

5.4 The balance between city and countryside: the Netherlands, 1700–1860

Room 202

Convener: Paul Brusse

Chair: TBA

A few years ago a Utrecht research program was launched, proposing a systematic study of the process of de-urbanisation in the period 1700–1860. It aimed at the testing of existing theoretical models of urban history, furnishing them with additional elements relating to culture, mentality and politics, thus trying to bring about an effective synthesis of political, economic and cultural history. Just as importantly it wanted to explore the ways in which the processes of urban decline and agricultural growth influenced each other. The papers in this session reflect the results of the program.

5.41 Paul Brusse – The changing economic relation between city and countryside in the Netherlands, 1750–1850

Between 1750 and 1850 the economic developments were among others determined by a serious urban decline. At the same time the surrounding countryside, especially agriculture, experienced an upswing. A case in point is the numbers of inhabitants in city and countryside in the maritime province of Zeeland: around 1750 almost 50 per cent of the population of the Zeeland isles lived in the city, around 1850 this percentage was 33. Considering the open economy in Zeeland, the orientation of trade, industry and agriculture on the market and the international conflicts in which the province ended up, the cause of the opposite economic developments in city and countryside is complicated, whereby local and international, economic and non-economic factors played a role. The aim of my paper is to unravel all of these factors, but I will focus on the countryside. What were the consequences of these opposite developments for the relations between city and countryside? My paper will contribute to theories about this relationship.

Dr. Paul Brusse is an historian at the Research Institute for History and Culture of the Utrecht University in the Netherlands. He wrote several books about regional economic developments between the seventeenth and the twenty-first centuries in this country. Now he is working on a research project called *The balance between city and countryside*, a project about disurbanisation in the Netherlands and the rise of an agrarian society, 1700–1860. He is also involved in the research project *Democratisation and modernisation in the Dutch Countryside 1850–1920* (Wageningen University). He is associated with the international CORN group, which is preparing a new Agrarian History of Western Europe. Furthermore he is Editor in Chief of a new four-volume work about the history of the Dutch province of Zeeland.

5.42 Jeanine Dekker – Political forces in the changing relations between town and countryside in the Netherlands, 1750–1850

In the years 1750–1850 parts of Dutch society enjoyed the coexistence of urban decline and rural prosperity. My aim is to determine how political factors played a role here. Political power in the countryside was especially at stake. In my paper I will focus on the case of the Dutch province Zeeland, where the urban elite owed high interests in the local government in the countryside. I will examine whether there was a connection between changes in the local rural government and changing relations between town and countryside in general. To explain this I will focus on three topics: the intentions of the urban elite, the power of the local executives and the political conscience of the rural population. This paper will challenge fundamental assumptions on the

relationship between town and country, especially on the leading role of cities in processes of (political) modernisation.

Dr. Jeanine Dekker carries out a research project on the political relations between town and country in the Dutch province Zeeland between 1750 and 1850. This project is part of the research project 'The balance between city and countryside, de-urbanisation and the rise of an agrarian society, Zeeland, 1700–1860' at the Research Institute for History and Culture of the Utrecht University (Netherlands). She also participates as an editor and author in a project to establish a large work on the history of Zeeland.

5.43 Arno Neele – De-urbanisation, ruralisation and the cultural balance between city and countryside in the Dutch province of Zeeland 1750–1850

This paper investigates the cultural implications of the processes of de-urbanisation and ruralisation for the province of Zeeland by looking at the public sphere, the material culture, the economic debate and the construction of a provincial identity. It argues that the growing prosperity on the countryside in Zeeland resulted in a rise of social and cultural capital among country dwellers. This capital could take various forms in which rural people tried to seek alliance with an urban cultural elite or tried to break away from this dominant elite. Furthermore, the urban perception on the countryside altered in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Agriculture and rural culture came to the fore of the public debate and rurality was of growing importance in the construction of provincial and national identities in the nineteenth century. However, well into the nineteenth century public debate in Zeeland had been dominated by the search for methods of re-urbanisation. It seems that the strong urban inheritance of the seventeenth century, followed by extreme urban decline in the eighteenth century, had delayed the integration of agriculture in the economic debate and the integration of rural culture in the provincial identity.

Arno Neele is a PhD student at the Research Institute for History and Culture of the University of Utrecht and is working on a thesis on the cultural implications of de-urbanisation in the Dutch province of Zeeland in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. His main interests are the cultural relations between centre and periphery and more specifically the interactions between city and countryside and between region and nation.

5.44 Wijnand Mijnhardt – From urban republic to rural monarchy 1700–1860

The results of the project on the emergence of a new symbiosis between city and countryside may help us to explain the peculiar transformation of the Dutch Republic into a monarchy in 1806. Very often this revolution has been presented as a mere contingency, only precipitated by Napoleonic dependency in the post-revolutionary period. It turns out that if we take the serious eighteenth century decline of the seaboard cities and the rural expansion all over the Netherlands seriously, the transformation from an urban Republic to an aristocratic Monarchy would seem only natural and the creation of a hereditary stadholderate in 1747 and the foundation of an enlightened monarchy in 1806 logical steps in the process. In my paper I will discuss the cultural, political, and economic factors contributing to that dramatic shift and its consequences.

Wijnand W. Mijnhardt has been full Professor of Cultural History at Utrecht University (1991–2007) and visiting Professor of Dutch History at the University of California in Los Angeles (2001–2005). Presently he is Chair of Comparative History of the Sciences and the Humanities, and Director of the Descartes Centre for the History and Philosophy of the Sciences at Utrecht University. Mijnhardt has held fellowships from the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in Los Angeles and from the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in Wassenaar. In 2005 he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton and in 2006/07 he was a Senior Research Fellow at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. In 2004 he was elected as a member of the Royal Dutch Academy of the Sciences. He published widely on Dutch intellectual history, on the Dutch Republic in the eighteenth century and on the Enlightenment. With Joost Kloek, he authored *1800, Blueprints for a National Community*, Vol. 2 in the series 'Dutch Culture in a European Perspective' (2005). In preparation is: *The Book that Enlightened Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (2010) (together with Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob).