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La mobilità sociale nelle società preindustriali: tendenze, cause ed effetti (secc. XIII-XVIII)

Social mobility in pre-industrial societies: tendencies, causes and effects (13th-18th centuries)

edited by

Angela Orlandi

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I testi pubblicati in questa collana raccolgono i risultati di ricerche originali attivate dalla Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini", sulla base di un progetto varato dai suoi organi scientifici. Gli autori vengono selezionati a seguito di una Call for papers che indica gli obiettivi scientifici del progetto; la selezione è effettuata sulla base di proposte circostanziate contenenti indicazioni sulle questioni storiografiche che si intende affrontare, l'area e il periodo storico preso in considerazione e la tipologia delle fonti da utilizzare. La Giunta del Comitato scientifico, eventualmente integrata da specialisti, analizza le proposte e seleziona quelle ritenute più valide e coerenti con il progetto generale di ricerca. I testi risultanti dalle ricerche vengono presentati e discussi in occasione della Settimana di Studi. Nel mese precedente al suo svolgimento, essi vengono messi a disposizione dei partecipanti, per consentire il necessario approfondimento della discussione. A seguito delle osservazioni e del dibattito svolto durante il convegno, gli autori inviano i loro testi definitivi. Tutti i testi vengono sottoposti a duplice peer review anonimo integrato da una terza valutazione in caso di pareri discordanti. Questo volume raccoglie solo quelli che hanno registrato un giudizio positivo.

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Guido Alfani*

Social and economic mobility in preindustrial Europe

Introduction

When thinking about how best to frame this prolusion to the *Settimana Datini*, which this year is dedicated to social mobility, I was first and foremost faced with a dilemma: where to begin?[1] With the relatively little we know from previous publications on this topic? With an overview of what I think were the long-term developments of social mobility? Both seemed fine options, but in the end, it occurred to me that, first and foremost, we need to understand why we are convened here to discuss social and economic mobility, which is not at all a traditional research topic for economic historians. Although this topic is somewhat implicit in the work of many, it is only in the last decade or so that social mobility has become an *explicit* objective of research in economic history.

I believe that there are two reasons for this new interest, one direct and one indirect. First, the direct one: we are concerned about the levels of social mobility *today*, which in much of the world, and definitely across most of the West, tend to be perceived as low and declining. Consequently, we seek to better understand mobility in the past because we want to figure up what is happening today (it is a well-known fact that the questions we ask when exploring the past are often determined by the present, that is by the epoch that we live in and by the challenges that our own society is facing). The second, indirect reason for which many social and economic historians are now looking at social mobility, is that this avenue of research seems to be a logical next step after all the collective effort that went into exploring long-term trends in economic inequality, an effort which has substantially intensified from the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008 (Wade 2014; Alfani 2024a).[2] This refocusing of the attention from inequality to mobility was surely important for me personally: the two

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[1] I am grateful to Francesca Trivellato for many useful comments on an early draft of this prolusion. The final version also profited from discussion with several participants to the 2024 *Settimana Datini*. The research leading to this article has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Program/ERC Grant agreement No. 725687, SMITE-Social Mobility and Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800.

[2] This recent, collective effort in researching long-term trends in economic inequality built upon a long tradition of research by economic historians: see Alfani 2021 for an updated synthesis of older and more recent research conducted on preindustrial inequality.

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ERC[3] projects that I led focused on inequality first, and later aimed to add social mobility to the picture.

Even if, arguably, our enquiry into social mobility (as our enquiry into economic inequality) is largely driven by 'modern' concerns, this does not exclude that by adopting this perspective we can look in new ways at the past, and maybe we can reach a better understanding of certain historical phases, and of certain courses of individual action. To clarify this point I will resort to an example particularly suitable to the occasion: that of Francesco di Marco Datini.

The Black Death and social mobility

Francesco Datini was born in 1335 (or around that date) to a middling family. When the Black Death arrived in Tuscany, in early 1348, he was just a boy. The terrible pandemic extracted a heavy toll on his family: Francesco lost both parents as well as his only sister and one of his two brothers. The Black Death caused mortality on such a scale that we struggle to even imagine it, killing indiscriminately the old and the young, the poor and the rich. It shook society, and felled many – but others, it elevated. This was also the case for Francesco Datini who just a couple of years after having been orphaned by the plague, aged about 15, sold some land that he had inherited from his father raising a capital of 150 florins, left Prato and moved to Avignon in South France. The city, which at that time hosted the papal court, was an important center for trade, where Italian and Flemish merchants met and where their interests intertwined. Within a decade Datini was well-established, forming partnerships with other Tuscan merchants and specializing in the trade of metals, arms and armour. This was only the beginning of his rise: Datini's business network and range of activities grew continuously throughout the second half of the fourteenth century.[4]

Francesco Datini was surely a brilliant merchant and entrepreneur, but he was also exploiting an exceptional historical situation. The Black Death had shredded consolidated economic and social structures, had broken and fragmented entrepreneurial and financial dynasties, had simply *killed* about half the population of Europe and the Mediterranean (Alfani 2024b) – and in so doing, it had opened spaces across society, which some could use as stepping stones to move up the socio-economic pyramid, sometimes (like in Datini's case) in a spectacular way (while others had their businesses and their families ruined, and fell down: although we tend to look at those who went up, mobility works both ways). In John Padgett's words, in Florence the Black Death caused a «huge tidal wave» of new lineages (including the Medici) entering the local economic and political elite (Padgett 2010, 369).

Of course, this flourishing of economic opportunities in the post-Black Death period was not limited to Tuscany, but it is found across most of Europe. In England, for example, soaring prices of wine caused by pandemic disruption of traditional trades led to excellent commercial opportunities from which both English and

[3] The ERC (European Research Council) is the main public body for funding of scientific research in Europe.

[4] About the economic rise of Francesco Datini, see Melis 1962; Luzzati 1987; Nanni 2010; Nigro 2010.

French traders from Bordeaux and Gascony profited greatly throughout the 1350s. From about the same period, exports of woollen cloths from England began to grow quickly, reaching unprecedented heights and generating new commercial opportunities for others, prominent among them the Genoese merchants who provided the English textile entrepreneurs with growing quantities of dyes and of alum from their mines in Asia Minor.[5] More generally, for England it has been argued that beginning with the demographic collapse caused by the Black Death and until the early fifteenth century, «social advance» was made easier not only by exploiting new opportunities in trade, but also by successfully following three other avenues of advancement: war (due to English early successes during the Hundred Years' War), other non-military services to king and barons, and the pursuit of lay professions related to the law and the judicial system (Payling 1992, 65-67).

The impression we get from these few examples – and indeed, the impression we get very clearly from the overall literature about post-Black Death conditions[6] – is of a marked acceleration in the speed of movement of individuals, families or groups across different social strata, which is basically how social theory defines an increase in social mobility. Such strata can usually be understood, and defined, as socio-economic strata (economic theory explicitly focuses on the movement from a certain economic status to another).[7] But how can we argue that the Black Death truly boosted socio-economic mobility? Thankfully, this crucial period in the history of Europe and the Mediterranean has attracted considerable attention. So we know, also thanks to the efforts of a large-scale research effort coordinated by Sandro Carocci which resulted in several books about social mobility in the Middle Ages published between 2010 and 2018, that the Black Death inverted a tendency for a slowing down of mobility which, in Italy as elsewhere, began to set in from the second half of the thirteenth century:[8] that is, when the phase of new opportunities opened by the Commercial Revolution of the eleventh and twelfth century was finally coming to an end. This was also the end of a phase of deep political change, which saw in at least some parts of Europe and definitely in Italy the rise of new social, economic and political groups, and particularly of the *Popolo*. This 'structural mobility', defined not at the individual but at the collective level, however, by the early fourteenth century had basically dried up; not even the shock caused by the Black Death was able to revive it (Carocci and Lazzarini 2018, 14).

What the Black Death did revive, then, was the mobility of individuals and families, and *this* is the dimension of mobility that we can actually measure by exploiting the exceptional sources available in some European regions, such as

[5] About the Anglo-French wine trade, see Blackmore 2020. About post-Black Death changes in the market for textiles, see Lopez and Miskimin 1962; Hunt and Murray 1999, 166-70.

[6] For a synthesis, see Carocci and Lazzarini 2018; Alfani 2023; 2024b; Cristoferi 2025.

[7] Note that, in a late-medieval context, in many European settings social advancement could also be defined as the outcome of a successful process of ennoblement; see for example the classic contribution by Kula (2001; first Polish edition 1983). On the continued importance of the acquisition of noble status for social advancement in an early modern context see for example Mousnier 1974 and Lukowski 2003; for a recent synthesis, Alfani 2023, 70-75.

[8] Carocci 2010, 5-7; also see the five volumes of the collection *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano*, Viella 2016-17, and Carocci and Lazzarini 2018.

Tuscany. John Padgett (2010) used information about marriages, tax assessments, and political offices to measure the appearance of new lineages in the Florentine elite, and was able to observe the boost to socio-economic-political mobility triggered by the Black Death and its subsequent waning: 198 new elite lineages became established in Florence during 1352-79, 91 during 1403-97, and just 7 during 1458-80 when the city was firmly in the hands of the Medici (Padgett defines lineages as descent groups identified by a «public last name»[9]).

More recently, my ERC project *SMITE – Social Mobility and Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800* has focused on collecting data from the earliest surviving property tax records (the *estimi*), linking households across time by exploiting all the available information. The advantage of this procedure is that, in principle, it allows to observe mobility across society. Unfortunately, due to the fact that the vast majority of rural familes of fourteenth-century Tuscany did not have a surname (Padgett's «public last name») and also due to the confused situation in the aftermath of the Black Death, we have to accept a lot of attrition, that is a relatively large prevalence of unlinked households. Nevertheless, the overall impression we get from a sample of 23 communities is so coherent that there is little doubt about the overall dynamics: the prevalence of "mobile" households (those who were able to move – either up or down – across the ordered quintiles of the distribution of taxable wealth) in the contado of Florence oscillated around an average of about 4.5% yearly in the forty years before the pandemic, increased by about 50% (reaching a level close to an yearly 6%) in the immediate post-Black Death period and remained at a relatively high level for a generation and more. Thereafter it set on a slow declining trend, so that by the early fifteenth century socio-economic mobility measured in this way was almost back to the levels that had prevailed one century earlier.[10] While this approach allows to clearly distinguish a general trend, the size of the boost caused by the Black Death to socio-economic mobility must be understood taking into account the fact that it has been measured based on a sample of rural communities, not on a large and dynamic city such as Florence. For a *rural* context, a 50% increase in yearly mobility can be considered truly exceptional.

[9] «Especially in an erratically growing city like Florence, with its many immigrants, the attainment of a recognized family name was the result of a dynamic process of becoming accepted as contributing members of the community and citizens in the republic. Attaining a last name, in other words, was itself one measure of social mobility», Padgett 2010, 364. On this mattert, also see Molho 1994.

[10] The estimates, which must still be considered provisional, are from Alfani, Ammannati and Balbo 2022.

Social mobility and 'calamities' in early modern times

Writing in 1942, the Russian-American sociologist Pitirim Sorokin – in many respects, a pioneer in studies of social mobility – argued that:

> By destroying a considerable proportion of the population any large-scale calamity creates many vacancies in the various strata of the society affected and its institutions. These vacancies occur not only in the lower positions but also in the higher ones, which frequently have to be filled from the lower ranks. In this way calamities intensify enormously the factor of upward mobility. Calamities strikingly accentuate also the factor of downward mobility – of demotion to a lower position in the social scale (Sorokin 1942, 111).

Among these «calamities» able to speed up «vertical mobility», Sorokin included the Black Death:

> as a result of the depopulation of England by the Black Death, the wages of farmhands doubled or trebled, and there was a widespread improvement in their general condition. […] Serfdom sharply declined, and many a serf became free – that is, climbed to a higher rung of the social ladder. The same plague intensified vertical mobility in other ways. A high degree of mortality occurred also within the rich and upper classes. […] The same was true of ecclesiastical positions. Owing to numerous vacancies, they frequently had to be filled by persons who would otherwise have been ineligible or would have had to wait long to climb to these positions (Sorokin 1942, 111).

This picture fits perfectly with our previous description of the consequences that the Black Death had for social mobility. But Sorokin was making a general statement about the power of large-scale calamity to reshuffle society, and the kinds of events that he had in mind were not only plagues (or epidemics more generally) but also famines, wars, and revolutions. As calamities are, unfortunately, a recurrent feature of human history, we could expect them to cause, from medieval to early modern times, a continuous sequence of mobility waves of the kind of that generated by the Black Death in the fourteenth century. This assumption, however, is only partially supported by the currently available evidence – evidence which, admittedly, is relatively limited.

In the context of my project SMITE, we explicitly focused on major plagues of the early modern period, and particularly those of the seventeenth century which, in central and southern Europe, were on a scale comparable to the Black Death in terms of overall mortality rates, to determine whether they also caused a substantial boost to socio-economic mobility. The conclusion, however, is that while these demographic shocks were indeed able to cause a spike in mobility, it was not nearly on the same scale as that produced by the Black Death either regarding its overall intensity, or (and more importantly) regarding its ability to persist for a long span of time. For example during the plague of 1629-30 in northern Italy, which killed about

one-third of the population of the affected area (roughly two million victims. Alfani 2013a), we find in the city of Ivrea in Piedmont a mobility spike comparable to that caused by the Black Death in the very short run, but just 3-4 years after the crisis yearly mobility was back to the pre-plague level. Ivrea is one of the few exceptional cases where we can measure yearly mobility (exploiting records of regular *correzioni* or 'amendments' to the property tax registers); when we have to do with sources that are distant in time, the (presumed) mobility-promoting effect of plagues becomes difficult, and sometimes impossible, to observe. This basically confirms the view that early modern plagues had a much inferior capacity than the Black Death to trigger a mobility wave, a conclusion that SMITE reached for various regions of Italy[11] as well as for South France and some other parts of Europe.

Regarding another kind of calamity featured in Sorokin's list, famine, we have almost no specific studies focused on its immediate impact on socio-economic mobility. What seems clear, again based on data from the project SMITE, is that (at least in southern Europe) even the worst famines, such as those that afflicted the continent in the 1590s and in the 1690s (Alfani and Ó Gráda 2017), were not able to cause any identifiable wave, or even any structural break in the series (that is, they did not trigger an inversion of the trend from a long-run tendency towards mobility increase, to a tendency towards reduction, or vice versa). However, based on the literature on the so-called "proletarianization", that is the process through which an increasing proportion of the European population lost control of the means of production and had to sell its labour to survive – a phenomenon which tended to come in waves, mostly triggered by large scale-famines (Tilly 1984; Alfani 2021) –, we could hypothesize that, at least in south Europe, major and long-lasting famines did not cause any visible effect because they were simply strengthening a pre-existent tendency towards reduction in mobility. This, of course, if we measure socio-economic mobility as relative movements between portions of the wealth distribution (as SMITE did). In fact, in this case, (absolute) "vertical mobility" *à la* Sorokin would simply mean making the poor poorer, and the rich richer, without modifying their position as, for example, the poorest 20% will remain trapped at the bottom, and the richest 20% will just consolidate their position at the top (Alfani 2023, 293-96).

Finally, wars and revolutions. While the impact of major wars on socio-economic mobility has attracted a relatively large amount of attention for the modern period, we have very few studies for the long preindustrial phase. The main attempt is a study of France from ca. 1720 to 1986, focused on intergenerational occupational mobility. For the eighteenth century, this study reported (on a baseline orientated towards slightly increasing mobility over time, defined as the decline in association between the occupational class of the father and that of the son) that the French Revolution did not have any strong immediate impact on mobility, although it might have contributed to reach a somewhat higher mobility baseline in the following decades (Van Leeuwen et al. 2015). A study of England in the run-up to the civil war which erupted in 1642 explored a different possible connection between socio-economic mobility and violent upturning of political regimes: it argued that declining upward

[11] See several other contributions to the proceedings of this Settimana Datini.

mobility during 1589-1639 spread discontent and favoured political radicalization among sectors of the urban middle class who experienced worse conditions compared to those enjoyed by their fathers, and in this way contributed to create a setting favourable to political upheaval (Bearman and Deane 1992).

Regarding war more generally, given the current scarcity of specific studies we can undoubtedly accept that it offered, to some at least, plenty of opportunities to move up or down the social and economic ladder (Alfani 2013b; 2023). However, in a preindustrial context at least some of those opportunities were reserved to those belonging to specific social categories. For example, in the army men rising from the ranks were rare and officer status, with the opportunities for personal enrichment that it entailed, was open almost exclusively to the nobility (by contrast, the Church was much more generous in offering to lowborn individuals the opportunity to climb high. Poussou 2004). Finally, in some situations those wielding political power might have enjoyed exceptional opportunities of exploiting the war conditions, as seemingly was the case for the political elites (and those individuals that assisted them in the city administration) of the German city of Nördlingen during the Thirty Years' War of 1618-48 (Schaff 2024).

Social mobility in the very long run

Overall, and with the very notable exception of the Black Death, major preindustrial crises or 'calamities' seem to have had a much more limited ability to produce spikes in vertical mobility than Sorokin had imagined. The implication is that long-term mobility trends might have been relatively flat – although how flat, and whether they were upward- or downward-oriented, remains the object of debate. This debate was mostly triggered by the publication, in 2014, of an important book by Gregory Clark (with coauthors for specific chapters), *The Son also Rises*. Clark argued, based on a novel and very 'parsimonious' method to estimate the levels of mobility in the very long run, that upward mobility rates were very low and constant in time, and that status was inherited in ways similar to the inheritance of genetically-controlled attributes (controversially, Clark stated that «nature dominates nurture»: Clark 2014, 14).

Clark measured the long-run pace of preindustrial social mobility for England and partly for Sweden (he achieved a much broader geographic coverage for the modern age), exploiting the information available about the distribution of rare surnames and that of the surnames of members of elite groups: the Norman conquerors of England in 1066, the students attending the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, etc. Whenever sources allowed, he exploited information for intermediate dates, properly breaking down the very long time periods that he explored into a sequence of shorter periods (Clark 2014, 70-87; see also Clark et al. 2015). Others tried to apply the same approach without any consideration whatsoever for intermediate periods (which, from a historical point of view, can be considered an *excessively* parsimonious approach). This is for example the case of a study of the city of Florence, which connected the distribution of surnames and of

the related wealth status in the *catasto* of 1427 to tax records for 2011 (Barone and Mocetti 2021).

Excessive parsimony (resulting either from an absolute scarcity of data, or from an unwillingness to collect more data from the archives when additional primary sources would in principle be available) is one reason why studies of this kind have been criticized, even when (as in the case of Florence) they could take into account entire societies, that is, all the individuals or households, independently from their status, existing in a given community or area.[12] Clark's own mobility estimates have also been criticized precisely because they *did not* cover entire societies, but focused only on the elites[13] – and we can't rule out that the processes of status transmission characterising the elites were different from those of the rest of society. Indeed, sociologists have long argued that the link between the status of parents and that of their children is much stronger at the top of the income distribution (and possibly even more at the top of the wealth distribution) than across the general population.[14] Unfortunately, this is also true (although for different reasons) for the lowest strata: those at the bottom of the income distribution (and their descendants) tend to be trapped in poverty, today as in the past (Alfani 2022). Regarding the wealth distribution, consider that those with no wealth and an income close to subsistence will be, by definition, unable to save and to start accumulating wealth (Alfani and Di Tullio 2019, 154-55). In principle, they might inherit, but it is a rare occurrence indeed that a preindustrial poor had any rich relations willing to bequest them anything.

The criticism addressed to Clark's (and related) research should not hide the fact that his novel approach contributed to spur a surge of studies in an area that had not been systematically explored before for preindustrial societies. In general, these new studies were based upon large-scale campaigns of new archival research of the kind needed to measure socio-economic mobility in more traditional ways, and which in principle could take into account the possibility that substantial short-term fluctuations existed (of the kind that could be generated by calamities), something that Clark's approach, even in the best conditions, is not very well-suited to do. While such short-term fluctuations might not alter much the estimates of the average pace of mobility across the ages, which was the focus of Clark's interest, they might have considerable importance for our understanding of specific historical phases or 'conjunctures' (*à la* Braudel), as is evidenced by the recent research concerning socio-economic mobility before and after the Black Death.

The downside is that these studies required data which was not previously available and which proved to be extremely labour-intensive to collect (even by the standards of historians fully committed to intense archival work…), which is why many are reaching publication stage just now. For example, my own project SMITE reconstructed complete (or almost) household wealth distributions from property tax

[12] In fact, all applications of Clark's method, even when (as is the case of Barone and Mocetti 2021) they begin with individual-level information for entire societies, in practice measure *only* between-group mobility, and not other components of the overall *individual* mobility: see Torche and Corvalan 2018.

[13] In practice, his approach consists in measuring to what degree those families who carried an elite surname still belonged to the elite at a later point in time.

[14] Form this kind of criticism to Clark, see Breen 2015.

records, for samples of communities in various Italian and European regions. Records as close in time as possible were linked together, and the relative (and when the sources allowed, also the absolute) movement of households across the wealth ladder was studied by means of traditional social mobility matrixes.

I have already illustrated SMITE's main findings regarding the ability of calamities to generate (or not) a surge in mobility. Regarding long-term tendencies, the general impression that we get from the case studies which have been completed so far is for a long-run tendency for socio-economic mobility to slowly decline during the early modern period in various parts of Italy (or at most to stagnate, as seems to have been the case in south France). This seems to have happened, for example, in the city of Bergamo in Lombardy from the mid-fifteenth to the early-seventeenth century, in Ivrea in Piedmont throughout the seventeenth century, and in the countryside of Vicenza from the mid-sixteenth to the late-seventeenth century.[15]

Beyond Italy we have some information for Catalonia. In the area of Barcelona, Gabriel Brea-Martínez and Joana Maria Pujadas-Mora argued, based on data from the *Barcelona Historical Marriage Database*, that the period from 1570 to 1639 was one of stagnant and relatively low mobility (measured as intergenerational persistence of occupational prestige or of economic capacity).[16] Finally, for northern France in the eighteenth century (Vendôme, Pas-de-Calais), a tendency toward a slight increase in intergenerational occupational mobility from the 1720s to the early nineteenth century has been reported (Van Leeuwen et al. 2015). This is obviously too little to argue for a North-South divide in mobility levels across early modern Europe. However, some additional evidence that in the context of the so-called Little Divergence such a divide did tend to develop comes from recent studies in long-term trends in economic inequality.

Before discussing what inequality studies can tell us about socio-economic mobility, it seems necessary to highlight another aspect of the debate: that concerning the absolute intensity of mobility. Beyond arguing that the pace of social mobility was about constant across time, and basically unchanging from the Middle Ages until today, Clark also claimed that it was very low: for him, there exists «a universal constant of inergenerational correlation of 0.75, from which deviations are rare and predictable» (Clark 2014, 12).[17] His critics, such as sociologist Richard Breen (2015), argue that this is roughly two times the prevailing estimates of intergenerational correlation of incomes in modern western societies. Even hypothesizing that social mobility was lower in preindustrial societies, the remaining difference is huge: all the more so, considering that for England during 1200-1700 Clark estimates that among

[15] For this and additional information from the SMITE project, see the articles by Ammannati, Crivelli, Di Tullio, Maffi and Viale included in the proceedings of this Settimana Datini. As seen in the previous section, SMITE measured socio-economic mobility as the movement of households between different quantiles of the overall wealth distribution.

[16] Brea-Martínez and Pujadas-Mora 2022 (also see Pujadas-Mora et al. 2018). These authors found relatively higher mobility in the period 1750-1829, which they explain with the spread of protoindustrial activities.

[17] Note that «intergenerational correlation» of status measures how much the status of the parents is transmitted to the children. With an intergenerational correlation of 1, all children would inherit the status of their parents.

artisans and students of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge the intergenerational correlation of status was in the range 0.77-0.85, then higher that the supposed "universal constant" (Clark 2014, 74). For the Barcelona area during 1580-1650, Brea-Martínez and Pujadas-Mora (2022, 10) estimated an intergenerational correlation in the range 0.45-0.5, apparently more in line with the traditional estimates – but based on a different kind of sources and a different method. Which is only the tip of the iceberg: when comparing surname-based estimates with those based on occupations or on assessments of taxable wealth, produced with a variety of regression techniques or calculated from mobility matrixes, and so on, we have a huge and unresolved problem of calibration and standardization. This is to say that as new quantitative estimates of socio-economic mobility will become available over the next few years, we will be faced with the problem of figuring up ways of making them comparable. This, at least, if we want to be able to qualify such estimates as suggesting 'high' or 'low' overall mobility.

Social mobility, inequality, and inequality extraction ratios

Although addressing the *absolute* intensity of mobility in preindustrial societies remains a difficult and potentially contentious issue, we can already meaningfully interpret the available series of mobility estimates as qualifying certain historical contexts as more or less socially mobile than others. In other words, we can already interpret in a meaningful way the *relative* development of mobility rates. As I have already argued, we have some signs that in early modern times southern European societies were becoming less mobile, while northern European ones were able to preserve more open features, or even enjoyed a slow increase in socio-economic mobility. This, which must be considered an hypothesis (due to current limitations in the available data), has potentially very important consequences for our understanding of the Little Divergence.

As evidenced by over fifteen years of intense research on preindustrial inequality, there appears to have basically been *no difference* in the trends in economic inequality found across the European continent from the late fifteenth to the end of the eighteenth century: after a phase of inequality reduction triggered by the Black Death in the fourteenth century, from the mid-fifteenth century (and sometimes, like in Tuscany, from a bit earlier) inequality growth had resumed everywhere and continued throughout the early modern period.[18] But it is not the same thing to experience inequality growth in a context of relatively easy social mobility (when all, or at least many, have a reasonable expectation of enjoying upward mobility based on their competences and behaviour, and maybe a bit of luck) or in a closed society.[19] Indeed, concerning modern societies a widespread (and basically faulty) idea is that high inequality might be somewhat caused by upward mobility, or more generally that it might result from economic growth (think of the rise of many early protagonists of

[18] For an updatde summary of this branch or resarch, Alfani 2021; 2024a.

[19] In general, higher socio-economic mobility can be considered desirable as it helps to attenuate many of the negative consequences of an unequal distribution of initial endowments (Fields and Ok 1999, 561).

the computer and information age to super-rich status, especially in the United States). This idea is often used to 'justify' a condition of relatively high inequality, as basically it leads to argue that higher inequality is simply an undesired side-effect of something positive (economic growth). But we now have ample evidence that, in preindustrial as well as in modern societies, inequality dynamics are largely independent from economic growth (Alfani 2021; 2024a), and that the relationship between economic inequality and social mobility is not unidirectional. We know, for example, that in some contexts high economic inequality ends up chocking social mobility (OECD 2015, 71-73; 2018).

The complex and debated relationship between levels and trends in social mobility, in economic inequality and in economic growth implies that they *must* be *measured independently* one from the other, and that it is simply impossible to even roughly derive, for example, inequality levels from estimates of per-capita GDP. In principle, then, we can have any combination of the three variables, which allows to formulate in this way our hypothesis about a growing "mobility divide" in early modern Europe: as the Little Divergence progressed, north Europe enjoyed economic growth and relatively high and maybe growing socio-economic mobility, moderating the negative consequences of growing inequality. At the same time, south Europe suffered from the worst-case scenario, that is a combination of economic stagnation, growing inequality and relatively low and even declining socio-economic mobility.

As arguably low socio-economic mobility is harmful to long-term economic development (OECD 2018; Neidhöfer et al. 2024), the dynamics of this complex system might have worked towards reinforcing and expanding the process of North-South divergence itself. South Europe would basically have remained trapped into an unfavourable situation until the industrial transition and the process of social modernisation offered a window of opportunity to escape this "mobility trap", and only with great difficulties (interestingly, the combination of a stagnating economy, high and growing inequality and social immobility characterized south Europe also around the time of the last major economic crisis, the Great Recession which began in 2008 and was followed by the sovereign debt crisis).

While, in principle, relative levels of social mobility in north and south Europe, and their trends, must be measured directly in order to make any less than hypothetical statement regarding the role that they played in the Little Divergence, it is also true that the general trends in economic inequality and in economic development which have now been reconstructed for various European areas do suggest that some scenarios are more likely than others. First, we have to consider that the early modern divergence in mobility between northern and southern Europe, if it really took place, would tend to characterize southern European societies as increasingly more 'extractive', and their elites as somewhat more 'predatory' of other social strata, compared to the northern European ones.

But the concept of 'extractive societies' resonates with that of 'inequality extraction', which has been applied systematically by recent literature to try and gather insights into the actual social significance of inequality change in preindustrial times. While the concept of extractive society is intuitive and can be used with some flexibility, that of inequality extraction, or more properly of «inequality extraction

ratio», has been formalized by Milanović, Lindert and Williamson (2011) as the ratio (in percentage) between the Gini index of income inequality actually estimated for a given society and period, and the Gini index corresponding to the theoretical situation in which that same society, given its level of economic prosperity (as proxied by its estimated per-capita GDP), 'extracted' as much inequality as possible by assigning to all its members just enough to survive, and redirecting all the surplus above mere subsistence to a single super-rich individual or household.[20]

An increase in income inequality does not necessarily make a society more 'extractive' as well (that is, keener on redistributing the surplus produced by the collectivity towards the elite), as that will depend on whether that society is also growing richer. When increases in average income, proxied by per-capita GDP, are quick enough, it is theoretically possible to have a society growing more unequal while also becoming less extractive. However, in presence of economic stagnation or decline *any* increase in inequality will make a society more extractive: and then, presumably, also nastier towards most of its population and organized in such a way as to favour in an ever-clearer way the social-economic elite.[21]

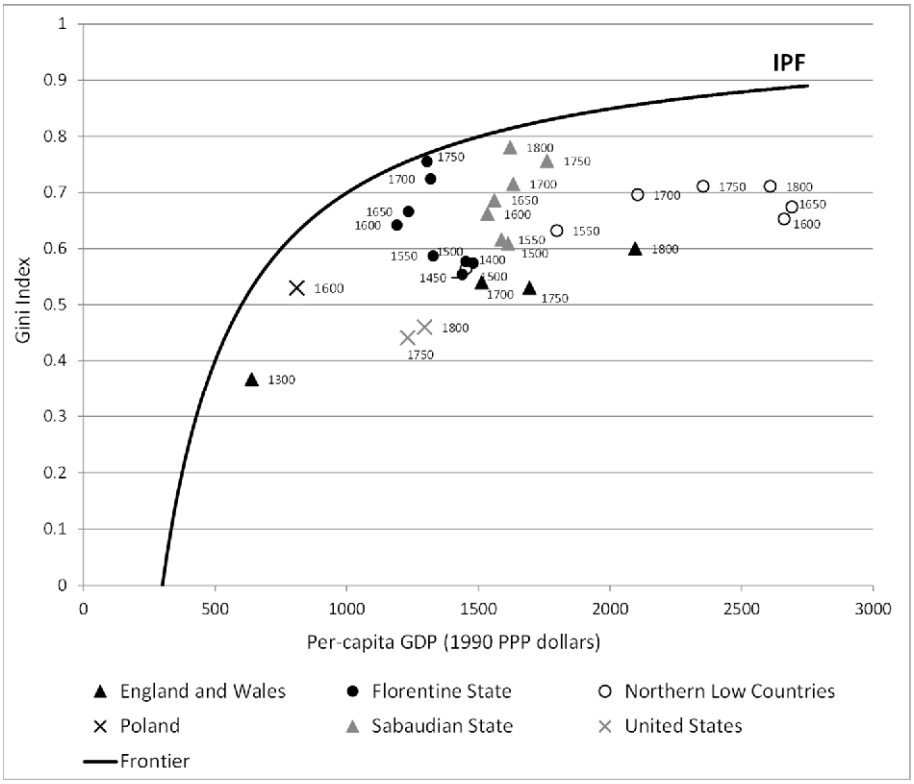
Graph 1 shows how different societies in different time periods were positioned looking at the combination of their average level of income and their inequality. In some cases, we have enough observations in time to observe patterns of change. Note that whenever a society tends to get closer to the inequality possibility frontier, marked as the IPF in the graph, it is also becoming more extractive. This was for example the case of the Florentine State, which by ca. 1500 was probably about as extractive as other highly-developed societies in central-northern Italy or in the Low Countries[22], but which throughout the early modern period appears to experience a constant growth in overall levels of extractiveness. By circa 1650, the Florentine State was already more extractive than any other contemporary state of Western Europe for which we have estimates, reaching the boundary of the IPF by 1750 (98%). The Sabaudian State followed a similar trend, although at a less steep pace. Northern European countries, instead, experienced very modest increases in extractiveness, or even a decline. For example, in the Dutch Republic (Holland) the inequality extraction ratio of 71% around 1500 increased by just 9 percentage points in the following two and a half centuries (80% by 1750), while in England and Wales the inequality extraction ratio went from 69% in the immediate pre-Black Death period to 67% by 1700. At that point in time, it was the lowest recorded for any European state.

[20] Note that the value of the Gini index varies between 0 (perfect equality: each household or individual has the same income or wealth) and 1 (perfect inequality: one household or individual earns or owns everything).

[21] In Milanovic, Lindert and Williamson's own words (2011, 268), «[t]he [inequality extraction] ratio offers a different perspective on how powerful, repressive and extractive were the ruling groups, their institutions and policies».

[22] The Low Countries were the only other area of Europe which, towards the end of the Middle Ages, could match central-northern Italy in terms of economic development.

Graph 1. **Inequality Extraction in Europe, 1300-1800**



Sources: Alfani 2021.

The fact that, in early modern Europe, economic inequality tended to grow independently from the economic conditions seems to suggest that human factors played a role. But was some segment of society actually working towards concentrating the economic resources in their hands, and towards preventing new individuals or groups to rise and to challenge their privileged positions? In other words, did social mobility have some declared enemy?

The enemies of mobility

Why was the mobility surge caused by the Black Death not replicated after later major plagues? Why, from at least the early seventeenth century, do we find signs of a slowing down of mobility in southern Europe? These are complex questions which would deserve careful contextualization and a multi-faceted answer. Here, however, I will highlight a specific factor: the defensive strategies pursued by the social-economic elites when faced with a new threat (like the return of the plague to Europe

in the fourteenth century) or with worsening economic opportunities. This will also help looking behind the abstract macroeconomic variables which I have just illustrated, bringing to the fore human agency – that is the explicit, intentional attempts of human beings to change things (usually in their favour), either directly, through their own choices and actions, or by promoting institutional change to serve specific purposes.

The case of the Black Death is, again, exemplary. At the beginning of my prolusion I have presented the case of Francesco di Marco Datini, who skilfully exploited the relatively fluid situation brought forward by the pandemic to rise from relatively humble conditions to entrepreneurial prominence. But at the other extreme of society, those who had entered the pandemic as belonging to the socio-economic elite had much to lose: not only their life, but also their chances of ensuring the continued fortunes of their lineage. One of the reasons why the Black Death led to a substantial reduction in wealth inequality, something of which we have solid historical proof (Alfani 2021; 2022), is that mass mortality tended to fragment property simply because (given the partible inheritance systems which prevailed in much of late-medieval Europe) patrimonies came to be divided evenly among many inheritors.

Patrimonial fragmentation posed a direct threat to the preservation of the socio-economic status of the elites and consequently, as soon as it had become clear that plague had returned to Europe to stay, wealthy individuals deployed defensive strategies to protect their families. As they couldn't do anything to preserve the lives of their descendants, they set out to protect the family patrimony against plagues and other possible mortality crises. After all, as southern European jurists from the fifteenth and sixteenth century stated, *familia, id est substantia*: the family *is* the patrimony. In practice, across the continent patrimonies were protected by recurring to institutions that derogated from the general rule of partible inheritance, such as the *fideicommissum* (entail).[23] While in some partible-inheritance areas the *fideicommissa* were already in use before the Black Death, archival records suggest that they became commonplace, including outside the nobility, only in the centuries following the pandemic; by the sixteenth century their use was generalized (Lanaro 2000; 2012; Leverotti 2005, 162-67). Allowing for some local variation, we find a broadly comparable timing of institutional adaptation across central-northern Italy, an adaptation that also involved other practices such as the *fraterna* (undivided property among brothers) customs of the Venetian merchant families and the associated 'limited marriage' system (Bellavitis 2013; Alfani and Di Tullio 2019, 84-85).

Practices and institutions of this kind are to be encountered in a variety of forms across Europe (think of the Spanish *mayorazgo*, analogous to the *fideicommissum*, regulated in detail by Castilian law since 1505 but already existing before that date) and all served similar purposes: to protect the patrimony from undesired fragmentation and in this way, to preserve the status of the lineage. Consequently, as I argue in a recent book dedicated to the history of the rich in the West,

[23] The *fideicommissum* established that a well-defined set of family properties was to be transferred unaltered from one generation to the next, and then to the following one, with no end, usually being passed on to the oldest son.

> when the last great plagues affected seventeenth-century Europe, the rich were ready, and they appear to have been able to preserve their social-economic status much better than during the fourteenth century, when the Black Death had taken them by surprise. This, however, also had the unfortunate side-effect of preventing mortality crises from levelling the playing field and maybe from liberating fresh social-economic energies. For the simple fact that the incumbent wealth elite was better able to maintain its strong grip on an overwhelming share of the economic (and social and political) resources meant that the opportunities open to other parts of society to move up the social ladder were drastically curtailed […]. More generally, the rich of early modern times seem to have been able to prosper relatively well in times of crisis (Alfani 2023, 293).

Arguably, the same institutions also helped the southern European socio-economic elites to face another problem: the worsening of economic opportunities associated with the Little Divergence, especially from the early seventeenth century. But on that occasion, the defense of status was not purely passive, as the elites also actively tried to strengthen their grip over the available resources –both the economic, and the political resources– and to make their privileged position as unassailable as possible. In Italy, a process of 'closure' of the local councils began in the late fifteenth century and became particularly intense during the sixteenth (Leverotti 2005). This was aimed at slowing down the rise of successful individuals and families coming from the middling strata of society, while at the same time protecting the 'rights' of those who used to be placed at the top.

Formal norms, however, are misleading indicators of social openness: they could be circumvented, and the norms themselves were usually established in periods of intense upward mobility (Cattini 1984b). A similar point has been made by Luca Mocarelli (2009) in his study of the way in which new families could be accepted into the nobility and the patriciate of Milan. Consequently, we need to move beyond regulations, looking at which and how many families were able to have their representatives sitting in local councils. Based on a sample of communities in the Emilia-Romagna region, including the important cities of Modena, Parma and Piacenza, Marco Cattini and Marzio Romani (Cattini 1984b; Cattini and Romani 2005) were able to document a marked reduction in the permeability of the local elite from the early seventeenth century, a process which strengthened in the eighteenth century.[24] Over the last few years, the SMITE project has developed additional case studies of the composition of the local political elite (defined as those families able to express members in the local councils); the provisional results seem to confirm a pattern of political closure from the early seventeenth century, for example in Ivrea in Piedmont, in Bergamo in Lombardy and in Verona in Veneto.

[24] Cattini and Romani used lists of council members included in the local *ordinati* (yearly books recording the deliberations of the councils of the community, which also include information about the members of local councils), building upon a methodology pioneered by Cattini (1984a) in his study of the rural town of San Felice.

The oligarchic closure of city councils, with 'old families' attempting to ward off the intruders by erecting legal barriers against their eligibility for public posts, did not only serve a political objective but also had clear economic motivations, as it ensured privileged access to the resources of the community, as shown by Matteo Di Tullio (2014) in a study of the Geradadda area in eastern Lombardy during the sixteenth century.[25] To use the lexicon of some recent studies in economics, Italian and in general southern European elites seem to have reacted to the worsening of the economic scenario by developing predatory behaviours: that is, they tried to maximize their immediate revenue even at the risk of damaging the long-run development opportunities of society as a whole.[26] By adopting this behaviour, they really acted as 'enemies of mobility', as this kind of status protection requires preventing as much as possible the rise of any potential challenger.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, the actions of southern European elites conscious of the new scenario of the Little Divergence – one in which, for example, Italian merchants were at a relative disadvantage in accessing directly the Atlantic trade routes – led them to choices that stifled socio-economic mobility also in an indirect way: «when capital-rich families decided to divert their ample resources from industry and trade to real estate, often profiting from times of crisis and particularly from famines when starving small-owners were forced to sell their properties at an unfavourable price, they established a distributive condition that tended to lock the lowest strata into a disadvantaged economic (and political) situation» (Alfani 2023, 115).

While the shift from investment in trade and industry towards land had some strong economic reasons, it also had an aristocratic connotation. Indeed, the 'aristocratization' of economic elites is a process which is often encountered in European history. It did not only happen in societies facing economic stagnation, but also in some which were at the peak of their success: including (at the other extreme of the Little Divergence) the Dutch Republic during its Golden Age. When, towards the end of the seventeenth century, competition with England over dominance of the seas and colonial spheres of influence became more intense, at the individual level it made perfect economic sense for Dutch families that had already accumulated considerable wealth to avoid the high personal and financial risks intrinsic in the Atlantic trade and to focus on other activities: including by becoming involved in government. As a collective behaviour, however, this had serious consequences. The regents (*regenten*), a category that covers all kinds of rulers of the Dutch Republic (including city leaders and heads of organisations) and whose members originally came from the richest and most successful merchant families of each locality, became an increasingly specialized class, anxious to preserve its position. By the early eighteenth century, 83% of the newly-appointed city councilors of Rotterdam and 79% those of Hoorn were a close relation of another councilor. At the same time, members of the regent class became less and less active in trade and in other sectors

[25] The economic importance of controlling political resources is confirmed by Schaff's (2024) study of seventeenth-century Germany. Interestingly, Schaff reports a correlation between a stronger oligarchic or anyway 'closed' character of local political institutions, and higher economic inequality.

[26] Regarding the concept of «predatory elites», see Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; 2012.

of the economy, and developed more aristocratic features (de Vries and van der Woude 1997, 586-96; Prak 2005, 126-27; Prak and van Zanden 2022, 184-86).

Following the sociologist Max Weber, members of an aristocracy are defined by possessing some sort of privilege, which must be protected from outsiders – as a privilege shared too widely is no privilege at all.[27] Consequently, the very development of 'wealth aristocracies' will tend to be inimical to socio-economic mobility. But there is also reason to think that, across history, this process led to the end of many phases of exceptional economic efflorescence and innovation, from the Dutch Golden Age of the seventeenth century[28] to the American Gilded Age of the nineteenth century (Alfani 2023). In this light, current concerns about the progressive development of a «global aristocracy»[29] might lead to more substantial worries about our future prosperity and economic opportunities: and give us all an additional motivation to explore the past, looking for clues about the complex and multifaceted way in which, across history, mobility flourished, or perished, in human societies.

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[27] Note that formal nobility (with the hereditary transmission of titles, etc.) is only a sub-category of the broader concerpt of aristocracy. For a discussion of the implications, see Alfani 2023, 65-67, as well as Weber 1956.

[28] The connection between accumulation of political and economic resources, ultimately leading to social polarization and institutional sclerosis, and the end of the Dutch Golden Age has been recently reaffirmed by Bas Van Bavel (2016, 195-200).

[29] For a synthesis of the relevant literature see Alfani 2023, 84-86.

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Fonti e metodi

Sources and methods

Francesco Ammannati

Misurare la mobilità sociale in Toscana tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna[1]

1. Introduzione

La mobilità sociale è un tema di grande interesse storiografico, che ha conosciuto un rinnovato slancio nelle ultime decadi grazie all'apporto di nuove metodologie di indagine e all'apertura a prospettive interdisciplinari. Sebbene ancora poco esplorato rispetto ad altri ambiti della ricerca storica, lo studio della mobilità sociale offre un osservatorio privilegiato per comprendere la complessità delle dinamiche economiche e sociali che hanno caratterizzato l'Europa in epoca preindustriale (Carocci 2010, 2011; Tanzini e Tognetti 2016).

Il concetto di mobilità sociale rimanda alla capacità degli individui e dei gruppi di modificare la propria posizione all'interno della stratificazione sociale, attraverso percorsi di ascesa o di declino. Come ha ben specificato Carocci (2010, 2), essa non può però essere concepita semplicemente come il passaggio da uno status sociale definito ad un altro altrettanto netto e determinato. Piuttosto, essa deve essere intesa come il riposizionamento di individui, famiglie e gruppi all'interno della complessa gerarchia che struttura lo spazio sociale, in termini di disuguaglianze economiche, di riconoscimento e prestigio, di partecipazione politica, e di ogni altro fattore rilevante in un dato contesto. Questa visione della mobilità sociale come fenomeno multidimensionale e fluido, anziché come semplice transizione tra categorie sociali fisse, è il frutto di una profonda rielaborazione teorica avvenuta negli ultimi decenni, sotto l'influsso delle scienze sociali. Abbandonata l'idea di un Medioevo rigidamente strutturato in ordini e stati, gli storici hanno adottato una concezione dello spazio sociale come realtà caratterizzata da molteplici assi di stratificazione e in continua riconfigurazione attraverso le interazioni degli attori.

Nell'ambito degli studi medievistici, in particolare, l'analisi di tali tematiche si è concentrata principalmente sui canali della mobilità, ovvero gli ambiti e le istituzioni che hanno favorito l'ascesa sociale, sui tempi e i ritmi di questo dinamismo, con particolare attenzione alle fasi di maggiore o minore fluidità sociale, e sui gruppi sociali coinvolti, dalla nobiltà alle *élites* urbane, dal ceto mercantile ai professionisti (Herlihy 1973; Padgett 2010). Lo studio della mobilità sociale in epoca preindustriale ha quindi

[1] La ricerca che ha condotto a questi risultati ha beneficiato di un finanziamento dello European Research Council (ERC) nell'ambito dello European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Program/ERC, Grant agreement No. 725687, *SMITE-Social Mobility and Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800*.

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conosciuto un'evoluzione significativa nel corso del Novecento, riflettendo i cambiamenti di paradigma della storiografia economica e sociale. Se fino agli anni Settanta la ricerca si era concentrata principalmente sull'analisi dei fattori economici e demografici, a partire dagli anni Ottanta si è assistito a un progressivo allargamento degli orizzonti di indagine. Da un lato, l'attenzione si è spostata sui ruoli svolti dalle istituzioni politiche e religiose nella promozione o nel contenimento della mobilità sociale (Gamberini 2017), dall'altro, l'influenza della sociologia e dell'antropologia culturale ha portato a una maggiore sensibilità per le rappresentazioni e le percezioni del fenomeno da parte degli attori storici.

Tuttavia, nonostante i progressi compiuti, lo studio della mobilità socio-economica tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna rappresenta ancora un ambito di ricerca largamente inesplorato. Questo è dovuto, in parte, a sfide metodologiche e interpretative, tra cui la difficoltà di individuare indicatori univoci e di stabilire con chiarezza relazioni causali tra fattori economici, sociali e politici.

A giudizio di chi scrive, le difficoltà inerenti alla raccolta e all'elaborazione di dati quantitativi a partire dalla documentazione preindustriale non devono essere considerate un pretesto per rinunciare a tentativi di quantificazione o all'applicazione di metodologie che, pur con i limiti inevitabili imposti dalla natura delle fonti disponibili, possano fornire una base solida su cui costruire l'analisi della mobilità e delle sue dinamiche. Al contrario, questo dovrebbe stimolare gli storici a esplorare nuove prospettive e a sperimentare strategie di ricerca innovative; un esempio è quanto mostrato da Padgett (2010) che per la città di Firenze ha individuato la relazione tra tre sistemi coesistenti di stratificazione e dinamica di mobilità sociale: quello basato sulla ricchezza, sull'accesso al governo cittadino e sulla persistenza temporale del nucleo famigliare. Pur rappresentando un'innovazione nelle indagini sulle modalità di accesso agli strati più alti della società cittadina, questo studio, come molti in passato, si concentrava sulle *élite*, non avendo come interesse l'osservazione delle dinamiche che coinvolgevano l'intera popolazione.

Il presente lavoro si propone di superare questo limite, collocandosi all'interno del contesto storiografico delineato dalle indagini condotte nel progetto SMITE, e adottandone le relative metodologie. In particolare, il concetto di mobilità utilizzato è quello che descrive il movimento nel tempo di un contribuente/nucleo famigliare da uno status economico a un altro, misurato come spostamento tra parti della distribuzione della ricchezza. Anticipando quanto verrà esposto più avanti in dettaglio, un modo abbastanza intuitivo è quello di identificare nominalmente tutti i nuclei fiscali registrati in un'indagine tributaria e in quella successiva e verificarne i movimenti verso l'alto o verso il basso. Vale la pena sottolineare che una tale metodologia può essere applicata, con i dovuti adattamenti, a qualsiasi realtà per la quale sia disponibile una documentazione in grado di fornire un quadro realistico della distribuzione della ricchezza dei contribuenti.

La Toscana qui considerata non coincide esattamente con l'attuale entità amministrativa della regione, in quanto non include né la Repubblica di Lucca, unitasi al Granducato solamente nel 1847, né una serie di territori annessi nel corso del XVIII secolo (Fasano Guarini 1973). L'area presa in esame corrisponde piuttosto al territorio storico della Repubblica di Firenze, mutato in Ducato a partire dal 1532 e successivamente nel Granducato di Toscana dal 1569. Quest'ampia area era suddivisa

amministrativamente in due parti, caratterizzate sia dalla diversa intensità di controllo politico esercitato dalla capitale Firenze, sia dal sistema di tassazione adottato. Il 'Contado' rappresentava l'entroterra circostante, originariamente comprensivo delle diocesi di Firenze e Fiesole, e successivamente allargatosi man mano che Firenze estendeva il proprio dominio su altri territori. In seguito, quando città di maggiori dimensioni come Arezzo e Pisa passarono sotto il dominio fiorentino, insieme ai loro territori rurali, quest'area venne designata come 'Distretto'. Lo Stato di Firenze così individuato non solo rivestì un ruolo di primo piano tra gli Stati italiani preunitari, ma occupò anche una posizione centrale nell'economia medievale europea. Sfruttando le eccezionali fonti disponibili per la regione, lo studio intende esplorare un ampio arco temporale che va dall'inizio del XIV secolo alla fine del XVIII secolo.

La devastante epidemia di peste che colpì la Toscana nel 1348 ebbe effetti di vasta portata sulle strutture socio-economiche preesistenti. Ad esempio, è attestato che causò una significativa riduzione della disuguaglianza economica. Tuttavia, sebbene si sia ipotizzato che la Peste Nera abbia offerto opportunità di mobilità sociale ed economica ascendente, soprattutto nella città di Firenze, sono poche le informazioni riguardo ad altre aree dello Stato fiorentino, o su periodi successivi che si estendano fino all'Età Moderna. Pertanto, questo studio si concentra sulle comunità del Contado, per le quali sono disponibili fonti sia precedenti che successive all'evento epidemico, in particolare i registri fiscali sulla proprietà o estimi relativi al XIV-XV secolo, i catasti quattrocenteschi, nonché i libri relativi alla nuova imposizione della Decima a partire dal XVI secolo. Questo corpus documentale consente l'analisi di tematiche di rilievo, ma al contempo complesse da investigare, come l'impatto della Peste Nera sulla stratificazione sociale e le dinamiche della mobilità socio-economica a lungo termine.

2. La creazione dello Stato fiorentino

All'alba del suo primo grande sviluppo territoriale, iniziato grosso modo nella prima metà del XII secolo, poco lasciava immaginare che nel giro di quattro secoli Firenze sarebbe stata in grado di consolidare uno Stato egemone nei confronti della maggior parte delle città toscane. Certo, alla fine di questo processo, con la conquista di Siena alla metà del Cinquecento e l'istituzione del Granducato di Toscana, il territorio amministrato dalla città del Giglio si mostrava comunque esiguo rispetto ad altre realtà statali che si spartivano la Penisola italiana. È senz'altro impossibile una precisa e definitiva misurazione dei confini e delle superfici degli stati preunitari su un arco plurisecolare, ma basta sottolineare che – con i suoi 18.000 kmq scarsi – ancora alla fine del Cinquecento[2] lo Stato fiorentino (o meglio dire il territorio sotto il controllo della Dominante) si poneva ben al di sotto della Terraferma veneziana (32.000 kmq) o dello Stato Pontificio o Sabaudo, per non parlare dei regni del Mezzogiorno (Carocci 2012; Fasano Guarini 1973; Pezzolo 2007; Zorzi 2000).

Ciononostante, è indubbio il successo di Firenze nei confronti di altre città-stato toscane che in epoca comunale sembravano possedere caratteristiche più congeniali

[2] Avrebbe raggiunto i 22.000 kmq solo nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento, con l'annessione del Principato di Piombino, del Ducato di Lucca e di altri territori.

a un futuro sviluppo economico e territoriale: basti pensare a Pisa e al suo potere marittimo commerciale (pur ridimensionato dopo la sconfitta della Meloria nel 1284), o Lucca, strategicamente posizionata sull'asse viario più importante che univa Roma all'Italia padana.

Non è questa la sede per richiamare i motivi che portarono al decollo politico ed economico di Firenze a partire dal Duecento (Goldthwaite 2009; Najemy 2006), ma in sintesi si trattò di «un'accumulazione primaria di risorse che permise alla classe dirigente fiorentina di prevalere nella difficile competizione militare che accompagnò il ridisegno della mappa politica italiana alla scala delle regioni piuttosto che delle città» (Zorzi 2000, 7). Condizioni favorevoli dettate anche dall'organizzazione del territorio toscano, caratterizzato da elementi quali la marginalizzazione progressiva delle formazioni signorili e la presenza di un denso reticolato urbano articolato su grossi centri – «quasi città» – dotati spesso di istituzioni politiche mature e di un proprio distretto (Pirillo e Pinto 2013).

Si può individuare nel Duecento il momento decisivo in cui Firenze definì le basi della propria egemonia economica, politica e anche demografica sulla regione. Quest'ultimo aspetto è stato visto come un elemento 'intrinseco' del futuro predominio della Dominante, poiché i dati disponibili sulla popolazione, pur da prendere con le precauzioni del caso, dimostrano la capacità di Firenze di attirare nuovi abitanti tanto da quintuplicare nel giro di un secolo la propria dimensione (da 15/20.000 abitanti all'inizio del Duecento a oltre 100.000 all'inizio del Trecento), costituendo nella prima metà del XIV secolo un decimo degli abitanti dell'area toscana, due volte la popolazione di Pisa o Siena, quattro volte quella di Lucca e ancora di più quella di Arezzo, Pistoia e Prato (Pinto 1982, 67; Zorzi 2000, 9).

In ogni caso, furono le conquiste operate mediante campagne politico-militari a determinare materialmente il controllo da parte di Firenze di buona parte del territorio della Toscana. La lotta di Firenze per la conquista del proprio Contado iniziò inglobando il confine diocesano esistente, e proseguì espandendosi a quelli limitrofi. A partire dalla conquista di Fiesole nel 1125, questo processo si completò in meno di cinquant'anni con la distruzione del castello di Figline (1167), che nei piani del vescovo di Fiesole, Rodolfo, avrebbe dovuto ospitare la nuova sede della diocesi. In seguito, il Contado di Firenze fu costituito dalla somma delle due diocesi, come dimostra l'assestamento dei confini intorno alla metà del XIII secolo: essi non furono tracciati intorno a elementi fisici o naturali, ma sul calco delle circoscrizioni ecclesiastiche (Zorzi 1994).

Gli sviluppi connessi alla ridefinizione e alla semplificazione, tra Tre e Quattrocento, della geografia politica italiana portarono il gruppo dirigente fiorentino a dotare la capitale di una zona cuscinetto a protezione del Contado, determinante per garantire un continuo rifornimento di risorse alimentari, e a tutela delle vie di commercio – montane, costiere e marittime –, così importanti per lo sviluppo economico a vocazione mercantile della città del Giglio. La seconda metà del Trecento rappresentò il periodo più intenso dell'espansione territoriale fiorentina. Nell'arco di vent'anni vennero annesse piccole città indipendenti, insieme ai loro contadi, mentre nel febbraio 1351 Napoli cedette a Firenze la piena sovranità su Prato, per l'infimo corrispettivo di 17.500 fiorini d'oro; l'annessione al Contado fiorentino fu immediata, e con essa la sottomissione, anche a livello fiscale, agli ordini della nuova dominante.

Una nuova fase di espansione territoriale coinvolse i territori di alcune signorie rurali, e vere e proprie *civitates* andarono a costituire il nascente Distretto: Pistoia fu sempre più soggetta al controllo fiorentino (fino a capitolare definitivamente nel 1401), San Gimignano fu conquistata nel 1353, Volterra nel 1361 e San Miniato nel 1370 mentre Arezzo fu acquistata nel 1384 e Montepulciano sottomessa nel 1390. Con la conquista di Pisa, nel 1406 Firenze acquisì il tanto desiderato accesso al mare, concludendo così la lunga fase di costruzione dello Stato fiorentino (Tanzini 2012). Esso non subì modifiche sostanziali fino all'annessione della Repubblica di Siena nel 1555. Lo Stato di Siena, tuttavia, non fu mai reso parte integrante del Ducato: fu concesso in feudo dal re di Spagna Filippo II a Cosimo I nel 1557, e formò con lo Stato di Firenze una sorta di «unione personale» sotto il Duca. Di conseguenza, non era soggetta alle magistrature fiorentine, ma manteneva una struttura amministrativa autonoma (Fasano Guarini 1973; De La Roncière 2010).

3. Misurare la mobilità socio-economica

3.1 Le fonti e loro limiti

Ancora nel 1763 si poteva scrivere che i confini tra Contado e Distretto erano «religiosamente osservati per il trasporto delle merci e delle dogane», e per i diversi sistemi di tassazione diretta in vigore sulle due aree (Fasano Guarini 1973). Se le quasi-città del Distretto continuarono a godere di una certa autonomia impositiva, almeno fino all'istituzione del Catasto del 1427, nonché di qualche margine di azione politica, il Contado era costituito da più di 1.100 comunità delle più svariate dimensioni – da pochi focolari a molte centinaia, come nel caso di Prato (che in realtà costituiva una notevole eccezione) – soggette allo stesso sistema fiscale.

Dal 1315 ai cittadini fiorentini fu risparmiata la tassazione diretta, basata sull'Estimo, mantenuta per le sole comunità del Contado; il capoluogo era soggetto a tassazione indiretta e a prestiti forzosi. Sebbene esistano testimonianze di estimi per il Contado risalenti al 1259, i primi superstiti sono quelli del 1350. Il materiale più antico fu distrutto durante i tumulti per l'espulsione del duca di Atene, allora signore della città (1343) (Barbadoro 1929; Conti 1966).

Per quanto riguarda la documentazione 'regolare', dal 1350 al 1415 risultano otto revisioni dell'Estimo del Contado fiorentino: 1350, 1357, 1364-65, 1372-73, 1384, 1394, 1401-02 e 1412-15 (Conti 1966). Fortunatamente, per specifiche località, è stato possibile individuare documenti fiscali che precedono gli anni della Peste Nera. Questi non figurano nel fondo Estimo dell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze, dove sono conservate le rilevazioni relative all'intero Contado, ma sono rintracciabili, in modo del tutto asistematico, all'interno dei protocolli di alcuni notai che, rogando con una certa consuetudine presso quelle comunità, erano stati probabilmente incaricati della redazione degli Estimi locali e avevano tenuto memoria dei risultati all'interno dei loro libri.

La determinazione della 'cifra d'Estimo' avveniva in due fasi: una volta stabilita la somma complessiva da imporre all'intero Contado, per legge si dava mandato agli

«Ufficiali dell'Estimo» di distribuirla tra le varie comunità. L'idea era quella di dividere la massa dell'Estimo in proporzione alla ricchezza dichiarata (o presunta) dalle comunità, anche se Cohn ha mostrato come le disuguaglianze fossero all'ordine del giorno e frutto di continue tensioni tra centro e periferia (Cohn 1999). La quota veniva quindi suddivisa tra le famiglie di ogni singolo 'popolo' sulla base delle dichiarazioni dei capifamiglia che chiamati a descrivere la reale situazione di ricchezza dell'unità contributiva. Questa operazione era di solito effettuata localmente, e veniva affidata a uno o più soggetti eletti dai maschi adulti della comunità; l'intervento degli Ufficiali dell'Estimo era richiesto solo in caso di contestazioni (Barbadoro 1929, 99).

Una seconda commissione, stavolta di cittadini, gli «Ufficiali degli errori dell'Estimo», aveva il compito di controllare le partite iscritte a ruolo, valutando la congruità delle dichiarazioni, cancellando quelle intestate per errore a cittadini fiorentini e eventuali doppioni, cercando di sciogliere le questioni relative alla residenza fiscale dei contribuenti iscritti in più parrocchie (Conti 1966, 5).[3] Il combinato di queste attività rappresentava la parte più apertamente politica dell'estimazione, poiché il numero e la delicatezza delle decisioni erano tali da rendere oggetto di controversia ogni risultato delle valutazioni proposte.[4]

L'attribuzione dei carichi fiscali definiva in termini monetari il costo dell'appartenenza alla comunità e quindi il ruolo dei singoli al suo interno, anche se questi aspetti erano certamente attenuati in caso di contribuenti rurali, per i quali prevaleva il peso dell'assoggettamento all'autorità. Per questo erano di particolare importanza le soglie che definivano le diverse categorie di abitanti: i contribuenti a pieno titolo, gli esenti per indigenza (esclusi completamente dai registri fiscali o registrati con una voce pari a zero o in bianco) o in conseguenza di specifici privilegi (Vallerani 2018, 243). Riguardo all'ultimo aspetto, un tipico esempio era rappresentato dai possedimenti della Chiesa, soprattutto quelli più antichi, che, nello stato fiorentino come altrove, non erano soggetti a tassazione e non comparivano nei registri dell'Estimo.

Le modalità tecniche con cui veniva decisa l'assegnazione della quota non sono chiaramente indicate dalle fonti, ma si basavano sulla capacità contributiva della famiglia, anche se approssimata. Di conseguenza, la 'cifra' o 'lira d'Estimo' non rappresentava il valore del patrimonio o del reddito nella sua dimensione 'reale' (ad esempio, come valore di mercato), ma indicava la capacità contributiva di ogni famiglia, stabilendo così delle proporzioni tra i contribuenti. Si trattava di una 'quota equa' determinata calcolando il patrimonio della famiglia (per lo più basato su beni immobili – terreni e fabbricati), al netto dei debiti, e confrontando i risultati con quelli ottenuti da altre famiglie. Sulla base della valutazione, venivano applicate le imposte dirette ricorrenti, di solito in termini di tanti «soldi per lira di Estimo» (Herlihy 1968, 258).

Al fine di riformare la politica fiscale dello stato e promuovere una distribuzione più equa e efficiente delle imposte, nel 1427 Firenze introdusse il suo celebre Catasto,

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[3] Questa serie di registri, denominati «Campioni dell'Estimo», mostra per ogni rilevazione fiscale la ripartizione definitiva della 'massa dell'Estimo' all'interno delle singole comunità.

[4] È infatti molto raro trovare nella documentazione testimonianza delle modalità operative. Qualche indicazione per il caso di Santa Maria Impruneta è data dai riparti del 1280 e del 1330 (Barbadoro 1929, 98). Particolarmente interessante un esempio dall'Estimo bolognese del 1315 che riporta il dettaglio di tale delicata operazione (Vallerani 2018).

un'audace e complessa iniziativa che, a partire dalla capitale, dal maggio del 1428 fu esteso alle aree rurali, dando avvio a una serie di rinnovi nel 1435-37, 1451-55, 1458-60, 1469-71, 1487-90 e 1504-05 (Conti 1966; Klapisch-Zuber e Herlihy 1988). Questi Catasti rurali furono predisposti secondo gli stessi criteri applicati alla città, costituendo un significativo miglioramento rispetto agli Estimi precedenti, progressivamente divenuti più articolati e complessi da gestire. All'interno del Catasto, il valore capitale di una proprietà veniva determinato capitalizzando il reddito dichiarato al tasso del 7%. Dal computo era esclusa la casa di residenza, ma vi rientravano i beni domestici, le merci, i crediti e le posizioni debitorie. La differenza tra attività e passività costituiva le «sustanze», o «valsente», o «sovrabbondante», cioè la cifra soggetta a imposizione.

Il Catasto, tuttavia, non durò a lungo. Nel 1495 fu congegnato un nuovo e più semplice sistema di prelievo basato sulla Decima, un'imposta annuale del dieci per cento (da cui il nome) da applicare al reddito dei beni immobili di proprietà di cittadini e contadini. Il reddito imponibile era in questo caso limitato ai beni immobili, con l'esenzione della casa di residenza. Nel Contado la Decima fu introdotta solo a partire dal 1507-08, mentre l'estensione del tributo ai beni ecclesiastici, sebbene limitata ai beni acquistati dopo tale data, fu concessa da Papa Leone X nel 1516. L'introduzione del sistema della Decima portò alla completa sostituzione, in città come in campagna, dei precedenti registri con la rilevazione diretta di tutti i redditi generati dai beni immobili.

In particolare, con l'avvento del Principato nel 1532, si diede avvio a un profondo riordino dei libri catastali, che tuttavia non comportò alcuna revisione dei vecchi imponibili. Ai cittadini (nel 1532) e ai comitatini (nel 1536) fu richiesta una nuova denuncia dei loro beni, segnando così l'ultima fase di censimento delle partite catastali introdotte nel sistema della Decima dopo il 1498 (per il Contado, dopo il 1508). Le voci contenute nei registri, accumulate nel corso degli anni con i trasferimenti di proprietà, mantennero immutato il valore dei cespiti, espresso in fiorini, soldi e denari larghi, fino ai primi decenni dell'Ottocento. Sebbene si fossero verificati rinnovi dei libri nel corso dei secoli,[5] la serie deve essere considerata come un unico flusso di registrazioni ininterrotte fino al 1776. I rinnovi, inoltre, furono principalmente dedicati alla registrazione dei trasferimenti di proprietà, senza un aggiornamento dei valori. Al contrario, numerose voci, costituite da eredità in sospeso o lasciti, «rimasero invariate anche nel nome dei proprietari, dal Cinquecento fino all'abolizione della Decima» (Fiumi 1968, 183).

Il meccanismo contabile di rilevazione dell'imposta consisteva nella registrazione, nella pagina sinistra di un registro («Campioni»), dei vari beni tassabili attribuiti a un contribuente; in calce a ogni posta, sulla somma dei valori dei beni, era calcolata la Decima complessiva. Le successive variazioni di proprietà erano registrate sommando sulla facciata a sinistra le nuove acquisizioni e riportando sulla facciata destra del registro le cifre estimali scaricate in caso di alienazioni. In entrambi i casi erano

[5] I Campioni del contado della Decima Granducale furono rinnovati, dopo il 1536, nel 1570, nel 1621 e nel 1715. Si veda Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), *Decima granducale*, 5165-5196 (S. Spirito), 5197-5236 (S. Croce), 5237-5272 (S. Maria Novella), 5273-5344 (S. Giovanni), 5361-5375 (Prato).

annotati i rimandi delle operazioni di acquisto o vendita al libro degli «Arroti», un'altra serie di volumi deputati a contenere le variazioni intervenute nei 'conti' dei contribuenti. Con il termine 'arroto' era quindi denominata la voltura, redatta dall'ufficio stesso sulla base di giustificazioni o 'fedi' (atto notarile, scrittura privata, testamento, atto di morte, ecc.), che i beneficiari dovevano presentare agli Ufficiali della Decima entro due mesi dalla data di acquisizione del bene immobile. Si noti che i beni alienati a enti ecclesiastici, opere pie o altri privilegiati continuavano a essere descritti, nei campioni della città o del Contado dai quali provenivano, sotto il nome di «Beni che furono di …, possiede oggi ...» (Conti 1966, 195).

Sebbene i contemporanei considerassero l'introduzione della Decima come un miglioramento in termini di maggiore equità, dal nostro punto di vista è una limitazione poiché alcune componenti di ricchezza diventano non osservabili, una su tutte le quote di debito pubblico possedute dai contribuenti. Tuttavia, ciò ha scarso rilievo pratico nell'analisi delle comunità del Contado, poiché sappiamo che nel 1427 erano i cittadini di Firenze a possedere il 99,75% del debito pubblico e, più in generale, il 78% di tutti i beni mobili nello Stato (Herlihy 1978, 137): è difficile pensare che la situazione si fosse ribaltata o fosse mutata in modo significativo nei secoli successivi.

Un problema più rilevante riguarda le case di residenza: nei Catasti tali beni venivano valutati ma non considerati nel calcolo delle imposte dovute, mentre nella Decima erano indicati senza alcuna attribuzione di valore. Finché l'immobile fosse rimasto «per uso», esso non sarebbe stato gravato da imposta, anche in caso di passaggio di proprietà. Con l'acquisto da parte di un contribuente già proprietario della propria casa di abitazione, però, il bene avrebbe perso tale agevolazione e sarebbe tornato soggetto a regolare Decima. Una distorsione evidente è che coloro che possedevano solo la casa di residenza erano fiscalmente equivalenti a chi non possedeva alcuna proprietà. È bene precisare che i genuinamente poveri non comparivano comunque nei registri fiscali, a causa della natura del sistema fiscale.

Altrove è stato dimostrato che questa caratteristica delle fonti decimali non comporta significative alterazioni nelle analisi di alcuni fenomeni come ad esempio l'andamento nel tempo della disuguaglianza economica (Ammannati, De Franco, e Di Tullio 2015). Anche per quanto riguarda lo studio della mobilità socio-economica, nell'accezione qui utilizzata di collocazione nel tempo dei contribuenti in diverse fasce di distribuzione della ricchezza, la mancata valutazione della casa di abitazione non costituisce quindi un problema: se il valore della proprietà immobiliare rimaneva invariato nel tempo, cioè se l'immobile continuava a essere la residenza principale della famiglia, ciò non aveva impatto sulla dinamica della mobilità del nucleo dal punto di vista fiscale. Ai fini di un'indagine come quella qui condotta, che vuole rintracciare le dinamiche di lungo periodo della mobilità sociale osservando un dato gruppo di contribuenti e una certa quota di ricchezza, alcune lacune delle fonti fiscali possono insomma rivelarsi un limite non determinante.

3.2 La banca dati

Fig. 1. **Le comunità del Contado fiorentino che compongono la banca dati**

Tra le centinaia di comunità del Contado fiorentino, ne abbiamo selezionate 23 basandoci su alcuni criteri fondamentali. In primo luogo, si è scelto di adottare come unità di osservazione il singolo 'popolo', anziché il 'piviere', livello amministrativo superiore che raggruppava un numero variabile di piccole comunità. Il Contado, ossia il territorio al di fuori delle mura cittadine, era infatti suddiviso nei quattro quartieri della città (San Giovanni, Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce e Santo Spirito), ciascuno dei quali comprendeva più 'pivieri', a loro volta articolati in 'popoli'. Questa organizzazione ricalcava in gran parte la tradizionale suddivisione ecclesiastica del territorio in pievi e parrocchie. Un'importante innovazione fu introdotta con il Catasto del 1435, che assegnò un numero progressivo a ciascun 'popolo' del Contado, quartiere per quartiere, identificandolo univocamente. Il sistema rimase in vigore fino alla graduale transizione verso il moderno Catasto ottocentesco e costituisce un elemento chiave anche per il secondo criterio di campionamento applicato, cioè la scelta di comunità che mantennero una continuità territoriale nel corso dei secoli. Infatti, tra XIV e XVIII secolo, Firenze riorganizzò più volte l'assetto amministrativo del proprio territorio, aggregando le comunità in leghe, vicariati e podesterie, la cui estensione poteva variare nel tempo a seguito di scissioni o accorpamenti. Tuttavia, grazie

alla numerazione progressiva introdotta nel Catasto, i 'popoli' rimasero identificabili con continuità per oltre tre secoli, permettendo così di seguirne l'evoluzione storica.

Infine, abbiamo considerato la copertura geografica, selezionando comunità distribuite in modo omogeneo all'interno del Contado, includendo anche Prato. Alcune località, come Antella, San Martino alla Palma e Santa Maria Impruneta, particolarmente vicine al capoluogo, furono tra le prime aree investite dall'espansione fiorentina. Qui, già dal tardo Medioevo, la penetrazione della proprietà urbana si era fatta più marcata, in un contesto dominato dal sistema mezzadrile. A partire dal XIV secolo la proprietà cittadina crebbe e si concentrò nelle aree più fertili e vicine ai centri urbani, mentre i comitatini conservavano quote maggiori solo nelle zone montane o collinari meno produttive, come il Casentino, dove l'influenza cittadina era più debole.

Un altro gruppo di comunità selezionate si trova nella Val d'Elsa, caratterizzata da terre fertili e diversificate, dalle pianure vallive alle basse colline. Questa area fu inglobata nel Contado nei primi vent'anni del Trecento: dapprima le località sulla riva destra dell'Elsa (Castelfiorentino, Poggibonsi e Monterappoli), seguite poi da Gambassi, zone che, per lungo tempo, segnarono il confine con il territorio senese. Particolarmente significativa è anche la presenza di Castel San Giovanni, nell'alto Valdarno, una delle comunità di nuova fondazione volute da Firenze alla fine del XIII secolo per consolidare il proprio controllo su aree prive di grandi insediamenti, contenere le incursioni militari di Arezzo e Siena e ridurre il potere delle signorie locali. Infine, nella parte settentrionale del Contado, abbiamo incluso le comunità di Borgo San Lorenzo, nel cuore del Mugello lungo il fiume Sieve, e di San Godenzo, il cui territorio prevalentemente montuoso si estendeva lungo i contrafforti appenninici in direzione di Forlì. Queste ultime località, ceduta a Firenze dai Conti Guidi nel 1344, rappresentava un ulteriore esempio del processo di consolidamento del dominio fiorentino sulle terre periferiche del suo stato territoriale.

3.3 La metodologia adottata

I registri fiscali utilizzati per analizzare la mobilità sociale economica all'interno delle comunità lungo tutto il periodo coperto dalle rilevazioni, siano dell'Estimo, del Catasto o della Decima, rappresentano un quadro realistico della distribuzione della ricchezza dei contribuenti (Herlihy 1968, 258). Gli esempi qui proposti riguarderanno l'utilizzo dei registri dell'Estimo come fonte di base per lo studio della mobilità socio-economica in epoca medievale e quelli della Decima per l'Età Moderna.

Come accennato, la modalità operativa prescelta per l'analisi implica l'identificazione dei fuochi fiscali elencati in un determinato Estimo – o per ogni anno nel caso della Decima – ('Anno 1') e nel successivo ('Anno 2'), operando cioè un *linkage* di due nuclei familiari e registrandone la variazione in ascesa o in diminuzione. Tale procedura richiede osservazioni ravvicinate nel tempo per garantire che si possa stabilire un legame nominativo tra i contribuenti. Le stime disponibili per il Contado fiorentino, soprattutto a partire dalla metà del XIV secolo, consentono di effettuare indagini a distanza di circa dieci anni l'una dall'altra (a meno di lacune nelle fonti). Ancora più dettagliate sono le rilevazioni offerte dalla Decima che, dal 1536 fino alla

sua abolizione nel 1776, registrava le variazioni dei beni immobili appartenuti ai contribuenti anno per anno, consentendo un'analisi ancora più sottile del movimento dei patrimoni. L'utilizzo di differenti tipologie di fonti richiede di confrontarsi con specifiche criticità metodologiche.

Per quanto riguarda l'Estimo, un primo problema pone la natura dei dati presenti nei singoli registri: essendo ogni rilevazione la conseguenza della diversa ripartizione tra le comunità di un contingente globale stabilito ogni volta da Firenze (il cui rapporto con la ricchezza totale delle comunità era tutt'altro che fisso (Cohn 1999)), non è possibile paragonare il valore assoluto delle 'cifre d'Estimo' di ogni 'popolo'. La soluzione è quindi suddividere la distribuzione in parti uguali, nel nostro caso cinque, misurando la mobilità sociale economica come il movimento delle famiglie tra quintili di ricchezza – considerando come Q5 tutti valori che appartengono al 20% superiore della distribuzione.[6] Tutti i movimenti sono poi inquadrati per ogni comunità in matrici standardizzate di mobilità sociale, così da ottenere misure come la mobilità verso l'alto (% di famiglie che salgono), la mobilità verso il basso (% di famiglie che scendono) e la mobilità totale (la somma delle due).

I registri della Decima non pongono questo tipo di problema, dato che riportano il valore stimato dei beni posseduti dai contribuenti durante l'intero intervallo di rilevazione. Per coerenza nell'adozione della metodologia, comunque, anche in questo caso le distribuzioni sono state suddivise in cinque parti.

Sempre osservando i dati degli Estimi, un'altra difficoltà può emergere in sede di *linkage*, allorché gli elenchi riportino i nominativi di più persone afferenti allo stesso nucleo famigliare (padre, o madre, con uno o più figli, fratelli, e così via). Se nell'Estimo successivo la continuità del fuoco è salvaguardata o dalla stessa denominazione o dal fatto che almeno uno degli eredi è sopravvissuto, il collegamento si considera perfezionato. Al contrario, se nell'elenco dei contribuenti successivo figurano due o più poste frutto di una filiazione del vecchio fuoco, si considera valido solo il collegamento tra quest'ultimo e il nucleo che ha assorbito la parte 'principale' del patrimonio; nel caso ciò non sia possibile (ad esempio sia subentrata una equa divisione tra singoli contribuenti indipendenti), il collegamento non viene considerato valido. Anche nel caso dei dati della Decima, quando un patrimonio viene smembrato tra più eredi il collegamento con il fuoco originario viene interrotto dando inizio al monitoraggio dei nuovi nuclei familiari.

In questa fase è necessario gestire un'ulteriore criticità: come calcolare le matrici di mobilità sulla base di distribuzioni che presentano 'gradini', ovvero comprendono più nuclei famigliari registrati con lo stesso valore (vedi Tab. 1)?[7] Questa situazione rende incerta l'assegnazione a quintili specifici, poiché il posizionamento relativo delle famiglie con la stessa 'cifra d'Estimo' dipende da criteri arbitrari di ordinamento,

[6] In questo testo, il termine 'quintile' si riferisce a ciascuna delle cinque parti uguali (20%) della distribuzione, anziché ai valori di soglia che delimitano tali gruppi, come previsto dalla definizione statistica formale. Questa scelta risponde a criteri di coerenza con la letteratura socio-economica di riferimento.

[7] In questa tabella, così come nelle successive, la 'cifra d'Estimo' è espressa in denari di lire fiorentine di piccioli (1 lira = 240 denari).

con conseguente sovrapposizione tra quintili adiacenti: un'attribuzione non strutturata potrebbe quindi distorcere le stime di mobilità, sovra- o sottostimando il passaggio tra parti diverse della distribuzione.

Tab. 1. **Esempio di applicazione del metodo. Estimo di Gambassi (1356-1365, distribuzioni non complete)**

nome	cognome/ patronimico	TOT Anno 1356	Quintile 1356		nome	cognome/ patronimico	TOT Anno 1365	Quintile 1365
Bartolomeus	Bertini	240	1		Bartolomeus	Bertini	240	1
Bartolomeus	Chelini	480	1		Bartolomeus	Chelini	240	1
Salvi	Juntarelli	480	1		Salvi	Juntarelli	240	1
Benivieri	Lippi	480	1		Bonorius	Lippi	240	1
Marchus et Nofrius	Guarduci	480	1		Mattheus	Baroncini	240	1
Paulus	Johannis (ser)	480	1		Niccholaus	Bindi	240	1
Matheus	Baroncini	720	1		Teri	Boni	240	1
Niccolaus	Bindi	720	1		Stefanus	Dini	240	1
Terius	Bonis	720	1		Ranuccius	Johannis	240	1
Stefanus	Dini	720	1		Fiorettus	They	240	1
Ranuccius	Johannis	**720**	**1**		Petrus	Bindi	**240**	**1**
Fiorectus	They	**720**	**2**		Lippus	Muççi	**240**	**2**
Nardus	Chay	720	2		Marchus	Vannis	240	2
Tavante	Colucci	720	2		Nardus	Chelini	240	2
Antone	Finucci	720	2		Jacobus	Vannelli	240	2
Cecchus	Petrini	720	2		Marchus	Guarducci	360	2
Johannes	Vanelli	720	2		Nardus	Cay	360	2
Franciscus	Gecti	720	2		Tavante	Chelucci	360	2
Pierus	Comucci	720	2		Antonius	Finucci	360	2
…	…	…	…		…	…	…	…
…	…	…	…		…	…	…	…
…	…	…	…		…	…	…	…

Per superare questa ambiguità, la procedura adotta un approccio basato su due diversi ordinamenti delle distribuzioni 'Anno 1' e 'Anno 2', mantenendo il legame univoco tra le famiglie: quest'ultimo aspetto garantisce che i movimenti tra quintili riflettano effettivamente le variazioni di status economico, senza disallineamenti artificiali. L'obiettivo è quello di massimizzare le differenze nei risultati, così da cogliere il margine estremo di variabilità in presenza di valori identici. Il risultato consente di ottenere due matrici di mobilità per ogni coppia di anni: è quindi sufficiente procedere alla media delle diverse misure per ottenere la stima desiderata, che risulti robusta e bilanciata. Utilizzando ordinamenti opposti per le condizioni secondarie (ascendente vs. discendente), si massimizzano le differenze nelle matrici, consentendo di catturare l'intero spettro di possibili mobilità. Vediamo nella pratica l'applicazione di questo metodo, usando come esempio il caso della comunità di Gambassi.

In primo luogo, è necessario ordinare i contribuenti in base all'Anno 1 (in ordine crescente, o «dal più povero al più ricco»), utilizzando l'Anno 2 (sempre «dal più povero al più ricco») come condizione di ordinamento di secondo livello, e procedere all'assegnazione dei quintili alle famiglie dell'Anno 1 (Tab 2a). Seguendo la stessa logica, il passaggio successivo consiste nell'ordinare le famiglie in base all'Anno 2 (in ordine crescente, o «dal più povero al più ricco»), utilizzando l'Anno 1 («dal più povero al più ricco») come condizione di ordinamento, e nell'assegnare infine i quintili alle famiglie dell'Anno 2 (Tab. 2b). Una volta identificati i movimenti tra i quintili delle famiglie dall'Anno 1 all'Anno 2, è possibile comporre una prima matrice e calcolare i tassi di mobilità (Tab. 2c).

Per ottenere i tassi di mobilità da una seconda matrice, è necessario ripetere il procedimento, disponendo le famiglie in base all'Anno 1 («dal più povero al più ricco»), utilizzando sempre l'Anno 2 come condizione di ordinamento, ma stavolta in senso decrescente («dal più ricco al più povero»), assegnando poi i quintili ai nuclei dell'Anno 1 (Tab. 2d). L'ultimo passaggio è quello di ordinare di nuovo in senso crescente i contribuenti in base all'Anno 2 («dal più povero al più ricco»), utilizzando l'Anno 1 («dal più ricco al più povero») come condizione, e assegnare i quintili alle famiglie dell'Anno 2 (Tab. 2e). Infine, disegnare una seconda tabella e calcolare i tassi di mobilità (Tab. 2f). Per ottenere i tassi di mobilità definitivi, è sufficiente a questo punto calcolare la media aritmetica tra i tassi di mobilità ottenuti dalle due matrici precedenti (Tab. 2g).

Tab. 2. **Riordino delle distribuzioni, Gambassi 1356-1365 (distribuzioni non complete)**

a) Assegnazione dei quintili 1356 (ordinamento 1356 *crescente*; condizione di secondo livello 1365 *crescente*)			**b) Assegnazione dei quintili 1365 (ordinamento 1365 *crescente*; condizione di secondo livello 1356 *crescente*)**			
TOT Anno 1356	**Quintile 1356 (CON 1365 crescente)**	**TOT Anno 1365**	**TOT Anno 1356**	**Quintile 1356 (CON 1365 crescente)**	**TOT Anno 1365**	**Quintile 1365 (CON 1356 crescente)**
240	1	240	240	1	240	1
480	1	240	480	1	240	1
480	1	240	480	1	240	1
480	1	240	480	1	240	1
480	1	360	720	1	240	1
480	1	1080	720	1	240	1
720	1	240	720	1	240	1
720	1	240	720	1	240	1
720	1	240	720	1	240	1
720	1	240	720	2	240	1
720	1	240	480	1	360	2
720	2	240	720	2	360	2
720	2	360	720	2	360	2
720	2	360	720	2	360	2
720	2	360	720	2	360	2

720	**2**	**360**	**720**	**2**	**360**	**2**
720	**2**	**360**	**720**	**2**	**360**	**3**
720	**2**	**360**	**720**	**2**	**360**	**3**
720	**2**	**360**	**480**	**1**	**1080**	**4**
…	…	…	…	…	…	…
…	…	…	…	…	…	…
…	…	…	…	…	…	…

c) Matrice di mobilità (condizione di secondo livello *crescente*/«dal più povero al più ricco»)

	Classe di destinazione 1365				
Classe di origine 1356	1	2	3	4	5
1	9	1		1	
2	1	5	4		
3	1	1	2	2	4
4		1	4	3	2
5		2		4	4

51	**Totali**	
23	Stabili	
14	*Ascendente*	*27,45%*
14	*Discendente*	*27,45%*
28	***Mobilità totale***	***54,90%***

d) Assegnazione dei quintili 1356 (ordinamento 1356 *crescente*; condizione di secondo livello 1365 *decrescente*)

TOT Anno 1356	**Quintile 1356 (CON 1365 decrescente)**	**TOT Anno 1365**
240	**1**	**240**
480	**1**	**1080**
480	**1**	**360**
480	**1**	**240**
480	**1**	**240**
480	**1**	**240**
720	**1**	**3120**
720	**1**	**2160**
720	**1**	**1920**
720	**1**	**1560**
720	**1**	**1080**
720	**2**	**1080**
720	**2**	**480**
720	**2**	**480**
720	**2**	**480**
720	**2**	**360**

e) Assegnazione dei quintili 1365 (ordinamento 1365 *crescente*; condizione di secondo livello 1356 *decrescente*)

TOT Anno 1356	**Quintile 1356 (CON 1365 decrescente)**	**TOT Anno 1365**	**Quintile 1365 (CON 1356 decrescente)**
1200	**5**	**240**	**1**
1200	**5**	**240**	**1**
960	**4**	**240**	**1**
960	**4**	**240**	**1**
960	**4**	**240**	**1**
720	**3**	**240**	**1**
720	**3**	**240**	**1**
720	**3**	**240**	**1**
720	**3**	**240**	**1**
720	**3**	**240**	**1**
720	**3**	**240**	**1**
480	**1**	**240**	**2**
480	**1**	**240**	**2**
480	**1**	**240**	**2**
240	**1**	**240**	**2**
960	**4**	**360**	**2**

720	**2**	**360**	**720**	**2**	**360**	**2**
720	**2**	**360**	**720**	**2**	**360**	**2**
720	**2**	**360**	**720**	**2**	**360**	**2**
…	…	…	…	…	…	…
…	…	…	…	…	…	…
…	…	…	…	…	…	…

f) Matrice di mobilità (condizione di secondo livello *decrescente*/«dal più ricco al più povero»)

	Classe di destinazione 1365				
Classe di origine 1356	1	2	3	4	5
1		4	1	1	5
2		5	2	3	
3	6		2		2
4	3	1	3	3	
5	2		2	3	3

51	**Totali**	
13	Stabili	
18	*Ascendente*	*35,29%*
20	*Discendente*	*38,32%*
38	***Mobilità totale***	***74,5%***

g) Mobilità socio-economica media

Mobilità con condizione di secondo livello *crescente*		**Mobilità con condizione di secondo livello *decrescente***	
Ascendente	*27,45%*	*Ascendente*	*35,29%*
Discendente	*27,45%*	*Discendente*	*38,32%*
Mobilità totale	***54,90%***	***Mobilità totale***	***74,5%***

Mobilità media	
Ascendente	*31,37%*
Discendente	*33,33%*
Mobilità totale	***64,70%***

Questa soluzione è particolarmente utile, e necessaria, nel caso delle distribuzioni ottenute dai dati dell'Estimo a causa della specificità delle norme e delle procedure che ne regolavano la composizione (l'attribuzione di una 'cifra d'Estimo' da parte degli Ufficiali), mentre è più raro che i libri della Decima propongano contribuenti con lo stesso identico valore, trattandosi di stime effettive di beni immobili. Per rendere le analisi confrontabili, comunque, anche le distribuzioni dei dati fiscali dal Cinquecento in poi sono state sottoposte alla rielaborazione descritta in precedenza.

4. L'applicazione del metodo

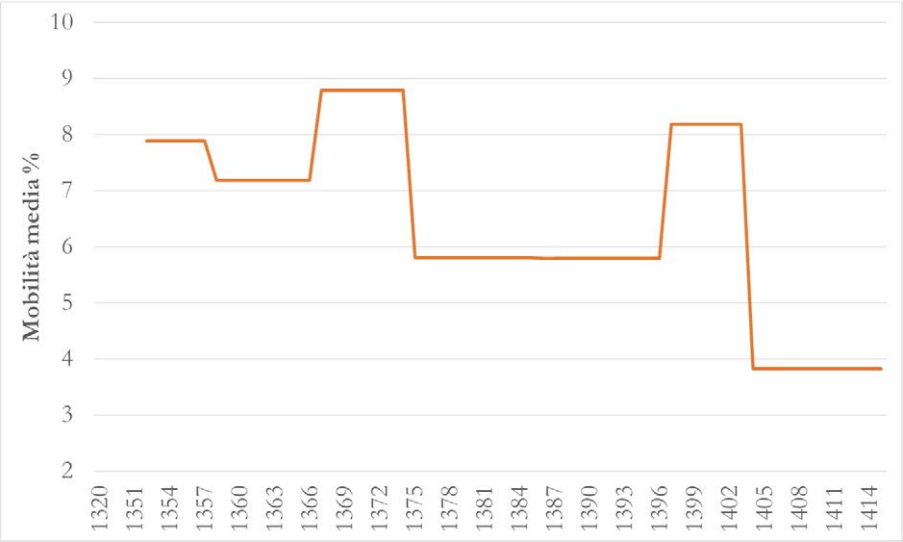
Applicando quanto visto a tutti gli intervalli disponibili, cioè calcolando la mobilità media ottenuta dalla creazione delle doppie matrici, è possibile verificare quanti nuclei famigliari hanno cambiato posizione nella distribuzione, in ascesa o in discesa, nel periodo considerato. Nel caso della comunità di Gambassi, presa ad esempio, i risultati sono visibili nella Tab. 3.[8] L'andamento medio annuale è rappresentato nel Graf. 1.

Tab. 3. **Mobilità socio-economica Gambassi 1350-1414**

Anno 1	**Anno 2**	**Anni**	**Fuochi Anno 1**	**Fuochi Anno 2**	***Link***	**Mobilità ascendente %**	**Mobilità discendente %**	**Mobilità totale %**	**Mobilità totale (annuale)**
1350	1356	6	151	130	93	24,73	22,58	47,31	7,88
1356	1365	9	130	110	51	31,37	33,33	64,70	7,18
1365	1373	8	110	160	86	31,97	38,37	70,34	8,79
1373	1384	11	160	189	97	34,02	29,89	63,91	5,81
1384	1395	11	189	175	84	32,14	31,54	63,69	5,79
1395	1402	7	175	190	96	29,68	27,60	57,29	8,18
1402	1414	12	190	187	100	23,00	23,00	46,00	3,83

[8] I registri utilizzati sono conservati nell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), *Estimo*, 258, 259, 264, 265, 266, 267, 269, 270.

Graf. 1. **Mobilità socio-economica Gambassi 1350-1414, media annuale**



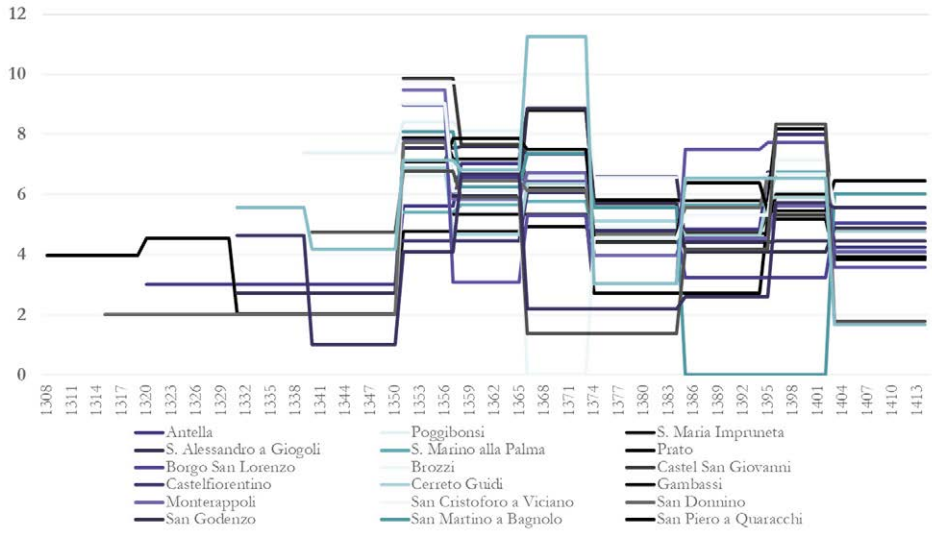
Estendendo questa metodologia ai dati di una serie di 'popoli' del Contado fiorentino, per alcune delle quali è possibile ampliare l'intervallo di osservazione anche a prima della Peste Nera,[9] si ottiene il Graf. 2.

Questo risultato permette una prima serie di considerazioni sulla dinamica della mobilità sociale nel Contado fiorentino, e soprattutto consente di apprezzare la discontinuità in aumento tra il periodo pre e post 1348. Il ricorso a una media annuale ottenuta semplicemente dividendo la percentuale di mobilità sociale per il numero di anni che intercorrono tra le osservazioni fiscali rischia però di creare problemi dal punto di vista di comparabilità delle misure, data la diversa lunghezza degli intervalli; inoltre, in alcuni casi, la distanza tra le date degli Estimi disponibili è molto ampia e rischia di distorcere (al ribasso) la mobilità media annua. Più lungo è il periodo, infatti, tendenzialmente più alta è la mobilità tra gli estremi, ma più bassa è la mobilità media

[9] La base di dati utilizzata per il periodo 1350-1415 comprende 23 comunità del Contado, uniformemente distribuite nel territorio intorno a Firenze: Prato, Antella, Poggibonsi, S.M. Impruneta, S. Alessandro a Giogoli, S. Martino alla Palma, Borgo San Lorenzo, Brozzi, Castel San Giovanni, Castelfiorentino, Cerreto Guidi, Gambassi, Monterappoli, San Cristoforo a Viciano, San Donnino, San Godenzo, San Martino a Bagnolo, San Piero a Quaracchi, Santa Lucia alla Sala, Sant'Andrea a Luiano, San Romolo a Tignano, San Filippo a Barberino, San Gersolè. I dati per queste comunità sono contenuti nei registri: ASF, *Estimo*, 258, 259, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 277, 278, 279, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 299, 300. Come anticipato, per alcune comunità sono disponibili anche Estimi pre-1348: per Santa Maria Impruneta 1307, 1319, 1330 (ASF, *Notarile antecosimiano*, 2354, 7145, 2359); per Brozzi, San Donnino, San Piero a Quaracchi e Santa Lucia alla Sala 1314 (ASF, *Notarile antecosimiano*, 951); per Antella, Sant'Andrea a Luiano e San Martino a Bagnolo 1319 (ASF, *Notarile antecosimiano*, 448, 7415); per Sant'Alessandro a Giogoli, San Cristoforo a Viciano, San Filippo a Barberino e San Gersolè a Semifonte 1330 (ASF, *Notarile antecosimiano*, 8911, 3783, 17578). Di queste ultime due comunità, più quella di San Romolo a Tignano, sopravvivono anche gli Estimi del 1339 (ASF, *Notarile antecosimiano*, 3785).

annua (una famiglia che si muove alternativamente verso l'alto e verso il basso un anno dopo l'altro, sembrerà perfettamente immobile quando si collegano fonti distanti un numero pari di anni).

Graf. 2. **Mobilità socio-economica per 23 comunità del Contado fiorentino 1307-1415, medie annuali**



La semplice standardizzazione annuale è quindi un'approssimazione sufficientemente buona quando i periodi considerati sono brevi (pochi anni) o di lunghezza comparabile, poiché le condizioni generali tendono a rimanere relativamente stabili. Tuttavia, diventa meno affidabile quando i periodi includono eventi estremi come pestilenze, guerre, o altri shock significativi che possono distorcere i dati in modo imprevedibile. In questi casi, la standardizzazione annuale potrebbe non essere sufficiente per catturare l'impatto di tali eventi, portando a conclusioni errate o fuorvianti. Pertanto, in presenza di grandi perturbazioni, è necessario adottare approcci più sofisticati per tenere conto di queste variazioni anomale.

Per superare questo problema è possibile introdurre un modello lineare di probabilità al fine di misurare la mobilità sociale annuale. Questo modello stima la percentuale di famiglie che attraversano cambiamenti di status sociale (in ascesa o discesa) in un periodo t specifico e in una data comunità i. La misura si basa sul numero iniziale di famiglie nel periodo, sull'anno di inizio e sulla sua durata. Sono utilizzati effetti fissi di comunità per controllare le influenze derivanti dalle caratteristiche specifiche di ciascun 'popolo' e isolarne gli effetti dalla variabilità dei dati. Inoltre, l'analisi è ponderata in base al numero di famiglie 'collegate' (*linked*) all'inizio e alla fine del periodo considerato. Questo significa che le famiglie che sono presenti

sia all'inizio che alla fine del periodo hanno un peso maggiore nell'analisi, riducendo il *bias* derivante dalla perdita di osservazioni.

Formalizzando, il modello lineare di probabilità adottato è

$$Y_{ti} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ti} + \delta_i + \mu_{ti}$$

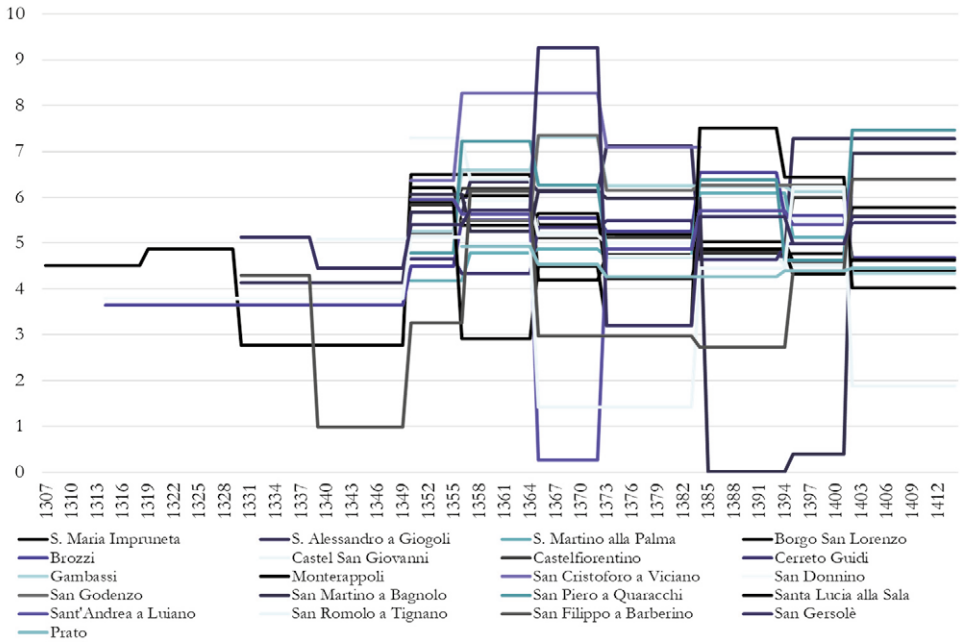
dove Y_{ti} rappresenta la percentuale di famiglie che sperimentano mobilità sociale, X_{ti} una serie di covariate (numero di famiglie all'inizio del periodo, anno iniziale di rilevazione, durata del periodo), e δ_i l'effetto fisso di comunità.[10]

Il modello stima che l'impatto marginale di un anno aggiuntivo sulla mobilità sociale sia pari a 1,3226 punti percentuali. Questo, tuttavia, è da interpretare come un effetto spurio, poiché è prodotto dal metodo di misurazione stesso. In particolare, la durata del periodo considerato influisce sulla misura della mobilità sociale, rendendo necessario un aggiustamento per ottenere stime più accurate e confrontabili. Per questo motivo la mobilità sociale osservata viene attribuita a un periodo 'standard' di 10 anni, utilizzando il coefficiente stimato dal modello. Questa standardizzazione permette di confrontare la mobilità sociale tra periodi di diversa durata, eliminando la distorsione legata alla lunghezza del periodo. Successivamente, la mobilità standardizzata viene divisa per la durata del periodo considerato, ottenendo così una media annuale della mobilità sociale. Si tratta di un passaggio cruciale per garantire che i risultati siano comparabili nel tempo e non siano influenzati dalla durata del periodo analizzato.

Vale la pena sottolineare che l'obiettivo principale di questa analisi non è stimare i livelli assoluti di mobilità sociale, ma piuttosto osservare la sua dinamica nel tempo. In altre parole, l'interesse è comprendere come la mobilità sociale cambia e si evolve nel corso degli anni, piuttosto che quantificarla in termini assoluti. Questo approccio consente di identificare tendenze e modelli temporali, fornendo insights più rilevanti per lo studio delle trasformazioni sociali e delle loro cause sottostanti. Il risultato dell'applicazione della metodologia sopra illustrata è visibile nel Graf. 3.

[10] Per i dettagli in merito al modello lineare di probabilità e l'analisi puntuale dei risultati rimando a Alfani, Ammannati, e Balbo 2022.

Graf. 3. **Mobilità socio-economica per 21 comunità del Contado fiorentino 1307-1415, medie annuali rettificate in base alla durata del periodo: 10 anni**



Alcune rapide considerazioni preliminari: nel periodo precedente alla Peste Nera, si osservano tassi di mobilità relativamente bassi. Se durante gli anni dell'epidemia si presentano problemi nella stima, principalmente a causa delle difficoltà nel rintracciare i collegamenti tra le famiglie attraverso i diversi periodi, probabilmente dovuti alla disgregazione della struttura sociale delle comunità, è evidente come nei trent'anni successivi, corrispondenti a circa una generazione e mezzo, si registri un aumento della mobilità sociale, seguito da una stabilizzazione a livelli più elevati rispetto a quelli precedenti. Pur ammettendo una relazione complessa e ancora non del tutto chiarita tra i livelli di mobilità sociale e altri parametri economici, è interessante sottolineare come, tra Tre e Quattrocento, la prima aumenti al diminuire della disuguaglianza economica: come è stato dimostrato da recenti studi sul tema, la tendenza tra Basso Medioevo e piena Età Moderna – in Toscana in particolare, ma anche altrove in Europa – è quella di un costante aumento della disuguaglianza interrotto solo, per circa un secolo, dalla Peste Nera (Alfani 2021, 2024; Alfani e Ammannati 2017; Ammannati 2015).

Il Graf. 3 riflette cambiamenti 'all'interno' delle comunità. L'analisi fin qui condotta infatti non prende in considerazione la cosiddetta 'mobilità geografica', cioè i movimenti migratori da una comunità all'altra; in realtà per alcune comunità e per alcuni anni, è possibile stimare una mobilità dovuta alle migrazioni, in entrata e in uscita (e totale).

Il fondo Estimo dell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze conserva infatti una serie, chiamata modernamente «Capi famiglia», che contiene le dichiarazioni presentate alla capitale dai 'popoli' del Contado fiorentino in vista della creazione, da parte degli Ufficiali, dei ruoli fiscali (Conti 1966, 6). Al contrario di questi ultimi, a cui si è fatto ricorso per la raccolta dei dati fin qui utilizzati, la serie dei «Capi famiglia» riporta le denunce delle comunità (o «portate») solo a partire dal 1365, proseguendo fino allo smantellamento dell'Estimo. Già dall'indagine fiscale del 1371, però, sono presenti informazioni sulle migrazioni dei residenti rurali; le popolazioni rurali erano infatti inquadrate in quattro categorie: «stanti» (coloro che erano rimasti nella comunità dall'ultima redazione), «venuti» e «tornati» (gli immigrati e i comitatini di rientro), «usciti» e «morti» (Cohn 1996, 384). Sfortunatamente non per tutte le comunità e per tutti gli Estimi vi è piena disponibilità di dati (perché non riportati dai responsabili dei 'popoli', perché perduti, perché incompleti). In ogni caso, per il periodo successivo alla Peste Nera è possibile utilizzare le informazioni esistenti – sempre utilizzando il modello lineare di probabilità introdotto in precedenza per evitare distorsioni legate alla diseguale lunghezza dei periodi – per stimare la mobilità geografica tra le comunità del Contado impiegate nello studio (escludendo Prato, la cui dimensione demografica rischia di distorcere le stime dei movimenti in entrata e uscita complessivi). L'analisi (si veda Alfani, Ammannati, e Balbo 2022 per maggiori dettagli) dimostra un livello di mobilità geografica post Peste Nera piuttosto elevata, anche se non è possibile una comparazione con quella del periodo precedente. Il suo aumento nel tempo, comunque, è coerente con un'ipotesi di esaurimento delle possibilità di avanzamento 'interno' e di stimolo all'emigrazione come ricerca di nuove opportunità.

Quanto visto finora ha interessato il periodo coperto dalla documentazione dell'Estimo. Come già ricordato, i dati offerti dai registri della Decima non presentano problemi conseguenti a distorsioni dovute alla lunghezza degli intervalli di osservazione, poiché sono in grado di fornire anno per anno un'immagine della consistenza della ricchezza immobiliare di ogni fuoco fiscale delle singole comunità. Il collegamento tra famiglie quindi è implicito, ed è possibile seguire i patrimoni per circa 250 anni ininterrotti, con gli eventuali passaggi dei beni agli eredi (a proposito di continuità del fuoco fiscale e delle modalità di gestione operativa in caso di divisione dei patrimoni resta valido quanto detto a proposito della documentazione dell'Estimo) A fronte di una maggiore laboriosità del processo, descritto in precedenza, di riorganizzazione delle distribuzioni 'con gradini' e di individuazione dei quintili, nonché di creazione delle matrici di mobilità anno per anno, si può però ottenere un risultato decisamente più dettagliato. Una esemplificazione è visibile nel grafico che segue, ottenuto elaborando i dati della comunità di Gambassi per il periodo 1536-1776 (Tab. 4).[11]

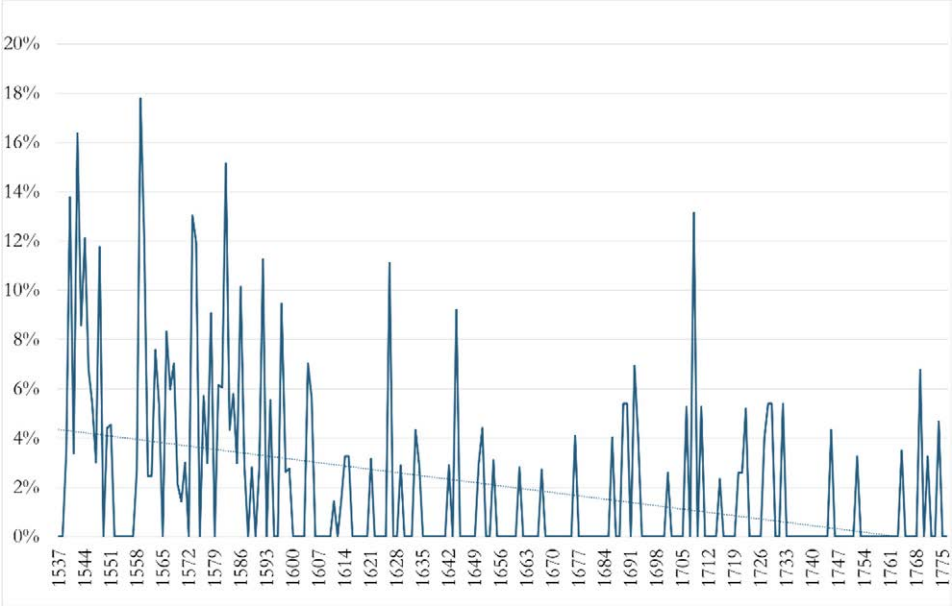
Tab. 4. **Mobilità socio-economica Gambassi 1536-1776**

Anno 1	**Anno 2**	***Link***	**Mobilità Ascendente**	**Mobilità Discendente**	**Mobilità totale (annuale)**

[11] ASF, *Decima granducale*, 5185, 5186, 5187, 5188.

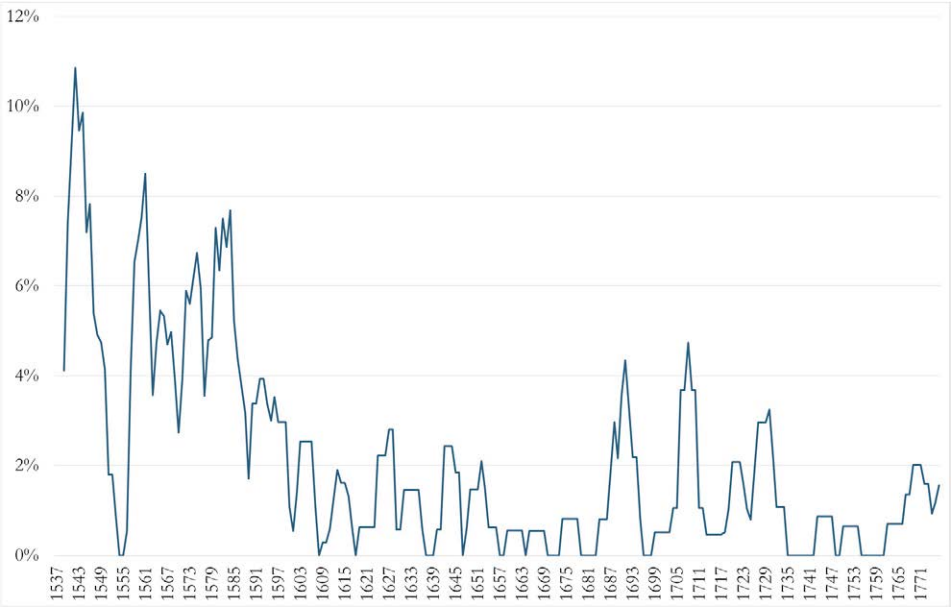
			%	%	%
1536	1537	58	0,00	0,00	0,00
1537	1538	58	0,00	0,00	0,00
1538	1539	58	1,72	1,72	3,45
1539	1540	58	6,90	6,90	13,79
…	…	…	…	…	…
…	…	…	…	…	…
…	…	…	…	…	…
1773	1774	64	3,13	1,56	4,69
1774	1775	65	0,00	0,00	0,00
1775	1776	65	0,00	0,00	0,00

Graf. 4. **Mobilità socio-economica Gambassi 1536-1776, media annuale**



Data la volatilità dei risultati annuali, risulta preferibile una riorganizzazione dei dati adottando una media mobile quinquennale (Graf. 5).

Graf. 5. **Mobilità socio-economica Gambassi 1536-1776, media mobile quinquennale**



5. Prime conclusioni

Questo studio ha mostrato come, a partire dalla ricchezza di informazioni offerte dalla documentazione fiscale in area toscana, sia possibile studiare la dinamica della mobilità socio-economica nel breve e nel lungo periodo. In particolare, le fonti disponibili per il Contado fiorentino, con le differenti tipologie di imposizione fiscale adottate dalla capitale nel corso dei secoli, hanno costituito un ricco corpus di dati su cui è stato possibile applicare metodologie di analisi in grado di superare alcune criticità dovute alla natura delle registrazioni. Diversamente da studi precedenti che si sono focalizzati su specifici settori della società, segnatamente le *élite* e le conseguenti modalità di accesso da parte dei cittadini alle classi più alte, l'obiettivo è stato rivolto all'intera popolazione soggetta alla fiscalità diretta. Utilizzando il concetto di mobilità come spostamento di un nucleo fiscale da uno stato economico a un altro misurato come movimento verso l'alto o il basso tra parti della distribuzione della ricchezza, si sono mostrati alcuni primi risultati per il periodo cruciale a cavallo della Peste Nera fino all'inizio del Quattrocento e per i secoli che coprono tutta l'Età Moderna.

Per formulare una riflessione più approfondita sarà opportuno utilizzare la stessa metodologia qui proposta per allargare l'indagine a un numero maggiore di comunità ed estendere l'arco temporale di riferimento ai secoli che vanno dal Cinque al Settecento, ma fin d'ora si può intuire come dopo alcuni decenni di crescita della mobilità sociale, quelli successivi alla Peste Nera, il dinamismo andò continuamente rallentando con l'avanzare dell'Età Moderna. Riprendendo quanto detto poco sopra in

merito al rapporto tra mobilità e disuguaglianza economica, ancora dibattuto e tutt'altro che assodato, questo risultato dimostra che non c'è motivo di aspettarsi che in una situazione di crescita della disuguaglianza debba aumentare anche la mobilità sociale.

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Benedetta Maria Crivelli

La mobilità occupazionale a Verona tra tardo Medioevo ed Età moderna: fonti e questioni metodologiche[1]

1. La mobilità occupazionale: riflessioni teoriche

Questo contributo ha l'obiettivo di descrivere le fonti utili per analizzare la mobilità occupazionale in una città dell'Italia settentrionale in antico regime. In particolare, si si cercherà di confrontare le fonti con le principali metodologie utilizzate per lo studio della mobilità occupazionale, rimarcando le criticità dei documenti disponibili rispetto ai modelli più diffusi di classificazione delle professioni.

Per misurare la mobilità occupazionale, infatti, è necessario disporre di un set di professioni che possano essere classificate secondo i parametri introdotti da modelli di codificazione utili a comparazioni spazio-temporali. Nonostante la diffusione di questi modelli, i tentativi di codificazione delle occupazioni nel territorio dell'Italia settentrionale sono piuttosto sporadici, e nessuna operazione di classificazione è stata fatta per le aree urbane. Ancor prima di arrivare a una misurazione della mobilità sociale nell'Italia settentrionale in antico regime, con questo saggio si intende colmare questa lacuna e riflettere su questioni di natura metodologica relative alla classificazione delle professioni nelle città, prendendo come caso studio Verona tra il XVI e il XVII secolo. Lo scopo di questo contributo è quello di analizzare in modo dettagliato le professioni registrate nei documenti fiscali della città veneta nella prima età moderna, facendoli dialogare con la letteratura e le fonti coeve in modo da comprendere il contesto socioeconomico. Sarà così possibile tracciare una evoluzione delle categorie professionali, da mettere in relazione con i percorsi di ascesa individuale definiti dalla posizione sociale nella distribuzione della ricchezza. In questo modo si potrà misurare la mobilità sociale non già in base alle classi sociali, ma in riferimento alle dinamiche di mobilità dei singoli individui.

Per meglio comprendere l'importanza di un siffatto lavoro di analisi delle fonti, è utile fornire un quadro di massima degli studi sin qui condotti sulla mobilità occupazionale, definendo anche la cornice entro cui si inserisce questa ricerca, ovvero il progetto SMITE (Social Mobility and Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800).

[1] La ricerca che ha prodotto questi risultati ha beneficiato di un finanziamento dello European Research Council, nel contesto del programma Horizon 2020 dell'Unione Europea, Horizon 2020 Framework Program/ERC Grant agreement No. 725687, SMITE-Social Mobility and Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800. Il progetto ha avuto l'obiettivo di indagare i trend di lungo periodo della disuguaglianza economica e la loro relazione con le dinamiche della mobilità sociale in Italia e in Europa (www.dondenda.unibocconi/SMITE).

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La mobilità occupazionale è uno degli strumenti con cui misurare la mobilità sociale. Infatti, la teoria economica definisce la mobilità come il movimento di individui, famiglie e gruppi da uno status economico ad un altro. Secondo questa definizione la mobilità occupazionale dà conto soprattutto della mobilità intergenerazionale, che si riferisce alla mobilità sociale dei figli in relazione ai loro genitori.

Come ha evidenziato Giovanna Da Molin (1995) il rapporto tra il mestiere dei figli e il mestiere del padre è frutto di una precisa strategia famigliare e tiene conto di diverse variabili. Una di queste è senza dubbio la ricchezza della famiglia, cui si aggiunge la «tradizione», che esplicita il desiderio di trasmettere al figlio la professione del padre, o in altri casi di garantire il prestigio famigliare attraverso una professione che definisca lo status della famiglia (es. il figlio avviato alla professione ecclesiastica). Analizzare la relazione tra il mestiere dei figli rispetto al mestiere svolto dal padre non è solo indicatore di una mobilità professionale, ma può essere rapportato anche all'andamento della ricchezza di una famiglia e alla capacità di mantenere o elevare il proprio status nel passaggio generazionale.

Nel mondo del lavoro urbano, che analizzeremo anche nello specifico caso di Verona, Tanzini e Tognetti, (2016, 9-11) nel loro studio sulla mobilità sociale nel medioevo che considera il ruolo svolto dai saperi come veicolo per la promozione sociale, evidenziano una difficoltà nei tentativi di ascesa sociale. Infatti, a partire dal XV secolo, essa è fondamentalmente limitata all'interno del ceto di appartenenza. Anche nelle città del Nord Italia, dove la crescita demografica e la struttura produttiva caratterizzata da imprese numerose e poco capitalizzate garantiva una più intensa dinamica sociale, l'inurbamento dalle campagne poteva corrispondere a un certo grado di benessere economico, ma difficilmente la ricchezza si traduceva in forme di mobilità sociale esterne alla comunità di appartenenza (Tanzini e Tognetti, 2016, 11).

Le professioni, espressioni di uno specifico sapere o *know-how*, sono state registrate nei documenti fiscali di diversi paesi nel corso dell'età moderna, e benché la varietà di linguaggi utilizzati per descriverle possa generare confusione, la facilità con cui è possibile raccogliere questi dati li rende i più adatti nella costruzione di uno schema di stratificazione sociale. Infatti, le occupazioni catturano sia lo status sociale, sia la capacità reddituale di un individuo e offrono informazioni riguardo la sua posizione sociale (Van Leeuwen e Maas 2011, 12-13). Il problema di definire uno schema delle classi sociali che possa essere adattato a diverse regioni in epoche differenti è una delle questioni fondamentali ogni qualvolta si intenda affrontare il discorso riguardo alla struttura sociale delle società del passato. Un tale schema è utile non solo a fini comparativi, ma consente di effettuare delle misurazioni rispetto a uno dei temi fondamentali che interseca i più ampi studi sulla diseguaglianza economica e la mobilità sociale in epoca moderna, ovvero in che misura uomini e donne possono sfuggire alla loro classe di nascita nel corso della loro vita (Van Leeuwen e Maas 2016, 838).

Come Van Leeuwen e Maas (2016) mettono in evidenza, il tema dell'incremento della mobilità intergenerazionale è strettamente legato al processo di industrializzazione, che ha permesso di rompere il vincolo sociale proprio delle società chiuse, dove coloro che appartengono per nascita a classi sociali più basse difficilmente riusciranno ad elevare la propria posizione sociale, anche a distanza di una o più generazioni. Le società di antico regime sono propriamente delle società chiuse, in cui la

mobilità occupazionale intra e intergenerazionale è generalmente bassa. Tuttavia, lo scopo della ricerca condotta nell'ambito del progetto SMITE è considerare la mobilità occupazionale come una delle componenti della mobilità economica, che può essere misurata dal movimento di un individuo tra le diverse parti della distribuzione della ricchezza (quintili, decili o percentili), considerando la ricchezza come un buon indicatore dello stato sociale (Alfani 2010, Carocci e Lazzarini 2018, 9).

L'attenzione alla mobilità individuale consente di uscire dal paradigma di classe che aveva caratterizzato gli studi precedenti e di elaborare un'analisi che tenga conto della complessità delle società di antico regime (Alfani 2021). L'idea che l'economia di antico regime non fosse caratterizzata da un generalizzato immobilismo ha permesso non solo di utilizzare approcci più dinamici, ma anche di superare un senso di inferiorità dato dalla mancanza di adeguate fonti quantitative e statistiche. Questo approccio neo-istituzionalista ha consentito di osservare la mobilità sociale come una competizione tra posizioni sociali, qualcosa di immateriale che può essere definito solo in relazione ad altri gruppi (Carocci e Lazzarini 2018, 11). Secondo questa prospettiva, le società preindustriali presentano una mobilità sociale molto più dinamica di quello che si potrebbe immaginare (Alfani, 2015). Tenendo conto della struttura occupazionale della popolazione, è possibile ipotizzare, come già indicato dalla letteratura (Mocarelli 2009), che individui altamente qualificati acquisissero uno status sociale elevato e accumulassero ampi patrimoni. Rimane da verificare se e come intere categorie professionali possano aver subito gli effetti positivi delle congiunture economiche e sociali, acquisendo una posizione sociale più elevata che ha favorito percorsi individuali di crescita economica. O se di contro alcune professioni abbiano perso il loro prestigio sociale, travolgendo in questo declino i singoli individui (Tanzini e Tognetti 2016, 7).

Come già anticipato, in questo saggio non ci occuperemo nello specifico della mobilità occupazionale, ma ci limiteremo a costruire una classificazione delle professioni della città di Verona utilizzando modelli standard di comparazione internazionale (es. HISCO, HISCLASS, PSTI), che analizzeremo più in dettaglio in seguito.[2] I dati raccolti saranno necessari per calcolare tanto la mobilità intergenerazionale, quanto quella intragenerazionale. Dallo studio della letteratura (Van Leeuwen, Maas, Rébaudo e Pélissier 2015; Dribe e Helgertz 2016),[3] è plausibile aspettarsi che la mobilità occupazionale intragenerazionale fosse piuttosto limitata in età moderna,

[2] HISCO e HISCLASS sono sistemi di classificazione delle professioni elaborati a partire dagli anni Sessanta del ventesimo secolo da ricercatori afferenti all'International Institute of Social History dell'Università di Amsterdam (https://iisg.amsterdam/en/data/data-websites/history-of-work); PSTI è uno schema di codificazione usato nel progetto *The occupational structure of Britain c.1379-1911* (https://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/occupations/).

[3] Oltre ai citati lavori sulla mobilità sociale in Francia dal 1720 e in Svezia dal 1815 alcuni risultati preliminari per l'Italia sono stati presentati a Milano nel 2018 nella conferenza organizzata presso l'Università Bocconi da Guido Alfani e Leigh Shaw-Taylor *Occupational Structures in European History*, nell'ambito del progetto *Occupational mobility and openness of elites in the early modern period: the case of Piedmont* finanziato dal Dondena Center Seed Grant, coordinato da Guido Alfani. Sul tema della mobilità sociale e la struttura occupazionale è attualmente in corso un progetto dell'Università di Padova *Occupational structure and labour mobility in historical perspective (1500-1850): Italy and the Mediterranean*, coordinato da Andrea Caracausi (https://www.mobilityandhumanities.it/2021/02/10/occupational-structure-and-labor-mobility-in-historical-perspective-1500-1850-italy-and-the-mediterranean/).

mentre la tipologia di dati disponibili in Italia - catasto onciario per il sud Italia (Bulgarelli 2004, Sardone 2020) e i registri del sale per il Piemonte (Alfani 2010) - offre maggiori informazioni sulla mobilità intergenerazionale. Tuttavia, la metodologia applicata dal progetto SMITE per lo studio della mobilità sociale, la quale prevede di connettere gli stessi individui in due momenti diversi della loro vita, può fornire informazioni sulla mobilità occupazionale di un individuo nell'arco della sua vita professionale. Inoltre, la disponibilità di una serie completa di estimi per la città di Verona consente di mettere in relazione gli individui nel corso di una generazione (intervalli di tempo di circa 25 anni) per un arco temporale piuttosto lungo (dal XV al XVIII secolo).

La natura seriale delle fonti fiscali permette anche di seguire l'evoluzione delle categorie professionali, definendone i caratteri specifici attraverso i cambiamenti economici che emergono nel passaggio dal XV al XVII secolo. Questo è possibile solo attraverso una puntuale analisi dei mestieri per coglierne le trasformazioni in termini di prestigio sociale, appartenenza alle corporazioni cittadine e tipologia stessa delle mansioni attribuite. Lo scopo è quello di osservare in che modo fenomeni quali le battaglie politiche di inizio XVI secolo, la crisi della manifattura cittadina e il calo demografico seguito alla peste del 1630 abbiano agito nel definire la struttura occupazionale della società veronese, influendo sulla distribuzione delle macrocategorie professionali per quintili di ricchezza.

Il saggio è così organizzato: nel paragrafo 2 si discute la fonte fiscale utilizzata, fornendo anche indicazioni sul campione delle professioni che emerge dai registri d'estimo; nel paragrafo 3 si presenta il sistema di codificazione delle professioni utilizzato per il caso veronese, mettendo in luce i problemi che sorgono nel tentativo di ridurre il caso nazionale a una classificazione standard; nel paragrafo 4 si procede all'analisi sistematica delle professioni registrate negli estimi veronesi, cercando di adattare la codificazione internazionale al caso specifico e alle dinamiche socio-economiche che caratterizzano la città di Verona in epoca moderna; infine, nell'ultimo paragrafo si dà conto di un primo tentativo di ricostruzione della struttura occupazionale dalla società veronese in relazione alla distribuzione della ricchezza calcolata sulla base dei dati fiscali.

2. La città di Verona: fonti fiscali

Verona, situata alla base delle Prealpi venete e attraversata dal fiume Adige, all'inizio del XV secolo aveva una popolazione di 20.100 abitanti, che quasi raddoppiano un secolo dopo (42.071 abitanti nel 1502). Nel corso del Cinquecento la popolazione continua a crescere raggiungendo i 57.706 abitanti nel 1605, per poi subire un crollo demografico importante nel primo trentennio del Seicento, dovuto all'epidemia di peste del 1630 (nel 1635 si contavano 31.196 abitanti). Questo andamento rispecchia gli effetti dei principali eventi politici, bellici e pandemici che caratterizzano i secoli dell'età moderna. Per quanto riguarda il quindicesimo secolo, nei primi cinquant'anni la stabilizzazione politica non fa registrare una grande crescita demografica, che si registra invece nel secondo cinquantennio, quando il lungo periodo di pace e tranquillità di cui gode la città si riflette anche nella condizione economica. Un'altra

battuta di arresto arriva con l'inizio del nuovo secolo e i fatti della lega di Cambrai che hanno un impatto significato sull'andamento demografico della città, che torna a crescere solo nella seconda metà del sedicesimo secolo, quando Verona sperimenta un periodo di grandi trasformazioni in tutti i campi della vita cittadina (Tagliaferri 1966, 49-54, Lanaro 1998, 66).

La fonte qui utilizzata è l'estimo della città di Verona, redatto con regolarità a partire dal 1405,[4] anno della capitolazione veronese alla dominante Venezia. A Verona l'estimo era diviso in tre corpi, città, territorio e clero, così che tutti gli abitanti della città erano registrati nell'estimo cittadino. Gli estimi di Verona sono tra i più completi, ma anche complessi, poiché includono beni immobili, mobili e redditi derivati da capitale e lavoro, da cui sono dedotte varie passività, tra cui la presenza nel nucleo famigliare di persone inadatte al lavoro (Alfani e Di Tullio 2019, 49-ss.). La serie di documentazione disponibile per la città di Verona è piuttosto lunga, coprendo un arco temporale che va dal 1409 al 1800. L'abitudine di bruciare le polizze preparatorie per la compilazione dell'estimo non consente di verificare le norme di redazione almeno fino al XVII secolo, quando la compilazione dell'estimo veronese cambiò distinguendo tra proprietà immobiliare, personale (una tassa imposta sul numero di persone abili all'interno del nucleo famigliare) e la proprietà di animali domestici. La cifra d'estimo era indicata in lire, soldi e danari, ma al fine del calcolo della ricchezza abbiamo preferito ridurre il valore all'unità di misura inferiore, ovvero i denari. Cifre d'estimo pari o superiori a 1 soldo corrispondono a 240 denari o più.

L'estimo, redatto a scopi fiscali, consente di ottenere informazioni importanti sui capifamiglia che venivano censiti dall'amministrazione del comune. Oltre alla ricchezza imponibile, i dati forniti dall'estimo riguardano la residenza in una delle contrade veronesi, l'appartenenza a un ceto nobiliare o l'attribuzione di un particolare titolo e la professione svolta. Quest'ultimo dato non è riportato in modo regolare negli estimi, ma nei quattro registri qui analizzati abbiamo una percentuale significativa di professioni sul totale dei nuclei famigliari censiti. Nel 1502 nel 46% dei casi è espressa anche la professione, nel 36% dei casi per il 1515, e con percentuali maggiori nel XVII secolo (53% nel 1616 e 48% nel 1635). Nonostante la mancanza di regolarità nella registrazione della qualifica professionale, si può ipotizzare, seguendo le intuizioni di Tagliaferri (1966, 73-87), che, al netto di errori di trascrizione o dimenticanze involontarie, gli estimi fossero piuttosto completi nel riportare le occupazioni di coloro che dalla professione ricevevano la principale fonte di reddito tassabile. Infatti, tra i non qualificati è necessario considerare i nobili, che erano tassati per lo più per redditi da capitale. Questi contribuenti erano anche coloro che esprimevano la maggiore potenza contributiva e infatti una buona percentuale degli estimati senza qualifica professionale si collocava nel quinto quintile di ricchezza (circa il 16% sulla percentuale di non registrati in tutto l'arco temporale preso in considerazione). Di contro, possiamo considerare che tra i contribuenti senza qualifica professionale ci fosse un buon numero di lavoratori occasionali o saltuari, con capacità contributiva molto bassa (circa il 10% della percentuale di non qualificati si collocava nel primo quintile di ricchezza). Altra questione riguardava la qualifica professionale

[4] I registri fiscali utilizzati per questo articolo si trovano in Archivio di Stato di Verona (ASVe), *Antico archivio del comune*, bb. 260 (1502) - 261 (1515) - 271 (1616) - 273 (1635).

attribuita alle donne; la maggior parte delle estimate erano vedove, iscritte sulla base di uno status giuridico sopraggiunto dopo la morte del titolare del fuoco e quindi in genere prive di una qualifica professionale (Tagliaferri 1966, 85). Esiste, invece, un numero ridotto di donne che rivendicavano una posizione professionale. Se prendiamo ad esempio l'estimo del 1502, le donne estimate erano l'8,5% della popolazione, ma solo lo 0,4% esprimeva una professione. Il gruppo più numeroso era rappresentato dalle meretrici (*meretrix*), ma comparivano anche tessitrici e ostetriche. La loro capacità contributiva era ridotta, ed è possibile che altre donne impiegate in modo saltuario nel lanificio o in altre attività del settore tessile non avessero riconosciuta la loro qualifica professionale.[5] L'altro grande gruppo di estimati non qualificati professionalmente era rappresentato da lavoratori che svolgevano attività extra-corporative. Le corporazioni, infatti, avevano interesse a registrare tutti i loro associati, poiché, come riporta Tagliaferri, i regolamenti interni alle corporazioni prevedevano «la ripartizione del carico fiscale tra gli associali «per contingente»: la somma stabilita veniva ripartita tra i confratelli in ragione del reddito e tenendo conto di particolari esenzioni, per cui la corporazione non aveva interesse alcuno a diminuire il numero dei membri» (Tagliaferri 1966, 76). Infine, vi sono coloro che, pur essendo ai margini della società, avevano una base imponibile di reddito tale da risultare contribuenti per l'estimo cittadino, ma le cui caratteristiche socioeconomiche ne precludevano qualsiasi possibilità lavorativa. Tra questi gli infermi, i mendicanti e i furfanti, il cui numero non è particolarmente elevato, ma cresce nel corso del XVII secolo (4 – peraltro tutte donne – nel 1502, 13 nel 1616 e 25 nel 1635).

3. Il codice HISCO: metodo e analisi.

Il progetto SMITE intende classificare le professioni in accordo con *Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations* (HISCO). Alla domanda su come fosse possibile analizzare i modelli storici della mobilità sociale a livello internazionale si era cercato di rispondere già alla fine degli anni Sessanta del secolo scorso, con la creazione di un codice che permettesse di raccogliere tutte le informazioni riguardo le occupazioni in diversi paesi entro uno schema comune di classificazione.

La novità introdotta da HISCO è un maggiore dettaglio nella classificazione, che permette di uscire dallo schema sociale di classe proposta dal raggruppamento negli otto settori economici e offrire una descrizione più analitica delle singole occupazioni, consentendo raggruppamenti che seguano le direttrici economiche e sociali che la ricerca richiede. Ovviamente come in tutti i casi di codificazione è possibile che alcune informazioni vadano perdute, ma la possibilità di costruire codici numerici di cinque cifre offre un grado di osservazione sufficientemente dettagliato da riprodurre la realtà socioeconomica di un territorio. Il codice a cinque cifre consente una facile incorporazione delle professioni in categorie più ampie. Le prime tre cifre si

[5] Sui percorsi femminili di affermazione sociale si veda Zanoboni (2016, 62-68), la quale sottolinea che, se le donne erano coinvolte nei processi produttivi e nelle attività commerciali non sempre questi trovavano trasposizione in un ruolo di rilievo nelle istituzioni preposte al governo dei processi produttivi.

riferiscono a gruppi unitari, le prime due cifre fanno riferimento ai sottogruppi, e la prima cifra definisce la macrocategoria.

Prima di procedere alla codificazione delle professioni raccolte negli estimi veronesi, è bene soffermarsi su alcune considerazioni in merito alla metodologia utilizzata ai fini della classificazione. Per questa operazione ci siamo serviti del sito web messo a disposizione da HISCO e ospitato dall'*International Institute for Social History* di Amsterdam, con un servizio che fornisce l'accesso al codice HISCO. Il sito fornisce anche informazioni di base sui dati utilizzati, le persone e le istituzioni coinvolte nel processo di costruzione del database e informazioni bibliografiche. Il sito web è progettato per essere un servizio infrastrutturale di lungo periodo, destinato ai ricercatori, in costante evoluzione come risposta ai loro suggerimenti e possibili integrazioni (Van Leeuwen, Maas, Miles 2004, 195).[6]

L'utilizzo di questo strumento ha permesso di usufruire del lavoro di codificazione fatto in precedenza, ma la costruzione di un database nazionale, limitato per ora alla città di Verona, non è stato privo di insidie.[7] Un primo punto da tenere in considerazione è la misura in cui la conoscenza dettagliata del contesto locale può aiutare nelle decisioni in merito alla codificazione. Nel caso veronese, e come si vedrà nel prossimo paragrafo, il fatto che alcune delle occupazioni registrate negli estimi facessero riferimento a delle corporazioni di mestiere aiuta ad avere un quadro più preciso dei compiti e delle funzioni attribuite a ciascuna professione. Questo è tanto più vero se prendiamo in considerazione la prima età moderna, periodo in cui le corporazioni di mestiere nel centro-nord Italia sono chiamate a ridefinire le proprie funzioni e i propri spazi in un contesto generalizzato di crisi. Sono gli anni in cui si afferma il sistema di produzione definito protoindustriale, all'interno del quale cresce l'importanza della figura del mercante-imprenditore, un processo che impoverisce le corporazioni, ma richiede loro uno sforzo di adattamento alle nuove condizioni (Chilese 2012). Il periodo qui considerato coincide con la massima espansione delle corporazioni (1560-1620), che va di pari passo con una fase di espansione economica per il Nord Italia, a testimonianza del fatto che le corporazioni rivestono un ruolo centrale nelle economie urbane (Mocarelli 2008, 166).

Inoltre, la conoscenza del contesto che offre la letteratura o il confronto con fonti coeve (ad esempio, per la città di Verona i fondi *Corporazione delle Arti* e *Casa dei Mercanti*), permette di sciogliere i dubbi relativi all'introduzione di nuovi lemmi per indicare i medesimi mestieri (un esempio è la sostituzione a partire dal Seicento di *spiciarius* con *aromatarius* per indicare lo speziale) o alla frammentazione delle mansioni rispetto a una produzione o un servizio (ad esempio all'interno dei panettieri la distinzione tra *pistor*, produttore di pane, e *festarius*, produttore di dolci, le cui specifiche funzioni, anche all'interno di una corporazione, sono andate definendosi nel corso del Seicento).

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[6] Il sito internet è visibile all'indirizzo https://historyofwork.iisg.nl/ [ultimo accesso 03/06/2024]. Attualmente è richiesto un permesso per accedere al database, la cui domanda può essere inviata tramite il sito.

[7] Il database di Hisco non riporta professioni riferite a casi studio italiani, nonostante sia già stato fatto un tentativo di codificazione delle professioni secondo il codice HISCO per il Friuli-Venezia Giulia, v. Breschi, Fornasin and Quaranta (2006).

Altri due problemi che sono sorti durante la codificazione delle professioni veronesi riguardano la vaghezza della definizione occupazionale e, di contro, una eccessiva specificità dell'occupazione registrata, situazione che è molto diffusa soprattutto nei mestieri legati alle arti tessili e alle numerose mansioni svolte dagli addetti al lanificio o al setificio.

Nel primo caso, il problema nasce dalla difficoltà di classificare un mestiere che non ha una specifica funzione tale da poter essere catalogata in una categoria facilmente comparabile nel tempo e nello spazio. Se prendiamo per esempio i lavoratori del pellame, troviamo un'occupazione definita *stringarius* (803), che si riferisce alla produzione di redini, fruste, coperture in pelle per nodello e articolazioni del cavallo, fissaggi in pelle per gli speroni, la quale potrebbe rientrare in una serie di altre categorie di lavoratori della pelle (i produttori di selle o imbragature, tagliatori o cucitori di prodotti in pelle). Questo tipo di professionista si occupa della produzione di oggetti che sono troppo generici per poter essere classificati in una categoria foriera di utili comparazioni, e per questo motivo viene inserita in una sottocategoria che raggruppa altri lavoratori della pelle (*Other Leather Goods Makers*, X-XX-90).

Di contro, ci sono professionisti che svolgono delle funzioni molto specifiche all'interno della filiera produttiva, ma che possiamo catalogare in una più ampia sottocategoria. È il caso, per esempio, delle professioni tessili, dove tra coloro che si dedicano al finissaggio dei tessuti (756) troviamo il *cimolinus*, il cimatore di compìto del filato, che si distingue dal *cimator*, il quale svolge l'operazione di smozzare la lana ma in modo più grossolano rispetto al primo. In questo caso entrambi i professionisti rientrano nella sottocategoria degli addetti al finissaggio dei tessuti, ma vista l'impossibilità di codificare due professioni di fatto molto simili, vengono anch'esse inserite nella sottocategoria .90, ovvero altri addetti al finissaggio del tessuto (*Other Bleachers, Dyers and Textile Product Finishers*).

Questi due esempi mostrano che l'utilizzo di sottocategorie generiche (generalmente indicate con il codice X-XX-90), che codificano «altri lavoratori del settore», è funzionale ad ottenere un codice anche per quei mestieri che difficilmente possono essere catalogati nei sottogruppi indicati da HISCO.

Un altro problema che è sorto nel corso della codificazione è la distinzione tra produttori e venditori di un bene, soprattutto per quei tipi di produzione in cui la bottega è anche luogo di vendita del prodotto. In questo caso si è seguito il principio che gli stessi creatori del database HISCO hanno adottato, ovvero il principio 4, secondo cui se un titolo era generico perché l'attività occupazionale comprendeva sia la produzione che la vendita, si è scelto di codificare solo l'attività produttiva. È il caso, per esempio, del formaggiaio, che con ogni probabilità non solo produceva il formaggio (775), ma aveva anche una bottega per la vendita dei prodotti (Van Leeuwen, Maas e Miles 2004, 191).

4. La codificazione delle professioni negli estimi veronesi.

Nei quattro estimi analizzati, la professione è registrata in 14.727 casi, per un totale di 167 professioni codificate secondo il codice HISCO. Tra queste, la professione con un maggior numero di occorrenze è quella codificata come *day-labourer*, che

identifica un lavoratore generico pagato a giornata. Questo tipo di professione è registrata nell'estimo come *bracentus* (bracciante, lavorante)[8] ed è riportata per 1.216 volte, con maggiore frequenza nel 1616 (674 rilevazioni), mentre nel 1515 è riportata solo 85 volte. Questo gruppo di professionisti raccoglie insieme alle macrocategorie 7 e 8 i lavoratori addetti alla produzione, operatori di attrezzature per il trasporto e operai. Le professioni appartenenti a queste macrocategorie sono quelle che ricorrono con maggiore frequenza in tutti e quattro gli estimi.

Oltre ai braccianti, rientrano nella macrocategoria 9 anche operari, manovali e garzoni alle dipendenze di cittadini o istituzioni pubbliche ed ecclesiastiche. Il codice 999, che indica un lavoratore generico che si serve di strumenti di lavoro semplici, identifica *laborator, manualis* o *garzonus*, la cui mansione compare solo a partire dal XVII secolo. I lavoratori appartenenti a questo sottogruppo (99), ovvero operai generici, sono i più numerosi con 1.357 rilevazioni. Se osserviamo la distribuzione di questi lavoratori per quintili di ricchezza notiamo una concentrazione molto alta nel quintile più basso per il sedicesimo secolo, e nei due quintili inferiori (2 e 1) per il diciassettesimo secolo.

Il secondo sottogruppo più numeroso è rappresentato dagli addetti al trasporto (98), all'interno del quale rientra una vasta tipologia di professioni. Gli addetti al trasporto su strada con veicoli trainati da animali (986), che ricorrono in 211 casi, nel XVI secolo sono definiti *caraterius* (carrettiere, vetturale) o *caballarius* (trasportatore). Più articolata è invece la definizione di questa professione nel XVII secolo, dove troviamo anche *nolezinus* (noleggiatore, vetturale) e *carozerius* (carrozziere), e in un caso *agitator*, cui è stato attribuito il significato di cocchiere assimilandolo al guidatore di un veicolo trainato da animali. Rientrano nel novero dei trasportatori senza una specifica classificazione (989) le professioni definite come *portitor vini* e *torculotus* (o *torculator*), *acquarolus* e *portitor lane* o *pannorum*, *fachinus lignorum*, *brenteganus* e *cariolatus*, il cui numero cresce nel Seicento. Tra questi, i trasportatori di vino (*portitor vini* e *torculotus*) sono i più numerosi (135 su 190). Nella definizione di questa professione si è deciso di non seguire le indicazioni di Tagliaferri che traduceva *torculotus* come addetto al torchio per la stampa, classificandolo nella categoria dei tipografi. Se da un lato, infatti, *torcolo* si riferisce al torchio, in questo caso l'indicazione di *torculatos de trideto* che troviamo nell'estimo del 1635, ci fa propendere per il lemma «torcolotto», con cui ci si riferisce «a quei Tionesi che per antica consuetudine si recavano in autunno a Verona per accudire ai lavori della confezione e del commercio del vino» (Tedoldi 2000, 75-89). È possibile che tra i portatori di vino rientrasse anche la professione di *brenteganus* (brentatore, vendemmiatore addetto al trasporto del mosto con la brenta. *Brento* è anche una antica unità di misura per il vino (Tedoldi 2000, 75). La distribuzione di questi lavoratori è concentrata nei quintili più bassi nel sedicesimo secolo, mentre tende ad essere più omogenea nel diciassettesimo secolo, con un caso in cui un *nolezinus* raggiunge il quintile più elevato.

Infine, rientrano tra i trasportatori (981) coloro che trasportano materiale utilizzando i corsi d'acqua, i quali si servivano di diversi scali urbani. Quelli più frequentati erano senza dubbio Ponte Navi, per le mercanzie da e per Venezia, e quello dell'Isolo, che permetteva lo scarico di merci, soprattutto legname, dal Trentino, dal Sud Tirolo

[8] Le definizioni attribuite alle professioni sono tratte da Tagliaferri (1966, 207-216).

e dalla Germania. Nonostante la storiografia abbia insistito su una riduzione del traffico fluviale dopo il Cinquecento (Tagliaferri 1966, 136-138), nei primi anni del XVII secolo si assiste a un aumento significativo del numero di trasportatori fluviali, che si riduce nuovamente nel 1635. La definizione attribuita a questi lavoratori è *nauta* (nocchiere) o *marinarius* (marinaio), che tiene conto della funzione svolta, e *zatterius* (nocchiere di zattere), *barcarolus* (barcaiolo), che tiene conto, invece, della tipologia di mezzo utilizzato. Questi lavoratori si collocano nei quintili inferiori.

