-Catholics born between 1721 and 1800 in the Groningen Ommelanden, using the newly devised social stratification. Intergenerational social mobility was very common. Schlumbohm (1994: 370-376) finds for the village of Belm in Westfalia using a four level division, that 76% of the females and 83% of the males marrying between 1771 and 1860 remained in the

same class. Clearly the Groningen Ommelanden were a very mobile society in the second half of the 18th and first half of 19th century.

There was a clear trend towards downward social mobility. If we do not take the 10% cases of people moving out of the research area into account, we have 1,662 cases left. Of these 34% experienced downward social mobility, while 19% managed to secure a higher position than its parents. This result is not surprising, regarding the proletarianization taking place from the middle of the 18th century onwards. Especially the share of higher positions (A and B) connected with controlling large plots of land was falling. On the other hand the share of subordinate workers (E) was increasing. This tendency towards downward mobility was reinforced by the fact that high classes had more surviving children. For the couples with off-spring (N=738) the number of children surviving till marriage or till the age of 30 was 3,0 and 2,9 for groups A and B, while it was 2,5 and 2,6 for groups D and E.

Partly because of this there was less continuity under the richest inhabitants than might be thought. Nearly half of the children had to accept living in a lower position, mainly these were the children of large farmers who themselves began a trade or managed only a medium-ranged farm. The enormous fall from a large and wealthy farm or business to living on the edge of poverty (D and E) was still experienced by 6% of the children. Poverty wasn't far away for anyone outside the noble class. However, it weren't lack of chances (e.g. large farms) which totally explained the high downward mobility of the children of the wealthy. Nearly a third of the people securing a position on the top, were

of lower origin. Mainly this were children of medium-ranged farmers and better-of artisans and shopkeepers. The social differences between these and the richest part of society were not very large. Descending of a farm of 20 hectare in Westerwijtwerd Aafke Cornelis married in 1752 at the age of 26 with the 40 year old farmer son Evert Aljes who already inherited the large 39 hectare farm Lutjebosch te Usquert of his deceased parents who died 6 years earlier. After a failed engagement of Evert 15 years earlier, he presumably was not able to demand too much wealth of his bride.

Large jumps on the social ladder were very often related to forced marriages and second marriages. Gebke Harms for example was a daughter of a cottager with 2 hectare of land (D) born in 1752 in Kloosterburen,. After the premature death of her parents she fell under poor-relief. Being four months pregnant, she married at the age of 19 a widower with 41 hectare. Afterwards she increased her holdings even more, partly due to a good second marriage with a younger man. She ended her life in 1828 as a land owner and was one of the richest farmers of the village.

Table 3: social mobility of Roman Catholics born between 1721 and 1800 in the Groningen Ommelanden.

	PARENTS					
CHILDREN	A: Nobility, upper middle class and large farmers	B: Middle class and medium- ranged farmers	C: Lower middle class and small farmers	D: Indigent artisans and crofters	E: Subordinate and unskilled labourers	Total
A: Nobility, upper middle class and large farmers	54%	16%	3%	2%	1%	15%
B: Middle middle class and medium-ranged farmers	23%	24%	12%	3%	3%	13%
C: Lower middle class and small farmers	10%	28%	33%	18%	12%	21%
D: Indigent artisans and crofters	3%	14%	20%	46%	24%	22%
E: Subordinate and unskilled labourers	3%	11%	17%	19%	54%	20%
Left the Groningen clay area	6%	8%	14%	12%	6%	10%
	(20%)	(18%)	(22%)	(24%)	(16%)	

Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset.

For most of the children originating from parents of the still rather substantial middle class B, however, the prospects were even worse than group A. Although 16% moved upwards as memorized, more than a quarter fell one class, and another quarter of them became part of the indigent poor. Children of the medium-ranged farms were seemingly pushed from these farms by the more well-to-do children of the rich farmers. Some had taken prerequisites and learned a trade or started a business, but a lot of them came into serious problems.

Derk Harkes, farmer on 22 hectare (B) in Holwinde married in 1729 having only 1 daughter from this marriage, who secured a medium-ranged farm after marriage, but later went broke. Derk Harkes remarried in 1733 Geertje Jans and they had three children who ended up as cottager with 1 hectare (D), farm labourer (E) and wife of a shepherd (E). Geertje Jans again remarried Mindelt Jacobs in 1747. One daughter of this couple in the end bought the Holwinde farm in 1783 of her stepmother (who married a labourer elsewhere), after living with her husband on a small farm elsewhere for a decade. The other daughter became farm labourer (E) with her husband. Mindelt Jacobs remarried again in 1754. One son made a rich widow farmer pregnant (A), the other married a medium-ranged farmers' widow (B). There was also a daughter who after marriage bought a small ship with her husband (C). A majority of the children from the Holwinde farm came into serious problems and experienced downward mobility, apparently while they did not have the money to buy a decent farm and the parental farm remained in the hands of stepfathers and stepmothers for a long time. Some children managed to solve these problems, the majority did not.

The position of the lower middle class was only a little bit more secure. However, their chances to rise were accordingly a little less. Many of these children of artisans and shopkeepers with small financial reserves moved into occupations like labourer, tailor and weaver, for which nearly no financial resources were needed. Alje Everts, the son of the large farmer Evert Aljes mentioned before, married a cottagers daughter and bought a ship. In the end he had to sell the ship and worked as a farm labourer. Four of his children

became also labourer, while one married a weaver. A cousin of Alje Everts still belonged to the group of very rich farmers.

The second lowest group, consisting of self-employed and crofters with insufficient land to survive without alternative activities, was surprisingly, only slightly more upwardly mobile than downwardly mobile. This was because a considerable part of the children of weavers and tailors ended up as unskilled farm labourers, while it proved very difficult for this group to acquire the funds to start a better trade as a smith, shoemaker or shopkeepers, or to buy a small farm. They were seriously hampered by a combination of lack of money and lack of availability of better positions. Jan Cornelis was a poor tailor in Kloosterburen, his only surviving daughter known became pregnant and had to marry a protestant farm labourer in 1797.

