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Author(s): Hartmut Kaelble

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ERAS OF SOCIAL MOBILITY IN 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY EUROPE

There are two separate histories of social mobility. First, there is the history by the historians. It is a local history of 19th and early 20th century communities. Contrasts prevail. Distinct changes and clear differences are revealed between rural and urban, proto-industrial and industrial, manufacturing and commercial, European and American communities. Usually this history of social mobility only covers a few decades. Its cliometrics are simple and can be understood by everybody. The sources are archival: census manuscripts, city directories, marriage registers, augmented by other local documents. The main debates center on the impact of urbanization, migration, local guild and property regulations, the local mentality of individual social classes or social groups, and the changes in family structure. Secondly, there is the history by the sociologists. It is a long-term history of entire countries during the 20th century. Stability and similarities predominate. Changes during this century as well as differences between industrial societies are seen as being very limited. Advanced techniques of measuring and analyzing the trend of social mobility are applied; only experts can fully understand them. The debates concentrate on occupational change, educational opportunities and achievement motivation as major factors influencing social mobility. The main sources are recent surveys and the past is reconstructed by following up social mobility from the younger to older respondents.

These two theatres of the history of social mobility have no actors and very few spectators in common. Sociologists mostly do not know the historical studies since they often regard them as too limited, too crude in their statistical methods, too narrow-minded in their analytical approach, too far removed from the long-term trend up to the present. Historians usually do not take a strong interest in sociological studies since they are regarded as not taking account of social history in entirety, as being too difficult to interpret because of the quantitative techniques employed, as remaining too general and vague in their conclusions. Historians are often mistrustful of attempts to reconstruct the past from recent surveys. There is no doubt that historical and sociological studies do deal with different periods. They are, however, often interested in the same basic questions. Hence, it is a pity that there is no bridge, no debate, no division of labor.

This article tries to start building a bridge from the historian's side. It has four purposes. First of all, it discusses the very long-term changes in social mobility during the 19th century, the century of the historians, as well as during the 20th century, the century of the sociologists. Since we do not and probably never will have nationwide time-series of social mobility during the 19th century, this article cannot be a strictly quantitative sociological study of the long-term trend. Building upon bits and pieces from historical studies of the preconditions of social mobility, it tries to assess what probably was the overall tendency of social mobility. It is an interpretive rather than a statistical analysis. Secondly, in dealing with the long-term trend, I shall try to avoid two different approaches, the one often found in historical studies, the other characteristic of sociological studies. On the one hand, I shall try to extend the short-term perspective of the historical studies which, for

good reasons, often cover only a few decades. On the other hand, I shall try to disprove the assumption made by some sociologists that the transition from pre-industrial to industrial society was accompanied by a definite increase in social mobility, which is seen as having risen gradually or, alternatively, through an abrupt and unique upheaval during the Industrial Revolution. It is argued that there are different eras of social mobility from the Industrial Revolution until the present, and that the idea of a sustained growth in social mobility during industrialization is a popular assumption rather than a well-founded conclusion. The history of social mobility since the Industrial Revolution should be seen as a crisis and a subsequent response rather than a steady development. At least three eras must be distinguished: the Industrial Revolution, the period of organized capitalism, and the post-industrial society. Each of these eras comprises a peculiar set of conditions conducive or detrimental to social mobility. A third central assessment is that the historical development of social mobility did not result from any single factor such as structural change or new ideologies and values; rather, a multitude of factors affected the level of social mobility. As the following pages are to show, occupational change, the rise of capitalism, changes in family structures, the demographic transition, types of migration, the ways in which individuals coped with crises in life, altered mentalities and government intervention were all factors which influenced the level of social mobility and all must be considered in any study of its history. The impact of each of these factors in the three eras of social mobility will be dealt with. Finally, I shall try to integrate two concepts of social mobility which recur in every debate on long-term changes in the quality of life and in historical studies. According to one view, the history of social mobility is to be seen as the *overall* increase or stagnation of social opportunities generally, while the other approach is concerned with the increase or decrease in *inequality* of opportunities especially between classes. This article tries to show that the two approaches in fact depend on each other, and that the historian cannot understand the past if he restricts his attention to only one of the two aspects. Judgments on social inequality of opportunity very much depend on whether social opportunities generally increase or decrease; judgments on the rise of social opportunities depend equally on whether inequality of opportunity is reinforced or diminishing. Hence, both aspects will be dealt with in some detail for each of the periods under discussion.

The Industrial Revolution

Assessments of the impact of the Industrial Revolution on social mobility are often based upon sweeping assumptions about *the* pre-industrial society. Social mobility in pre-industrial societies is generally considered to be low, impeded by rigid barriers between social classes and by a pre-industrial lack of achievement-orientation, a failure to appreciate the advantages of social ascent. Conversely, pre-industrial society is sometimes regarded as a golden age of social mobility in which the modern bureaucratic or capitalist barriers to social mobility did not yet exist.

Grave doubts are cast on both views by three pieces of evidence. First, comparisons with even very remote pre-industrial societies such as the Roman Empire yield no clear straightforward evidence that social mobility was lower in pre-industrial societies. To be sure, these comparisons are very difficult and ambiguous. But since historians of the Roman Empire have started to use modern approaches, their studies show substantial social mobility, especially into elite positions and into the Roman upper class. It proves difficult to establish that the

upper class of an industrializing society such as Imperial Germany was distinctly more open towards social climbers than the Roman Empire (overall rates of social mobility being excluded from the comparison for lack of sources on the Roman past).¹ Secondly, studies — especially on early modern Europe — do not support the view of a rigid pre-industrial society with low and stable rates of social mobility. Various studies of the long-term changes in social mobility in early modern Europe have clearly demonstrated that mobility did not by any means remain constant. Hence, the assumption of higher rates of social mobility in modern societies very much depends upon which industrial or industrializing society is compared with which pre-industrial period and society.² Finally, the debate on proto-industrialization has questioned our view of the Industrial Revolution as having led to higher rates of social mobility. Franklin Mendels argues that proto-industrialization had a strong impact on social mobility, above all in reinforcing downward mobility. If this view is corroborated by empirical studies on proto-industrial communities — there is evidence in support of his view in this issue — low social mobility rates, and above all, low rates of upward mobility in these “pre-industrial” communities run counter to the common assumption, since rates are low because of the earlier beginnings of industrialization rather than because of the lack of it. Low rates of social mobility in this case cannot be interpreted simply as pre-industrial.³

