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## REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL MOBILITY PATTERNS IN THE NETHERLANDS AND BETWEEN 1830 AND 1940

Social mobility in Dutch society of the past is a neglected field of study. Very few quantitative historical investigations have been published in this field, compared with e.g. that of social structures.<sup>1</sup> This is regrettable, as mobility studies are not only interesting in themselves, but are also important for the understanding of more general problems of industrialization and modernization.<sup>2</sup>

Some social theories contain the implicit assumption that industrialization and modernization exert a direct influence on social mobility. Industrialization in particular and economic growth are often held to lead to a more open, "mobile," society in which individual achievement is very important. The reverse assumption, that mobility is low in pre-industrial societies, is also frequently made. These ideas presuppose a period of total change somewhere between pre-industrial and industrial societies where the locks are opened and the pent-up water can take its own course. This line of thought, which we may call the "dogmatic transition theory," is implicit in the just-mentioned "optimistic" view of social mobility trends. Strangely enough, the "pessimistic" theory of social mobility trends, the American "blocked" mobility thesis, also sees great differences between modern society and American society of the past — but in the reverse direction. According to this latter theory, there was a period in American history in which mobility rates must have been high. It was not economic growth itself, but the overcrowding of American territory by immigrants, that brought an end to this period. The "Golden Age of Equality" was ended by overcrowding the possibilities for a "Rags-to-Riches" career diminished.

Both theories, the optimistic and the pessimistic one, presuppose a period of transition in relation (direct or indirect) with industrialization or economic growth. Such myths can flourish in the absence of empirical data. Contrasting the features of one's own society with a hypothetical society in the past is very attractive. However, though nostalgia may be a pleasant feeling, it is not the right starting point for research in the social sciences. Social theories need a thorough historical base of empirical data. Much work of this kind has in fact already been done, and the results of many American mobility studies are impressive.<sup>3</sup>

These studies cast doubt on the above-mentioned belief in a shift in mobility rates between our own society and that of the past. Many recent European studies allow similar conclusions to be drawn for our part of the world: Institutional factors seem to play such an important role in Europe that economic development and mobility are not always directly linked. In particular, local mobility studies tend not to support the hypothesis of a linear increase in mobility rates.<sup>4</sup>

In this article we shall try to link our research with these local and regional studies by using a comparative approach to mobility patterns in various processes of modernization during the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

In particular we are interested in two questions:

- Is there any relationship — and if so which — between rising mobility rates in general or upward mobility in particular and the process of modernization?
- Is there any difference between industrialized regions and non-industrialized regions in this respect?

Emphasis will be laid on occupational mobility, though we know that there are other aspects of social inequality which can influence social mobility. Power, authority, prestige and social relations can be as important as occupation alone, but are difficult to measure in historical research. Limiting social "class" or position to occupation, however, does not get rid of all our problems. In Lockwood's well-known terms "market" and "work" are both components of occupation.<sup>5</sup>

The consequence of this for the present study is that we should ideally define occupational categories so that the members of a given category are comparable, on the one hand in terms of source and level of income, and on the other in their location within a system of authority and control. Skilled and unskilled labourers should be put in separate classes. Unfortunately, it is difficult to establish the correct position on both scales for every occupation, since the name of the occupation does not give detailed information on these points. For instance, "merchants" can be wealthy men, but also small peddlers or tradesmen, while "farmers" can be big landowners, peasants or sometimes even cottars. Similar problems arise in the category of artisans: the income of the master artisan may not exceed that of his journeymen; but his location in the system of authority and control is very different. We tried to solve these problems by linking income and occupation as best we could. This is not too difficult for the period in question in the Netherlands, since estimates of income can be found in municipal poll-tax records and (towards the end of the period) state tax returns.

We shall also adduce information which throws light on the question of whether people tended to share their fathers' social position or not. Comparison of the results over time and among regions with different degrees of industrialization yields an estimate of the effect industrialization had on social mobility trends and class formation in general.

Class formation in the Netherlands is generally held to have been rather weak during the nineteenth century. The late onset of industrialization is often seen as responsible, as is the typical split-up of Dutch social structures along socio-religious lines. For example, there are Protestant, Catholic and non-denominational schools, hospitals, child welfare services, etc. while a similar split (with a few political overtones) is even found in broadcasting and the press. This is sometimes called "pillarisation" by Dutch authors (a literal translation of the Dutch "verzuiling").

American sociologists like Blau and Duncan have stressed that high mobility rates could hamper class formation.<sup>6</sup> Although we do not share their functionalistic approach, an effect of this kind could have some bearing on our cases too. A comparison of our results for the Netherlands with those for other European and American social groupings will perhaps yield a better insight into the causes for relative slowness of class formation in the Netherlands.

### **General Characteristics of the Regions Studied**

Like every country of Western Europe, the Netherlands experienced a certain degree of industrialization during the nineteenth century. However, in comparison with the United Kingdom and Germany, Dutch industrialization was retarded until the end of the century. During the last decade, however, a "take-off" can be detected here too and changes in economic structure occurred.<sup>7</sup>

This does not mean of course that there were no major economic changes before that time. The western part of the country had been leading in trade, shipping, commerce, banking and general services since the seventeenth century.

Indeed, this very lead in economic matters probably led (via the well-known effect of industrial inertia) to the relative economic stagnation of the country (compared with the United Kingdom and e.g. North German towns) during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. However, thanks to the relatively high degree of training of the population and in particular as a result of the geographical advantages of the western part of the country, some economic sectors showed marked development already before the "take-off." Trade and shipping flourished again, especially after the industrialization of Germany. Shipbuilding, engineering and industries connected with shipping and commerce (mainly food and processing industries) grew too.