Differences between the skilled group of weavers, tailors and carpenters without much financial resources and the unskilled group of farm labourers were surprisingly low. Of course children of farm labourers had a far larger chance to become farm labourer than children of weavers and tailors. In both groups about the half had the same kind of occupations as their parents. Nevertheless, the chances of labourers and lower middle class to rise to group A, B and C were nearly the same. Both groups had the same problems, lack of cash and lack of credibility to make the investments necessary to obtain better occupations. The labourer Jelte Renjes had three children surviving, one died aged 31 in Holland, where she worked as a maid, the other daughter became labourer, while the son was active as a carpenter. Although his family had a lot of fortunate relatives

under whom some very rich farmers, the children didn't succeed to rise again to prosperity.

At least 10% of the Roman Catholic children born in the Groningen Ommelanden left the region, as far as we know most went to the nearby city of Groningen, where they showed up in widely diverging occupations like brewer, salesmen, artisan, waggoner and porter. Children of the more well-to do (mainly farmers) moved considerably less to elsewhere than children of the middle class. These middle class children often had the skills which gave them good prospects in the city. Children of labourers were less inclined to leave the clay area, having no capabilities and no funds to improve themselves elsewhere. However, long distance migrations of this group can be easily missed in the sources. In this respect, a very rare account is the report at the burial of a labourers daughter of 22 in Eenrum that she had as relatives a father, a sister and also two brothers who sailed to the East-Indies. We never hear from the again. It is possible that more Roman Catholics from lower classes went to Holland and afterwards to the Indies without leaving any trace.

Table 4: The number of social classes risen or fallen (N= 1,662)

	+4	+3	+2	+1	Equal	-1	-2	-3	-4
Total	3	18	58	249	771	348	152	50	13
%	0%	1%	3%	15%	46%	21%	9%	3%	1%
Males	0%	1%	4%	14%	49%	20%	7%	4%	1%
Females	0%	1%	3%	16%	44%	22%	11%	2%	1%

Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset.

There were no exciting differences in social mobility between males and females in the Groningen Ommelanden in the 18th and begin of the 19th century. Females were a little bit more mobile, which tend to result in a marginal higher female risk for downward social mobility. The ladder to upward mobility, namely marriages with partners from higher classes and forced marriages worked in the same way for males and females as the examples given show. Because the occupation of a large part of the middle class outside agriculture were connected to skills of males (carpenters, smiths, weavers, tailors) and sons usually learned these skills as apprentice of their father, males clung more to the occupation of their father and were somewhat less mobile socially. Even for males, however, you can speak of a very open society. More than half ended up in a different social position as their parents.

Some simple and rough correlations were made to explain the number of social levels individuals fell or rose. However, few meaningful relations were found. Change over time, gender and age at marriage were not influential, as was the age the father died or the age the mother died. Only the number of surviving female children in the parental family seemed to have had a very weak negative effect ($r = -0.085$; $n = 1,568$) on chances, suggesting that too much female children was somehow a burden for the family, because of their lower productive and income capacity.

Clearly other factors than social background played an important role in the obtaining of social positions in the Groningen Ommelanden. Social positions were not at all secure from one generation to the next; there were chances, but much greater were the risks.

Incompetence of couples in this market-oriented society was heavily punished by a social fall. Downward social mobility as measured in this paper can be blamed to parents or to children, because we measured the social position of every couple (parent or child) in the first 10 years after marriage. Some of the downward mobility measured was an inheritance of a social fall of the parents later in life, however, most of it seem to have been the result of the inadequacy of the children to secure the same level as their father and mother. Of course it has to be remarked that in the crucial years between the age of 12 and marriage, choices of parents, next to choices and behaviour of children played a mayor role in the acquiring of skills, funds, credibility and a social network, necessary to achieve success in a market-oriented society. In a way, one can argument that high social mobility based on personal achievements if it leads individuals to social positions better fitted for them, is beneficial for economic growth. It would go too far to say that in the Groningen clay area only capacities and skills counted, however, the region must have indeed benefited from certain tendencies to a more efficient division of work taking into account capacities and not only inherited social resources.

Succession

We have seen that the social mobility was very large in the Groningen Ommelanden. Partly this was due to heterogamous marriages, but also it seemed to have been one of the characteristics of society. If the preferred transfer of property is via succession from father to son such high mobility is not to be expected. In theory, most of the positions in the social stratification can be handed over, this is the case for farms, land, shops, workshop, ships and more difficult regular subordinate positions. Even a position of a

regular farm labourer could be handed over from father to son, and though this was presumably unusual, at least the labourers house can be transferred.

In this chapter I want to research if handing over of social positions was usual. Also I want to investigate if this direct handing over of specific social positions was important for newly-wed couples which had to make a new start. As discussed before, the most attractive and important position was that of farmers. On the farms the production and income was generated on which most of this rural society drifted. The transfer of farmsteads is also the easiest to measure (table 5).

Table 5: The transfer of farms in the Groningen Ommelanden, ca. 1710 –ca. 1820.

	Roman-Catholic farmer couples marrying 1701-1780 (last farm only)	All transfers of farms in Kloosterburen and Wierhuizen 1721-1820
To daughter	13%	13%
To son	21%	17%
Widow remarrying	18%	15%
Widower remarrying	16%	9%
Inherited by other related persons	0%	2%
Sold	33%	44%
N	329	184

Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset; Database on the use of land in the eastern Marne, 1591-1830. Preliminary data!

Only one third of the farms were handed over to one of the children, mostly to sons, however, the handing over to daughters was not unusual. Jan Benes and Aafke used a provincial farm of 20 hectare in the beginning of th 18th century. Their children sold the farm in 1725 to their newly-wed sister Lutje Jans. She and her husband lived for a very long time, and un the end they were succeeded by their youngest daughter, who

afterwards married in 1784 at the age of 35 with Hibbe Folkerts Poelma a son of a farmer of about the equal size. After her death in 1820 her son and daughter succeeded. Only the son married in 1829, and he sold the family farm in 1847 to strangers.

An extreme case is Wiske Aries, single and 45, who was allowed to take over in 1778 the large farm of Piloersema, actually a very small castle or 'borg', after the death of her mother, despite the availability of four older brothers, from which the oldest was also still unmarried. Only after Wiske's death her oldest brother, still being single, bought the farm of 53 hectare from the other heirs. The others were not interested, because they already acquired large farms, one by marrying a heir, one by marrying a widow and one by buying a farm. However, usually the daughters were already married at the moment they took over the parental farm.