These arguments against the simplistic view of social mobility *before* Industrial Revolution proper are the more important as our view of the increase in social mobility *during* the Industrial Revolution has also been modified by the results of recent research. This period now seems to be characterized by restricted social mobility rather than by a spectacular increase in the rate of mobility. Some of the main factors mentioned above led only, if at all, to a limited increase in social mobility, whereas others worked against or even counterbalanced the modest improvements. This is true for both of the two perspectives discussed here, i.e. for the overall development of social mobility as well as for class inequality of opportunity.

A first crucial factor in the overall development of social mobility is occupational change. The Industrial Revolution is usually regarded as a period of occupational upheaval, as a sudden or at least rapid transition from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial society. The idea of occupational upheaval may make some sense for industrializing communities — though we know of surprisingly low rates of social mobility for 19th century industrial cities. On a national scale, however, occupational change during the Industrial Revolution was not very rapid or dramatic. For example, the proportion of industrial workers rose in Belgium between 1846 and 1910 from 23% to only 33%, in France between 1866 and 1921 from 16% to only 22%, in Italy between 1881 and 1921 from 13% to only 20%. In Prussia, a notoriously rapid industrializer, the proportion of factory workers proper rose between 1821 and 1861 from 3% to a mere 7%.⁴ The decline in the proportion of farmers, artisan masters and agricultural workers was correspondingly slow. The moderate extent of occupational change during the Industrial Revolution led to moderate rates of social mobility. Moreover, viewed from the perspective of the twentieth century, in many European countries the Industrial Revolution was by no means outstanding for intensity of occupational change. Even in industrial cities and regions, occupational change was just as significant after the Industrial Revolution and this is even more true if we look at developments on the national scale. Generally speaking, it was in the post-war period that occupational structures

changed most dramatically. Thus, the agricultural sector shrank in Sweden, Belgium, Italy and Germany by around only 1% per annum during the Industrial Revolution, compared to 4-5% per annum in the post-war era. The industrial sector also changed much more dramatically in the post-war era: after World War II in most European countries, it shrank more rapidly than it had grown before 1914.⁵ Hence, the Industrial Revolution should be seen as the gradual beginning of a long-term irreversible process of industrialization with slowly rising or stagnating rates of social mobility, rather than as a sudden jump from agrarian to industrial society with extraordinarily high rates of social mobility caused by spectacular occupational change.

The demographic transition which, in some European countries, partly coincided with the Industrial Revolution, also reduced rather than reinforced social mobility in two respects. Life expectancy increased during the demographic transition not only for children, but also, if to a lesser extent, for adults. Because adult mortality during the active life cycle became less frequent,⁶ fewer occupational positions were open to those entering the labor market; hence, chances of mobility decreased. Furthermore, the rapid population growth during the demographic transition led to a rising demand for jobs, especially on the part of the younger generation starting work. The available jobs on the labor market had to be shared among an increasing number of people, and this also tended to reduce the chances of social mobility. The extent to which these potential reductions in social mobility during the demographic transition actually took effect very much depended upon the speed of population growth and life extension on the one hand, and on the expansion of the domestic and overseas labor market on the other hand. At any rate, the demographic transition was clearly not a factor increasing the rates of social mobility during the Industrial Revolution.

Geographic mobility was also a factor whose influence on social mobility during the Industrial Revolution was ambivalent at least. To be sure, the liberation of the individual from feudal restrictions on migration and the improvement of transportation opened up new educational and occupational opportunities and, therefore, increased the chances of social ascent. However, if we analyze actual geographic mobility during the Industrial Revolution, a good deal of migration led to dead ends rather than to social ascent since early industrial society was generally not prepared to offer all migrants adequate housing, education, medical treatment, a healthy environment, social networks, social security and help in adjusting to an unknown industrializing society. What studies of geographical mobility during the Industrial Revolution often reveal is unsteadiness, fluctuation, and vicious circles of poverty rather than purposeful migration to better economic opportunities. Industrial cities came into being at a time when there was a large overshoot of migration and when the quality of urban life was experiencing a crisis; thus, the conditions for individual social ascent were often unfavorable. So far, it is difficult to say whether migration to better opportunities or desperate unsteadiness prevailed during this period. But the simple fact that geographical migration was far higher during the Industrial Revolution than in the inter-war and post-war periods indicates a substantial level of unsteadiness which would have lessened rather than increased the chances of social mobility.⁷

Moreover, the rise of meritocratic mentalities and social values and the opening of the lower middle and the middle class to all talents was far less pronounced than is often assumed. It comes as no surprise that the habit of transmitting land and property within the family remained strong or was even reinforced in the

agricultural sector, and that farms and landed estates were virtually closed for upward social mobility.⁸ Similarly, we are not surprised to find that artisan workshops were very frequently passed on from father to son. What is more important, however, is the fact that in the modern social strata of industrializing society too, such as businessmen and skilled workers, the Industrial Revolution did not pave the way to full meritocracy. From various recent studies of the early industrial business elite, we know that the family played a very important role, either directly, that is through inheritance of the family enterprise, or through more indirect help with capital formation, with education, with the recruitment of management.⁹ Moreover, recent studies on skilled workers have shown that even positions on this level in early industrial factories were often handed down from father to son and were not open to all talents. In particular, the labor aristocracy was a social stratum with high self-recruitment; it also cannot be regarded as a major example of a break with traditional mentalities of social immobility during the Industrial Revolution.¹⁰ White collar workers, who were often more openly recruited, were still rare in the factories of this era. Hence, the persistence of a non-meritocratic mentality restricted mobility chances during the Industrial Revolution.