Un'altra categoria di trasportatori era rappresentata da coloro che scaricavano e caricavano merci nei mercati o nei porti (971). I termini utilizzati per definirne la mansione erano genericamente *fachinus* o *baiulus* (facchino), con una frequenza maggiore di questo secondo lemma per il XVII secolo. *Fonticarius*, come custode di fondaco o magazziniere, è riportato una sola volta nel 1616. Questi lavoratori si raggruppavano per lo più negli strati più poveri della popolazione, benché nel 1502 ci fosse un facchino con una cifra d'estimo che superava i 300 denari, collocandosi nel quintile più alto della distribuzione.

Proseguendo nella descrizione dei lavoratori appartenenti alla macrocategoria degli operai e manovali, un numero consistente è rappresentato dai lavoratori addetti alle costruzioni (95). Tra questi i più numerosi sono i muratori (*murarius,* 951), seguiti dai falegnami (*marangonus*, 954), le cui competenze professionali nella realizzazione di un edificio erano state oggetto di numerose controversie tra le corporazioni di mestiere cui facevano riferimento. Tale conflittualità si accentua tra Sei e Settecento, quando, come riporta la letteratura, dopo una contrazione nella prima metà del Seicento (per effetto anche della peste del 1630), si assiste a una ripresa dell'attività edificatoria, la quale «tornò a rappresentare un elemento economico di rilevanza notevole, impiegando un buon numero di lavoratori ed andando ad interessare – come investimento dotato di una certa redditività – parte della classe dirigente cittadina» (Chilese 2012, 118). Tuttavia, l'aumento del numero di lavoratori impegnati nelle costruzioni è in crescita già all'inizio del XVII secolo. È in corso in questa fase una ridefinizione del numero e delle competenze delle corporazioni attive in città, che portò all'approvazione dei nuovi statuti dell'arte dei *marangoni* nel 1609. La ridefinizione delle caratteristiche delle corporazioni aveva come obbiettivo una maggiore efficienza e controllo sull'arte, che era conseguenza del potere accumulato dal capitale mercantile e dalla posizione preminente raggiunta da alcuni membri delle corporazioni (Mocarelli 2008, 168). L'arte dei falegnami era assai rilevante per l'economia urbana, tanto che il redattore anonimo di una *Informazione delle cose di Verona* sosteneva che i «traffichi principali sono il negozio mercantile della lana, e della seda, e quello de' legnami […] e l'arte de' marangoni, che lavorano di nogara, cioè scanni, cadreghe e cose simili, fa molte faccende» (Chilese 2012, 119). L'importanza che questa arte rivestì nell'economia cittadina nel corso del XVII secolo si ritrova anche nell'acquisizione di una maggiore posizione sociale, che vede aumentare il numero di falegnami nei quintili di ricchezza più alti nel 1616 e nel 1635. L'aumento delle attività connesse all'utilizzo del legno va di pari passo con la crescita delle attività di costruzione, coinvolgendo nell'incremento del numero di lavoratori e della loro posizione sociale anche i muratori.

L'attività di lavorazione del legno comprende anche altre categorie professionali, che, tuttavia, si è scelto di codificare tra produttori di mobili e altri lavoratori del

legno (81). La decisione di distinguere i *marangoni* da altri lavoratori del legno è legata ai numerosi riferimenti che si trovano in letteratura a una conflittualità di lunga data che contrapponeva i falegnami a una serie di corporazioni «confinanti», ovvero legate all'attività delle costruzioni (muratori, fabbri, tagliapietre), che erano accusati di lavorare senza autorizzazione materiali di stretta competenza dei falegnami (Chilese 2012, 62). È vero anche che l'arte dei *marangoni*, i cui statuti furono più volte rivisti nel corso del XVII secolo nel senso di un maggiore irrigidimento delle norme di accesso all'arte e dei compiti e delle prerogative del massaro, imponeva a tutti coloro che avessero a che fare con il legno di sottostare all'arte, rivolgendosi ai suoi iscritti per ottenere il legname grezzo o lavorato e al massaro per l'esecuzione di alcune lavorazioni. Ciononostante, la specificità delle lavorazioni effettuate dalle professioni del legno registrate negli estimi ci porta a codificare questi ultimi nella macrocategoria 8, distinguendoli così dai falegnami addetti alle costruzioni (954).[9]

Nelle macrocategorie 8 e 7 rientrano le cosiddette arti manifattrici, che Tagliaferri divide in arti tessili e arti manifattrici diverse. Secondo la codificazione HISCO, questa articolazione risulta molto più variegata. Nel gruppo 8 rientrano lavoratori della pelle, legno, metalli (compresi i metalli preziosi), vetro e ceramica. Nel gruppo 7, invece, troviamo i lavoratori tessili, che rappresentano la quota maggiore di questi professionisti, e gli artigiani dediti alla lavorazione del cibo.

Una novità introdotta dalla codificazione HISCO, rispetto alla classificazione tra arti tessili e altre arti fatta da Tagliaferri, riguarda la distinzione tra professioni dedite alla produzione, che rientrano nelle macrocategorie 8 e 7, e quelle dedite alla vendita, che vengono classificate nella macrocategoria 4. Un esempio significativo è rappresentato dalla professione del *draperius* (drappiere, 410), che Tagliaferri inserisce nelle manifatture tessili, attribuendogli l'importante funzione di *mercante-imprenditore*, «cui spettavano probabilmente i più difficili e rischiosi compiti organizzativi del lanificio veronese, ma a cui andavano anche i maggiori profitti connessi all'attività mercantile» (Tagliaferri 1966, 145). In virtù di questa funzione «di controllo unico ed accentrato del lanificio», il drappiere rivestiva anche una posizione sociale elevata, che era testimoniata da una potenza finanziaria che ne garantiva alti redditi mercantili. Nel Cinquecento, prima che la figura del *draperius* scomparisse dalle registrazioni estimali, questi professionisti occupavano le posizioni più alte nella distribuzione della ricchezza, tanto che nel 1502 ben 25 drappieri su 49 erano collocati nel quintile più alto. Di questi 49, 12 erano registrati con una doppia attività, nella maggior parte dei casi legata ad altre occupazioni nel campo tessile (sarti, tessitori, calzolai, pellicciai), e in alcuni casi a professioni legate alla vendita del cibo (formaggiai, panettieri, merciai). Questa pluriattività era strettamente legata all'organizzazione del lavoro che si affermò tra il XV e il XVI secolo nel settore laniero. Come mette in luce Demo (2001, 87-89), il livello medio-alto dei panni prodotti nelle città venete, per lo più indirizzate a un mercato internazionale, richiedeva lunghe ed accurate operazioni di lavorazione che superavano la possibilità di una sola bottega artigiana e obbligavano a una più complessa organizzazione del ciclo laniero. Se in un primo tempo questa funzione era svolta da un artigiano (per esempio sarti o tessitori), il salto decisivo si compì con

[9] Caregarius: seggiolaio; scatolarius: scatolaio; rotarius: lavoratore di ruote di legno; brentarius: lavoratore di tini; intagliator o incisot legnorum: intagliatore di legno; fusarius: lavoratore di fusi.

l'intervento di un mercante, che provvedeva sia all'approvvigionamento delle materie prime sia allo smercio del prodotto.

Come ricordato anche da Tagliaferri, con l'estimo del 1605 la professione di *draperius* scompare, sostituita da numerose categorie di *mercatores* «ad ognuna delle quali spetta ora un campo limitato e proficuo di attività» (Tagliaferri 1966, 145). L'attività mercantile legata al commercio della lana, per quanto crolli in termini numerici, rimane tra le professioni più redditizie anche nel Seicento: nel 1616 tutti i 13 mercanti registrati come *mercator lanae* appartengono al quinto quintile di ricchezza, mentre nel 1635 3 su 7 si trovano nella fascia più ricca della popolazione, e solo uno occupa la posizione più bassa.

Tornando alle arti manifatturiere, tra gli artigiani che si occupano di lavorare le rocce troviamo prevalentemente manovali dediti al taglio della pietra (*lapicida,* 820), il cui numero rimane costante per tutto il periodo. Questi lavoratori, con pochissime eccezioni, si trovano generalmente collocati nel mezzo della scala sociale. Tuttavia, all'inizio del XVI secolo, Vivinanus Magnani, di Giorgio, tagliapietre, mantiene una posizione sociale elevata con una cifra d'estimo che gli permette di collocarsi nel quinto quintile. Nel 1616, tre lavoratori qualificati come tagliapietre si collocano nel quintile più ricco della popolazione.

I lavoratori di metalli (83) si dividono in diverse sottocategorie. Gli artigiani che maneggiano il ferro vengono registrati genericamente come fabbri (*faber*, 831), o per specifiche attività artigianali. Tra queste la sottocategoria più numerosa è rappresentata dai produttori di armi e altri manufatti in ferro utili per le armature (*armarolus*) e per i paramenti dei cavalli (839). Il loro numero, e anche la loro ricchezza, cresce nel corso del XVII secolo, con una più articolata varietà di specializzazioni manifatturiere. Una sottocategoria a parte è rappresentata dai lavoratori del rame (873), tra i quali i fabbri ramai e calderai (*calderarius)* rivestono una posizione sociale elevata con una concentrazione della professione nel quinto quintile lungo tutto il periodo analizzato (Garbellotti 1998). Infine, una sottocategoria importante non tanto in termini numerici, quanto relativamente alla ricchezza, è rappresentata dagli orafi (*aurifex*, 880), i quali si distribuiscono in modo abbastanza uniforme nel Cinquecento, mentre, nel Seicento, è maggiore la loro concentrazione nei quintili più alti.

Nell'ambito delle arti manifatturiere, la macrocategoria 7 è quella più rappresentata in tutti e quattro gli estimi analizzati. In questa ritroviamo i lavoratori del settore tessile, che sono divisi in tre sottocategorie: sarti, tappezzieri e lavoratori collegati (79), filatori, tessitori e tintori (75) e conciatori di pelli e tintori (76).

Nella prima sottocategoria (79), si distinguono i sarti (*sartor*, 791) dai cucitori (*sutor*, 795). A partire dal XVII secolo la denominazione di *sartor* viene completamente sostituita da termine cucitore (*sutor*) o affini (*uchiator*). Il numero di questi lavoratori aumenta nel corso del diciassettesimo secolo, con un incremento della loro posizione sociale rispetto al 1502, anno in cui il numero di sarti estimati nel quintile più alto è esiguo.

Una tendenza simile è osservabile per i conciatori (*unctor*, 761), pellicciai (*pelliparius*, 761) e pellai (*pellacanus*, 761), che nel 1616 registrano cifre d'estimo molto alte, corrispondenti ad una posizione elevata nella distribuzione della ricchezza. Un'altra sottocategoria ampiamente rappresentata è quella degli addetti al finissaggio dei tessuti (*tinctor* 756), che sono molti numerosi nel 1502, mentre il loro numero si

riduce già dal decennio successivo. Un dato importante, oltre al consueto andamento che vede il progressivo aumento della ricchezza di questi lavoratori nel corso del XVII secolo, è la diminuzione di alcune professioni legate all'intera lavorazione della lana; se nel 1502 e nel 1515 sono registrate oltre ai tintori anche altre occupazioni che rientrano nella manifattura laniera (*garzator*, *cimator*, *scurator*, *valcharius*, *follator*, *cimolinus),*[10] e che sono in numero maggiore rispetto ai primi, nel XVII secolo gli addetti alla tintoria sono preponderanti e occupano i quintili superiori della ricchezza. Nonostante la corporazione dei tintori nel corso del XVII e XVIII secolo fosse stata minata dai tentativi dei mercanti di panni di semplificare il processo di produzione assumendo il compito di tinteggiare il tessuto (Chilese 2012, 122-123), nella prima metà del XVII secolo, la professione garantiva una certa ricchezza, testimoniata anche da un aumento della cifra d'estimo tra il 1616 e il 1635 per tre tintori registrati negli estimi, che colloca alcuni di questi professionisti nei due quintili di ricchezza più elevati, con uno spostamento dal quarto al quinto quintile per Domenico de Dottis.

La sottocategoria che merita maggiore attenzione è quella di filatori, tessitori e tintori (75), all'interno della quale vi è una maggiore varietà di occupazioni. Tra queste, quella che registra il maggior numero di addetti è la tessitura (*textor*, 754), distinta tra l'arte della lana, del lino e arte serica (vedi tab. 1). Osservando la tabella, non solo è evidente un calo del numero dei tessitori nel XVII secolo, ma soprattutto la progressiva scomparsa del lanificio, a favore della produzione di seta. La perdita di prestigio sociale dei tessitori è legata anche al progressivo abbandono di forme organizzative del lanificio, che ancora sopravvivevano tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento. Infatti, se nel tardo medioevo cominciava ad affermarsi il modello del mercante-imprenditore descritto in precedenza, continuavano a sopravvivere microimprese familiari, le quali si sobbarcavano le varie fasi della lavorazione fino alla tessitura inclusa (Demo 2001, 88). Prima di arrivare alla filatura, la lana greggia subiva una serie di lavorazioni affidate a operai poco specializzati e compiute con l'ausilio di strumenti limitati e poco costosi, che rappresentavano il capitale della bottega di un lanaiolo. Questi operai erano pagati a cottimo o a tempo e la retribuzione doveva essere molto bassa, circostanza che si riflette anche sulla capacità contributiva che era tra le più basse soprattutto per gli scardasssatori (Demo 2001, 92-93). Se si considerano le operazioni di cardatura della lana (*pectinator, scartezinus, batarius, batilana, lavator lanae*, 751), che passano dal 4,6% del 1502 all'1,2% del 1635, la crisi del lanificio nel XVII secolo diventa ancora più evidente.

Mediante la filatura la fibra così preparata veniva trasformata in filato continuo. La filatura era svolta per lo più impiegando manodopera femminile, e soprattutto per il Cinquecento, rientrava nelle molteplici operazioni svolte dalle microimprese familiari organizzate intorno a drappieri o tessitori. Può essere questa la ragione per cui negli estimi del XVI secolo sono pochissimi i lavoratori registrati come filatori (752), mentre il loro numero aumenta nel corso del diciassettesimo secolo raggiungendo le

[10] Garzator: garzatore di berretti, calze, pannilana o pignolati; cimator: scamozzatore di pannilana; scurator: purgatore di panni; valcharius: addetto al follone per i pannilana; cimolinus: cimatore di compìto di pannilana; follator: follatore di panni. Per quanto riguarda il settore laniero, questi lavoratori destinati ai trattamenti preliminari alla filatura sono i più numerosi, seguiti dai tessitori, mentre inferiore è il numero degli occupati nella tintura e rifinitura (Demo, 2001, 145).

113 registrazioni nel 1616 (di cui 18 donne) e 44 nel 1635 (nel Cinquecento sono registrati solo tre filatori) (Demo 2001, 95).

Se la crisi del lanificio cominciò a manifestarsi già all'inizio del XVI secolo, più duraturo è invece il berrettificio, che conobbe una forte espansione nella seconda metà del Quattrocento e rimase piuttosto vivace fino ai primi decenni del diciassettesimo secolo. I berrettai (*biretarius* o *cappelarius*, 793) raggiunsero il 2,6% della popolazione censita nel 1515, per poi scendere all'1,2% nel 1616 e allo 0,5% del 1635 (Demo 2001, 143).

Anche nel settore della produzione serica la manifattura decentrata risulta dominante. Il mercante-imprenditore (*mercator serici*), la cui professione compare di fatto solo del XVII secolo, sovrintende e controlla le varie fasi della lavorazione. Gli operatori addetti alla lavorazione della seta (*cavichiolus*, 754) sono presenti quasi esclusivamente negli estimi del XVII secolo e il loro numero è più basso rispetto agli operatori del lanificio. Tuttavia, sia Tagliaferri che Demo denunciano una sottoregistrazione negli estimi dei lavoratori della seta, probabilmente perché il settore per tutta la prima metà del XVI secolo non era organizzato in una corporazione. Inoltre, per tutto il XV e XVI secolo le operazioni legate alla preparazione del filato di seta, in particolare l'incannatura, erano affidate alla manodopera femminile, e dunque non compaiono nell'estimo (Demo 2001, 156).

Tab. 1. **Numero di addetti alla tessitura divisi per tipologia di tessuto**

TESSUTO	**1502**	**1515**	**1616**	**1635**
Pannilana (compresi pignolati, panni bassi, rasce e samiti)	131	50	14	9
Pannilini	38	20	2	1
Seta	5[11]	1	27	8
Tele	0	0	5	0
Non specificato	54	28	96	52
Totale	228 (3,2%)	99 (1,7%)	144 (1,1%)	70 (0,8%)

Nella macrocategoria 7, oltre agli operatori delle arti tessili, un ruolo rilevante è occupato dai professionisti legati al processamento del cibo (77). Questa sottocategoria è sicuramente tra le più articolate e si colloca a metà tra i semplici produttori e i bottegai (Chilese 2001, 185). All'interno di questa categoria, il gruppo più numeroso è rappresentato dai fornai (*pistor* e *festarius*, 776), seguiti dai produttori di farine di grano (*molendinarius*, 771). La produzione e il rifornimento di cereali per il pane rappresenta uno dei pilastri dell'economia veronese, sottoposta anche all'autorità

[11] Questo dato è importante perché conferma la diffusione della tessitura dei drappi di seta a Verona contro le disposizioni veneziane e prima dell'autorizzazione alla produzione dei velluti neri, concessa nel 1554 (Demo, 2001, 154)

cittadina (Chilese 2001, 189 e Tagliaferri 1966). Numerosi erano anche i formaggiai (775), il cui numero aumenta leggermente nel corso del Seicento, quando alcuni di essi raggiungono una quota di ricchezza elevata. Esemplificativo di ciò è la maggiore cifra d'estimo di un formaggiaio nel 1635, pari a 1368 denari, attribuita a Joseph Gusmerinus, di Bernardino, probabilmente fratello di Petrus Gusmerinus, di Bernardino, che nel 1616 svolgeva l'attiva di formaggiaio e a cui era attribuita una cifra d'estimo di 156 denari. Questa elevata cifra contributiva collocava entrambi nella porzione più ricca della popolazione. Sembra che quella dei formaggiai fosse l'arte che, all'interno del settore alimentare, prevalesse in quanto a capacità contributiva (Chielese 2001, 186).

L'ultima categoria rappresentata è quella dei macellai (773), il cui numero rimane pressocché costante fino al 1616, per poi ridursi leggermente nel 1635.

Con la macrocategoria 6 si entra nelle professioni relazionate all'agricoltura, alla zootecnica e alle attività forestali. Complessivamente i lavoratori appartenenti a questa macrocategoria non sono molti, ma è evidente una crescita significativa di addetti alle attività agricole e zootecniche nel 1635; in questo anno gli occupati nella macrocategoria 6 rappresentano il 2,5% della popolazione censita.

Rispetto alla classificazione di Tagliaferri, con la codificazione HISCO vengono esclusi da questa categoria i braccianti e i lavoratori a giornata, inseriti, come si è visto, nella macrocategoria 9. Rimangono, dunque, i lavoratori addetti alla cura degli animali e attività agricole collegate (62), che sono i più rappresentati, pescatori e cacciatori (64), coloni e agricoltori (61), mentre pochi sono le professioni forestali (631), per lo più legate al taglio della legna (*spezzamontus*)

Tra gli addetti alla cura degli animali (624) troviamo per lo più stallieri (*stallerius*), bovari (*boarius*, *vaccarius*), allevatori di cavalli (*cozonus*), porcari (*maiarius*), e pecorari (*pecudiarius*). Come è facile immaginare, tranne rare eccezioni concentrate nel 1502 e 1635, la capacità contributiva di questi lavoratori è bassa. Quello che si può notare, invece, è, non solo l'aumento degli addetti nel 1635, ma anche un aumento del numero di pecorari e porcari nel XVII secolo, assenti quasi totalmente nel secolo precedente, dove abbondavano invece gli allevatori di cavalli.

I pescatori (641) sono quasi assenti nel XVI secolo, mentre il loro numero cresce in modo evidente nel Seicento, acquisendo anche posizioni contributive molto elevate. Nel 1635, il pescatore Hironimus de Mainardis detto Mercarino, di Andrea, registrato come *non habitantes*, aveva una cifra d'estimo di 648 denari, che lo collocava nel quinto quintile di ricchezza. Sempre nello stesso anno, Jacobus Bubulus, di Francesco, pescatore, migliora la capacità contributiva rispetto a quella del padre, anch'egli pescatore, che nel 1616 si collocava nel primo quintile di ricchezza. Infatti, nel 1635, Jacobus raggiunge i 96 denari del coefficiente contributivo, posizionandosi nel terzo quintile.

Anche i coloni e gli agricoltori (611) rappresentano un numero consistente di lavoratori solo nel 1635, quando vengono identificati come *agricola*. La loro posizione contributiva rimane molto bassa.

La macrocategoria 5 comprende i lavoratori dei servizi. Tra gli occupati ai servizi alla persona i più numerosi sono i barbieri (*barberius,* 570), il cui numero si riduce nel corso del XVII secolo. La capacità contributiva di questi lavoratori rimane bassa con pochissime eccezioni nel 1502. Un altro sottogruppo piuttosto numeroso è

rappresentato dagli addetti ai servizi alberghieri (*hospes,* 510), che crescono in modo evidente di numero nel XVII secolo, passando dallo 0,1% della popolazione censita nel 1502 all'1% nel 1635. Con la crescita numerica sale anche la capacità contributiva di questi addetti che tanto nel 1616, quanto nel 1635 raggiungono cifre d'estimo superiori ai 250 denari, che per entrambi gli anni sono comprese nel quinto quintile di ricchezza. I servitori domestici (*famulus*, 540) sono registrati quasi esclusivamente nel XVII secolo, e come è facile immaginare le loro cifre d'estimo sono tra le più basse.

Soldati semplici (*armiger* o *miles*, 583) e ufficiali pubblici preposti al servizio di polizia (*barisellus*, 582) sono quasi assenti nel 1515, mentre il loro numero rimane costante negli altri anni. La loro capacità contributiva è bassa, rappresentando gli strati più infimi del servizio di pubblica sicurezza.

In generale possiamo dire che questa macrocategoria, all'interno della quale sono registrate anche un non piccolo numero di meretrici (599), era quella che registrava cifre d'estimo tra le più basse.

All'opposto, la macrocategoria 4, che raggruppa gli addetti ai servizi di vendita, mercanti e operatori del denaro, rappresenta un gruppo di professionisti che poteva vantare una certa ricchezza. Abbiamo già parlato dei drappieri e dei mercanti di lana. Tuttavia, la categoria dei *mercatores* (41) era molto estesa, spaziando dai semplici merciai, che si occupavano di diverse tipologie merceologiche, ai mercanti di beni necessari all'economia della città (il legno, per esempio) o di prodotti di lusso (gli speziali). Questi ultimi (410), che nel XVII secolo assumono il nome di *aromatarius*, sono tra i mercanti più ricchi della città. Il loro numero cresce negli estimi del Seicento, nei quali è possibile osservare la persistenza di alcune famiglie nella professione di speziale dal 1616 al 1635: Rosa, De Donatis, Maffioletus, Meraviglia, Borella, Massotus, Paltonus, Forestus, Speronus.

Se l'attività mercantile garantiva in genere abbondanza di capitali, nella sottocategoria dei mercanti troviamo anche semplici rivenditori che si collocavano nel quintile più basso della distribuzione della ricchezza. Tra questi, oltre ai venditori di stracci (*pezarolus*), venditori di carta e libri (*cartarius*, *librarius*) e rigattieri (*strazarolus*).

Una categoria a parte tra i mercanti, in crescita nel Seicento, è quella dei rivenditori di strada (452), che commerciano prodotti agricoli (*ortolanus*) o zootecnici (pesci, polli e galline). La loro posizione sociale è intermedia, ma osservando la loro crescita in termini numerici si può ipotizzare che svolgessero un ruolo fondamentale nell'economia cittadina.

Le macrocategorie dalla 3 alla 0 della codificazione HISCO rappresentano i cosiddetti ceti professionali, ovvero medici, insegnanti e uomini di legge, secondo la classificazione tradizionale, a cui si aggiungono professioni tecniche e artistiche nel campo delle scienze fisiche e naturali e ingegneristiche.

Gli ufficiali pubblici sono raggruppati nella macrocategoria 3, che codifica coloro che attuano norme, leggi e regolamenti emanati da governi statali, centrali o locali. All'interno di questa categoria, i professionisti maggiormente rappresentati sono gli addetti alle dogane (*datiarius*, *viator*, 310), che nel XVII secolo non solo aumentano in termini numerici, ma acquisiscono anche una maggiore posizione sociale con coefficienti di contribuzione che superano i 400 denari, compresi nel quinto quintile.

Nella macrocategoria 2, in particolare, si collocano le professioni che potremmo definire amministrative e di organizzazione della produzione. Questi pochi

professionisti si riconoscono sotto la definizione di *factor* (fattore, amministratore di azienda agricola pubblica o privata, 212) e il loro numero aumenta nel corso del XVII secolo. Ancora meno sono i gestori di ospedali e ricoveri pubblici (*hospitalerius*, 219) che si collocano nei quintili di ricchezza inferiori.

Infine, i ceti professionali codificati con il codice 0 e 1. La codificazione HISCO pone giuristi, uomini di legge, maestri e artisti nella macrocategoria 1, mentre le scienze mediche, naturali, l'architettura e l'ingegneria hanno codice 0.

Come ricorda Chilese, questi professionisti provenivano da famiglie economicamente agiate, e per alcuni punti di vista si collocano all'interno del ceto nobiliare. Il titolo legale, infatti, caratterizza il gentiluomo colto «in grado di affrontare insieme alla gestione del patrimonio familiare, quello della cosa pubblica» (Chilese 2001, 104). Ma se talvolta l'interesse da parte nobiliare per le discipline giuridiche esiste, è molto più frequente un certo sospetto da parte del consiglio cittadino verso coloro che si dedicano alla legge o alla medicina.

Ancora Chilese (2001) sottolinea come vi sono diversi modi di esercitare in ambito giuridico, ognuno dei quali è legato al grado di istruzione, capace di operare distinzioni nette all'interno del gruppo. Queste distinzioni hanno a che fare anche con le spese necessarie all'istruzione, spese elevate che non tutte le famiglie potevano permettersi. Da qui la necessità di scegliere il tipo di diritto all'interno del quale intraprendere la propria professione e la naturale distinzione tra notai e giudici (o avvocati). Se si tiene conto della capacità contributiva di questi professionisti, il notariato era quello con coefficienti di estimo più bassi, con alcune eccezioni nel 1515, dove tre notai superavano i 1000 denari di cifra d'estimo, collocandosi nel quinto quintile. La possibilità per gli appartenenti al collegio notarile di entrare a far parte del consiglio cittadino, se non impossibile, era per lo meno remota. Diverso invece era il caso dei professionisti iscritti al collegio dei dottori di legge (129), le cui connessioni con le famiglie più in vista di Verona era evidente anche dalla attribuzione del titolo di *dominus*, che non viene registrato solo nel caso di Leonardus Cepolla nel 1502, Filippus Prandinus nel 1515 e Batholomeus Mapheus nel 1616. È interessante notare che la qualifica di *doctor* per un medesimo estimato non è registrata in tutte le rilevazioni estimali: dei 9 dottori di legge estimati sia nel 1502 che nel 1515, solo per 4 viene registrata la professione in entrambi gli anni; gli altri 5 vengono registrati come *doctor* solo nel 1515. Nicolaus Florinus, che nel 1502 non ha alcuna qualifica professionale, viene registrato come *doctor* nel 1515, ma perde tale qualifica nel 1531. Analoga situazione per i 6 dottori di legge che vengono registrati come tali nel 1515 e senza alcuna qualifica nel 1531. Nel secondo decennio del Cinquecento, Verona visse un periodo di grandi rivolgimenti politici a seguito della battaglia di Agnadello, che portò la città ad issare le bandiere imperiali e consegnarsi all'imperatore Massimiliano fino al 1517. La reazione favorevole all'impero da parte dei ceti dirigenti mostrava il rancore che questi provavano verso Venezia, motivato sia da cause politiche che fiscali (Lanaro 1992, 37-38). Visto lo stretto legame esistente tra le élite cittadine e il collegio dei dottori di legge è possibile che nel 1515 ci fosse la necessità di qualificare gli appartenenti a questo gruppo professionale che si identificavano con le famiglie più in vista di Verona.

Nel 1635 la figura del dottore in legge scompare sostituita dal *causidicus* e dal *procurator* (129), le cui funzioni sono più vicine a quelle di un avvocato che di un giurista

in senso lato. Questa diversa funzione trova riscontro anche nella ricchezza dei dottori della legge che si concentrano negli ultimi quintili di ricchezza, con una buona percentuale che supera ampiamente i 1000 denari di coefficiente di contribuzione. Le cifre d'estimo degli avvocati (*causidicus*, *solicitator*, *procurator*), invece, erano più basse pur rimanendo entro i quintili di ricchezza più alti.

Clerici ed ecclesiastici sono classificati con il codice 14. Tra questi i canonici (141) sono quelli che mantengono una posizione sociale più elevata collocandosi nel quinto quintile di ricchezza in tutti e quattro gli estimi analizzati. Altre categorie di ecclesiastici sono i cappellani (149) che registrano cifre d'estimo decisamente più basse dei canonici.

Maestri di scuola sono codificati nel sottogruppo 13 che comprende *gramaticus, aritmeticus* (132), nel XVI secolo, e i più generici *magister* e *preceptor* (130), nel XVII secolo. Rispetto alla ricchezza dell'intera macrocategoria, questo sottogruppo aveva cifre d'estimo più basse.

L'ultima macrocategoria raggruppa le professioni mediche e delle scienze naturali (061), divise tra fisici e medici-chirurghi. Tra questi i fisici hanno una capacità contributiva più alta. Tra le professioni mediche (06 e 07), un altro sottogruppo è composto dai veterinari (*marescalcus,* 065), con capacità contributive non elevate ma entro i quintili più alti della ricchezza.

Interessante è il caso delle ostetriche (073) che, pur rientrando tra le professioni mediche, hanno coefficienti d'estimo molto bassi e si collocano nel secondo e primo quintile di ricchezza. Questa occupazione, svolta esclusivamente da donne, era probabilmente equiparata in età moderna alle professioni per la cura della persona, benché la codificazione HISCO non attribuisca un mestiere simile all'ostetrica o alla levatrice nella macrocategoria 5. Poiché non è possibile operare questa distinzione, è necessario codificare tra le arti mediche anche mestieri che erano più legati alla pratica e alla tradizione, spesso anche con connotazioni non scientifiche, come per esempio i cavadenti e i cosiddetti medici empirici.

5. Professioni e distribuzione della ricchezza nella città di Verona

Le informazioni raccolte sulle occupazioni nella città di Verona tra XVI e XVII secolo possono essere utili anche per rispondere a domande di ricerca che vanno oltre il campo della mobilità occupazionale, concentrandosi, in particolare, sulla struttura occupazionale delle società preindustriali. La struttura occupazionale è un indicatore importante nel determinare il dinamismo sociale, dal momento che i settori urbani, servizi e industria, mostrano più alti livelli di produttività rispetto all'agricoltura e, in genere, le società economicamente più sviluppate hanno livelli di occupazione nel settore agricolo più bassi rispetto ai paesi più poveri (Chilosi e Ciccarelli 2022). Gli storici hanno cercato di ricostruire la struttura occupazionale delle società preindustriali, fornendo stime sulla distribuzione della forza lavoro nei tre settori primario, secondario e terziario nelle economie rurali e cittadine dal quattordicesimo secolo (Allen 2000; Malanima 2005). Nelle aree urbane, i processi di urbanizzazione hanno permesso di concentrare l'attenzione sulle diverse professioni, ricostruendo la

distribuzione della forza lavoro nel settore secondario e terziario (Malanima 2011; Zucca Micheletto 2013).

Se si osserva la città di Verona, centro urbano che va incontro a una serie di trasformazioni a partire dal quindicesimo secolo, ampie riflessioni sono state fatte in merito alla formazione degli stati «regionali» e «territoriali», considerando la loro strutturazione non solo dal punto di vista politico-istituzionale, ma anche nella loro componente economica (Ciriacono 1986; Varanini 1992; Lanaro 1999). Il concetto di «regione economica» insiste sul rapporto tra economia cittadina e mercato regionale, sulle scelte di politica economica dei governi, che in molti casi provocarono uno scontro tra gli interessi economici della dominante Venezia e della città di Terraferma, soprattutto nel campo dell'attività manifatturiera (Demo 2001). Nel corso del Cinquecento, mercanti e imprenditori della Terraferma continuarono a esportate i propri manufatti lungo le consuete vie del traffico nazionale, verso l'area padana e l'Italia centrale e meridionale, e internazionale, nel Lavante e nei paesi d'oltralpe, nonostante le pressioni esercitate da Venezia per un maggiore controllo sulle attività produttive, anche a fini fiscali (Lanaro 2003 e 2022). Tuttavia, a partire dalla seconda metà del Cinquecento, la crisi del lanificio, come si è visto anche nel paragrafo precedente, ha avuto un forte impatto sull'economia cittadina, con conseguenze importanti sulla organizzazione della filiera produttiva e distributiva della lana, che aveva conosciuto tra quindicesimo e sedicesimo secolo un crescente investimento anche da parte delle élite cittadine (Demo 2013).

I dati ottenuti attraverso la codificazione delle professioni, che sono stati analizzati nel paragrafo precedente, possono essere utilizzati per contribuire all'analisi dei cambiamenti intercorsi nella struttura occupazionale della città di Verona tra XVI e XVII secolo, offrendo nuove riflessioni sull'impatto che la crisi dei settori produttivi trainanti e la crisi demografica conseguente alla peste del 1630 hanno avuto nel passaggio dal dinamismo economico che ha caratterizzato i secoli XV e XVI, al Seicento.

Per ottenere il grafico della struttura occupazionale della città di Verona per i quattro estimi che sono stati analizzati, si è proceduto a dividere la popolazione estimata per quintili di ricchezza. Calcolato il numero di estimati, abbiamo ordinato la popolazione secondo la cifra d'estimo dalla maggiore alla minore, ottenendo così un ordinamento «rich to poor». Una volta definiti quintili di ricchezza omogenei, si è proceduto a calcolare quanti individui per ogni macrocategoria professionale fossero registrati in ognuno dei cinque quintili. Questo calcolo ha tenuto conto anche dei dati non disponibili, ovvero gli estimati per i quali non era registrata la professione, indicati come *missing data* (MD) (vedi Tab. 2).

Tab. 2. **Numero di *missing data* sul totale degli estimati per i quattro estimi di Verona analizzati**

ANNO	MISSING DATA	TOTALE ESTIMATI
1502	3762	6953
1515	3627	5671
1616	5893	12438
1635	4080	7868

Osservando i grafici così prodotti (Graff. 1-4), si può vedere che la macrocategoria più rappresentata in tutti gli anni presi in esame è quella degli artigiani tessili e addetti alla produzione del cibo (7), mentre le meno rappresentate sono quelle che comprendono gli ufficiali pubblici (3) e i lavori di amministrazione (2).

Come è plausibile aspettarsi in una società di antico regime, le macrocategorie maggiormente rappresentate nelle rilevazioni fiscali sono quelle dei lavoratori manuali, dai lavoratori giornalieri nell'agricoltura o nelle attività di costruzione e trasporto, alle varie categorie di artigiani.

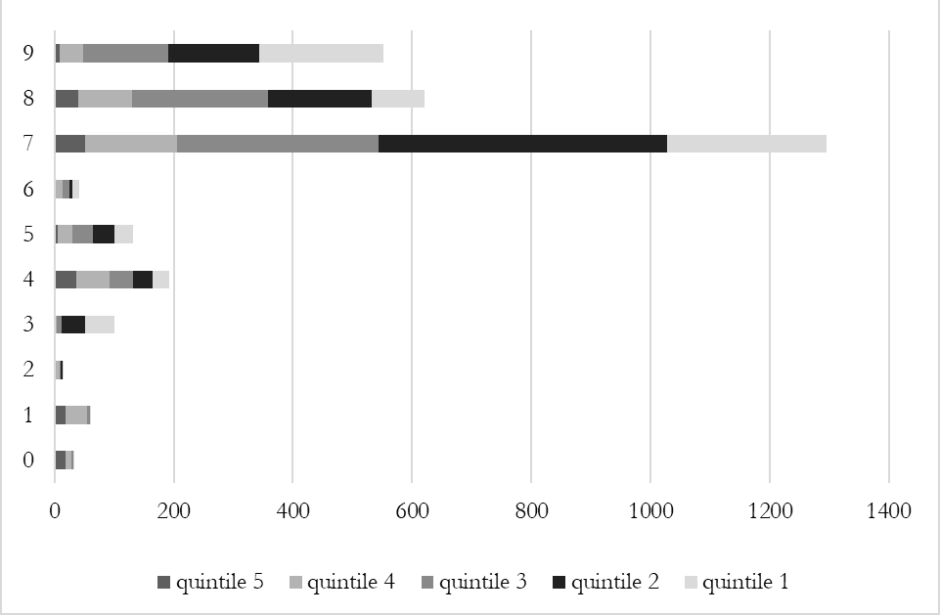
Se ci si concentra sulle singole categorie, confrontandole nei diversi anni presi in esame, si nota che nel corso del XVI secolo la percentuale di lavoratori a giornata diminuisce dall'8% (1502) al 4% (1515). Percentuali più alte si ritrovano nel Seicento con una riduzione dal 12% all'8,5% dal 1616 al 1635.

Le categorie 7 e 8 che raggruppano artigiani e lavoratori manuali rappresentano il gruppo di lavoratori più numeroso, pari al 27,5% della popolazione nel 1502 e al 22,5% nel 1515. Queste percentuali si mantengono all'inizio del Seicento, con il 24,9% sull'intera popolazione censita nel 1616, per poi scendere nel 1635 con il 20,8% di addetti al settore manifatturiero. Tra gli artigiani che vantano maggiore ricchezza vi sono, come si è visto, i lavoratori addetti al processamento del cibo, in particolare macellai e formaggiai.

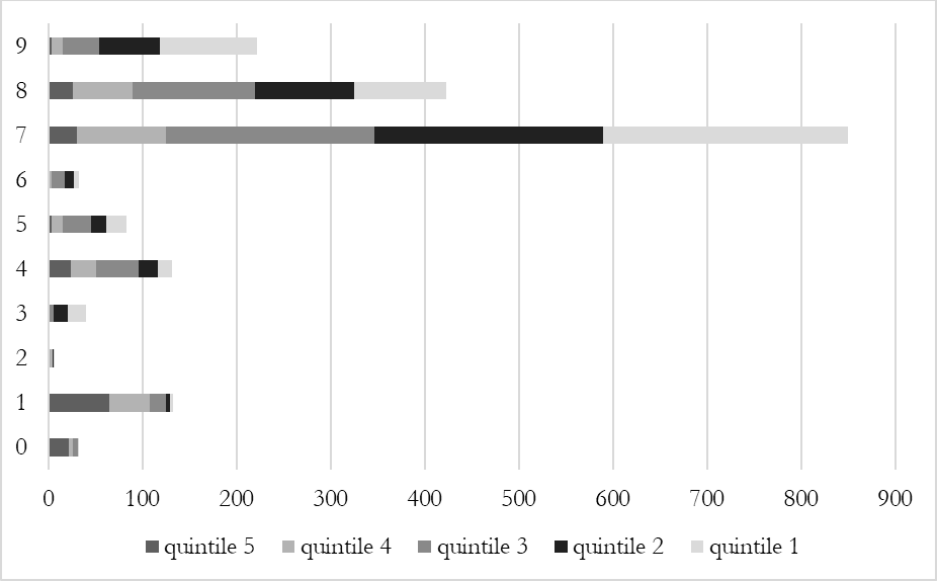
Al lato opposto della scala sociale troviamo le professioni giuridiche, mediche e artistiche (0 e 1); il loro numero è molto basso nel 1502, mentre nel 1515 cresce raggiungendo 165 rilevazioni (1,3% nel 1502 e 2,6% nel 1515). Come si è visto, le contribuzioni più basse dei professionisti appartenenti a queste categorie sono quelli delle ostetriche o dei sensali, ma nel 1502 solo 4 su 95 professionisti rientrano nei quintili più bassi della ricchezza. Nel 1515, tra i più poveri di questa categoria troviamo notai, veterinari, chirurghi e il loro numero è di 9 su 165 rilevazioni.

Nel Seicento (graf. 3), il numero complessivo di professionisti appartenenti alle categorie delle arti mediche e giuridiche (0 e 1) diminuisce tra il 1616 e il 1635 (2,4% nel 1616 e 1,9% nel 1635), ma aumentano coloro che si collocano nel quintile più basso della ricchezza (12 su 311 nel 1616, pari al 3,8%, mentre nel secolo precedente (1515) solo il 3% degli occupati nelle categorie 0 e 1 si collocavano nel quintile inferiore). Tra questi vi sono ostetriche e sensali, ma anche chirurghi, magistrati e notai. Nel 1635 (graf. 4), i 2 occupati su 148 appartenenti alle macrocategorie 0 e 1 (pari al 1,3%) che si trovano nel quintile più basso sono un chirurgo e un precettore.

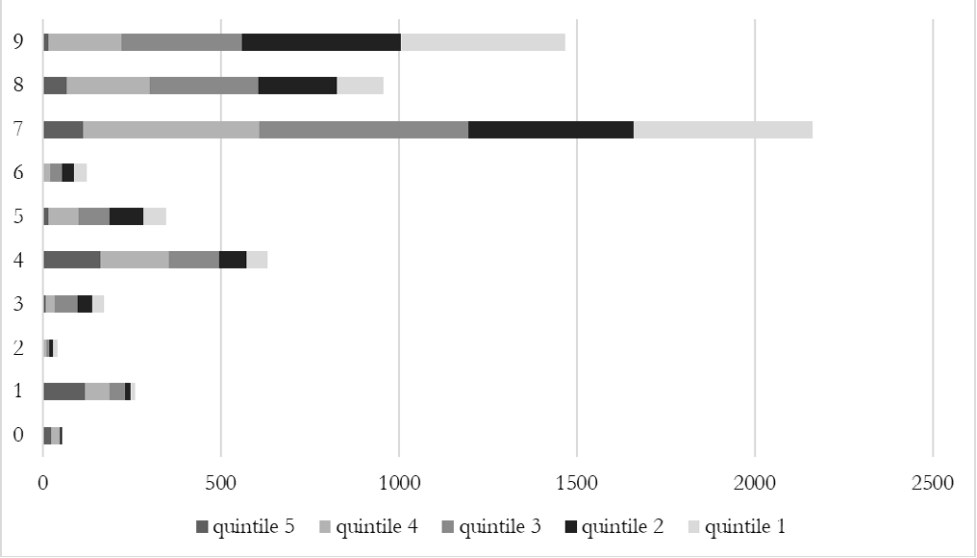
Graf. 1. **Distribuzione delle 10 macrocategorie professionali per quintili di ricchezza, 1502**



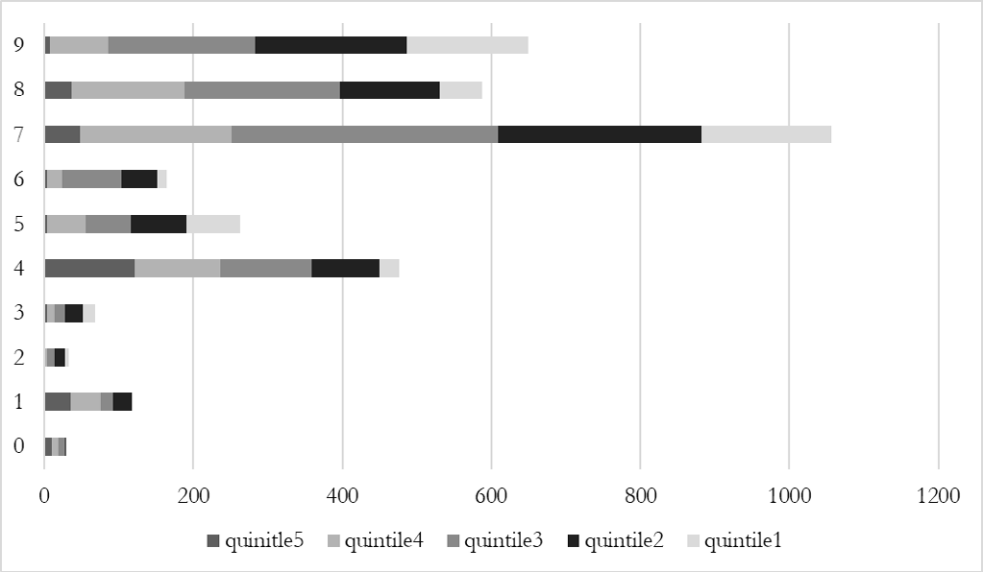
Graf. 2. **Distribuzione delle 10 macrocategorie professionali per quintili di ricchezza, 1515**



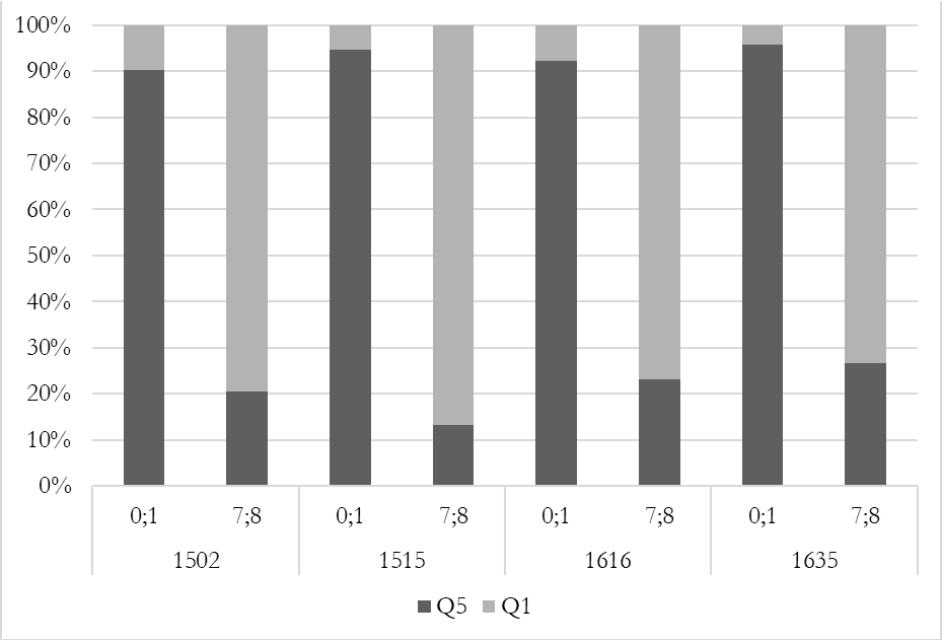
Graf. 3. **Distribuzione delle 10 macrocategorie professionali per quintili di ricchezza, 1616**



Graf. 4. **Distribuzione delle 10 macrocategorie professionali per quintili di ricchezza, 1635**



Graf. 5. **Rapporto tra gli occupati nelle arti liberali (macrocategorie 0 e 1) e arti manifattrici (macrocategorie 7 e 8) nel quintile superiore (Q5) e nel quintile inferiore (Q1)**



6. Conclusioni

Nelle pagine precedenti si è dato ampio spazio all'analisi delle fonti e dei metodi utili ad analizzare la mobilità occupazionale nella città di Verona, prendendo in considerazione un indicatore fondamentale, la ricchezza. Si è cercato in primo luogo di definire le caratteristiche demografiche ed economiche della città, insistendo in particolar modo sull'importanza delle attività manifatturiere cittadine nella relazione con il mercato regionale, che ha avuto un ruolo importante nel determinare i rapporti di forza con la dominante Venezia. Attraverso l'analisi delle singole professioni, si è cercato di dimostrare come nel corso del XVII secolo l'accumulo del capitale mercantile abbia permesso la creazione di grandi patrimoni individuali e abbia spinto verso un maggiore controllo su di essi attraverso una più attenta politica corporativa. L'espansione delle corporazioni, che coincide con la crescita economica che caratterizza gli anni a cavallo tra XVI e XVII secolo, è testimoniata da un lato dal maggior numero di rilevazioni delle occupazioni negli estimi (la percentuale maggiore di registrazioni è nel 1616 con il 53%), e dall'altro da un aumento nel corso del Seicento delle occorrenze di alcune professioni inquadrate nelle corporazioni cittadine, tra questi falegnami (*marangonus*) e panificatori *(pistor* e *festarius*).

Un esempio significativo del potere finanziario acquisito attraverso i capitali mercantili è rappresentato dal passaggio nei primi anni del Seicento dal drappiere,

inteso come *mercante- imprenditore*, a cui erano demandati i più impegnativi compiti di organizzazione del processo di produzione della lana, al mercante di lana, che pur diminuendo nei numeri, acquisisce una potenza economico-finanziaria che lo pone al vertice della distribuzione della ricchezza. In generale, se si osserva la struttura occupazionale della società, si può notare un significativo aumento del numero dei mercanti (raggruppati nella macrocategoria 4) nel corso del Seicento.

Inoltre, la scomparsa del drappiere segna la crisi del lanificio cittadino, ben rappresentato dalla drastica diminuzione del numero di tessitori negli estimi seicenteschi e del ridimensionamento di alcuni processi produttivi che nei secoli precedenti erano affidati a operai specializzati nelle botteghe tessili.

Da questa prima analisi delle professioni nella città di Verona, è stato possibile rilevare alcune importanti informazioni sulla struttura e l'andamento nella distribuzione della forza lavoro tra macrocategorie professionali. È interessante notare che artigiani e lavoratori manuali rappresentano il gruppo più numeroso, il quale si mantiene stabile tra il 30 e il 20% della popolazione lungo i due secoli. Più discontinua è, invece, la percentuale di occupati nelle professioni liberali, che cresce nei primi decenni del Cinquecento per poi diminuire nuovamente dopo la peste. Non si esclude su questo andamento il peso dei rivolgimenti politici che seguirono la battaglia di Agnadello, che ebbero sicuramente un effetto maggiore sulle élite cittadine. Quello che si può notare è una generale diminuzione nella seconda metà del Cinquecento della percentuale di lavoratori manuali nel quintile superiore rispetto al quintile inferiore, segno di una maggiore concentrazione della ricchezza all'interno di questa categoria professionale. Nei quintili centrali della distribuzione le percentuali di occupati nella categoria dei lavoratori manifatturieri diminuisce nei primi decenni del XVI secolo per aumentare nuovamente solo dopo la peste del Seicento. Questo andamento potrebbe allinearsi ai dati in nostro possesso sulla diseguaglianza economica e la mobilità sociale, che è piuttosto bassa nei decenni centrali del Cinquecento nonostante in quegli stessi anni si assista ad una attenuazione delle diseguaglianze economiche. I ceti manifatturieri cittadini, nella seconda metà del Cinquecento, potrebbero tendere a polarizzarsi nei due estremi della distribuzione, mentre i quintili centrali rimangono piuttosto stabili, come se la crisi di alcuni settori chiave della manifattura avesse irrigidito le posizioni intermedie, favorendo invece l'ingresso di nuovi lavoratori poco qualificati.

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Matteo Di Tullio

La mobilità sociale a Bergamo tra tardo Medioevo ed Età Moderna: fonti e metodi d'indagine

1. Introduzione

Questo contributo ha l'obiettivo di discutere le fonti e i metodi utili a ricostruire e misurare la mobilità sociale in una città dell'Italia settentrionale d'antico regime. Nello specifico, si prendono in considerazione le relazioni tra mobilità sociale, disuguaglianza economica e accesso alle istituzioni di governo locale. L'arco cronologico analizzato è piuttosto ampio (tra Quattro e Settecento) e la base dati utilizzata è perlopiù frutto di nuove ricerche d'archivio.[1]

Prima di entrare nel dettaglio del caso studio, si propongono alcune riflessioni sulle determinanti della mobilità sociale nelle società di antico regime, riprendendo e aggiornando alcune considerazioni già avanzate in altra sede (Di Tullio 2017; 2018). Quello della mobilità sociale è certamente un tema complesso, oggetto di un fervente dibattito in varie discipline delle scienze sociali e umane. Non è tuttavia privo d'utilità definirne alcune coordinate, necessarie ad orientarsi entro un campo così vasto.

Possiamo anzitutto assumere che il diverso grado di mobilità di una società sia il risultato della tensione tra la propensione alla riproduzione e le spinte al cambiamento, veicolate attraverso vari canali. L'attitudine alla riproduzione è un carattere generale dei comportamenti sociali nel lungo periodo e lo è sicuramente in modo maggiore per delle realtà esclusive e cetuali come quelle d'antico regime.[2] Lungi dal

[1] La ricerca che ha prodotto questi risultati ha beneficiato di finanziamenti dello European Research Council nel contesto del Settimo Programma Quadro dell'Unione Europea (FP7/2007-2013)/ERC Grant agreement No. 283802, EINITE-Economic Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800; del programma Horizon 2020 dell'Unione Europea, Horizon 2020 Framework Program/ERC Grant agreement No. 725687, SMITE-Social Mobility and Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800; del programma Finanziato dall'Unione Europea – NextGenerationEU – Missione 4 Istruzione e ricerca - componente 2, investimento 1.1 "Fondo per il Programma Nazionale della Ricerca (PNR) e Progetti di Ricerca di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale (PRIN)" progetto PRIN_PNRR_2022 P2022MBB3N "Political Inclusion and Inequality in Preindustrial Italian Alps (1500-1800)" CUP F53D23011470001; e del programma finanziato dalla fondazione CARIPLO - Inequalities research. Generare conoscenza per ridurre le diseguaglianze 2023, progetto "Taxation, Public expenditure, and Economic Inequality in preindustrial Venetian Lombardy (1400-1800)". Le considerazioni sulle dinamiche della disuguaglianza economica che presento in questa sede sono state oggetto di ampia trattazione in Alfani, e Di Tullio (2019), al quale si rimanda fin d'ora.

[2] Sul tema è possibile rimandare a studi classici come Polany (1944), ma anche a più recenti e 'innovativi' lavori, tra i quali Clark (2014). Questa propensione sarebbe tipica tanto delle società antiche, come di quella contemporanee, stando agli studi dell'antropologo Appadurai (1996), al quale si rinvia

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voler sostenere che il mondo preindustriale fosse immobile, nondimeno si può asserire che nei secoli che stiamo studiando si sperimentassero forme di mobilità più in ragione del fallimento della riproduzione, che per generali processi di promozione.

Diversi anni fa, David Herlihy (1973) è arrivato addirittura a sostenere che nell'Europa medievale la mobilità sociale sarebbe stata quasi esclusivamente il risultato della dinamica discendente dei rami cadetti delle famiglie dell'*élite*. Per questo identificava tre modelli di mobilità, essenzialmente determinati dalle diverse condizioni economiche e dalle dinamiche demografiche: (I) le fasi di stagnazione (come i secoli prima del Mille) produrrebbero una mobilità circolare 'a somma zero', frutto della compensazione tra alcune famiglie in declino e altre più intraprendenti in ascesa; (II) i periodi di espansione economica e demografica, ad esempio fra XI e XIV secolo, favorirebbero invece la riproduzione degli strati più elevati, spingendo verso il basso le famiglie con limitate risorse e i cadetti di quelle più ricche, determinando così un certo grado di mobilità, soprattutto discendente; (III) le fasi di grande rinnovamento socioeconomico (come l'ascesa delle economie urbane fra XIV e XV secolo), infine, produrrebbero una continua pressione degli individui e dei gruppi sociali più dinamici, oltre che l'attrazione di risorse dalle 'periferie', determinando un'elevata mobilità.

È evidente che un simile schema può solo parzialmente adattarsi alle diverse realtà: una questione su cui torneremo a più riprese anche discutendo il nostro caso studio. Tuttavia, si può essere d'accordo sul modo in cui è delineata la generale propensione alla conservazione delle società d'antico regime, con l'eccezione di una parte molto limitata della popolazione, in particolare i mercanti e gli operatori dell'alta finanza.[3] In buona sostanza, la tendenza alla riproduzione caratterizzerebbe normalmente i comportamenti sociali (e familiari), benché contro questa attitudine agirebbero regolarmente delle spinte 'individuali' (come quelle dei mercanti) e occasionalmente, ma non meno frequentemente, degli shock (epidemie, carestie, guerre, instabilità politica o disastri ambientali) o delle congiunture generali (economiche e demografiche).

In questo contributo, più che seguire le ragioni delle spinte individuali, interessa definire i quadri generali della mobilità sociale, domandandosi quali contesti e congiunture abbiano favorito l'apertura dei diversi canali della mobilità.[4] Tanto la definizione, quanto soprattutto la misurazione dei fenomeni di mobilità sociale, richiedono però d'identificare degli indicatori utili ad osservare i processi di ascesa, discesa o stazionarietà. Le condizioni di partenza e di arrivo possono in effetti riguardare contesti diversi, riferendosi a posizioni assolute o relative. Ricostruire la mobilità, del resto, significa studiare l'evoluzione nel tempo della distribuzione di una risorsa

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anche per l'originale uso dei termini 'produzione' e 'riproduzione' per indicare la costruzione sociale degli spazi e delle identità; questione a cui si è rifatto anche Torre (2012), che ha discusso questi concetti in rapporto alla produzione delle 'località'.

[3] Ad esempio, Kellenbenz 1967-68; Petralia 2010. Per i finanzieri risultano particolarmente fruttuosi gli investimenti nelle finanze e nel debito pubblico, come dimostra il caso dei genovesi. Si vedano, ad esempio, De Luca 2007; Fara 2016; Marsilio 2008; Terreni 2006; 2015.

[4] Si veda la definizione di Carocci (2010, 10-13), che riprende il sociologo Pitirim Sorokin, tenendo però assieme la dimensione 'istituzionale' dei canali della mobilità con quelle informali di clientela. Su questi ultimi aspetti si vedano i classici Granovetter 1973; Padgett e Ansell 1993.

all'interno di una popolazione, considerando la stabilità o la modifica della posizione individuale in relazione all'intero. Se si considerano risorse che possono essere ordinate, si analizza la mobilità verticale, altrimenti si deve più propriamente riferirsi a quella orizzontale (Checchi e Dardanoni 2004).

La mobilità sociale, dunque, non è 'semplicemente' il passaggio da una condizione ad un'altra, quanto piuttosto ogni ricollocazione entro i diversi fattori rilevanti (economici, politici, di prestigio e così via) di una data società (Carocci 2010, 1-2). Le grammatiche della struttura sociale mutano nel tempo, perciò è importante conoscere il contesto e il sistema di valori della società che stiamo indagando (Kula 1972, 417).[5] Altresì è rilevante aver presente le possibilità formali della mobilità, l'eventuale elusione di queste limitazioni nel passaggio dalla norma alla pratica, così come i potenziali movimenti *de facto* di cui gli stessi contemporanei non si rendono conto (Kula 1972, 420-23).

Definito il quadro, per ricostruirne la mobilità è necessario identificare degli indicatori gerarchizzabili, meglio ancora se misurabili. Tra le varie proposte, risulta ancora valida quella avanzata diversi decenni fa da Witold Kula (1972, 426-27), che considerava cinque criteri utili a definire la struttura di una società: 1) il patrimonio, vale a dire l'uso di forze produttive; 2) il reddito, in senso quantitativo e qualitativo; 3) la partecipazione al potere; 4) il prestigio sociale; 5) lo stile di vita (costumi, cultura).

Seguendo questo schema, per dar conto della complessità del fenomeno della mobilità sociale nel nostro caso studio, considerate le fonti primarie disponibili, proponiamo un'analisi combinata di diversi indicatori. Si ricostruisce, infatti, il grado di mobilità dei vari soggetti in rapporto alla distribuzione nel tempo della ricchezza (criterio 1), che per le società preindustriali – e in parte per le attuali – è un ottimo indicatore anche della distribuzione dei redditi (criterio 2) (Alfani 2015; Piketty 2014). Inoltre, si considera l'evoluzione dell'avvicendamento individuale e famigliare all'interno degli organi di governo locale, vale a dire il diverso grado di partecipazione al potere politico (criterio 3) e del raggiungimento di posizioni di prestigio sociale (criterio 4).

2. Economia e popolazione

Bergamo è una città ai piedi delle montagne, edificata su una serie di colli, a nord dei quali si trovano le Prealpi Orobie, mentre a sud si estende la Pianura Padana. All'alba del Quattrocento era ancora sotto il dominio di Milano e dei Visconti, ma la morte del duca Gian Galeazzo (1402) aprì una fase turbolenta che portò a profondi e duraturi cambiamenti. Bergamo entrò nei domini della Serenissima di Venezia nel 1428, rappresentando fino alla caduta della Repubblica (1797) una parte importante della frontiera occidentale della Terraferma.

Per la sua posizione defilata rispetto alle linee di traffico che attraversavano la Pianura Padana e ai principali valichi alpini, nel corso del Medioevo il capoluogo orobico aveva sviluppato una vocazione manifatturiera, più che commerciale o

[5] Carocci (2010, 15) evidenzia giustamente che la vendita e/o l'allivellamento di una terra, che potrebbero essere percepiti come una perdita di status, possono in realtà sottendere la creazione di una nuova clientela, quindi essere fattori d'ascesa.

finanziaria, anche in ragione dell'importanza del lanificio e delle attività estrattive nelle valli. Queste ultime, piuttosto popolose e dinamiche, fungevano da concorrente nei confronti della città. Nelle alte valli Seriana e Brembana e nella Valle di Scalve si estraeva e lavorava il ferro, mentre nelle basse e medie valli Seriana e Brembana e nella Valle Imagna si fabbricava il 'panno di Bergamo': un prodotto di bassa qualità esportato in tutta l'Italia settentrionale grazie al suo prezzo competitivo, garantito dall'ampio ricorso alla manodopera rurale (Mainoni 1994; 1997). La pianura occupava invece una superficie relativamente piccola del contado bergamasco e solo una minima parte comprendeva le fertili terre della bassa irrigua. Anche per queste ragioni, il capoluogo orobico si sviluppò meno rispetto alle altre città lombarde e della Terraferma e non riuscì mai ad esercitare un potere compiuto sul proprio contado (Chittolini 1999).

L'avvio del dominio della Serenissima non risolse questa dialettica tra città e territorio. Venezia aveva impostato con cautela la sua politica fiscale e amministrativa verso Bergamo, tanto per la sua collocazione alla frontiera dello Stato quanto per la scarsa produttività agricola locale. Rispetto alle altre province di Terraferma, infatti, quella bergamasca ottenne importanti privilegi. Ampie autonomie furono riconosciute alle valli, così come vennero promosse giurisdizioni semi autonome in pianura. Alla città, invece, si concessero importanti prerogative doganali, in particolare per il transito delle produzioni manifatturiere locali verso la laguna. Questi ultimi provvedimenti avevano l'intento di saldare il legame tra Venezia e i mercanti bergamaschi e di limitare il più possibile il contrabbando in direzione della frontiera milanese e svizzera, che tuttavia fu ampiamente praticato nei secoli successivi (Pederzani 1992; Pezzolo 1998, 50-51). Persino a livello monetario Bergamo si distinse dal resto della Terraferma, potendo continuare ad utilizzare fino a metà Cinquecento la lira locale di conto, allineata a quella di Milano e di valore doppio rispetto a quella di Venezia (Cattini e Romani 1998, 16).

Nei primi decenni del Quattrocento, il capoluogo orobico si trovava in una fase di depressione demografica ed economica, quale conseguenza delle pestilenze trecentesche e del disordine politico-militare successivo alla morte di Gian Galeazzo Visconti.[6] Stabilizzatasi sotto il dominio di San Marco e soprattutto grazie al relativo periodo di calma conseguente alla pace di Lodi (1454), la popolazione ricominciò a crescere, particolarmente nella seconda metà del secolo, quando si raggiunsero circa 18.500 abitanti. Questa traiettoria non si arrestò, almeno inizialmente, nemmeno con l'avvio delle guerre d'Italia del Cinquecento, seguendo una dinamica tipica di buona parte delle città dell'Italia settentrionale e della Terraferma veneta (Cozzi e Knapton 1986, 228-229) (Graf. 1).

[6] Risparmiata dalle pestilenze del 1347-50, Bergamo fu severamente colpita nel 1361, nel 1375 (preceduta da una gravissima carestia) e in misura minore nel 1381 e nel 1385. Come se non bastasse, città e contado furono interessati anche dalla grave pestilenza del 1399-1400, quando si dovettero toccare i 20.000 morti (Albini 1999, 217-18).

Graf. 1. Andamento della popolazione di Bergamo (1430-1790)

Fonte: nostra elaborazione da Albini 1999; Belfanti 1995; Saba 1995.

Tra il 1450 e il 1527 la popolazione crebbe soprattutto per effetto della migrazione, come sembra suggerire il differente tasso di sviluppo delle vicinie urbane rispetto quelle suburbane. Fatto 100 la popolazione alla metà del Quattrocento, le vicinie urbane salirono a 146 nel 1499 e a 170 nel 1527; quelle suburbane toccarono invece 230 nel 1499 e 241 nel 1527. Questo processo comportò l'allargamento dell'area cittadina, con una più marcata differenza tra vicinie del centro e sobborghi, abitati per la quasi totalità dagli strati meno abbienti (Albini 1999, 241-242). Le vicinie urbane, collocate sui colli e limitate dalle mura (medievali e, da fine Cinquecento, bastionate), non poterono svilupparsi oltremodo; perciò, furono soprattutto borghi e sobborghi ad assorbire la crescita urbana e fu particolarmente in queste vicinie 'esterne' che si concentrarono le manifatture (Cattini e Romani 1998, 34; Colmuto Zanella e Zanella 1995).

Questi assunti trovano conferma dall'analisi di un registro redatto per una contribuzione straordinaria imposta nel 1527 per il rifacimento delle mura cittadine (il cosiddetto Estimo delle medaglie), che, oltre ai contribuenti con la loro quota di «taglia», riporta anche i *nihil habentes* (coloro che, più che essere poveri in assoluto, non avevano abbastanza sostanze da essere chiamati a contribuire alla spesa). Nelle vicinie urbane non solo vivevano meno persone, ma si registra anche una minore incidenza dei *nihil habentes* sul totale degli abitanti rispetto a quanto rilevato in quelle suburbane (Tab. 1).[7]

[7] Biblioteca Civica A. Mai (BCBg), *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Sezione antico regime*, *Estimi*, 1.2.16-XXI. In merito a questa esazione straordinaria di 2.000 lire imperiali imposta per la «fortificazione urbis», si veda anche la deliberazione del consiglio maggiore della città del 7 febbraio 1527 (BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Sezione antico regime*, *Azioni dei consigli*, 1.2.3.1-17).

Tab. 1. **Contribuenti e *hihil habentes* registrati nell'Estimo delle medaglie (1527)**

Vicinie	Contribuenti	*Nihil habentes*	Totale	*% nihil habentes*
Urbane	1.368	173	1.541	11,23
Suburbane	2.214	917	3.131	29,29
Totale	3.582	1.090	4.672	23,33

Fonte: Nostra elaborazione da BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Sezione antico regime*, *Estimi*, 1.2.16-XXI.

La migrazione dalle aree rurali ebbe sicuramente importanza nella dinamica demografica urbana, anche se città e campagna seguirono simili traiettorie del popolamento, tanto in senso espansivo, quanto in fasi di recessione; in ragione di ciò, nel corso di questi secoli, il tasso di urbanizzazione oscillò fra il 10 e il 15%.[8]

Raggiunti poco meno di 24.000 abitanti nel 1527, la popolazione scese nei decenni successivi per effetto presumibilmente della peste del 1528, che colpì duramente varie parti della Lombardia. Seguì la ripresa del secondo Cinquecento, in un contesto di generale espansione economica e demografica dell'Italia settentrionale, con andamenti altalenanti, però, frutto tanto della peste di San Carlo (1576-78), quanto delle gravi carestie degli anni '90 del Cinquecento (Alfani 2010). Assestata attorno a 20.000 abitanti negli anni '20 del Seicento, Bergamo fu duramente colpita dalla peste manzoniana, che falcidiò tra il 40 e il 50% della popolazione.

Come nel secolo precedente, anche nel Cinque-Seicento la lavorazione dei panni di lana restò la manifattura bergamasca per eccellenza (Panciera 2000). Al contrario di altre realtà della Terraferma che nel corso del Seicento sperimentarono una recessione della manifattura laniera per via della concorrenza del nord Europa, Bergamo sviluppò la sua produzione lungo tutto il secolo, anche grazie alla capacità di legarsi a Venezia, pur allo stesso tempo continuando a gravitare, come il resto della Lombardia veneta, entro l'area economica milanese (Mocarelli 2006). Alla produzione laniera, s'andò del resto affiancando quella serica, mentre le attività siderurgiche rimasero fondamentali, ma nelle valli più che in città (Poni 2000; Sella 2000; Colli 2000).

Bergamo, come buona parte del Territorio, si dedicava alle manifatture anche per cercare di ottenere le risorse necessarie ad importare le derrate alimentari, che solo in parte erano prodotte localmente. Seppure l'immagine dell'agricoltura bergamasca come arretrata e statica sia stata ormai superata (De Luca 2000), resta il fatto che l'importazione di cereali dal Cremasco, dal Cremonese, dalla Geradadda e da altre aree della Pianura Padana caratterizzò la storia orobica d'età moderna (Costantini 2016). Sicuramente anche per queste ragioni, oltre che per la concorrenza con le manifatture delle valli, il ceto urbano investì nella proprietà fondiaria, arrivando

[8] Nostra elaborazione da Albini 1999; Belfanti 1995; Saba 1995. Non abbiamo dati per il Quattrocento, ma questi valori sono riscontrabili per i secoli successivi.

praticamente a controllare la quasi totalità dei fondi nelle aree più fertili di pianura già nel corso del Cinquecento (Gioia 2004).

In ogni caso, nella seconda metà del Seicento il bergamasco non solo sperimentò una fase di discreto sviluppo economico, ma altresì una rapida ripresa demografica. La crisi conseguente alla peste del 1629-30 fu riassorbita piuttosto rapidamente e, anzi, ad inizio Settecento, Bergamo raggiunse una taglia demografica mai toccata in precedenza: circa 30.000 abitanti.

3. Estimi, distribuzione della ricchezza e mobilità sociale

La ricostruzione delle dinamiche della distribuzione della ricchezza nell'Italia preindustriale è resa possibile dall'analisi degli estimi. Questi ultimi erano gli strumenti privilegiati per la raccolta degli oneri fiscali, in un contesto nel quale vigeva il principio della solidarietà di corpo (Maifreda 2002, 61-62) e si assisteva costantemente al tentativo di scaricare gli oneri fiscali dal 'centro' alle 'periferie' (Alfani e Di Tullio 2019; Borelli 1980; Lanaro 1982; Zangheri 1980). Si tratta di un sistema ereditato dall'età comunale, divenuto patrimonio degli stati regionali del Rinascimento e messo in discussione solo con il processo di formazione statuale della prima modernità (Chittolini, Molho e Schiera 1994; De Maddalena e Kellenbenz 1984; Dincecco 2011; Dubet e Legay 2011). Nel processo di conquista della Terraferma, Venezia aveva tentato di attuare forme di standardizzazione del prelievo, in particolare attraverso il rafforzamento dei poteri fiscali delle città, ma non riuscì a limitare il policentrismo amministrativo (Berengo 1999; Knapton 2012), al contrario assistendo al proliferare di nuove eccezionalità, soprattutto nelle aree di frontiera (Ventura 1964). La Serenissima aveva, dunque, garantito a sé il prelievo sui dazi, lasciando alle comunità locali la piena autonomia d'esazione e ripartizione delle imposte dirette (le cosiddette «gravezze») (Knapton 1982, 20).