Important for the transfer of farms was that the surviving partner of a farmer couple very often remarried and stayed on the farm (compare Schlumbohm 1994: 451-480, in opposition to Belm children from the first marriage did not have any special rights in the Ommelanden). Taking into account the data for Belm, the high importance of the transfer of farms through remarriage was not unique for Groningen. The handing over of the farm to a new generation could in this way be delayed for decades. We already saw this happening in the example of the Holwinde farm. An extreme but illuminating example is Papekop in Usquert (41 hectare). In 1732 Jacob Pieters Bos married Trinje Tewes, and they acquired this farm. He remarried Jakomina Klaasen in 1758. Jakomina Klaasen remarried Jacob Jans Bos in 1766. Jacob Jans Bos remarried Trinje Willems in 1769.

Trinje Willems remarried Renje Berents Bos in 1786. Renje Berents Bos remarried Martha Freerks in 1798. In 1816 the farm is sold. Table 5 suggests that widows were a little bit more inclined to remarry than widowers, possibly because they found it hard to run a farm without a male also in charge. Of course widows and widowers with a farm were, despite their age, very attractive marriage partners in the Ommelanden.



Picture 1: Farm Piloersema in Den Ham, build as a noble house in 1633, barn from 1700.

About a third of the farms were sold to non-relatives somewhere at the end of the family life cycle, which was very high if compared to Belm in Germany, where between 1711 and 1860: 38% went to males heirs, 13% to female heirs, 36% to remarrying widows and widowers, and only 13% to others (Schlumbohm 1994: 385). The same difference in the

incidence of selling to non-relatives seems to have exist with German Recklinghausen, where most of the plots of land were sold to relatives and not to strangers (Sabeau 1990: 373-415). In their study of two parishes in southern Sweden in the period 1720-1840 Dribe and Lundh (2005) also find only a few non-relatives and a lot of sons and daughters succeeding after the death of a widow or widower. Succession practices in the Groningen Ommelanden seem to have been very exceptional for continental Europe, which possibly is related to the very modern economy this rural region had in the 18th century. Medieval law in rural Groningen laid heavy weight on the continuity of land and property through (male) lineages. Perhaps there were still cultural and emotional ideas about the necessity to hand over family farms to the next generation in the 18th century, but the practice had become completely different.

Several specific reasons can be discerned for selling farms. One is that the parents became old and wanted to retire. Derk Sjabbes (1697-1777) and Aaltje Klaasen (1708-1782) sold their 40 hectare farm in Zuidwolde to strangers in May 1770 for 4,000 guilders, despite having three sons and two daughters. They bought a nice house in nearby Bedum. All their children met difficulties in remaining on the level of their parents, some acquired smaller farms. One daughter married in February 1770, and bought with her husband a 22 hectare farm in April of the same year. Another reason to sell is that both parents deceased when the children were still too young to take over. Luurt Luurts (1750-1785) and Anje Laurens (1756-1782) married in 1775 and bought a farm of 33 hectare in 1778, the guardians of their children sold this farm in 1787. However, in case one of the marriage partner died young the surviving partner usually

remarried. More often, the farm was sold by the heirs after the death of the last parent, sometimes to one of the heirs, but also to strangers. In 1782 two married and three unmarried children of Freerk Jans and Martje Jacobs sold their farm in Westerklooster with 21 hectare to the unrelated and newly-wed Folkert Willems and Jeike Hindriks. In a lot of cases no children at all survived till maturity, sometimes relatives took over the farm, but most of the time the heirs sold the farm.

Folkert Willems is also a good illustration of another reason to sell a farm, namely debts. He had to sell his farm in 1807, having serious money problems for some time. Possibly his incapability to pay his children their marital inheritance - which was obligatory at the moment of remarriage - was an important reason for living in concubinate for several years before 1807. Folkert ended his life as a farm labourer and seasonal butcher. Perhaps the most important reason, however, for selling farms was the obtaining of a different farm. Usually the new farm (bought or inherited) was bigger (see the example of Eisse Julles Halsema later on), there are only a few examples that farmers sold their own farm and bought a smaller one to escape from bankruptcy.

Unfortunately, the data on succession of other social groups than farmers are more problematic, due to a lack of sources. However for most of the newly-wed couples a statement can be made about where they settled, say in the first three to five years of their marriage. If no other information was available, similarity of village and occupation was taken as a sign of succession [which results probably in an overestimation of the number of successions: I still want to evaluate each case again, using new information and more

strict criteria]. From data originating from the second half of the 19th century it is known that during the first phase of the marriage couples had a very huge inclination to migrate. In the Groningen clay area more than one third of the couples moved from one municipality to another in the first five years, especially in the first year (Paping 2004). The actual changes of house will have been bigger taking into account that municipalities consist of several villages, and there were also a lot of removals within a village.

Table 6: Sons and daughters taking over the household of their parents around their marriage date.

	Yes	No	Unclear	N
A: Nobility, upper middle class and large farmers	17%	83%	-	350
B: Middle middle class and medium-ranged farmers	9%	91%	-	308
C: Lower middle class and small farmers	7%	93%	-	552
D: Indigent artisans and crofters	18%	81%	1%	384
E: Subordinate and unskilled labourers	5%	84%	11%	269
Total	13%	85%	2%	1,853

Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset. Preliminary data.

Table 6 shows that succession was not the prime solution for the problem of finding a household newly-wed couples had. One must, however, take into account that the table suggests a lower significance of succession than reality. Just one partner of the couple had to bring in a position of its parents. However, for about three quarter of the new couples the taking over of one of the parental households wasn't a solution. It has to be remarked that succession of children was least rare under the rich farmers in group A and the indigent weavers and tailors in group D. In the last category it were mostly males who followed in the foot steps of their father. In conclusion still 18% of the males, but only 9% of the females was able to take over the parental household around the time they

married. This difference more than explains the 5% difference in social mobility between males and females.