This sceptical view of social mobility during the Industrial Revolution is corroborated if the factors influencing the *distribution* of social opportunities are examined. Most of these factors reinforced rather than diminished the inequality of mobility chances. A first important factor was access to capital in an economic era in which direct ownership prevailed even in large enterprises and in which capital intensity was already substantial, at least in some economic sectors such as spinning, mining, the iron and steel industries, shipbuilding and banking. Business careers in these sectors very much depended upon the ownership of capital and, hence, businessmen were mostly recruited from the rich and the middle class. True, one should not overrate this factor since the overall rate of social mobility was not greatly influenced by the degree of openness of this relatively small number of positions, and since, moreover, in some other branches such as the engineering industry, capital intensity was still low and a successful business career depended on technical knowledge rather than on capital ownership. Nevertheless, in this early industrial period business careers were clearly not open to talents from a wider range of social classes than in the twentieth century.

Demographic factors seem to have worked in the same direction. Everything we know about social differentials of life expectancy and family size suggests that, during the Industrial Revolution, the higher an individual's position in the social hierarchy, the greater was his life expectancy and the larger was his family. Therefore, whoever aspired to a better position in society had to face the fact that the competitors who stemmed from the social stratum he wanted to reach were numerous and that greater life expectancy in the higher strata restricted the number of openings. There is no evidence that these sociobiological barriers to social ascent diminished during the Industrial Revolution. What little information we have leads us to assume that social differentials of life expectancy and family size increased rather than decreased in this economic era.¹¹

Geographical mobility seems to have reinforced these effects of capital and demographic differentials on class inequality of opportunities. The few studies we have on the social history of geographical mobility during the Industrial Revolution indicate that the differences between social classes were distinct. In general, unskilled workers were more mobile than skilled workers; skilled

workers in their turn were still more mobile than white collar workers. Moreover, it seems that enforced unsteadiness was especially strong among unskilled workers, whereas geographical mobility among skilled workers is explained to a larger degree by a wide labor market and by a purposeful use of occupational chances.¹² Hence, it seems that enforced migration prevented unskilled workers from using educational or occupational opportunities more often than skilled workers. Inequality of social opportunities was intensified by migration.

The ability to cope with critical life situations was also an important factor affecting class inequality of social mobility, since childbirth, disease, invalidity, unemployment or the death of the family bread-winner could all have a strong impact on the use of educational and occupational chances. On the one hand, the traditional ways of coping with critical life situations, with support being given by the family, the social network of neighbors, the community or the feudal lord, weakened; on the other hand, self-help organizations and welfare institutions emerged only gradually. Therefore, the Industrial Revolution was a particularly difficult period for coping with individual life crises. It is important for the inequality of opportunities that the ability to cope with critical life situations clearly differed between social classes. Such situations were especially difficult for highly mobile unskilled workers with loosened family ties, little inclination to organize self-help, large families, high infant mortality and few savings, and for whom employers made little provision. It was less hard for many skilled workers with greater readiness to organize self-help, smaller families and substantial savings, and for whom employers made better provision, and easier still for the middle class.

All in all, the Industrial Revolution was not an era of dramatic rise in social mobility and of exceptional opportunities for newcomers from all social classes, as is often assumed. This examination of factors influencing social mobility indicates that the expansion of social mobility must have been modest, since occupational change was undramatic; since population growth led to a strong demand for the available opportunities; since extensive geographical mobility often impeded rather than improved the use of occupational chances; and since the non-meritocratic mentality, that is the habit of handing down occupational positions within the family, was still unbroken. Moreover, the inequality of opportunities was exacerbated by the fact that, for business careers, access to capital played a more important role than in subsequent periods; by the fact that there were distinct sociobiological barriers to social ascent; and by the fact that enforced migration, with its negative consequences for social ascent, and material and mental preconditions for coping with critical life situations clearly differed between social classes. This does not mean that the Industrial Revolution in general offered fewer social opportunities than non-industrial societies. However, it seems more appropriate to regard it as a period of crisis for important strata of society rather than as a golden age of high social mobility with opportunities open to all talents.

The Era of Organized Capitalism

“Organized capitalism” is regarded here not as a clear-cut period of time, but as a set of crucial historical developments. It is true that social scientists do not agree on the theoretical implications, the timing, or even on the detailed content of this or similar terms. They largely agree, however, that the rise of the large enterprises and the emergence of the interventionist state were major turning points in European history. In many countries, these developments coincided with the

demographic transition, or at least with its later stage. Without having the space for a detailed discussion of organized capitalism, these major changes are taken as a starting-point. They had a strong impact on social mobility and made the development as well as the distribution of social opportunities during the period of organized capitalism clearly different from what they were during the Industrial Revolution. To show this in more detail, we shall look once again at the factors of social mobility discussed above in connection with the Industrial Revolution, and try to assess how they affected mobility in the era of organized capitalism.

Various occupational changes were a first important consequence of the developments which are usually comprised under the term "organized capitalism." Above all, the number of white collar workers expanded rapidly in most European countries; mainly due to the expansion of large enterprises and the growth of public administrations, they became a substantial part of the workforce. The rise in white-collar positions led to new and substantial opportunities for workers as well as for small artisans and farmers. This was the most important respect in which occupational change in the period of organized capitalism differed from that of the Industrial Revolution. It led to a distinct increase in rates of social mobility and social ascent — an increase which has been established in various studies of long-term changes in social mobility in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.¹³ Moreover, the number of managers who ran enterprises but did not necessarily own them increased in this period; they became a substantial part of the social class of businessmen. Since a managerial career did not depend upon capital ownership, as had the careers of most early industrial business leaders, new social opportunities were opened. This occupational change also depended to a large degree on the rise of large corporations and the parallel demise of the family enterprise in big business. True, the rise of the managers barely influenced the overall rates of social mobility since managers remained only a tiny proportion of the workforce as a whole; it had an important impact, however, upon elite mobility, a point to which we shall return.