Only the most flourishing industry of the nineteenth century — textiles — showed some decline. In the western parts of the country this industry had been declining since the eighteenth century as a result of high wage costs. Textiles were produced increasingly on the basis of cottage industry in the southern and eastern parts of the country, though not on a sufficient scale to rival British and Flemish textiles seriously. Only the protective tariff policy of the Dutch government and monopolistic position in the East Indian market eased the position somewhat. Again in the south and the east of the country textile mills were established during the second half of the nineteenth century, but at least in the south the process of change was slow. Up until 1870, most textile production was done at home by workers who combined agrarian labour with weaving and spinning. The same was true of the tobacco and cigar industry, and cigarmaking was sometimes combined with other activities. The founding of factories did not really change the overwhelming influence of cottage industry in tobacco and cigarmaking until the First World War — by which time the putting-out system had led to the creation of what can only be described as sweatshops which left no time at all for other activities.

In spite of the retardation of industrialization, the Netherlands was in many aspects a modern country during the nineteenth century. Urbanization in the west was — and had long been — very important, and had important implications for the whole of society.<sup>8</sup>

In this connection we may mention in particular the growth of relatively labour-intensive and diversified horticulture and cattle-raising activities, based on a largely urban work force. These tendencies became stronger after the growth of British and German markets for dairy products and vegetables. However, agriculture did not show this trend in every part of the Netherlands. On the sandy soils in the south and east small, largely self-supporting family farms flourished. The farmers (and their wives) earned some extra income from domestic handicrafts. Their sons and daughters provided the labour for the textile and cigar factories during the second half of the nineteenth century and for the "newfangled" electrical industry that was born at the end of the century.

Nevertheless, agriculture was by no means completely displaced by industry in this area. Some farmers succeeded in modernizing their farms after 1880 and embarked on market-oriented production by way of mixed farming (cattle raising and food crops). Co-operative stores, dairy factories and in particular loans from (Raffeyisen type) agricultural banks stimulated this development. In the north and the southwestern part of the country agriculture was also different from that in the west, but this is not important for our present purposes. In this article we compare five areas:

a) *Rotterdam*

This fast growing port had about 50,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the nineteenth century and — though mortality rates were high — reached 350,000

inhabitants by 1900. Rotterdam was a town with an overwhelming lower-class majority (about 80% of the heads of households), a small middle class (10 to 15%) and a minute upper class. This class structure did not change very much during the century. Most inhabitants earned their wages in activities related to the shipping and commerce.

b) *Hillegersberg*

During the period of our study, Hillegersberg was a village just on the outskirts of Rotterdam; it was absorbed by the latter in 1941. The distance from Rotterdam was too far to give the village a commuting function in the nineteenth century, though industry was not all locally oriented. Agriculture (market-oriented) and the processing industry were important economic activities. During the nineteenth century the population grew from about 2,000 inhabitants to 6,000. About 55% of heads of households were lower class; about 40% middle class and 5% upper class in 1850/1860. The relative importance of the middle class was due to the presence of many farmers and horticulturists, though the percentage of artisans was also high. The permanent market for farming products in nearby Rotterdam created a generally rather well-to-do situation.

c) *Zuid-Holland*

The third area we studied was comparable in this respect with Hillegersberg. A rural enclave (partly fens, partly clay farming land) in the major urban agglomeration (The Hague, Leyden, Gouda etc.) which dominated the province of Zuid-Holland, contained a number of villages where cattle raising was very important, but horticulture even more so. Perhaps more than in Hillegersberg artisans here worked for a local market. Factories did not exist. As a result, the lower class in 1860 was smaller than in Hillegersberg (45% of heads of household); the size of the middle class contingent varied from village to village, depending on how many big farmers and professional men (doctors, solicitors, etc.) there were. Population growth in this area, though slower than in Rotterdam and Hillegersberg, did amount to 100% in the course of the nineteenth century.

d) *Bommelerwaard*

The social and economic structure of this region was less dependent on nearby towns than regions b) and c) above. The Bommelerwaard, located between the rivers Waal (a branch of the Rhine) and Meuse, was rather isolated. The heavy clay soil made special types of agriculture possible. Production was not for direct consumption in nearby towns. Sales to the market consisted particularly of products that could be stored. The river clay was also the basis of a brick-making industry with demand for low-paid, relatively unskilled workers, creating a large working-class contingent after the middle of the century (more than 60% of the heads of households in some villages). The middle class as a whole was relatively small. Farms weren't large, although labor-intensive production on a small scale was difficult, apart from the cultivation of fruit. Perhaps as a result of this population growth was very slow (50% during the period 1850-1940).

e) *Eindhoven*

The last area we studied is located in the southern part of the country. During the nineteenth century the present industrial town of Eindhoven consisted of one small market town of medieval origin and five surrounding villages. As a result of rapid population growth after 1870, the six communities became increasingly interconnected, with the result that by 1920 Eindhoven had annexed the five villages. For various reasons explained elsewhere,<sup>9</sup> the six communities can be studied as one town, even during the period of our investigation. Agriculture was practiced during the nineteenth century, but became of minor importance.

Textiles and tobacco were the most important industries before 1890. Both grew out of cottage industry, originally combined with agrarian activities. After the middle of the century, production was more and more concentrated in factories and mills. The industrial character of the town became even more marked after the establishment of the Philips lamp factory in the 1890s. It is not surprising that the social structure changed from predominantly middle class to predominantly working class during the period of our study. In 1850, only 38% of heads of households were lower class as compared with 54% middle class. In 1890 the corresponding percentages were 47 and 43, and in 1920 the situation was completely reversed, with 57% lower class and only 38% middle class. Modern factory employment was well established from that time on.

Summing up, we may characterize the most salient differences between the five regions covered by our study in the following thumb-nail sketches. Rotterdam had already acquired an urban character before the fast population growth which occurred during the period of our study, while Eindhoven changed from what was effectively a group of villages to a modern industrial town in the same period. Hillegersberg and the rural enclave of Zuid-Holland both underwent dynamic development, thanks to the market provided by the nearby urban areas; while social and economic changes were much slower in the Bommelerwaard, owing to the isolated nature of this area.

### Materials and Methods

The sources of the data used in this study and the methods used to process them are described in detail elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>

In the present article, we will restrict ourselves to a few relevant comments concerning the three main aspects of social mobility discussed here, viz inter-generational and intra-generational mobility of males and marriage-determined mobility of females (generally referred to as "connubial mobility" in the literature).

#### a. Inter-generational mobility of males

The most important source of data for our investigations in this field was the *register of marriages*, established in the Netherlands in 1811 (by the French). The marriage<sup>11</sup> contains various items of information of interest for our study, viz. the name, age, occupation, birthplace and residence of bride and bridegroom and of their living parents.

This certificate had to be signed by all above-mentioned, together with the witnesses (generally four in number during the period of our study) and the registrar; if any of these parties was unable to sign, mention was made of this fact on the certificate. Marriage cohorts were established by taking samples from these marriage registers for different years in all communities studied, except Eindhoven.

The *Eindhoven* samples (10%) were based on census returns for the six municipalities involved, for 1850, 1890 and 1920.<sup>12</sup>

Heads of households and their wives were followed from birth until death in order to reconstitute families and to gain data about all the occupations followed by each person studied during his or her lifetime. It should be noted that the *Eindhoven* samples were not marriage cohorts in the strict sense, since some people enumerated in the census were married outside the region concerned; however, this only accounts for a small part of the population (about 10-15%).

The marriage cohorts for *Rotterdam* and *Hillegersberg* were based on samples of marriages concluded between 1811 and 1900. In the rural areas (*Zuid-Holland* and

*Bommelerwaard*) marriages occurring in specific 5-year periods separated by 19-year intervals (1820-1824, 1843-1847, 1866-1870, 1889-1893, 1912-1916 and 1935-1939) were analyzed.

The idea of basing inter-generational mobility rates on occupational information from marriage certificates is open to criticism in certain respects,<sup>13</sup> in particular because unmarried persons and persons marrying outside the community are excluded from the study. We were able to test the effect of such differences from the Eindhoven material, where the sample populations studied did contain people who married elsewhere. The Eindhoven data (though not defining marriage cohorts in the strict sense) were also useful as a basis for exploration of intra-generational occupational mobility. Marriage certificates only give the occupation of bride and groom at a specific point in their life cycle (generally towards the start of their adult life), and of their parents at a much later stage in life. Mobility rates based on this information do not thus cover *all* possible occupations of these persons. Use of census returns allows occupations of a given person to be sampled at various points in his life cycle.

Another methodological problem is how to group the occupational information, and how to relate it to the social classes. The greater the number of sub-groups, the greater the chance of detecting differences in status between father and son. On the other hand, it is rather artificial to construct many classes and sub-groups in a rather undifferentiated society. In general, we worked with a modified 5/6 class type of division, that is to say: a lower lower class, an upper lower, a lower middle, an upper middle, a lower upper and an upper upper class. For the study of intergenerational mobility we did not include the upper classes (professions, higher civil servants, factory owners and landed aristocracy). The middle class consisted of tradesmen, independent artisans, white-collar workers, the majority of farmers (divided into small and big farmers), local teachers and lower civil servants. In the lower class, we distinguished among journeymen, factory laborers and agricultural laborers.

As mentioned above, we linked occupations as far as possible with estimated income or wealth, based on data concerning municipal poll taxes and/or state taxes.

#### **b. Intra-generational mobility of males**

Information on intra-generational or career mobility was analyzed for Eindhoven and Rotterdam.<sup>14</sup>

In Rotterdam this information was based on samples of heads of households from the census returns for the period from 1830 to 1880. The census data were grouped to cover the three decades 1830-1840, 1850-1860, and 1870-1880. Within each decade the occupation of each head of household sampled at the start of the period was compared with that at the end (assuming that he was resident in the area in question and working, at both instants). The same procedure was carried out on the census data for Eindhoven for the three decades 1850-1860, 1890-1900 and 1920-1930. Here too, information on occupation was linked, if possible with data on wealth and income.

#### **c. Marriage-determined mobility of females**

Source material and methodology for the study of this type of mobility (generally called *connubial mobility* in the literature) do not differ from those needed for the study of inter-generational mobility.

As a large proportion of brides were stated to be without occupation at the time of marriage, we shall not use the data on brides' occupations for our study of connubial mobility, but shall proceed on the hypothesis that the status of women

during the nineteenth century was derived from that of males. Unmarried women had their father's social status; when married they got their husband's. It was only relatively late in the twentieth century that marital status started to become of minor importance for women. Connubial mobility rates could thus be derived from the occupational information on bridegroom and bride's father in the marriage certificates.

### Results

Full details of the results of this investigation will be reported in the study of Eindhoven mentioned above. The present paper only gives a condensed account of the most salient results. In particular, while our study did include data on upper-class groups, we have omitted the corresponding results from the present paper so as to make our results more comparable with those of other authors. The main source of non-comparability here is the high degree of internal recruitment measured in upper-class groups in our study (75%, as compared with 2-4% on the assumption of random recruitment from all social classes). Had we pooled upper classes (where free diffusion between classes is much more operative), our mobility rates would have been appreciably altered.