Not only the farms, but also shops, workshops, inns and labourers houses were handed over to unrelated people after the death of the last partner of a couple. The reasons are the same as for farms. Social positions of the middle class and the farm labourers mostly were not available when their off-spring wanted to marry. The children were definitely not inclined to wait for it, and the parents were not prepared to give them up early. When the last of the parents died it was often too late for one of the children to return, inasmuch that they already settled elsewhere in a definitive way. Jan Lammerts (1728-1807) a well-to do shoemaker in Kloosterburen using also 7 hectare had a son and a daughter. Both spent about five years in his house after their marriage in 1798 and 1792 respectively, waiting for the opportunity to buy a medium-ranged farm. When Jan Lammerts died age 78 his house and land were sold by his heirs.

The German born tailor Jan Kuilman (1740-1812) lived in Uithuizen and had six surviving children. By the year 1812 they were spread all over the provincie, one was married to a weaver in Kloosterburen, two were married to tailors in Leens and Eenrum, one was a tailor in the city of Groningen. His youngest son married in 1816 to become tailor in Kloosterburen. Only his oldest son Lubbert lived as a tailor in Uithuizen. Marrying in 1805, he took over the house of his father, who didn't owe a house anymore in 1806. However, this succession was not very attractive, inasmuch as his father still had large debts from some his failure as a pedlar in the period 1768-1773. Comparable are

the cases, especially for the groups D and E, that the parents during their old day relied on poor relief, having not enough income capacity themselves. The house was sold by the poor board (if it wasn't already sold before) and the aged spent their last years in a poor house. Approximately 10 to 20% of the couples ended their life under poor relief.

Inheritances: rules and reality

We have seen that gender differences in social mobility were very small. Females were only slightly more upwardly and downwardly mobile, which means that the social position of females from generation to generation was nearly as secure as that of males. A possible explanation for these small differences can be found in the legal customs of the Groningen clay area.

In the Groningen countryside, the old medieval law used stated that sons receive twice as much as daughters of the immovables. However, the practice had become quite differently, during the 17th and even more in the 18th century a lot of marriage contracts were concluded between the more prosperous inhabitants of the Groningen Ommelanden. Nearly always the bride and groom decided to make sons and daughters of this marriage completely equal in all their rights (“gelijke sibbe”), which meant that they inherited the same share. The same provision can be found in last wills. Even if there wasn't a marriage contract the equal division of inheritances between sons and daughters (or more distant female and male relatives) was the ordinary practice. Only some of the nobles persisted in the unequal division of inheritances, which seemed to have been a way to avoid impoverishment of the family in case of too much off-spring. As an (unforeseen)

result nobles were very unsuccessfully in reproducing themselves. Their number diminished because of a high incidence of celibacy, but possibly also because of inbreeding and emigration.

Around the age of 25 (sometimes even at 20) orphaned boys and girls received “*veniam aetatis*”, which meant that they got the permission to act independently. Unmarried females had just the same rights as males. However, if women married, they came under the guard of their husband. Married women were not seen as capable to agree on economic transfers concerning property, without permission of their husband. However, the opposite was in practice also the case. If married men transferred property or borrowed money, their wife was usually present, and if she wasn't, it was explicitly stated that he also acted on her behalf. Unless stated otherwise in a marriage contract, all the possessions were shared equally by bride and groom. In the 18th century names on men and women were always completely given in contracts. However, in the 16th and 17th century it was not unusual to mention only the front name of the wife, or sometimes no name at all in the province of Groningen.

Widowed women and men could act nearly independent, also because they were the legitimate guard (“*legitimi tutrix*”) of their adolescent children. If sons and daughters were adult they had (as heirs of their deceased father or mother) to give consent for transfers of property. In case one of the parents remarried three male guards were legally appointed, ideally one from the paternal family, one from the maternal family and one external (for example a neighbour). In some cases the father was one of the guards.

Unless otherwise stated in the marriage contract the children received half the wealth of their parents in these cases, to be paid to them (or better their guards) when they were 18 years old. At the age of 18 the children were seen as economically independent of their parents, which also meant that they were able to save money from their wages. Usually the remaining parent borrowed the money of the guards for the period after the children had become 18. If the surviving parent did not remarry, he or she usually had the usufruct of the whole inheritance. The whole inheritance was divided only after his or her death, which could take a very long time, as we will see.

The ideal model of a nuclear family in a society with (nearly) no population growth is that two people marry and have two children who survive till their age of marriage. Preferably around the time these two children want to marry, their parents (being around 60) have just died, so both children have the resources to start a household of their own. One (the son) takes over the paternal household, the other (the daughter) receives her inheritance in money, leaves, and marries someone who also takes over the parental household. The money she receives can be used to pay off the leaving sister of her new partner. The problem with this ideal model is that nearly all the parameters in real world are differently. Table 7 shows that these ideal families are a tiny minority, and that the transfer of property usually had to go in a completely different way.

Table:7: Number of children marrying, or surviving till the age of 30 (Roman catholic couples in the Groningen clay area marrying between 1721-1800).

Sons -> Daughters √	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
0	X	121	43	14	6	3	2	1	190
1	99	91	50	12	12	3	-	-	267
2	43	69	35	17	5	1	-	-	170
3	32	35	18	10	-	1	-	-	96
4	12	13	7	-	2	2	-	-	36
5	4	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
6	1	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	4
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total	191	336	153	53	25	11	2	1	772

Males n=975, females n=1,108. Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset. NB: Couples without children surviving are not taken into account. Only children actually reported alive are counted, which causes a slight underestimation, due to unreported migration.

To interpret table 7, we first have to realize that there were also a lot of couples without remaining children (about 200). These group consisted of three categories: 1. ordinary childless couples (some 10%); 2. couples where the bride (mostly a widow) was older than 40, and not fertile anymore, or where the husband or wife died shortly after marriage; 3. couples with children which all died before their thirties (mostly as infants or juveniles). Of course the positions of these couples without children partly made up for the difference between 772 parental couples and 2,083 children: a maximum of 37% the children could in theory succeed their parents. Inasmuch as a lot of widows and widowers remarried and got children again, this percentage in reality was considerably lower. Taking this into account, the reported maximum of 13% succeeding children (table 6), however, remains very low.