Moreover, social stratification changed in various important respects with clear consequences for social mobility. The social differentials between unskilled workers and the artisan elite tended to become smaller. Various studies have demonstrated that the demarcation line between these two groups was very strict during the Industrial Revolution and that this rendered it difficult for unskilled workers to advance within the working class. After the Industrial Revolution proper, the reduction of social differentials of income, autonomy at work, education, unemployment, and adjustment to industrial society made social ascent easier, even if they depreciated its value somewhat. Furthermore, the social differentials between workers and lower white collar employees also tended to become smaller, if only to a slight extent. The advantages which white-collar employees enjoyed with regard to income, autonomy at work, and preferential treatment by the employer became less distinct. This, too, led to workers gaining access to such positions more easily and, again, the process was accompanied by a certain devaluation of upward mobility.¹⁴ Furthermore, the period of organized capitalism coincided in a number of European countries with the rise of the professions — physicians, lawyers, pharmacists, chemists, engineers, civil servants. Professionalization created a new stratum which was prestigious, highly qualified and generally well-to-do, and this gave rise to new, if highly formalized, opportunities for social ascent, although the effect on overall rates of social mobility was still very limited in this period. Finally, the rise of the large enterprise led to a rise in the social status of the business elite. In general, the business elite

of the Industrial Revolution had headed only medium-sized enterprises with at most a few thousand employees. It did not belong to the national upper class in terms of wealth, prestige and social contacts. In politics it was not very powerful apart from its influence in industrial cities and regions. The business elite in the period of organized capitalism was much more powerful economically, with enterprise work forces reaching tens of thousands. It became part of the national upper class and played an important role in the political decision-making process on a national level. Hence, to rise to the ranks of the business elite was a much greater step forward in the period of organized capitalism than it had been during the Industrial Revolution. All these changes in social stratification cannot simply be seen as direct consequences of the crucial developments which took place during the period of organized capitalism. They were, however, influenced by these developments or at any rate coincided with them.

A further, less obvious factor leading to increased overall social mobility was the strengthening of meritocracy. Admittedly, we do not know very much about this aspect of the history of social mobility, an aspect which is concerned with the development of social values and mentalities. It seems clear, however, that the emergence of new social groups such as white-collar workers, civil servants, the professions and managers led to a rising number of occupations, access to which depended less on direct inheritance and ownership and more on qualification and competition, although at the same time other, if less effective, ways of placing family members were found. It might well be that the more meritocratic occupations had a wider impact on society and led to a change in the accessibility of the more traditional spheres, too. Family enterprises did have to change the training of presumptive heirs under the pressure of the more successful managerial economy. This may also have been partly true for small business and for agriculture.

The rise of various social services should also be considered as a factor increasing the chances of social mobility and social ascent. Alphabetization, which, at least in some European countries, was only completed during the period of organized capitalism, opened up jobs requiring elementary education to more people than ever before. This was true especially of routine white-collar work, which was becoming increasingly important. The development of inner-urban transportation networks in the early 20th century widened the labor market and increased occupational opportunities for those commuters who were able to rely on transportation and were no longer restricted to workplaces which could be reached on foot. The gradual, if incomplete, rise of the welfare state helped in coping with critical life situations and made it easier to take advantage of educational and occupational opportunities.

True, there were also powerful factors which impeded social mobility during the period of organized capitalism. The demand for occupational chances increased, or at least remained high, mainly because the early stages of organized capitalism coincided in many parts of Europe with the later stages of the demographic transition, i.e. rates of population growth were still high and there was a high demand for jobs among young people. Moreover, geographical mobility remained high during the early part of the era of organized capitalism, at least in some European countries. It still consisted to a substantial degree of enforced unsteadiness and, hence, impeded rather than improved the use of occupational chances. Compared to the Industrial Revolution, however, it seems that the factors which impeded overall social mobility did not become distinctly stronger. Hence, one can conclude that, on balance, the period of organized capitalism in general offered more occupational chances than the Industrial Revolution.

Changes in the class distribution of occupational chances are not so clear during the period of organized capitalism. Some slight changes ought to be mentioned. First of all, the unequal access to capital became somewhat less significant for occupational mobility and social ascent for at least two reasons. On the one hand, small business became less dominating as a channel of social ascent to the lower middle class and was in this respect partly replaced by the positions of white-collar workers and lower civil servants. This does not necessarily mean that social ascent became easier; however, access to capital lost its crucial role. On the other hand, as mentioned above, some careers of the business elite also became disconnected from capital ownership, since access to capital was not a direct precondition of access to managerial positions. Once again, other barriers depending on other factors replaced the capital barrier and often led to other unequal distributions.¹⁵

Secondly, social differentials of family size seem to have changed. Once again, for lack of extensive research, the information is unclear on this topic. It seems, however, that the significant differentials of family size of the Industrial Revolution were reduced in the late nineteenth century due to a more equal distribution of life expectancy, due to a general improvement in sanitary conditions, in medical treatment and in nutrition and due to the expansion of middle-class values of family and natality. Hence, the difference in family size between classes seems not to have been so great as in the preceding period. Upper-class and middle-class families could have become even comparatively smaller. Thus, the pressure exerted by the transmission of positions within upper and middle class families became relatively less strong; opportunities of social ascent improved somewhat.¹⁶

Thirdly, at least after World War I, the strong social differentials in the rate and type of geographical mobility seem to have been reduced with the overall increase in persistence. Hence, the social cleavage between those who were forced to migrate and those who chose to migrate because it benefited them became less distinct, especially among wage earners.¹⁷

Fourthly, the class inequality of critical life situations was gradually and slightly reduced by the rise in the standard of living, by rising life expectancy, by the declining size of the family, by improvements in housing, by increasing job security, by the development of public social insurance systems covering health, disability, and unemployment, and by the gradual reduction of social differentials among wage earners. Hence, the chances of planning vocational training and occupational careers over longer timespans became somewhat less unequal. However, these developments should not be overestimated since we do not yet know enough about their intensity and since the effects on the distribution of occupational chances were probably small.