Per quanto riguarda la fiscalità diretta, perciò, Venezia stabiliva l'ammontare degli oneri da imporre alle diverse parti della Terraferma e dello Stato da Mar, delegando la responsabilità dell'esazione alle comunità locali. In altre parole, la camera fiscale veneziana, definiva l'intero ammontare del tributo e stabiliva la ripartizione provinciale dell'onere,[9] di concerto con i corpi territoriali che a loro volta lo dividevano tra le comunità locali. Erano poi queste ultime ad occuparsi dell'effettiva riscossione. Qui entravano in gioco gli estimi, che erano appunto gli strumenti per distribuire gran parte delle imposte dirette tra i singoli corpi dello stato o di una provincia e da questi tra i contribuenti.

Esistevano infatti diverse tipologie di estimo: quello generale, utile a Venezia per ripartire gli oneri tra le varie province; quelli territoriali, attraverso i quali ognuna delle province ripartiva il carico all'interno dei propri corpi (città, contado, vallate, clero, terre separate, ecc.) o, come nel caso di Bergamo, di giurisdizioni fiscali intermedie chiamate «quadre» (Favaretto, 1997; Pederzani 1992; Rossini 1994; Zamperetti 1987); infine, quelli comunali, per ripartire i tributi tra i singoli contribuenti, o meglio tra i

[9] Secondo la ripartizione classica fra città, clero e territorio (Maifreda 2009, 83), con l'eccezione di Bergamo dove la ripartizione avveniva fra la città e le diverse parti del territorio (pianura e valli). Diverso il caso di Treviso, dove si aggiungeva il corpo dei forestieri (Grubb1982; Scherman 2009; 2013).

fuochi o *households* che componevano una comunità (corpo fiscale). Entro questo sistema, infatti, i comuni avevano facoltà di dividere i carichi imposti dal centro come meglio credevano, avendo solo cura di versare alle camere fiscali quanto dovuto e nei tempi stabiliti, riproponendo alla scala locale il tentativo di scaricare il peso del fisco sui gruppi più distanti dall'*élite* politica. Ciò avveniva particolarmente tra i cittadini, che oltre a godere di diversi privilegi nei confronti dei rurali, sui quali ricadeva maggiormente il peso delle imposte dirette, facevano gravare la maggior parte degli oneri fiscali loro spettanti sui dazi, che, oltre a pesare in modo maggiore sui meno abbienti per effetto della natura regressiva di quei tributi, colpivano anche gli abitanti del contado (Collins 1988; Pezzolo 1990). Senza contare gli effetti del processo di trasferimento delle ricchezze rurali negli estimi cittadini, grazie alla diffusa penetrazione della proprietà urbana nei territori (come fece Bergamo in pianura), da un lato, e all'acquisizione della cittadinanza di vari membri delle *élite* rurali, che potevano trasportare così i loro beni nelle liste cittadine e pagare meno oneri fiscali (Di Tullio e Ongaro 2020). Il trasferimento della proprietà dei beni reali dalle comunità rurali alle città avrebbe dovuto riflettersi nel rinnovo degli estimi generali, che tuttavia non avveniva così spesso (Zamperetti 1987), e fu oggetto di un'accesa e infinita disputa fra i vari corpi dello Stato per tutta l'età moderna (Del Torre 1986; Pezzolo 1998; 2006).

Bergamo e il suo Territorio non furono esenti da questa dialettica, che riguardò tanto il problema del rinnovo degli estimi generali, quanto la fuoriuscita dei beni dagli estimi rurali (Pederzani 1992; Pezzolo 1998; 2000; Silini 1996). Questo tentativo di alleggerire il peso degli oneri fiscali non rende meno attendibile le rilevazioni estimative che, al contrario, essendo gestite localmente, erano sottoposte ad un controllo sociale stringente. I libri d'estimo erano infatti redatti a partire dalle polizze compilate da ogni famiglia, vagliate dai deputati all'estimo, che, solo dopo accurate analisi e a partire dagli ordini stabiliti dal consiglio comunale, definivano il valore da attribuire ad ogni proprietà e il coefficiente famigliare. Indubbiamente si poteva cercare di nascondere qualche piccola sostanza agli occhi attenti della comunità dei vicini, ma non si poteva certo snaturare la propria condizione.

Per Bergamo si conserva una discreta serie di estimi, che copre il periodo 1430-1704, seppure non sempre per tutte le vicinie.[10] Gli estimi orobici includono essenzialmente la registrazione degli immobili (terre e case, sottraendo quella d'abitazione, aggiungendo un valore per i fitti attivi e detraendo i diversi 'gravami'). Si includono anche redditi derivanti da diritti di sfruttamento di risorse ambientali (come acque o miniere). Infine, è riportata una generica indicazione relativa al valore dell'arte esercitata, che in tutti i casi incide marginalmente sulla cifra d'estimo finale. Le quote registrate sugli estimi riguardano il reddito capitalizzato ad un determinato tasso dei beni posseduti e non il valore del bene stesso (Borelli 1980; Zangheri 1980); in altri termini, sui registri si trova il reddito teoricamente prodotto dai beni medesimi, ma essendo il tasso di capitalizzazione fisso, in termini distributivi – ovvero di misura della disuguaglianza – non fa alcuna differenza considerare il valore dei beni o il loro reddito presunto.

[10] BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Sezione antico regime*, *Estimi*, 1.2.16-II (1430), 1.2.16-14 (1448), 1.2.16-XXI (1537), 1.2.16-XIII A e B (1555); Archivio di Stato di Bergamo (ASBg), *Estimo Veneto*, filze 1 e 2 (1610), 6 e 7 (1640), 11-14 (1704).

L'analisi degli estimi permette anzitutto di ricostruire la distribuzione della ricchezza e di seguirne l'evoluzione nel corso del tempo. Per ragioni di sintesi, si rinvia a quanto già esposto in altra sede per una disamina completa sui metodi di calcolo e sul significato delle statistiche utilizzate (Alfani e Di Tullio 2019); qui basti rilevare che, non diversamente dal resto della Repubblica e di altre realtà italiane ed europee, Bergamo sperimentò una costante concentrazione della ricchezza nel periodo considerato. Nel grafico 2 proponiamo un confronto fra la dinamica della disuguaglianza (espressa come coefficiente di Gini) a Bergamo e quelle delle città della Serenissima e della Terraferma nel suo complesso. Rispetto a queste ultime, Bergamo fa registrare una decrescita dell'indice di concentrazione fra metà Cinquecento e metà Seicento, probabilmente in ragione delle crisi di mortalità che caratterizzarono quei decenni. Da metà Seicento, tuttavia, la crescita della disuguaglianza riprese in modo significativo, tanto che il valore dell'indice di Gini al 1700 è maggiore a quello del 1550 (Graf. 2). Come in altri casi, anche a Bergamo la distribuzione nel complesso è fortemente determinata da quanto avviene alla parte più ricca della società (D1), vale a dire che crescita o decrescita dell'indice di Gini sono guidate dalla maggiore o minore fortuna dei più ricchi (Graf. 3). Questa correlazione non è una necessità statistica, ma una regolarità empirica riscontrabile tanto per le società del passato quanto per quelle contemporanee.

Oltre alla misura della distribuzione della ricchezza, gli estimi permettono di seguire l'evoluzione dei patrimoni dei vari fuochi contribuenti. Nello specifico, collegando le informazioni dei diversi registri è possibile osservare l'andamento dei destini dei diversi aggregati domestici, non in quanto tali, ma in rapporto al complesso della ricchezza locale. A tale scopo, per ogni rilevazione, si sono divise le famiglie contribuenti in cinque classi di ricchezza e si è analizzata la permanenza o il movimento di ognuna di loro nelle varie classi tra un'osservazione all'altra, monitorando dunque il fuoco tra le generazioni. In tal modo è stato possibile calcolare i tassi di mobilità generale, discendente e ascendente. Ognuno di questi valori è stato poi diviso per il numero di anni compresi nell'intervallo considerato, così da stabilire dei tassi medi di mobilità annuali.[11]

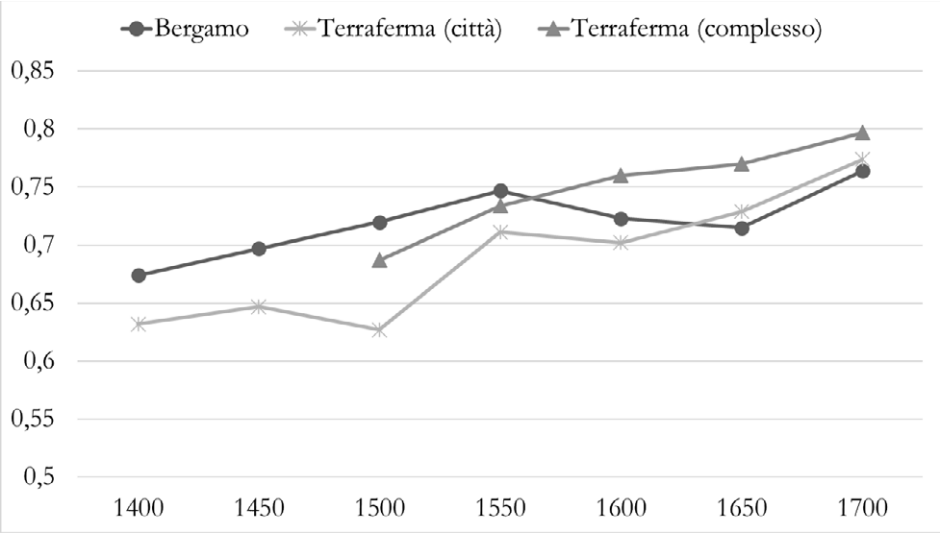
Nel caso bergamasco non disponiamo di registri con ordinate correzioni annuali delle cifre d'estimo, ma dove possibile abbiamo raccolto il valore originale e l'ultimo tra gli aggiornamenti presenti per ogni partita. I dati provvisori, frutto del lungo processo di collezione delle informazioni e di *linkage* fra i diversi estimi, sono sintetizzati nel grafico 4.[12] La figura mette piuttosto bene in evidenza la progressiva riduzione del grado di mobilità sociale nel corso del periodo analizzato. Ad inizio Quattrocento, in un contesto di forte trasformazione della società bergamasca, per effetto del cambio di dominazione e delle crisi di mortalità che caratterizzarono i decenni precedenti,

[11] Per i dettagli sul calcolo di questi indici, si rimanda ad Ammannati 2025. Si noti che le medie annuali sono state calcolate semplicemente dividendo la mobilità complessiva in ciascun periodo compreso tra due estimi per la durata in anni, senza procedere, per il momento, ad alcuna standardizzazione che tenga conto dell'impatto sulle stime della durata del periodo medesimo. Su questo tema, si veda Alfani, Ammannati e Balbo 2022.

[12] Tra 1430 e 1448 sono state linkate il 50,09% delle partite del primo anno e il 49,19% del secondo; tra il 1537 e il 1554, il 93,43 del primo e l'89,9 del secondo; tra il 1555 e il 1609 il 76,72 del primo e il 71,8 del secondo; infine, tra il 1610 e il 1639, il 70,1% del primo e il 91,16% del secondo.

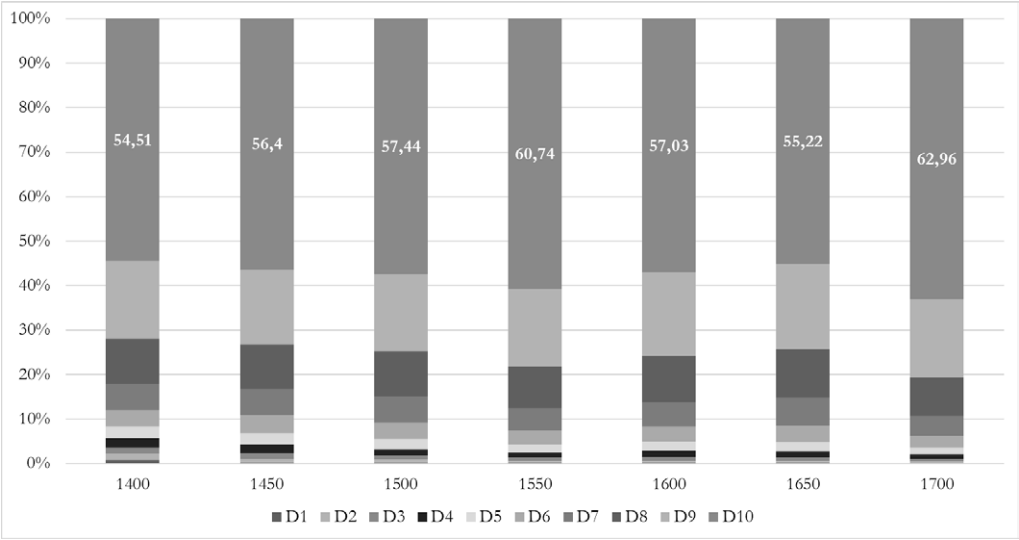
il tasso di mobilità generale annuale si attesta attorno al 3%, con una lieve preminenza della mobilità crescente rispetto a quella decrescente. Nel Cinquecento, invece, il contesto orobico risulta molto meno mobile, con una tendenza all'irrigidimento nel corso del secolo – nonostante quanto osservato riguardo alla riduzione della disuguaglianza economica (Graf. 2) –, seguita da una lieve inversione per effetto della crisi di mortalità che caratterizza i primi decenni del Seicento. Sfortunatamente, gli estimi bergamaschi non permettono di estendere questa analisi al resto del Seicento, né oltre. In ragione di quanto si è osservato a proposito della dinamica della disuguaglianza e di quanto si argomenta nel prossimo paragrafo in relazione all'avvicendamento dei bergamaschi al vertice dell'amministrazione locale, tuttavia, non è difficile supporre che quella del periodo 1610-1637 fu solo una breve parentesi di ripresa della mobilità, seguita a stretto giro da una nuova fase di rallentamento.

Graf. 2. **Trend della disuguaglianza a Bergamo, nelle città della Repubblica di Venezia e nel complesso della Terraferma (Indice di Gini)**



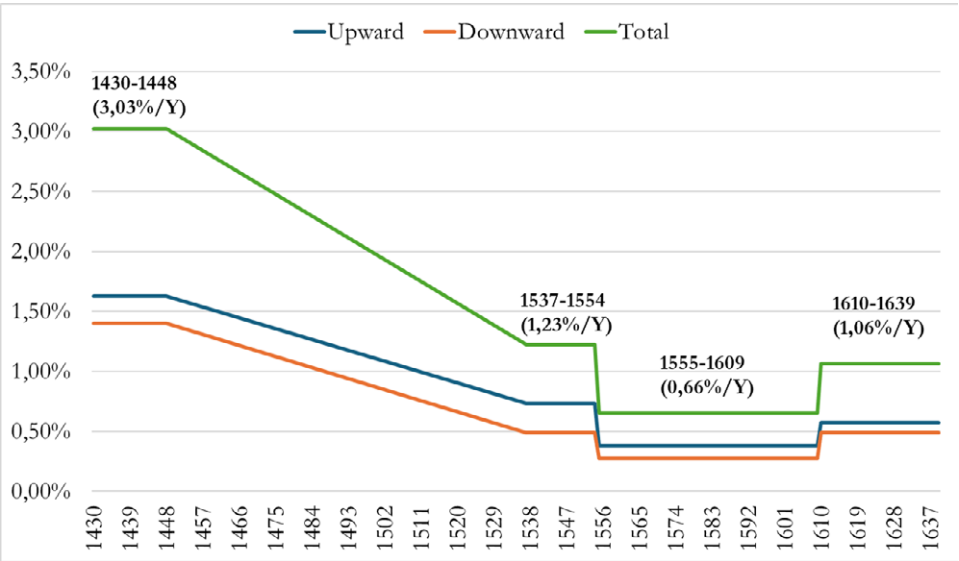
Fonte: Nostra elaborazione a partire dai dati pubblicati in Alfani e Di Tullio 2019

Graf. 3. **Decili di distribuzione della ricchezza a Bergamo**



Fonte: Nostra elaborazione a partire dai dati pubblicati in Alfani e Di Tullio 2019

Graf. 4. **Trend della mobilità sociale a Bergamo (Distribuzione della ricchezza)**



Fonte: Database SMITE. Calcoli elaborati a partire dal *linkage* degli estimi conservati in: BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Sezione antico regime*, *Estimi*, 1.2.16-II (1430), 1.2.16-14 (1448), 1.2.16-XXI (1537), 1.2.16-XIII A e B (1555); ASBg, *Estimo Veneto*, filze 1 e 2 (1610).

4. Accesso al consiglio cittadino e prestigio sociale

Come in molte altre città d'antico regime, la partecipazione al consiglio maggiore di Bergamo si basava su un sistema di cooptazione, nel quale coloro che erano in carica avevano un ruolo determinante nel definire i successori. Per il periodo che stiamo studiando, dobbiamo considerare che gli statuti del 1430 avevano ridotto i seggi da 144 a 72. La nuova assemblea era definita ogni anno nel mese di dicembre, ad opera degli stessi consiglieri in ruolo.[13] In realtà, più che di un vero e proprio rinnovo, sembra si trattasse di eleggere i sostituti per coprire eventuali posti vacanti, lasciati liberi per decesso o per trasferimento ad altro incarico.[14] Questa riforma, oltre presumibilmente che per ragioni connesse al crollo demografico, si giustificava con la necessità di tenere lontano dal governo comunale le famiglie ghibelline (Agazzi, Alessandri, Crotta, Lanzi, Maldura, Suardi e Vegis), vale a dire filo-viscontee, in favore di quelle guelfe, che avevano sostenuto invece l'affermazione del dominio di San Marco (Cattini e Romani 1998, 17).

Alcune novità furono poi introdotte dalla riforma degli statuti del 1491, approvati dal Senato di Venezia nel 1493.[15] In questo caso era previsto il rinnovo dell'intero consiglio, ma con un sistema che rendeva quasi certa la rielezione. Ognuno dei 72 deputati in carica, infatti, era sottoposto a votazione per la conferma da parte dei colleghi; perciò, erano sostituiti solo coloro che non superavano questo passaggio. S'introdussero inoltre alcune limitazioni all'elettorato passivo: per essere candidati bisognava avere almeno trent'anni e non aver subito condanne per frode o per debiti. Insomma, queste norme erano destinate a rendere più semplice la cooptazione, limitando l'accesso tanto alle famiglie ghibelline, quanto alle nuove arrivate o a quelle recentemente arricchitesi. Si ricordi che il secondo Quattrocento fu contemporaneamente un periodo di consolidamento del potere veneziano in Terraferma, di grande fermento economico e di crescita demografica.

Dopo una fase di continui cambi di dominazione negli anni turbolenti delle guerre d'Italia e in particolare a seguito della sconfitta di Agnadello (1509), ristabilitosi il dominio della Serenissima (1517), Venezia promosse un'ulteriore riforma del consiglio maggiore di Bergamo, composto da allora da 100 consiglieri. Ogni dicembre dovevano essere nominati 50 nuovi membri, che sarebbero rimasti in carica per i due anni successivi. I 50 uscenti dovevano teoricamente rimanere in contumacia per un anno prima di poter essere rieletti, ma non sempre la regola fu rispettata. Si confermò l'età minima di 30 anni per gli eleggibili e si stabilì che ogni famiglia non poteva esprimere più di tre propri membri contemporaneamente, limite innalzato a quattro nel 1619. Il 23 maggio dello stesso anno il numero dei consiglieri fu portato a 132, ma il 21 novembre del 1620 si tornò a 100 deputati e così rimase fino al 1800.

La ricca documentazione sulla composizione e l'attività dei consigli cittadini ancora conservata, assieme ad alcuni studi già pubblicati, hanno permesso di seguire l'andamento plurisecolare dell'avvicendamento d'individui e famiglie nel consiglio di

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[13] BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Statuti*, 1.2.1-12.

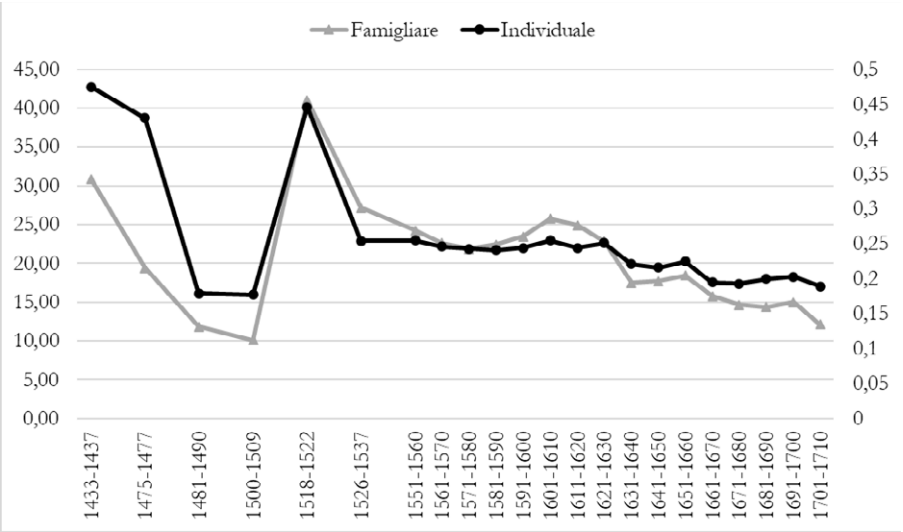
[14] Ad esempio, BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Azioni dei consigli*, 1.2.3.1-5, f. 35. Si veda anche Gotti 1994-95, 8.

[15] BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Statuti*, 1.2.1-45

Bergamo. Pur mancando informazioni per alcuni decenni, infatti, è stato possibile osservare la partecipazione ai consigli tra il 1433 e il 1710, nel limite del possibile, aggregando i dati per decenni.

Nel grafico 5 si presentano due indici di avvicendamento. Quello individuale è stato calcolato dividendo il numero di consiglieri presenti in ogni periodo per il numero di seggi disponibili. In questo caso, dunque, i valori si esprimono tra 0 e 1. Più ci si avvicina ad 1 e più completo è il turnover fra i consiglieri (vale a dire che ogni consigliere occupa il seggio una sola volta). Per dare maggiore solidità all'analisi, i dati individuali sono stati 'ponderati', moltiplicando il quoziente individuale per il numero di famiglie rappresentate in ogni periodo. Per questi calcoli, si sono definite le famiglie aggregando i consiglieri sulla base del medesimo cognome. Si tratta ovviamente di un'approssimazione, che non tiene conto né di possibili disaccordi all'interno delle famiglie, né dei rapporti con gli affini, né di alleanze tra famiglie di un medesimo partito. Questa è apparsa comunque la migliore aggregazione possibile, non solo perché è una scelta piuttosto comune in letteratura, ma anche perché è in grado di offrire una buona approssimazione del vero. Senza contare che, come già ricordato, sono le stesse regole di funzionamento dei consigli ad individuare la famiglia come la base per stabilire le norme di accesso agli organi di governo, introducendo un tetto al numero di membri della medesima famiglia che potevano sedere contemporaneamente nella stessa squadra consiliare, così come vietando la simultanea presenza di padri e figli o fratelli germani (Cattini e Romani 1998, 22).

Graf. 5. **Avvicendamento famigliare (asse y principale) e individuale (asse y secondario) nel consiglio generale di Bergamo (1433-1710)**



Fonte: Nostra elaborazione da BCBg, *Manoscritti*, AB 352; BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Sezione antico regime*, *Azioni dei consigli*, registri 1.2.3.1-1, 1.2.3.1-2, 1.2.3.1-3, 1.2.3.1-4, 1.2.3.1-5; Cattini, e Romani 1998, 23; Gotti 1994-95, 14, 22, 95-172.

Il grafico 5 rappresenta in modo piuttosto chiaro la situazione del ricambio nel consiglio bergamasco nel lungo periodo, evidenziando come solo dei forti shock esogeni siano riusciti ad alterare le pratiche di chiusura garantite dal sistema di cooptazione.

La serie si apre con una fase di forte avvicendamento individuale. Il periodo 1433-1437 rappresenta anzi quello in cui i consiglieri cambiarono maggiormente tra una squadra e l'altra, benché il dato famigliare ridimensioni un po' questa alternanza. Simili cambiamenti sono giustificabili con l'avvio della nuova dominazione veneziana e con l'allontanamento delle famiglie ghibelline e potrebbero avere a che fare anche con il forte calo demografico verificatosi tra seconda metà del Trecento e inizio Quattrocento. La dinamica della popolazione sembra tuttavia incidere solo in parte sull'apertura del consiglio, così come quasi nullo appare l'effetto delle diverse fasi economiche. Se prendiamo il secondo Quattrocento, infatti, né la rapida crescita demografica, né la buona congiuntura economica generale paiono aver giovato sul ricambio ai vertici dell'amministrazione.

Se è vero che negli anni 1475-77 si registra un alto tasso di turnover individuale, lo è altrettanto che quello famigliare si attesta su valori molto più bassi. In altri termini, in quegli anni un numero relativamente ristretto di famiglie riuscì a far turnare sui seggi diversi membri delle proprie parentele; non si esclude, tuttavia, che questa differenza potrebbe in parte avere a che fare con il numero ridotto di anni osservati. Nel periodo successivo (1481-1490), infatti, oltre a ridursi ulteriormente il valore dell'avvicendamento famigliare (poco meno che dimezzato rispetto alla rilevazione precedente), si verifica il crollo del quoziente individuale (da 0,431 a 0,179).

Il picco massimo di irrigidimento di questo processo fu raggiunto negli anni precedenti alla battaglia di Agnadello (1509). In quel momento, le dodici famiglie più rappresentate controllavano il 43% dei seggi (Cattini e Romani 1998, 18);[16] il quoziente di ricambio individuale raggiunge così il minimo storico di 0,177 e il valore del turnover famigliare arriva a 10,12.

Le guerre d'Italia aprono però una fase di significativo avvicendamento ai vertici del consiglio. Si tenga presente che la ricostruzione riguarda il periodo successivo al 1517, cioè dopo che i veneziani erano tornati stabilmente a controllare Bergamo. Eppure, anche in ragione della riforma del consiglio che portò a 100 i seggi disponibili, si dovette verificare un'accesa dialettica tra vecchie e nuove *élite*, tanto che nel quinquennio 1518-1522 sia il quoziente di ricambio personale che il dato famigliare registrano livelli fuori dallo standard, simili solo a quelli degli anni '30 del Quattrocento. Il processo di adattamento alla nuova riforma sembra comunque essere stato piuttosto rapido, tanto che il turnover nel periodo 1526-1537 si era già notevolmente ridimensionato: il quoziente di ricambio individuale è dimezzato rispetto a qualche anno prima, mentre un po' meno evidente è la caduta dell'avvicendamento a livello famigliare. La dinamica decrescente prosegue lentamente ma inesorabilmente, allineando i coefficienti individuali con i dati famigliari, fino agli anni '70 del Cinquecento, quando la tendenza s'inverte. Soprattutto a livello famigliare, si verifica un

[16] Si tratta delle famiglie Calepio (38 presenze), Colleoni (28), Albani (27), Benaglio (24), Rivola (24), Pasi (24), Brembati (21), Colombo (20), Marchesi (19), Vitalba (19), Avvocati (18) e Zonca (17).

maggiore ricambio delle *élite*, tuttavia senza grandi scossoni, né avvicinarsi minimamente al contesto degli anni 1518-1522.

Quanto accadde a Bergamo fra secondo Cinquecento e primo Seicento segue una tendenza simile a quella verificatasi in altre città dell'Italia settentrionale, ma con oscillazioni molto meno marcate.[17] In generale, pur considerando le specificità locali, la letteratura ha sottolineato una certa apertura dei consigli cittadini in quei decenni, benché in un contesto di allungamento delle distanze tra ricchi e poveri e di contemporanea ascesa del «ceto medio borghese», che aspirava raggiungere la considerazione politica, i titoli e i caratteri del patriziato d'età più antica (Angiolini e Malanima 1979). Nel caso di Modena, Parma e Piacenza, ad esempio, il quoziente fra 'anziani' e seggi disponibili è superiore rispetto a quello di Bergamo e con oscillazioni più marcate tra un decennio e l'altro. Il confronto fra il numero medio di consiglieri per ogni cento seggi relativo al periodo 1550-1620, in effetti, mette in evidenza la minore mobilità delle *élite* bergamasche. Questa differenza è particolarmente evidente nei confronti di Piacenza, dove tuttavia una quota dei consiglieri era estratta a sorte (Tab. 2).

Tab. 2. **Consiglieri per cento seggi nei consigli comunali di alcune città dell'Italia settentrionale (1550-1620)**

Città	Consiglieri per cento seggi (media)
Bergamo	24,7
Modena	31,6
Parma	36,4
Piacenza	58,6

Fonte: Cattini e Romani 1998, 25.

Quello di Bergamo non sembra comunque essere un caso isolato nella Terraferma veneta, considerato quanto fecero le *élite* bresciane e veronesi nei medesimi decenni (Lanaro 1992; Romani 1988). Resta il fatto che tra 1550 e 1620 ben 38 famiglie bergamasche fecero parte senza soluzione di continuità del consiglio maggiore, occupando il 57% dei seggi disponibili (4.026 su 7.032).

Il fermento più o meno accentuato registrato nelle varie città dell'Italia settentrionale fra Cinquecento e primo Seicento venne comunque meno nel corso di quest'ultimo secolo, per effetto tanto della riconfigurazione economica della penisola, quanto di più incisive strategie di conservazione attuate dai ceti al potere (Borelli 1974).

Nel Seicento anche Bergamo seguì una simile traiettoria. Tra gli anni '10 e '20 il turnover era in continua diminuzione. Le crisi di mortalità che colpirono la città attorno al 1610 e soprattutto in occasione della peste del 1629-30 rallentarono semplicemente questo processo, senza tuttavia bloccarlo o modificarlo nella sostanza. Qualche effetto maggiore si registra a livello di avvicendamento ponderato su base famigliare, ma nulla di nemmeno lontanamente paragonabile rispetto all'effetto degli sconvolgimenti d'inizio Quattrocento o di quelli verificatisi attorno al 1520.

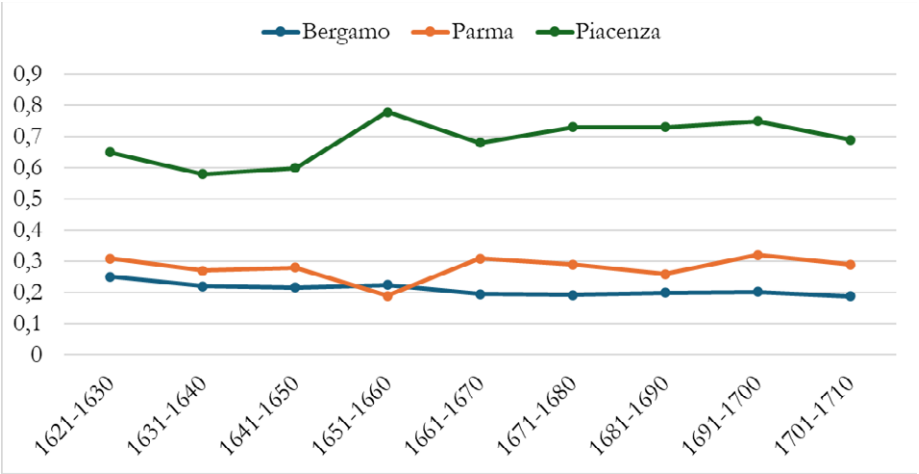
[17] Gli studi che confermano queste dinamiche sono differenti. Per ragioni di sintesi ci limitiamo a citare i diversi saggi raccolti in Cattini e Romani 2004; Guraducci 1990; Tagliaferri 1984.

Pur senza mutare il quadro generale, la dinamica dell'avvicendamento divenne stagnante negli ultimi vent'anni del Seicento, forse per effetto di un rallentamento del processo di chiusura. Ci si trovava in una fase in cui le pressanti necessità finanziarie e la sempre più gravosa pressione fiscale dovuta alle costose guerre di Candia (1645-1669) e di Morea (1684-1699) potrebbero aver suggerito di allargare l'accesso all'amministrazione a nuove famiglie e di concedere la cittadinanza a qualche forestiero.

Ad inizio Settecento, la riduzione dell'alternanza riprese vigore, tanto che si arrivò a livelli di chiusura simili a quelli d'inizio Cinquecento: il quoziente si attesta a 0,189 a livello individuale, mentre si raggiunge 12,096 ponderandolo per il numero delle famiglie rappresentate. Insomma, nel decennio 1701-1710 si registrano valori solo di poco superiori al periodo 1500-1509. Quella d'inizio Settecento fu però una chiusura ben più marcata, considerato che nel frattempo la popolazione orobica era cresciuta di circa 1/3 rispetto a due secoli prima, passando da poco meno di 19.000 a 30.000 abitanti.

Il confronto tra i quozienti di ricambio individuale di Bergamo, Parma e Piacenza mette in evidenza dinamiche simili e piuttosto lineari (ad eccezione del decennio 1651-1660, almeno per le due città emiliane). Anche a Piacenza, dove parte dei consiglieri era sorteggiata, pur con livelli diversi, le oscillazioni del valore tra un decennio e l'altro sono in effetti minime (Graf. 6).

Graf. 6. **Quozienti di ricambio individuale a Bergamo, Parma e Piacenza (1621-1710)**[18]



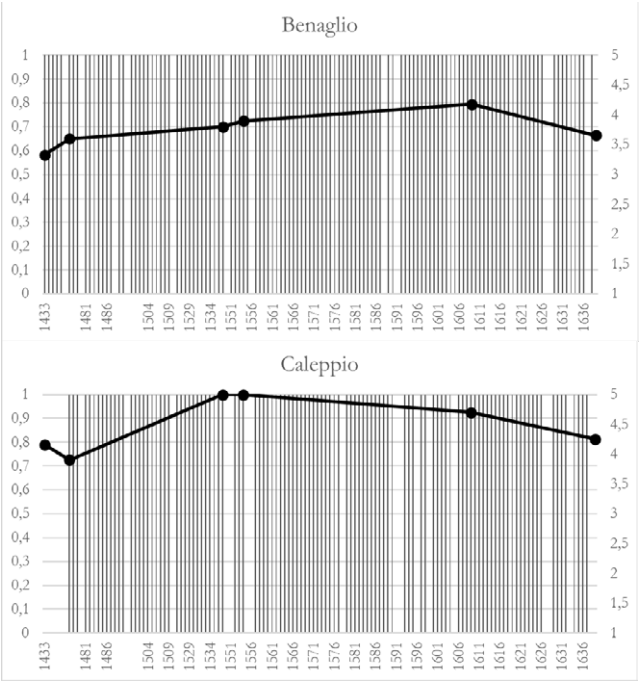
Fonte: Nostra elaborazione da BCBg, *Manoscritti*, AB 352; BCBg, *Archivio Storico del Comune di Bergamo*, *Sezione antico regime*, *Azioni dei consigli*, registri 1.2.3.1-1, 1.2.3.1-2, 1.2.3.1-3, 1.2.3.1-4, 1.2.3.1-5; Cattini 1984, 222, tab. 1; Cattini e Romani 1998, 23; Gotti 1994-95, 14, 22, 95-172;

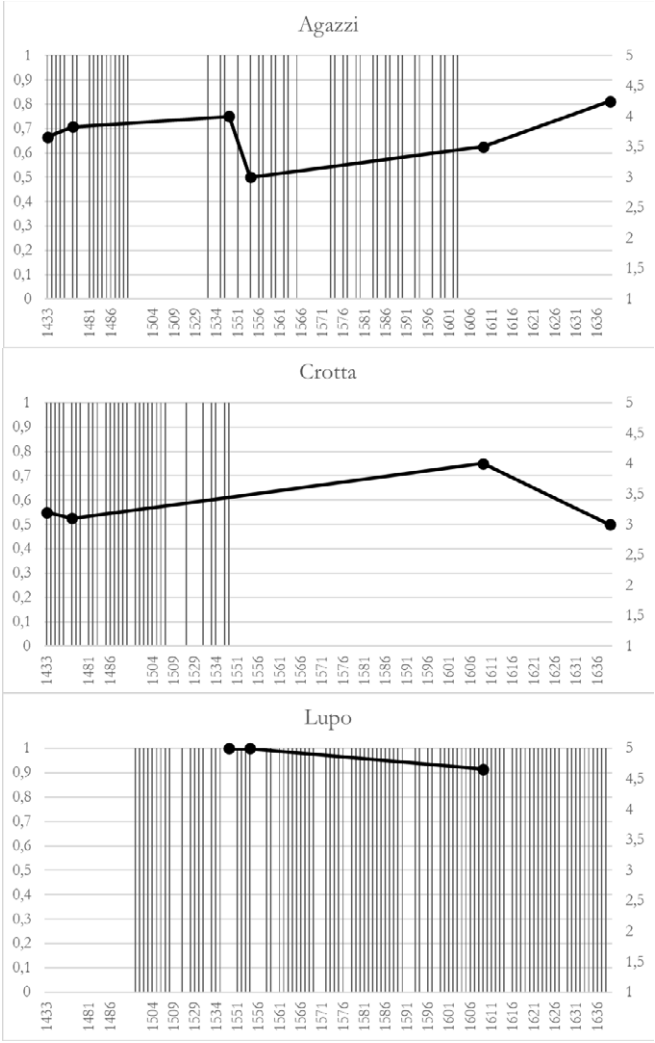
[18] Nel caso delle due città emiliane, i dati sono stati aggregati in modo leggermente diverso da Bergamo (1620-9, 1630-9, … invece di 1621-1630, 1631-1640, …), ma la differenza non è parsa tale da inficiare la possibilità del confronto.

Non resta che valutare l'eventuale relazione fra ricchezza e partecipazione al potere, considerando le possibili connessioni tra i due indicatori della mobilità che stiamo seguendo. In tal senso non interessa tanto analizzare se le famiglie più ricche partecipassero al potere, questione piuttosto facile da supporre e che è già stata studiata anche nel caso in esame (Cattini e Romani 1998, 26, tab. 3). Piuttosto interessa ricostruire la dinamica di questo processo, cosa possibile, allo stato attuale della ricerca, solo seguendo le singole traiettorie famigliari.

Per questo sono state selezionate cinque famiglie (due guelfe, Benaglio e Caleppio, due ghibelline, Agazzi e Crotta, e una entrata in consiglio solo nel Cinquecento, Lupo) ed è stata messa a confronto la loro capacità di partecipare al consiglio (attribuendo 1 ad ogni anno per il quale espressero almeno un consigliere) con la loro posizione nelle cinque classi di ricchezza che abbiamo utilizzato per studiare la mobilità sociale, presentate nel paragrafo precedente. Per ogni anno, la posizione delle varie famiglie è stata determinata calcolando la media fra i valori degli omonimi per cognome. Considerato che la serie della mobilità per ricchezza è più breve di quella della partecipazione al consiglio, si è scelto di concentrarsi sul periodo 1433-1639, assegnando il valore della ricchezza del 1430 all'anno 1433 e quello del 1448 all'anno 1475 (Graf. 7).

Graf. 7. **Relazione tra presenza nel consiglio cittadino (istogramma grigio; asse y principale) e classe di ricchezza (linea nera; asse y secondario) di alcune famiglie bergamasche (1433-1639)**





Fonte: si vedano i grafici 4 e 5

Pur nella loro diversità, in tutti i casi la relazione fra le due variabili sembra piuttosto debole. Le due famiglie guelfe (Benaglio e Calepio) furono costantemente presenti nel consiglio indipendentemente dalle piccole variazioni della loro posizione in termini di ricchezza. Similmente, le due famiglie ghibelline (Agazzi e Crotta), parteciparono o meno al consiglio più per ragioni di ordine politico o famigliare, che in rapporto ai loro patrimoni. Solo nel caso della famiglia Lupo, in effetti, sembra di poter intravedere, almeno inizialmente, una qualche similitudine tra la crescita della partecipazione al consiglio e della ricchezza. Stabilire una causazione entro questa timida relazione è, in ogni caso, molto azzardato. Per tali ragioni, solo ulteriori

indagini su un campione più ampio di famiglie potranno permetterci di affermare qualcosa di più compiuto e solido in tal senso.

5. Conclusioni

Nelle pagine precedenti abbiamo discusso fonti e metodi per lo studio della mobilità sociale a Bergamo tra Quattrocento e Settecento, considerando e combinando due indicatori (ricchezza e prestigio). Si sono definite anzitutto le peculiarità demografiche ed economiche del capoluogo orobico: città di manifatture, più che di commercio e finanza, che doveva competere con le intraprendenti valli e che controllava direttamente la piuttosto piccola area di pianura del proprio territorio; un centro urbano non grandissimo, costituito da un nucleo di vicinie entro le mura, difficilmente espandibile in ragione del contesto geo-pedologico, al quale si affiancavano sobborghi e borghi che si espandevano o contraevano in ragione della dinamica demografica.

Grazie all'abbondanza di fonti estimative e relative alla composizione del consiglio generale della città, si sono proposti diversi modi di misurare la mobilità locale, relazionandoli fra loro e con le dinamiche demografiche e della disuguaglianza.

Nel complesso, fra Quattro e Settecento, la società bergamasca seguì dinamiche di riduzione della mobilità, sia in termini di distribuzione della ricchezza, sia di accesso al potere politico. Solo ad inizio Quattrocento gli indicatori registrano un elevato grado di mobilità. Nel corso dei decenni successivi, al contrario, si verificò una certa stabilità e un progressivo irrigidimento sociale, mitigato solo da shock esogeni o endogeni, come le crisi di mortalità o i grandi sconvolgimenti politici.

In una città nella quale il ceto più dinamico (mercantile) era di per sé scarso, i meccanismi di chiusura oligarchica e di riproduzione delle *élite* caratteristici delle società d'antico regime agirono con ancora maggiore incisività. Nel corso del tempo, anzi, la società bergamasca mise in atto strategie utili a riassorbire rapidamente eventuali fattori destabilizzanti. Lo testimoniano, ad esempio, il relativo impatto sulla mobilità sociale delle pestilenze e delle carestie del secondo Cinquecento e d'inizio Seicento, pur in un contesto di decrescita della disuguaglianza economica. Insomma, le crisi demografiche, le fasi di espansione economica o la riduzione della disuguaglianza risultarono condizioni necessarie ma non sufficienti a promuovere la mobilità sociale, tanto in termini di ricchezza che di prestigio.

Si può, dunque, concludere che solo grandi sconvolgimenti generali come quelli che caratterizzarono i decenni a cavallo fra Tre e Quattrocento o le guerre d'Italia d'inizio Cinquecento riuscirono a modificare significativamente il quadro. Eccezion fatta per questi specifici casi, in tutti e tre i secoli considerati, si verificò invece una inesorabile tendenza alla riproduzione e all'arroccamento delle *élite* economiche e politiche nelle proprie posizioni apicali.

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Luciano Maffi

La mobilità sociale nel Basso Piemonte nel XVII secolo. Gli estimi del territorio di Tortona: fonti e metodi d'indagine.

1. Introduzione*

Come noto gli estimi rappresentano una fonte di grande rilevanza perché attraverso la loro analisi è possibile effettuare non soltanto studi sulla fiscalità, ma anche sull'agricoltura, le professioni, e più in generale su aspetti di analisi sociale, come la diseguaglianza e la mobilità economica e sociale. La storiografia negli ultimi anni si è soffermata in modo approfondito sul tema della diseguaglianza, ricorrendo proprio agli estimi come una delle fonti privilegiate per l'età medievale e moderna (Alfani 2021; Alfani e Ammannati 2017; Alfani 2010). Gli studi pubblicati hanno migliorato sensibilmente la conoscenza delle dinamiche relative alla distribuzione della ricchezza del passato. In generale, nel periodo 1300-1800 circa, la disuguaglianza sia di reddito che di ricchezza è cresciuta quasi ovunque in Europa (con l'eccezione della fase secolare di declino della disuguaglianza innescata dalla peste nera del 1347-52). Le cause dell'aumento della disuguaglianza sono da attribuire a vari fattori, fra cui la crescita demografica, le istituzioni fiscali particolarmente regressive (anche in quanto collegate all'ineguale distribuzione del potere politico), lo sviluppo economico e finanziario, e appunto alla scarsa mobilità sociale (Alfani e Di Tullio 2019).

La disuguaglianza è dunque diventata oggetto di dibattito tra gli economisti, specie nella sua analisi di lungo periodo (Piketty 2015). Tra l'altro, nella maggior parte delle analisi il punto di partenza per lo studio della diseguaglianza è costituito dall'inizio della rivoluzione industriale, mentre solo recentemente si sono avviati studi sulla diseguaglianza in età preindustriale (Alfani 2021, 4). In particolar modo, a partire dal tardo Medioevo, la documentazione d'archivio consente di produrre stime affidabili della disuguaglianza economica, ma anche del reddito. Questi studi si sono basati sulle fonti fiscali per ricostruire la distribuzione della ricchezza. Come accennato, negli studi degli ultimi anni le fonti più utilizzate sono state le imposte sulla proprietà, particolarmente diffuse nell'Europa meridionale, e chiamate estimi in Italia. Queste fonti forniscono informazioni sulla ricchezza imponibile (beni immobili) posseduta da ogni famiglia (Alfani 2021, 9).

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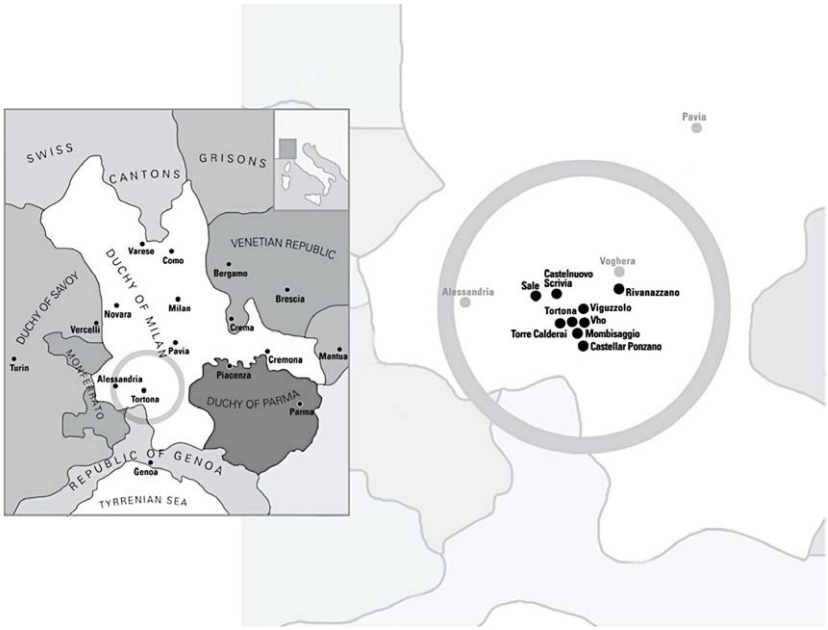
Luciano Maffi, *La mobilità sociale nel Basso Piemonte durante la prima Età Moderna. Gli estimi del territorio di Tortona: fonti e metodi d'indagine*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9.07, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *La mobilità sociale nelle società preindustriali: tendenze, cause ed effetti (secc. XIII-XVIII) / Social mobility in pre-industrial societies: tendencies, causes and effects (13th-18th centuries)*, pp. 101-117, 2025, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0667-9, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9

Più in generale, la maggior parte delle ricerche recenti sulla disuguaglianza preindustriale oltre ad aver proposto una serie di fattori che, in diversi momenti e aree, hanno spinto la disuguaglianza a crescere o a diminuire, hanno evidenziato come nel corso dei secoli la ricchezza si sia concentrata nelle mani di una percentuale estremamente ridotta della popolazione (Alfani, Gierok e Schaff 2022; Alfani 2021; Alfani e Ammannati 2017).

La letteratura, invece, ha dedicato meno attenzione alla mobilità economica e sociale, tranne che nel caso delle élite e delle figure professionali. In relazione al caso italiano alcuni studi rilevanti sono stati destinati, per esempio, all'età medievale (Carocci e Lazzarini 2018; Carocci e De Vincentiis 2017; Carbonetti Vendittelli e Vendittelli 2017; Gamberini 2017; Tanzini e Tognetti 2016; Collavini e Petralia 2019). Altri studi, a livello internazionale, sono stati dedicati al periodo che parte dalla rivoluzione industriale fino all'età contemporanea (Clark e Cummins 2015; Clark 2014), in generale meno studi sono stati rivolti all'Età Moderna.

La mobilità sociale ed economica può essere definita come il movimento di individui, famiglie o gruppi, da un certo status economico a un altro. Lo status può essere misurato in termini di reddito o di ricchezza, e la stessa mobilità economica può anche essere determinata con appositi calcoli (Fields e Ok 1999). Il legame tra mobilità sociale e disuguaglianza economica, in special modo per l'Età Moderna, merita di essere approfondito perché la tendenza alla crescita della disuguaglianza economica sul lunghissimo periodo rende ancora più importante misurare in modo indipendente i tassi di mobilità sociale, verificando se vi sia correlazione tra l'andamento della disuguaglianza economica e quello della mobilità sociale.

Fig. 1. **Il Tortonese nel contesto del Ducato di Milano**



Questo contributo intende analizzare, all'interno del progetto SMITE, le fonti utili alla ricostruzione della mobilità economica nel Basso Piemonte nel corso del XVII secolo, con specifico riferimento al territorio tortonese, che nel periodo considerato apparteneva al Ducato di Milano. Verranno presentate e descritte le fonti conservate negli archivi dei comuni di Tortona e Castelnuovo Scrivia, mettendo in evidenza limiti e opportunità offerte da questa tipologia documentaria, al fine di monitorare l'evoluzione dei patrimoni familiari in quel periodo. Tali riflessioni verranno relazionate al contesto socio-istituzionale sia di ambito locale sia di livello regionale. Verrà quindi proposta una riflessione sul caso di studio di Castelnuovo Scrivia (Fig. 1).

2. Le fonti analizzate

Il tipo di informazioni necessarie per studiare la mobilità economica sono diverse da quelle utilizzate per misurare la disuguaglianza, specialmente perché servono informazioni più frequenti nel tempo. Per il progetto SMITE sono stati selezionati quegli estimi che permettevano di raccogliere dati più frequenti nel tempo, in modo da garantire un collegamento nominativo tra i diversi anni e la possibilità di stabilire link fra i nuclei familiari e i capifamiglia. Per questa ragione anche un campione ristretto di comunità può essere efficace in questo tipo di analisi. I dati raccolti nel database hanno potuto essere sviluppati attraverso il collegamento nominativo di stime vicine nel tempo (attraverso libri di aggiornamento dell'estimo) oppure considerando le correzioni regolarmente apportate ad un estimo nel periodo compreso tra l'anno in cui è stato completato e l'anno di completamento del successivo estimo. Nello specifico caso della documentazione analizzata per il territorio tortonese si sono incontrate entrambe le tipologie di documentazione.

Per la comunità di Tortona e per i villaggi di Vho, di Castellar Ponzano e di Mombisaggio-Torre Calderai (tutti siti nel contado collinare pochi km a sud di Tortona) i dati raccolti hanno potuto essere sviluppati attraverso il collegamento nominativo di stime vicine nel tempo (attraverso libri/vacchette di aggiornamento dell'estimo), che fanno riferimento e aggiornano i dati di un estimo dell'anno 1600. I libri di aggiornamento dell'estimo sono degli anni 1633, 1648, 1658, 1668, 1688, 1713, consentendo di correlare fra loro informazioni relative alla mobilità economica dal 1600 al 1713 per la città di Tortona.[1]

[1] I documenti che sono stati analizzati sono i seguenti e tutti conservati presso l'Archivio Storico Città di Tortona (ASCT): ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 4, 1, Libro del catasto, 1600*; ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 4, 2, Registro vacchetta del catasto, 1601*; ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 5, Catasto "forensi", 1601-1775*; ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 6, Registro vacchetta del catasto (1633)*; ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 8, Registro vacchetta del catasto (1648)*; ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 9, Registro vacchetta del catasto (1658)*; ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 10, Registro vacchetta del catasto (1668)*; ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 11, Registro vacchetta del catasto (1688)*; ASCT, *Fondi aggregati all'archivio storico, Fondo 5, Serie 1, Libri del Catasto, n. 12, Registro vacchetta del catasto (1713).* Esisteva inoltre un Registro vacchetta del Catasto del 1620, che è attualmente deperdito, a questo fa riferimento il successivo Registro vacchetta del Catasto del 1633.

Per la comunità di Castelnuovo Scrivia i volumi di estimo analizzati sono del 1620 e del 1639.[2] Su questi volumi le correzioni sono state apportate direttamente sull'estimo (e datate), consentendo un'analisi anno per anno della mobilità economica, dal 1620 al 1679, attraverso 1308 item/record nel database. Per esemplificare, l'estimo introdotto a Castelnuovo nel 1620 comprende correzioni datate fino all'anno 1638. Nel 1639 fu introdotto un nuovo estimo, successivamente mantenuto aggiornato attraverso correzioni fino al 1679; nel 1680 venne poi introdotto un nuovo estimo.

Grazie ai database costruiti, la mobilità sociale ed economica è stata misurata in base al movimento tra parti specifiche della distribuzione della ricchezza (nello specifico, le famiglie registrate sono state suddivise per quintili di ricchezza crescente), come è la procedura comune negli studi sulla mobilità (Fields e Ok 1999). La mobilità economica è stata misurata come movimento delle famiglie tra i quintili di ricchezza, dove la classe 5 rappresenta il 20% più ricco.

In generale, in relazione a questo tipo di fonte, è utile sottolineare che durante la prima Età Moderna, gli estimi emersero come strumento cruciale per l'amministrazione e l'organizzazione della proprietà terriera, della tassazione e del governo dei territori. Rappresentavano un approccio sistematico alla misurazione e alla valutazione dei terreni, con un'importanza rilevante nel tessuto sociale, economico e politico delle prime società moderne, influenzando profondamente la distribuzione del potere e delle risorse. In pratica, l'estimo svolgeva un ruolo fondamentale nello stabilire i diritti di proprietà sulla terra. In un'epoca caratterizzata da economie agrarie e strutture feudali, la terra non rappresentava solo una forma di possesso, ma costituiva un fattore determinante per lo status sociale, l'influenza politica e il potere economico. Il processo di estimo forniva un mezzo per delimitare i confini della proprietà, identificare le parcelle di terreno e registrare la proprietà fondiaria, consolidando così i diritti e gli obblighi dei proprietari terrieri (Alfani e Barbot 2009).

Numerosi studi sono stati effettuati sulla fiscalità del Ducato di Milano in età spagnola, che hanno dimostrato la complessità del sistema in uso in quell'area (Vigo 1979; Vigo 1994; Giannini 2017).

La decisione di mantenere lo stato di Milano all'interno del sistema imperiale asburgico (argomento su cui tornerò più avanti) pose in evidenza il problema dell'irrazionalità del sistema fiscale esistente: Carlo V ordinò pertanto la redazione di un estimo generale dello stato, ma ciò suscitò l'opposizione delle oligarchie lombarde, che vedevano in esso un pericoloso strumento di controllo (Di Tullio 2011b;

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[2] Archivio Storico Comunale Castelnuovo Scrivia (ASCCS) – Castelnuovo Scrivia Catasto (CSCAT). Per i libri dell'estimo 1620-: ASCCS-CSCAT, *Estimi dei Reggenti, 5 (ex. Inv. 1775 n. 13)*: *Liber estimi realis Castrinovi Scripie Nobilium compilati anno 1620*; ASCCS-CSCAT, *Estimi dei Separati, 5 (ex. Inv. 1775 n. 19)*: *Liber extimi reali Pop. Comunitatis Castrinovi Scripie compilatus da anno 1620 super mensura generali totius territori facta a Svetonio Santo Petro*. ASCCS-CSCAT, *Estimi dei Separati, 6 (ex. Inv. 1775 n. 14)*: *Secundus liber extimi realis Castrinovi Scripie Pop. Compilati anno 1620 ex ordine Com. et illustrissimi magistratus super mensura generali totius territori facta a Svetonio Sancto Petro 1620*. Per i libri dell'estimo 1639: ASCCS-CSCAT, *Estimi dei Reggenti, 6 (ex. Inv. 1775 n. 5)*: *1639 Liber estimi realis Castrinovi Scripie Nobilium pro observantia proclamationis excellentissimi Gubernatoris status mediolani*; ASCCS-CSCAT, *Estimi dei Separati, 7 (ex. Inv. 1775 n. 20)*: *1639 Liber extimi realis Castrinovi Scripie Pop. pro observatione proclamationis excellentissimi Gubernatoris Status Mediolani*.

Zappa 1995). Pur tra notevoli ostilità verso il progetto, l'estimo generale fu concluso nel 1560 e ciò rese il patrimonio del ducato di Milano, inclusa la città, quotato a 12.748.830 lire, soggetto al pagamento delle imposte, come previsto dalle indicazioni fornite del collegio fiscale e della congregazione dello stato. Come ha evidenziato Matteo Di Tullio

> di là dai dati quantitativi, la vicenda del perticato del 1558 appare significativa di un processo di riforma e redistribuzione dei carichi fiscali giocato su più fronti, che, come argomentato, fu una costante di buona parte della storia lombarda del cinque-seicento. L'estimo di Carlo V fu, infatti, la più imponente ma non l'unica operazione di revisione del sistema fiscale, che al contrario fu sottoposto a continue sistemazioni (Di Tullio 2011b, 27).

L'obiettivo principale era riequilibrare l'imposizione fiscale tra i diversi segmenti dello stato, in particolare contrastando i privilegi delle città. Tuttavia, nonostante la necessità di provvedimenti fiscali e riforme amministrative per garantire risorse adeguate alla difesa del territorio, tali misure non poterono essere pienamente attuate a causa della persistenza dei privilegi, delle esenzioni e degli abusi perpetuati dalle oligarchie locali. Questo stato di cose giustificò ampiamente le lamentele dei governatori spagnoli di Milano. Passando dal contesto generale a quello territoriale, le finanze delle comunità rurali hanno recentemente suscitato un nuovo interesse, coinvolgendo sia la storia socio-istituzionale, da tempo impegnata nell'analisi dei territori, sia la storia economica, che tradizionalmente si è concentrata sullo studio delle finanze statali o delle principali città (Pezzolo 1985; Pezzolo 2003; per i contadi del ducato di Milano: Colombo 2009; Faccini 1988). Nel Cinquecento l'amministrazione dei territori era un processo complesso. Un aspetto cruciale di questa complessità era il ruolo centrale svolto dalle comunità locali nella gestione degli affari militari, sia in tempo di guerra che di pace. Questo costituiva uno degli elementi fondamentali di questa stratificazione delle prerogative amministrative. I governi locali dovevano affrontare una serie di compiti, tra cui la distribuzione degli alloggiamenti tra la popolazione e l'assicurazione della loro equa applicazione, garantendo il rispetto di tali disposizioni da parte di tutti i membri della comunità (Di Tullio 2011a, 12). In generale, la necessità di alloggiare le truppe e di far fronte alle crescenti richieste fiscali dello Stato imponeva un notevole sforzo sulle società locali nel bilanciare prelievo e spesa, oltre a richiedere una notevole capacità di reazione. Questa situazione rendeva indispensabile l'adozione di pratiche amministrative locali che consentissero di soddisfare un bisogno collettivo che, in teoria, sarebbe stato di competenza centrale.

Le più rilevanti fonti di entrata nei bilanci comunali derivavano principalmente da due tipi di prelievo: la tassazione locale e gli eventuali redditi generati dalla vendita dei beni comunali. La tassazione locale comprendeva due categorie distinte: le imposte fiscali di competenza statale, raccolte a livello locale per varie ragioni, e quelle deliberatamente istituite dalle comunità a loro discrezione. Da ciò deriva l'importanza degli estimi conservati negli archivi comunali. Si giocava, dunque, un costante rapporto tra centro e periferia, sui sistemi di alloggiamento militare, sulle forme di prelievo fiscale e sulle pratiche di gestione delle risorse locali. Di conse-

guenza ciò generava azioni di produzione e riproduzione delle istituzioni, che dovevano attivare capacità di autoconservazione e di difesa dei gruppi che le costituivano durante periodi di crisi.

Gli estimi, dunque, sebbene comunemente associati alla governance e alla tassazione a livello statale, hanno svolto un ruolo significativo all'interno delle comunità locali. Nei contesti comunitari, gli estimi hanno funzionato poi come meccanismo per regolare l'uso della terra, risolvere le dispute e rafforzare la coesione sociale. Gli estimi hanno consentito alle comunità di organizzare le proprie risorse fondiarie, facilitando il processo decisionale collettivo e la governance a livello locale. La natura collaborativa delle indagini di stima, che spesso coinvolgeva i membri della comunità e le autorità locali, ha favorito un senso di proprietà collettiva e di responsabilità condivisa per la gestione delle risorse terriere, specie nei confronti dell'autorità centrale (Colombo 2008).

3. Il contesto politico e sociale

Parte del Nord Italia, com'è noto, ha vissuto a fine Quattrocento e per la prima metà del Cinquecento una complessa storia politico istituzionale. Nonostante la definitiva affermazione degli Asburgo con la battaglia di Pavia del 1525, numerose peculiarità politiche e istituzionali dello stato di Milano rimasero in uso. Il Ducato di Milano passò a Francesco II Sforza, che tuttavia amministrò sotto l'occhio attento dei rappresentanti spagnoli sul territorio, Marino Caracciolo e Antonio de Leyvadel, comandante delle armate imperiali (Rabà 2021; Di Tullio, Maffi e Rizzo 2016; Maffi 2007; Buono 2009; Arese 1972). Morto lo Sforza nel 1535, i regni di Francia e d'Inghilterra, gran parte degli Stati della penisola italiana, in particolare lo Stato della Chiesa e la Repubblica di Venezia, vollero persuadere Carlo V d'Asburgo a ritirarsi dal ducato assegnandolo a un principe italiano o straniero. Nonostante il dibattito acceso, che si protrasse fino al 1555, nel quale anche alcuni consiglieri della corte spagnola riconoscevano l'utilità di sgravarsi dalle proibitive spese che la difesa del Milanese comportava, l'imperatore decise per il dominio diretto sul ducato, definendolo la «chiave d'Italia» (Maffi 2007). Tale scelta impose ulteriori modifiche ed un'evoluzione delle istituzioni centrali dello stato e, conseguentemente, di quelle delle sue dieci province (Milano, Alessandria, Bobbio, Como, Cremona, Lodi, Novara, Pavia, Tortona e Vigevano) (Rizzo 2001). Questa organizzazione e la dipendenza dalla corona spagnola, poi, proseguirono anche nel periodo successivo e per l'area territoriale che analizziamo in questo articolo, fino alla prima metà del Settecento. Il regno di Sardegna ottenne il contado di Tortona e i vari feudi imperiali ancora esistenti in quell'area, in virtù del trattato di Vienna del 18 novembre 1738. Si dovettero tuttavia attendere il trattato di Worms del 13 settembre 1743 e il successivo trattato di Aquisgrana del 18 ottobre 1848, nel contesto della guerra di Successione Austriaca, affinché l'intera area del Tortonese e dell'Oltrepò Pavese diventassero a tutti gli effetti parte delle «province di nuovo acquisto» del Regno di Sardegna.

Il contesto demografico e sociale tortonese in quel periodo è stato indagato nelle ricerche di Giuseppe Bonavoglia, Giuseppe Decarlini, Ugo Rozzo, Italo

Cammarata e Monica Graziano (Bonavoglia e Decarlini 1995; Decarlini 1996; Rozzo 1971; Cammarata 2000; Graziano 2009). La città di Tortona si trovava nell'area meridionale del Ducato di Milano e nel 1616 contava 5.110 abitanti,[3] mentre nel 1628 invece 5.152 (Decarlini 1996). Dopo l'epidemia di peste degli anni 1630-1631, a cui vanno aggiunti i due assedi devastanti subiti da Tortona nel 1642, da parte delle truppe franco piemontesi, e nel 1643, da parte delle truppe spagnole, la popolazione tortonese nel 1646 ammontava a circa 2.600 persone. Nel 1666 la popolazione cresceva a 3.333 e nel 1689 a 3.900, ma soltanto nella seconda metà del Settecento sarebbe tornata ai valori di inizio Seicento (Decarlini 1996). Fra le famiglie più abbienti, tutti appartenenti alle famiglie decurionali della città, vi erano i Balbi, i Bragheri, i Carnevale, i Crozza, i Guidobono Cavalchini, gli Isimbardi, i Massa, i Montemerlo, gli Opizzoni, i Passalacqua, i Rampini (Maffi 2022).

Tortona sintetizza emblematicamente la complessità delle relazioni e delle alleanze di quel periodo, attraverso una figura femminile, che è stata protagonista delle vicende di questa città per lunghi decenni. Cristina di Danimarca andò sposa nel 1534 a Francesco II Sforza ed ebbe Tortona come città dotale, matrimonio che legava la Lombardia agli Asburgo contrastando le pur sempre esistenti pretese francesi su questo stato-chiave per gli equilibri italiani. Cristina, all'epoca dodicenne, era figlia di Cristiano II, re di Danimarca, Svezia e Norvegia, e di Isabella d'Asburgo, sorella di Carlo V di Spagna (Rozzo 1971). Rimasta vedova dopo soli due anni, si risposò nel 1541 con Francesco di Lorena, da cui ebbe tre figli. Pur lontana, Cristina continuò sempre ad occuparsi attentamente della sua Signoria. A Tortona ritornò stabilmente nel 1578 ed abitò in città fino alla sua morte, avvenuta nel 1590. Le località del contado di Tortona, inserite nell'estimo della città, si trovano nell'area collinare appena a sud della città. Si tratta di Vho, Castellar Ponzano e Torre Calderai. Esse avevano nel corso del Seicento una popolazione che si attesta all'incirca fra le 100 e le 200 persone.

Il contesto demografico e sociale di Castelnuovo Scrivia in quel periodo è stato indagato nelle ricerche di Giuseppe Decarlini, Paolo Paoletti e Italo Cammarata (Decarlini 1992; Paoletti 1992; Cammarata 2006). Nel 1584 la popolazione di Castelnuovo ammonta a circa 5.000 persone, di cui 2.487 maschi e 2.537 femmine.[4] Pochi anni dopo, nel 1597, la popolazione ammonta a 5.576 (Decarlini 1992, 66).[5] Nel primo ventennio del Seicento, la popolazione aumenta parecchio, arrivando a 7.250 persone nel 1616.[6] Negli anni seguenti comincia un calo consistente che prosegue nei decenni successivi. Nel 1627 a 5.500 persone,[7] nel 1635 a 5.400,[8] nel 1644

[3] Archivio Storico Diocesano di Tortona (ASDT), *Stato della Diocesi, Cart. 1, Fasc. 1, Registro dello Stato della Diocesi.*

[4] ASDT, Cart. C/243, Castelnuovo Scrivia.

[5] Giuseppe De Carlini, Popolazione e clero secolare nella pieve di Castelnuovo fra Cinquecento e Seicento, in Brunetti 1992, 66. Archivio Vescovile di Tortona, Cart. B/179.

[6] ASDT, Cart. s.n, *Stato della Diocesi 1616*, volume manoscritto *Stato del clero et luochi della Diocesi di Tortone.*

[7] ASDT, Cart. B/235, *Visitatio Rev.mi Ep. Pauli Aresii 1623-1630.*

[8] ASDT, Cart. B/238, *Visitatio Rev.mi Ep. Pauli Aresii 1630-1640.*

a 4.132,[9] per poi gradualmente riaumentare negli anni successivi fino a circa 5.000 nel 1670.[10] Tra le famiglie più in vista della città si annoveravano i Bandello, gli Acerbi, i Torti e i Grassi (Cammarata 2006).

Per quanto riguarda il contesto politico, anche il territorio di Castelnuovo era parte del Ducato di Milano. Nel 1525, dopo la battaglia di Pavia, l'imperatore Carlo V, ricompensò per i suoi meriti sul campo di battaglia il marchese Ferdinando D'Avalos, nominandolo feudatario di Castelnuovo. Alla morte di quest'ultimo, avvenuta nel dicembre dello stesso anno gli successe il cugino Alfonso D'Avalos del Vasto che ne prese possesso (Brunetti 2005). La ricchezza del feudo di Castelnuovo proveniva in quegli anni specialmente dalla produzione e commercio del guado che fecero la fortuna del borgo fra il XIV e la prima parte del XVII secolo (Cammarata 2001; Cammarata 2017). Nel 1538 il marchese di Castelnuovo divenne anche governatore di Milano (De Caro 1962). Alla sua morte, nel 1546, il feudo di Castelnuovo passò nelle mani della vedova, Maria d'Aragona, verso la quale i castelnovesi rinnovarono il giuramento di fedeltà. Il primogenito di Alfonso, Ferdinando D'Avalos, non appena fu maggiorenne il 20 giugno 1568, vendette il feudo di Castelnuovo a Gian Battista Marino, di origini genovesi, ma di cittadinanza milanese. La cifra pagata fu di 90.000 lire. I Marino si erano arricchiti sia con l'attività creditizia sia con il commercio del guado e ciò spiega la volontà di stabilirsi in un territorio che primeggiava, sia quantitativamente che qualitativamente, nella produzione della sostanza colorante.

A partire dal 1588 i Marino si fecero costruire a Castelnuovo, su progetto dell'architetto e pittore Pellegrino Tibaldi, un fastoso palazzo, oggi noto come palazzo Centurione. In questo edificio veniva spesso ospitato Ambrogio Spinola, generale delle truppe spagnole, conquistatore delle Fiandre e governatore di Milano (ospite di Cecilia Grimaldi sorella di sua madre Polissena Grimaldi) (Brunetti 2020). In questo stesso palazzo lo Spinola morì il 25 settembre 1630, dopo l'assedio di Casale Monferrato. In quegli stessi anni i Marino furono promotori della edificazione dello stupendo complesso di Sant'Ignazio, con chiesa e convento, messo a disposizione dei Gesuiti, che costituirono un collegio. Durante la dominazione spagnola, Castelnuovo si trovava in una zona di confine: pur appartenendo geograficamente al Ducato di Milano, la sua vicinanza al Piemonte, governato da Maria Cristina, sorella del re di Francia, lo rendeva fortemente influenzato dall'amministrazione francese. Infatti, alla morte del cardinale Richelieu, nel 1642, i francesi occuparono il territorio e saccheggiarono il paese. Seguirono anni in cui Castelnuovo fu soggetto a un continuo scambio di potere fra spagnoli e francesi, al termine dei quali il paese tornò agli spagnoli e quindi a far parte del Ducato di Milano.

4. Mobilità sociale nel territorio Tortonese: il caso di Castelnuovo Scrivia

La scelta di presentare il caso di Castelnuovo Scrivia è dettata da alcune ragioni significative, funzionali ad esemplificare l'utilità dello studio degli estimi: anzitutto la

[9] ASDT, Cart. B/241, *Visitatio Rev.mi Ep. F. Fossati 1644-1650.*

[10] ASDT, Cart. B/149, *Visitationes Castrinovi, Casellarum, Campibeati, Salarum et Plebium Ill.mi Mons. Settala.*

fonte esaminata consente l'analisi anno per anno della mobilità economica. Inoltre, questa località ben rappresenta la complessità delle relazioni che intercorrevano sui vari livelli politico amministrativi (centro-periferia), ma anche all'interno della comunità stessa (fazioni in cui erano divise le famiglie e rapporti con il feudatario). Il caso, dunque, offre un'opportunità di grande rilevanza per comprendere in modo approfondito le interazioni e le tensioni che caratterizzavano la realtà delle campagne nel periodo storico preso in considerazione, che assieme alle crisi congiunturali più gravi, quali epidemie, guerre e malversità climatiche, costituiscono elementi importanti per comprendere il contesto in cui la mobilità avveniva o non avveniva.

