

Contrasting Experiences? Remittances, Welfare and the Household Economy in 18th- Century Europe

Thijs Lambrecht

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Remittances, Welfare and the Household Economy

- saving patterns of servants
 - pre-marital resource acquisition
 - important, but not studied in detail
 - no significant role in models of household formation (real wage versus niche model)
- sources of pre-industrial welfare
 - family versus collectivity
 - English debate (→ more comparative data)
 - rehabilitation Old Poor Law

Servants and remittances

- high saving potential: 40 – 50 % of the cash wage
- no dependents
- period of financial independence between adolescence and marriage
- what happened between leaving house and setting up house ?
 - Hajnal/Smith

Servants and remittances

- but, some servants did remit their earnings to their family members (esp. parents)
- characteristic feature of the institution of service?
- comparative research for Belgium, France and England
- unmarried adolescents working away from home source of welfare for families ?

Belgium

- evidence from farm account books
- remittances: frequent
 - benefits in kind from employers for parents
 - cash wage of servants = credit line for parents: cash, food, fuel, clothing, services etc.
 - not limited to young servants
 - requires small distance between child and parent

France

- evidence from farm account books
- benefits in kind and various payments to parents
- different regions
- important: accounts of the Flahaut farm in Labourse

Remittances to parents by servants on the Flahaut farm in northern France, 1812-1830 (% of cash wage).

	Female servants	Male servants
1812	5	2
1813	/	9
1814	8	/
1815	/	/
1816	26	/
1817	53	/
1818	53	/
1819	/	/
1820	/	44
1821	/	23
1822	4	/
1823	20	13
1824	21	17
1825	42	14
1826	33	/
1827	25	/
1828	25	/
1829	/	40
1830	32	9

France

- evidence from farm account books
- benefits in kind and various payments to parents
- different regions
- important: accounts of the Flahaut farm in Labourse
- indirect evidence: welfare policy for soldiers' families in 1790's

England

- different opinions
- not uncommon, but less frequent than in Belgium and France
 - limited in time
 - only young servants
- remittances not reported in household budgets of Davies and Eden in 1790's
- Poor Law reformers: stress the lack of family welfare (for example T. Haweis)
- discourse on filial relations: family welfare is limited

Contrasting experiences

- Belgium and France: servants are source of material assistance
- England: less important than in Belgium and France
- institution of service important in three countries
- but different pattern of remittances

Servants' wages and poor relief in the 'Eight Parishes', c.1700.

	population ^a (n)	male servants ^a (n)	female servants ^a (n)	Total wages servants (£ p.) ^b	income poor tables (£ p.) ^c	relief/wages (%)
Elverdinge	800	74	60	9494	1000	10.53
Noordschote	500	57	59	7901	732.3	9.27
Vlamertinge	846	65	63	8813	729.8	8.28
Zuidschote	311	42	29	5156	392.6	7.61
Reningelst	1072	86	77	11368	848.7	7.47
Watou	1487	98	93	13196	928.5	7.04
Loker	485	34	25	4244	262.4	6.18
Woesten	324	22	18	2830	61	2.16
Total		478	424	63002	4955.3	
Weighed average						7.87

Servants' wages and poor relief in the North Sea area, c. 1800.

Country	Region	Date	relief/wages (%)
Belgium	Eastern Flanders	1795	7
	Eastern Flanders	1803	4
France	Northern France	1789	52
England	Bed, Berk, Bu and Ox	1785	92 – 115
	Bed, Berk, Bu and Ox	1802	127 – 159