Government activity was ambiguous during the era of organized capitalism in various respects. On the one hand, this was a period of transition to a decision-making process in which the bureaucracy, big business and organized labor were the most influential factors. It was especially with the rise of organized labor as a major political force that equality of opportunities increasingly became a political issue, either because of direct pressure from labor, or because such pressure was anticipated. On the other hand, the process by which equality of opportunities became a goal of government policy was not homogeneous and gradual, but was rather marked by sudden progress and reversals and by striking intra-European differences. Contrasting political systems in Europe, with fascism versus liberal democracy as the predominant international European conflict, led to differing evaluations of equality of opportunities as a goal of government policy and, even more, to great differences in the actual effects of government intervention.

To sum up, the era of organized capitalism was a period of rising overall opportunities because of far-reaching alterations in occupational structure and social stratification and because of the more competitive access to occupations, and, in the later part of the era, because of the increase in geographical persistence and the decrease in job demand after the demographic transition. Changes in the distribution of occupational chances between classes are much less clear. Rising opportunities may have been somewhat less unequally distributed, partly because capital became rather less influential as a factor affecting social mobility, partly because social differentials of family size, of geographical mobility and of material and mental aspects of critical life situations diminished somewhat. It must be pointed out, however, that in the era of organized capitalism in Europe, very forceful short-term events such as the World Wars, the Great Depression and politically enforced mass migrations had a strong impact on social mobility and in many respects overshadowed the long-term changes in social mobility in which we are primarily interested.

Post-Industrial Society

Like the era of organized capitalism, the post-industrial society is also regarded here as a set of developments rather than as a specific period of time. However, in most European countries, it coincides largely with the post war period. Once again, the term has many meanings and there is little agreement among social scientists about this era.¹⁸ Recent debates on long-term changes in modern societies have focused upon three main tendencies which most social scientists would regard as important, even if they prefer to label them with different terms. All these developments have had a significant effect on the development of social mobility. First, the service sector is considered to be the most dynamic sector in modern European societies. True, the result of this dynamism has not been the same all over Europe. In some countries the service sector has remained somewhat smaller than the industrial sector; in others, by far the greater part of the working population is employed in services. Moreover, not all branches of the service sector in fact expanded; personal services even declined. Social and economic services were the core of the dynamic expansion.¹⁹ In general, however, there is no doubt that post-industrial society clearly differs from previous eras in this respect. Secondly, the expansion of a highly-qualified group in the working population, the professions, is regarded as a characteristic of modern European societies. To be sure, the rise of highly qualified professions had already started in many European countries in the late 19th or early 20th centuries, at least in education. However, the expansion has been much more rapid in the post-war period and has given rise to a substantial proportion of highly qualified professionals in the working population, whereas they formerly represented only a small percentage. Some social scientists even believe that this change in the work force has brought with it a change in the power structure and has made the professions the new ruling class. Thirdly, the post-war period is characterized by the definite establishment of a new power structure: the emergence of a tripartite system in which big business, the bureaucrats and organized labor are the most influential groups. The integration of organized labor, in particular, has made the power structure of modern European societies different from that of previous periods. The tripartite system is not completely new. But it remained highly instable in inter-war Europe, above all because of the threat of fascism.

All these basic tendencies of the era have influenced social mobility. Again, these consequences will be shown, first for the overall development of social mobility and thereafter for the social distribution of chances.

As in previous periods, the most obvious factor influencing the overall development of social mobility is occupational change. The two basic characteristics of post-industrial society, the rise of the professions and the dynamics of the service sector, have brought about a new situation different from that of previous periods. Rapid expansion made the professions a substantial proportion of the work force, and their growth had an impact on the overall rates of social mobility. Since access to the professions is highly formalized, the increase in rates of social mobility was largely restricted to mobility between generations, whereas, in the period of organized capitalism, career mobility probably also accounted for at least part of the rise in social mobility. Unfortunately, since there is very little quantitative research on the expansion of the professions, we do not have exact information on the growth of this occupational group for more than a few countries. Nevertheless, this is the most important and most widely mentioned factor in the distinct increase in mobility rates in post-war Europe. This was the more true as the white-collar sector continued to expand. Hence, the new occupational chances represented by the rise of the professions were added to the factor which had enlarged occupational chances during the period of organized capitalism. Furthermore, the dynamics of the service sector enhanced occupational chances and stimulated occupational mobility from the agricultural as well as from the industrial sector. For Europe as a whole, it has been estimated that the service sector rose from 37% in 1960 to 50% in 1980, with slight variations among European countries.²⁰ What is important is the speed at which occupational sectors changed, which was distinctly more rapid in the post-war period than ever before. This is not only true of the above mentioned rates of shrinkage in the agricultural sector, which after all had already become a small sector without a strong impact on overall rates of social mobility. It was also true of the service sector, which often grew much more quickly than its counterpart, i.e. the industrial sector, in previous periods. Hence, rapid sectoral change of occupation is to be considered as a second major reason why rates of occupational mobility were particularly high in post-industrial society.