Of the couples with children only a tiny 12% was of the ideal type of one son and one daughter. However, 464 of the couples had one son, and so a possible male heir. On the

other hand 25% of the couples had no son at all, a majority of these couples had just one daughter. Clearly, a single heiress was a quite ordinary phenomenon. If we take the ideal family for the transfer of property more broadly as consisting of 1 or 2 children, than we see that 51% of the families fit into this model. However in 49% of the families the inheritance had to be divided into at least three portions: 21% in three, 13% in four and the rest in even more parts.

We can also look from the more negative perspective of the children. Only 34% of the sons had no brother competing for the fraternal position, and 34% had even two brothers or more. If we look to the partition for all: 11% was the only surviving child, 17% had to divide the inheritance in two, 24% in three, 19% in four, 16% in five parts, and the remaining 13% in six or more parts.

Clearly, for the majority of the children the parental inheritance (if any) was too low to secure the same position as the parents had. We already mentioned that only the number of daughters had a small detrimental effect on the social mobility of the children in a family. For the rest the number of siblings had no statistically significant effect on the social mobility chances. This suggests that the size of the partitioning of the parental inheritance wasn't that important at all for social success or failure. Table 8 shows that this wasn't even the case if we restrict ourselves to the children of farmers using more than 5 hectare. Clearly, we did not find any statistical relation between the size of the parental family and social mobility, because there was no relation at all. Children from large families were as successful as those from small families. Only the perspectives of

only children was somewhat more positive, because their high chance on upward mobility, however, the number of cases is only small. Children coming from very large families fared a little worse than general, but the differences are very small and again the number of cases is low. Table 8 suggest clearly that the absolute size in money of the parental inheritance wasn't important at all.

Table8: Intergenerational social mobility and the number of surviving siblings, children from farmer couples using more than 5 hectare born 1721-1800 in the Groningen Ommelanden.

	upward	equal	Down-ward 1 level	Down-ward 2-4 levels	Emi-grated	N
Only child	28%	35%	17%	20%	0%	46
One brother or sister	9%	40%	22%	25%	4%	104
Two brothers or sisters	11%	41%	22%	20%	6%	176
Three brothers or sisters	9%	33%	31%	22%	5%	116
Four brothers or sisters	12%	49%	19%	17%	4%	113
Five brothers or sisters	6%	42%	28%	22%	1%	81
Six to eight brothers or sisters	5%	33%	26%	28%	8%	39
Total	11%	40%	24%	21%	4%	675

Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset . NB: Only full brothers and sisters are taken into account.

The insignificance of the size of the parental inheritance is an astonishing result, taking into account that large farms were bought and sold for huge amounts of money. As in for example Recklinghausen (Sabean 1990: 193-198, 249-256) much effort was made to make the division of the inheritance as equal as possible, making an inventory of all the possessions and estimating their value. In October 1792 the inheritance of the large and very rich farmers Jacob Ariens (1730-1789) and Jantje Derks (1747-1788) was divided. Son Derk received the farmstead in Bedum with 51 hectare for 10,443 guilders, however his share was only 5,386 guilders, so he had to pay 5,057 guilders to his four younger brothers. Possibly the mother of his new wife borrowed him this sum. Three years before

the oldest brother Arien received a farm of 9.775 guilders which his late father financed for him just before he died. He also had to borrow some 5.000 guilders, because the parents of his newly-wed wife were still alive. With their 5.000 guilders, some money of their wife and some loans, all the younger brother were able to buy large farms in the following years. For example, brother Jan and his wife Katherina (a rich farmers daughter with both parents still alive) married in May 1798 and bought a farm with 55 hectare in Bedum in March 1800 for 16,500 guilders, of which they borrowed at least 6,000 guilders from the sellers. Of course, this is a very positive example. The five children of Derk Siabbes, mentioned before, selling his large farm for 4.000 guilders in 1770 and not having much further reserves like Jacob Ariens, were in a position much worse, with only an inheritance of about 800 guilders each. It seems logically that if Derk Sjabbes only had two children, it would have been easier for his off-spring to obtain a large farm, too. However, this kind of logic is not confirmed at all in table 8.

Clearly, money was important. However, if you did not have it you borrowed it, and nearly every new farmer, salesman, or substantial artisan turned to this strategy. Of course the availability of own capital eased the obtaining of loans, but the social network, the accompanying financial credibility and personal capacities did too. Taking into account table 9, the direct availability of inherited capital can not have been too important. Two third of the Roman Catholics received their complete inheritance being 30 years or even a lot older. Because of second marriages of surviving parents quite a few inherited some sums earlier, mostly these were relatively low, also because the surviving parent and her new partner had some interest in lowering their heritage.

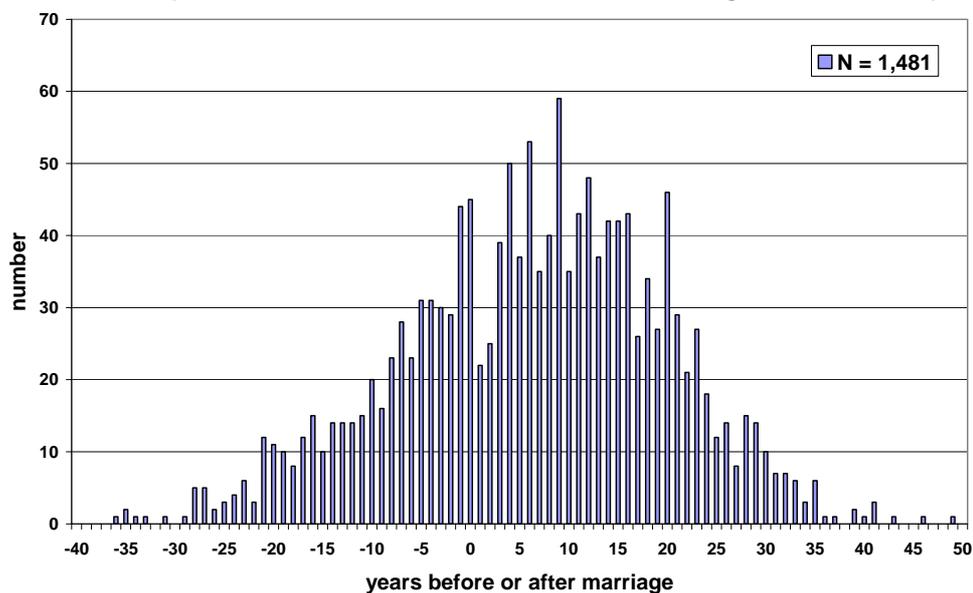
Table 9. Age of Roman Catholics born between 1721-1800 losing their father and mother

Age	Father died	Mother died	Fully orphan
0-9	19%	17%	3%
10-19	22%	16%	12%
20-29	21%	17%	18%
30-39	22%	25%	31%
40-49	13%	17%	25%
50 and older	4%	7%	10%
N	1,714	1,687	1,705

Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset.