Nel Seicento, il secolo sul quale si concentra l'analisi di mobilità economica nel borgo, si confrontarono (meglio scontrarono) due fazioni createsi nel XV secolo: inizialmente famiglie più eminenti filosforzesche contro quelle filoestensi e, successivamente nel Cinquecento, quelle filofrancesi contro quelle filospagnole. Questa spaccatura fra «nobili/gentiluomini» e «popolari», non era rappresentata dalle fortune economiche delle famiglie che ne prendevano parte. Accadeva infatti che vi fossero famiglie «popolari» come gli Acerbi con grandi patrimoni, mentre famiglie «nobili» con patrimoni esigui (Cammarata 2006).

Anche quando Castelnuovo passò sotto il saldo controllo della Spagna e le due fazioni non trovarono referenti esterni che sostenessero l'una o l'altra parte, proseguì la contrapposizione fra i gruppi familiari. Nello specifico, già dal Cinquecento, i «popolani» avevano chiesto che fosse compilato a loro beneficio un estimo separato da quello dei nobili, accusati di ingiustizie fiscali. D'altro canto, risultò proprio una famiglia dei «popolani», ossia gli Acerbi, la protagonista di un voto a cui poterono partecipare tutti i capifamiglia il 13 luglio 1581, con cui stabilire se essi dovessero pagare le tasse su una loro vasta possessione nei pressi di Castelnuovo. Si trattò di una vertenza decennale, considerando che il Senato di Milano aveva stabilito già dal 1540 che Borso Acerbi doveva pagare le tasse per le terre di sua proprietà (Brunetti 2020). La richiesta di indire una sorta di referendum partì da 400 capi di famiglia di Castelnuovo, autodefinitisi «I Rinuncianti». Costoro, in gran parte legati agli Acerbi e coordinati da Teodosio Torre, marito di Isabella Acerbi, miravano a porre fine agli scontri, agli omicidi, alle aggressioni e alle tensioni nella comunità. In polemica con i Grassi (della fazione dei «nobili»), essi contavano sull'accordo raggiunto con gli Acerbi, i quali si erano impegnati a versare per i 40 anni di arretrato la cifra forfettaria di 3.200 scudi, contro i 40.000 rivendicati dagli oppositori, irremovibili su qualsiasi forma di trattativa in merito. Il voto si svolse consegnando due sfere ad ogni capo famiglia, nera per proseguire la sentenza e bianca per adeguarsi ai Rinuncianti, i quali prevalsero con 611 voti favorevoli contro 148 sfere nere (Cammarata 2006). La vittoria degli Acerbi provocò le naturali proteste degli oppositori, i quali sottolinearono il gran numero di elettori della famiglia Acerbi coinvolti nella vertenza, le minacce ricevute da alcuni votanti, il fatto che anche minorenni avessero votato e anche la presenza tra i votanti di alcuni che non pagavano alcuna tassa al Comune (Cammarata 2006). Tale episodio testimonia in modo esemplare la rete di complesse relazioni interne alla comunità, che costantemente richiesero strategie di mediazione a trattative sia a livello locale sia di governo centrale, chiamando in causa anche i feudatari locali.

Tornando ad approfondire la divisione esistente a Castelnuovo fra due gruppi rivali, essa risale al Quattrocento e vede da un lato i filoestensi, denominati marchesani (poi popolani), e i filosforzeschi gentil'homini (o nobili). Il 27 febbraio 1537, i plebei o popolani richiesero di poter usufruire delle rendite dei dazi, di ricevere la loro quota derivante dagli estimi e di partecipare alla determinazione delle tasse. Inoltre, sollecitarono che gli esattori fossero due, uno per ogni gruppo (nobili e popolani). Il Consiglio generale venne riformato con 12 membri eletti per entrambe i gruppi in cui era divisa la comunità. Questi 12 membri avrebbero scelto settantadue consiglieri competenti e idonei al governo, che si sarebbero alternati in gruppi di 36 ogni anno. Venne inoltre riformata la quota di tassazione, che passò da 2/5 per i reggenti e 3/5 per i separati, a una suddivisione paritetica (Brunetti 2020, 79).

Fra le parti vi furono continui alterchi e tentativi di mediazione, coinvolgendo anche le istituzioni statali a Milano. Le accuse da una parte contro l'altra erano simili ossia di autoesentarsi dalle spese per gli alloggiamenti militari, di ridursi le tasse, e di non lasciar consultare i libri contabili (Brunetti 2020, 80-81).

Questa contrapposizione fece sì che a Castelnuovo ci fosse una particolare attenzione all'estimo/i della comunità, perché era una forma di controllo fra le fazioni. Nonostante il costo che l'operazione di redazione dell'estimo dovette comportare, a Castelnuovo fu redatto un estimo nei seguenti 5 anni: 1563, 1600, 1620, 1639 e 1680. Esistono un estimo dei nobili e uno di popolani, evidentemente con controlli incrociati nella redazione dei medesimi. Come ho già detto, inoltre, gli estimi del 1620 e del 1639 (per ognuno di questi anni abbiamo un estimo dei nobili e un estimo dei popolani) risultano corretti regolarmente consentendo l'analisi annuale della mobilità economica. Inoltre, è noto che molti più libri delle correzioni degli estimi furono prodotti rispetto ai pochi che sono sopravvissuti. La conflittualità interna, pertanto, oltre a stimolare la produzione di estimi più frequenti, parrebbe favorire anche la conservazione delle fonti (in particolare delle correzioni agli estimi), per poter assicurare la "tracciabilità" dell'imposizione passata.

Come ha efficacemente osservato Emanuele C. Colombo

> al termine 'estimo' nella Lombardia spagnola non è associato soltanto questo significato, di sistema di riparto o di insieme di beni tassabili (estimo personale, estimo reale ecc). 'Estimo' vuol dire anche appartenenza. Far parte di un estimo significa appartenere a una determinata realtà sociale, cioè al corpo dei cittadini, dei rurali o degli ecclesiastici (Colombo 2009, 66).

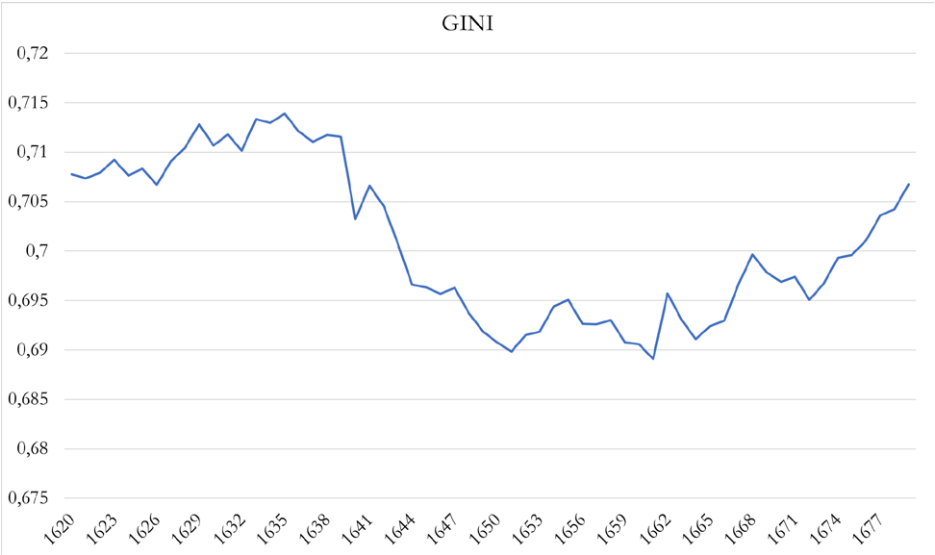
Nell'estimo di Carlo V vi è prima di tutto una gigantesca operazione di distinzione tra status, che cioè censisce la terra in base alla differente appartenenza di corpo del proprietario. Si tratta di un'operazione che tra i suoi effetti ha quello di far scemare d'importanza la distinzione, capitale nel periodo medievale, tra nobili e non nobili, che viene rimpiazzata da una nuova categorizzazione. Sottolinea Colombo che

> con ciò diventa anche evidente che far parte di un corpo nobiliare non sarà più così chiaro e definito come far parte di un corpo di cittadini. Parallelamente, però, il concetto di estimo in quanto appartenenza viene utilizzato in

> seno a comunità e contadi proprio per separare corpi nobiliari o presunti tali dal tessuto fiscale dei vari territori. È così che in molte comunità si precisa e approfondisce nel corso del Seicento una distinzione fra estimo di nobili e uno di non nobili (Colombo 2009, 66).

Sebbene questo studio si focalizzi sulla mobilità sociale, è fondamentale analizzare preliminarmente le dinamiche della disuguaglianza economica. L'elevato livello di dettaglio fornito dai registri d'estimo di Castelnuovo Scrivia consente, come detto in precedenza, di monitorare con precisione i cambiamenti nella concentrazione della ricchezza all'interno della comunità, anno per anno (per il periodo considerato 1620-1680). Nel complesso, l'analisi dei dati dei registri di Castelnuovo Scrivia (Graf. 1) rivela nel primo decennio considerato un periodo di stabilità con variazioni minime e, successivamente, una fase in cui le disuguaglianze iniziano a diminuire. L'inizio di questa fase di riduzione coincide con gli anni successivi alla peste del 1630. Gli alti tassi di mortalità dell'epidemia hanno portato a una parziale redistribuzione della ricchezza. La diseguaglianza comincia ad aumentare nuovamente negli anni Settanta del Seicento. Queste tendenze alla disparità economica sono in stretto accordo con le recenti ricerche effettuate anche in altre aree del nord Italia studiate nel progetto SMITE.

Graf. 1. **Andamento della disuguaglianza economica a Castelnuovo Scrivia, 1620-1680 (indice di Gini)**



Nello specifico, i dati di Castelnuovo Scrivia sono, nel complesso, coerenti con quanto la letteratura ha mostrato. Essi mostrano come i livelli di diseguaglianza economica si attestassero su livelli relativamente alti nel periodo che va dalla fine

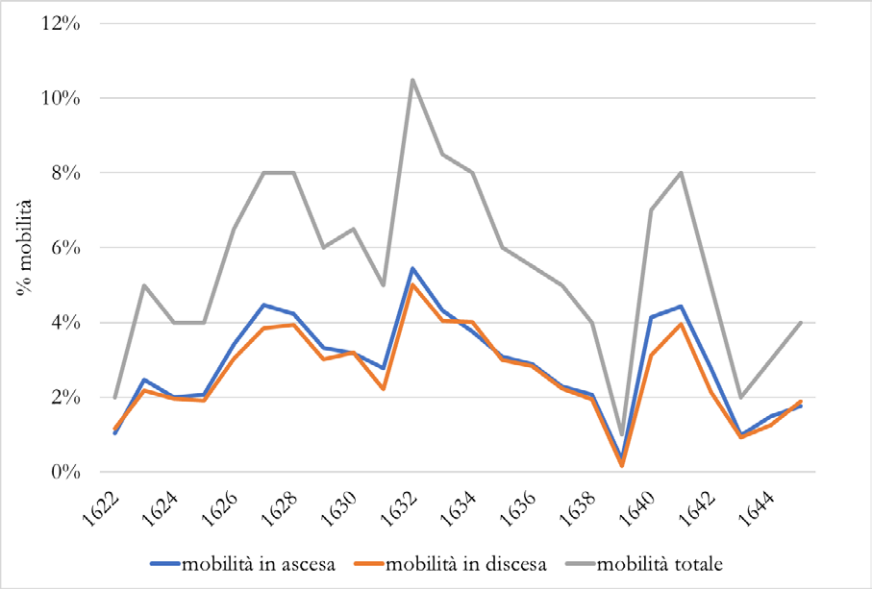
del Cinquecento e per i primi tre decenni del Seicento. Le disparità economiche avrebbero visto una (sensibile) diminuzione solo negli anni Trenta del Seicento in concomitanza con l'epidemia di peste. L'alto tasso di mortalità (De Carlini 1992) portò alla disgregazione (e talvolta alla completa scomparsa) di numerosi gruppi familiari interferendo pesantemente sui normali processi di successione ereditaria. I patrimoni si frammentarono e i beni fondiari vennero distribuiti verso un numero più ampio di famiglie, aumentando la loro quota di ricchezza e contribuendo, come mostrano appunto i dati, a mitigare le disparità sociali all'interno della comunità. Nonostante i tassi di mortalità paragonabili a quelli della peste nera, la peste del 1630 causò una diminuzione delle diseguaglianze assai meno duratura. Come possiamo vedere dai dati, già alla metà del secolo l'azione mitigatrice della peste si era arrestata e a partire dagli anni 1660 le disparità di ricchezza cominciano ad acuirsi, andando a toccare quote vicine a quelle pre-peste.

Passiamo ora ad analizzare l'evoluzione delle dinamiche di mobilità sociale all'interno di questo specifico contesto, però facendo riferimento al decennio precedente e a quello successivo la peste del 1630. Innanzitutto, come si evince dal Graf. 2, possiamo osservare il dinamismo economico che permea la comunità di Castelnuovo in quegli anni. Ogni anno, numerose famiglie acquistano nuove proprietà e altrettante vendono o dismettono alcuni dei loro beni. Siamo quindi lontani dall'immagine stereotipata delle comunità rurali come statiche. Ogni famiglia, in base alle proprie esigenze e necessità, ha continuamente venduto, comprato o affittato porzioni di terra per perpetuare le proprie strategie economiche e raggiungere i propri obiettivi.

Quali furono gli effetti di questa grave crisi di mortalità sulle dinamiche economiche interne alla società?

L'analisi della mobilità è un elemento di grande utilità per capire se gli effetti dannosi delle diseguaglianze erano mitigati da un alto grado di mobilità sociale o accuiti da una bassa mobilità. Come accennato in precedenza, la peste del 1630 è probabilmente alla base del processo di attenuazione delle disuguaglianze economiche che possiamo osservare a partire dagli anni Trenta del XVI secolo. Tale traumatico evento produsse effetti anche sulla mobilità sociale. Come si può vedere dal Graf. 2, infatti, la peste causò un aumento della mobilità sociale a Castelnuovo Scrivia. Dai dati risulta piuttosto evidente il picco positivo che segue allo scoppio dell'epidemia di peste del 1630. La peste risulta dunque essere un episodio che incide in maniera benefica sull'economia di Castelnuovo proprio perché riduce le diseguaglianze e controbuisce ad aumentare, proprio per i meccanismi di redistribuzoine descritti in precedenza, la mobilità sociale.

Graf. 2. **Mobilità sociale in Castelnuovo Scrivia, 1622-1644**



Anche qui, e ancora in maniera più evidente, le conseguenze benefiche sulla mobilità dell'ondata di peste sono assai limiate. I dati mostrano infatti che in pochi anni la mobilità crolla per assestrarsi su livelli addirittura più bassi di quelli pre-peste. Un ulteriore aumento della mobilità si registra tuttavia nuovamente nei primi anni Quaranta, periodo nel quale questo territorio è interessato da campagne militari che vedono opposti spagnoli contro francesi, che saccheggiano l'area, rivendicandone il possesso. Anche in questo caso si tratta di un aumento di breve durata: nel giro di pochi anni la mobilità ricominciò a diminuire, proseguendo la tendenza iniziata nel corso della prima parte del secolo.

5. Conclusione

L'analisi della mobilità sociale ed economica nel Basso Piemonte nel Seicento, con un focus sul territorio tortonese e, in particolare, sul caso di Castelnuovo Scrivia, mette in evidenza le complessità di un contesto storico caratterizzato da forti disparità economiche e da tensioni socio-istituzionali. Gli estimi, fonte documentaria centrale, hanno permesso di tracciare un quadro dettagliato della redistribuzione della ricchezza e dei movimenti di status tra le famiglie.

Nel periodo analizzato, la peste del 1630 emerge come un evento spartiacque, capace di interrompere temporaneamente le disparità economiche attraverso la frammentazione dei patrimoni, un aumento della mobilità sociale e una redistribuzione parziale della ricchezza. Tuttavia, questa riduzione delle disuguaglianze si rivela transitoria. Il contesto locale di Castelnuovo Scrivia fornisce un microcosmo particolarmente significativo per comprendere come fattori esterni, come epidemie e guerre, interagissero con dinamiche interne alla comunità, tra cui

rivalità familiari e dispute sull'equità fiscale. La continua contrapposizione tra le fazioni dei «popolari» e dei «nobili» non solo rifletteva i conflitti di potere, ma contribuiva anche alla produzione e conservazione di estimi dettagliati, che oggi rappresentano una risorsa preziosa per lo studio della mobilità sociale ed economica.

Pertanto, l'analisi di Castelnuovo Scrivia non solo arricchisce il dibattito sulla mobilità sociale nel contesto italiano ed europeo preindustriale, ma invita anche a riflettere su come le crisi – sanitarie, militari o politiche – possano ridisegnare temporaneamente le dinamiche economiche e sociali, senza però alterarne in modo strutturale le fondamenta. Questo caso di studio dimostra l'importanza di un approccio multidimensionale per comprendere i fenomeni di lungo periodo e la loro capacità di influenzare le società in trasformazione.

Le ricerche di questo tipo aprono prospettive interessanti per indagini future. In primo luogo, l'approccio metodologico che combina fonti documentarie locali con analisi socio-economiche comparate potrebbe essere esteso ad altre aree geografiche e periodi storici, permettendo un confronto più ampio delle dinamiche di mobilità e disuguaglianza. Inoltre, approfondimenti sui legami tra mobilità sociale e trasformazioni istituzionali potrebbero chiarire come le comunità reagivano a eventi critici, contribuendo a una maggiore comprensione della resilienza delle società preindustriali. Infine, lo studio della stratificazione sociale, condotto con tecniche avanzate di analisi dati, potrebbe offrire nuove intuizioni sui meccanismi di redistribuzione della ricchezza e sulle loro implicazioni per le politiche fiscali e istituzionali del periodo.

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Mattia Viale

The estimi *of the Republic of Venice as a resource for studying social mobility in rural areas*[*]

1. Introduction

In recent years, the investigation of economic inequality during the pre-industrial era has captured the attention of an increasing number of scholars. Over two decades of dedicated research in this field has yielded a rich collection of studies that trace the long-term evolution of economic disparities across various European cities and regions

and even beyond (Coşgel 2008; Coşgel and Ergene 2012; Saito 2015; Lindert and Williamson 2016). This body of work covers a range of focal points, from the root causes of inequality (Alfani and Ryckbosch 2016; Milanovic 2018) and the interplay between income and consumption (Hoffman et al. 2002; Hanus 2013) to the impact of economic imbalances on social structures and institutional systems (Alfani and Murphy 2017). Despite this breadth of enquiry, the interrelationship between economic inequality and social mobility has yet to be thoroughly explored, marking a critical gap in our knowledge.[1] Addressing this gap is crucial; while economic inequality is somewhat of a given, enhancing social mobility offers a pathway to ameliorating the negative effects associated with unequal access to resources. Conversely, a dearth of social mobility reinforces social hierarchies, intensifying the detrimental impacts of inequality.

To advance this area of study, we draw on the data and methodologies developed through the "*SMITE-Social Mobility and Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800*" project, supported by the European Research Council. Our goal is to enrich the current literature by focusing on social mobility trends within the rural areas of the Republic of Venice during the early modern era. In particular, our analysis highlights the tax registers (*estimi*) of rural communities in the Vicenza territory as invaluable resources for such investigations. The community of San Vito between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries serves as a case study in our analysis. Through this lens, we aim not only to contribute to the broader discourse on economic inequality and

[*] The research leading to this article has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Program/ERC Grant agreement No. 725687, *SMITE-Social Mobility and Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800*.

[1] For the case of Italy, the topic of social mobility has mostly been explored in studies focusing on the contemporary era, particularly the post-World War II period (Schizzerotto and Marzadro 2008; Barone and Guetto 2020; Acciari, Polo, and Violante 2022). Research on the pre-industrial period, however, has been much scarcer. Available studies have primarily concentrated on either the nineteenth century (Gozzini 1984; Allegra 2000; Freschi and Martinez 2024) or the medieval age (Collavini and Petralia 2016; Tanzini and Tognetti 2016).

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Mattia Viale, *The* estimi *of the Republic of Venice as a resource for studying social mobility in rural areas during the pre-industrial era*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9.08, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *La mobilità sociale nelle società preindustriali: tendenze, cause ed effetti (secc. XIII-XVIII) / Social mobility in pre-industrial societies: tendencies, causes and effects (13th-18th centuries)*, pp. 119-131, 2025, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0667-9, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9

social mobility but also to showcase the nuanced dynamics at play within rural societies of the period.

2. The territory of Vicenza

Located in the heart of the Venetian mainland, Vicenza and its surrounding area, known as the *Vicentino*, stretch longitudinally from the plains to the Dolomites. Positioned between Padua and Verona, two major centres in northeast Italy, Vicenza's development during the late Middle Ages was significantly influenced by its geographic context (Demo and Bianchi 2014, 73-96). Subject to Paduan rule throughout the thirteenth century, Vicenza came under the control of Verona's ruling dynasty, the Scaligeri, in 1312 (Varanini 2003, 291-294; 2010). Despite this political subordination,[2] there was no decay in local institutions or deterioration in the socio-economic fabric of the city. Instead, particularly in the Veronese era, Vicenza's urban elites fortified the governmental framework, the city underwent significant demographic growth (Castagnetti 1990), and local industries embarked on a trajectory of robust expansion.[3]

The demographic, social, and economic development of Vicenza was not confined to the city's boundaries but also proliferated across the surrounding territory. Vicenza's extended period of subordination to neighbouring powers, which curtailed its dominion over adjacent areas, inadvertently fostered the prosperity of rural communities. By the mid-thirteenth century, the region boasted over 200 rural towns and villages (Bortolami 2012). Over time, some communities evolved complex governance systems, securing significant levels of autonomy from Vicenza (Knapton 1984). Particularly in the foothills, communities leveraged the region's rich natural resources to bolster economic growth, enabling the emergence of wealthy families who subsequently integrated into the city's oligarchic elite.

In 1404, during a significant territorial expansion that led Venice to enlarge its domains throughout the entire northeastern portion of the Italian peninsula, Vicenza and its surrounding territory were absorbed into the Republic of Venice. Venice organised its new Italian state in a federal manner, exerting its power in a subdued fashion (Zamperetti 1989, 87). It indeed confirmed Vicenza's central role in relation to its rural district (*contado*) while leaving untouched all the privileges (fiscal and jurisdictional) that the rural communities had gained between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries under the previous regimes (Zamperetti 1987; 1991).[4] This situation remained unchanged for at least a century and a half. By the mid-sixteenth

[2] Vicenza experienced only a brief interlude as an autonomous municipality between 1259 and 1266; indeed, some historians do not hesitate to describe it as a 'satellite city' (Cracco 1988).

[3] The conjuncture of the fourteenth century was crucial for the establishment of a significant wool industry in subsequent periods (Demo 2001; 2013).

[4] Venice adopted this approach not only in Vicenza but also across all the territories it annexed during the early modern period (Ventura 1964). Moreover, the recognition of privileges acquired under previous rulers was not unique to the Venetian government. This approach was common among many states forming between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with perhaps the sole exception of the Florentine state (Chittolini 1979).

century, the circumstances had undergone a radical transformation. On the one hand, the severe crisis resulting from the War of the League of Cambrai (1508-1516) brought with it a costly project to reconstruct the Republic's defensive system, which required improvements to the tax collection system and an increase in the revenue generated (Knapton 1984). On the other hand, between the 1540s and 1570s, the Republic lost its commercial outposts in Apulia, then Cyprus, and several bases along the Albanian coast – strategic points for trade with the Levant – which compelled Venice to focus more keenly on its mainland possessions to maintain its maritime empire (Zamperetti 1991). These developments prompted the Venetian authorities to abandon the previous, rather lenient, system in favour of establishing a more structured power framework. This shift entailed a significant recalibration of Venice's political strategies. The change was particularly evident, as the Venetian authorities started to engage directly with the rural elites, a strategic move aimed at ensuring a greater capacity for action and influence over the territory (Maifreda 2002, 63-69).[5] To facilitate this deeper involvement, specific magistracies governed by local elites were established.[6] A prime example of this new administrative framework was the formation of the *Corpo Territoriale*.[7] Starting in 1550, this entity became a pivotal administrative body for the governance of the rural district of Vicenza, marking a significant shift from Venice's previous reliance on provincial city elites as intermediaries in rural affairs. Despite resistance from the Vicenza nobility (Zamperetti 1989, 90-91), the *Corpo Territoriale* gradually carved out a significant role in centre–periphery relations. This evolution led, among other things, to the development of an administrative and political architecture that achieved substantial autonomy in the imposition and collection of taxes.

A final, noteworthy observation is the fact that despite the *Corpi Territoriali* emerging during a period of economic expansion and reflecting the renewed economic strength of the *contado*, the living conditions of the peasants worsened significantly over time due to the increased economic presence of the Venetian

[5] This attitude was prevalent in much of the mainland, in both the provinces of Veneto and Lombardy, affecting areas where the *contado* was historically more active and politically assertive, as well as those areas where the inhabitants of the countryside had been more oppressed by the city elites. (Varanini 1980; Knapton 1984; Rossini 1994; Zamperetti 1987; Maifreda 2002).

[6] In the same period, similar dynamics are also found in Spanish Lombardy. With the land register ordered by Charles V, the prerogatives of the urban elites were greatly reduced, while there was a simultaneous recognition of the demands coming from the territory (Porqueddu 1980; Vigo 1986; Chittolini 1983; Zappa 1991).

[7] According to an alternative view, the creation of the *Corpo Territoriale* was less a Venetian initiative to secure a privileged interlocutor in regional governance and more a product of the rural "bourgeoisie", who sought to align their rising social status with political influence. Wealthy rural families, unable to penetrate the noble elite of the provincial city, encouraged the establishment of an independent institution. This would allow them to complement their economic prominence with political authority, enabling direct interaction with Venice's central government while bypassing Vicenza (Povolo 2010). These two perspectives – the top-down view of the *Corpo Territoriale* as a Venetian initiative and the bottom-up view of it as a project driven by the rural elite – are not mutually exclusive. It is plausible that Venice, aiming to strengthen its control over the territory, capitalised on the rural bourgeoisie's desire for legitimisation, thereby supporting the formation of the *Corpo Territoriale*.

patricians in the Mainland. By the fifteenth century, favourable price trends and increased demand for agricultural goods had prompted many Venetian nobles to increase their investments in the mainland, seizing land from local farmers and landowners. In this context, the *Corpi* did not appear to be very combative in defending the peasants or in attempting to improve their conditions. This emphasises that the *Corpi Territoriali* were not an expression of the rural world in its entirety but primarily represented and defended the interests of a class of landowners, professionals, and affluent merchants who had a greater interest (in addition to the means and the cultural and political capacity) to express their own demands (Del Torre 1986, 46; Zamperetti 1987, 298; Maifreda 2002, 68-69).

3. The Venetian tax system

In the Republic of Venice, tax imposition was a structured annual process. The central government in Venice first determined the total revenue expected from the Mainland provinces. This sum was then divided among the three administrative entities that constituted these territories (both socially and economically): the city, the rural district, and the clergy. Each of these entities, in turn, divided its assigned share among its constituents (Ventura, 1964; Knapton 1981). Due to the autonomy it had achieved, the *Corpo Territoriale* had the ability to decide how to distribute its share of taxes among the various municipalities within its jurisdiction, free from interference by the rulers or the elites of Vicenza. Moreover, the municipalities had the discretion to decide on the distribution of their own tax share among the local taxpayers (Knapton 1984; Pezzolo 1985a).

To determine the allocation of tax shares among various property owners, a tax register (*libro d'estimo*) was created in every municipality. Periodically, landowners were required to submit a certificate on which they self-declared the extent of their landholdings. These declarations were subsequently reviewed, recorded in the tax register, and followed by the valuation process. Each parcel of land, whether owned or leased, underwent assessment and was assigned an estimated value. These values were determined using parameters discussed and decided upon by the governing bodies of the community (Ongaro 2019). The sum of these values determined the *quota d'estimo* for a household, essentially a coefficient indicating a household's economic capacity. The principle was straightforward: the higher the *quota d'estimo* value, the wealthier the family, and, correspondingly, the greater the tax burden they were required to bear.

As previously mentioned, the parameters for taxing real estate properties were determined within each community. Consequently, local representatives aimed to establish property valuation systems that were most beneficial to their residents. For instance, in a community where leased lands were more common than owned lands, the tax rate for the former was lower than that for the latter. The reverse was also true: in municipalities where most families owned the lands they farmed, the tax rate for owned lands was more advantageous than that for leased lands. Taxation was not limited to lands; it also extended to people. Some areas decided to create a fixed taxable base for each family, while others chose to tax only the head of the family

and male children (the latter proportionally based on age) or opted not to include the personal component in their calculations. Given the wide latitude for discretion, specific communities could decide to tax certain specific elements. Thus, among the hundreds of tax registers of the *Corpo Territoriale* of Vicenza, we find even communities imposing specific rates on working animals, mill wheels, saws for timber processing, and paper mill looms (Pezzolo 1985b).

The fact that the rural communities within the Vicenza territory, united under the *Corpo Territoriale*, had such extensive autonomy in managing their fiscal affairs ensured that each community guarded its own tax registers with great diligence. Consequently, today, the archive of *libri d'estimo* from the communities in the Vicenza territory stands as one of the most substantial and complete collections of the Venetian Republic.[8]

4. Sources and methods

Among the hundreds of records that constitute the *Estimo* archive of the Vicenza territory, now preserved at the State Archive of Vicenza, we find several registers of particular value for analysing economic inequalities and social mobility. As mentioned earlier, the communities within this territory had considerable autonomy over the management of their *estimi*. This autonomy extended not only to deciding what to tax and at what rate for various types of properties but also to the frequency with which the valuations were updated. Reviewing the registers, we find communities that opted to update their tax records every two or three years, some that waited at least five years, and others that drafted a new valuation after a decade. Yet, the most valuable for our analysis are those that adopted a kind of rolling procedure in which the registers were constantly kept up to date. Instead of compiling a new register from scratch after a few years, some communities preferred to continue using the same register, correcting it annually to note new properties purchased, those sold, and those held on lease. This system offers exceptionally detailed and accurate data collection, enabling us to reconstruct the economic history of every single household within a community with remarkable precision. Furthermore, it allows us to trace the internal economic dynamics of a community with a high degree of specificity and detail. Therefore, for our analysis of social mobility in the rural communities of the Republic of Venice, we relied precisely on those communities in the territory of Vicenza that feature registers with annual corrections. From these sources, it is indeed possible to trace, year by year, the evolution of changes in wealth, providing insights into how wealth was distributed and exchanged over time among the various households that comprised a community.

[8] The series of tax registers from rural communities alone consists of more than a thousand volumes, covering a time span (albeit quite variable depending on the community) from the second quarter of the fifteenth century to the first decade of the nineteenth century.

The methodology employed is that developed within the SMITE project,[9] hence based on mobility matrices. The initial step of the method is to gather data on the *quote d'estimo* (which is a coefficient indicating the economic capacity of a household calculated on the number and quality of assets owned) for each household for all the years in which it appears "active." This is followed by ranking the households according to their wealth level, thereby dividing the entire population into quintiles of wealth. This then allows the calculation of how many households manage to ascend to higher quintiles (thus exhibiting upward mobility) and how many descend to a lower quintile (indicating downward mobility) from one year to the next. The sum of these two measures (upward mobility and downward mobility) yields the total mobility. Essentially, we calculate the percentage of households that become (relatively) wealthier, the percentage of households that become poorer, and a value that illustrates the proportion of households experiencing changes in their wealth status.

In the case of Vicenza, the quality of the sources particularly supports precise analyses, yielding data that allow for an exceptionally accurate examination of economic dynamics. To demonstrate the potential of these sources for studying social mobility, we have chosen to utilise the case study of San Vito between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Located in the affluent foothill region and with a population of around a thousand people, San Vito emerged as one of the main contributors to the territorial budget in the early modern period (Knapton 1981, 395). However, more than its economic standing, we chose San Vito as a case study due to the wealth of preserved fiscal documentation with yearly corrections. The *estimi* of this community include annual data covering a span from 1541 to 1665.[10]

5. Social mobility in the territory of Vicenza: The case of San Vito

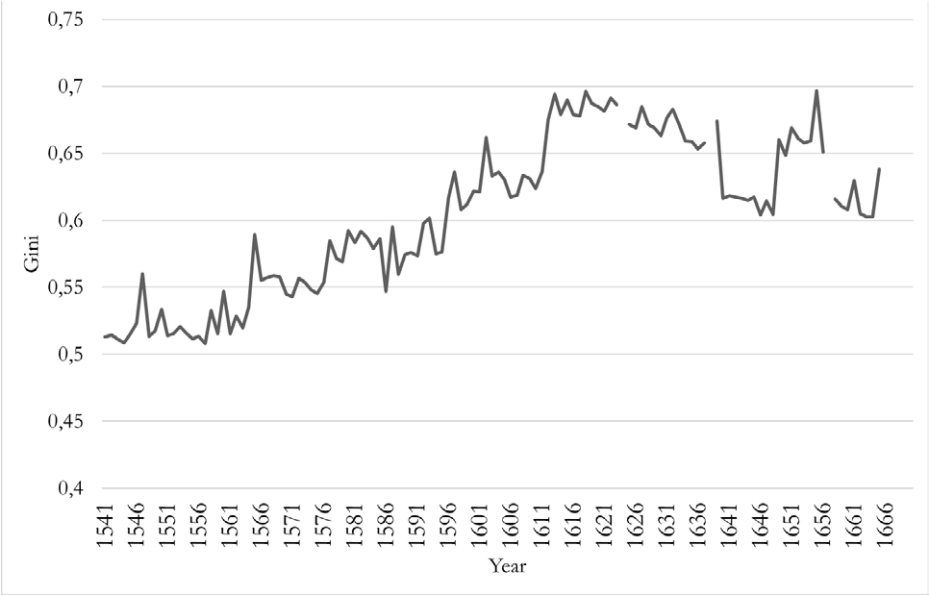
Although our study mainly centres on social mobility, it is essential to begin by delving into the dynamics of social inequality. The high level of detail provided by the valuation records from the Vicenza territory enables precise monitoring of changes in wealth concentration within various communities on a year-to-year basis. Overall, an analysis of the data from the San Vito registers (Graph 1) reveals that the transition from the sixteenth century to the seventeenth century is characterised by a marked increase in inequalities. This period can be divided into three distinct phases: an initial phase of significant inequality growth, followed by a period of stabilisation with minimal changes, and finally, a phase where inequalities started to decline. Specifically, we note a gradual yet notable escalation in economic disparities from the 1540s to the 1610s, followed by two decades of relative stability, and then a period of diminishing inequalities. The beginning of this reduction phase coincided with, and was likely precipitated by, the plague of 1630. The high mortality rates of the

[9] For a detailed discussion of the methodology developed by SMITE, please refer to the contribution of Francesco Ammannati in this volume.

[10] The *estimi* analysed in the next pages can be found in: Archivio di Stato di Vicenza, *Estimo*, bb. 1347, 1348, 1349, 1350, 1351, 1352; Archivio Storico Comunale di San Vito di Leguzzano, *Estimo*, B2-II.

epidemic significantly thinned the mainland population, leading to a partial redistribution of wealth. These trends in economic disparity are in close agreement with recent research on the Venetian mainland (Alfani and Di Tullio 2019).

Graph 1. **Trend in economic inequality in San Vito, 1541-1665 (Gini index)**



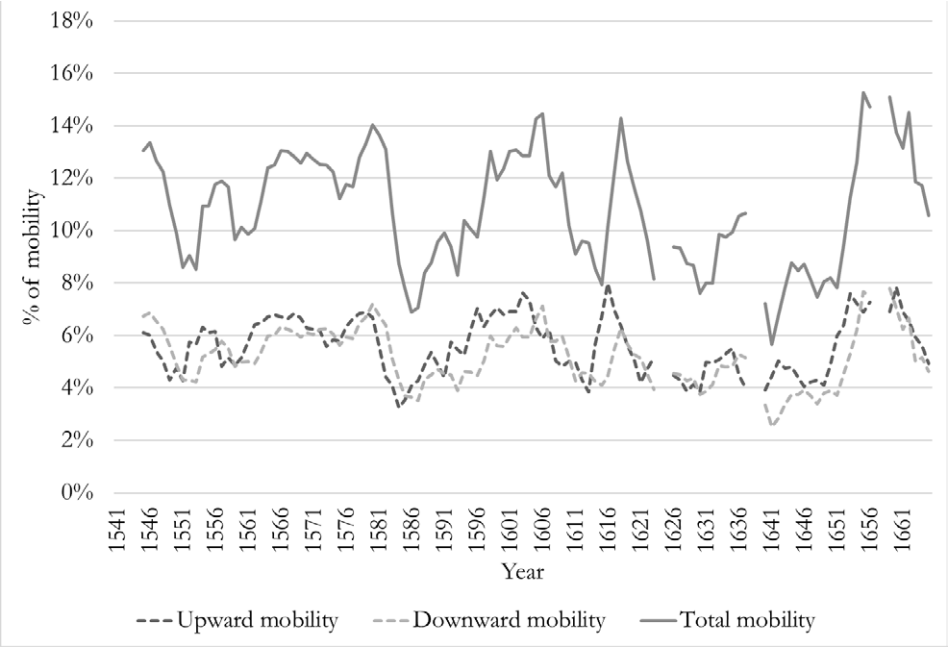
We now turn our attention to the evolution of social mobility dynamics within this specific context. First, as shown in Graph 2, we can appreciate the economic dynamism that permeated the community of San Vito. Every year, numerous households acquired new properties, and equally, many sold or disposed of some of their possessions. Thus, this finding is far from the stereotypical image of rural communities as static and mired in severe poverty. Each household, according to its needs and necessities, continuously sold, bought, or rented portions of land. These ongoing adjustments in landholdings were essential for peasant families to perpetuate their economic strategies and achieve their goals based on their family's labour capacity. The varying consumption needs of a family at different stages of its existence necessitated changes in its economic activities – expanding when the family grew in size and contracting when it decreased. This led to an intense circulation of property, as peasants acquired or relinquished land to balance their household resources with their requirements (Čajanov 1988; 1991). Such adjustments resulted in frequent movements in inequality, both upward and downward, as shifts in property ownership redistributed wealth within the community.

While the short-term picture appears somewhat reassuring and optimistic, the long-term outlook is far less so. As demonstrated in the century under consideration,

there was a slight trend towards increasingly limited social mobility (more apparent if we disregard the mobility peak after 1630, which was due to an exogenous shock that does appear to have permanently affected the underlying trend: see below). Whether in periods of rising inequalities, times of stagnation, or those of declining disparities, social mobility tended to decrease, signalling a society that gradually became more rigid.

Graph 2. **Trend in social mobility in San Vito, 1541-1665**

(data smoothed by a 5-year moving average)

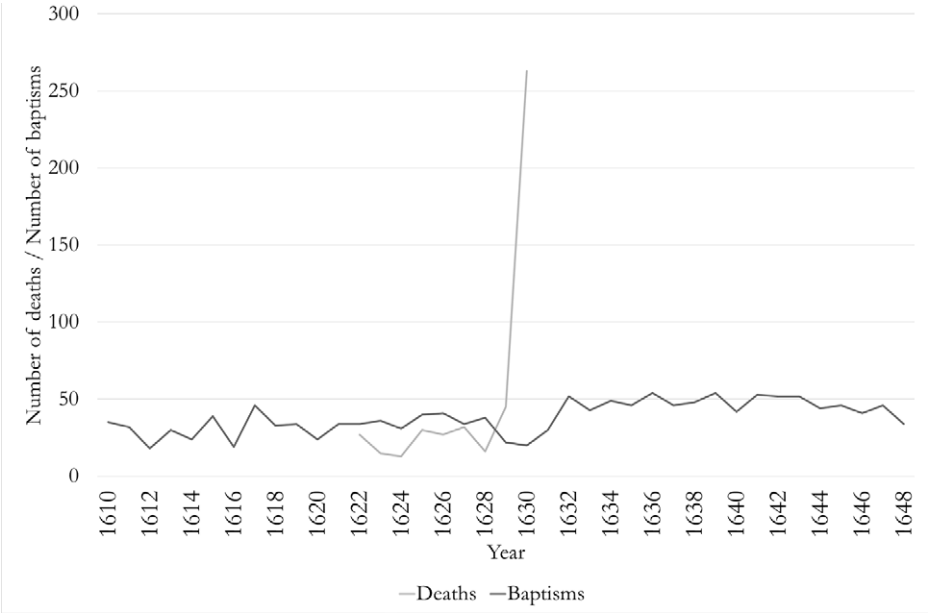


As is well known, the plague of 1630 struck the Italian peninsula with severe ferocity, affecting both cities and rural areas. In terms of mortality and intensity, this pandemic event is the only one that can somewhat be compared to the Black Death. The parish records of San Vito provide a particularly vivid depiction of the harshness with which the plague hit this locality.[11] In the years immediately preceding the plague, San Vito reported a death toll ranging from approximately 15-30 individuals. However, with the onset of the plague, this figure soared to over 260. The impact of the plague on birth rates is also noteworthy, as evidenced by the number of baptisms between 1630 and 1631, which fell by at least a third compared to previous years

[11] Archivio Diocesano di Vicenza (ADVi), *Parrocchia dei Santi Vito, Modesto e Crescenzia di San Vito di Leguzzano*, *Registri dei morti*, b. 1; ADVi, *Parrocchia dei Santi Vito, Modesto e Crescenzia di San Vito di Leguzzano*, *Registri dei battesimi*, bb. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

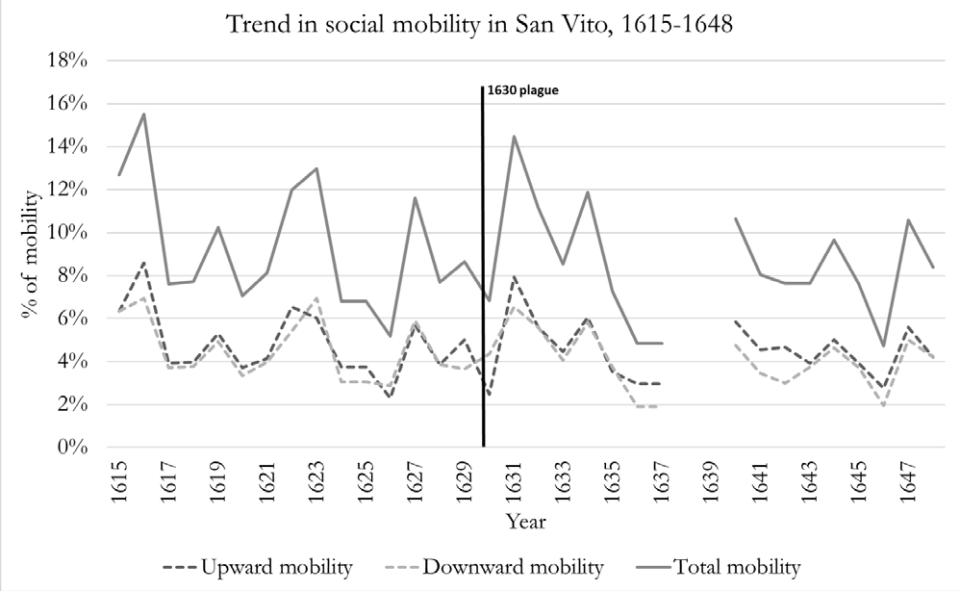
(Graph 3). The demographic decline's effects are further evident from the *estimi*: the number of recorded households dropped from about 260 to 237 within a five-year span, only to begin increasing again towards the end of the decade.

Graph 3. **Number of baptisms and deaths in San Vito, 1610-1648**



What was the effect of this severe mortality crisis on the internal economic dynamics of society? As mentioned earlier, the plague of 1630 is likely at the root of the process of mitigating economic inequalities, which is observable starting in the 1630s. However, the effects on social mobility were not as beneficial. As shown in Graph 4, the plague caused an increase in social mobility in San Vito. This increase, however, was of overall limited intensity and, more importantly, short-lived: within just a few years, mobility began to decline again, continuing the trend that had begun in the course of the sixteenth century.

Graph 4. **Trend in social mobility in San Vito, 1615-1648**



6. Concluding remarks

In this study, we describe the wealth of sources that the Vicenza territory offers for studying inequalities and social mobility in pre-industrial rural areas. Due to Vicenza's unique political development, its rural communities were able to prosper significantly, starting from the Middle Ages, securing substantial autonomy from the city's control and its ruling elites. This autonomy was largely maintained even after Vicenza and the *Vicentino* fell under Venetian rule, as Venice preserved pre-existing balances while constructing its mainland state. Consequently, the rural communities continued to develop, becoming increasingly credible partners for Venice in managing territorial affairs. In the first half of the sixteenth century, when Venice was compelled to strengthen its presence on the Mainland following the challenging circumstances of the Italian Wars and the loss of strategic portions of its empire in the Eastern Mediterranean, it chose to engage directly with local communities. This approach led to the establishment of institutions representing rural areas, exemplified by the creation of the *Corpo Territoriale* in 1550. The fiscal domain was the primary area of this engagement, granting rural communities considerable autonomy in their tax systems and collection methods at both the district and community levels. This led to each community meticulously creating and maintaining its own tax registers (*estimi*). Among the thousands of registers produced, many of which still exist today at the State Archive of Vicenza, those managed with a rolling procedure, in which the composition of the assets of various taxpayers was updated year by year, are of particular interest for the study of inequalities and social mobility. These sources are particularly valuable for this type of study because they provide highly accurate data

on the year-to-year status of various households within a community, as demonstrated by the case study of San Vito.

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Albert Reixach Sala, Pau Viciano

Social mobility in the towns and countryside of the late medieval Crown of Aragon (c. 1300-c. 1550): sources and methodological approaches[1]

1. Introduction

Social mobility is a subject implicit in many dynamics traditionally studied by the historiography of the late medieval Iberian kingdoms, in general, and the Crown of Aragon, in particular (Iradiel 2010; Igual 2018; Reixach, Burguera 2024). It includes phenomena such as the making and evolution of urban oligarchies (Viciano 2008b; Laliena 2010; Sabaté, 2013; Fynn-Paul 2015). Rising social mobility in the mercantile sectors has also been the object of many studies since the 1990s (Fernández Trabal 1995; Aurell 1996; Cruselles 2001; Soldani 2010; De la Torre 2019), a process that could also affect families from smaller settlements (Viciano 1993; Aparisi Martí 2019-2020). Other works deal with entrepreneurship and upward mobility within the milieu of craftsmen (Iradiel, Igual, Navarro and Aparici 1995; Navarro 1998, 2004, 2018; Llibrer 2014) or skilled professionals like jurists or notaries (Graullera 2009; Cruselles 1998). These analyses have not been limited to towns, since some scholars have also drawn the attention to the inhabitants of rural areas and their possible migration to cities (To 2010; Furió, Garcia-Oliver 2010; Mas 2000; Orti 2013). Studies on the trajectories of peasant families in the kingdom of Valencia stand out. They show, for instance, peasants that, thanks to their socio-professional mobility, could become shopkeepers in a second generation and merchants in a third (Viciano 1995), as well as others who joined the professional body of notaries (Aparisi Romero 2025, forthcoming). However, more global approaches are needed, especially given recent research on inequalities and connected economic trends (Furió et al. 2020; Morelló et al. 2020; García-Montero 2020).

As is well known, the Iberian domains of the kings of Aragon are endowed with a rich documentary series from the beginning of the fourteenth century onward. However, there is still archival evidence that is unexplored or pending systematization. The first section of the paper will be devoted to describing the most important features of these sources and their application to both quantitative and qualitative research on social mobility. We will mainly focus on three types of sources: fiscal registers, municipal records that provide long-term perspectives and notarial

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records, especially testaments, probate inventories and marriage contracts. In each case, we seek to build series of sequential data from these documentary series. In doing so, we will discuss their scope and limitations, as well as methods that can be applied in order to assess both upward and downward mobility during the late Middle Ages. We will focus on several representative cases of the urban network of Catalonia, Valencia and Majorca.

2. Description of archival sources

The first group of registers to be employed to examine social mobility derives from direct taxes in the different territories or within specific municipalities as a source to assess, in the long run, the evolution of membership in specific socio-professional groups, as well as those belonging to different socioeconomic strata. These data can also be supplemented with sources arising from the activity of urban governments and notary offices.

2.1. Fiscal records: from general to local direct taxes

It is important to distinguish between direct taxes collected by the Crown and those imposed by local authorities. Generally speaking, they all tended to tax the assets or wealth of family units, but with important differences that influence how they can be used by researchers.

Beginning with general taxes imposed by the Crown, the *monedatge* or *morabatí* was a direct undifferentiated tax collected in the kingdoms of Aragon, Valencia and Majorca (López Elum 1972; Baydal 2006-08; 2020). In Valencia, the taxes often included a detailed list of taxpayers as well as the total number of hearths per settlement, so these sources can be employed to study demographic elements or anthroponomy, as several studies on Valencia and also Majorca show (Arroyo 1969; 1986; Ferrer 1975; 2005; Cabanes 1973; Sevillano 1974; Guinot 1988; Sastre 1989; Aparici Martí 2009a). With regard to social mobility, a crucial element is the existence of a minimum income threshold for taxpayers, which was set at 105 *solidos*; below this sum, people were considered exempts or *nichils*. This feature allows us to observe the oscillation above or below the minimum wealth threshold in order to see possible socioeconomic transformations. When there are *morabatí* records for a given place from different years, we can identify taxpayers whose status as payers or exempts (*nichils*) changed, and in some cases, the collectors even pointed out the reasons for an individual taxpayer's fiscal impoverishment.

In Catalonia, *fogatjaments* were general surveys that included the number of hearths or family units in each community, who were obliged to share the tax burden arising from subsidies approved in *Corts* or parliaments. Only the later general *fogatjaments* (from 1496 onwards) include nominal lists of the holders of hearths (or taxpayers) within each place. They can provide insights into the occupational or socio-professional structure of towns, but not into their wealth distribution (Orti 1999).

The most important group of fiscal registers arise from the imposition of direct taxes by both urban and rural communities. These local taxes (*talla* in Catalonia or *peita* in Valencia) consisted of direct taxes on wealth based on the estimation of the value of the assets belonging to the families in the community. The tax was recorded in a book, a wealth register, called *llibre d'estimes* o *padró*, which provides information on the socio-professional background of the taxpayers, an assessment of their wealth, and details on their assets. The sums that taxpayers owed were recorded in another source, the so-called *llibres de talles* or *de la peita*. These books contained information similar to that in the wealth registers, but it was less detailed, since each kind of assets was not listed. Literature on these sources is extensive for Catalonia and Valencia (Turull, Morelló 2005; Morelló et al. 2020; Furió et al. 2020; Viciano 2023a). There are also studies dealing with Majorca and Aragon (Barceló 2002; Tudela, Pascual 2023; Medrano 2006; Vispe 2022, respectively).

Changes in the ownership of assets, whether through the property market or family transfers, made it necessary to update these registers. These changes were usually recorded in the form of marginal annotations next to relevant older entries in the wealth register, until the accumulation of entries made it difficult to use them and a new one was drawn up. In at least one place (Castelló de la Plana), the updates were recorded in a separate book, the so-called *llibres de compres i vendes* (books of purchases and sales) in which all transfers during a year were detailed, and not only through the market, as the name would suggest (Viciano 2023b).

These local tax records from Catalonia and Valencia have mainly been studied to assess economic inequalities and to discern how general parameters in this respect evolved. In Catalonia, recent case studies have illuminated cities such as Tortosa (Miquel, Morelló 2025 forthcoming), Girona (Reixach 2022) and Balaguer (García-Montero 2020), along with smaller towns such as Cervera, Igualada (Miquel, Verdés 2024), Valls and Reus (Morelló 2017). There have been similar case studies for Valencia such as the small towns of Alzira or Castelló (Furió 1982, 2017; Peris 1985; Joli, Doménech 1996-1997; Domingo 1998; Viciano 2008a; 2008b; Furió et al. 2020). The City of Majorca has also been studied (Barceló 2002, among other works by the same author; Tudela, Pascual 2023).

The methodology used to study social mobility in registers that only record payments differs somewhat from that used to simply assess economic inequalities. The increase or decrease of tax sums attributed did not necessarily indicate changes in the volume of wealth because the amount of tax depended on the rate applied each year to the tax base, according to the needs of the municipal treasury. Thus, knowing the rate applied by taxable income, information that appears in the same collection booklet or in the books of municipal acts, is needed to reconstruct the taxable wealth of the taxpayers. But the homogeneous series of data of a group of taxpayers, corresponding to different collection books, does make it possible to follow the fluctuation of a person's wealth over the course of his or her life cycle. For longer periods, the methodological question that arises is the same as in all the fiscal sources we are examining: to establish the links of kinship between different generations of taxpayers, for which it is necessary to resort to complementary sources, notarial records in particular.

Since our purpose is not to follow the evolution of the wealth held by an individual or family but rather to track relative changes in wealth within a community, the focus is on the numeric strata in the declared wealth or sums attributed to taxpayers. Then it is a matter of measuring the percentage of changes or continuities within a certain bracket (decile or quartile) and, in the case of groups that have changed their standing, the bracket where they end up.

The detailed description of the assets of taxpayers in the wealth register offer even more stimulating avenues for research, notably the possibility to observe how the proportion of urban immovables, land and movable assets, generally conditioned by the socio-professional condition or age of taxpayers, evolved. In this regard, we can often observe patterns such as the transition from land to commercial investments in the case of well-to-do farm families, or from productive investments in the most active years to an emphasis on security and honor at the end of an individual's life journey. Several studies illustrate part of these dynamics in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Valencia (Viciano 1995; Furió 2007; Vercher 2017; Aparisi Romero 2025 forthcoming). This type of exercise, however, requires complex analyses in terms of the checking of different sources.

2.2. Municipal registers: lists of offices and newcomers

The municipal archives of many cities and small towns in Catalonia, Aragon, Valencia and Majorca are endowed with several sources to study social mobility (Batlle 1988; Narbona 2007; Bernabeu, Narbona 2023). First of all, there are the proceedings of the municipal councils. They have been examined in the case of Catalonia (Miquel, Reixach 2022), and especially with respect to the kingdom of Valencia, including its capital (Anyó 2001; Bernabeu, Narbona 2023), Xàtiva (Boluda 1999; Terol 2006), Gandia (Olaso 2005), Alzira (Lairón, Vercher 2017), Vila-real (Aparici Martí 2021) and, particularly, Castelló (Rabassa, Sánchez Almela 2017; Viciano, Guinot 2018; Navarro, Aparici 2018; Royo, Garcia Edo 2019; Baydal, Ruiz 2019). These proceedings, apart from other evidence, include the appointments of officers or elections of representatives of local governments. These institutions are interesting with regard to social mobility if we consider them a showcase of economic and social dynamics more than a mere space of political struggles. Access to municipal offices in itself was a parameter of social status. In addition, the access to many organisms or offices of the municipal government according to three divisions within the political community opens windows to changes of position in the upper-middle part of local society.

Studies dating back decades have already been conducted on municipal office-holding in Catalan towns such as Perpignan (Daileader 2000), Girona (Reixach 2019), Manresa (Torras 2006; Fynn-Paul 2015, 68-91) and Cervera (Turull 1992). In Valencia, municipal proceedings have led to quantitative analyses of the accumulation of offices by families, enabling assessment of their rise or fall in local political society. Such case studies include the city of Valencia (with the lists of municipal officers from 1306 to 1516 published in Narbona, Bernabeu 2021) (Narbona 1994; 1995; 2007), Castelló (Viciano 2008b), Alzira (Bernabeu 2014; Bernabeu, Garés 2018) and

the region of Oriola (Barrio 2002). Municipal registers have also served as a basis for prosopographical studies such as those developed for the patriciate of Valencia (Narbona, 1988-1989; 1999) or the local elites of small towns such as Castelló (Viciano 1993; 1995). Even when the sources have not been as well preserved, the prosopographical technique has been profitably applied to the study of the political leading actors of the city of Zaragoza (Mainé 2006; Velasco 2022) and other urban centers in Aragon, such as Huesca (Iranzo 2005) and Teruel (Navarro 2002). This approach has also been applied in Majorca, although in a less systematic way, in part connected with a particular share of power due to Palma's undisputed leading role in the government of the whole island since the representatives of the municipality were representatives both of the city and of the kingdom (Planas 2005).

Municipal records of new inhabitants or freedoms, like the books called «llibres d'aveïnaments» in Valencia, also allow us to capture the dynamics of geographical mobility and broader migration flows (Morelló 1999). Some of these studies focus on the capital of this kingdom (Cruselles 1999, 2003) and also other places like Castelló (Sánchez Adell 1976) and Vila-real (Aparici Martí 2009a; 2009b). Other works center on immigrants arriving in Valencia from a specific territory, like Aragon (Salvador 1989; Cebrián 1990; Cabanes 1997; Navarro 2002; Ferrer 2008) and, to a lesser extent, Catalonia (Salvador, Benítez 1998). These processes often also implied upward or downward mobility. The study of social mobility can be enriched if we combine examination of the degree of settlement or continuity in a specific place, with these registers of newcomers and records of the collection of direct taxes discussed before. There is a literature illustrating this for small towns in Valencia like Vila-real (Ferrer 2005) and Castelló (Sánchez Adell 1978) or rural places like Sueca (Furió 1982).

2.3. The wide range of possibilities of socially representative notarial records

In order to track the socioeconomic trajectory of individuals and families, notary records can be very useful. They allow us to trace family links and to disambiguate cases of homonymy and similar problems of personal identification. The great preservation of this kind of sources in north-eastern Iberia, part of the so-called Latin Arch, for both larger towns and smaller settlements in Catalonia, Valencia, Majorca and part of Aragon, offers many possibilities. A point to underline: as has been argued in Tuscany or other Italian regions, notarial culture penetrated lower down the social scale (Cohn 1998). That is why notarial records provide a wide range of information for most social groups. For instance, the representativeness of wills is beyond doubt, as confirmed by several works on Catalonia and Majorca, such as samples from fifteenth-century Barcelona (Casamitjana 2005, 193-203) and the City of Majorca (Barceló 2019, 289-308) that cover a wide range of social strata, from the nobility to peasants and freedmen and poor women.

Wills, probate inventories and marriage contracts in notarial registers can offer different types of information about wealth and status. In last wills or testamentary documents, there are obviously indications on family wealth that can be compared

across generations (Maltas 2022; Vela 2007; Tortosa 2022b), which is also possible through probate inventories (Benito 2008). Yet several sources' limitations must be taken into account, as several works on Majorca, Catalonia, Valencia and Aragon show (Barceló 1994; Bolòs, Sánchez-Boira 2014; Palarea 2024; Almenar 2017; García Marsilla, Almenar 2022; Aliaga, Almenar 2023). Specific monetary valuations for each item, for example, were often only recorded after auctions (García Marsilla, Vela, Navarro 2015). For the rest, valuations have to be made according to the quality and nature of the goods based on information from outside the source itself. Overall, only the dowries in marriage contracts provide a proper quantitative element since they were usually monetary or expressed in cash in many regions, even for the peasantry (Donat, Marcó, Orti 2010; To 2016). Ongoing research is, however, beginning to show the great possibilities these sources offer for the study of inequalities in cities like Valencia (Tortosa 2022a) and Girona (Pérez 2024).

In the case of the urban centers of the Crown of Aragon, there is no significant gap separating the groups represented in the records produced by the municipal authorities and the most common clients of the notaries, who ranged from the wealthy and privileged to people with scarce resources. Although in certain cities, especially the larger ones, the most frequent users of each notary's office may present a specific socio-professional profile (in part due to their residence in town), this cannot be considered an impediment to finding traces of practically the same people and families in the fiscal sources, municipal records, and notarial acts.

Notary records help us to face the two most important methodological challenges encountered when tracing social mobility: name linkage and diachrony. The existing literature shows that family names in the late medieval Crown of Aragon became relatively consolidated from the late 12th-13th centuries onwards (To 2002; Guinot 1999; Mas 2001).[2] The increasingly widespread use of socio-professional labels is also a factor (Kowaleski 1995, 120-26; Bernardi 2004; Hanne, Judde de Larivière 2010, 235-349). In the area under scrutiny, these labels appear to be more common for craftsmen and specialized occupations such as practitioners, notaries or university-trained professions like physicians and jurists. In highly hierarchical social sectors, such as commercial groups, some identifications can be confusing. In a similar vein, it is necessary to treat with caution the ambiguous category of citizen (Obradors-Suazo 2017).

The need for a diachronic dimension to assess social mobility is a challenge in itself. In other words, any changes in the social scale can only be measured within a minimum period of time. If the phenomena of intragenerational mobility are to be studied, possible transformations should be observed over the course of a person's adult life, i.e., from about 20 to about 40 years. If the aim is to look at intergenerational mobility, the perspective ought to be extended to at least half a century or more. This period increases the volume of documentary mass to be processed, which in turn points to the importance of cross-referencing different

[2] The debate on the use of surnames as a source for estimating social mobility is well known: Clark 2014; Clark, Cummins, Hao, Díaz Vidal 2015. The case in point, however, presents different strengths and weaknesses from the paradigmatic observatory of pre-modern England. Furthermore, in our methodology explorations we do not propose the simple tracking of family names as a method, but rather try to complement it with other types of information.

sources. It also leads to the need to resort to the reconstruction of individual careers including the sometimes reviled methodologies used to produce genealogies (Marí 2015) and prosopography (Sesma ed. 2006; Verboven, Dumolyn 2007). This does not exclude the possibility of exploring methodologies of quantitative analysis applied for later periods in the same area, for example, in Brea-Martínez, Pujadas-Mora 2019.

3. Dynamics of social mobility: several approaches tracing individuals and families in different kind of sources

The objective of the second part of this work is precisely to test some methodologies by exploring several approaches to tracking upward and downward mobility in different places in north-eastern Iberia. These case studies include data from large cities like Palma (formerly known as City of Majorca) and Girona that ranged from 20,000 to 5,000 inhabitants to smaller urban centers like Castelló de la Plana and Sant Mateu, both in the northern kingdom of Valencia (Tab. 1).

We offer here four specific case studies that track families in the fiscal and municipal registers of Girona, the evolution of relevant family names in the City of Majorca based on the list of members of the municipal executive and, finally, the trajectory of family names from records of the collection of *morabatí* in a small town in the northern kingdom of Valencia, Sant Mateu, and that from the wealth registers preserved in another small urban settlement of the same region, Castelló de la Plana.

Tab. 1. **Evolution of the approximate number of inhabitants (based on lists of households) of the towns in the sample from 1350 to 1500**

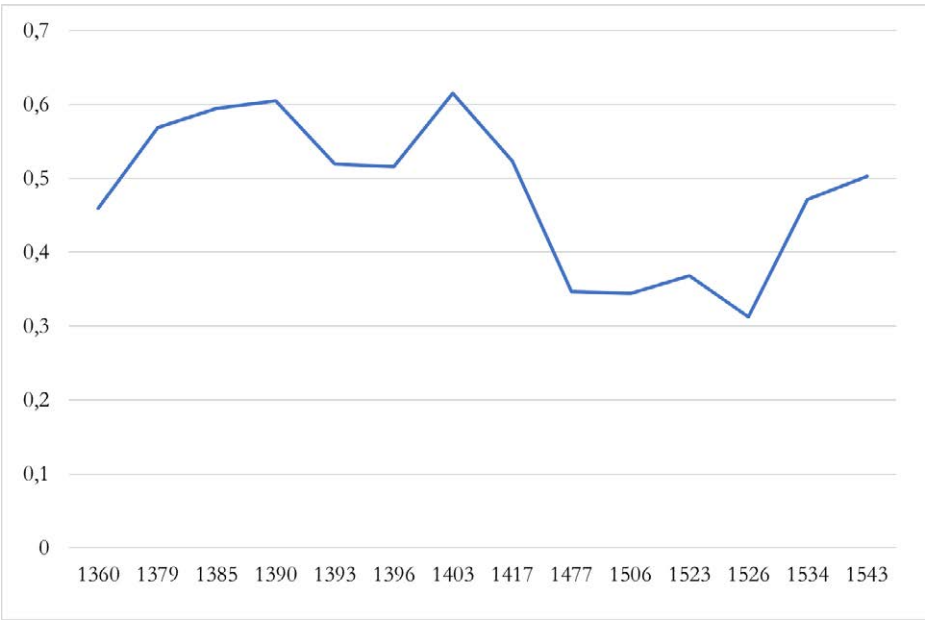
Place	Population and (Year)			
	c. 1350	c. 1400	c. 1450	c. 1500
Palma (City of Majorca)	19,735 (1350)	13,990 (1421)	11,100 (1452)	12,528 (1503)
Girona	8,370 (1360)	6,989 (1403)	3,928* (1462)	4,464 (1496)
Castelló de la Plana	4,950 (1357)	4,374 (1415)	2,920 (1451)	2,178 (1499)
Sant Mateu	4,279 (1373)	3,334 (1415)	1,872 (1451)	1,386 (1499)

Sources: Successively: Sevillano 1973-5, 247-49; Reixach 2022, 571; Guinot 1988, 229-49. For the specific figure of Castelló in 1357: Roca 1953. In all the figures arising from number of households or hearths the generally accepted multiplier of 4.5 inhabitants per hearth for urban centers is applied.

3.1. The evolution of families in Girona through tax registers and lists of municipal offices

Girona, the leading city in north-eastern Catalonia, kept robust series of fiscal registers and records of the municipal government. Indeed, it is the most important Catalan town, along with Tortosa, endowed with local tax series from the fourteenth century onwards. Its fiscal registers are mostly *llibres de talla*, which record the amounts attributed to all taxpayers for the period between 1360 and the mid-sixteenth century, with examples almost every five years or less, apart from a gap between 1417 and 1477. Municipal acts do not specify the criteria used for valuation, although analysis of the source compared to other records shows that the lion's share of valuations corresponded to immovable properties. The possession of annuities was also important in some portfolios. By contrast, there is no evidence concerning the inclusion of other sources of income. The quality of the sources improved in the latter decades of the fourteenth century, but it becomes less precise at the first half of the sixteenth century (Reixach 2022). The stratification of taxpayers suggests that the valuations are consistent with those derived from the value of dowries paid or received (Pérez 2024). If used with caution, fiscal registers offer avenues for the analysis of various long-term trends like inequalities. Graph 1 charts the evolution of the taxes via the Gini coefficient, a statistical measure generally admitted as proxy of unequal distribution of wealth.

Graph. 1. **Evolution of the Gini coefficient in the city of Girona (1360-1543)**



Source: Based on direct tax sources from AMGi listed and described in Reixach 2022, 570.

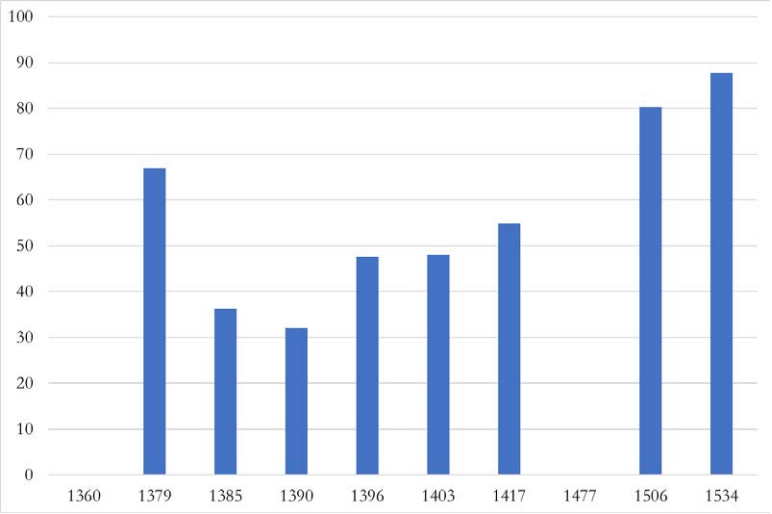
These data, combined with other parameters, stress a tendency towards growing inequality in Girona throughout the second half of the fourteenth century with an important reduction during the decade after 1390, although this trend could possibly be due to some particularities of the registers arising from political struggles in the city during this period (Reixach 2019, I, 212-13, 304-11). In any case, during the central decades of the fifteenth century, the inequality figures declined again before slowly recovering during the first decades of the 16th.

It is beyond the scope of this work to analyze the possible reasons for the evolution of inequality levels in Girona. Our aim is rather to examine the extent to which tax records can be useful in order to capture the dynamics of social mobility taking into account the challenges described in the previous section. In addition, the technical impossibility of reconstructing the links of all the individuals, i.e. taxpayers, who appear in the fiscal registers, means that we propose here an intermediate solution, which relies on categorizing taxpayers by deciles according to the tax sums they had to pay. A necessary initial remark is that, apart from the gap already pointed out between the register of the year 1417 and 1477, there are some other gaps that imply some differences in temporal distances.

If we start by observing the evolution of the richest decile (decile 10) of taxpayers in successive registers from 1360 to 1534, it is necessary to understand that this social stratum in Girona was composed not only of well-off citizens or rentiers but also merchants and even some wealthy craftsmen in the leading manufacturing sectors.[3] One kind of mobility can be assessed by calculating the percentage of newcomers in subsequent tax deciles compared to people that remained from one register to the following one (Graph 2). This exercise shows that there was more mobility in the top decile in the 1370s than in the following two decades. A similar trend is evident when we extend this exercise to five leading socio-professional groups: the so-called patriciate, the merchants and three relevant craftsmen, clothmakers, tanners and shoemakers (Graph 3).

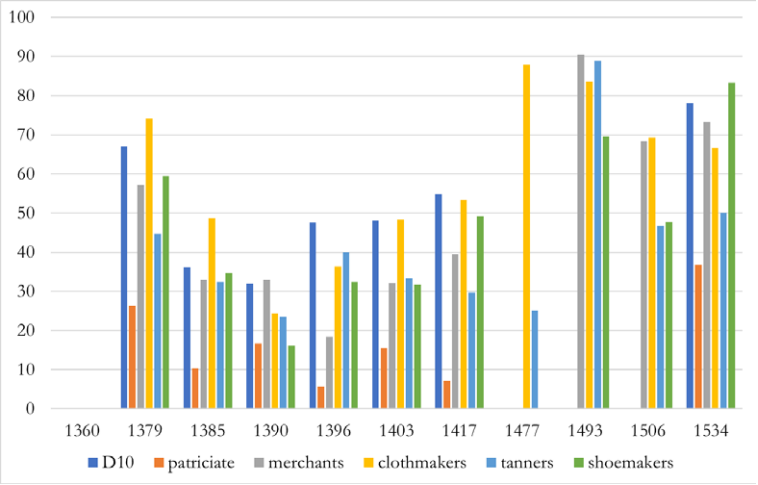
[3] For context, between 1360 and 1534, from 33 to 17% of the members of this decile were part of the families representing the so-called patriciate of the city, while from 35 to 20% were merchants, 18 to 6% experts in law, 11 to 3% textile craftsmen, 17 to 3% leather craftsmen, and finally, from 27 to 5% held other occupations (the latter percentages are affected by the declining usage of socio-professional labels in some late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century registers).

Graph 2. **Evolution of the members of decile 10 in Girona (1360-1534) expressed by percentages of new individuals in the tax records**



Source: Based on direct tax sources from AMGi listed and described in Reixach 2022, 570.

Graph 3. **Evolution of the members of several socio-professional groups in Girona (1360-1534) expressed by percentages of new individuals in the tax records**[4]



Source: Based on direct tax sources from AMGi listed and described in Reixach 2022, 570.

[4] As in the previous graph, we have omitted the data about the groups in which there were practically no cases of continuity notably the records between 1417 and 1477 to avoid giving an even more distorted picture.