A further factor leading to high rates of social mobility in post-industrial society is the change in social stratification. Once again, the rise of the professions is the most important new development. Since it led to the substantial growth of a prestigious, well-paid, highly qualified social stratum, chances of upward social mobility increased. No doubt, the expansion of the professions also led to a certain social depreciation of this social group. Nevertheless, on the whole, the chances of social ascent were enlarged. This is again the argument which is most widely used to explain the historical increase in upward social mobility shown by recent surveys.²¹ Its effect was the greater as factors which reinforced upward social mobility during the era of organized capitalism did not disappear: As we have seen the number of white-collar employees continued to expand. Hence, chances of upward social mobility for workers remained high.

A third, less obvious factor influencing social mobility was the rise of the welfare state. Although the institutions of the welfare state were already starting to emerge in the pre-war and inter-war periods, its actual payments and nonmonetary services reached a new quality in the post-war period in most European countries. Payment in case of disease or unemployment, scholarships for students and old age pensions increased to such an extent that many critical life situations which in previous eras had prevented the use of educational and occupational chances, became less significant. Hence, indirectly and to an extent which is still not fully clear the rise of the welfare state led to increased rates of occupational mobility.²²

With one possible exception which will be discussed below, these factors reinforcing occupational and social mobility were not counterbalanced by developments which worked in the opposite direction. Population growth declined in the long run and so did the demand for jobs from the young, although, in the short run, converse developments overshadow this long-term trend. Meritocratic values may have gained an even stronger hold than in the period of organized capitalism, though we do not have any clear information on this point. Government intervention, if weak in its positive influence on social mobility, at least did not impede it. All in all, the overall development of social mobility seems to have led to higher rates than in earlier periods.

Changes in the class distribution of mobility chances are less spectacular. Nevertheless, various factors in favor of a less unequal distribution did emerge in this era. First of all, the rise of the professions as a substantial group in the work force is once again important. The expansion was so rapid that recruitment to the professions had to be opened to other social classes. Members of the lower middle and even the working classes clearly had better chances of entering this stratum and rising in the social hierarchy. This does not mean that members of the middle class were forced to step back in a zero numbers game; their chances seem to have improved as well. The higher ranks of society became more distinctly open for all.²³

Moreover, the definite establishment of the welfare state not only helped to improve the use of occupational and educational opportunities, but also reduced inequalities in coping with critical life situations. The calculability of life increased for the average citizen. Individual planning of the life-course, a major precondition of better educational opportunities, was facilitated or even initiated by the welfare bureaucracies. Unequal insecurity in the individual life situation became less characteristic of European societies. Hence, a major factor influencing inequality of chances became less distinct.²⁴

Finally, with the firm establishment of the tripartite power system, equality of opportunities became a central issue in politics. In spite of variations in specific goals, a broad consensus among labor, liberal and conservative politicians emerged in this respect in post-war Europe. This issue became increasingly important in various fields of politics such as education, family, and appointments to the public administration. To be sure, equality of opportunity as a political goal was not totally new. In many respects, it was already important in the inter-war period. However, it did not emerge in its present significance until after World War II. This does not necessarily mean that the political goal of equality of opportunity effectively changed the distribution of chances since it is difficult to ascertain the workings of such policies and since they can only take effect in the long run. Nevertheless, a historical analysis of social mobility must take this factor into consideration.²⁵

At least one further factor influencing the distribution of chances may partly have worked in the opposite direction. From scattered and still very inconsistent pieces of information, we have the impression that social differentials of family size changed. An A-shaped pattern in which the families were smaller the higher their standing in the social hierarchy seems to have been replaced by an X-shaped pattern in which the higher social classes had relatively large families, the lower middle classes had smaller families, and the working classes had again relatively large families.²⁶ Under the conditions of low population growth, the latter pattern was favorable to social ascent into the lower middle class, since those who aspired to that level met relatively few competitors from its ranks. It was unfavorable to

social ascent into the upper middle classes, since those who aspired to such ascent were confronted by a substantial number of competitors from that class. However, this must still be regarded as speculation, since exact information on long-term changes in social differentials of family size is scarce.

To sum up: we have tried in this article to present a collection of arguments and hypotheses for empirical research rather than a historical theory of social mobility. These arguments are examined in the context of three historical eras which are seen as changes in long-term developments rather than as clear-cut periods of time. The article attempts to draw conclusions from the available evidence rather than to present a strictly quantitative analysis of the long-term trend of social mobility on which, in any case, we do not have precise data for the period before World War I. We have tried to show how factors of social mobility, such as occupational change, alterations in the economic structure and in social stratification, demographic developments, changes in the family, alterations in ways of coping with individual life crises, in mass migration, in mentalities and in government intervention, had an impact on the overall development as well as on the distribution of mobility chances. It is argued that the idea of a steady and continuous increase in social mobility rates from the Industrial Revolution on, as well as the converse idea of a sudden rupture of occupational structure during the Industrial Revolution, accompanied by extremely high rates of social mobility, does not really square with what we know about factors and rates of social mobility. It seems more plausible that the increase in overall social mobility during the Industrial Revolution was small, or even that there was a decline in social mobility rates, depending upon whether the reinforcing or impeding factors became stronger in a particular country, and that the distribution of mobility chances did not become less unequal. We can conclude from what we know about factors of social mobility that only thereafter, in the era of organized capitalism, did strong forces which operated in favor of an increase in overall social mobility come into effect. Even then, the factors which tended to equalize the social distribution of opportunities had only a modest effect which was largely counterbalanced by reverse developments. In post-industrial society, the tendency for rates of social mobility to rise became even stronger due to new developments in occupational and social change. Factors which equalized the distribution of mobility chances, if ambiguous, did become more influential, though the actual effects are still unclear. In one sentence: The continuous rise in social mobility rates started after rather than during the Industrial Revolution; the trend towards greater chances for social ascent was not accompanied by a strong momentum for redistribution of occupational and social opportunities. It should be stressed that these are arguments drawn from a review of the history of *factors* of social mobility; much more research needs to be done before we shall know exactly *how* these factors worked and what effects they had in individual European countries.