Table 8 shows that next to the division of the parental inheritance among too many siblings there was a problem facing newly-wed couples in need of financial resources to establish an economically sound household. In some examples it became clear that in most cases one of the parents was still alive upon marriage. This made dowry's and parental loans of prime importance to establish a good household. Table 9 makes clear that most of inhabitants of the Groningen Ommelanden lost their last parent well into their thirties, while it was not unusual to have a parent alive at the age of 40 and over. Considering that the age of marriage was about 30 for males and 27 for females, and the median even a few years lower, most people marrying had still one or even both parents and presumably no inherited money.

**Graph 1: Years before or after marriage the last surviving parent died
(Roman Catholics born 1721-1800 in the Groningen Ommelanden)**



It has been suggested that the high age at marriage in Western Europe has something to do with people waiting for a position (Hajnal 1965; Engelen and Wolf 2005). Graph 1 makes, however, perfectly clear that in no case people in the Groningen Ommelanden waited for the death of their parents to free such a position, or to use the inheritance in cash to ease the obtaining of a position elsewhere. Males and females had to marry in their thirties or even early forties if marriage was the usual moment to transfer a farm, shop, workshop or house to the next generation. I presume this result isn't typical for the Groningen clay area, which was in essence a rather unhealthy coastal area in the 18th and first half of 19th century, hit by severe malaria epidemics every ten year. If mortality is not extraordinarily low compared with elsewhere, the same situation arouses there too, with most of the children marrying well before the death of their last parents. At least for the Groningen Ommelanden the point can even be made that there was no relation at all

between marriage date, and the death of the last parent. In the one or two years after this death not more but less marriages were concluded. If there was a relation between economy (means of support) and demography (marriages) it at least wasn't a very direct one.

Seen in this light it is not surprising that direct succession from one generation to the next was of limited importance. Parents in Groningen were not prepared to give up their position, if they were able to keep them, and until their seventies most of them were. Even if physically incapable to work, unmarried servants could be hired to do the job, so retirement was unnecessary and unattractive. On the other hand, most married children were not inclined to stay for a long period in the parental household, waiting for an event (the death of the last parent) which still could take a long time. And they absolutely did not want to wait with the marriage until this death. Parents were reluctant to split their property when still alive, and the legal system of "beklemmingen" prevented these kind of divisions too. The result was that the buying of a position (farm, workshop, house) was an attractive solution for newly-wed. However, despite this seemingly independency of the parental inheritance, the population of the Groningen Ommelanden still clung to the Western European Marriage pattern with high ages at marriage and a high celibacy (at least 10%). The marriage system included great personal freedom in the determination of the age at marriage, resulting in a wide spread in ages at marriage, males marrying ordinary between 22 and 36, and females between 19 and 31.

Starting a household of their own

It has become clear that couples marrying in generally were not able to take over one of their parental homes, because these parents were still alive and not inclined to give up their own position upon their marriage date. Nevertheless, the first years after marriage were extremely important to secure a good position. In table 10 a closer look is taken at the newly-wed couples settling at first in the Roman-Catholic stronghold Kloosterburen. Striking is the number of couples who did not seem to have a clear view of where to live after marriage, which absolutely contrasts the idea of Hajnal (1965) that people postponed marriage until they “could establish an independent livelihood adequate to support a family” (See also Engelen and Wolf (2005); and Fertig (2005) who calls this the “niche-hypothesis”). Despite the high ages of bride and groom, stepping into marriage seemed not to be a very well-prepared decision economically. Most couples had not taken precautions to ensure a structural place to live. Although nearly all the houses were still owned by the inhabitants around 1810, a lot of couples had to rent a house and quite a few had to resort to the house of one of the parents. This lack of preparation did not have anything to do with sudden forced marriages, inasmuch as nearly all the other couples were in quite the same situation. There are also no signs that marriage was the way to escape the control of the parents (who in that case were able to use the labour resources of the unmarried: Engelen and Wolf, 2005: 27-30, Klep, 2005), because in Groningen they were not, parents usually had to pay for the work of their children aged 18 and over. A notable exception in the search for houses were the remarrying widows and widowers, who most of the time stayed in the old home. The rest of the couples started a rather successful quest for houses and farms in the first years after marriage. Only a minority

remained at the parental home, to take it over in due time, so it is not appropriate to speak of a stem-family system as in the highlands of South-East Norway or the Pyrenean valleys (Fauve-Chamoux 2006).

Table 9: Life after marriage (1791-1800) of Roman Catholic couples, settling at first in Kloosterburen (Groningen)