These results do need to be nuanced. The number of newcomers, especially during the last phase of the period under study, should be reduced because transformations in some groups like craftsmen, rather than internal transformations, could be directly attributed to geographical mobility. For instance, from the mid-fifteenth century onwards there was a non-negligible flux of immigrants coming from other kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula, several parts of France and other territories of the western Mediterranean or even the Germanic Empire, which strongly influenced the clothmaking occupations.[5]

Tab. 2. **Evolution of the percentage of continuity, upward mobility and downward mobility according to deciles in Girona (1360-1523)**

period	D10			D9			D8			D7			D6			D5			D4			D3			D2			D1		
	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓	=	% ↑	% ↓
1360-1379	54.5	0	45.4	31	15.5	53.4	15.1	39.6	45.3	27.9	9.3	62.8	6.12	40.8	53.1	27.3	36.4	36.4	14.3	32.1	53.6	0	60	40	31.2	43.7	25	23.1	76.9	0
1379-1385	67.6	0	32.3	49.3	18.2	32.5	29.6	39	31.5	27.7	26.5	45.8	18.6	34.9	46.5	16.4	42.5	41.1	17.1	54.9	28.0	5.3	47.4	47.4	20	64.6	15.4	36.4	63.6	0
1385-1390	84.3	0	15.7	66.7	11.1	22.2	50	19.1	30.9	25.4	29.8	44.8	40.6	29.3	30.1	34.8	41.9	23.3	48.8	51.2	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1390-1396	85.6	0	14.4	49	27.1	24	18.8	37.6	43.6	25	28.3	46.7	32	20.6	47.4	30.7	37.3	32	9.4	36.7	53.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1396-1403	86.7	0	13.3	30.8	31.9	37.4	42.6	40.7	16.7	34.2	48.9	17.1	7.3	46.9	45.8	17.7	43.7	38.5	18.9	56.8	24.3	15.1	72.8	12.1	30.4	67.2	2.2	12.5	87.5	0
1403-1417	73.8	0	26.2	37	21.9	41.1	14.1	35.2	50.7	15	30.6	54.2	16.7	33.3	50	3.6	41.8	54.5	10	40	50	17.9	51.3	30.8	15.6	68.9	15.6	40	60	0
1477-1506	69.6	0	30.4	29.2	20.8	50	18.2	54.5	27.3	0	70	30	13.8	48.3	37.9	31.2	43.7	25.5	0	58.3	41.7	0	66.7	33.3	0	100	0	100	0	0
1506-1523	78.6	0	21.4	32.3	26.5	41.2	5	35	60	4.8	61.9	33.3	12.9	48.4	38.7	5.3	31.6	63.2	11.1	77.9	11.1	5.9	70.5	23.5	33.3	33.3	33.3	0	100	0

Source: See graph 3. For the records between 1385 and 1396 there is no data concerning the deciles 3-1 because the small difference in values makes it impossible to establish different strata.

For a more dynamic view of these changes within the deciles of the successive records of local taxes collected in Girona between 1360 and 1534, we can link the original decile of a taxpayer with his or her decile in the following tax. Individuals or families for which continuity between two successive records cannot be established are excluded. Focusing on those who do remain, we can calculate the respective percentages of continuing in the same tax decile, moving up to a higher decile or

[5] The importance of French immigration during the 16th and 17th centuries has been traditionally stressed by scholarship on early modern Catalonia (Armengual-Bibiloni, Pujadas-Mora, 2017). However, collections of sources like those employed here suggest the need to explore this type of urban migration that probably began as early as the end of the fourteenth century.

moving down to a lower decile, which allows us to derive gross percentages of upward, downward and non-mobility (Tab. 2). By adding the percentage represented by both upward and downward mobility, we can also obtain a gross parameter of total mobility, which is, in fact, the percentage of change with respect to families or individuals who remain in the same decile, without taking into account the possible large number of cases that do not enter the calculation because they have not continued from one record to the other (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3. **Evolution of the percentages of total mobility according to deciles in Girona (1360-1523)**

period	D10	D9	D8	D7	D6	D5	D4	D3	D2	D1
1360-1379	45.45	68.97	84.91	72.09	93.88	63.64	85.71	100	68.75	76.92
1379-1385	32.35	50.65	70.37	72.29	81.40	58.9	82.93	94.74	80	63.64
1385-1390	15.73	33.33	50	74.63	59.35	76.74	51.16	0	0	0
1390-1396	14.44	51.04	81.19	75.00	68.04	68	90.63	0	0	0
1396-1403	13.33	69.23	57.41	75.00	92.71	61.46	81.08	100	69.57	87.50
1403-1417	26.21	63.01	85.92	84.72	83.33	45.45	90	82.05	84.44	60
1477-1506	30.43	70.83	81.82	100	86.21	75	100	100	100	0
1506-1523	21.43	67.65	95.00	95.24	87.1	36.84	100	94.12	66.67	100

Source: See graph 3 and tab. 2.

Another approach to assess social mobility looks at changes in the status of the more than 300 individuals and families who at some point between the years 1345 and 1520 held one of the six offices of juror (*jurat*) that made up the executive of the municipal government of Girona. The city's inhabitants eligible to participate in the municipal council and hold offices were divided into three socio-political groups called *mans* («hands»). Some authors had asserted that these categories actually depended on the tax assessments expressed in sources such as those discussed above (Guilleré 1994, II, 254-265; Fynn-Paul 2015, 77-91). However, several elements point out that the "hand" is an indicator of social status, so, as established by many scholars, based on a mixture of material wealth, position on the social ladder and more or less formal political influence in relation to the rest of the neighborhood (Dumolyn 2013; Brown 2019). It is important to acknowledge that those holding

municipal offices were only a minority within the urban community as a whole: around 6%.[6]

It is even more important to clarify how family links across generations are established. Fortunately, the case of Girona has been the object of prosopographical studies based on the use of the extensive collections of notarial records preserved in the city during most of the period observed (Guilleré 1994; Reixach 2018; 2019). It is for this reason that the succession of different members of the same family holding municipal offices can be traced with a fair degree of certainty: links can be tracked, for example, between parents and children (or even grandparents and grandchildren in the longest-lasting families) and, at the same time, solve homonymy problems in the more common family names. As shown by several works on other cities of the Crown of Aragon cited above, the exercise of political functions at the local level tended to be inherited through patrilineal transmission,[7] as was also the case with family names, as indicated above and also proven by this existing literature (for instance, Bensch 1995, Fynn-Paul 2015 or Narbona, Bernabeu 2021) perfectly consolidated in the region since the thirteenth century, especially in the strata eligible to participate in government bodies.[8]

Beyond these methodological cautions, the reconstruction of the list of the six members of the municipal executive renewed annually shows mostly continuity according to membership to strata of access to the executive organism of the municipality. But there are several significative examples of families whose status changed over time (Tab. 4). Upward political mobility occurred in families that moved from the lower to the middle «hand» and those that left this middle «hand» to climb to the upper stratum. The first upwardly mobile group usually consisted of craftsmen, mainly linked to dynamic manufacturing sectors such as leather or textile, who entered the world of commerce: in general terms, they had shifted their focus from family-based production to the marketing of manufactured products or raw materials. The second trend was commonly experienced by rich merchants who became rentiers or entered occupations in law or medicine, after an investment in higher-level training, which enabled them to acquire prestige thanks to their

[6] These figures vary between 3 and 10% in different towns in the western dominions of the kings of Aragon, and the city of Girona shows a relatively high proportion in this respect considering its size: Reixach 2019, 2, 517-18.

[7] This also meant that it was exceptional for a single family from which different branches emerged to continue to occupy a prominent place in the political community of the city. In Girona, during the chronology studied, there are only a few merchant families that managed to do so for one or two generations (no more because their own dynamism led them to geographical mobility or to the convergence with social sectors disconnected from local politics) and, likewise, unwritten rules always prevented two cousins from simultaneously occupying a position at the head of the municipal government.

[8] The focus on family names passed down through male lineage means that the family groupings employed in the study exclude connections arising from marriage. This is also consistent with the fact that the female group, despite being able to head a household for different reasons, was excluded from holding offices and participating in municipal politics in general.

profession. Some upward mobility may also have been due to marriage alliances or to connections to the royal administration or entourage.[9]

Tab. 4. **Permanence or changes within the three strata of access to the municipal executive in Girona (1345-1520)**

Changes in strata	No. of individuals/families	percentage within the total cases
Remain lower	143	46.58
Remain middle	63	20.52
Remain upper	48	15.64
Lower to middle	31	10.1
Lower to middle to upper	2	0.65
Lower to upper	2	0.65
Middle to upper	19	6.19

Source: Based on the list of members of the executive in Reixach 2019, 2, 710-18; Sobrequés 1955. For the period between the years 1471 and 1520, it is directly based on Arxiu Municipal de Girona, Ajuntament de Girona, *Manuals d'acords* (Proceedings of the municipal council), register years 1471-1520.

The mentioned lists have been cross-referenced with the prosopographical information gathered in the research partly published in Reixach 2018 and 2019. From a methodological viewpoint it should be noted that, in order to try to capture both possible intragenerational and intergenerational mobility, the sample includes both individuals who held office more than once and who may have experienced a social rise in their own person, along with families, i.e. the succession of different generations whose members have been appointed on different occasions.

These upward trajectories, specifically, 31 examples of ascents from the lower to the middle stratum and 19 from the middle to the upper «hand», apart from the aforementioned four exceptional cases that rose from the lower to upper strata, usually took place within two or three generations. It means the father could be part of the lower or middle political strata, while his son or grandson moved to an upper stratum. This process also occurred more quickly for entrepreneurial craftsmen who entered the merchant class, although it took more years and even decades to get into the upper strata.

[9] Many examples on both figures can be found in: Reixach 2018, and Reixach 2019. A well-known example of sustained upward mobility is the Bell-lloc family, originally in the trade of furs, which is the subject of a classical monograph: Fernàndez Trabal 1995. However, even more exceptional and meteoric were the trajectories of other small business families such as the Beuda (originally linked to the leather sector like the Bell-lloc) or the Cavalleria (whose second well-known member was an apothecary who stood out as a supplier to the royal household and the following one a physician) as well as the Segurioles.

In terms of chronology, the majority of changes in status occurred during the second half of the fourteenth century or between approximately 1350 and 1450 (Tab. 5). This trend is consistent with the analysis of the fiscal sources in which the ratios of changes clearly increased between the records of 1396 and 1417 (Graph 3).

Tab. 5. **Periods in the sequence of rises from one political stratum to another (1345-1520)**

period	change in strata	No. of cases	percentage (%)
1350-1400	Lower to middle	8	16
1350-1400	Middle to upper	4	8
1401-1450	Lower to middle	4	8
1401-1450	Middle to upper	2	4
1451-1500	Lower to middle	9	18
1451-1500	Middle to upper	4	8
1501-1520	Lower to middle	1	2
1501-1520	Middle to upper	0	0
1350-1450	Lower to middle	8	16
1350-1450	Middle to upper	4	8
1350-1500	Lower to middle	0	0
1350-1500	Middle to upper	3	6
1400-1500	Lower to middle	1	2
1400-1500	Middle to upper	2	4

Source: See Tab. 4.

3.2. An approach to changes in the status of families holding offices in the City of Majorca (1348-1500)

Turning to the City of Majorca, the undisputed capital of the island and kingdom of the same name and a fundamental port enclave in the western Mediterranean, as well as a notable urban center with around 20-12,000 inhabitants during this period, we can offer an approach based on municipal offices similar to the one we have just discussed for Girona. In Palma the municipal executive was formed of six members, called jurors (*jurats*) as in other parts of the Crown of Aragon. They were annually renewed and the positions were distributed as follows among the groups with access to local political power. The first position of juror was held by local nobility (in general, lower nobility compared to other Aragonese territories); the second and third

positions were held by citizens, rentiers or members of the urban elite; the fourth and fifth by merchants of a certain level and, finally, unlike in other places, only the sixth position was left free for artisans or craftsmen (Planas 2005, 148-58).

The approach to assessing social mobility consists of reconstructing the family links of all the individuals who held offices in the executive of the City of Majorca (as mentioned, an organism also representing the whole kingdom) between 1348 and 1523. This exercise captures 684 individuals grouped in 307 different families or family groups, although 164 of them, in reality, are individuals who hold one office (or at most two) in their lifetime, and there was no other immediate family member with whom they shared a family name. The latter cases were considered given the possibility they could experience intragenerational mobility.

The same considerations on family grouping and the prevalence of patrilineal transmission discussed for Girona apply to the case of Majorca, where there is also an important consolidation of family names from the end of the thirteenth century (Mas 2001). It is also a fact that cases of homonymy, at least among those eligible for municipal government positions, are proportionally rare.[10] Nonetheless, unlike in Girona, we do not have enough information to guarantee the validity of some of the established relationships.

Be that as it may, this exercise shows some clear cases of social rise (Tab. 6). Around one-third of all families underwent changes, while the remaining two-thirds (65.5%), did not change position over the years. It is true that among the large group that did not undergo changes, 74% are actually individuals who held the position of juror at some point in time and no other individual with whom they shared a family name held this office. We must also pay attention to 10% of cases in which no significant changes are recorded and in which isolated individuals account for a smaller proportion, only 35% of the total. In this sense, we only consider significant changes when the leap in position implies moving, for example, from 6th position for the artisans to 4th and 5th for the merchants or 2nd or 3rd for the citizens, but not if they are simple changes between two positions in the same group; that is to say from 5th to 4th, remaining within merchants, or from 3rd to 2nd, remaining within citizens.

[10] Among the 307 different families, we detect only 12 possible cases of family names that probably belonged to two or more unrelated families. This possibility is suggested by the significant social distance between, for example, artisans and wealthy citizens or nobles and/or by their appearance in disconnected chronologies or marking an illogical trajectory as that of a family belonging to the urban elite in the fourteenth century and another with the same name being artisans in the fifteenth century (a figure that is very often likely to be due to the conversion of Jews under the patronage of certain prominent townspeople who gave them the family name). Specifically, these family names are the following: Ferrer, Miró, Mora, Pagès, Riera, Roig, Santjoan, Serra, Tomàs, Umbert, Valero and Vidal. In all these cases, two or more different families have been considered or counted despite the coincidences of family names.

Tab. 6. **Changes in the position by family groups within the municipal executive of the City of Majorca (1348-1523)**

Changes in position	**No. of cases**	**Percentage within the total**
remain 1 (nobility)	29	-
remain 2 (patriciate)	15	-
remain 3 (patriciate)	19	-
remain 4 (merchants)	35	-
remain 5 (merchants)	29	-
remain 6 (craftsmen)	74	-
No changes	**201 (149 of them families with only one represented member)**	**65.5**
2 (patriciate) to 1 (nobility)	3 (1 of them a family with only one represented member)	1
3 (patriciate) to 1 (nobility)	6	2
4 (merchants) to 1 (nobility)	3	1
5 (merchants) to 1 (nobility)	3	1
6 (craftsmen) to 1 (nobility)	2	0.7
4 (merchants) to 2 (patriciate)	7 (1 of them a family with only one represented member)	2.3
4 (merchants) to 3 (patriciate)	3	1
5 (merchants) to 2 (patriciate)	9	2.9
5 (merchants) to 3 (patriciate)	4	1.3
6 (craftsmen) to 2 (patriciate)	2	0.7
6 (craftsmen) to 3 (patriciate)	1	0.3
6 (craftsmen) to 4 (merchants)	9 (2 of them families with only one represented member)	2.9
6 (craftsmen) to 5 (merchants)	8	2.6
No significant changes	**31 (11 of them families with only one represented member)**	**10.1**
"Downward" (including cases of doubtful tie)	15	4.9
Total number of families	307 (164 of them families with only one represented member)	

Source: Based on lists of *jurats* in Campaner 1881, 92-5, 198-202.

From this first approach, further analyses could be carried out. Regarding the chronology of examples of upward mobility, no phase with a particular concentration of cases is detected. In fact, in most cases the evolution requires two or three generations, so that it may take 50 to 100 years to confirm the significant rise from one position to another higher one. However, only focusing on the most relevant transformations from the 6th or 5th position to upper strata, which implies 38 cases, in 19 of them the first member of the community is already documented in the second half of the fourteenth century, in 14 it does not appear until the first half of the fifteenth century and only in five until the second half of the same century. More significantly, for most of the 38 families mentioned it took almost a century to consolidate a descendant in a position clearly superior to that of the first family representative at the top of the municipal government. Only in six cases starting during the second half of the fourteenth century (families Pagès, Font, Hug, Reial, Castell and Conilleres) and a further two beginning during the first part of the fifteenth century (families Lledó and Mestre) was it possible in 50 years or less. It goes without saying that these preliminary results could be improved by refining some individual identifications and family groupings in the sample cross-checking with the unfortunately sparse literature on urban elites in Majorca or the wide range of unedited primary sources preserved in its archives (Barceló 2002; Planas 2005; Burguera 2024).

3.3. Mobility through the minimum threshold of income in a small town of the northern kingdom of Valencia, Sant Mateu

By turning to fiscal sources, in this case generated by the monarchy, it is possible to evaluate the evolution of the family fortunes of some communities in Valencia. It deals with registers deriving from the collection of *morabatí* in this territory. Concretely, we will examine a small town with a series of records of this direct tax for several years, Sant Mateu. It was a small town with around 1,000 hearths under the jurisdiction of the order of Montesa.[11] Assuming the limits of the source compared to wealth registers for taxes levied by municipal authorities, we will pay attention to the individuals identified as «nichil» in these sources.

From a methodological viewpoint, this qualification, meaning exempt, requires some clarifications if it is to be considered a parameter of social mobility. On the one hand, «nichils», that indicate the correction of an administrative error, normally because the taxpayer was already registered in another part of the register or because he died between the time of drawing up the payroll and the start of the effective tax collection, have no economic significance. However, even when it was indicated that, due to no longer possessing sufficient assets, a taxpayer was considered a «nichil», this did not always mean downward social mobility. It could be a case of parents who donated all or part of their assets to their children during their lifetime, or the children of a father or mother who were taxpayers could appear as «nichils». Those cases in

[11] ARV, Mestre Racional, 11.779, f. 105r-130r (year 1415); Ibidem, 11.783, f. 130r-165v (year 1421).

which a person qualified as a «nichil» appears linked by direct kinship with a real taxpayer have not been counted as «poor» for the purposes of socioeconomic mobility. Rather, it was more likely to be incidents linked to the life cycle of the taxpayers.

Although the only condition for being considered «poor», from the point of view of wealth possessed, was not to reach the limit of 105 *solidos*, the qualifiers used by the collectors – or by their scribes to designate those exempted for economic reasons – «pauper», «no ha béns» (has no assets) or «no aver béns valents CV *solidos*» (has no assets valuated at 105 *solidos*) – could suggest a gradation of the level of poverty, especially when it indicates that an exempted person was living from charity. In this case, they would be truly poor, while the fact of not having sufficient assets, bearing in mind that the estimation was based above all on property, and that some «nichils» were artisans, could not always be assimilated to poverty in the strict sense.

When wishing to follow the evolution of a specific person over their course, which can imply only few collections of the *morabatí*, the only question that arises – apart from the availability of sufficient records for a given place – is how to identify them on the basis of their name and family name. This is a relatively simple problem to solve if we bear in mind that the anthroponymy was fixed as explained above. Only the indications of the occupation or of the status of age (i.e. the comparative labels of senior or junior), when missing in some registers, could cast doubt on the identification of the taxpayer, although these cases lack statistical significance. On the other hand, in a long-term view, which goes beyond an individual biography, it would be necessary to establish direct kinship links between a taxpayer and his descendants, in order to assess the family trajectory. The *morabatí* registers do not usually provide this information, so it is necessary to resort to other sources, especially notarial documentation. However, an approximation can be made on the basis of the taxpayer's family names, given that – with a small margin of error – the same family names would correspond to taxpayers linked by direct kinship.

In any case, taking all that into account and, excluding the «nichils» for other reasons, there are 68 «nichils» for poverty in the 1415 *morabatí*.[12] Among them, 31 (45%) do not appear in the following register, that of 1421, probably because they either died or left the town. The rest are divided almost equally between those who would remain in the same «poor» status and those who would experience upward mobility, as they are considered taxpayers with more than 105 *solidos* of wealth. From another perspective, if we consider the previous situation of the 40 «poor» of 1421, we can say that 11 did not appear in the 1415 payroll, the other 11 (27%) were already considered «poor» in 1415, while 18 (45%) had fallen in economic level, since in 1415 they appeared as taxpayers. In the *morabatí* of the year 1421, among the 50 «nichils» there were five blind men and some of them had been considered taxpayers in 1415, so this disability was the trigger for their downward mobility.

However, among the 20 family names that make up the «nichil» taxpayers of 1415, 16 (80%) had disappeared by 1481, either due to emigration or the biological extinction of the lineage, both symptoms of social fragility and of the difficulty of

[12] The number of nichils was 78, so the poor accounted for 87.1% of the total. The rest corresponded to people who had emigrated (4) and other circumstances (6).

overcoming fiscal poverty in the long term. To these were added two families (10%) that would end up being «miserable and poor», while upward mobility from the level of poverty was only achieved by the other two families (10%), one of which, with five members in 1481, had an evidently better chance of perpetuating itself biologically. In fact, this demographic vitality of the lineage was also a symptom of upward mobility, since biological survival and local renewal were linked to the improvement of socio-economic conditions.

The records of Sant Mateu allow us to analyze the evolution of the number of «nichils» in relation to the general movements of the population.[13] Normally, as can be seen from the cases studied (Furió et al. 2020), the decrease in the demographic volume, which can be considered an indicator of economic decline, was associated with a reduction in inequality measured by the Gini index. This aggregate result was associated with a reduction of the upper and lower wealth strata in favor of the middle

However, if we consider only the minimum income to contribute, which in fact – as indicated in the sources – was a poverty line, the dynamics are different from those expressed in the deciles on which the Gini index is based. Thus, we consider Graph 4, which shows the evolution of the indexes corresponding to the number of «nichils», the total population, and the percentage of «nichils» in relation to the population. As can be seen, the demographic decrease, which shows a long phase of decrease from 1380 to 1535, was not accompanied by a decrease in the index of fiscal poverty, neither in the number of «nichils» nor in the percentage of the «nichils» with respect to the population. Quite the contrary: when the demographic volume of the town decreases, the number of poor people and their weight in the population increases. In this sense, the most drastic demographic drop, from 733 to 360 households, i.e. a reduction of 50%,[14] increased the number of poor people and, especially, their proportion in the population as a whole. Subsequently, between the late fifteenth century and the first third of the sixteenth century, the situation tended to stabilize, so that the continuation of the demographic depression – in reality a downward stagnation – did not bring about a new increase in poverty, but the two indicators of «nichils» were reduced. However, especially their percentage of the population continued to be higher than the general demographic index. This evolution suggests that a part of the economically weaker sector, in times of difficulties, was pushed into poverty, unable to benefit from the distribution of wealth through inheritances or the supply of land and other goods that flowed into the market during periods of depression. In this sense, they were unable to take advantage of the new favorable relationship between land and population, while they suffered the impact of epidemics or the fiscal pressure that caused the general demographic decline.[15]

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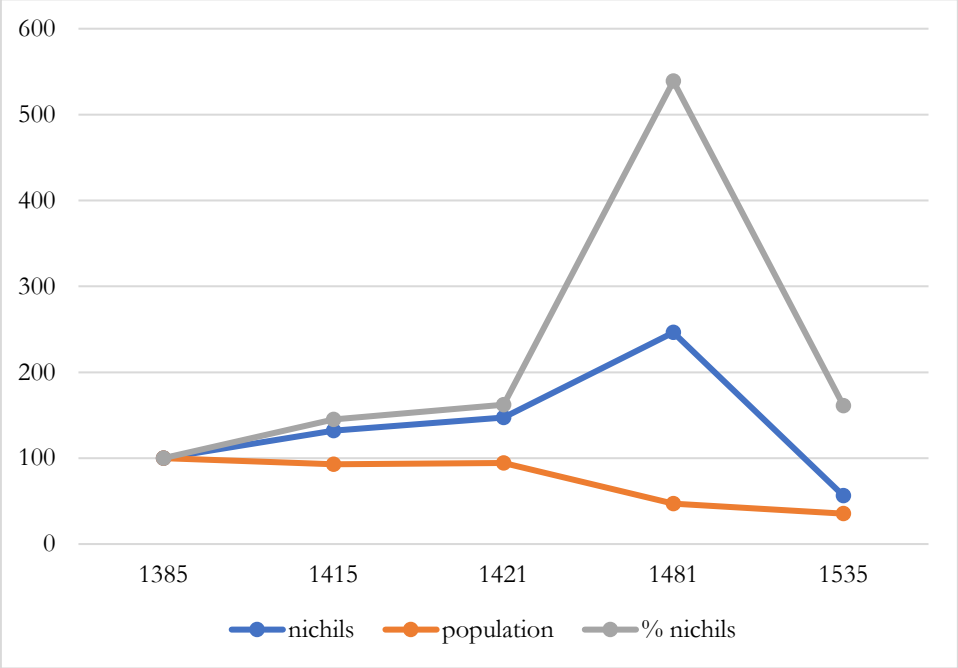
[13] The records do not specify the type of «nichils» for all years but rather their total number. However, taking into account the data cited from 1415, it can be considered that they represented the level of poverty.

[14] This demographic evolution is shared by the northern region of the kingdom, since the population decreased by half between 1420 and 1450 (Ferrer 1975, Guinot 1988)

[15] In a northern small town like Borriana, the excessive increase of the fiscal pressure caused by public indebtedness led to the emigration of many inhabitants, with a demographic fall from 264 hearths

Graph 4. **Indexes of the registers of *morabatí* of Sant Mateu**
Base 100 = 1385



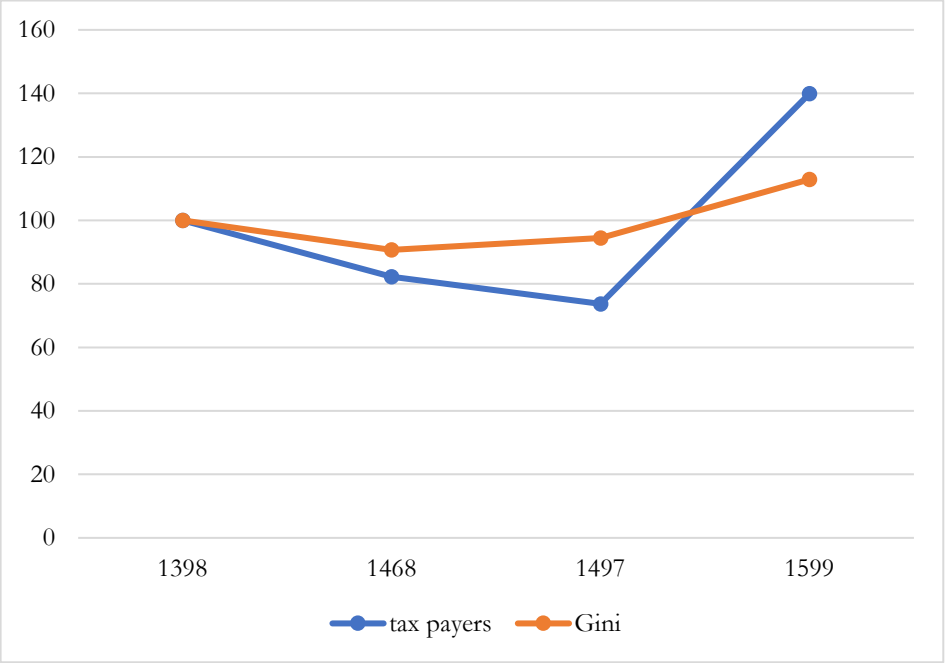
Source: ARV, Mestre Racional, 11.772, f. 75r-95r; 11.779, f. 105r-130r; 11.783, f. 130r-165v; 10.877, f. 138r-149r; 10.888, f. 480r-486r.

2.4. Social mobility and family names in Castelló de la Plana from wealth registers

Continuing with the kingdom of Valencia, similar exercises can be carried out with fiscal records for the small town of Castelló de la Plana. From wealth registers (*padrons de la peita*), it has been possible to establish the relationship between the inequality measured in the Gini index and the demographic evolution represented by the total number of taxpayers. In general (Graph 5), there is a correlation between the demographic trend and the level of inequality: in the moments of greatest demographic fall, from 1398 to 1468, the Gini index decreases, while in the moments of greatest population increase, from 1497 to 1599, it increases. The exception to this trend is during the second half of the fifteenth century, between 1468 and 1497, when the number of taxpayers declined but inequality increased, although less markedly than in the other stages.

in 1451 to 166 in 1469 and 160 in 1481, when 40% of the *morabatí* taxpayers were considered «nichils» due to poverty (Viciano 1992).

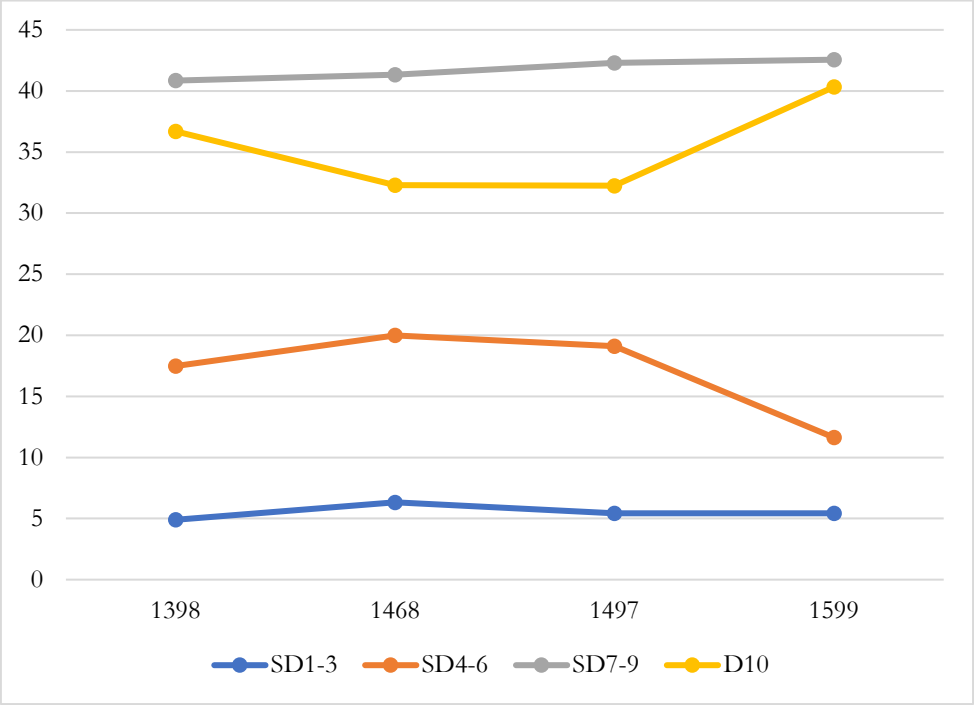
Graph 5. **Gini indexes of taxpayers in Castelló de la Plana**
Base 100 = 1398



Source: Furió et al. 2020, 200.

In fact, if we observe the evolution of the accumulated wealth for each decile (Graph 6), it can be asserted that the increase in the Gini index between 1468 and 1497 was not due to a concentration in the upper level, since the richest 10% (D 10) did not increase its share in the distribution of wealth, stable at 32.28% and 32.25%, respectively. What did happen was a reduction of the share corresponding to the lower (D 1-3) and medium-lower (D 4-6) strata in favor of the medium-higher (D 7-9). Although there was no mechanical correlation between the demographic trend and inequality, a general trend was detected, although it could be attenuated by the influence of other socioeconomic factors, such as the impact of the markets and the consolidation of a political oligarchy capable of obtaining advantages when it came to accumulating wealth.

Graph 6. **Share of the total wealth in each register by deciles in Castelló de la Plana**



Source: Furió et al. 2020, 195.

The analysis per decile, therefore, qualifies the aggregate value of the Gini index (Graph 5). Likewise, it offers a view of the economic mobility, taken as a whole, of the different wealth strata, but does not allow us to identify the social mobility processes of individual taxpayers or of the families to which they belonged. In order to carry out an analysis of social mobility from this perspective, it is necessary to follow the value of their patrimonies from one individual recorded in a register to a later one, separated by at least two or three generations. Given the difficulty of precisely identifying the descent of each taxpayer over time, which can only be achieved in the case of the best documented cases in other sources such as notarial ones, we make the assumption that all taxpayers with the same name were part of an extended family and their successors. Taking into account that the family names were already fixed and that the study focuses on a single community, the margin of error of this methodological solution is relatively low. The main issue arises for common family names, which were precisely shared by a much higher number of taxpayers than the average. Thus, in the 1398 register, the average number of taxpayers per family name is 2.12, while eight family names grouped 10 or more taxpayers, some

of them very common in other places such as Martí, Ferrer and Peris. It is possible that among these, which accounted for 1.9% of the family names and 10.4% of the individuals, identification errors were concentrated, but in general it can be considered that the taxpayers of the same family name were linked by kinship ties.

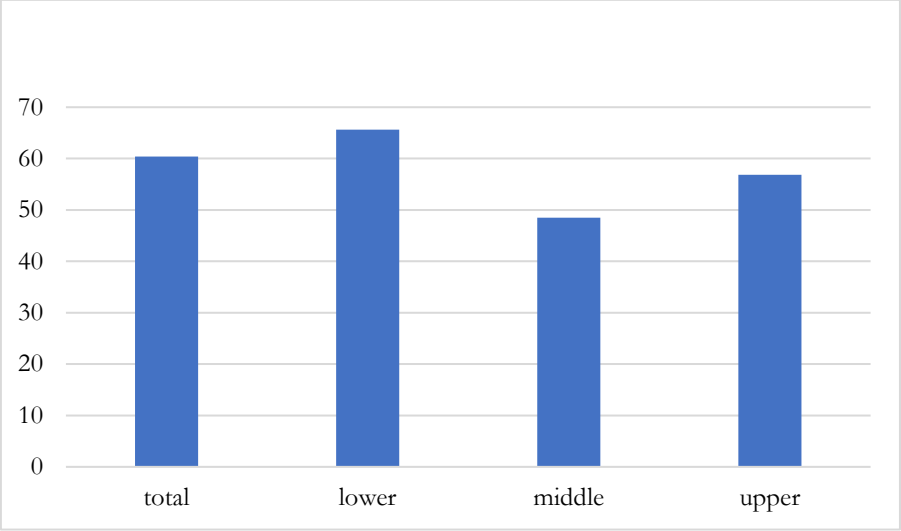
A second methodological matter is to assign a wealth level to each family, given that the taxpayers appeared in the registers on an individual basis, that is, as heads of a domestic aggregate. In this sense, it was decided to calculate the arithmetic mean of all the taxpayers with the same name. Subsequently, they have been classified into three wealth strata, defined both by the average wealth of the household and by the thresholds required to participate in the municipal government. Thus, both in 1398 and 1468, the two registers studied, the average wealth was around 2,000 *solidos*, which was also the value of the minimum patrimony to be able to be elected as a *conseller*, the lowest level of municipal office. Therefore, the lowest stratum of wealth that we define is between 0 and 2,000 *solidos*. The middle (middle) was between 2001 and 4,000 *solidos*, the latter figure being double the average income and the amount needed to gain access to the higher magistrates (juror and justice – *jurat* and *justícia*). Finally, the upper group was the minority that exceeded a patrimony of 4,000 *solidos*.

From this classification, it is possible to follow the mobility of the family names registered in 1398 by comparing them with those of 1468, two registers separated by 70 years, that is to say, from the perspective of two or three generations (Graph 7). First of all, it must be said that of the 414 family names of 1398, only 164 were recorded in the register of 1468. This means that 250 out of 1398 families, 60% of the total, had disappeared seven decades later.[16] This disappearance could be due to the lack of male descendants, but there were also socioeconomic reasons that hindered the biological survival or the relocation of families with less wealth. In fact, of the 250 family names that disappeared, the majority (68.8%) belonged to the lowest stratum, while only 11.6% were of the highest level.[17] This fragility of the lower stratum is confirmed if we consider, from an economic level, the percentage of families that disappeared, since of the poorest 1398, more than 65% were unable to perpetuate themselves. However, the percentage differences within each stratum are not as marked as in the absolute data, which suggests that, in addition to wealth, other social drivers were involved.

[16] This proportion is similar to other small towns in Valencia (Sánchez Adell 1978, Ferrer 2005, Furió 1982).

[17] Among the 250 disappeared families mentioned, 172 were from the lower, 49 from the middle, and 29 from the upper stratum.

Graph 7. **Families missing from 1398 to 1468 by stratum**



Average wealth by stratum : lower (0-2000 *solidos*), middle (2001-4000 *solidos*), upper (plus 4000).
Source: Appendix, Table C.

The number of individuals per family was a relevant factor (Tab. 7), since in all the wealth strata in 1398, the average number of individuals per family name of those who perpetuated in 1468 was double that of those who disappeared. It must be said that this parameter reflected biological attributes, but there was also a link with the wealth stratum, since the poorest had a lower average than the other groups. However, it should be noted that it was the middle stratum that had the most taxpayers per family name, while the upper stratum was even lower than the average, since family assets were distributed between only one or two parents.

Tab. 7. **Average of individuals by family and stratum (1398)**

stratum	Whole stratum	Missing in 1468	Continuity in 1468
lower	1.83	1.33	2.77
middle	2.95	1.69	4.13
upper	1.96	1.41	2.68
total	2.12	1.41	3.19

Average wealth by stratum: lower (0-2000 s*solidos*), middle (2001-4000 *solidos*), upper (plus 4000).
Source: AMC, Llibres de Vàlues de la Peita 1398, 1468.

The general trend of social mobility between 1398 and 1468 (Tab. 8) was, therefore, the disappearance of the majority of the families (60%), while those that

were perpetuated remained in the same stratum (21%) and the rest rose or fell by the same proportion (9%). There was, consequently, great instability in terms of the survival of the families, but a balance between stability and mobility among those who managed to perpetuate themselves.

Tab. 8. **Mobility of families in Castelló de la Plana from 1398 to 1468**

mobility	no. of families	percentage
missing	250	60.38
same level	87	21.01
ascent	39	9.42
descent	38	9.17
Total	414	

Source: AMC, Llibres de Vàlues de la Peita 1398, 1468.

If we break down these trends by detailing the changes in wealth status (Tab. 9), we can see that the most frequent case was that of families in the lower income bracket who did not manage to ascend (35% of the families), followed by those who ascended from this level to the middle (17%), but this tendency was offset by the descent from the middle to the lower level (14%), while a similar proportion of families remained in the intermediate level (13%).

Tab. 9. **Mobility by stratum from 1398 to 1468**

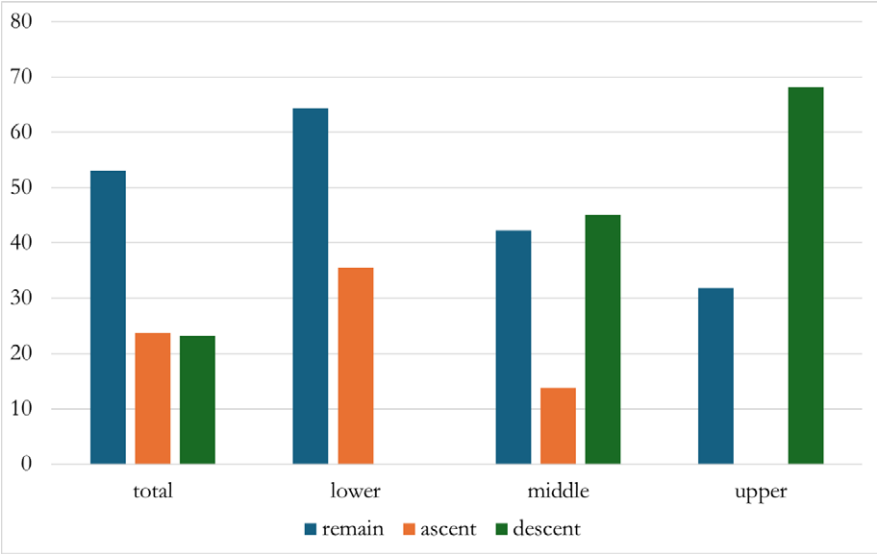
cases in each stratum and changes	no. of families	percentage
remain lower	58	35.36
remain middle	22	13.41
remain upper	7	4.34
lower to middle	28	17.07
lower to upper	4	2.48
middle to lower	23	14.28
middle to upper	7	4.34
upper to lower	6	3.72
upper to middle	9	5.59
total	164	

Average wealth by stratum: lower (0-2000 *solidos*), middle (2001-4000 *solidos*), upper (plus 4000).
Source: AMC, Llibres de Vàlues de la Peita 1398, 1468.

Mobility depended, to a large extent, on the family's level of wealth, since differentiated trends can be established according to the strata (Graph 8). Overall, half of the families in 1398 were stable and the other half were divided between those that ascended and those that descenended. However, if we look at the trend within each income stratum, we can see that the most stable – or rather, the most stagnant – level was the lowest, since only slightly more than 35% managed to ascend to higher

levels. The middle sector was less stable, and tended to experience economic decline, since 45% of these families descended to a lower level, while only 13% ascended to a higher level. However, the stratum that experienced the greatest instability was the richest: only 31% of its families maintained their position in 1468, while the majority, almost 70%, descended to the middle and even to the lower stratum.

Graph 8. **Percentages of stratum mobility from 1398 to 1468**



Average wealth by stratum: lower (0-2000 *solidos*), middle (2001-4000 *solidos*), upper (plus 4000).
Source: AMC, Llibres de Vàlues de la Peita 1398, 1468

Thus, the analysis of the mobility of the families complements the observation of the deciles, since the instability of the upper group is coherent with the decrease in wealth concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest 10%. This great downward mobility explains that of the 10 main families in 1398, by average wealth, only two remained in the upper stratum in 1468, but only one – the Reus – remained among the top 10. However, the majority of the great families of 1398 disappeared, and only one descended to the lower level (Tab. 10).

Seen from the perspective of the 10 most relevant families of 1468, nine were new in this economic elite, although they were not immigrant families, since they all appeared as taxpayers in 1398 (Tabs. 10-11). In fact, half of them came from the upper stratum -although only one, as mentioned above, was among the top 10 –, but the other half had come from the middle and lower strata in 1398. Therefore, the general mobility that has been identified for the whole of the upper stratum was also present at its wealthiest apex. However, what should also be noted is that, without documenting significant changes in the taxation of wealth, the average value of the main patrimonies had decreased from 1398 to 1468. In fact, the average of 8,000

solidos that in 1398 corresponded to the elite in 1468 had disappeared. Once again, these data are consistent with the fact that the richest decile tended to lose participation in the taxed wealth from 1398 to 1468.[18]

Tab. 10. **Ten upper families in 1398**

Family	Average wealth (in *solidos*)	Individuals	Stratum in 1468
Tous	23200	1	lower
Barbarrossa	17475	1	middle
Franc	12650	1	missing
Castellot	11300	1	missing
Reus	10525	1	upper
Ferrando	10400	5	upper
Alçamora	9275	2	missing
Espàrrec	9031	4	missing
Galí	8650	1	missing
Vilamanya	8375	1	missing

Source: AMC, Llibres de Vàlues de la Peita 1398

Tab. 11. **Ten upper families in 1468**

Family	Aaverage wealth	Individuals	Statum in 1398
Reus	8787	2	upper
Serra	8325	1	middle
Capcir	8250	1	lower
Feliu	7575	3	upper
Rocamartí	7125	1	middle
Alquècer	6340	5	upper
Agramunt	5483	3	upper
Jover	5430	5	lower
Moliner	5300	2	lower
Sanxis	4975	3	upper

Source: AMC, Llibres de Vàlues de la Peita 1398.

[18] However, this is not a mechanical reflection, since the deciles are measured on the basis of the wealth of individual taxpayers, while the analysis of families has been carried out using the arithmetic averages of the various individuals bearing the same family names.

3. Short conclusive remarks

In this contribution, conceived first and foremost as a discussion of sources and methodological proposals, we have described the main archival evidence available in the western territories of the late medieval Crown of Aragon for the study of social mobility. We have described the sources derived from the collection of direct taxes both at a general level and within the municipalities, the records resulting from the activity of the municipal administrations and, finally, some specific aspects of notarial sources. Among the latter, emphasis has been placed on wills, probate inventories and marriage contracts.

Particularly concerning tax and municipal records, no one would dispute their potential for detecting changes in socioeconomic positions among members of urban and rural communities within the geography and chronology investigated. However, their limitations have also been pointed out. Thus, two major challenges become evident in most cases: the need for relatively serial records that allow covering long periods of time in order to capture possible transformations and, at the same time, the various difficulties in linking individuals or even the same people recorded in different registers. In this regard, several strategies have been proposed based on the remarkable consolidation of family names in the Iberian Northeast from the thirteenth century onwards.

At the same time, we have commented on the main aspects for consideration when taking as a parameter of the level of wealth the values included in tax sources, whose features vary significantly depending on the exact type of registry; for instance, the amounts obtained in the wealth registers cannot be treated in the same way as what are merely lists of taxpayers and sums attributed to them.

Moving from theory to practice, many of these possibilities and weaknesses have been explored through various approaches to significant case studies. In particular, the examples of the cities of Palma and Girona and the small towns of Sant Mateu and Castelló de la Plana highlight the methodological challenges for assessing upward and downward mobility processes in premodern societies.

Although we only rely on provisory observations, an initial tentative final consideration would be that relevant changes took place within the societies of different urban centers (both large and small) of the Crown of Aragon between the mid-fourteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century. Certainly, this observation should be linked to many other economic and social dynamics that operated in this territory during the chronology in question, such as demographic evolution, the main economic trends (i.e., agricultural production, outcomes of manufacturing and commercial activity, wages or investment opportunities) or changes in the distribution of wealth and economic and social inequalities in general (Furió 2017, Catalán 2023). In this sense, based on the case of Girona, the correspondence between rising inequality parameters and indications of greater mobility in certain strata during some phases has been pointed out. In the approach to Castelló de la Plana, certain correlations between the redistribution of wealth and demographic increases or declines have also been noted. However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to delve deeper into these interrelationships.

Our main conclusion is, therefore, that social fluidity was far from alien to the late medieval Crown of Aragon. In the light of the examples from Catalonia and Valencia examined through tax sources, the intermediate groups appear particularly dynamic, although this general pattern is clearly different depending on diversity of occupations and the social complexity of each place. In larger towns, it implies the existence of certain channels for social rise from the crafts or small trades to the intermediate stratum, with participation in the local political system. In smaller urban centers, on the other hand, this could translate into a relative instability of the top 10 fortunes and, therefore, the parallel existence of opportunities for getting rich and for social regression. In all of this there is a confluence of reasons and drivers that only the crossing of different sources in exhaustive case studies will allow us to ponder.

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Mobilità sociale, crescita economica e disuguaglianza economica

Social mobility, economic growth and economic inequality

Marco H.D. van Leeuwen, Ineke Maas

Social class mobility in the early modern Europe: a first international comparison

1. Introduction

It is now commonly accepted that in terms of geographical mobility, non-industrialized parts of Europe were by no means immobile (e.g. Page Moch 2003) With regard to social mobility we know that these societies were not static either. We can find qualitative evidence of stellar upward mobility of some individuals. But we do not know much more. In large measure this is so because the civil register data, used to study occupational class mobility, date from the early nineteenth century onwards. Yet there are reasons and possibilities to study social mobility in pre-industrial Europe.

As to the reasons, to begin, there is a historical interest of knowing how much social mobility there was in the pre-industrial era, and of knowing if industrialisation was indeed a watershed leading to more open societies, as is often claimed. Second, there is a theorical reason to see if in the absence of the main presumed determinants of social mobility, which are connected to industrialisation, there are still substantial changes and variations in social mobility, hinting at the operation of other determinants.

As to the possibilities, first, there exists a limited number of comparable datasets covering the eighteenth century onwards. And second, industrialisation is a process that started at different times across the European continent, with some countries only industrializing in the second half of the nineteenth century, leaving us with datasets for the early part of that century, that is still in a premodern state.

The questions we begin in this paper to seek to answer are:

- How did intergenerational social class mobility change over time?
- Are there variations in intergenerational social class mobility between countries and regions?

The focus will be on observed rates of mobility (total mobility), that is the share of persons that change classes, in this case between the generations, and not on unequal chances of mobility (relative mobility) as expressed in for example odds ratios or Altham statistics.

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2. Theories on social class mobility

We first discuss two main theories on social mobility, namely modernisation theory and status maintenance theory. Next, we describe the potential disrupting force of wars and revolutions. Then we give an overview of other possible determinants of social mobility, pertinent to early modern societies (for a recent overview of theories, see van Leeuwen and Maas 2010; Maas and Van Leeuwen 2023; 2024). We conclude with a short review of empirical tests for the theories.

2.1 Modernisation theory and status maintenance theory

Was there any noticeable social mobility prior to the Industrial Revolution? According to modernization theorists, after the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of new employment opportunities independent of parental connections, the spread of novel ideas facilitated by mass communication and transportation, and the anonymity of urban life compared to rural communities all contributed to the erosion of traditional bonds between children and their parents. As a consequence, children would more often obtain a different occupation, sometimes even in another occupational class, than that of their parents. Goode wrote

> With industrialization, the traditional family systems are breaking down (…) Elders no longer control the major new economic or political opportunities, so that family authority slips from the hands of such family leaders. The young groom can obtain his bride on his own, and need not obey anyone outside their family unit, since only the performance on the job is relevant for their advancement. They need not rely on family elders for job instruction, since schools, the factory, or the plantation or mine will teach them the new skills (…) . Nor do they even need to continue working on the land, still in the possession of the elders, since the jobs and the political opportunity are in the city. Thus, industrialization is likely to undermine gradually the traditional systems of family control and exchange (Goode 1964, 108-09).

According to modernization theory, there are four broad groups of drivers of increased mobility (Treiman 1970; Knigge et al 2014). (1) Industrialisation – or broader, occupational change - led to new occupations that could not be learned or inherited from the parents but required schooling. (2) Educational expansion also for lower classes not only enabled people to take up jobs they could not learn from their parents, but it also led to differences in cultural capital becoming smaller, and it opened new occupational windows as employers selected employees more than before based on credentials rather than the social class of parents. (3) The growth of a common culture made that more people than before had access to all kinds of news, and specifically to information on job openings. (4) Urbanisation implied anonymization, meaning that an employer could not use social background as a criterion in the hiring process. The result, in the words of Landes (1969, 546), was: «A competitive industrial system … will increase social mobility, raising the gifted, and lucky, and

lowering the inept, lazy, and ill-fortuned. This is the kind of thing one sees in eighteenth or nineteenth century Germany … or in nineteenth and twentieth century Japan … or in France … or in the India of today».

Modernization theory has not been uncontested, with some scholars arguing that notwithstanding the processes of occupational change and educational expansion, societies have not become as open, in terms of social class mobility, as the theory implies. Social maintenance theory (Collins 1979; Bourdieu and Passeron 1978) agrees on the opening of societies due to these factors but posits that certain groups matched this increasing competition by new, protective mechanisms. When certain resources – such as the possession of land or secondary education - became less efficient in providing high class positions to children, elite parents would be the first to gain access to new resources (e.g. a diploma of higher education) that favored the status of their children.

A few take aways are of importance here. The first is, that both modernization and status maintenance theory predict more social class mobility due to educational expansion, but the latter states that this is being counterbalanced for elites. This leads to opposite expectations for social class mobility: an increase tout court, versus stagnation due to continuing elite social reproduction. The second is that both theories are understood to mean that before the age of industrialization, social class mobility was stagnant. The third take away, however, is that the theories give reasons why this might not invariably have been the case. In the early modern era, there were cities (with more anonymization than in the countryside), there were schools, not just for elites, and there were periods not only of occupational change but also of other 'disruptive' changes, such as wars and revolutions, leading to the opening of elite positions for those not born into the elite.

2.2 Wars and revolutions

Sorokin, an early theorist on intergenerational social mobility, explored patterns, processes, and determinants of mobility in his seminal works (Sorokin 1959 [1929 1st edition) and idem 1942). Sorokin's studies were influenced by events such as the French and Russian revolutions. He observed that vertical mobility in France showed fluctuations with periods of intensification, notably during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, when significant social upheavals occurred. Wars, often coinciding with revolutions, played a key role in driving vertical mobility, creating vacancies and opportunities for advancement. However, Sorokin also noted a corrective movement following periods of turbulence. Wars and revolutions, particularly when occurring simultaneously, led to temporary increases in absolute mobility, but eventually, corrective measures were implemented to restore stability.

The empirical record on the effects of wars in the pre-industrial period has mainly focussed on internal mobility within the army (Van Leeuwen and Lesger 2005 and esp. 2010; Alfani 2023; 2024, this volume). In general, the military may have played a role in shaping social mobility, with higher ranks often reserved for the nobility, particularly the grandees (Van Gelder 2004; Bruijn 2008). Lower-ranking officers could advance based on merit and years of service, while ordinary soldiers, typically

from lower social classes, faced stigma but could still rise through the ranks with skill and endurance. During war this was more likely to happen because more vacancies opened up. Cases of spectacular rise exist and some claim for example that the French conscription system notably facilitated social mobility (Welten 2007), whereas others are more sceptical. Alfani states that

> in the army men rising from the ranks were rare … by contrast, the Church was more generous in offering to lowborn individuals the opportunity to climb high (2024, this volume).

2.3 Other possible determinants

Apart from the effects of wars, there may have been other factors shaping the extent of social mobility across pre-industrial areas and eras. Examples of upward mobility include the creation of new social positions in Europe's colonial empires – much as it did later, see Van Leeuwen and Maas 2022 –, the abolition of slavery in Mediterranean countries post-1700, expanding career opportunities within the Catholic Church due to new religious orders like the Jesuits, colonization movements such as the German Mennonites on the river Wolga, and the end of serfdom in East and Central Europe, freeing former serfs. Historians have also studied downward social mobility at the group level, such as the establishment of serfdom east of the Elbe River, known as *zweite Leibeigenschaft* from the sixteenth century onward. Other examples include the loss of power and privilege among the nobility after the French Revolution, and the relative decline in social status of the peerage in modern economies like the Dutch Republic and England compared to the urban bourgeoisie (see for more details on these examples and the references Van Leeuwen and Lesger 2005 and esp. 2010).

A major factor shaping mobility rates in Europe were economic developments and regional differences – often linked to urbanization, resulting in variation in the occupational structure (Davids and Lucassen 1995). Early modern Europe saw higher mobility rates in regions with a 'modern' economy, characterized by a lower percentage of the labour force in agriculture. In the 16th century, around 80% of the labour force in Europe was in farming, declining to over 50% by the mid-19th century, though much higher in central and eastern Europe. A banana-shaped urban belt emerged across Northern Italy, Southern Germany, the Low Countries, and Southeast England, dominating trade and manufacturing during the early modern period. Outside this belt, urbanization was mainly limited to regional hinterlands of capital cities and certain coastal and inland regions. The urbanized areas offered better upward mobility opportunities compared to more peripheral parts of Europe, but also increased chances of downward mobility, as observed with immigrants in Amsterdam (Kuijpers 2005).

The emergence of craft guilds, partly spurred by urbanization, initially fostered social mobility by providing formal career paths from apprentice to journeyman and eventually master. However, regional variations existed, such as in the coastal areas of the Netherlands where guild requirements were less stringent compared to

Germany, and the tradition of *Wanderjahre* was absent (Lourens and Lucassen 2000). Over time, the position of master within guilds became increasingly restricted to the children and relatives of masters, limiting social mobility. Many apprentices and journeymen were left with the prospect of remaining wage earners for their entire working lives. The dissolution of the guild system in the 18th and 19th centuries reversed this trend, removing barriers to entry for newcomers and ending preferential treatment for insiders' sons.

Population growth significantly impacted social mobility, particularly in early modern Europe, where technological advancements were slow. As population growth outpaced available resources, diminishing returns in agriculture and increased population pressure in rural areas became evident. In regions favouring the inheritance of undivided farms to a single child, many individuals were compelled to seek livelihoods beyond agriculture (Kok 2010). Some migrated to urban centres, hubs of industry and services, while others supplemented their incomes through protoindustry, fishing, navvying, and the shipping industry, which employed many rural residents. Overall, the declining proportion of farmers in the labour force likely contributed to increased total mobility rates. The expansion of protoindustry and services in rural areas created new opportunities previously unavailable. For instance, in seafaring regions like North-Holland, a career path from sailor to merchant via steersman and shipmaster was not uncommon.

From the mid-17th century, naval professionalization occurred in seafaring nations like England and the Netherlands, establishing formal career paths for officers. Prior to this, officers, though often from higher social circles, had more open-ended careers, allowing even common sailors to attain top positions. In civilian life, large merchant companies mirrored the military hierarchy. Initially, founders of companies like the English East India Company and the Dutch VOC held top positions, but control eventually shifted to the urban patriciate. However, opportunities for advancement existed in VOC Asian offices due to high turnover rates and a shortage of European artisans. Commanders could amass significant wealth, enabling upward mobility for themselves and their descendants through advantageous marriages.

2.4 Large scale historical studies on social class mobility

While various studies attributed explanatory significance to processes of modernization, particularly industrialization and educational expansion, during the nineteenth century, they did not quantitatively measure these phenomena. Rather, they study changes in social mobility over time. Van Leeuwen et al. (2016) conducted a comprehensive study examining mobility in France from 1720 to 1986, employing a consistent methodology across various time periods and geographic locations. They observed a general increase in social mobility over this timeframe, starting from their earliest measurements up to the end of the twentieth century, albeit with intermittent periods of stagnation or occasional decline. Additionally, Maas and van Leeuwen (2016) analysed 600,000 marriage records spanning seven European countries between 1800 and 1914. Their findings indicated a trend towards heightened total mobility during the industrialization period across most of the countries studied,

including France, Great Britain, parts of Germany, Hungary, and the Netherlands. Despite being a late industrializer, Sweden exhibited a relatively high level of social mobility, particularly during the final decades of the nineteenth century.

Two contributions to this special volume on preindustrial Europe use the same social class scheme as we do and thus produce comparable results. The study by Goldberg (2024, this volume) on the city of Leipzig is discussed below when we present the results for our German cases. Brea-Martinez and Pujadas-Mora (2024, this volume, Graph A1) analyse intergenerational mobility in greater Barcelona, 1570-1879. They show that in the first period (1570-1639) just under 60% of the bridegrooms are socially immobile, thus just over 40% are mobile, and this share increases in the proto-industrial period (1750-1829) and grows further in the early industrial period (1830-1879).

3. Datasets on social class mobility in pre-industrial German, French, and Swedish areas

Here we will extend these studies by looking at datasets in French areas, including the ones just discussed, German, and Swedish areas. We will describe total class mobility – the percentage of the population that changes classes between the generations – subdivided into upward and downward mobility and into different forms (e.g. from agrarian to non-agrarian). Since the vital registers we use, are in most areas silent about occupational activities of women, we are left studying only men, that is to look at social class mobility between fathers and sons.

Care has to be taken when describing mobility patterns and comparing them over time and between countries. The geographical areas differ per country and period, and so does the availability of occupational information. Total mobility is influenced directly by the marginal distributions of a mobility table, that is, amongst others by changes in the class distribution. The class distribution of the regions, localities, and individuals that are included in the data very likely deviate from the class distribution of the country as a whole. And although we deleted periods and regions for which the data were obviously incomplete, it is never the case that the complete population is represented in the data because in all datasets there is a sizable number of men for whom information on their occupation is lacking. Thus, we certainly cannot assume that the small selection of localities for which we have data represents the areas they fall under, and also not that as a whole they would represent 'Europe'. Table 1 presents the datasets.

Generally, we look at church registrations of marriages where the occupation of the bridegroom was listed and that of his father (if alive and present). This leads to father-son combinations of occupations that we will code in a common occupational coding scheme and a common class scheme, discussed later. While we focus on first marriages – to make the mobility processes studied simpler – we cannot in all cases, remove second or higher marriages. Table 1 lists a main publication by the main author associated with the dataset, and, of course, we are most grateful to them that we can analyse these data.

Tab. 1. **Characteristics of the datasets**

Period	Type of data	Coverage		N original[1]/ N analyses	Reference
German places					
1689-1799	Marriages (church), father's and son's occupation at son's marriage	Parish St. Georgen in Berlin	All marriages	9988/ 5396	Kapelle et al. (1988); Schultz (1992)
1730-1849	Clan registers, father's and son's occupation with highest status	Complete population of villages and cities: Hamburg, East Frisia, Hartum, Saarland, Herrenberg	First marriages	8955/ 3816	Imhof (1998)
1660-1850	Clan registers, father's and son's occupation with highest status	Complete population of villages	First marriages	6464/ 2241	Knodel (1988)
1730-1850	Marriages (church), father's and son's occupation at own marriage[4]	Krummhörn region in East Frisia	First marriages	8547/ 3330	Voland (2011)
French places					
1716-1819	Marriages (church/civil), father's and son's occupation at own marriage	40 villages spread over France	All marriages	13,326/ 1,863	Henry & Houdaille (1978)
1740-1792	Marriages (church), father's and son's occupation at son's marriage	Department Pas de Calais	First marriages	59,014/ 7,175	van Leeuwen et al. (2016)
1670-1850	Marriages (church), father's and son's occupation at son's marriage	City Vendome	First marriages	9,519/ 2647	Pélissier, Rébaudo & Brizions (2008)
1803-1850	Marriages (civil), father's and son's occupation at son's marriage	France: Tra-families	First marriages	17,598/ 8,733	Dupâquier (2004); Leroy, Nicolas & Pélissier (1998); Bourdieu, Kesztenbaum, & Postel-Vinay (2014).
Swedish places					
1751-1850	Marriages (church), father's occupation around son's birth, son's occupation around age 30	Sundsvall region	All men[2]	11,352/ 3,211	Demographic Data Base, CEDAR, Umeå University
1771-1850	Marriages (church), father's occupation around son's birth, son's occupation around age 30	Västerbotten region	All men[2]	10,697/ 6,358	Demographic Data Base, CEDAR, Umeå University
1740-1850	Marriages (church), father's occupation around son's birth, son's occupation around age 30	Linköping region	All men[2]	21,007/ 4,264	Demographic Data Base, CEDAR, Umeå university
1770-1850	Marriages (church), father's occupation around son's birth, son's occupation around age 30	Norrland	All men[2]	3,115/ 1,486	Demographic Data Base, CEDAR, Umeå university

[1] (First) marriages during the period of investigation; [2] Men aged 30 during the period of investigation

3.1 German areas

For localities in current Germany, we have some 34 thousand records in the period 1660-1850. After selecting records with information on the occupation of fathers and sons, about 15 thousand records remain. These relate to the following localities. (1) a parish in a suburb of Berlin (Kapelle et al. 1988; Schultz, 1992). (2) the population of the following villages and cities: Hamburg, East Frisia, Hartum, Saarland, and Herrenberg. These well-known Imhof (1988) data in all but one case relates to clan registers of villages and localities (*Dorf- und Ortssippenbüchern*), these are complete village genealogies based not just on marriage registers but also on registers of baptism and burial. In the case of Hamburg, the data are from genealogies (*Geschlechterbücher*). These are thought to be more selective than the clan registers. For many individuals in this dataset more than one occupation is recorded. The occupations are, however, ordered alphabetically and not dated. We chose the highest occupation, both for fathers and sons. (3) The Knodel (1988) data also relate to village genealogies (*Ortssippenbücher*) and share the same characteristics as the Imhof data. They relate to a subset of villages from more than 100 villages with a genealogy and were chosen to reflect an interesting variety of social, economic, and demographic settings. (4) The Krummhörn region in East Frisia**.** In Voland's (2011) study of the Krummhörn region in East Frisia, church marriage registers and registers of proclamation spanning approximately the years 1700 to 1900 were examined. During the early modern period, the Krummhörn region in East Frisia was home to around 15,000 inhabitants.

3.2 French areas

For France we have slightly less than 100 thousand cases covering the period 1670-1850. Of these 20 thousand remain for analyses. We published on these data before (Maas and Van Leeuwen 2010; Van Leeuwen et al. 2016). They come from the following datasets. (1) Henry's 40 villages. The 'Henry dataset', gathered in the 1960s and 1970s by French demographer Louis Henry, has been recently digitized by the INED under Alain Blum and Isabelle Séguy's supervision (Séguy 2001). Henry focused on studying French demographic history and fertility trends. He noted all vital events in a large sample of French communities from 1670 to 1829 (later extended to 1869) and reconstituted populations in 40 villages over the same period. The data, derived from parish registers maintained by Roman Catholic Church clergy, include vital events such as births, marriages, and deaths. (2) The TRA data began with all marriages involving men whose family names started with the letters TRA, occurring in mainland France between 1803 and 1832, along with marriages of their descendants (Bourdieu, Kesztenbaum, and Postel-Vinay 2014; Dupaquier 2004; Dupaquier & Kessler 1992). The nineteenth-century marriage data were obtained by consulting indices of decennial marriage tables and retrieving civil marriage records of TRA respondents.

The two other datasets we utilize enable us to connect the epochs before and after the French Revolution. The French Revolution marked the beginning of civil

registration of marriages, upon which the TRA dataset relies. This event essentially secularized a task that had been traditionally performed by the Roman Catholic Church for centuries, and on which the Henry data are based. (3) The county of Vendome was granted as a duchy and peerage of France in 1515. Members of the Association de Généalogie Vendômoise have long collected data for the small city of Vendôme, located south of Paris. While the oldest marriage certificate dates to 1668, data for this early period are too limited for analysis. Consequently, we have chosen to focus on the period after 1720. (4) The Association Généalogique du Pas-de-Calais has amassed vital data for the province (department) of Pas-de-Calais, situated in the northern region of France, overlooking the cliffs of Dover and adjoining Belgium. Our analysis focuses on first marriages of grooms from 1740 onwards.

3.3 Swedish areas

Our Swedish dataset comes from the Demographic Database in Umeå, which digitized and linked vital registers in several parts of Sweden (Alm Stenflo 1994; Edvinsson 2000). It encompasses individuals residing in 37 parishes across Sweden, primarily concentrated in four regions: the northern inland area, the Skellefteå region (both non-industrial), the industrialized Sundsvall region, and the southern Linköping region. While these regions do not encompass the entirety of Sweden, they represent a diverse array of communities. This includes individuals from varying occupational backgrounds such as small and large-scale farmers, nomadic reindeer herders, artisans employed in small workshops as well as larger iron foundries, along with industrial workers and industrialists at the forefront of Sweden's rapid industrialization. During this transformative period, Sweden transitioned from a predominantly rural and agrarian society to one where industrial production assumed increasing significance. From a religious and ethnic standpoint, Sweden was largely homogeneous, with most inhabitants being Caucasian and members of the Lutheran state church. While there were some Jewish communities in Sundsvall and Linköping, as well as a Finnish-speaking population in Tornedalen (including Nedertorneå, Karesuando, Jukkasjärvi, and Gällivare), Karesuando and Gällivare also hoasted a sizable Sami population. We published before on the Swedish data, but for a later period (Maas and Van Leeuwen 2002).

4. Creating mobility tables

4.1 From occupational titles to HISCO and HISCLASS

For all the areas under study we analyze mobility tables, and to make these we need to place occupational titles into social classes. To do so in a comparable way, occupational titles were first coded into a common historical occupation classification system (HISCO) and then into a classification system based on HISCO for social class: (HISCLASS). Later we will also use the social status scale HISCAM (Lambert et al. 2013; for an overview, see van Leeuwen 2020).

HISCO, the Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations, has been developed to classify occupational titles from historical sources (Van Leeuwen, Maas and Miles 2002; 2004). It is a comprehensive system derived from the International Labour Organization's (ILO) International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) from 1968. With ten major groups subdivided into minor and unit groups, HISCO offers detailed coding, comprising approximately 1,600-unit groups. It is organized in a treelike fashion, with the 'major groups' being characterized by the first digit of the code: 0 and 1Professional, technical and related workers; 2 Administrative and managerial workers; 3 Clerical and related workers; 4 Sales workers; 5 Service workers; 6 Agricultural workers, fishermen and hunters; 7, 8 and 9 Production workers, transport equipment operators and laborers. For example, codes 6-xx.xx represent the primary sector, with 6-2x.xx focusing on agricultural and animal husbandry workers. Specific categories include field crop and vegetable farm workers (6-22.xx), with subcategories like general field crop farm worker (6-22.10) and wheat farm workers (6-22.30). HISCO also incorporates additional variables (Status, Relation, and Product) to capture social and employment status, and product-related details found in historical records. The Status variable is especially noteworthy, distinguishing ownership types, artisan career stages, educational levels, and indications of social status. Once the data are coded in HISCO, it is relatively simple to recode them into the HISCLASS social class system (Van Leeuwen & Maas 2011). HISCLASS, in its fullest form has 12 social classes based on a combination of whether it is a manual or a non-manual occupation, the skill level, whether the occupation usually involves supervising others or not, and whether it is in the primary sector or not. We use this class scheme here, but due to the small number of cases in some social groups, we use a collapsed version that has 5 social classes: (1) non-manuals, (2) skilled workers, (3) farmers, (4) unskilled workers, (5) farm workers. One issue that needs a further decision when recoding HISCO into HISCLASS is what to do with occupation titles of the type "worker" without any further specification. These workers could either be classified as rural unskilled workers or as urban unskilled urban workers, in other words they need to be allocated to one of two social classes. We use the standard solution in HISCLASS to base the allocation on the share of farmers in the locality: if there are many, we allocate the workers into the social class of rural workers, else we consider them to be unskilled workers outside of agriculture.

4.2 Missing occupational information

Occupational mobility can only be analysed if occupational information exists both for the bridegroom and his father. There are, however, bridegrooms whose father was elsewhere, deceased or, less likely, present at the marriage of his child but without a stated occupation. These cases cannot be used to calculate mobility rates, but we can compare them with the cases with full information, see Table 2. There does not seem to be a systematic bias resulting from removing the bridegrooms whose fathers do not have a stated occupation at the marriage of their child. The only exception are the Swedish regions, where farmers will be overrepresented in our

analysis. This is probably due to the fact that occupations of the parents are not listed on the marriage certificate of the children but require linking several documents. These are more likely to be found in the same area for a stable population such as farmers.

Tab. 2. **Class distribution of sons before and after deleting cases without information on occupational class of father**

German places								
	Germany St. Georgen		Germany Hamburg and villages		Germany villages		Germany East Frisia	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Non-manual	17.5	12.8	29.2	32.2	11.4	8.5	16.9	15.7
Skilled workers	32.4	33.8	18.9	19.7	24.0	26.3	23.0	25.6
Farmers	1.8	2.2	30.3	30.6	31.8	33.8	9.7	8.2
Unskilled workers	42.5	44.3	18.8	15.6	22.3	21.7	49.6	49.8
Farm workers	5.8	6.9	2.8	1.9	10.5	9.7	0.8	0.6
% missing	44.6		53.5		61.1		52.6	
French places								
	France 40 villages		France Pas de Calais		France Vendome		France Tra-families	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Non-manual	10.0	10.4	14.6	16.6	17.5	17.3	9.6	9.6
Skilled workers	9.1	9.4	22.2	25.2	32.1	33.5	18.3	19.6
Farmers	53.7	54.6	12.9	8.1	11.8	11.5	39.0	38.3
Unskilled workers	20.3	19.1	43.3	42.6	31.8	30.8	25.7	25.1
Farm workers	6.9	6.6	7.0	7.5	6.8	6.8	7.4	7.4
% missing	74.9		75.8		61.4		46.2	

Swedish places								
	Sweden Sundsvall		Sweden Västerbotten		Sweden Linköping		Sweden Norrland	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Non-manual	11.3	6.0	6.1	4.2	8.2	7.3	5.9	3.9
Skilled workers	11.3	7.1	1.9	1.5	2.5	2.1	0.8	0.4
Farmers	27.7	37.5	45.4	51.2	10.7	16.1	30.6	39.4
Unskilled workers	11.2	7.9	12.1	11.7	9.9	9.8	6.2	6.1
Farm workers	38.5	41.5	34.4	31.4	68.7	64.7	56.5	50.1
% missing	69.1		36.9		79.1		49.8	

4.3 Creating social class mobility tables

Table 3 present an example of an intergenerational mobility table. The high percentages on the diagonal of the table show that in the German villages, 1660-1850, most men remained in the same class as their fathers. In order to calculate upward and downward mobility rates, the classes need to be ordered from high to low status. We calculated the mean status (HISCAM) of the occupations of all men in each class. For the German villages this was 72.57 for non-manuals, 49.99 for skilled workers, 60.75 for farmers, 45.37 for unskilled workers, and 41.54 for farm workers. Farmers thus on average have higher status than skilled workers, which means that sons of farmers who become skilled workers are downwardly mobile. We did this check for all regions and almost always find higher status of farmers compared to skilled workers. When we reverse farmers and skilled workers in the table, below the diagonal are the cases where the father belonged to a higher social class than his son - the downward mobile cases – and above the diagonal are the upward mobile sons. Based on such tables, we can calculate total, upward and downward mobility.