It may also be mentioned that, since our results have been obtained by use of both transverse and longitudinal analysis,<sup>15</sup> some caution should be — and has been — exercised in their interpretation. On the other hand, the inclusion of regions with widely differing social structures is a valuable feature of our study, as it does allow (careful) conclusions to be drawn concerning the influence of urban/non-urban environments and various economic differences on social mobility.

#### Inter-generational mobility of males

Table 1 summarizes our findings concerning intergenerational mobility in the lower and middle classes in the various regions studied.

Two aspects are distinguished here: the *general mobility* and the *upward mobility* rating; these two quantities are defined in the footnotes to Table 1.

One very clear conclusion can be drawn from Table 1 viz: the general mobility (as defined in this table) is greater in Rotterdam than in any of the other areas studied. Only nearby *Hillegersberg* approaches Rotterdam in this respect, though the pre-1850 mobility in Hillegersberg may perhaps be too high to be representative for a village of this type.<sup>16</sup> Mobility rates in the countryside were much lower — at least during the nineteenth century. Eindhoven, where a high mobility might be expected on the basis of the "optimistic" view of the result of industrialization mentioned in the Introduction, does not in fact score any higher than the rural areas were studied.

A second conclusion is that, in spite of the great differences in general mobility rates observed between town and countryside, the upward mobility ratings in the countryside are not very uneven.

In *Zuid-Holland* and in the *Bommelerwaard* there seems to be a fairly constant increase not only in mobility in general, but also in the upward mobility rating up to 1940, despite the economic crisis of the thirties.

The trends observed in the industrialized region of Eindhoven are at first sight rather puzzling: a tremendous rise in upward mobility rating between 1850 and 1890 was followed by an enormous drop from 1890 to 1920. However, if we take the birthplace of our population samples into account, we see that an increase in immigration had important effects. The rise in upward mobility between 1850 and 1890 is then found to be caused by locally born sons, going to work in factories, while their fathers were only agrarian laborers. The fall in upward mobility ratings



**Table 1**  
**Social mobility between generations within and between middle and lower classes in different regions in the Netherlands, 1850-1940**

marriages before	Rotterdam 1	Hillegersberg 2	Zuid-Holland 3	Bommelerwaard 4	Eindhoven 5
<i>1. general mobility<sup>xx</sup></i>					
1850 <sup>x</sup>	53	42	30	16	25
1875	54	41	—	—	—
1890	—	—	—	—	32
1900	49	41	23	22	—
1920	—	—	—	—	34
1940	—	—	36	42	—
<i>2. upward mobility<sup>xxx</sup></i>					
1850	0.9	1.4	0.5	0.8	0.3
1875	0.3	0.6	—	—	—
1890	—	—	—	—	1.3
1900	1.4	0.7	0.6	0.9	—
1920	—	—	—	—	0.2
1940	—	—	1.0	1.0	—

x) The periods covered vary from region to region (see text).

xx) *General mobility*: the number of sons whose social status at marriage differs from that of their father at the same time, per 100 middle-class and lower-class sons marrying in the region and period in question. This general mobility may be divided into two parts: *upward mobility* (son on higher rung of social ladder than father at time of son's marriage) and *downward mobility* (son on lower rung than father).

xxx) *Upward mobility rating* = upward mobility divided by downward mobility.

after 1890 on the other hand, was due to sons with factory employments whose fathers (who were either farmers or artisans), had emigrated in general from other areas to Eindhoven.

In general the reasons for these regional differences seem clear. Restricted division of labor and domination of one economic sector (farming in the countryside) or of one branch of industry (lamp-making gradually expanding to electronics industry in Eindhoven) narrows the scope for sons to choose a job other than that of their fathers. Rigid differences in status, maintained for long periods of time, especially in the countryside, were also a barrier to large-scale mobility. During the nineteenth century there seemed to be a real line of division between the artisans and the farmers, though both enjoyed middle-class status. The hypothesis that restricted division of labor in towns and rigid differences in status in the countryside reduced mobility rates is also supported by our evidence on occupational continuity between father and son (Table 2).

The continuity of occupations was less in Rotterdam than in all other regions studied. Even in the industrializing town of Eindhoven, where many immigrants lived, more than 50% of the bridegrooms had the same occupation as their father. The son of a weaver tended to become a weaver himself, and the son of a cigarmaker became a cigarmaker. (And in particular: the son of an employer became an employer, and the son of a doctor a doctor). Only in the port of Rotterdam and to a lesser extent in the nearby village of Hillegersberg was recruitment into occupations less strict, though here too there was still a fair degree of continuity. The general pattern seems to be that a decrease in continuity

**Table 2**  
**Occupational continuity between father and son (as a percentage of all marriages).**

marriages before	Rotterdam 1	Hillegersberg 2	Zuid-Holland 3	Bommelerwaard 4	Eindhoven 5
1850	30	32	42	77	47
1875	34	41	—	—	—
1890	—	—	—	—	47
1900	27	50	60	72	—
1920	—	—	—	—	45
1940	—	—	47	45	—

rates is coupled with increasing division of labour and diversification of the economic structure. It may further be noted that the rates in the rural regions we studied in the twentieth century are strikingly close to those in Eindhoven and Hillegersberg about 1900 (just below 50%). However, a high probability that sons will have an occupation differing from that of their fathers, does not necessarily imply high upward mobility. Especially during the period 1850-1875 downward mobility was great in Rotterdam, even though continuity was low too. However, this had temporal rather than structural reasons.<sup>17</sup>