Labourers	<i>Birth man</i>	<i>Birth woman</i>	<i>Marriage</i>	<i>Place where they settled in the ten years after marriage</i>
Jan P. de Haan	1769	1770	1791	Forced marriage; bought house after two months
Renje J. Bot	1765	1765	1792	Forced marriage, bought house after 14 days
Renje R. Kamer	1756	1766	1793	Rented a house or lived in a poorhouse
Klaas Berents	1763	1766	1793	Forced marriage, possibly quickly bought newly-build house
Jelis J. Bot	1754	1766	1794	Widower with house sold; 1797 bought new house, where they presumably already lived
Luurt S. Halsema	1770	1757	1794	Quickly build a house on land of his childless uncle (a farmer)
Albert J. Scholtens	1750	1769	1795	Widower in his house
Berent L. Bot	1765	1768	1795	Rented a house or lived with his brother or parents; 1798 bought house.
Derk L. Mug	1762	1765	1795	Possibly quickly bought newly-build house
Jan J. Bottema	1770	1774	1796	Forced marriage; presumably lived with his parents; 1798 bought newly-build house
Martinus J. Durmer	1766	1775	1796	Lived with his father; 1803 inherited the house
Sikke J. Bloem	1769	1772	1797	Forced marriage; lived in a poorhouse; 1805 bought this poorhouse
Jan D. van der Leege	1762	1772	1797	Possibly lived with her mother; 1805 bought her house (condition mother could stay); 1808 (after mothers death) rented a house
Willem J. Bot	1769	1774	1798	Forced marriage, presumably lived with his mother, c1800 bought house; 1809 bought tiny farm with 4 hectare elsewhere
Hindrik A. Scholtens	1779	1777	1799	Forced marriage; lived with his father (Hindrik died soon)
Jan Berents	1770	1775	1799	Possibly lived with his brother (Jan and his wife died soon)
Tjaard H. Duninga	1755	1773	1799	Widower in his house, 1804 moved to other house
Tjaard J. Bottema	1774	1778	1799	Possibly lived with his mother or other family; 1807 bought house
Farmers				
Hindrik M. Wijnema	1763	1768	1792	Widower, farm already sold; lived with her father (small farm and shoemaking); 1796 bought large farm
Willem J. Iema	1761	1766	1792	Lived on small farm with her father, inherited this farm in 1806
Ubbe Reinders	1770	1773	1793	He (orphan in 1792) bought large farm 3 months before marriage from brother
Eisse J. Halsema	1770	1771	1794	Forced marriage; labourer rented tiny farm of his sister; 1800 bought large farm elsewhere; 1803 bought fathers large farm from inheritance
Harm. J. Boerema	1765	1770	1798	Lived with his father (small farm and shoemaking); 1804 bought farm elsewhere
Geert F. Eikens	1770	1737	1799	Widow on her small farm
Remt S. Halsema	1773	1780	1800	On his parents farm; parents retired in other house
Artisans and shopkeepers				
Harm H. Timmer	1758	1771	1795	Widower, in his house (carpenter); c1798 newly-build house and some land; 1809 moved to her parents large farm (inheritance) elsewhere
Jan Berents	1770	1752	1797	Owned or bought house; 1798 bought house; 1799 returned to first house; 1801 bought expensive house; 1803 bought cheap house; 1805 broke (shoemaker)
Joh. Scheifferling	?	?	1797	Unknown, moved elsewhere in 1800 (presumably an artisan)
Hindrik G. Abels	1771	1770	1798	Widow in her house (tailor)
Hijbel J. Pel	1775	1773	1798	Bought house 1799; 1801 bought house; 1804 bought house (small shopkeeper)

Renje J. de Boer	1763	1776	1798	Forced marriage, rented a house, 1800 moved elsewhere (carpenter)
Willem J. Stok	1770	1761	1799	Unclear, possibly lived with one of his or her brothers (tailor, after his death in 1805 pauper)
Jan J. Jansen	1754	1777	1799	Widower in his house (rich shopkeeper-salesman)
Cornelis C. Huizinga	1776	1775	1799	Forced marriage, lived presumably with her father, 1805 bought house (carpenter)

Succession directly after marriage was clearly of minor importance, and then only in the group farmers. There were some cases of postponed succession. Illuminating is the life of the rich farmers' son Eisse Julles Halsema, who had to marry the daughter of a well-to-do blacksmith. The first 6 years he had to spend as a labourer, then at last he managed to buy a considerable farm in a neighbouring village. Three years later he profited of his father's death at the age of 72 to buy the large Halsema-farm from his numerous brothers and sisters. In 1812 Eisse had become, despite his difficult start, one of the 500 richest persons of the Groningen countryside. It happened very regularly that newly-wed couples first stayed a few years in a parental house or in a small house in a village, to buy a medium-ranged or large farm afterwards. Others first bought a smaller farm to move after some years to a bigger farm. One can think of several rational reasons for this kind of behaviour: firstly, some time was needed to find an appropriate (large) farm; secondly, the newly-wed couple did not have enough credibility to get the loans to buy a farm, yet; thirdly, one could wait till one inherited more money (which was quite risky) or get the chance to succeed. Without enough income living in house without work was a dangerous situation if it lasted too long a period. Farm labour wages were about 150-200 guilders a year, farm work did not bring a farmer nearer, especially not after 1780 when farm prices started to rise. If farmer couples waited too long with the purchase of a farm, they could in the end fall back to the status of farm labourers.

Non-agrarian couples were in a similar position as farmers, but they had the advantage to have their skills and were capable to earn income right away. Especially the less well-to-do artisans could settle and start a business of their own right after marriage, tailors and carpenters did not even really need a house of their own. Most of them bought one in due time, mainly with borrowed money. The largest problem was to find enough customers. Other artisans had to invest in shops and workshops, which were sometimes taken over (there was a lot of continuity in establishments as bakeries, smithies, mills, inns and shops), but they also often started the trade freshly in a bought house.

Scheme 2 in the introduction did not prove to be completely correct. At least for the Groningen Ommelanden, the moment of marriage was not as decisive for the social future as stated, however, the few years directly after marriage were. In these years social background, available capital and capital prospects, personal skills and personal and financial credibility had to be transformed in a good position, which couples in most instances held till the end of their life.

Conclusion

In the Groningen Ommelanden equal inheritances were combined with the indivisibility of farms, houses, workshops and other resources. Most males and females, though marrying very late, still had not received any inheritances, because one of the parents was still alive. Succession of the parental household, though not unusual, wasn't the rule. Taking into account the situation in the first months and years after the marriage date an

independent household was usually not yet arranged for. Cohabitation with one of the parents, was only a temporary stage, most newly-wed couples obtained a house or farm within a few years. Although the social background was of importance during this process, the size of the prospected inheritance played only a marginal role, as the marginal influence of the number of siblings in social success shows. Presumably personal skills were also decisive in the quest for a good position. A very high social mobility was the result. Due to the stability in the number of farms, population growth and accompanying proletarianisation the chance to experience downward social mobility was a lot larger than to rise on the social ladder. Differences between males and females in mobility chances were only marginal. Sons succeeded their parents more often on the farm, or in their handicraft or trade. However, the succession of daughters wasn't unusual, despite the availability of a suitable brother. Succession of parent to son or daughter was a completely dominant strategy in the transfer of wealth, the transfer of money was in a lot of cases just as convenient.