Free University of Berlin

Hartmut Kaelble

FOOTNOTES

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1. K. Hopkins, *Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire*, in: *Studies in Ancient Society*, ed. by M.I. Finley (London, 1974); H. Castritius, "Die Gesellschaftsordnung der roemischen Kaiserzeit und das Problem der sozialen Mobilitaet," in *Mitteilungen der Technischen Universitaet Braunschweig* 8 (1973), no. 3, pp. 38-45; M.K. Hopkins, "Social Mobility in the Later Roman Empire: the Evidence of Ausonius," in *Classical Quarterly* 1961. These are my conclusions from a vivid discussion in a stimulating seminar with Hartmut Galsterer.
2. L. Stone, "Social Mobility in England 1500-1700," in: *Past & Present* no. 33 (1966); R. Chartier/J. Revel, "Université et société dans L'Europe nouvelle," in: *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 25 (1978); R. Grasby, "Social Mobility and Business Enterprise in 17th Century England," in: D. Pennington/K. Thomas (eds.), *Puritans and Revolutionaries*, (Oxford, 1978).
3. cf. F.F. Mendels, "Social Mobility and Phases of Industrialization," in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1976).
4. cf. P. Bairoch (ed.), *The Working Population and its Structure* (Brussels, 1969), pp. 149, 178-9; P. Sylos Labini, *Saggio sulle classi sociali* (Roma 1978), table 1.2; G. Hardach, "Klassen und Schichten in Deutschland 1848-1970, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 3 (1977).
5. cf. *Historical Statistics 1960-1980. OECD Economic Outlook*, OECD Paris 1982, p. 35; H. Kaelble, "Der Mythos der rapiden Industrialisierung in Deutschland," in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983).
6. Evidence for the increase of life expectancy during the active period of the life cycle: A.E. Imhof, *Die gewonnenen Jahre* (Munich 1981) pp. 79 ff.
7. cf. I. Erikson/J. Rogers, *Rural Labour and Population Change* (Uppsala 1978); L. Niethammer/F. Brueggemeier, "Wie wohnten die Arbeiter im Kaiserreich?" in: *Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte* 16 (1976); the contributions by Dieter Langewiesche and Heilwig Schomerus in: W. Conze/U. Engelhardt (eds), *Arbeiter im Industrialisierungsprozess* (Stuttgart, 1979).
8. cf. besides the articles by J. Kocka and by H. van Dijk/J. Visser/E. Wolst in this issue: Eriksson/Rogers, *Rural Labour*; W. von Hippel, "Industrieller Wandel im laendlichen Raum," in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 19 (1979); R.H. Hubscher, *L'Agriculture et la société rurale dans le Pas-de-Calais au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Arras 1980); J. Söderberg, *Agrar fattigdom i Sydsverige under 1800-talet* (Stockholm, 1978).
9. cf. C. Erickson, *British Industrialists. Steel and Hosiery 1850-1950* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 11 ff.; M. Lévy-Leboyer, "Innovations and Business Strategies in 19th and 20th-Century France," in: E.G. Carter et. al (eds.), *Enterprise and Entrepreneurs in 19th and 20th-Century France* (Baltimore, 1976); J. Kocka, "Entrepreneurs and Managers in German Industrialisation," in: P. Mathias/M.M. Postan (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, 7, part 1 (Cambridge, 1978); H. Kaelble, "Long-term Changes in the recruitment of the Business Elite: Germany Compared to the US, Great Britain, and France since the Industrial Revolution," in: *Journal of Social History* 13 (1979/80); T. Pierenkemper, "Entrepreneurs in Heavy Industry: Upper Silesia and the Westphalian Ruhr Region, 1852-1913," in: *Business History Review* 53 (1973); R. Torstendahl, "Les chefs d'entreprise en Suède de 1880 à sélection et milieu social," in: M. Lévy-Leboyer (ed.), *Le patronat de la seconde industrialisation* (Paris, 1979).
10. cf. G. Crossick, *An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society. Kentish London 1840-1880* (London 1978), p. 117; J.W. Scott, *The Glassworkers of Carmaux* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 35 ff., 72 ff., 129 ff.; Y. Lequin, "La formation du prolétariat industriel dans la région lyonnaise au XIXe siècle," in: *Le mouvement social* no. 97 (1976), pp. 129 ff.; D. Woronoff, "Le monde ouvrier de la sidérurgie ancienne: note sur l'exemple français," in: *Le mouvement social* no. 97

(1976), pp. 113 ff.; K. Tenfelde, "Bildung und sozialer Aufstieg im Ruhrbergbau vor 1914," in: W. Conze/U. Engelhardt (eds.), *Arbeiter im Industrialisierungsprozess* (Stuttgart, 1979) pp. 488 ff.; H. Schomerus, *Die Arbeiter der Maschinenfabrik Eblingen* (Stuttgart, 1977), pp. 263 ff.; F.D. Marquardt, "Sozialer Aufstieg, sozialer Abstieg und die Entstehung der Berliner Arbeiterklasse, 1806-1848," in: H. Kaelble (ed.), *Geschichte der sozialen Mobilität seit der industriellen Revolution*, (Koenigstein, 1978): P. Borscheid, *Textilarbeiterschaft in der Industrialisierung* (Stuttgart, 1978).

11. For the long-term change of social differentials of life expectancy cf. Imhof, *Die gewonnenen Jahre*, pp. 119 ff.

12. cf. D. Langewiesche, "Mobilität in deutschen Mittel- und Grosstaedten. Aspekte der Binnenwanderung," in: W. Conze/U. Engelhardt (eds.), *Arbeiter im Industrialisierungsprozess* (Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 79 ff.