One final remark about occupational continuity between father and son should be made. Even though the overall tendency is towards a decrease in continuity, we do observe an increase in continuity from 1850 to 1900 in the rural parts of Zuid-Holland (and also in Hillegersberg). This temporary increase was doubtless largely due to the growing influence of the towns. Artisans working for the local market were no longer a major part of the local economy at the end of the century. Thanks to good transport, local demands could be supplied from the towns. This decrease in the diversification of the economic structure was only temporary; after 1900, an increase in diversification appeared again. Another explanation of the temporal lower rates of mobility in the countryside of *Zuid-Holland* could be the migration to the towns during this period. It is sometimes suggested in the literature that migrants are less bound to tradition and more adventurous than their non-migrating fellow-countrymen.<sup>18</sup> We have little firm evidence either to prove or to disprove this hypothesis, though it seems self-evident that the nearby towns could have exerted a great attraction on potential migrants. In the isolated *Bommelerwaard*, on the other hand, where opportunities for a career in nearby towns were almost absent, upward and downward mobility was reasonably well balanced.

So far the most striking difference in mobility rates has been found between Rotterdam and Eindhoven. Rotterdam showed high general mobility rates, low continuity rates and, at the end of the century, more upward than downward mobility. As against this Eindhoven revealed only a temporary rise in upward mobility ratings, while its general mobility score was more comparable with the countryside than what one would expect of a town — a town, moreover, where industrialization was taking firm root. In fact, the large-scale introduction of factory work in Eindhoven seems to have influenced the social status of the sons adversely as compared with their fathers. The most important reason for this seems to be the large number of factory employees whose fathers were still working independently after 1900.

The above-mentioned increase in the number of lower-class heads of households between 1890 and 1920 reflects this change too. However, we may ask whether this measured decrease in upward mobility does in fact reflect a

deterioration in social status. It may well be that factory employment (although undoubtedly a form of dependent labor) was better for the people concerned than the uncertainties of independent labor. The wages of factory labourers were perhaps more regular, and although security was not as important at the turn of the century as it had been say 50 years before, when any form of social security was practically non-existent, the risk of losing a factory job was perhaps less than that of failing to find regular work as an independent worker, except in times of high unemployment. However, factory work was often dull and there was little freedom. The beginning of the Taylor system was not far away.<sup>19</sup>

We should beware of idealizing factory work at the turn of the century. Our whole analysis of social mobility is very largely based on use of the differences between skilled and unskilled work, independent and dependent employment, as criteria of social status. The perception of contemporaries need not have coincided with these criteria. However, there are indications that around 1900 by no means every factory labourer appreciated his employment situation as being better than that of independent artisans.<sup>20</sup> To this extent, the measured steep drop in upward mobility in industrializing Eindhoven does seem to reflect a perception that the sons were failing to attain as high a social status as their fathers.

So far, our analysis does not seem to confirm the theory that industrialization has a positive effect on social mobility — on the contrary. Although mobility rates in the countryside were generally not high, upward mobility was not absent. Few people changed their social status but a good proportion of those who did change registered an improvement. Again, when we restrict our attention to one specific but important aspect, that of inter-generational mobility, the mobility between lower-class and middle-class, we see that the countryside differed from both Rotterdam and Eindhoven. Whereas in the decade before 1900 the proportions of middle-class sons with working-class fathers in Rotterdam and Hillegersberg were 9% and 10% respectively, the proportion of 'skidders' (working class sons with middle-class fathers) in the same period in both places was about 36%. In the countryside on the other hand, upward and downward mobility were more or less in balance (13% and 10% of 'climbers' in *Zuid-Holland* and the *Bommelerwaard* respectively as against the same percentages of 'skidders'), whereas in *Eindhoven* the balance was far more uneven (10% 'climbers' and 46% 'skidders').

Summing up we may state that our study seems to show that industrialization not only produced the advantage of appreciable upward mobility, but frequently had the disadvantage of creating a 'negative' gap between father and son (sons with lower social status than their fathers).

In general, industrialization as such (the increase in factory employment) does not seem to have been an important factor for the changes in social mobility between 1850 and 1940. In the countryside, where factory employment was absent or of minor importance, mobility rates also rose (at least after 1900), and upward and downward mobility were more or less balanced. In industrializing Eindhoven the mobility rates dropped, and downward mobility exceeded upward mobility. Economic diversification seems to be a better explanation for higher mobility than one-sided industrialization. About 1900 Eindhoven showed low rates of upward mobility, whereas Rotterdam had more upward than downward mobility. But Rotterdam exhibited a diversified growth in port activities and a great variety of industries, while the only growing industry Eindhoven had was Philips (electrical): the tobacco and textile industries were in decline.

However, to say that there is no relationship between growing factory employment and upward mobility is not the whole truth either.

We already mentioned the methodological problems inherent in the use of marriage certificates as a data source for studying intergenerational mobility. Specifically, this 'snapshot' fixes the social status of father and son at very different points along their life cycle. The father is likely to be near the top of his career when his son marries, whereas the son will be near the start.

In an attempt to eliminate this age gap as much as possible, we used all kinds of information about occupations, in censuses, population registers, etc., for the Eindhoven population to correct for the age gap. For example, if a son had married when his father was 50 years old, we tried to discover from later census returns of population registers what kind of work the son was doing when *he* was 50.

Even with this correction there still seems to be an inverse relationship between industrialization and upward mobility, at least in Eindhoven. Sons of independently working fathers who had a job in a factory when they married tended to stay in factory employment all their working life. There were many changes within the same occupational level: the apprentice engine-driver became a master engine-driver; the factory laborer became an overseer; the administrator achieved a higher rank; however, there were very few occupational changes which crossed the class boundaries as defined in this study (such as journeymen becoming independent artisans).