The clay area of Groningen can be seen as a good example for 18th and 19th century modern capitalistic European regions. However, the countryside of most of continental Europe had quite different characteristics. Further research is necessary to compare these results with more traditional regions, than is done in this paper. Questions to be addressed are: was social mobility indeed considerably lower in the more traditional and less capitalistic parts of the countryside? Were succession and gender of more importance there, while personal capabilities unrelated to social background were less? Furthermore, one can ask if the disadvantage of the loss of security because of the growing importance

of market forces in the lives of people, is compensated by the growing chances people have, and the overall higher level of economic welfare? It can be argued that a general movement in the direction of the modern social-economic relations – as we already find in the Groningen clay area in the 18th century – in which not only social background, though primarily individual capacities explain social and economic chances belongs to the core of the explanation of the success of the Western society in the last centuries.

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Appendix A: The database

In the period 1986-1988 a family reconstruction was made for the five Roman Catholic parishes in the so-called 'Ommelanden' (literally surroundings) of Groningen (Paping 1988). Roman Catholics formed some 5% of the total population of about 50,000 around 1800. In the last two decennia this database continuously was improved using information from all kinds of sources, especially taxation records, civil proceedings, and notarial acts.¹

In first instance there were only three Roman Catholic parishes in this region: Bedum (registration of baptisms starts in 1680, marriages in 1728), Den Hoorn (starts in 1727) and Uithuizen (starts in 1730). All these parishes comprise a large number of villages. New parishes were split off in 1751 (Appingedam) and 1763 (Aduard). Preserved Roman Catholic death registration (only persons older than about 12-16 year) was starting only in 1802 in Den Hoorn. In the parish of Bedum only burial registers survive from 1797 onwards. However, more general death records for example for the village of Bedum (from about 1775 onwards) and the village of Eenrum (from 1755 onwards) exist too. From 1806 onwards general death records exists for every village. Marriages were also obliged tot be concluded in the Dutch reformed church. Because of this double registration nearly every marriage can be found. Children were mostly baptised the day of birth or a day later, so that most children born alive are indeed in the Roman Catholic baptism records. From 1811 onwards the registration office offers a complete civil registration of births, deaths and marriages. In the older forms of registration underregistration, seems to have been very limited.

¹ This database was used before in: Paping and Collenteur (2004).

In conclusion: baptisms are nearly complete from 1731 onwards, for the period 1721-1730 about half of the them are missing and some dates have to be estimated quite roughly, registration of marriages was also nearly complete, only the death records are incomplete before 1806. However, with the help of additional sources the year of decease can be estimated roughly for a lot of people. At the moment for the parents of more than 80% of the cohort members (Roman Catholics born between 1721 and 1800) relatively secure information on the date of death is available.

Table A.1 The quality of the database of Roman Catholics born in the Groningen Ommelanden, 1721-1800

	Males	Females	Total
Total	976	1,116	2,092
Marriage dates	830	994	1,824
Unmarried	105	83	188
Age when mother died	800	887	1,687
Age when father died	816	898	1,714
Age when became fully orphan	812	893	1,705
Number of surviving brothers and sisters	910	1,035	1,945

The database comprises at the moment information on 2,092 Roman Catholics born between 1721 and 1800 in the Groningen Ommelanden, who married or reached the age of 30. From the majority of the other registrations in the baptism register it is sure that they died before the age of 30. However, the database is not perfect, possibly some 50-100 Roman Catholics more will have reached the age of 30, but until now we did not trace them in the sources. This group consists presumably mostly of people remaining unmarried (which are relatively hard to trace), emigrants moving out of the Ommelanden, and people marrying non-Catholics. A little bit comparable are the 67 persons from which we know that they survive till the age of 30, but we miss data about their later life.

The database on Roman Catholics has definitive advantages, inasmuch as a region of 1.000 square kilometres comprising some 150 small and larger villages is considered using only a few parish registers. People had to move large distances to leave the region, and fortunately, most of them show up in the parish registers of the nearby large city of Groningen. For 18th and 19th century the quality of the data in the database is very good. Another advantage is that nearly all the occupations are known, and by using additional sources information on the amount of property (mainly land) is nearly always available, which makes it relatively easy to place them in a specific social class.

In the text we only use the cases with complete knowledge on the specific topic. For some families we do know how many children married and/or reached the age of 30, while we do not know the year of decease of the parents, and sometimes it is the other way around. This is the reason that the number of cases involved changes with every question.

Something has to be said about the representativity of the Roman Catholics for the total population of the Groningen Clay area. Considering occupations they definitively were not representative. Farmers, and especially larger farmers were somewhat overrepresented, inasmuch as these groups could afford to stick to the old faith. On the other hand because of the same reason the share of farm labourers was extraordinarily low. However, indigent artisans were well represented under the Roman Catholics, which can be explained simply. Many of the weavers, tailors and carpenters were poor immigrants from Germany or their descendants, and on the other side of the Dutch-

German frontier (Westfalia) mainly Roman Catholics were living. A* relatively large group within the Roman Catholics were first, second or third generation immigrants, which, however, seemed to have been quite well integrated considering the mixed marriages. Surprisingly few labourers were coming from Germany.

Appendix B: Social Mobility numbers

Table B.1: Social Mobility of Roman Catholics in northern Groningen, born 1721-1800 (numbers): married people only.

	PARENTS					N
CHILDREN	A: Nobility, upper middle class and large famers	B: Middle class and medium- ranged farmers	C: Lower middle class and small farmers	D: Indigent artisans and crofters	E: Subordinate and unskilled labourers	
A: Nobility, upper middle class and large famers	200	52	12	9	3	276
B: Middle middle class and medium-ranged farmers	87	80	51	13	9	240
C: Lower middle class and small farmers	38	93	137	78	33	379
D: Indigent artisans and crofters	12	45	83	199	68	407
E: Subordinate and unskilled labourers	13	38	69	85	155	360
Left the Groningen clay area	22	25	58	52	18	175
N	372	333	410	436	286	1.837
Unmarried	44	34	34	49	27	188
Unknown, presumably survived after the age of 30	5	18	12	15	17	67