Tab 3. **Example of a mobility table: Germany: villages, 1660-1850 (Knodel data)**

		Father's class				
		Nonmanual (%)	Skilled workers (%)	Farmers (%)	Unskilled workers (%)	Farm workers (%)
Son's class	Nonmanual	52.8	7.3	4.2	4.5	6.7
	Skilled workers	16.7	56.5	15.3	18.7	5.9
	Farmers	18.8	16.8	63.0	17.5	14.6
	Unskilled workers	8.3	16.1	14.4	54.1	12.6
	Farm workers	3.5	3.3	3.1	5.3	60.3
	Total	100.0 (144)	100.0 (614)	100.0 (826)	100.0 (418)	100.0 (239)

5. Analyses

5.1. The size of the primary sector

Although all datasets refer to periods before industrialization, the class distribution differs substantially between regions and over time. Graph 1 presents the share of the bridegrooms working in agriculture. Panel 1a shows the German places, ranging from about half of the bridegrooms in agriculture at most to less than a tenth. The low percentage in agriculture for East-Frisia is puzzling. We therefore had a closer look at the occupational distribution. In East-Frisia the unskilled working class was especially large (between 40 and 50%) and consisted almost exclusively of occupational titles for workers without further information (*Arbeiter*, *Heuermann* and *Tageloehner*). Given the small share of farmers in the region these have been put in the class of unskilled workers as opposed to farm workers. We, however, cannot at present exclude that part of them were actually working as farm laborers. Somewhat unexpectedly, some of the lines rise over time, e.g. for the Knodel villages and for Hamburg and surrounding villages, indicating a growing farm sector.

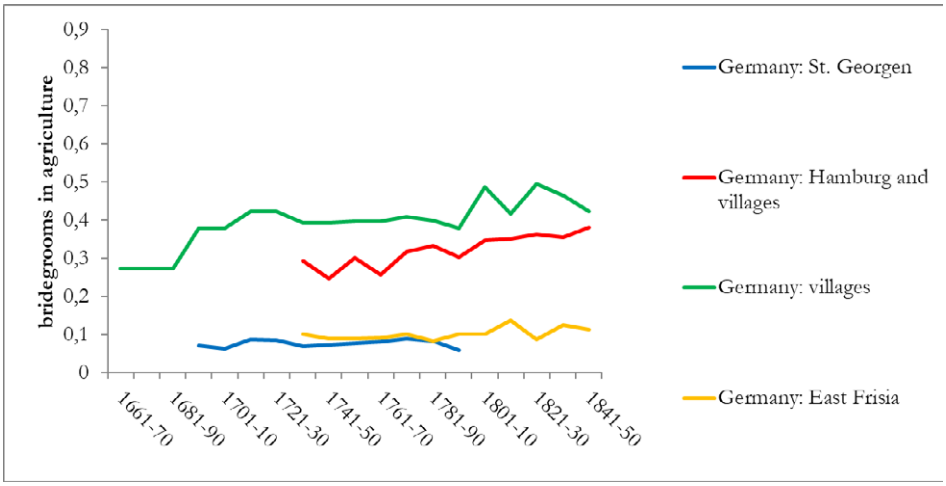
Panel 1b of Graph 1 shows the French places, encompassing the 40 mostly agricultural villages studied by Louis Henry as well as the city of Vendome in which the farming population, as could be expected, was a minority. The nationally representative TRA-sample shows that France in the first half of the nineteenth century, still contained a large agricultural sector, only a little smaller than that of the 40 villages in the brief period where they overlap. In the department Pas de Calais, the agricultural sector was relatively small. Further analyses show that this was not due to misclassifying large numbers of general workers, as these are rare. Panel 1c relates to the Swedish places, ranging from the overwhelmingly agricultural Norrland to the Sundsvall district. Here again the farming population increases in all regions and stagnates towards the middle of the 19th century.

The aim of this study is not to test hypotheses on determinants of mobility rates. However, if the extent of mobility is mainly driven by the size of the farming class,

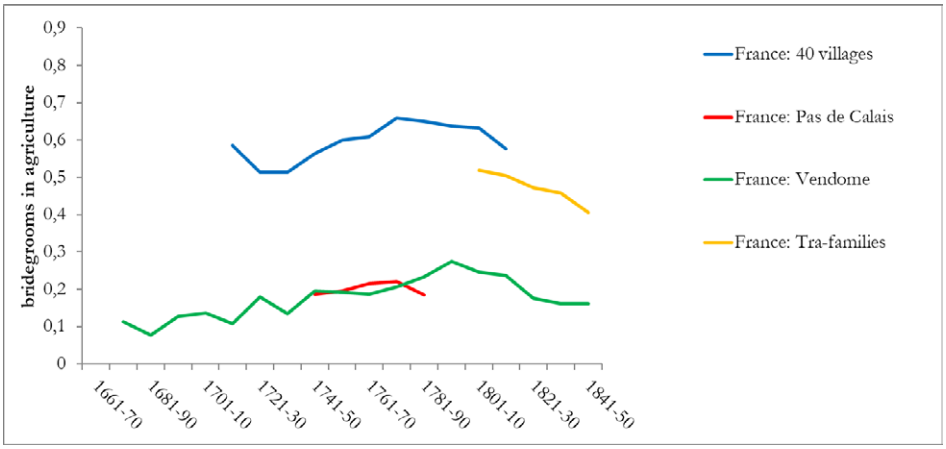
then we would expect least mobility in the Swedish regions, average levels of mobility in the two German sets of villages, the French villages and the whole of France (Tra-data), and most mobility in the Berlin parish of St. Georgen, East Frisia, Pas de Calais and the city Vendome.

Graph 1. **Share of the bridegrooms working in agriculture**

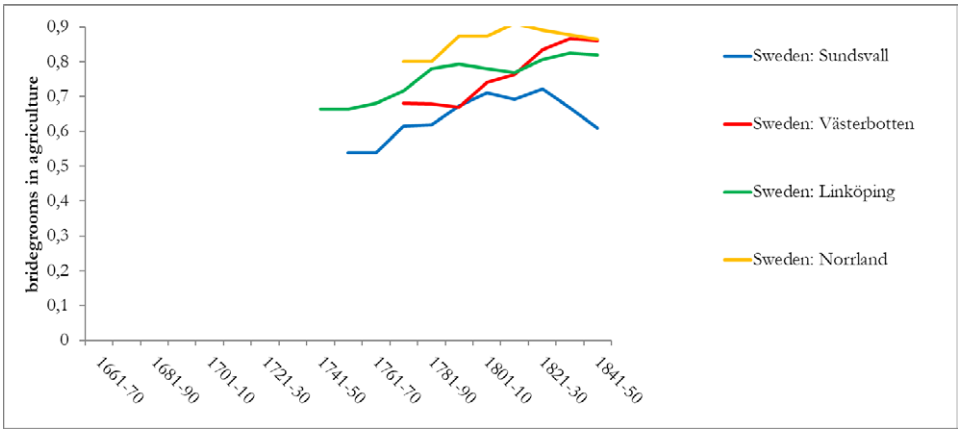
Panel a. German places



Panel b. French places



Panel c. Swedish places



5.2 Intergenerational social class mobility rates

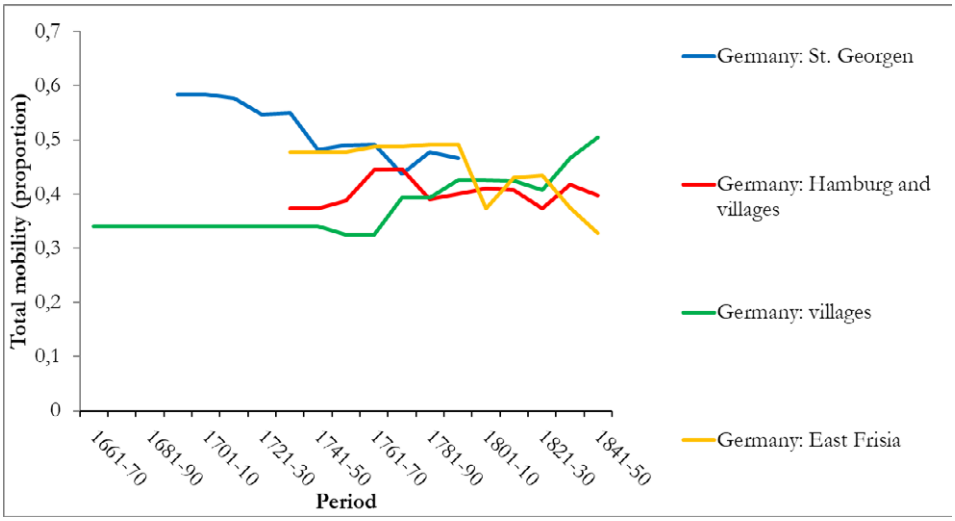
Graph 2 shows total mobility rates for all areas, that is: the percentage of bridegrooms who are in a different social class than their father. Panel a covers the German places. From the graph it can be concluded that Germany was certainly not an immobile society. The rate of intergenerational mobility varies between 60% (parish St. Georgen in the beginning of the 18th century) to 34% (German villages in the same period). Whereas in the beginning of the observed period the regions with many farmers (in the two village-datasets) show less mobility than those with few farmers, this difference disappears towards the end of the 18th century. Goldberg (2024, this volume) reports mobility rates of similar magnitude for the city of Leipzig. But whereas we find a decrease of mobility in the city of Berlin, in Leipzig intergenerational mobility increased from about 40 to 65%.[1] Panel b refers to the French regions. Intergenerational mobility rates do not differ much between the 40 rural village, the province of Pas de Calais and the city of Vendome. The graphs for the Tra-dataset, suggest that in the first half of the nineteenth century there was more mobility in the city Vendome compared to whole of France. Mobility increased in the beginning of the 18th century, but this trend is solely based on data of the city Vendome. It increased again in the first half of the 19th century, a period in which the farming sector declined. Panel 2c relates to Swedish places. In these rather rural areas, there is certainly not less mobility than in the other countries. Mobility rates range between 60% and 36% and converge to around 50%. Overall, there appears to be no clear relationship between the size of the farming sector and the rate of

[1] Goldberg (2024, this volume) reports on intergenerational social class mobility in the city of Leipzig. 1550-1850, a.o. using the HISCLASS scheme. Graph 10 of this study shows that prior to 1730 about 60% of sons are in the same class as their fathers, that is 40% are socially mobile. The share of immobile men drops until the end of the 18th century to about 35%, thus leading to about 65% of sons being mobile, and this remains so for the first half of the nineteenth century.

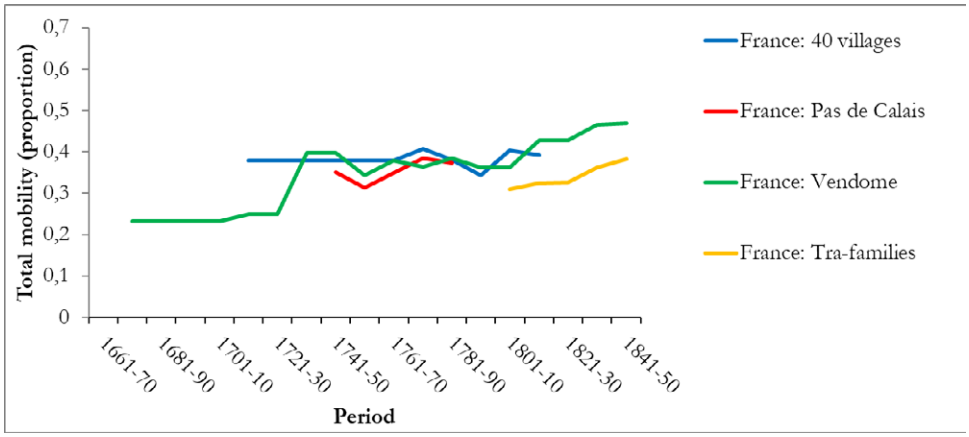
intergenerational mobility. Either this relationship does not exist, or it is not visible because the mobility rate is affected by many other factors.

Graph 2. **Total mobility. Number of class mobile bridegrooms as % of total number of bridegrooms**

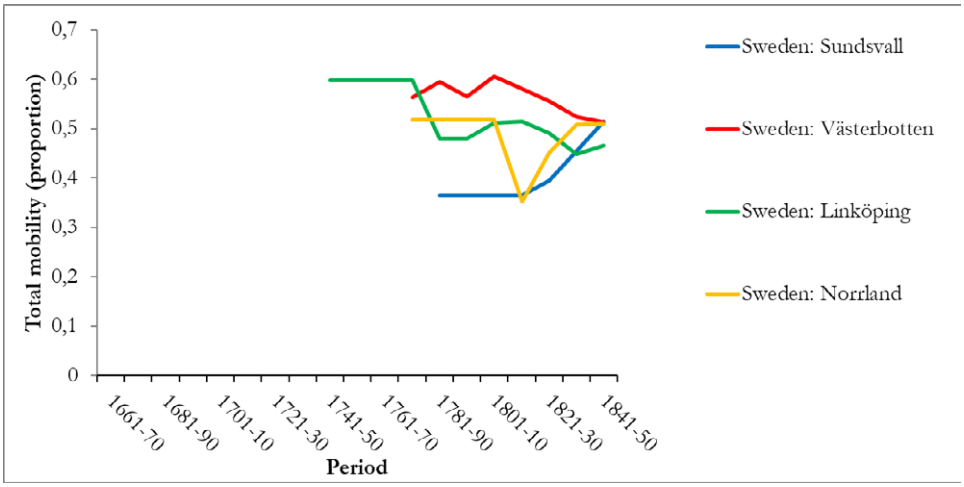
Panel a. German places



Panel b. French places



Panel c. Swedish places



5.3 Trends in social class mobility

The graphs suggest that in some regions mobility increased, whereas in other regions it decreased. However, the numbers of cases in the mobility tables differ between regions and vary over time. Therefore, from the graphs, it is difficult to conclude whether these changes are real or the result of random fluctuation. In Table 4 we estimate whether there are significant linear (model 1) or quadratic (model 2) trends over time in rates of total mobility, for German (panel a), French (panel b), and Swedish places (panel c). Generally, the trends that can be observed in Graph 2 appear to be significant (i.e. we can assume that the mobility rate was not constant over time). And, as could be observed in the graph, trends differ between places within countries. For example, there is a significant linear decrease of the log odds of mobility in the Berlin parish St. Georgen, and a linear increase of similar size in the German villages. The decrease in the log odds of mobility in East Frisia is nonlinear, and mainly happening at the end of the observation period. In Hamburg and villages no significant trend is observed. In France the log odds of mobility significantly increase in all regions, except the 40 villages. And the pattern of convergence of mobility in the different regions in Sweden is backup by positive trends in Sundval and negative trends in Västerbotten and Linköping.

Tab 4. **Changes in total mobility: linear and quadratic (logistic regression of intergenerational mobility on time)**

	b	sign.	b	sign.	b	sign.	b	sign.
a. German places								
	Germany: St. Georgen		Germany: Hamburg and villages		Germany: villages		Germany: East Frisia	
Model 1								
Constant	.393	**	-.390	**	-.770	**	.177	
Time	-.058	**	.000		.061	**	-.065	**
Model Chi² (df)	34.452 (1)		0.001 (1)		27.893 (1)		32.661 (1)	
Model 2								
Constant	.578	**	-.464		-.761	**	-.199	
Time	-.135	**	.031		.054		.075	
Time squared	.006		-.002		.001		-.010	**
Model Chi² (df)	37.14 (2)		0.528 (2)		27.943 (2)		39.983 (2)	
N	5,396		3,816		2,241		3,330	
b. French places								
	France: 40 villages		France: Pas de Calais		France: Vendome		France: Tra-families	
Model 1								
Constant	-.522	**	-.725	**	-1.193	**	-.863	**
Time	.007		.047	**	.061	**	.087	**
Model Chi² (df)	.138 (1)		8.535 (1)		48.938 (1)		26.872 (1)	
Model 2								
Constant	-.544	*	-.661	**	-1.448	**	-.846	**
Time	.017		-.023		.122	**	.068	
Time squared	-.001		.013		-.003		.004	
Model Chi² (df)	.153 (2)		9.601 (2)		51.583 (2)		26.950 (2)	
N	1,863		7,175		2,647		8,733	

c. Swedish places

	Sweden: Sundsvall	Sweden: Västerbotten	Sweden: Linköping	Sweden: Norrland
Model 1				
Constant	-1.241 **	.502 **	.390 **	-.122
Time	.212 **	-.058 **	-.054 **	.007
Model Chi² (df)	45.293 (1)	20.597 (1)	13.828 (1)	.073 (1)
Model 2				
Constant	-1.583 **	.323 *	.453 **	.462
Time	.371	.040	-.074	-.324 **
Time squared	-.017	-.011	.001	.037 **
Model Chi² (df)	45.795 (2)	23.662 (2)	13.917 (2)	7.792 (2)
N	3,211	6,358	4,264	1,486

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$; All time effects are in decades (years/10).

For France we tested the Sorokin hypothesis of the effects of 'great' wars and revolutions in a previous study (Van Leeuwen et al. 2016). We looked at the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815, which killed, according to estimates, 1.7 million French. While this is not of the same magnitude as the shocks of the Black Death or the Thirty-Year War (Alfani 2024, this volume), which caused wealth mobility to increase, it was as big a shock on French and European soil as it gets after the plague. In addition, unlike the pest that one either succumbed too or survived in one piece, the French Revolution and the following wars not just killed but also took many more men out of the labour market due to non-fatal inflictions that made them ill-suited for their former work. So arguably the effects of wars are bigger than the number of casualties suggest. Wealth is not social status, and in regions with partible inheritance, according to law or custom, the death of a patriarch with more than one son, generally would cause a redistribution of wealth from the one patriarch to his sons (Alfani 2024, this volume). In the case of social status, there is not such clear-cut logic, because a father's occupation not necessarily has to be filled by his own son (although this might be the case for farmers and other owners of means of production). In a nutshell, if the Sorokin effect existed then the French revolution and its aftermath arguably forms the second-best testing case after the plagues.

Our tests revealed that total mobility stagnated before the French Revolution and accelerated thereafter. The Vendôme and the Pas-de-Calais data show an increase in absolute mobility in the first few decades of the nineteenth century compared with the second half of the eighteenth century. This increase levelled off

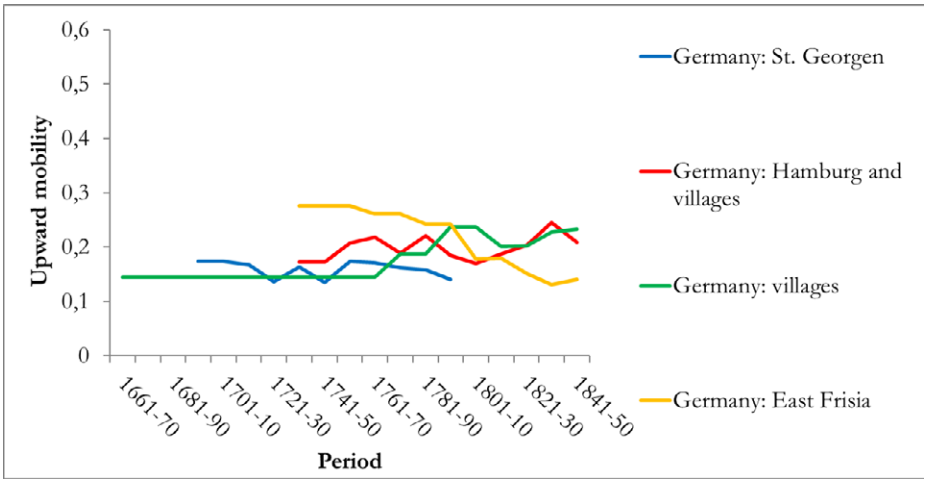
after the mid-nineteenth century. Regression models in which we add parameters for the overall trend and for the periods of war reveal that total mobility might even have declined during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars (and during the two world wars). But the effects are not significant and thus we cannot conclude that total mobility changed during these three upheavals.

5.4 Upward and downward social class mobility

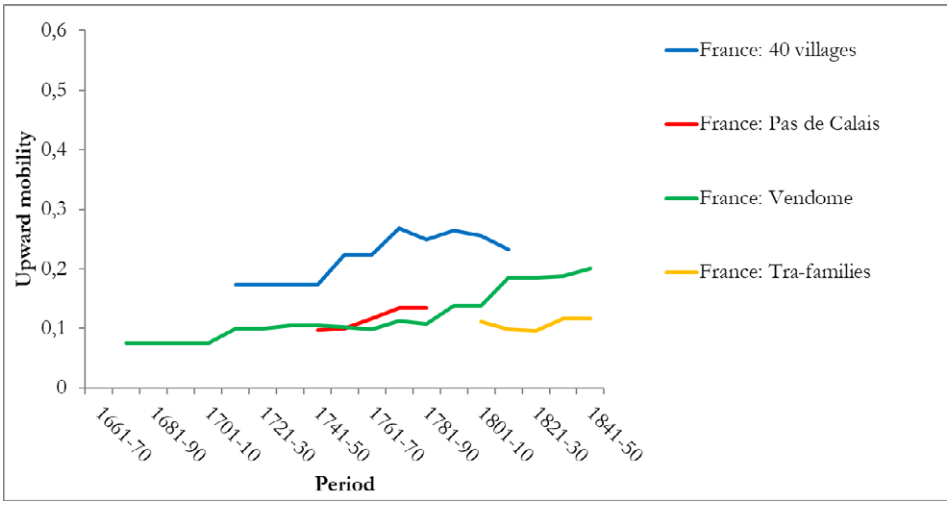
If mobility is mainly driven by sons of farmers leaving the farming class, one would expect to mainly observe downward mobility. These sons are most likely to become (un)skilled workers, who on average have lower status than farmers. However, if most mobility is due to sons of workers obtaining more skills, upward mobility is more likely. We show trends in upward and downward mobility in Graph 3 and 4. Graph 3, panel a, depicts the share of upward mobile bridegrooms in German places. It ranges between 15 and 30%. In the two village-datasets upward mobility increases after 1750, but in East Frisia it decreases in the same period. The upward mobility rates in the French places in panel b, are of similar size as those in Germany and tend to increase somewhat over time. There is less upward mobility in the Swedish places (Panel c), despite the odd bump for Västerbotten.

Graph 3. **Upward mobility. Number of upwardly class mobile bridegrooms as % of total number of bridegrooms**

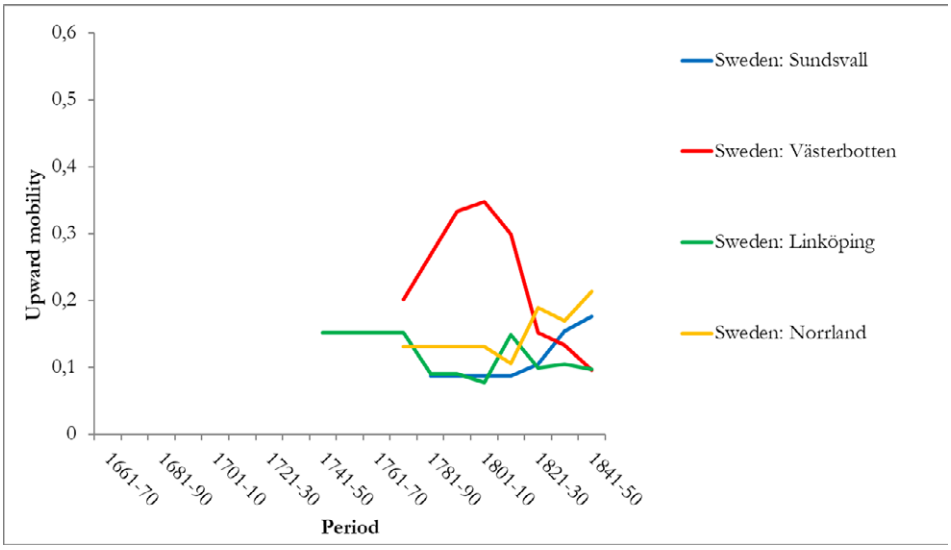
Panel a. German places



Panel b. French places



Panel c. Swedish places

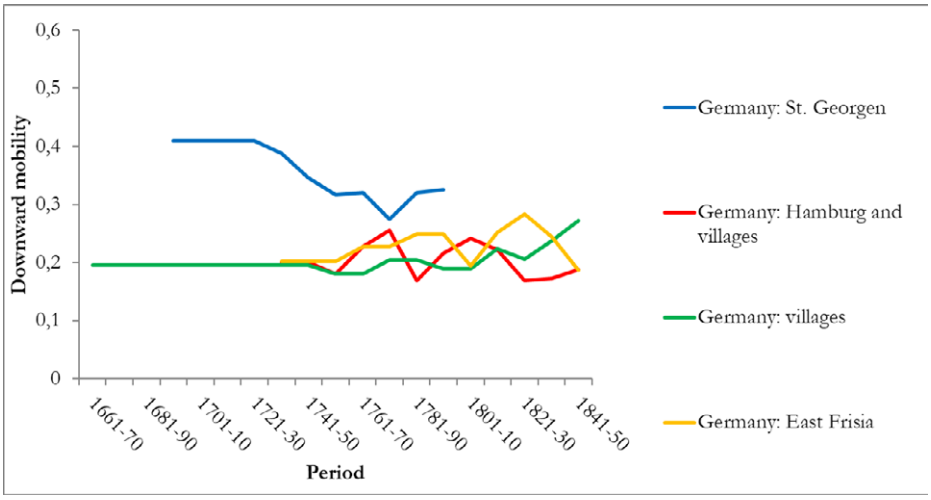


Graph 4 depicts the share of downward mobile bridegrooms. The rate of downward mobility was rather like that of upward mobility in German places (panel a) and French places (panel b). Only in the parish of St Georgen in Berlin the rate of downward mobility was exceptionally high (between 40 and 30%). Sweden deviates from Germany and France in that it shows clearly higher rates of downward mobility

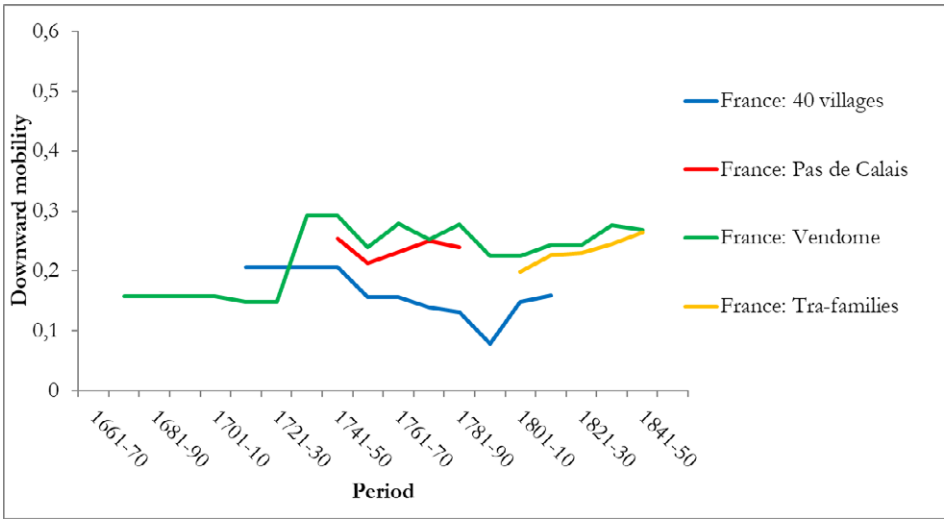
(25 to 45%) compared to upward mobility (10 to 20%). This latter finding suggests that in the predominantly agrarian Swedish society mobility indeed mainly consisted of sons of farmers ending up in a lower occupational class.

Graph 4. **Downward mobility. Number of class mobile bridegrooms as % of total number of bridegrooms**

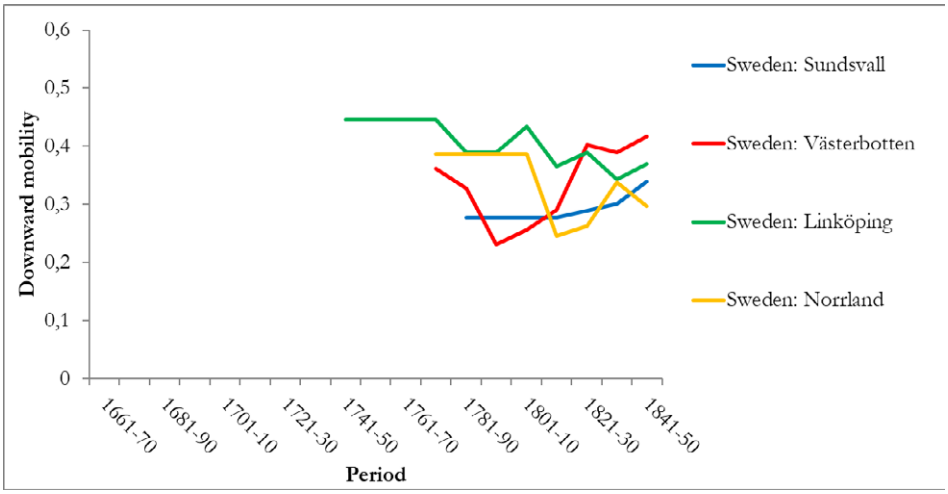
Panel a. German places



Panel b. French places



Panel c. Swedish places



5.5 Intersectorial social mobility

To shed further light on types of upward and downward mobility we distinguish seven types of mobility: farm to farm labor; farm to other; farm labor to farm; farm labor to other; other to farm, other to farm labor, not farm related. We expect the high rate of downward mobility in Sweden to be caused by sons of farmers entering the working class. That is also what we observe: between 29 and 37% of all mobility relates to farmers' sons becoming farm laborers. They are downwardly mobile but stay in the farm sector. This percentage is much higher than in Germany (below 3%) and France (below 6%). This high rate of downward mobility in the farming sector, however, does not only indicate a general impoverishment in this sector, but also a weak barrier between being a farmer and being a farm laborer. In Norrland and Västerbotten there is also considerable mobility in the opposite direction (resp. 23 and 15%). This type of mobility is very rare in the German and French areas (always below 4%, except in the 40 villages where it reaches 9%).

In Germany and France farmers' sons are also likely to leave the farming class, but with a different destination. They do not become farm laborers but skilled and unskilled workers outside the farming sector. In the German villages 30% of all mobility is of this type. In France as a whole, this is even 34%. It differs between region to what extent reverse mobility (from other sectors into the class of farmers) occurs. Generally, this seems to be most likely in more rural areas. E.g. in German villages 22% of all mobility is from outside the agricultural sector into the farming class. In the 40 villages in France this is 31%. In the Berlin parish St. Georgen there are only few farms, making it unlikely for people outside of the agricultural sector to become a farmer (1.1%) and the same is true for the city Vendome (1.2%).

The rural character of Swedish society is also visible in the very low percentage of all mobility that does not involve a father or son from an agricultural class. This

most frequently occurs in the most industrialized region (Sundsvall: 10.2%). This is much lower, though, than in German places (between 30 and 74% of all mobility) and in French places (between 20 and 56%). What also sets Sweden apart is the high share of mobility from outside the farming class (fathers are (un)skilled workers) into farm labor (between 17 and 33%). Not only the barrier between farming and farm labor, but also that between farm and other labor seems to be relatively weak.

Tab 5. **Types of mobility per sector**

a. German places	Germany: St. Georgen	Germany: Hamburg and villages	Germany: villages	Germany: East Frisia
From farm to farm labor	1.6	1.2	2.8	0.1
From farm to other	19.1	26.6	30.2	11.9
From farm labor to farm	0.3	1.7	3.8	0.1
From farm labor to other	8.3	2.6	6.5	1.9
From other to farm	1.1	29.4	21.9	11.2
From other to farm labor	4.8	1.6	5.1	1.2
Not farm related	64.9	36.9	29.8	73.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
b. French places	France: 40 villages	France: Pas de Calais	France: Vendome	France: Tra-families
From farm to farm labor	5.9	2.7	5.4	5.2
From farm to other	23.6	24.0	26.3	34.0
From farm labor to farm	9.0	0.1	0.3	1.4
From farm labor to other	6.0	8.1	7.7	10.8
From other to farm	31.1	1.9	1.2	12.3
From other to farm labor	4.1	9.8	2.8	4.4
Not farm related	20.3	53.4	56.3	31.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
c. Swedish places	Sweden: Sundsvall	Sweden: Västerbotten	Sweden: Linköping	Sweden: Norrland
From farm to farm labor	34.0	29.3	36.9	35.8
From farm to other	10.1	10.3	8.6	6.2
From farm labor to farm	8.3	14.7	3.3	22.6
From farm labor to other	11.6	4.7	8.6	6.0
From other to farm	7.2	18.8	4.5	9.8
From other to farm labor	18.4	17.1	32.9	17.4
Not farm related	10.2	5.1	5.1	2.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

6. Conclusion and discussion

Preindustrial occupational datasets do exist, and in sufficient quantity. So, although they are rare compared to those for later periods, it is quite possible to extend the debates regarding intergenerational social class mobility into the preindustrial era. This article is the first attempt to do so for several countries comparatively. This was only possible because several scholars made their data available for secondary analysis – a very laudable practice. We have reported known issues with the data, and our solutions or our present ignorance. A main issue is that we at present have mostly information on scattered localities. The Tra-dataset for France forms an exception, but it relates only to the period from the 19th century onwards. And we presented initial results.

We coded the data uniformly in the occupational coding scheme HISCO and the social class scheme HISCLASS - and for a few analyses into the social status scale HISCAM. A perennial issue plaguing social class mobility studies using vital registers is that for a considerable set of father-son social class ties, there is missing information on the father. This is the case for the datasets we reanalysed here too, but, fortunately for present purposes, for most regions we did not observe a difference in class distribution between complete and incomplete cases.

We investigated total, upward, downward and sectorial mobility. In the country for which we presently arguably have the best data, France, the rate of intergenerational mobility increased, albeit irregularly from the 1720s until 1850 (actually until the end of the twentieth century, as we showed in another study (Van Leeuwen et al. 2016)). For the German and Swedish places, no clear picture can yet be observed: total mobility trajectories vary among places and over time, as do upward and downward mobility. Sweden stands out by a relatively high rate of downward mobility, mostly consisting of farmers' sons becoming farm laborers. More than expected, however, sons with fathers from outside the farming class succeeded in becoming a farmer. Barriers between the sectors seem to have been weak in Sweden.

We can draw two broad conclusions. The first is that pre-modern social class structures were not as stable as either modernization or status maintenance theories claim. The second is that in the case of France, for which we have excellent long-term records, even the major shock of the French Revolution and its aftermath did not cause an observable Sorokin effect for men.

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Jan Michael Goldberg

Transformation of urban occupational structure and mobility (Leipzig, 1550-1850)

1. Introduction

Since humans began to engage in specialized occupations, these have been subject to constant change. Classic studies in the field of occupational structure analysis primarily illustrate the transition from an agrarian-oriented occupational structure to a developed economy with industrial production (Clark 1951; Kuznets 1966). Today, the transformation of the occupational world remains a topic of scientific and societal debate. Particularly, the influence of technologies is widely discussed, as seen in the German-speaking context, for example, through the debate surrounding the term «Industry 4.0».[1] A similar discussion took place in the 1970s and 1980s with the introduction of computer technology (cf. Heßler 2016, 18).

However, upheavals - not just technological ones - have had the potential to alter the occupational structure previously; thus, they interact with economic development. Various other shocks and trend shifts such as wars, reforms, innovations, changes in religion, etc., may have also had an impact. Altmann and Kammerer categorize these causes into (1.) technical-organizational changes in the production process, (2.) demand-driven economic changes, and (3.) societal conditions such as policies or training structures and their changes (cf. 1970, 9-11).[2] For example, a new technology like the steam engine can lead to the substitution of manual labor with machines. Conversely, new markets can increase demand volume, thus enabling further specialization. The Netherlands provides an example of how such Smithian growth can lead to radical changes in the occupational structure (cf. Shaw-Taylor and Wrigley 2014, 83). A societal condition example is the former guild system, which exerted control over training and professional work.

Cities are particularly suitable for examining changes in occupational structures. They have few agricultural workers, so economic development can only be partially explained by the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society, although a transition from the primary to the secondary and tertiary sectors is observed, for instance, in the case of the Barcelona metropolitan area (1715-1860) (cf. Brea-Martínez and Pujadas-Mora 2018, 241). Surprisingly few studies exist on the occupational structure in individual cities. Watson, based on cities in the 1990s,

[1] In the German-speaking context, a recent trend towards an occupational structural upgrade can indeed be observed, where the ranks of industrial workers and office assistants have thinned out (Oesch 2016, 207).

[2] Wrigley also emphasizes the demand-driven influence on occupational structure (cf. 2016, 74f.).

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identifies a correlation between growth rates and occupational structure: production-intensive cities or those with a large proportion of healthcare workers show lower growth (cf. 2005, 19-20). However, he sees a need for further research into the relationship between immigration, population growth, qualifications, and occupational structure. This raises the question of what influences the employment structure in cities. So far, no study has been found that examines the impact of these various changes using the example of a city. Existing city-specific studies cover short periods and/or periods from the second half of the 20th century onwards (z. B. Khadke, Kharat, and Kamble 2019; Koizumi and Wakabayashi 2015).

Thus, there is a research gap in exploring the occupational structure of individual cities from a long-term, historical perspective. This leads to the question of how a change in the occupational structure in cities is practically carried out. This can happen through (1.) migration, (2.) intragenerational, or (3.) intergenerational change. Due to the latter aspect, the change in the occupational structure is also strongly linked to the question of social or occupational mobility.[3] There are a few studies on the development of occupational mobility based on specific cities: Favre, Floris, and Woitek examine birth cohorts in Zurich between 1780 and 1870. Zurich undergoes significant changes during this period (rapid population growth, industrialization, development of the banking sector, founding of the university, development of the railway system). Contrary to expectations, they observe a slight decline in mobility during the study period. The cause for this is identified in particularly high intergenerational persistence of occupations with low socioeconomic status (cf. Favre, Floris, and Woitek 2018, 25). Another Swiss example can be found in Basel by Häner and Schaltegger (2022). Additionally, Barone and Mocetti measure long-term low social mobility in Florence (1427-2011), which has only significantly increased in recent years. Their data suggest a glass floor that prevents elites from descending (cf. Barone and Mocetti 2020, 1889). Research on mobility structure in connection with the occupational structure of individual cities has been neglected so far. Considering that many changes occur locally and also have their effects locally, it is essential for economic.

In the present study, Leipzig, a German city that has experienced many significant upheavals over the past centuries, is examined. These upheavals have the potential to have influenced the occupational structure. Leipzig is located at the intersection of two significant historical trade routes, the «via imperii» and the «via regia» (cf. Schönfelder and Börngen 2015, 39). Trade thus significantly influences the city's development. It becomes an important trading center, initially as a goods fair, then as a sample fair. Leipzig also develops into a center of printing and book trade (cf. Keiderling 2012, 221). Thus, the city undergoes various changes even in proto-industrial times. It is also assumed that as a trade fair city, Leipzig has been strongly influenced by regional economic shocks.

This changes, while similar to trends in other European cities, are shaped by unique factors makes it a distinct case within the broader European context.

[3] Sorokin already described in 1927 that such shocks can have effects on social mobility without explicitly labeling them as shocks (cf. 1998, 143ff. u. 466ff.). Subsequently, the term occupational mobility will be used, which also implies a social change.

Although many towns experienced economic transformations due to industrialization and population growth, but Leipzig's trajectory was notably influenced by its role as a major hub for trade and intellectual exchange. The town became a leading center for the printing industry after the Thirty Years' War, making it the foremost book trade city in the Holy Roman Empire. Unlike cities driven by early industrialization, Leipzig's growth was tied to intellectual production and commerce. Additionally, the special role of its trade fair economy makes the city something unique as an object for scientific studies. Also the city's strategic location at the intersection of via imperii and via regia trade routes also made it a focal point for economic activity, influencing its occupational structure in ways that differed from more isolated towns. So, its unique combination of trade, intellectual production, and strategic location makes it an exciting case for exploring the complexity of urban development in Europe, providing further empirical insights.

The hypothesis is that significant changes in the city's development also affect the occupational structure and must be accompanied by occupational mobility. These (dis-)continuities are further referred to as shocks or trend breaks. For the study, a population dataset for the period between 1550-1850 is used. This timeframe is chosen because Leipzig also undergoes disruptions in proto-industrial times, which may contain valuable insights into the transformation of occupational structures. The study examines the rise of the printing industry (1680), the Seven Years' War (1763), a population boom (1800), and the beginning of industrialization (1839). From today's perspective, these events may appear shock-like, especially given the focus on specific years, but each transition extended over several years. The defined years are therefore (only) mathematically relevant because they identify the significant turning point. The impact of each upheaval on the occupational structure is examined. Additionally, for this period, there is a dataset on the Leipzig population collected through an innovative citizen science approach. This dataset consists of genealogical, intergenerational links between individuals in Leipzig's urban evangelical communities.

Next, the available data is introduced in detail. Subsequently, the methodological approach to examining the effects of upheavals in Leipzig on the occupational structure is described. A time-series-based structural break analysis is conducted, with cross-tabulations also used to analyze upheavals. Occupational data is coded according to the «Klassifikation der Berufe 2010» (KldB; Paulus & Matthes, 2013) and the «Historical International Classification of Occupations» (HISCO; van Leeuwen, Maas & Miles, 2002). The HISCO assignment also allows classification into the «Historical International Social Class Scheme» (HISCLASS; van Leeuwen & Maas, 2011) and the «Historical Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification» (HISCAM; Lambert et al., 2013). The resulting analysis results are presented and interpreted before reaching a conclusion.

2. Data

The empirical basis for this study is a new dataset on the population of Leipzig, which was created as part of the «Time Machine Leipzig» project.[4] The data used here was collected through the Data Entry System (DES) of the Society for Computer Genealogy (CompGen) in another citizen science (sub-)project. With the DES, private individuals systematically collect data from historical sources. Using the DES, the «Index of Leipzig Families» (KLF)[5] as well as the «Index of Leipzig District Testament Files» (KLK)[6] have been compiled. The KLF contains data on individual families residing in Leipzig, with information such as life dates, occupations, and children's data recorded on 20,000 index cards. Seidel and Wermes write about the KLF:

> The index includes the council death registers of the city of Leipzig from 1721 to 1851 (excluding illegitimate and non-local entries), the citizen registers of the city of Leipzig from 1501 to 1818, as well as the marriage registers of the Leipzig inner-city parishes of St. Nikolai (from 1541) and St. Thomas (from 1549) up to 1850 in full, and up to 1875 for native Leipzigers, along with the baptismal registers of these parishes for the period 1580 to 1850. Thus, the compiler of the index, Helga Moritz, processed approximately 200,000 baptismal entries and about 20,000 marriage entries from these Leipzig church parishes from 1580 to 1850, 150,000 death entries from the Leipzig council death registers, as well as all citizen entries from the citizen registers of the city of Leipzig for the aforementioned period (Seidel and Wermes 2017, 289).

It is worth noting additionally that Leipzig was almost entirely an Evangelical-Lutheran city at the beginning of the 19th century, and almost all residents belonged to one of these two parishes St. Thomas and St. Nikolai (cf. Hein 2017, 75). Therefore, the KLF likely contains close to a comprehensive survey of the local Leipzig population up to that time. However, in the further discussion of the data, it becomes evident that Helga Moritz did not fully evaluate all the sources.

The KLK, on the other hand, consists of approximately 4,800 index cards documenting around 6,500 individuals. Each testifying individual has a card summarizing references to the individual testament files.[7] It does not provide information about the content of the testaments but serves solely as a finding aid. The index covers the period from 1696 to 1829.

The data from KLF and KLK are merged using record linkage according to the algorithm defined by Goldberg and Mernitz and linked intergenerationally, resulting in an intergenerational dataset (see corresponding chapter). The merging of 241,467

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[4] Aims of the Time Machine Leipzig include merging various sources to make them accessible in an appealing format (cf. Müller 2022, 269; cf. Time Machine Leipzig 2022).

[5] Staatsarchiv Leipzig, *Kartei Leipziger Familien, 21959*.

[6] Staatsarchiv Leipzig, *Testamente des Amtes Leipzig, 20009, 5465-5584*.

[7] Spouses who jointly created a will were given two index cards.

records from KLF yields a dataset of 216,085 individuals.[8] Unnecessary columns are deleted, leaving the following information about the individuals (see

Tab. 1). The frequency indicates the proportion of person records where this information is available.

Of particular relevance for the study is the combination of the birth year and an occupation indication, as the birth year provides temporal context. Only 26,453 out of 69,812 individuals with an occupation indication also have information on birth or baptism available. Among the individuals with an occupation indication but no birth year, many cases involve the first known generation: the father is known in only 8.4 percent of cases, whereas the father is included in the dataset for individuals with an occupation indication and birth year in 94.7 percent of cases.

Tab. 1. **Parameters in the merged dataset, their description, and frequency, n=216,085**

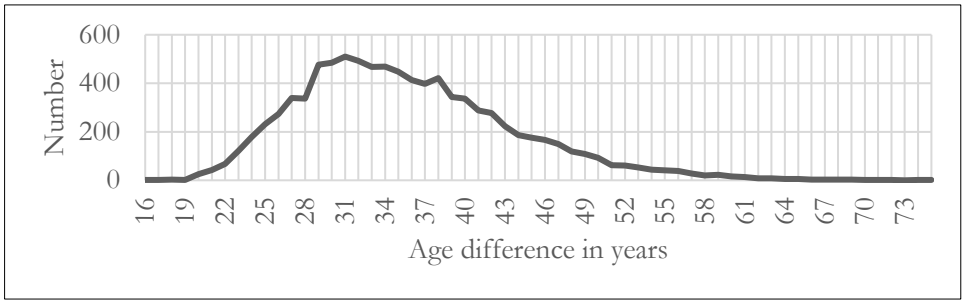
Label	Description	Frequency
id	Identificator of a person	1.00
idFather	Identificator of the father	0.62
idMother	Identificator of the mother	0.47
idSpouse1	Identificator of the first spouse	0.55
idSpouse2	Identificator of the second spouse	0.06
idSpouse3	Identificator of the third spouse	0.01
birthday	Day of birth	0.28
baptismday	Day of baptism	0.29
deathday	Day of death	0.15
burialday	Day of burial	0.00
marriageday1	Year of first marriage	0.49
marriageday2	Year of second marriage	0.05
marriageday3	Year of third marriage	0.01
occupation	Occupation	0.32
firstnameGiven	First name(s)	1.00
surnameGiven	Surname	1.00
sex	Gender (F/M)	1.00
probate	Presence of a will	0.01

For a significant portion of individuals, no birth year is available, and thus, their age is unknown. To include these individuals, an age estimate is made. For each person without a birth or baptism date, it is checked if they have children. If they

[8] The column «probate» is derived by comparing the KLF with the KLK (each compared with itself). Individuals who could be matched between the two were identified as testators (non-0 indicates the presence of a will).

have multiple children (and birth years of the children), the earliest birth year is selected. Then, 30 years are subtracted from this year. This approach is based on the mode of the age difference between fathers and sons (see Graph 1).[9] This method allows estimating the birth year for an additional 23,293 individuals. As a result, there are a total of 49,746 individuals with both an occupation indication and an (estimated) birth year. Thus, a significant portion of data for male individuals in the KLF becomes usable. For most women, there are no occupation indications available.

Graph 1. **Distribution of the age difference between fathers and sons (father's age at the time of birth) in the KLF**



The occupational indications are initially cleaned up, taking into account source-specific peculiarities. Often, the occupational indications contain information about the individual's citizenship status, which is irrelevant for evaluating the occupation in this study. This information is therefore filtered out. Additionally, occasionally there are time indications within the occupational indications, marking the date when citizenship status was acquired. These are also removed. If a person has multiple occupational indications, they are separated from each other and considered equivalent. The remaining indications are classified according to KldB and HISCO. Initially, the automated classification method described by Goldberg and Moeller is used (Goldberg and Moeller 2022). Any occupational indications not classified through this method are manually coded.[10] The KldB coding is performed by the Historical Data Center of Saxony-Anhalt. This results in a coverage of 97 percent of all occupational titles for HISCO and 99 percent for KldB. The KldB coding provides a five-digit code.[11] The first digit of this code indicates the occupational

[9] This assumption is imperfect, also because the mode here does not indicate the age of the father at the birth of the first child, but rather his average age across all children. Since, as will be shown later, broad cohorts of 10 years are used, the deviation at this point can be neglected.

[10] To do this, foreign-language synonyms are searched for in the HISCO database.

[11] The coverage refers to the number of unique job titles. Out of 5,285 unique job titles, there are 5,127 HISCO codes and 5,263 KldB codes. Prior to this, any entries that clearly do not represent job titles, such as location names, are manually filtered out. Since the more common job titles have been coded, the classification of all job entries in the dataset is even higher. However, a complete coding of all job entries is not possible because sometimes abbreviations cannot be deciphered, non-job-related entries are included, or in rare cases, the job could not be manually classified.

field (see Tab. 2). The so-called fifth digit provides information about the skill level of the respective occupation (see Tab. 3).

Tab. 2. **Occupational fields of the KldB**

Key	Occupational areas
0	Military
1	Agriculture, Forestry, Animal Husbandry, and Horticulture
2	Raw Material Extraction, Production, and Manufacturing
3	Construction, Architecture, Surveying, and Building Technology
4	Natural Sciences, Geography, and Computer Science
5	Transport, Logistics, Protection, and Security
6	Commercial Services, Trade, Sales, Hotel, and Tourism
7	Business Organization, Accounting, Law, and Administration
8	Health, Social Services, Teaching, and Education
9	Language, Literature, Humanities, Social Sciences, Economics, Media, Arts, Culture, and Design

Tab. 3. **Levels of Skill Requirements in the KldB**

Key	Levels of requirements
0	No occupational specification (e.g., resident, neighbor, citizen)[12]
1	Helper and apprentice tasks
2	Professionally oriented tasks
3	Complex specialist tasks
4	Highly complex tasks

The coding according to HISCO offers the possibility to separate occupations into so-called main groups (the first digit, see Tab. 4). Additionally, the scales HISCLASS and HISCAM can be utilized, as there is an assignment of HISCO codes to these scales. HISCLASS is a system for classifying occupations into twelve occupational classes (see Tab. 5). In addition, there is HISCAM, a scale of social prestige ranging from 1 (lowest prestige) to 99 (highest prestige). Unlike the scales presented so far, HISCAM is interval-scaled. Various tables adapted to different countries and periods exist for HISCAM (van Leeuwen et al. 2013).[13]

[12] Correct, entries classified in this way are manually filtered out because they do not represent job titles. Therefore, this category does not appear again in the subsequent process.

[13] The authors recommend using the universal scale for the German context, as the table for Germany is based on a less comprehensive dataset. Therefore, for this study, table U2 is utilized, covering only men from 1800 to 1938. There is no assignment for earlier periods. However, it is assumed that occupations from earlier times can also be assigned a HISCAM value using this table. This assumption may introduce bias if the social prestige of occupational groups has changed over time. There is a research gap in extending these tables to earlier periods.

Tab. 4. **Main groups in HISCO**

Key	Main groups
0/1	Professional, technical and related workers
2	Administrative and managerial workers
3	Clerical and related workers
4	Sales workers
5	Service workers
6	Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters
7/8/9	Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers

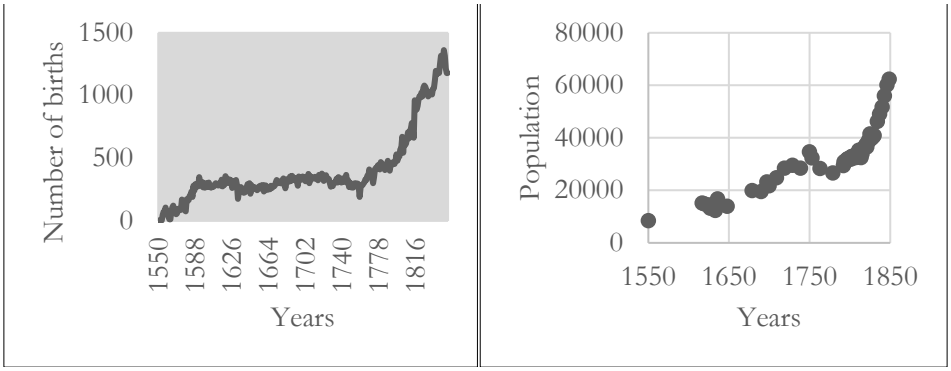
Tab. 5. **HISCLASS classes**

Key	Class
-1	Described only as «workers» (HISCO code 99900)
1	Higher managers
2	Higher professionals
3	Lower managers
4	Lower professionals, clericals and salesmen
5	Lower clericals and salesmen
6	Foremen
7	Skilled workers
8	Farmers
9	Lower skilled workers
10	Lower skilled farm workers
11	Unskilled workers
12	Unskilled farm workers

The temporal distribution of births within the KLF shows that between approximately 1600 and 1800, the number of recorded births roughly ranges from 200 to 300 per year (see Graph 2, left). Estimated birth dates are not included in this graph. After a small local low point in the mid-18th century, birth rates steeply rise and reach their peak in the mid-19th century, with 1,000 births per year. After that, no further births are recorded in the KLF. In comparison with the population development (see Graph 2, right), it is particularly noticeable that, unlike the number of births, it already increases significantly at the beginning of the 18th century: the population doubles from 1699 to 1727. This increase cannot be solely attributed to births in Leipzig. Thus, the significant population growth in Leipzig at the beginning of the 18th century must mainly be explained by migration. After 1800, a strong exponential growth in population is evident. This growth is also reflected in births, but not to the extent that it could explain population growth without migration.

Walther also points out that Leipzig only shows a positive birth surplus from the 1820s onwards; thus, growth was mainly dependent on migration for a long time (cf. 2012, 214f.). However, it is also evident that not all births in Leipzig were recorded in the KLF. Walther records a total of 11,796 live births in Leipzig between 1801 and 1810 (cf. 2012, 215), while the KLF documents only about half of this, namely 4,948 births, during the same period. Walther adopts his numbers from Hasse (1878, 164). Here, it becomes clear that unlike the KLF, Hasse's work includes illegitimate births. The legitimate births amount to 9,190 during this period. Nevertheless, the number significantly deviates from the number of individuals documented in the KLF. This demonstrates that Helga Moritz only partially transferred baptisms to the KLF. The assumption that Hasse includes many children from the (later incorporated) surrounding areas, i.e., children not baptized in St. Nikolai or St. Thomas Church, is implausible. Hasse published his work in 1868, at a time when there had been no incorporations.[14]

Graph 2: **Number of births per year in the KLF (left, without estimated birth years) and population development of Leipzig (right)**



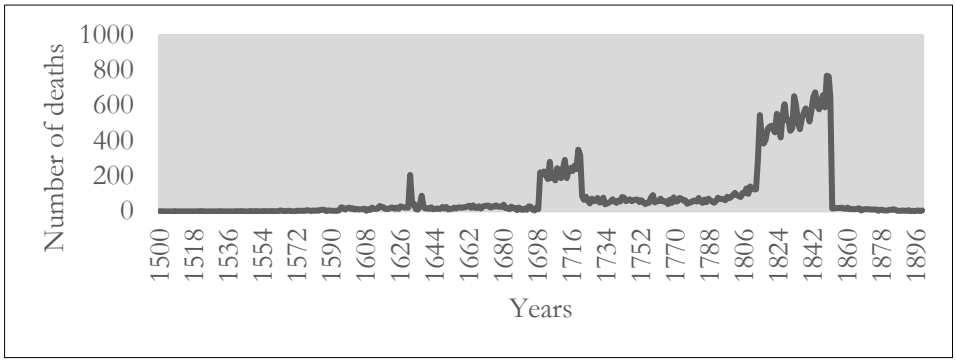
Source: Number of births per year based on a compilation from Süßmilch (1742, 324), Sonnenkalb (1864, 1), Knapp (1872, Tafel 1), Füssler (1955, 105), Blaschke (1967, 140), Walther (2012, 204), Gränitz (2013, 25 u. 83), and Höpel (2016, 97), where the numbers mentioned are subject to critical evaluation, as seen in Homburg (cf. 2000, 173-76) or Füssler (cf. 1955, 123), and are here intended only to roughly indicate the general population trend.

A consideration of the years of death and burial shows that they are only sporadically available (see Graph 3). According to Seidel and Wermes, death information is supposed to have been taken from the «Ratsleichenbücher der Stadt

[14] At this point, however, the special significance of the surrounding area for Leipzig should be noted, especially later in the 19th century. Hasse quotes a statement from 1855: The population around Leipzig belongs much more to the city itself than is the case in Dresden and Chemnitz. In neither of these two cities do you see such crowds streaming in from all gates every evening and pouring into them every morning as in Leipzig. Whole corporations reside in the countryside. The numerous castes of market helpers, typesetters, printers, and so on, largely only reside in Leipzig during working hours. (Hasse 1876, 11)

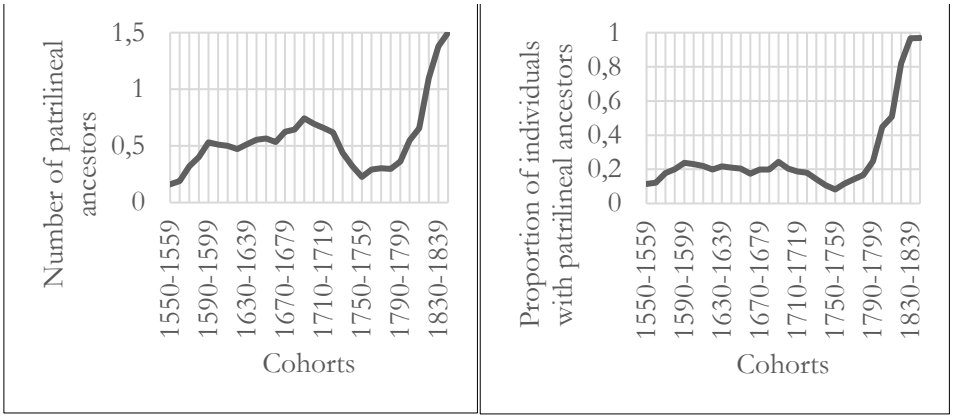
Leipzig von 1721 bis 1851» (cf. 2017, 289). Indeed, the first peak coincides with death data immediately before the beginning of this period. The last peak covers roughly the last 30-40 years of the extent of the Ratsleichenbücher. Obviously, the Ratsleichenbücher were not completely evaluated by Helga Moritz. Another minor peak is found during the time of the Thirty Years' War. Due to this irregular temporal structure, death information is not used in this analysis.

Graph 3. **Number of deaths documented in the KLF per year**



The comparison of birth and population numbers during the observation period indicates significant influx of migrants. If there is simultaneous out-migration, the influx must be even greater. The high spatial mobility poses a challenge to the intergenerational aspects of the discussion of social mobility, as it is possible that few families were resident in Leipzig for many generations. Kessler already noted that Leipzig in the early modern period does not have centuries-old patriciate and the city does not have merchant families that have survived for centuries in the trading profession (1932, 207 u. 226). This fact is also evident in the data: The average number of patrilineal ancestors of individuals with occupation information in the dataset ranges from about 0.5 to 1.5 over much of the observation period (see Graph 4, left). It should be noted that until the 19th century, only about 20 to 40 percent of individuals in the dataset have a known father. After that, this proportion increases significantly: In the last cohort (1840-1849), almost all individuals have a known father (see Graph 4, right). This sharp increase is mainly due to the fact that the birth years of the migrant fathers are rarely in the 19th century.

Graph 4: **Average number of patrilineal ancestors of individuals with occupation information per cohort (left, excluding estimated birth years) and percentage of individuals with occupation information for whom the father is known (right)**



This (geographical) mobility practice poses a challenge to the analysis of shocks due to the restriction that individual families cannot be longitudinally examined across several generations before and after a shock. Instead, an analysis of cohorts - independent of individual families - must be conducted.[15] Implementing a multigenerational approach appears not feasible in this context.[16]

Since the KLF analyzed church registry data, a complete survey of the local evangelical population was conducted. The proportion of other religious communities (especially Catholics and Jews) in Leipzig during the observation period was so small that it can be considered negligible (cf. Löffler 2017, 78f.; cf. Mitzscherlich 2017, 80f.). Additionally, all individuals who neither married nor baptized children in Leipzig are not listed. The proportion of this group consisting of unmarried journeymen and servants would have been significant throughout the observation period. This leads to a distortion. It can also be assumed that numerous merchants were present in Leipzig during trade fair periods, who were also not included in the KLF.

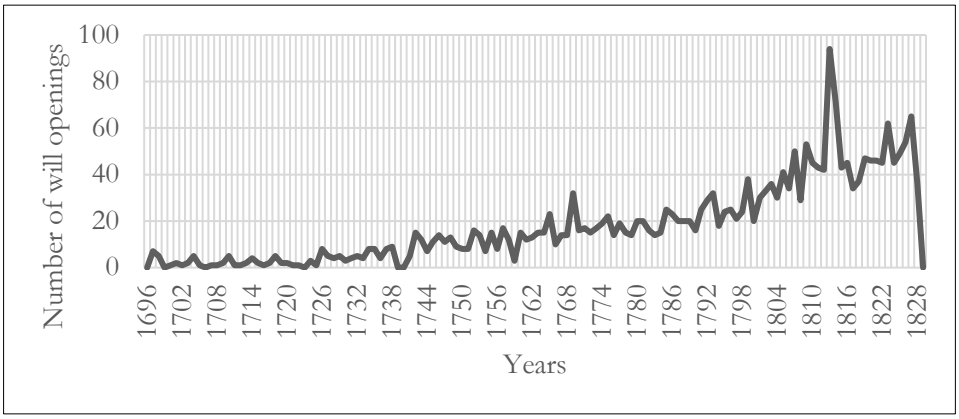
The second data source utilized is the KLK. It is used to generate another binary characteristic for individuals: whether a person has left a will or not. The KLK does not provide any insight into the content of the wills. An occasional examination of the wills also reveals that the content of these documents is difficult to operationalize. It is assumed that particularly among wealthy individuals - the urban elite - there is motivation to create a will. This allows the dataset to be divided (testating elite versus

[15] An alternative approach is to analyze surname groups instead of individual genealogical connections (cf. G. Clark et al. 2015). However, for Leipzig, there are not enough surnames available that have remained constant in the area for a long time.

[16] Multigenerational mobility refers to mobility that extends beyond the horizon of two consecutive generations (cf. Solon 2018, F340). According to Hällsten and Kolk, there is a research gap in this area (cf. 2021, 3).

non-testating population). Any differences in occupational structure and social mobility can thus be separately examined. A temporal comparison of the opening of the wills shows that at the beginning of the KLK, there are few wills available, and this number then exponentially increases until the end of the observation period (see Graph 5). The war year 1813, during which the Battle of Leipzig took place, is characterized by a particularly high number of will openings, indicating a high mortality rate.

Graph 5: **Openings of wills in the KLK over time**



3. Methods

This paper aims to analyze the extent to which past shocks/trend breaks (1) influenced the occupational structure of the city of Leipzig and (2) whether this was accompanied by changes in the nature of occupational mobility (through migration as well as intra- and intergenerational changes). To analyze the changes in the occupational structure, upheavals will be identified based on the city and regional history of Leipzig, which fall into one of the three categories according to Altmann and Kammerer (demand, technology, societal conditions) and thus create the conditions for changes in the occupational structure (cf. Altmann and Kammerer 1970, 9-11). A structural break analysis will be conducted for these upheavals. In a second step, the analysis will focus on the impact of migration as well as intra- and intergenerational changes on occupational mobility. Since comparable studies on the historical changes in occupational structures in cities over a long period in the past are lacking, a new method will be developed here. Consequently, this will also allow an assessment of the suitability of the developed methods for the research question.

3.1 Analysing upheavals in the occupational structure

To implement the structural break test, the Chow test is used (Chow 1960). With this test, structural changes over time can be detected (cf. Wooldridge 2009, 453). To do this, time series are split at the time of the upheaval, and the coefficients of the

linear slopes of the two newly formed time series are examined. If the partial regressions better represent the data than the regression over all data, a structural break is identified. The formula used is visible in (1) (Wooldridge 2009, 247). The sum of squared residuals is denoted as SSR (for the first part of the time series, the second part, or all data). The number of all data points is denoted as n. The library used in the program code can detect breaks with $k = 2$ in simple linear models, thus determining the dimensionality of the regression model. The resulting value can be interpreted similar to an F-test.

$$CHOW = \frac{(SSR_p - (SSR_1 + SSR_2))}{SSR_1 + SSR_2} * \frac{(n - 2(k+1))}{k} \quad (1)$$

To perform the test, a time series is required. In this analysis, the occupation data is operationalized and linked with the birth dates of the individuals. The available variables (KldB, HISCO, HISCLASS, HISCAM) offer various ways to represent occupational changes. For further analysis, the occupational sectors and skill levels of KldB (kldb1, kldb5), the main groups of HISCO (hisco1), HISCLASS classes (hisclass), and the average HISCAM value (hiscam) are utilized.

To illustrate the changes in the occupational structure of the city of Leipzig, the proportions of each manifestation of the variable are compared. This results in a total of 35 time series (kldb1: ten time series, kldb5: four time series, hisco1: seven time series, hisclass: 13 time series, hiscam: one time series).

Next, occupational mobility is examined, with a focus on migration. To analyze which individuals may be driving potential changes in occupational structure, this step considers only the migrants. It is not explicitly clear from the KLF data which individuals migrated. Therefore, it is assumed that the first-listed ancestors of a person are those who came to Leipzig. If their ancestors had also lived in Leipzig, they would have been part of the KLF and linked by the algorithm used.[17]

Next, attention is turned to intragenerational mobility. Many individuals have not just one, but multiple occupational listings. These could have been performed concurrently or sequentially. Unlike in rural settings, urban residents typically did not engage in agricultural side jobs, so it can be assumed that most city residents held one occupation at a time. Additionally, the multiple occupational listings could represent holding multiple offices (e.g., councilor). Therefore, if two occupations are listed, it suggests intragenerational mobility, although the direction of the mobility cannot be determined. To illustrate this mobility, a cross-tabulation is useful. Creating different tables for various cohorts allows for temporal differentiation.

Lastly, intergenerational mobility is examined by comparing fathers and sons. If there is a deviation between the occupation of a son and that of his father, a change is identified. However, a challenge arises when some individuals have multiple occupations, potentially belonging to different classes. A change is only identified if there is no overlap in classes between individuals. By calculating the proportion of

[17] However, not all individuals named in the KLF are Leipzig residents. It's possible that a person may marry into Leipzig, but the listed father never resided in the city. Since this aspect cannot be differentiated here, and all are assumed to be Leipzig residents, this distortion must be accepted.

changes for each cohort, a time series is generated, which can also undergo a structural break test. The directional aspect of the mobility is determined through cross-tabulations.

When analyzing the time series, it's important to consider that the occupation data is linked to the birth years of the individuals. This results in a temporal offset between the practice of the occupation and birth. The exact timing of when a person practiced the assigned occupation cannot be precisely determined. Since the KLF is based on church and citizen registers, occupation information is likely derived from marriage entries (both one's own and those of children), baptismal records of children, one's own burial record, and mention in the citizen register. This period roughly extends from the age of 20 onwards. This complicates the analysis of the impact of structural changes, as there is no exact year for identifying occupational transitions, and structural changes can only be detected with the generational uncertainty of approximately 30 years. This also means that a potential structural break may affect not only those born at the time of the break but also those who are already adults or in training. Particularly, individuals in the process of career exploration may have been affected by a structural change. Therefore, a temporal shift of 20 years is defined. It is assumed that individuals are approximately in this exploratory phase. All time series shown here range from 1550 to 1849. The cohort size is set at 10 years to ensure an adequate number of data points per cohort while maximizing the number of data points per time series. This division results in 30 data points per time series. To analyze a structural break, the dataset is split at the beginning of the respective cohort (not at its end). For example, a shock occurring in 1755 would lead to the splitting of the time series in the cohort containing the year 1735 (in this case, the cohort 1730-1739). In practice, the split for the structural break test occurs at the year transition of 1729/1730.

During the period under consideration, Leipzig experienced various upheavals. Between 1550 and 1849, the following four shocks are identified, which could have influenced Leipzig's occupational structure through technology, demand, and/or changes in societal conditions.[18] These are presented below:

The first upheaval examined here is the **rise of the printing industry** in Leipzig after the Thirty Years' War. While Leipzig had been significant for printing and publishing since the 16th century, it was only after the devastating Thirty Years' War, which also affected Leipzig's economy, that Leipzig emerged as the most important book trade city in the Holy Roman Empire (cf. Fuchs 2016, 234 u. 247f.). Between 1670 and 1700, 44 percent of prints in the German-speaking area were published in Leipzig (Fuchs 2016, 249). This is also because many external publishers had their books printed in Leipzig to sell them directly at the book fair there, without the need for prior transportation (cf. Fuchs 2016, 248). The year 1680 is chosen as the point of structural change for this study. Fuchs writes:

[18] The shocks, however, are not isolated events but extended over years. It's only through the long-term perspective of this analysis that they appear as shocks. For this reason, they will continue to be referred to as such here.

> By 1680, the Leipzig book trade had largely recovered from the consequences of the Thirty Years' War. A multitude of new booksellers and publishers entered the expanding market. The publishing industry was undergoing dramatic changes during this phase. Publishers diversified into companies that primarily served the local and regional market with small-scale literature, and publishers who operated at the fairs and in the nationwide or even international book trade (Fuchs 2016, 248).

The year 1680 does not itself mark the trend break; the end of the Thirty Years' War does (cf. Fuchs 2016, 245). However, Fuchs' analysis of VD17 indicates that about half of Leipzig's printed works of the century are found in its last third. Thus, the shift in 1680 rather describes a trend break in the nature of the demand for printed matter, which gradually becomes evident from that point onwards. Factors identified by Fuchs that favored the expansion of book production include the early Enlightenment, the establishment of national languages, the emergence of literary works, new media types such as newspapers, and an increasingly widespread literacy (cf. 2016, 256). In addition to the local book fair and changing demand, relatively low censorship also contributed to Leipzig's achievement of a leading position in the German-speaking world by the late 17th century (cf. Keiderling 2012, 221).

The second upheaval examined here is marked by the **Seven Years' War** from 1756 to 1763. With the entry of Prussian troops into Leipzig at the beginning of the war, the city began a period of hardship, during which a population loss was recorded (cf. Döring 2016, 94-97). Denzel attributes a downturn in trade during the war, currency destabilization in Saxony, and high tribute payments as contributing factors (cf. 2016, 213). However, significantly more important was the upswing of Leipzig as a trade fair location at the same time. According to Denzel, , Leipzig began its truly flourishing phase as a trade fair venue at the end of the war (cf. 2012, 100). Thus, the number of trade fair visitors after the war was almost double the previous level (cf. Denzel 2016, 214f.). A century earlier, Leipzig played a much less significant role in the European trading system (cf. Denzel 2012, 97f.). In terms of the city's changing function (from a regionally significant trading city to the most important trading center in Central Europe), this could have led to a shift in labor demand, with the execution and organization of trade fairs reflected in Leipzig's occupational structure. While this represents a longer-term trend, the significant temporal upheaval is located during the Seven Years' War, as identified by Denzel, and hence is chosen here as well. The end of the war year 1763 is selected as the year of the structural break.