#### b. Intra-generational mobility of males

It is hardly surprising that individual career mobility shows different trends from inter-generational mobility. Unfortunately, we have data on intra-generational mobility only for three decades of the nineteenth century for Rotterdam (1830-1840; 1850-1860; 1870-1880), and three decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth century for Eindhoven (1850-1860; 1890-1900 and 1920-1930)<sup>21</sup> (See Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Career mobility among the population of Rotterdam and Eindhoven in ten-year periods**

	Proportion of mobile males*		Ratio of upward to downward mobility	
	<i>Rotterdam</i>	<i>Eindhoven</i>	<i>Rotterdam</i>	<i>Eindhoven</i>
<i>period</i>				
1830-1840	19 (19)		1.5 (1.4)	
1850-1860	21 (19)	7 (5)	2.1 (2.0)	0.9 (0.6)
1870-1880	29 (24)		7.4 (7.9)	
1890-1900		14 (14)		1.8 (1.7)
1920-1930		19 (18)		2.2 (1.9)

\*Related to a 6 class type of stratification. Between brackets lower and middle classes only.

Once again, we see that career opportunities in Rotterdam were better than in Eindhoven. During the period 1850-1860 in Eindhoven only a few peasants became weavers, and some labourers started up as landlords (or inherited a pub from their father-in-law). Occupational change during this period did not generally cross class boundaries as defined in this study.

The situation in the nineteenth century in Rotterdam was already different. Occupational change with upward or downward mobility was more general here,

upward mobility being more frequent than downward mobility. However, one reservation should be made. The turnover of population in Rotterdam was higher than in Eindhoven. In Rotterdam for instance between 1870 and 1880, 47% of this sample population moved or died. Comparable figures for Eindhoven were 19% mortality and 18% emigration (together a turnover of 37%) in the period 1890-1900 and 6% mortality and 8% emigration (a turnover of 14%) for 1920-1930 (a period of good economic opportunities). Consequently the higher percentage turnover in Rotterdam may hide a greater proportion of 'skidders.'<sup>22</sup> However, in our opinion this is not very likely.

Compared with inter-generational mobility patterns, both Rotterdam and Eindhoven showed higher rates of career mobility and higher positive rates of upward mobility, though the difference in Eindhoven was much slighter. In this respect there does not seem to be a relationship between economic growth (and diversification) and mobility.

It is interesting in this connection to look at the long-term changes: only then can the real effects of industrialization be shown. Unfortunately, we only have data for Eindhoven on this point. Nevertheless, the results are surprising.

Comparing the over-all careers of males living in 1890 in Eindhoven with those living there in 1920, we see that general mobility rose only slightly from 18 to 20%; but within this mobile group there was a dramatic shift towards upward mobility. The people living in the early industrialization period did not pluck many of the fruits of industrialization. While their social position at the time of their marriage was in many cases better than their fathers', upward mobility during their life tended to be outweighed by downward mobility (upward mobility rating 0.9).

The opposite was true for the next generation. Their social status tended to improve enormously after a bad start (compared with their fathers). Every 'skidder' in the Eindhoven sample for 1920 was outnumbered by twelve 'climbers' though industrialization did not have much influence on the general mobility. One remark, however, should be made here: our data concern people who already had a well established position in the labour market in 1920. They were all married and had families. As far as we can see, they were less severely hit by the economic depression of the 1930s than the generation which entered the labour market during the second half of the 1920s and the 1930s. This group did not have a well established position at the outbreak of the crisis and in many cases only succeeded in finding a job at all after very hard work and great trouble. This situation influenced not only their short-term social status, but also their long-term mobility chances.<sup>23</sup> One important consequence of this for our study was that many persons who would doubtless have married under better economic circumstances did not marry at all, or married much later, and are thus excluded from our statistics.

It would be valuable to have information about life-time career trends for other areas too. The only conclusion that can be drawn for the moment is that, at least in Eindhoven, industrialization reduced inter-generational mobility, but improved career prospects for some people during their lifetimes.

### **c. Marriage-determined mobility of females**

The above studies of inter- and intra-generational mobility only deal with half of the problem: we still have to say something about social mobility for women — a topic which tends to be neglected by researchers in this field, though we may expect improvements in the future. Some interesting studies do already exist in this field.<sup>24</sup> However, one particular complication is connected with the historical study of female social mobility.

Neither occupation nor career, but marriage seems to have been the most important factor determining the social mobility of women. A woman's social position was nearly always derived from that of a related male. Before marriage she derived her position from her father; after marriage from her husband. It is understandable, therefore, that only a few women stated any occupation in the marriage certificate (an average of 20 to 30%). If they had one, it was probably a temporary one and often ended at marriage.

The majority of the occupations recorded were, moreover, either in unskilled factory work (tobacco-cutting, etc.) or in some form of cottage industry. It is interesting that in the rural areas, where we would expect more continuity of female occupation before and after marriage, only 5% of the brides registered any occupation at all.

Consideration of the social mobility of women is important for an understanding not only of the position of the women themselves, but also of the structure of the society in which they lived. We therefore devoted a certain amount of attention in our study to the marriage-determined (connubial) mobility of females. Marriages connect families. In a society where intermarriage between different social classes is not uncommon (as in the Netherlands during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) class divisions tend to be blurred; the existing system maintaining social inequalities becomes unstable.<sup>25</sup> The likelihood that women will maintain stronger links with their families than men doubtless plays a role here too.<sup>26</sup>

It will only be possible to confirm these suggestions when we know more about intermarriage: not only how many intermarriages took place, but also the trends in upward or downward mobility here as functions of time.