13. cf. G. Kleining, "Die Veraenderung der Mobilitaetschancen in der Bundesrepublik," in: *Koelner Zeitschrift fuer Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 23 (1971) (between the birth cohorts 1876-1895 and 1916-1925 the white collar workers among children of unskilled and skilled workers rose from 4% to 19% and from 9% to 24% respectively); A. Heath, *Social Mobility* (London, 1981), pp. 78 ff.; less distinct: G. Pourcher, "Un essai d'analyse par cohorte de la mobilité géographique et professionnelle en France," in: *Acta sociologica* 9 (1965).

14. The most important studies putting forward these arguments are: P.N. Stearns, "The Unskilled and Industrialisation. A Transformation of Consciousness," in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 16 (1976); J. Scott, *The Glassworkers of Carmaux*; H. Schomerus, *Die Arbeiter der Maschinenfabrik Eblingen* (Stuttgart, 1977); H. Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats als Klasse* (Munich, 1981); K. Tenfelde, "Der bergmaennische Arbeitsplatz waehrend der Hochindustrialisierung (1890-1914)," in: W. Conze/U. Engelhardt (eds.), *Arbeiter im Industrialisierungsprozess*; R. Vetterli, *Industriearbeit, Arbeiterbewusstsein und gewerkschaftliche Organisation* (Goettingen, 1978); R.Q. Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh*, (Oxford, 1976); J. Kocka, *Die Angestellten in der deutschen Geschichte 1850-1980* (Goettingen, 1981); G. Anderson, *Victorian Clerks* (Manchester, 1976); for a summary of this research: H. Kaelble, *Industrialisierung und soziale Ungleichheit* (Goettingen, 1983).

15. cf. for the long-term change of the recruitment of the business elite in late 19th and early 20th century: S.M. Lipset/R. Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* (Berkeley, 1959), pp. 114 ff.; J. Kocka, "Enterpreneurship in a Late-comer Country: the German Case," in: K. Nakagawa (ed.), *Social Order and Entrepreneurship* (Tokyo, 1977); M. Lévy-Leboyer, "Le patronat français, 1912-1973," in: *Le patronat de la seconde industrialisation*; H. Kaelble, "Recruitment of the Business Elite."

16. For one factor, i.e. the reduction of social differentials of life expectancy of children cf. Imhof, *Gewonnene Jahre*, pp. 116 ff.; R. Spree, *Soziale Ungleichheit vor Krankheit und Tod* (Goettingen, 1981), pp. 49 ff. On the social differentials of family size direct evidence is rare. Hence, what is presented here is hypothesis on a topic which ought to be investigated.

17. Langewiesche, "Mobilität," p. 76 f.

18. The term "post-industrial" society is used since it is more comprehensive than "tertiary society," mainly referring to occupational structure, or "corporate pluralism," mainly concerned with political decision making and interest groups. The danger of an ideological bias seems to be small after the term is used by very different scholars such as Daniel Bell and Alain Touraine; cf. D. Bell, *The Post-Industrial society. A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York, 1973); A. Touraine, *La société post-industrielle* (Paris, 1969).

19. cf. J. Fourastié, *Le grand espoir du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1963); J. Singelmann, "The Sectoral Transformation of the Labor Force in Seven Industrialized Countries 1920-1960," in: *American Journal of Sociology* 84 (1978); P. Flora, *Quantitative Historical Sociology* (The Hague, 1977), pp. 48 ff. I tried to put forward this argument in: H. Kaelble, "Social Mobility in America and Europe: A Comparison of 19th Century Cities," in: *Urban History Yearbook* 1981, pp. 31-34. I intend to do more research on this topic.
20. *Historical Statistics 1960-1980. OECD Economic Outlook* (Paris, 1982), p. 35 (covers the European member states of the OECD). In the decade between 1950 and 1960, the growth of the service sector seems to have been lower: cf. P. Bairoch/J.-M. Limbor, "Changes in the Industrial Distribution of the World Labour Force by Region, 1880-1960," in: *International Labour Review* 98, 1968, pp. 326-7. Growth rates of the industrial sector before World War II can be calculated from: P. Bairoch (ed.), *The Working Population and its Structure* (Brussels, 1969).
21. cf. as examples J. Goldthorpe et. al., *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Britain* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 68 ff.; A. Darbel, "L'évolution récente de la mobilité sociale," in: *Economie et statistique* 71 (1975).
22. cf. as a recent comparative article referring to further studies: P. Flora/J. Alber, "Modernization, Democratization, and the Development of the Welfare State in Modern Europe," in: P. Flora/A.J. Heidenheimer (eds.), *The Development of the Welfare States in Europe and America* (New Brunswick, 1981); dealing more directly with the relationship between welfare states and social mobility: K.U. Mayer/W. Mueller, "Historical Changes in Life-Course Processes and the Role of the State," unpublished paper given on a session of the American Social Science Research Council, Committee on Life-Course Perspectives on Human Development in 1982 (to be published).
23. For the access to higher education cf. K.H. Jarausch (ed.), *The Transformation of Higher Learning 1860-1930* (Chicago, 1982); H. Kaelble, *Soziale Mobilität und Chancengleichheit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich* (Goettingen, 1983), ch. 3.3; for the access to the professions information is more scattered. Cf. above all the studies by Goldthorpe, Heath, Darbel mentioned above.
24. Mayer/Mueller, "Life-Course Processes."
25. For first comparative studies on the change of political goals in Europe cf. F.K. Ringer, *Education and Society in Modern Europe* (Bloomington, 1979); J.A. Armstrong, *The European Administrative Elite* (Princeton, 1973). For scepticism about effects on the actual distribution of opportunities cf. as a major example: Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility*.
26. Some scattered informations on the purely hypothetical argument: A.H. Halsey, *Social Change in Britain* (Oxford, 1978), p. 99; R. Spree, *Soziale Ungleichheit vor Krankheit und Tod*, p. 180.