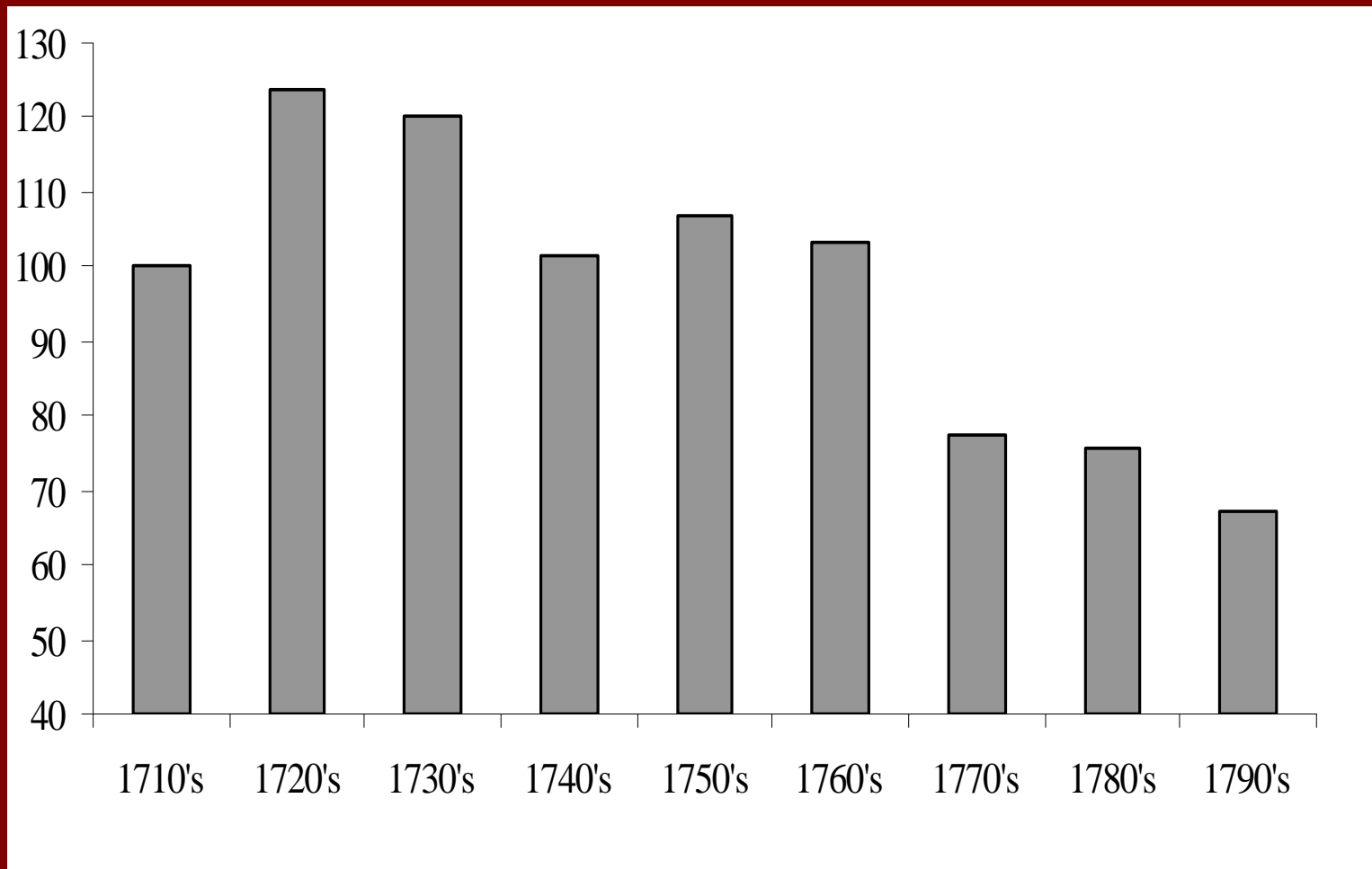
Welfare rural Europe, c. 1800

- Belgium & France: family model of welfare
vs.
- England: institutional model of welfare
- differences in relative importance of the family and the ‘collectivity’ (Laslett)
- Belgium and France: children in service are an asset of the family economy

Causes

- determinants of remittances ?
- “tempered altruism”: mutually beneficial
- inheritance/ownership of land
- gives parents power over their children and children an incentive to assist their parents
- differences Belgium/France and England ?

Ratio of land prices and wages of servants in Flanders, 1710-1795 (1710-19 = 100)



Consequences

- **dynamics of household formation**
 - average age at marriage
 - crude marriage rate
- **mobility**
 - Laslett: mobility rates of servants are higher in 17th-century England than in 18th-century France
- **consumption patterns & demand**

Conclusion

- outside appearance versus internal dynamics of households
- servants = same characteristics in Belgium, France and England
- but different relationship to parental household economy