It is hardly surprising that the basic source of material for our study of connubial mobility was the same as for our study of inter-generational mobility — viz. the register of marriages. The problems encountered in the analysis of this material were sometimes the same as in the study of the intergenerational mobility of males, and sometimes different. One important problem is the representativeness of the data. If women are more likely to remain spinsters than to marry below their class, the connubial behaviour of women does not tell us all we need to know.<sup>27</sup> We have to know something about the overall aspects of celibacy in the society too, if possible in relation to social structure. Moreover, the measurement of connubial mobility on the basis of data from marriage certificates involved the same age-gap problems (but now between father of the bride and his son-in-law) as the measurement of inter-generational mobility for males. The latter problem could — at least for Eindhoven — be solved in this study with the aid of census data, but for the former we need demographical information, not available at this moment. The reader should bear this in mind while inspecting Table 4.

Comparison of Table 4 with Table 1 shows clearly that, in general, brides are more mobile than bridegrooms. This conclusion agrees with the results of research on the same subject in modern American society.<sup>28</sup>

One possible reason for the difference could be that intermarriage demands adaptation by means of customs and styles of life; change of occupation by means of occupational skills.<sup>29</sup>

This greater social mobility for brides does not, however, necessarily imply higher chances for upward mobility than for men. Some women accept lower status more readily than men.

Consultation of the census returns for Eindhoven shows that for a number of the women in our sample, the drop in social status on marriage was final, while

Table 4

**Marriage-determined mobility of females within and between middle and lower classes.**

marriages before	Rotterdam 1	Hillegersberg 2	Zuid-Holland 3	Bommelerwaard 4	Eindhoven 5
<i>1. general mobility<sup>x</sup></i>					
1850	47	71	40	27	36
1875	58	62	—	—	—
1890	—	—	—	—	54
1900	63	67	44	32	—
1920	—	—	—	—	49
1940	—	—	42	38	—
<i>2. upward mobility<sup>x</sup></i>					
1850	0.5	1.1	0.6	0.6	0.2
1875	0.4	0.8	—	—	—
1890	—	—	—	—	0.9
1900	0.8	0.9	0.7	1.0	—
1920	—	—	—	—	0.8
1940	—	—	0.8	0.8	—

x) for definition, see footnotes to Table 1.

others managed eventually to bring their husbands up to roughly the same level as their fathers. The inheritance of property was particularly useful in this respect: shopkeeping and innkeeping in particular seem to have been good channels for upward mobility from the lower class.

Apart from the above-mentioned general conclusion, Table 4 shows interesting regional differences, comparable with those in intergenerational mobility. General connubial mobility rates were higher in Rotterdam and the countryside of Zuid-Holland than elsewhere, but upward mobility was less than downward mobility. Nevertheless, there is a general tendency for the upward mobility rating to rise in all areas. After 1900 the rural areas showed increasing connubial mobility rates.

The only marked difference between connubial mobility patterns and those for inter-generational mobility of males was found in Eindhoven, where women tend to show a higher upward mobility rating than men. Analysis of our census data for Eindhoven yields the following impression: many bridegrooms came from elsewhere and found work (mostly with lower status than their fathers') in factories. Here they met their future brides (girls with lower-class fathers from the town or from the nearby country). The marriage resulted in downward mobility for the men and upward mobility for the women.

So far, we only have been considering mobility patterns within and between the lower and middle classes. However, analysis of mobility between all classes (including the upper class) yields a clearer picture of marriage determined mobility for females. The major part of male social mobility is found within the lower classes of society.

Upper middle-class and upper-class fathers in general succeeded in bringing their sons to the same social level as themselves at the time of the latter's marriage.

On the other hand, brides in all classes tended to change social level on marriage, with a general trend towards upward mobility. In other words, the occupations of father-in-law and son-in-law were not so closely linked as those of father and son (see Table 5).

**Table 5**  
**Occupational continuity between father of the bride and son-in-law (as a percentage of all marriages).**

marriages before	Rotterdam	Hillegersberg	Zuid-Holland	Bommelerwaard	Eindhoven
	1	2	3	4	5
1850	20	18	34	42	28
1875	11	24	—	—	—
1890	—	—	—	—	24
1900	23	22	30	42	—
1920	—	—	—	—	27
1940	—	—	23	28	—

Our data seem to show in general that intermarriage rates rose during the nineteenth century in all regions studied, and tended to level off during the twentieth. In general, bans on intermarriage as an instrument of class cohesion were rather weak (though possible differences in celibacy rates in different classes should be borne in mind); Dutch society seems to have been fairly fluid in this respect during the period under review.

### Conclusions

As mentioned in the Introduction, researchers on social mobility often suggest a positive correlation between industrialization and increasing social mobility (in particular upward mobility). The results of the present study do not support this hypothesis for the Netherlands.

Kaelbe, in an interesting comparative study of social mobility in American and European towns, suggested that the higher mobility rate in the United States may have been caused by differences in occupational structures and occupational development patterns between the United States and industrializing Europe.<sup>30</sup> During the period of interest, the U.S.A. had a smaller industrial sector than might perhaps be thought, and a relatively large service sector.

We suggest that at least partly similar conclusions can be drawn for the Netherlands. Industrialization started late, but occurred within a commercial economy with an important service sector. The changes in mobility rates with time cannot be explained by industrialization alone.

Rotterdam had mobility rates that were high enough to be comparable with port towns like Boston and London, which also had large service sectors.<sup>31</sup> Factory employment in Rotterdam was of minor importance compared with trade, shipping and other port activities. Nevertheless mobility rates were high, both for men and women. Eindhoven, on the other hand, industrialized fast and intensively. Nevertheless, the domination of the electrical industry gave the town a marked lower-class character for a long time. An overwhelming majority of the inhabitants became factory laborers after 1900, often with a social status lower than that of their fathers. Nevertheless the 'proletarianization' of the class structure did not last forever.

