

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

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Characteristics Groningen Ommelanden 18th/19th century

- Part of the very wealthy Dutch coastal area
- Rural area near large city
- Market-oriented agriculture and high specialisation (30% farmers, 30% labourers, 40% artisans, shop-keepers)
- Proletarianisation from ca. 1780 onwards
- Equal partition of inheritances between sons and daughters (mostly a 17th century development)
- Indivisibility of nearly all the farms, houses and social positions
- Nuclear households were preferred

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

- A.**
 - 1. Large farmers (30 hectare and over), land owners, nobles.**
 - 2. large salesmen, higher officials, large factory owners.**

- B.**
 - 1. Medium-ranged farmers (15 to 30 hectare).**
 - 2. Middle ranged salesmen, large shopkeepers, artisans a.o. > 3 ha.**

- C.**
 - 1. Small farmers (5 to 15 hectare).**
 - 2. Artisans with workshop, small shopkeepers a.o., lower officials.**

- D.**
 - 1. Crofters and farm labourers with 1 to 5 ha, gardeners.**
 - 2. Artisans without workshop, weavers, pedlars, police men a.o.**

- E.**
 - 1. Farm labourers.**
 - 2. Lower skilled subordinates (handicrafts & services), soldiers.**

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

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

Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset.

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

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

Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset.

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

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

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

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

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

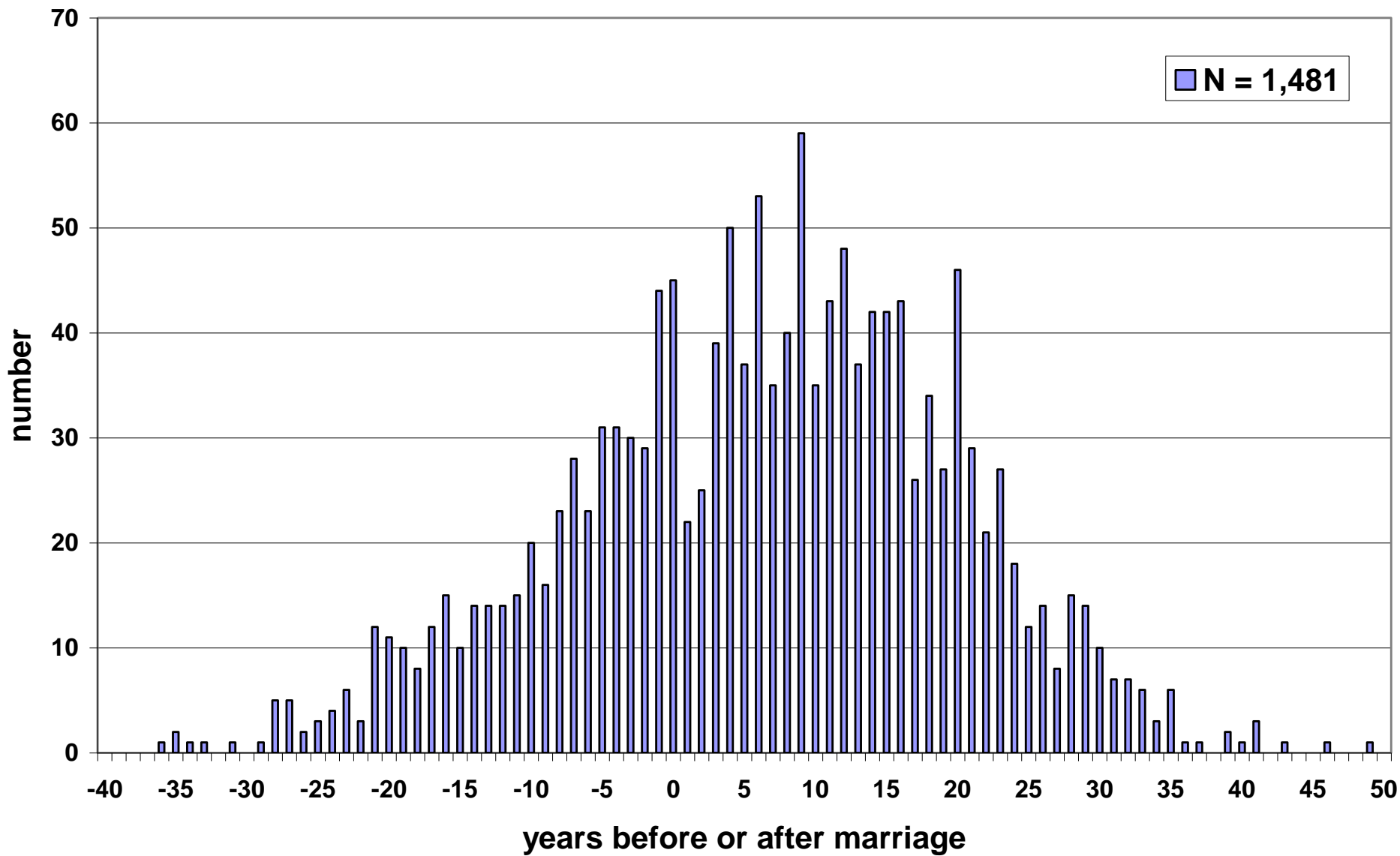
Source: Groningen Roman-Catholic Dataset. Preliminary data.

Table 8: Intergenerational social mobility and the number of surviving siblings, children from farmer couples using more than 5 hectare born 1721-1800 in the Groningen Ommelanden.

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

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

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



Factors explaining intergenerational social mobility in a 'modern' market-oriented rural economy

- Social background of (limited) importance: social and financial credibility and expected size of inheritances
- Gender differences were small: females more mobile
- Number of siblings (division of the expected inheritance) was unimportant
- Only 13% of the children succeeded their parents around the marriage date: making succession of minor importance (most parents were still alive or already dead for years)
- Most couples still had to secure a place after their marriage date (contrary to Hajnals niche-hypothesis as explanation of high ages at marriage)
- Personal qualities presumably a necessary precondition for long-term personal success (???)