
1.3 The family farm

Room 107

Chair: Ernst Langthaler

1.31 Richard Paping – The transfer of farms in a Dutch commercial rural society from the sixteenth till the twentieth century

In this paper I will try to explore how in a part of the coastal region of the Netherlands commercial farms were transferred to new users from the sixteenth until the end of the twentieth century. A database with the history of the inhabitants of 80 farms in four parishes in the eastern Marne in the provincie of Groningen covering the period 1591–1991 will be analysed. This region was characterised by large farms, an equal inheritance system, near indivisibility of farms and high proletarianisation (wage labour). Research for less market-oriented parts of Germany (Belm) suggests a considerable continuity of families over the generations (with a preference for sons) on at least the more substantial farms from the middle of seventeenth century onwards. The limited dependence on the market and the underdeveloped money economy possibly also limited competition between peasants and protected them from bankruptcies.

In an agricultural economy like the early-modern coastal Netherlands where selling the produce on the market and buying the inputs was the primary goal, commercial, agricultural and management skills of farmers perhaps played a far more decisive role. On the one hand the (use of the) farm was absolutely no certainty, on the other hand the farm, land, livestock and equipment embodied not only most of the capital of the farmer's family, but also constituted the inheritance for all the children of the next generation. Presumably these factors created a completely different system of transferring farms, with a much smaller role for family succession.

In this paper I want to answer the question whether commercial farmer families indeed were less attached to the 'family farm'? What priorities did they seem to have had through the centuries when transferring the farm? Did the position of sons and daughters in the chances to succeed on the family farm differ? What were the chances of the children of the farmers to obtain a farm themselves? Played high age at marriage and extended and multiple families a role in the transfer of farms to the next generation? Was there a relation between the age at marriage and the taking over of the farm? What was the effect on transfer practices of population growth and the rise in income per capita (increasing the possibility to retire) especially from the nineteenth century onwards? Was the transfer system of large (and wealthy) farms different from that of the smaller ones, and was this system in the twentieth century different from that in early-modern times?

Richard Paping (b.1962) is senior lecturer in Economic and Social History (University of Groningen). He is interested in both macro social-economic developments and micro aspects of the life of people. His research fields are rural history, agrarian history, demographic history, standard-of-living, social structure and social mobility in the sixteenth to twentieth century, mostly in (the north of) the Netherlands and in an international comparative perspective. He published for instance on family strategies and on the potato blight of 1845 (with Ó Gráda and Vanhaute). At the moment his research pivots on farm succession, household structure and the development of the Dutch population 1400–1850.

1.32 Ann Grubbström and Helen Sooväli-Sepping – Estonian family farms in transition: generational change and gender

This paper focuses on land transfer in Estonia in a long term and gender perspective. Earlier research on land succession has often focused on Western Europe and also often excluded the twentieth century. The results are based on interviews and make it possible to discuss underlying forces that determines decisions on land transfer.

During the inter-war period family farming was a norm and an ideal and there were many potential successors in a family. Most farms were transferred to a son, and daughters normally inherited only in the absence of male successors. One central argument of this paper is the significant role and persistence of family farm and land transfer as norms and ideals, despite the interruption of the Soviet period with a collective agricultural system. Immaterial resources like values and symbols were important in the transfer process. One example is the emotional value of the house as a symbol of family history. Today, family farming is gradually declining in importance but the active farmers still value traditions like deciding upon a successor at an early stage. This is also true for former farmers with an emotional attachment to land. Even though gender is less important in decisions about a successor parents value capabilities that they more often find among sons.

Helen Sooväli-Sepping is a senior researcher at the Centre of Excellence on Cultural Theory, the Centre for Landscape and Culture, the Estonian Institute of Humanities, and Tallinn University. She received her PhD from University of Tartu and was a Fulbright postdoctoral fellow at University of California, Los Angeles. Her research focuses on imaginative geographies, landscape and imagery, and cultural geography. She has co-edited two international books: *Seasonal Landscapes* with Hannes Palang, and Anu Printsmann (2007); and *European Rural Landscapes: Permanence, Persistence and Change in the Globalising Environment* with Hannes Palang, Marc Antrop and Gunhild Setten (2004).

Ann Grubbström is a research fellow at the Department of Social and Economic Geography, Uppsala University, Sweden. Her PhD focused on ethnic minorities and landownership. Her postdoctoral research concerns strategies for generational change and transfer of resources in Estonian farming in a long-term perspective. Another project focuses on forest and land as resources in Estonia. She has just started a three-year project: Looking for farmers, young farmers' future strategies in a transforming sector.

1.33 Ann Catrin Östman and Pirjo Markkola – Gendering land reforms – the early twentieth-century land question from the perspective of masculinity

The paper studies the discussions about the land question from the perspective of gender. During a long period possession of land has been main object of state intervention in Finland. We analyse the discussions preceding the reform made in 1918. Our aim is to analyse how land legislation drew its meaning from gendered positions and gendered ideals. In this paper we will compare different land reforms and series of land regulations from a gender perspective by relating them to the ideal of the family farm and to understandings of masculinity.

In the presentation we will explore ways of making gender visible, i.e. how we will try to demonstrate that gendered ideals shaped the structure and implementation of land reforms. The study will 1) look at how questions of marital status and household positions were dealt with in different discussions; 2) analyse how the to the idea and the role of the family was touched upon; 3) analyse how ideals of manly independence and self-support were touched upon in the discussions about land reforms; 4) search for key points in the discussion of rights and duties relating to conceptions of manhood.

We will also comment on the different influence groups active in the preparation of land reforms. The research material on land reforms includes documents from the process of law-drafting and the law texts themselves; archival material from the Ministry of Agriculture and its commissions preparing the land reforms; finally texts and pamphlets from different pressure groups (e.g. organisations for small holders and farmer's fractions within political parties).

Previous Finnish research on land reforms in the twentieth century has predominantly dealt with the acquisition of land in terms of social and economical structures within the agrarian population as well as agricultural production structures. Moreover, aspects of language, ethnicity and geographical position have been discussed.

Pirjo Markkola, professor in history at the University of Jyväskylä, has published vividly in the fields of gender history and social history. She has written about rural women's work, about social reform, and religion. Furthermore, she has edited the last volume of the series of Finnish Agricultural History.

Ann-Catrin Östman's doctoral thesis, published in 2001, discussed understandings of femininity and masculinity in a small Finnish community, 1879-1940. She has also written about the history of agricultural history, about farmer's co-operatives and about early Finnish studies of the agrarian population.