Rural areas also provide an interesting test case for the hypothesis of a relationship between industrialization and high social mobility. In the rural areas we studied real industrialization did not exist at all. Nevertheless, mobility rates increased slowly but steadily (albeit from an initially low level). Moreover, downward mobility did not greatly exceed upward mobility, as it did elsewhere. One important factor in these rural areas was a process of occupational differentiation which increased the range of middle-class occupations (largely



clerical jobs at various levels, but also e.g. teaching and the professions).

This gave an important impetus to mobility, even though rates were lower in the countryside than they were in Rotterdam at the end of the nineteenth century.

In general we may say that mobility rates in the Netherlands were somewhere between the American and German levels reported by Kaelble.<sup>32</sup> Strong class divisions, in particular between the lower class and the middle class, did not exist. Even when the social opportunities deteriorated markedly as they did in Eindhoven, there was no sign of the formation of a working class. Eindhoven did not become a stronghold of the Dutch Labour Party and in the general labour unrest was unimportant.<sup>33</sup>

Several reasons can be given for this situation as far as Eindhoven is concerned: religious affiliation of the majority of the population, strong differentials (in payment, housing, etc.) between the skilled workers from the north or from abroad and the largely indigenous unskilled workers and doubtless also the paternalistic social policy followed by Philips. The fluid character of a society where many women married men from a higher class and where quite a few men were able to improve their social status during their lifetime, may have played a contributory role.

Unfortunately, none of the areas we studied was characterized by formation of a real working class. In any case, working-class radicalism played a surprisingly minor role in Dutch social and political life. It is not easy to explain why. The various religious affiliations, and the accompanying split of many social structures along socio-religious lines which has been mentioned above, have been known to exacerbate social strife perhaps more often than they reduce it.

The relative ease of intermarriage detected in this study seems to be another facet of the same complex. Maybe the best we can say at the moment is that the Dutch tend to be too matter-of-fact, too "look before you leap" to allow factional struggles to impede advancement of the common weal for long. But why?

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#### FOOTNOTES

We would like to express our gratitude to professor A.G. Hopkins for his valuable remarks and to Dr. R.H. Bathgate for the correction of our English version.

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  10. H. van Dijk, A.M. van der Woude, *Van Plattelandsgemeente naar Industriestad*. For a general introduction of marriage registers for the study of social mobility see: W.H. Sewell, "Social Mobility," 218-220.
  11. G.J. Heederik, *Van Kasboekregister tot Burgerlijke Stand. Medisch-Demografische Aspecten van de Registratie van Huwelijken, Geboorte en Sterfte* (Meppel, 1973).
  12. Census Returns were reconstructed by means of the so called Population Registers. These Registers contained not only the households at the moment of the census, but also changes in the households during the years after census taking. E.g. new born children, deaths, but also removals of the family and changes in occupations of family members were registered. In the larger towns every ten years a new Population Register was started, in smaller towns and villages only every thirty or forty years.
  13. See note 10.
  14. Van Dijk, *Rotterdam 1810-1880*, ch. 3.
  15. A group of individuals who experienced the same event (marriage) within one and the same period, called a cohort, can be investigated in different manners. In case of longitudinal analysis only a single cohort is followed over time. With a transversal analysis only a picture of one moment is made.
  16. Shifts in the occupational structure are responsible for the high mobility rates. After 1750 Hillegersberg was affected by a long-term economic crisis because her chief means of support, the peat-digging was exhausted. Agriculture was made possible through the reclamation of peat-pools. Unemployment remained high although many peat-cutters

became farmers or agricultural labourers. The rise of local trades and the expansion of this branch of industry at the beginning of the 19th century were responsible for an economic recovery and an enlargement of occupational possibilities. The shift in the means of support of the Hillegersberg population can be shown by the high general mobility and upward mobility rates. Relatively large numbers of sons with an artisanal occupation having fathers who were either agricultural labourers or unskilled laborers were responsible for forcing up the rates.

17. The uneven rates between upward and downward mobility during this period seem to be caused in general by a large group of journeymen with artisan fathers. The presence in the sample of this group can be explained in two ways. Either a stagnation in the possibilities for people to become independent craftsmen existed or the opportunities were so good that it was not necessary to delay marriages until the moment of independence. The opposite development of the business cycle and the economic opportunities in the crafts during that period seem to prove this. An extra proof can be found in lower ages of marriage for artisans during this period.

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20. Stearns, *Lives of Labour*, 230-231.

21. Van Dijk, *Rotterdam 1810-1880*, ch. 3; Van Dijk, Van der Woude, *Van Plattelandsgemeente naar Industriestad..*

22. Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians*, 42.

23. H. Philipsen, "Werkloosheid en Maatschappelijke Verandering," in P.W. Klein en G.J. Borger (eds.) *De Jaren Dertig. Aspecten van Crisis en Werkloosheid* (Amsterdam, 1979), 157-161.

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25. Kocka, *Familie und Soziale Platzierung*, 48.

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27. Glenn, "Patterns of Intergenerational Mobility," 685.

28. *Ibid.*, 698

29. *Ibid.*, 686.

30. H. Kaelble, "Social Mobility in America and Europe: a Comparison of Nineteenth-Century Cities," *Urban History Yearbook* (1981), 31-34.

31. Kaelble, "Social Mobility in America and Europe: a Comparison of Nineteenth-Century Cities," 30.

32. *Ibid.*, 26.

33. A. Teulings, *Philips. Geschiedenis en Praktijk van een Wereldconcern* (Amsterdam, 1976), 37-39.