

## **Abstract**

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*Squeezing the budget: households, life cycles and investment strategies in 16<sup>th</sup> century Holland*

Life cycle analysis has been an important concept in the study of households in historical societies for quite some time now. Few sources allow historians to really test the effects of the life cycle on household portfolios though: it has proven difficult to identify the effects of squeezes on the wealth of households. This paper explores possibilities to test variation in the value and composition of household assets for families in a suburb of a small town in the sixteenth century. Our sources allow us to test whether life cycle theory applies to these families by looking at portfolios in the course of the life cycle – rather than at the beginning and end. Results from our first sample indicate that even among the poor there were different ways to employ assets (and creditworthiness). We also deal with the question whether these were strongly connected to life-cycle squeezes or not – and hence with the question whether households could use assets in a strategic way.