Around 1800, Leipzig has fewer inhabitants than in 1750 (see Graph 2). This changes rapidly with the beginning of the 19th century. The onset of the **population boom** around 1800 marks a phase in which Leipzig grows from 30,000 inhabitants to approximately 700,000 inhabitants in 130 years. Against the backdrop of the enormous increase in population in the second half of the 19th century, Walther concludes that there is only «slight growth» between 1800 and 1830 (cf. 2012, 205).[19]

[19] This was also interrupted by the Napoleonic Wars. Not only did the decisive Battle of the Nations take place in Leipzig in 1813, but the war also had a profound impact on the population of Leipzig. While few civilians lost their lives due to the hostilities, more significant were the subsequent

Nevertheless, this is significant enough in the context of the period under consideration to merit attention. Henning attributes the reasons for this population development (for the entire German-speaking region) to improvements in medical care, resulting in lower mortality rates, as well as the absence of epidemics, wars, and famines (see 1989, p. 18). Here, a technological shock (in the medical field) is identified, which not only creates new professions but also significantly expands the labor supply. The year 1800 is chosen as the time point for the structural break analysis.

The **intensification of industrialization** marks the last trend break considered here. According to contemporary accounts by Gretschel, around 1836 the Leipzig population was divided into scholars, officials, booksellers, merchants, artists, craftsmen, and those who earned their living either by serving in various capacities or by various handicrafts (cf. 1982, 163).[20] Industrial occupations are not mentioned in this list, although this alone is not evidence that there were no industrial occupations in Leipzig at the time. However, Leipzig was industrialized relatively late compared to other regions in Saxony (cf. Schäfer 2012, 185). Nevertheless, in the 1830s, a series of events can be identified that initiated a stronger industrialization. First, simplifications in the transport of goods are noticeable: Leipzig is affected by Saxony's accession to the Zollverein in 1834 (cf. Schäfer 2012, 190). This created better conditions for domestic trade and thus changed demand. With the opening of the first long-distance railway line to Dresden in 1839, goods could also be transported more easily; a carter needed three days for the journey to Dresden, while the railway took only a few hours (cf. Schötz 2017, 260). Additionally, in the 1830s, steam-powered machines increasingly entered production. For example, in Leipzig in 1834, the first high-speed press was installed, marking the transition to factory production at Brockhaus (cf. Schötz 2017, 247). In general, at the beginning of the 1830s, first factories or businesses transitioning to factories were founded (cf. Zwahr 1996, 157). This shock primarily contains elements of a technological shock (railway, new machines).[21] The year 1839 is chosen as the time point for this structural break, the year of the opening of the long-distance railway line.

The effects of the freedom of trade, which was only fully implemented in the Kingdom of Saxony in 1861 (a shock to social conditions), are unlikely to have had a significant impact on the data due to its relatively late timing compared to the rest of Germany.[22] The identified and to-be-examined disruptions are summarized in Tab. 6.

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illnesses, which caused the death of ten percent of the population in the first half of 1814 (cf. Schlenkrich 2017, 94). Additionally, many weddings did not take place during the war years and were postponed until afterward (cf. Ludwig 2017, 30). Nevertheless, the events in and after 1813 did at least have the effect of temporarily halting the population boom.

[20] 1836 is also the year of the publication of the original edition.

[21] It should not go unnoticed that Leipzig experienced further upheavals in the 1830s, for example, a revolution in 1830 (siehe dazu auch Zwahr 1996, 152-59).

[22] Before the liberalization of trade, craftsmen were subject to guild restrictions in their work and, for example, could not produce unlimited amounts or pay market-dependent wages (cf. Korge 2012, 212).

Tab. 6. **Overview of the upheavals to be examined**

Year	Upheaval	Time point in time series
1680	Printing industry	from cohort containing year 1660
1763	Seven Years' War	from cohort containing year 1743
1800	Population boom	from cohort containing year 1780
1839	Intensification of industrialization	from cohort containing year 1819

Since many shocks are being investigated here, all of which could potentially have influenced the occupational structure, a split Chow test over all the data is not appropriate. Instead, the time series needs to be narrowed down. For this reason, 100 years or ten cohorts before and after the upheaval are considered. In cases where there are not 100 years before and after, the time series is examined as far as available. The period of 100 years is chosen to detect long-term trend breaks (over approximately three human generations in each direction). As a robustness check, this analysis is also conducted with boundaries of 60 and 140 years.

3.2 Analysing the influx and intra- and intergenerational change

The analysis of the impact of migration, intragenerational change, and intergenerational change on occupational mobility occurs in three steps, each separated according to these three potential factors.

Migration

To analyze migration, it is important to first identify which individuals have migrated. While the dataset occasionally includes information about origins, this information is only partially available. Additionally, the underlying dataset for this analysis does not contain location information. Typically, the KLF does not include location details, suggesting that the respective event took place in Leipzig. Since the dataset is intergenerationally linked, the parents of children born in Leipzig are known. However, this does not imply that all individuals without parents in the dataset have migrated. There are cases where a man, whose parents do not reside in Leipzig, marries in Leipzig and settles there. Since his parents are listed at the time of marriage, there is another generation in the dataset despite him being the migrant. However, these cases are not frequent enough to be of significant relevance. Therefore, it is assumed that all individuals without a known father are migrants. This allows the dataset to be split into (1) migrants without a father and (2) individuals born in Leipzig with a father.

Now, the occupational structure of migrants can be compared with that of non-migrants. When comparing the occupational structure of migrants with that of all individuals, it is important to consider the proportion of migrants within the total population. From

Tab. 1, it can be observed that 67 percent of individuals have a known father. In this case, the proportion of migrants is significant enough that migrants should only be compared with the locally resident individuals.

If the change in the occupational structure of migrants mirrors that of the local residents, then the (percentage) change in the occupational structure is not altered by migrants and is not determined by them. However, if migrants, for instance, have occupations with a high socioeconomic status, and as a result, the average socioeconomic status of the entire city population significantly increases, migrants would be a cause of the change in the city's occupational structure - a deviation would result in less correlation between the variables. Therefore, a Pearson correlation coefficient is calculated between the time series. A high coefficient indicates that a significant portion of Leipzig's occupational change is attributable to migration.

Intragenerational mobility

Intragenerational mobility occurs when a person changes their occupation. In the KLF, this is evident when multiple occupations are listed for a single individual. Since the KLF sometimes includes multiple occupational entries per person, it is assumed that Helga Moritz supplemented various occupational entries for each individual. However, no statement can be made regarding the sequence of occupations. Additionally, the consecutive intragenerational development within an occupation is not reflected (e.g., a master shoemaker was previously an apprentice and journeyman shoemaker). Consequently, only a change or the concurrent execution of two occupations can be identified (especially when mentioning positions such as a council mandate).

To analyze intragenerational mobility, cross-tabulations are used. Only individuals with at least two occupational entries are included in the cross-tabulation. A separate cross-tabulation is created for each variable. Only if the respective occupations have different values are they relevant for the respective cross-tabulation (for example, mobility from KldB skill level 4 to another occupation with the same value is not counted). The number of transitions is then compared to the total number of individuals whose occupation has the respective value (including individuals with only one occupation). This determines the proportion of individuals who exhibit a particular value for a variable for a limited time. A high proportion indicates high intragenerational mobility, while a low proportion indicates the opposite.

Intergenerational mobility

When determining intergenerational mobility, a proportion of mobile individuals is also calculated. However, mobility is not measured for each individual variable value but for the variables as a whole. If a son has the same value as his father for a variable, it is categorized as 1; if the values differ, it is categorized as 0. If multiple values are present and at least one of them matches, a value of 1 is also assigned. This comparison is made between two generations (father and son).

For each time cohort, the average of ones and zeros is calculated, representing the proportion of mobile population. If this value is 1.0, every individual shares the same characteristics as the respective parental generation, whereas a value of 0.0 indicates complete mobility. Through temporal comparison, a time series is generated for each variable. Unlike the analysis of changes in occupational structure, these time series undergo a qualitative analysis where breaks are visually identified and

explained. This approach is feasible due to the limited number of time series and serves as a methodological contrast to the structural break analysis conducted earlier.

4. Result and interpretation

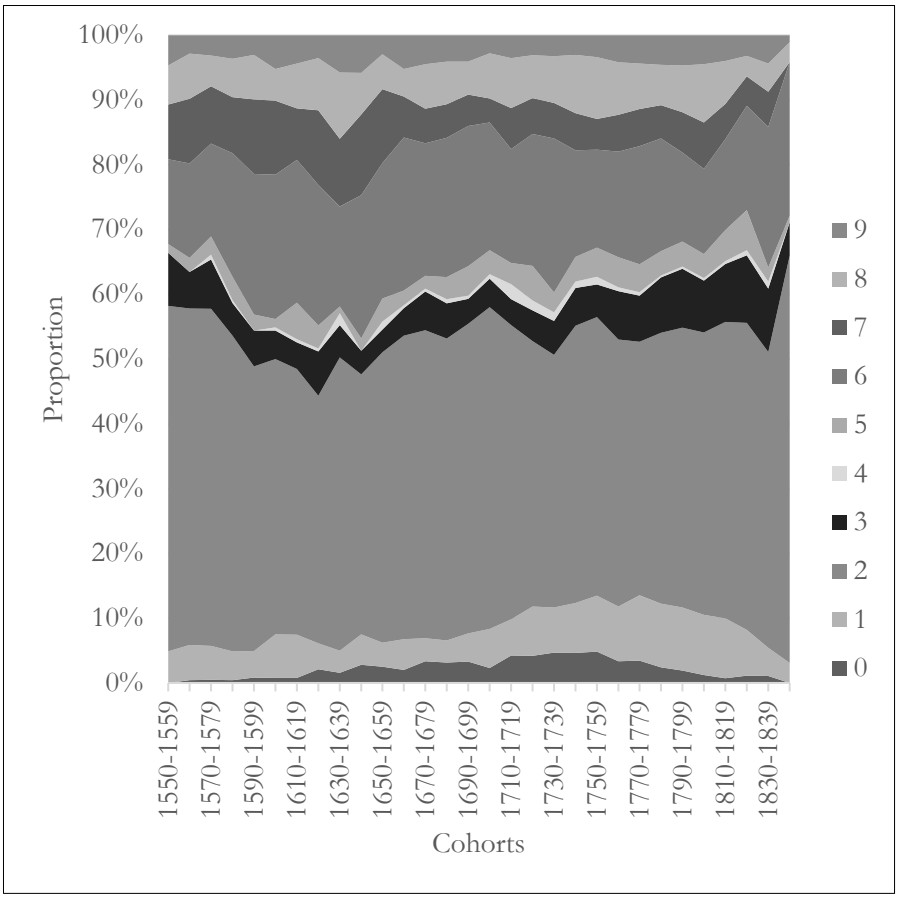
The presentation and interpretation of the results will first address the general changes in the occupational structure before delving into migrations and both intra- and intergenerational mobility.

4.1 Occupational structural change

For depicting occupational change, a stacked area chart can be used (cf. Elvery 2019, 2). This representation is visible for the variable «kldb1» in Graph 6. Initially striking is the surprisingly low level of change in the occupational structure over the long period under consideration. While changes in the proportions of the individual classes of the variable are noticeable, the transformation rarely occurs abruptly but rather gradually over many decades. Thus, the urban structure exhibits significant continuity over the period examined, despite the major upheavals Leipzig undergoes during this time. However, detailed changes are indeed discernible, particularly from the 18th century onwards (e.g., the growth of Group 5: Transport, Logistics, Protection, and Security). The stacked area chart format, however, can lead to overlooking changes in classes with a low percentage and may only be imprecisely detected. Therefore, a stacked area chart format is dispensed with in the following. Instead, each expression of a variable's time series is separately examined.

Based on the five variables described above (kldb1, kldb5, hisco1, hisclass, hiscam), a total of 35 time series are generated, representing the 35 expressions of the variables. A structural break test is conducted for each of these time series at the times of the four defined shocks, resulting in a total of 140 structural break tests within the boundaries of ±100 years of data. Tab. 7 shows the significance of the presence of each structural break. The results need to be examined with nuance. While significant structural breaks can be identified in the time series, no shocks or upheavals are recognized to have a decisive influence on all variables and expressions. Moreover, at the level of abstraction of the variables under study, there is not necessarily a causal inference that a shock or trend break has triggered a structural break in the time series - let alone answering how it managed to do so.

Graph 6. **Change in the occupational structure based on the variable kldb1**



The colour highlights provide information about the results of the robustness check within the boundaries of ±140 and ±60 years. If a field is lightly grayish, it indicates that a significant structural break was also identified in one of the other tests; for a more pronounced colour, significant structural breaks were identified in both additional tests. Notably, in the robustness checks, not a single structural break is identified for the printing trend shift in 1680 when changing the year boundaries. However, for the other three analyzed upheavals, 36 out of 40 structural breaks are confirmed in at least one of the other two tests. In 18 cases, the other tests identify significant structural breaks that remain hidden in the ±100-year test. The structural break test with the boundary of 60 years shows comparatively few significant upheavals (eleven). This could mean that the upheavals do not exhibit short-term effects or that significant changes in the time series occur only after distant changes, which may no longer be associated with the structural break.

Tab. 7. **Significance of structural breaks for various Leipzig shocks or trend breaks, observation of 100 years before and after, null hypothesis: there is no structural break, Chow test, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.005, * p<0.01, light colouring stands for a further significant structural break in the robustness checks, strong colouring stands for two further significant structural breaks in the robustness checks**

Variable: kldb1

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Printing industry		***	**				*	***		**
Seven Years' War	***	***					*		*	
Population boom	**	***	**							
Industrialization		*					*			*

Variable: hisclass

	-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Printing industry			*		*				*	**		**	
Seven Years' War		**			*				*		*	***	
Population boom	***				***				**		*	***	**
Industrialization	***				**				**	*			***

Variable: hisco1

	0/1	2	3	4	5	6	7/8/9
Printing industry	*		**	***		**	**
Seven Years' War				***	***	***	
Population boom				***	***	***	
Industrialization				**		**	

Variable: kldb5

	1	2	3	4
Printing industry	**	*		**
Seven Years' War				
Population boom				
Industrialization		***		**

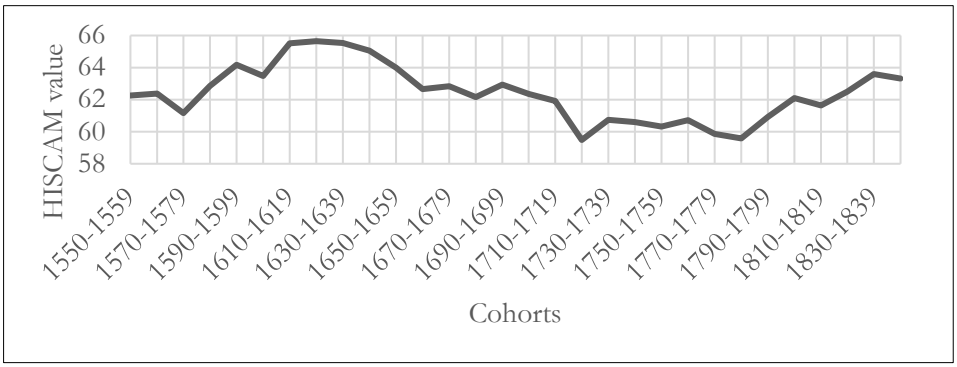
Variable: hiscam

	Average
Printing industry	***
Seven Years' War	***
Population boom	***
Industrialization	

Upon closer examination of the time series of all variables and cohorts, it is apparent that structural breaks in the time series are not always present at the chosen four time points. Additionally, visually identifiable structural breaks occur at different time points for each time series and are specific to each time series. Therefore, the time series are individual and must be interpreted accordingly. However, it remains evident that there are structural breaks in Leipzig's occupational structure during the observation period. To assess these more precisely, a more detailed analysis is required, which cannot be conducted for all time series at this point. Rather, this result motivates further research.

An exemplary representation of the time series for the HISCAM average is presented below (see Graph 7). The HISCAM scale is designed to have an expected value of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 (cf. Lambert et al. 2013, 81). An average consistently above 60 indicates that the population in the city holds professions with excessively high prestige. Starting from an initial level of around 62, the average HISCAM value increases to about 66 scale points by the 1620s cohort. Then, there is a decrease to about 60 scale points by the cohort of 1780-1789. By the end of the observation period, the average HISCAM value increases again to about 64 points. Structural breaks in this time series are not necessarily related to the mentioned events. For instance, the change in trend in the 1620-1629 cohort could have been caused by the Thirty Years' War, for example. Conversely, the other trend change in the birth cohort of 1780-1789 may indeed be related to the population boom in the period after 1800. Additionally, a general downward trend can be observed between 1620 and 1789, which lasts for a remarkable 170 years.

Graph 7. **Development of the HISCAM average over time in the KLF**



A structural downward mobility can also be observed in rural areas. Weiss analyzes social mobility in Saxony between 1550 and 1880. He shows that the proportion of full-fledged farmers in the rural population steadily decreased from over 80 to about 20 during this period. At the same time, until around 1800, the proportion of individuals classified as smallholders (half-farmers, gardeners, etc.) increased significantly (cf. Weiss 1993, 27). This result cannot be explained without a division of the agricultural estates. Additionally, during this period, the number of

individuals without significant agricultural employment also increased steadily (cf. Weiss 1993, 104). This, in turn, is due to population growth and the inability of every descendant to take over their parents' position, resulting in a general downward mobility. In the city of Leipzig, such a downward trend can also be observed, although the mechanism is different - there is no land to be divided. Moreover, the downward trend is already interrupted at the beginning of the 19th century.

Analyzing the proportion of individuals with highly complex professions, which tend to have a high HISCAM value (category 4 of variable kldb5), can help to better assess this trend. The share of this category decreases from about 25 percent in the cohort 1630-1639 to about ten percent in the last cohort (1840-1849). Put simply, the city council does not expand just because the city grows larger. Therefore, there are not automatically more highly valued positions. Additionally, the sectors where highly complex professions are located change: While individuals at the beginning of the observation period mainly concentrated in sectors 7 (business organization, accounting, law, and administration) and 8 (health, social services, education, and training), by the end of the observation period, professions of this highest level of demand are present in almost all sectors.

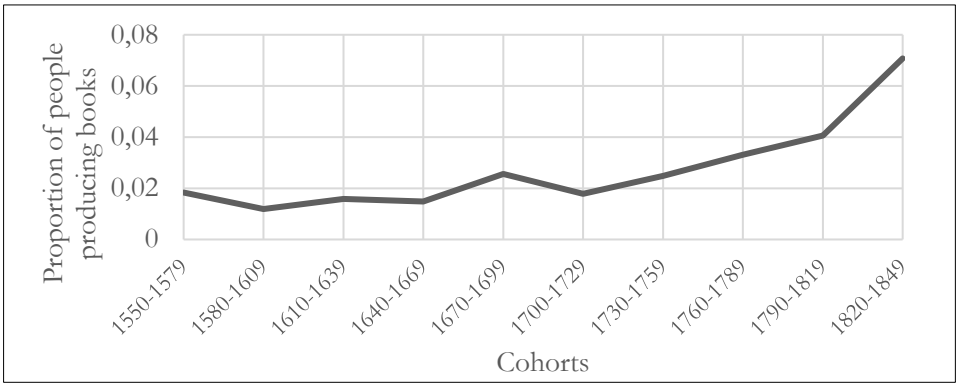
As described, this level of abstraction of the selected variables may not be sensitive enough to analyze shock effects. A more detailed perspective can be gained by examining specific occupations. An example of this is the quantitative development of occupations related to the printing press trend shift of 1680. In Graph 8, the share of printers, bookbinders, typesetters, typecasters, copperplate printers, and engravers is depicted.[23] Indeed, there is an increase from one to almost three percent of the workforce after the Thirty Years' War.[24] Although this share briefly drops to two percent at the beginning of the 18th century, it then steadily rises to about seven percent. This illustrates why the previous structural break analysis did not reveal significant upheaval around 1680 (the rise of the printing industry):[25] If anything, the «shock» of 1680 affected only about one to two percent of the workforce in the second half of the 17th century. Thus, it becomes evident that there is potential in the detailed analysis of individual occupations. This minor change may go unnoticed when examining the KldB occupation group 2 (production), or it may not even be visible when individuals switch between different manufacturing occupations.

[23] Persons who have the following letter combinations in their job description are selected: «uchdr», «uchbin», «riftse», «riftgie», «upferste», or «upferdr».

[24] At this point, it should be noted that Wittmann stated for the mid-18th century: In 1739, Leipzig, with 28,000 inhabitants, had 20 bookstores, 15 printing houses, 22 bookbinders, 11 copper engravers, 8 copperplate printers, and three type foundries. Two to three percent of the city's residents likely lived directly from the book trade. (Wittmann 2019, 93) His estimate of two to three percent aligns very well with the findings presented here.

[25] Only in the KldB occupational area 3 (Construction, Architecture, Surveying, and Building Technology) was such a case found.

Graph 8. **Proportion of book printers, bookbinders, typesetters, type founders, copperplate printers and engravers by year of birth of individuals**



It remains to be noted that until the beginning of the 18th century, little structural mobility is observed in the occupational categories (kldb1). After that, more pronounced shifts can be seen. Overall, there is a trend away from highly complex activities, which over a long period tends to correlate with a downward trend in the assessment of the average social prestige of the occupational structure. However, the four significant shocks examined do not show any recognizable, overarching, shock-like influence on Leipzig's occupational structure at this level of abstraction, although upheavals in Leipzig's occupational structure are present. The application of a Chow test seems to yield inconclusive results due to the double temporal uncertainty - on the one hand, caused by the occupation as a unit of measurement, which can occur at any point in life, and on the other hand, the punctuating of sometimes decades-long trends to a specific year. To make existing changes visible and explainable, detailed and granular data or qualitative explanations of the time series are necessary.

4.2 Influx or intra- or intergenerational change

The highlighted changes can mainly be attributed to three causes: (1.) A changed occupational structure due to migration, (2.) individuals who changed their profession during their lifetime (intragenerational mobility), and/or (3.) a changed occupational structure because sons pursued different professions than their fathers (intergenerational mobility).

To analyze the effect of migration, the 35 time series are generated based solely on individuals for whom no further ancestor is known - the similarity of the migrants to the time series of the local residents is of interest. For this purpose, the Pearson correlation coefficient is calculated between the time series (see Tab. 8). For the HISCAM time series, the correlation coefficient is 0.61**. The results show a mixed picture: Some correlations are low, others are moderate to high, some are even negative, and few are significant. For example, in the hisclass category 4 (lower professionals, clericals, and salesmen), there is a significant correlation of -0.20. This suggests that a significant portion of the changes in this group may have occurred

due to migration. At the same time, the correlation for the farmers (category 8) is high at 0.74, although it is not significant in this case. This analysis appears to be more hypothesis-generating for detailed analysis rather than providing causal conclusions.

Tab. 8. **Pearson correlation coefficients between all persons and those without a father, Mann-Whitney U test, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.005, * p<0.01**

kldb1										
Class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Coefficient	0.81	0.61**	0.13	0.33	0.72	0.40	-0.29	0.52	0.59	0.35***

hisco1							
Class	0/1	2	3	4	5	6	7/8/9
Coefficient	0.44**	0.41	0.28	0.01	0.73	0.69	0.35

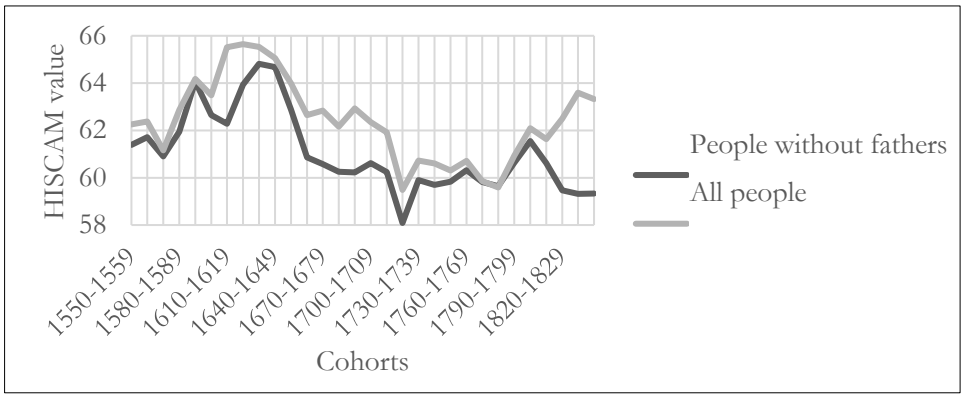
hisclass													
Class	-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Coefficient	0.38	0.35	0.49*	0.60	-0.20*	0.28	0.69	0.26	0.74	0.73	0.75	0.61	0.43

kldb5				
Class	1	2	3	4
Coefficient	0.12	0.22	0.31	0.43

A high correlation does not mean that the values are identical. Rather, it indicates that the direction in which the values evolve is similar. Further examination of the HISCAM score is particularly interesting. It appears that the social prestige of the occupations of the generation without fathers, according to the HISCAM scale in the dataset, remains constant at the same level or below that of the entire cohort (see Graph 9).[26] Therefore, migration to the city seems to have positively affected the prestige of occupations for the subsequent generations. Perhaps the move to the city was associated with the hope for social advancement - at least on the HISCAM scale, it seems to have worked. Another interpretation is that the migrants are responsible for the steadily declining level.

[26] Here it should be noted that in the graph, «all individuals" also includes individuals without known fathers. The difference is even more pronounced when these are excluded.

Graph 9. **Comparison of the average HISCAM score of all persons and persons without a known father in the data set over time**



Intragenerational mobility can be measured in the dataset when multiple job entries are available for a person. For intragenerational analysis, a cross-tabulation is generated over all the data (see Tab. 9). A person with occupations of different categories increases the count in the corresponding cell of the cross-tabulation. At the same time, the «Total» row indicates the total number of individuals with job entries in that category (including those with only one job entry). This allows for determining the proportion of individuals from one class who also hold another occupation (row «Proportion»).

This proportion varies depending on the category (e.g., for the variable kldb1, it ranges from 0.05% to 0.23%). Multiple entries are particularly common in the «Business organization, accounting, law and administration» category (category 7).[27] Overall, the intragenerational mobility observable in the data is low. A similar conclusion is generally supported by examining the tables for the variables kldb5, hisclass, and hisco1 (see Tab. 10 to Tab. 12).

[27] The individuals in this main group who have multiple professions are engaged in trade in about 40 percent of cases (category 6).

Tab. 9. **Proportion of persons in the KldB occupational areas with several occupational areas**

	0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
0	0	15	122	19	0	25	32	17	10	13
1	15	0	95	15	5	38	102	77	23	6
2	122	95	0	118	12	131	582	130	90	90
3	19	15	118	0	1	31	91	81	18	12
4	0	5	12	1	0	4	12	22	13	3
5	25	38	131	31	4	0	117	34	32	23
6	32	102	582	91	12	117	0	408	74	70
7	17	77	130	81	22	34	408	0	231	31
8	10	23	90	18	13	32	74	231	0	205
9	13	6	90	12	3	23	70	31	205	0
∑	253	376	1370	386	72	435	1488	1031	696	453
Total	1316	3741	29191	4320	408	2471	12544	4461	5123	3126
Proportion	0,19	0,10	0,05	0,09	0,18	0,18	0,12	0,23	0,14	0,14

Tab. 10- **Proportion of people in the KldB requirement levels with several occupational areas**

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
1	0	326	34	44
2	326	0	356	979
3	34	356	0	449
4	44	979	449	0
∑	404	1661	839	1472
Total	3998	46213	4792	10655
Proportion	0.10	0.04	0.18	0.14

Tab. 11. **Proportion of people in the HISCLASS classes with several occu. areas**

	-1	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
-1	0	5	2	2	20	14	4	63	7	84	5	23	1
1	5	0	280	92	392	64	2	152	37	86	0	15	0
2	2	280	0	27	246	105	2	42	30	58	1	8	0
3	2	92	27	0	66	12	0	22	6	21	5	11	0
4	20	392	246	66	0	118	1	330	25	202	7	98	4
5	14	64	105	12	118	0	1	40	7	42	0	11	1
6	4	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	1
7	63	152	42	22	330	40	1	0	18	219	3	78	3
8	7	37	30	6	25	7	1	18	0	15	3	4	1
9	84	86	58	21	202	42	2	219	15	0	2	100	3
10	5	0	1	5	7	0	0	3	3	2	0	0	0
11	23	15	8	11	98	11	0	78	4	100	0	0	2
12	1	0	0	0	4	1	1	3	1	3	0	2	0
∑	230	1125	801	264	1509	415	15	971	154	834	26	350	16
Total	2273	3775	5433	1044	12418	1604	82	23164	1458	10114	484	3166	149
Proportion	0.1	0.3	0.15	0.25	0.12	0.26	0.18	0.04	0.11	0.08	0.05	0.11	0.11

Tab. 12: **Proportion of people in the main HISCO groups who have several areas of occupation**

	0-1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7-9**
0-1	0	285	168	69	100	34	160
2	285	0	89	328	38	37	114
3	168	89	0	130	55	15	101
4	69	328	130	0	117	18	340
5	100	38	55	117	0	23	569
6	34	37	15	18	23	0	61
7-9	160	114	101	340	569	61	0
∑	816	891	558	1002	902	188	1345
Total	6953	2830	2795	9188	5029	2275	35717
Proportion	0.12	0.31	0.2	0.11	0.18	0.08	0.04

Omitting the HISCAM table due to its size, the information in this format may not be immediately apparent due to its granularity. However, in most categories, only a single-digit percentage of individuals have a second occupation with a different HISCAM value.[28]

The third aspect involves intergenerational mobility, measuring whether a change compared to the previous generation occurs based on various variables.[29] In Graph 10, the proportion per transition per cohort for the different variables is shown. The years between 1550 and 1579 are omitted since there were few individuals born during this period, for whom the father's occupation is known. Initially, the similar development of all variables is noticeable - the difference on the scale is mainly explained by the varying number of variable attributes. Until around the beginning of the 18th century, mobility is comparatively low for all variables (indicating high stability), followed by a phase of steadily increasing mobility until the end of the century. Afterward, mobility stabilizes at a high level. The development is thus divided into three phases: a «stable phase» from 1580-1729, a «transformation phase» from 1730-1789, and a «mobile phase» for those born between 1790-1849.[30]

It is particularly noteworthy to observe the trend of the variable «hiscam». This scale has a large number of possible attributes compared to the others. Yet, during the stable phase, it mainly ranges between 50-60 percent. The fact that a child occupies the same HISCAM value as their father can typically be explained by them having the same occupation. The significant decrease to around 20 percent is a consequence of most sons choosing a different profession than their fathers during the mobile phase.

Due to the high similarity in the developments of the individual variables, the analysis will continue with the variable «kldb1». To understand the extent to which intergenerational transmission has changed, the dataset is divided into three phases and the KldB occupational categories (see Tab. 13). It becomes evident that not all occupational categories are equally affected by this change. For instance, category 9 (linguistics, literature, humanities, social sciences, economics, media, arts, culture, and design) undergoes significant change: Instead of 58 percent maintaining the same characteristics in the stable phase, only 20 percent persist in the mobile phase.[31] However, the sample size in this category must also be considered, as it is particularly low for some attributes, making it less conclusive (e.g., category 4. The absolute number of individuals is provided in parentheses).

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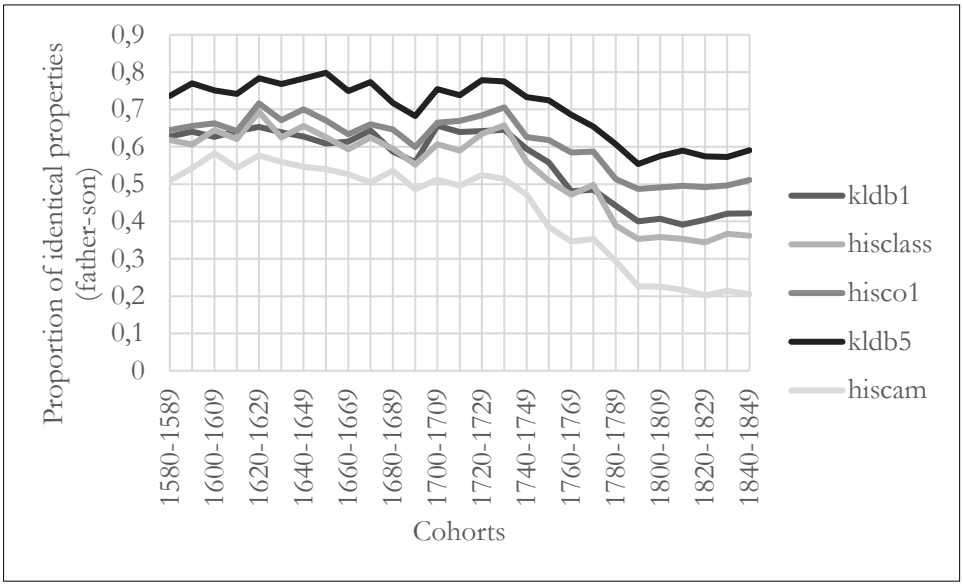
[28] An exception is observed among individuals with a HISCAM value of 93. 40 percent of these individuals have a different value. Slightly more than half of these cases correspond to the value 63, which makes this combination stand out significantly. This is related to the frequent combination of merchant/trader (rated 63) and a seat on the Leipzig city council («Ratsherr», rated 93).

[29] The variable HISCAM is included here, with a change being measured if the exact HISCAM value of the father is not reached.

[30] It should be noted that the mobile phase begins around the time when the structure of the previously mentioned HISCO main groups also undergoes more significant changes (see Graph 6). Thus, there is a change in the occupational structure at that time, and individuals are not merely switching within the same occupations.

[31] The decisive factor here is the manifestation among the children.

Graph 10. **Change over time in the proportion of people who have the same characteristics as the respective father on different scales**



Tab. 13: **Proportion of people working in the same field as their father (kldb1), in per cent by phase, number of absolute persons in brackets, Mann-Whitney U-test, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.005, * p<0.01**

Class	Stable phase	Trans-formation phase	Mobile phase	Ratio (Mobile/ Stable)	Difference (Mobile-Stable)
0	0.17 (8)	0.13 (14)	0.07 (23)	0.41	0.10***
1	0.47 (82)	0.28 (58)	0.11 (127)	0.23	0.36***
2	0.75 (1663)	0.61 (777)	0.56 (3378)	0.75	0.19***
3	0.33 (69)	0.46 (75)	0.30 (359)	0.91	0.03***
4	0.55 (16)	0.33 (8)	0.15 (11)	0.27	0.40
5	0.13 (15)	0.18 (20)	0.14 (102)	1.08	-0.01***
6	0.57 (612)	0.52 (323)	0.42 (1212)	0.74	0.15***
7	0.36 (159)	0.27 (43)	0.20 (198)	0.56	0.16**
8	0.44 (135)	0.38 (95)	0.25 (269)	0.57	0.19***
9	0.58 (125)	0.40 (48)	0.20 (159)	0.34	0.38***

Building on this, the question arises as to which groups the individuals migrated to. The following presentation illustrates the largest proportional deviation. The number of this largest target attribute is provided in parentheses (see

Tab. 16). It is noticeable that the proportion of the largest migration often increases. The fact that classes 2 (raw material extraction, production, and manufacturing) as well as 6 (commercial services, trade, sales, hotel, and tourism) predominantly accommodate the most individuals is also due to the fact that quantitatively, these are the two largest classes. In some cases, the migration to these attributes exceeds even the proportion of individuals who remain in the father's class. This phenomenon is clearly observable when comparing the three phases directly (see Tab. 15 to Tab. 17). While the cross table in the stable phase still exhibits the typical pronounced diagonal, the image changes towards the mobile phase to two vertical bars mainly representing classes 2 and 6. However, these areas also see a significant number of individuals leaving - in absolute terms, the proportions of the classes are roughly maintained across the phases. Therefore, a significantly increased mobility can be observed in the 18th century, primarily based on exchanges to and from KldB occupational categories 2 (production) and 6 (trade). However, if the proportions of the occupational categories remain roughly the same structurally (as also seen in the diagram presented earlier, see Graph 6), this raises even stronger questions about why occupational mobility has changed so significantly.

Tab. 14. **Largest share of churn in individual areas as share of change, group of largest churn in brackets, variable kldb1**

Class	Stable phase	Trans-formation phase	Mobile phase
0	0.49 (2)	0.40 (2)	0.44 (2)
1	0.19 (2)	0.25 (2)	0.36 (2)
2	0.11 (6)	0.15 (6)	0.18 (6)
3	0.24 (2)	0.26 (2)	0.40 (2)
4	0.14 (7)	0.25 (2)	0.32 (6)
5	0.39 (2)	0.36 (2)	0.38 (2)
6	0.14 (7)	0.18 (2)	0.30 (2)
7	0.27 (6)	0.32 (6)	0.30 (6)
8	0.28 (7)	0.19 (2)	0.25 (6)
9	0.15 (6)	0.30 (2)	0.34 (2)

Tab. 15. **Cross-tabulation of variable kldb1 (proportion per column), stable phase (1580-1729), colour highlighting of high stability, father at the top, son on the left**

	0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
0	0.17	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.02
1	0.02	0.47	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	0.49	0.19	0.75	0.24	0.14	0.39	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.09
3	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.33	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02
4	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.55	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.02
5	0.06	0.06	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.13	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00
6	0.06	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.07	0.18	0.57	0.27	0.11	0.15
7	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.13	0.07	0.07	0.14	0.36	0.28	0.05
8	0.04	0.06	0.04	0.08	0.10	0.04	0.11	0.23	0.44	0.05
9	0.11	0.02	0.03	0.07	0.00	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.58

Tab. 16. **Cross-tabulation of variable kldb1 (proportion per column), transformation phase (1730-1789), colour highlighting of great stability, father at the top, son on the left**

	0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
0	0.13	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02
1	0.03	0.28	0.01	0.01	0.08	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.01
2	0.40	0.25	0.61	0.26	0.25	0.36	0.18	0.15	0.19	0.30
3	0.13	0.06	0.06	0.46	0.13	0.09	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.03
4	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.33	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00
5	0.06	0.07	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.18	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.00
6	0.11	0.23	0.15	0.13	0.04	0.17	0.52	0.32	0.19	0.14
7	0.04	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.27	0.10	0.02
8	0.08	0.05	0.04	0.01	0.08	0.04	0.05	0.15	0.38	0.07
9	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.00	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.40

Tab. 17. **Cross-tabulation of the variable kldb1 (proportion per column), mobile phase (1790-1849), colour highlighting of great stability, father at the top, son on the left**

	0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
0	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.00
1	0.02	0.11	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01
2	0.44	0.36	0.56	0.40	0.19	0.38	0.30	0.19	0.20	0.34
3	0.14	0.05	0.06	0.30	0.08	0.09	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.05
4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
5	0.08	0.08	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.14	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.05
6	0.12	0.22	0.18	0.13	0.32	0.21	0.42	0.30	0.25	0.21
7	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.20	0.12	0.05
8	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.11	0.25	0.08
9	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.08	0.20

For further interpretation, it is therefore particularly relevant to examine what changed for those born in Leipzig during the transformation phase (1730-1789). At this point, it is questionable whether a preceding shock like the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) could trigger such a process of transformation. As already indicated, the city suffered greatly during the Seven Years' War (hard years, population loss, disruption of the trade fair).[32] However, after the war, there was a resurgence of the trading hub. Additionally, a significant increase in employment in the printing industry during this time period was also demonstrated. Nevertheless, these changes did not occur abruptly during or immediately after the war; instead, a gradual institutional transformation spanning about two generations (60 years) is evident. Consequently, it can be inferred that from the mid-18th century onwards, there must have been increasing opportunities in Leipzig for individuals to deviate from their fathers' occupations. Particularly, the significant increase in mobility on the HISCAM scale implies this.

The Seven Years' War could indeed have acted as a demographic shock by significantly reducing the population, thereby laying the groundwork for the positive developments afterward (cf. Epstein 2000, 69). Epstein identifies demographic shocks (triggered by events such as diseases like the plague) as essential drivers of economic growth. His line of thought is based on Schumpeter's concept of creative destruction (cf. Schumpeter 2020, 106). According to this idea, the shortage of labor resulting from demographic shocks leads to institutional changes. For example, apprenticeship admissions in guilds may become easier, and labor-saving innovations may find greater acceptance (cf. Pamuk 2007, 309f.). Consequently, while not all

[32] Additionally, Denzel attributes a cyclical downturn in trade fair commerce, currency instability in Saxony, and high contribution payments as contributing factors to the situation (cf. 2016, 213).

remaining individuals change their occupations, institutional changes occur, slowly and gradually leading to transformation.

Moreover, when fathers pass away and their positions are not immediately filled by their descendants, increased professional rematching occurs. Children, due to the resulting decision-making flexibility, can choose occupations that better align with their abilities, skills, and interests. This reallocation of labor leads to a more efficient use of resources and positive economic implications. Furthermore, occupational mobility is a necessary condition for changing the occupational structure (and thus for economic change). The more mobile individuals are, the faster the economy can adapt to market changes.

The long-term effects of such demographic shocks are evident, as demonstrated by the example of the Plague of 1627-1629. Alfani, Gierok, and Schaff illustrate that this event led to a structural break in the inequality development of Germany. After the population reduction, society became more egalitarian until the 18th century (cf. 2022, 92, 107 u. 118).

Years' War could indeed have initiated institutional change. In fact, a population decline can be identified during the affected period: while about 32,000 people were residing in the city in 1753, ten years later, there were approximately 4,000 fewer individuals. The famines of the 1770s further reduced the population by about 2,000 people (cf. Höpel 2016, 97). This represents a noticeable reduction of about 20 percent, which on an individual level, could have provided opportunities for occupational change.

If predominantly men had died, this could also provide an explanation for the increased mobility. For instance, Abramitzky, Delevande, and Vasconcelos demonstrate, using the example of France after World War I, that an excess of women promotes mobility – men are more likely to marry women of higher status (cf. 2011, 144). However, the Leipzig population suffered more directly from the effects of war, rather than because Leipzig sons fell on the battlefield. While across all KLF data, 57 percent of individuals with a date of death are male, during the years 1756-1763, it is only 52 percent. From this perspective, it seems unlikely that the war led to a significant surplus of women.[33]

Höpel attributes the rapid resurgence of the city to bourgeois educational and occupational aspirations, as well as to the Saxon state reforms after the Seven Years' War (cf. 2016, 97). However, Leipzig's post-war resurgence is not unique: The so-called Saxon Rétablissement leads to the reconstruction and reform of all of Saxony, later transforming it into one of Germany's leading industrial regions (cf. Kroll 2014, 72-74 u. 96). For instance, in 1764, the Leipzig Economic Society was founded with the purpose of promoting the efficiency of production through scientific knowledge. This led, for example, to the promotion of the manufacturing industry, with 26 manufactories established in Leipzig alone (cf. Höpel 2016, 100f.). It is evident that the reforms implemented after the war also had the potential to foster occupational mobility. When classifying the reasons for occupational changes into the categories defined by Kammerer and Altmann (as introduced earlier), it becomes clear that in

[33] Allerdings sind die Todesdaten in die KLF wie gezeigt nur sehr unvollständig übertragen worden.

Leipzig, especially during the Rétablissement, technological changes, changes in societal conditions, and changes in demand were prominent factors. Technological changes were primarily driven by the promotion of the manufactory system, which introduced production-related innovations. Moreover, the general endeavor to integrate scientific knowledge into production processes may have had a beneficial impact on production efficiency.

Höpel identifies a change in the societal value system as the second area concerning societal conditions - promotion of trade and education, as well as frugality, replaced an opulent court and resource-consuming military apparatus (cf. Höpel 2016, 102). Further elaborating on Höpel's observations, which describe the emergence of a bourgeois culture and sociability, one gets the impression of an enlightened urban culture where even the urban elites incorporate emerging groups (cf. 2016, 106-10). Beachy also notes that with the Rétablissement, bourgeois influence profoundly changed traditionally corporatist institutions (cf. 2005, 97). Specifically, examples include the establishment of the Academy of Drawing, Painting, and Architecture or the creation of a professorship in economics in Leipzig (cf. Höpel 2016, 101).

Another aspect that may have promoted opportunities for professional mobility in this context was the rise of Leipzig as a trading center.[34] Due to its proximity to the marketplace, engaging in commercial activities became an obvious choice. However, the mechanism of action could also occur in the opposite direction: the transformation of Leipzig may have made it necessary to pursue commercial occupations. Ultimately, this changes the demand for labor. Those born during the Transformation phase, roughly between 1750 and 1810, would be in their career exploration phase. This period, as previously discussed, witnessed a significant transformation of Leipzig into a trade center of European significance. The increased trading activity indeed appears to be a significant factor contributing to intergenerational mobility, as evidenced by the results of the cross-tabulations presented earlier: a substantial portion of the change occurs in category 6 (Trade). However, not all sons persist in this occupational choice in the subsequent generation; roughly half of them leave this occupational category. Mobility cannot solely be attributed to the trade aspect. The cross-tabulations also show growing fluctuations in the production sector (2). While this cannot be explained by industrialization in Leipzig during the Transformation phase, the establishment of 26 manufactories in the last third of the 18th century provides a potential explanation. Moreover, a significant portion of mobility occurs between production and trade occupations: the sons of craftsmen become traders, while many traders' sons become craftsmen again. This demonstrates a close relationship between the production and distribution of goods.

In summary, it can be said that a significant portion of occupational mobility is influenced by newcomers. Intergenerational change also plays an important role, especially during the mobile phase from around 1790 onward. Between

[34] According to Höpel, the resurgence of trade fairs, as well as the introduction of manufactories after 1763, can be attributed to the effects of the Rétablissement and developments in the book industry (cf. Höpel 2016, 104).

approximately 1730 and 1790, a shift from a predominantly non-mobile society to one with high mobility can be observed. Those born during this period are highly affected by the repercussions of the Rétablissements after the Seven Years' War. The institutionally driven reforms, deemed economically fruitful, trigger an institutional shift that leads to higher occupational mobility on various levels. The relevance of these individual levels (population decline, technological change, demand change, societal change) for this societal transformation cannot be precisely determined here - only their combined effect. In this sense, the Seven Years' War can be evaluated as an act of creative destruction, wherein the labor market becomes more permeable, allowing greater room for innovations. Even if the subsequent reallocation of the workforce does not solely determine positive economic development, it plays at least a supportive role. Thus, the extreme growth in the 19th century is not solely attributed to the industrialization of the city and its surroundings (cf. Walther 2012, 201f.) - rather, the findings of this research suggest that development is also a result of the Rétablissements and the associated change in occupational mobility. Occupational mobility acts as a catalyst for economic development, while intragenerational mobility-related changes in occupational structure are considered less relevant.

Indeed, the stabilization of the change in professional mobility towards the end of the 18th century raises questions. The trends shown in Graph 10 suggest a regressive pattern, indicating a decrease in the speed of the mobilization trend by the end of the 18th century. This implies that such a high level of professional mobility has been reached, which is simply not surpassed under the prevailing societal conditions. Another possibility is that the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the 19th century may influence this development and interrupt this trend.

4.3 Special features for testators

The KLF is divided into the testating individuals (n=870) and non-testating individuals (n=65,512), each with occupational information. The underlying assumption is that the testating individuals are wealthier. However, the average HISCAM score of the testators is 62.3, only 0.5 scale points higher than the score of those who have never made a will. This difference is minimal. Furthermore, the Mann-Whitney U-test yields a p-value of 24%, indicating that this difference is not statistically significant. Additionally, upon examining the occupations of the testators, there is no evidence to suggest that only individuals with particularly prestigious occupations have made wills. Instead, the occupations of the testators represent an average cross-section of the population in terms of prestige on the HISCAM scale. Therefore, the group of testators cannot be used as originally planned to study differential behavior as an example of an elite class. Consequently, this step is omitted from the analysis.

5. Conclusion

The hypothesis underlying this study, that abrupt or trend-breaking changes of various kinds are also reflected in the occupational structure of a city, cannot be clearly confirmed in the case of the city under investigation - Leipzig - during the period from 1550 to 1849. Instead, a differentiated view is required: Despite significant changes, the occupational structure remains very stable over a long period. Even the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) does not lead to a permanent change in the occupational structure. This enduring stability is particularly surprising for Leipzig, a city that is presumed to be more sensitive to shocks as an important trading center. Only with the transition to the 19th century does a gradual change in the occupational structure begin to emerge. This change is preceded by the Schumpeterian creative destruction of the Saxon state in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), followed by a period of reform known as the Rétablissement. In this phase of reforms, key reasons for changes in Leipzig's occupational structure are recognized: changes in production technology, demand, and societal conditions - coupled with institutional changes. Despite these significant upheavals, however, the change occurs slowly, partly due to migration but mainly through intergenerational mobility.[35]

Not only does the occupational structure change, but also the occupational mobility increases significantly during this period. The likelihood that a child born after 1790 will take up the same profession as their father is only about half as high as it was for children born before 1730. This reallocation of labor implies that people can better utilize their skills, abilities, and interests in the economy, making them more effective. This, in turn, suggests that the increase in occupational mobility contributes positively to Leipzig's economic prosperity - and consequently to the significance the city holds several decades later.[36]

The significance of the Rétablissement for the history of Leipzig - and beyond, for the entire history of Saxony - is primarily associated with reforms and the founding of institutions that individually promote the economy of Saxony significantly. What has so far gone unnoticed is the indirect impact through occupational mobility. This study highlights this undiscovered element for the rise of Leipzig. The results suggest a mechanism whereby positive economic effects can be achieved through increasing mobility. This, in turn, may also provide reason to evaluate and shape current economic development measures in terms of their effects on promoting occupational mobility.

Leipzig differs significantly from other cities examined in this regard. While Leipzig shared some common urban trends, its reliance on trade and intellectual exchange, rather than industry alone, makes it a distinct case within the broader European context. Additionally, unlike Florence, analyzed by Barone and Mocetti, Leipzig does not consistently exhibit low mobility. Here, we observe a shift towards

[35] The chosen method does not allow for a more detailed quantitative weighting of these factors.

[36] By the end of the observation period, Leipzig had just over 60,000 inhabitants, as stated by Gränitz (cf. Gränitz 2013, 86). The population boom to over 700,000 inhabitants occurred thereafter, up to the first half of the 20th century. It's worth noting the relative growth compared to the beginning of the 19th century, which often gets overshadowed by the later boom.

a much more mobile society earlier than in Florence. On the other hand, Favre, Floris, and Woitek observe a declining mobility in Zurich, which is also undergoing significant structural changes socioeconomically. This suggests that the change does not affect socioeconomically disadvantaged social strata there, unlike in Leipzig. For future research, it is desirable to examine and compare the occupational mobility and economic development of different cities. Not only Leipzig undergoes a phase of great prosperity; other cities also experienced strong growth phases in the 19th century - without being affected by the Rétablissement, for example.

The present dataset is also characterized by the restriction that occupational information is only linked with the birth date, leading to temporal inaccuracies. With a different type of dataset that provides more detailed information on occupational status at the time of the event under investigation, the effects of shocks could potentially be better examined. Additionally, it has been shown that using the current dataset, a Chow test alone, due to the ambiguity of occupations as a unit of measurement and the determination of turning points for long-term disruptions in a one-year interval, does not yield meaningful results. However, the methods used to analyze the effects of migration, as well as intragenerational and intergenerational mobility on the city's occupational structure, are convincing. The method for determining the migration effect appears to be hypothesis-generating. Furthermore, it would be relevant to develop a method that incorporates the different weighting of these three factors.

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José Antonio Mateos Royo

Peaceful conquest or skilful adaptation? The rise of Genoese merchants in Aragon (1580-1620)[1]

1. Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, the historical significance of migration has aroused considerable academic interest. This has resulted in the publication of numerous studies of the phenomenon in Europe between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, a period of transition between the migration caused by war and religious conflict typical of late medieval times and migration with economic causes, which grew increasingly important in the early Modern Age to become the chief driver of migration today (Dupaquier 1994; Page 1992). These studies address not only conventional demographic or economic issues but also new social and cultural questions, such as those concerning the integration or mobility of immigrants into their host community. The majority of them concentrate on towns and cities, and on immigrant communities displaying a marked ethnic, religious or occupational identity (François ed. 1996; Menjot and Pinol 1996; González-Bernaldo, Martini and Pelus-Kaplans, eds. 2008). Other studies explore the influence on migration policies of the emerging fiscal-military states' goals and even of new or revised political concepts such as citizenship, nation, state or empire which appeared in this period, especially as they applied to foreigners (Herzog 2003; Munck and Winter 2012).

As a regional case study of this social mobility of immigrant communities taking place in late medieval and early modern Europe, this paper explores the rise of the Genoese colony located in Saragossa between 1580 and 1620. Despite their previous limited activity, after the extinction of the regional mercantile bourgeoisie, this colony controlled the trade and short-term credit in Aragon during this period. This rapid and easy process was surprising in a society resistant to the economic power of foreigners and in a kingdom that preserved, under the Hapsburg monarchy ruling Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its laws and institutions developed since its creation in 1035, only suppressed by the more centralist Bourbon dynasty in 1707. This study analyses the thoughtful strategies adopted by the Genoese to obtain this economic position without significant social rejection. Their networks of information and financing with other Genoese merchants in Spain and Italy enabled them to take advantage of exceptional circumstances. The adaptation of their business to the political and economic context as well as to the legal and institutional framework of the kingdom allowed them to increase their efficiency and obtain the

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support of the regional elites in Aragon who used their services, such as nobles, clergy, citizens, and the representatives of the Spanish monarch: viceroy, governor, judges.

Given the lack of private documentation linked to the Genoese companies and families active in Aragon, the main source used has been the records of the notaries who worked for the Genoese between 1561 and 1620 in Saragossa which was the centre of this mercantile community. Various Aragonese public archives, both municipal and regional, have provided new data on their businesses and systems for moving their money. In contrast to the selective analysis of data on trade, leasing of feudal rents, marriage settlements and wills carried out in previous studies (Gómez Zorraquino 1987 and 1995), I have extended the research to include other economic and institutional subjects, ignored but well documented in the primary sources. Despite the predominance of economic information, this methodology allowed a better understanding of the family and company arrangements of the Genoese. Their strategies pursuing upward social mobility have been compared with those of French immigrants in Aragon and Genoese in other Spanish territories of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

With the Genoese population concentrated in Saragossa, the political and communication centre of Aragon, there is no local count that allows us to quantify it between 1561 and 1620. An exhaustive analysis of the notarial records mentioned above found 81 Genoese men considered as inhabitants, residents or with domicile in Saragossa in this period. Unlike Valencia between 1450 and 1550, where many Genoese worked in the silk industry, or Cartagena between 1590 and 1630, where they focused on different urban services (Salvador Esteban 1986, 180-86; Navarro Espinach 1994; Torres Sánchez 1990: 564), these innmigrants did not provide qualified craftsmen to Saragossa. The only trade attributed to them or exercised by them is that of merchant or their representative. Their number is small compared to the 915 French with known trade who lived in Saragossa in 1642 among a population of 6,090 taxpaying households according to a local census. However, along with 40 small merchants (shopkeepers and hawkers), only 43 of these 915 (4.7%) are classified as actual merchants (Mateos Royo 2013, 356). The notarial records do not allow us to specify the permanence of these Genoese in Saragossa; but the rate of arrival is clear. If between 1561 and 1580, 19 Genoese are mentioned (23.46% of the total); this added up to 46 (56.79%) between 1581 and 1600. The rapid development of business in Saragossa in these two decades led to the greatest number of stays for a few years and temporary visits by compatriot traders. Only 16 new Genoese (19.75%) are registered between 1601 and 1620, some being offspring or family members of merchants who arrived in the previous period and remained in Aragon. Nine Genoese wives of these merchants are cited as residents in Saragossa between 1581 and 1620, but only three signed documents before a notary from 1615 onwards.

2. The preliminary phase (1561-80). Economy

In these two decades, the Genoese explored the economic possibilities of Aragon, whose trade had grown strongly during the second third of the sixteenth

century, facilitated by certain reforms. After decades of leading negotiations with royal or regional authorities ruling in Béarn and Catalonia, the public institutions of Aragon achieved in the middle of this century the final eradication of the reprisals or legal seizures of goods which had been applied since the late Middle Ages by merchants to foreign counterparts in their territory in order to collect debts unpaid by their compatriots. These agreements brought security to the transit of merchandise: the transport of wool belonging to Aragonese traders through the Ebro river towards the Mediterranean sea became safer after being the main commodity seized in Catalan ports by native merchants in the past. The mutual reduction of tariffs on the exit of gold and silver coins agreed in 1564 between the Aragonese and Catalan *Cortes* or parliaments favoured their export from Aragon to France and Italy via Catalonia, taking advantage of the Aragonese policy of free monetary circulation (Mateos Royo 2021, 153-62). Domiciliation in Saragossa valued its political importance as the capital of the kingdom and its strategic location in the centre of the Ebro river valley, which facilitated communication and transactions with the surrounding kingdoms. The Genoese used the privileges granted by the kings of Aragon in the Middle Ages to Saragossa that exempted its residents from paying tolls to the king and private individuals when transporting their goods through Aragon. This right persisted, even if the goods were transported by their servants or hired carriers if their owners made them their legal representatives.[2]

Aragon had been a traditional axis of trade with Italy since the late Middle Ages due to its substantial sheep population, and just as the regional merchants did in the sixteenth century, the Genoese bought unwashed or washed wool in Aragon to export it to Genoa. Between 1562 and 1567, this was the main undertaking of the company formed by Luis Espínola and Vicencio Lercaro.[3] They either purchased the sheared wool from regional nobles, merchants or farmers at the main fairs and markets or agreed with the farmers before shearing to deliver it on a fixed date, advancing part of the money as a down payment. In February 1579 Vicencio Lercaro obtained 11,524 *arrobas* of wool in this way in south-west Aragon.[4] Their purchases considered not only the quality of the wool (that coming from the Community of villages of Teruel and Albarracín was the highest valued), but also the transport costs from the collection point to Saragossa and Escatrón, from where they went down the Ebro river in canoes to Tortosa for transport from the ports of Ampolla or Mataró towards Livorno and Genoa.[5] Agustín Guirardí and Borbón Centurión even tried – unsuccessfully due to lack of water – to construct a wool scour in two

[2] Historical Archive of Notarial Records of Saragossa (HANRS), Mateos Solorzano (MS), 1568, f.454v-55v, 1572, f.785r-89r, 800r-01r, 1578, f.420v-21v. This exemption did not apply to tolls under lordship ownership. AHNS, Diego Fecet (DF), 1598, f.503v-05r, 517r-23v.

[3] HANRS, MS, 1570, f.350r-73r.

[4] HANRS, MS, 1579, fo. 190r-92v. The Aragonese *arroba* weighed 12.6 kilograms.

[5] HANRS, Martín de Gurrea (MG), 1566, f.36r-41r; Diego Casales (DC), 1591, f.627v-34r; DF, 1586, f.484r-86r, 1591, f.765r-70v, 1595, f.702v-09r, 1601, f. 1828r-31v.

municipalities in south-western Aragon during the 1580s in order to increase the amount of washed wool sent to Genoa.[6]

In addition to wool, the Genoese merchants were able to trade other commodities for the domestic market, such as leather, or items for export, such as the valuable saffron. Along with its export to Genoa through the Catalan ports, the Genoese traders sent saffron from Saragossa to Seville and even to Lyon in France, for the fairs.[7] The main product imported from Genoa were the quality fabrics not manufactured in Saragossa: velvet, rascia, Milanese stametto, fabrics with gold and silver thread.[8]

In order to pool efforts and capital, the most active Genoese merchants grouped themselves into companies made up of two or three people, often relatives, with legal capacity to act autonomously on behalf of all the members if some were absent. The incorporation of Aragonese into these companies was scarce, often due to their status as leather or wool craftsmen, which gave them a good knowledge of the acquired raw material or grounds to use it to manufacture products.[9] Without being partners, the Genoese could represent their compatriots to close deals or collect debts outside Saragossa, taking advantage of their travels to other territories or stays in other cities. The small number of Genoese residing in Saragossa in this period induced some of them to trust these tasks to their Aragonese servants, after probably contributing to their necessary mercantile training.[10]

Competition from local traders in Aragon led the Genoese to maintain important commercial activities in Castile and Navarre, especially the purchase of wool.[11] Francisco Ossago exceptionally extended his business of trading wool and other goods between 1569 and 1574 to the north-east of Castile, Navarre, Basque Country, Béarn and the west coast of France.[12] The connections of these Genoese with compatriots settled in Madrid, Toledo or even Seville facilitated the commercial deals, as reflected in the designating of procurators to collect pending debts, including *juros* (government bonds) or loans from the Spanish monarchy.[13] After forming a company with Francisco Ossago, Jerónimo Espínola moved to Toledo, where he resided between 1568 and 1571, to close business deals on behalf of both.[14]

From 1566, the Genoese were very active in the use of *cédulas* or bills of exchange to speed up the mobility of the transactions, helping to make Saragossa a centre of exchange with the cities of Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid and the fairs of Medina

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[6] Historical Archive of Notarial Records of Daroca (HANRD), Miguel Domingo Latorre (MDL), 1582, f.35v-39v., 1588, f.203r-15v; AHNRS MS, 1582, f.733r-34r, DF, 1587, f.604v-06r, 1001r-03v.

[7] HANRS, MS, 1571, f.640r-42r, 1574, f.132v-33r; DF, 1591, f.997r-98v.

[8] HANRS, MS, 1571, f.339r-40r, 1574, f.956r-57r, 1575, f.234v-35v, 1576, f.785v, 836v-37r.

[9] HANRS, MG, 1551, f.108r-16v; HANRD, MDL, 1583, f.154r-56r.

[10] HANRS, MS, 1573, f.28v-30v, 39r.

[11] On the purchase of wool in Castile by the Genoese traders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Girón Pascual 2018, 116-66; Rodríguez de Gracia 2003, 599-606.

[12] HANRS, MS, 1569, f.1013r-14r, 1573, f.28v-30v, 1574, f.398r-90v, 892v-93v.

[13] HANRS, MS, 1568, f.344r-45r, 371v-75r, 1569, f.960v-62r, 1570, f.648v-50r, 692r-96v, 1571, f.323r-24r, 1572, f.339r-40v, 1573, f.216v-18v, 1579, f.536r-38v.

[14] HANRS, MS, 1568, f.373v-75r, 1569, f.881v-82v, 1570, f.425v-26v, 1571, f.288v-89v, 337r-39r.

del Campo and Lyon, in France. Still used on occasion in the 1560s, the resort to exchange in the fairs of Villalón and Medina de Rioseco declined in Saragossa from 1570 onwards.[15] In addition to the essential role performed by the fairs of Medina del Campo, the use of these bills reinforced commercial and financial links with Madrid, capital of the Spanish monarchy.[16] The sharp decline of the number of protests of bills of exchange presented to the Genoese in Saragossa since 1580 confirms the consolidation of the exchange system.[17] Those who had more money at their disposal could store their capital or that of their company in the table of deposits created by the town of Saragossa in the mid sixteenth century to store sums from private individuals and withdraw it from there at will. Six merchants proceeded in this way in 1565 and 1574.[18] As an expression of their limited liquidity, the Genoese made fewer short- and long-term loans to the Aragonese than later on.

3. The rise of the Genoese (1581-1620). Economy

3.1. Feudal rent leases and cereal trade

As a new and lucrative line of action, the Genovese initiated the leasing of feudal rents in Aragon, exercised until 1580 exclusively by the local merchant bourgeoisie. The lordships owned by the high lay nobility were the first option considered, given their extension and the indebtedness of their owners. From the middle of the sixteenth century, the Duke of Villahermosa and the Marquis of Camarasa contracted long-term credits with Aragonese merchants, purchased in the decade of 1580 by large Genoese traders – Espínola, Negro, Centurión – at a lower price, becoming creditors of these nobles.[19] The important sums invested between 1582 and 1592 by large Genoese traders are evidence of their interest (Graph 1). After Daniel Espínola had leased the rents of the Duchy of Villahermosa for three years from April 1582 for 291,000 *sueldos* a year, he shared his rights with Juan Bautista de Negro once he had recovered them after having sold them to Borbón Centurión in 1582 and the latter to Juan Bautista Espínola in 1583.[20] Juan Bautista de Negro managed to lease the rents of this duchy for 320,000 *sueldos* a year for eight years from April 1586 and those of the barony of Osera and Figueruelas for 120,000 *sueldos* for six years from April 1588: 43.75% and 39.58% of this annual income was dedicated to pay pensions to these two noblemen's creditors. His brother Felipe de Negro leased the rents of the Marquisate of Aytona for 190,000 *sueldos* for three years from April 1589; but he

[15] HANRS, Jacobo Secanilla (JS), 1563, f.279r-80r, MS, 1567, f. 388r-v.

[16] About these fairs, Casado Alonso, ed. 2017, 139-91, 219-35.

[17] HANRS, MS, 1566-80.

[18] Municipal Archive of Saragossa (MAS), Administration Books (AD), 1601 and 1602.

[19] HANRS, MS. 1583, f.333v-49r.

[20] HANRS, MS, 1582, f.220r-v, 1583, f.591r-94r, 1591, f.688r-92r; Miguel Diaz de Altarriba (MDA), 1585, f.442r-43r.

sold them in February 1590 to Juan Bautista de Negro and the latter to Juan Bautista Espínola for 200,000 s*ueldos* in October 1591.[21]

Although the Duke of Villahermosa renegotiated in 1590 with Juan Bautista de Negro the terms of payment of the lease to satisfy his lenders, the Royal Governor of Aragon ordered in 1592 the seizure of the rents – in particular, cereal stored in granaries – by the *Real Audiencia* or the supreme royal tribunal of justice in Aragon, as a result of the duke's involvement in a regional rebellion against Philip II in 1591. He also ordained Juan Bautista to fulfil the terms of the lease as administrative commissioner of the lordship revenues, responsible to the king, the duke and his creditors. His management was hampered by the *Real Audiencia*, which withheld part of his income until 1595.[22] As shown by the return of their lease rights to their owners or their sale to Aragonese merchants by Juan Bautista de Negro in 1592, the financial insolvency of these lay lordships induced the Genoese merchants from 1593 to give up this business (Graph 1).[23] Their decision was reinforced by the expulsion from Aragon in 1610 of the *moriscos* or Muslims forced in 1526 to convert to Christianity ordered by King Philip III, which affected around 14,000 families (just under 19% of the kingdom's inhabitants) and depopulated many lay lordships. As an exception, between April 1607 and March 1616, Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero and the Aragonese merchant Domingo Sanz de Cortes leased for 54,000 *sueldos* per year rents belonging to the Barons of Alfajarín after loaning them money at 6.66% in 1606. With the lease being assumed by Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero in August 1610, they submitted to arbitration between 1611 and 1614 to settle accounts and distribute the annual price among the barons and their lenders. With the baroness having inherited these rents through usufruct during her widowhood according to the laws of Aragon, an agreement with her creditors in 1618 led her to lease them to Alexandre Gualtero in 1619 for 50,000 *sueldos* per year to ensure the collection of their annual pensions.[24]

The Genoese also leased feudal rights linked to *encomiendas* – commissioned feudal domains – or lordships of military orders (San Juan de Jerusalén, Santiago, Calatrava). These rents were assigned in usufruct to a noble and influential member of the order, designated by the grand master and approved by the Council of Military Orders located in Madrid. Both sometimes had to ratify the leases of the *encomiendas* agreed by their usufructuary, particularly if certain terms were in breach of the order's constitutions.[25] Perhaps to overcome their reluctance, between 1586 and 1602 the Genoese collaborated with Aragonese merchants or purchased their lease right to obtain these rents.[26] These leases lasted until 1621 and generated assumable and variable costs – between 11,200 and 60,000 annual *sueldos* – according to size,

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[21] HANRS, MDA, 1585, f.382v-441v, DF, 1588, f.323r-36v, 1376r-85v; 1589, f.5v-15r; Jerónimo Andrés (JA), 1592, f.450r-73v.

[22] HANRS, DF, 1590, f.116v-18r, 1592, f.179r-81v, 1595, f.1320v-27r.

[23] HANRS, JA, 1592, f.450r-73v, DF, 1593, f.294r-96r.

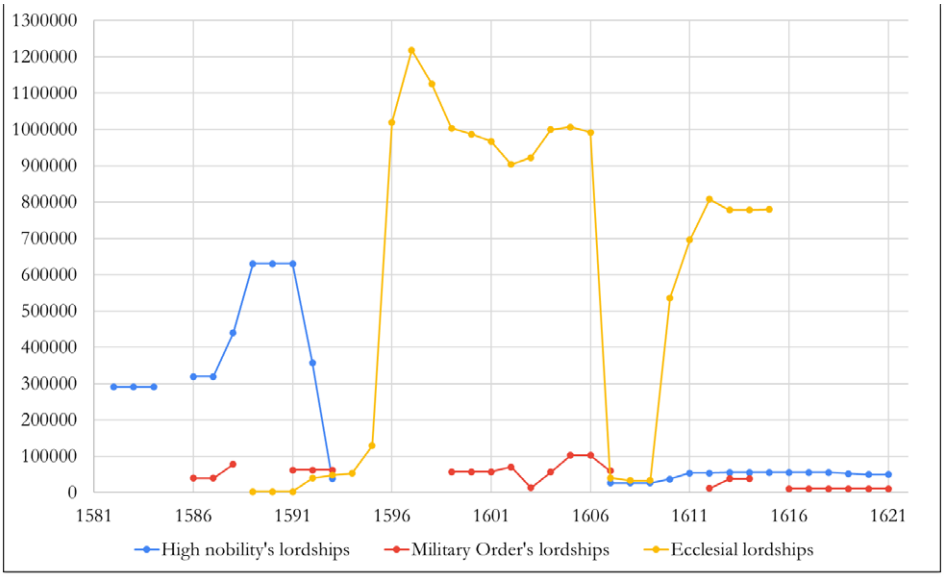
[24] HANRS, DF, 1606, f.1861v-73v, 1607, f.568r-605r, 1610, f.1140v-60r, 1611, f. 1523r-35v, 1614, f.344v-97r, 1619, f.882v-910v.

[25] HANRS, DF, 1604, f.1696r-1700v, 1615, f.187v-88r.

[26] HANRS, DF, 1586, f.577v-80r, 1588, f.267v-72v, 1589, f.541r-54v, 1602, f.1556r-60v, 1605, f.1965v-69v

population and rents of the *encomiendas* (Graph 1). Their choice of the lordships took advantage of the influence of compatriots residing in Madrid on the Council of Military Orders or the cession of usufructs to nobles with dealings with Genoese such as Gastón de Moncada, Marquis of Aytona, Viceroy of Aragon between 1604 and 1610 and Commander of La Fresneda in 1613.[27] These rights were acquired by the large lessees of lay and ecclesiastical feudal rents such as Juan Bautista de Negro, Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli and Pedro Jéronimo and Alexandre Gualtero.[28]

Graph 1. **Costs of feudal rent leasing in Aragon by Genoese traders, depending on types of lordships (1582-1621), *in sueldos***



Sources: Gómez Zorraquino 1995, 408-11 and HANRS, MS, 1582, f.220r-v, 1583, f.591r-94r, 1591, f.688r-92r; MDA, 1585, f.382v-443r; DF, 1588, f.267v-72v, 323r-36v, 1589, f.541r-44v, 682v-86r, 1596, f. 1423r-24v 1598, f.232v-46r, 1606, f.1542v-49r, 1607, f.568r-605r; 1616, f.290r-302v, 1621, f.73v-82r; JA, 1592, f.450r-58r; DC, 1593, f.302v-308r, 1597, f.100r-103r, 1604, f.530r-534v.

Note: The *sueldo* was a unit of account used in Aragon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After the Castilian system of weight and purity was adopted for all issues of silver coinage in 1519 and 1528, one *sueldo* was equal to half a *real*, the main silver coin minted in both centuries in Aragon.

The most important feudal rents available to the Genoese in Aragon belonged to the secular clergy, particularly to the Archbishopric of Saragossa (that included

[27] HANRS, Juan Escartín (JE), 1591, f.420v-31r, DF, 1613, f.414v-23v, 1615, f.182r-97r, 1617, f.87v-100r.

[28] See notes 24, 25, 26 and HANRS, DF, 1603, f.488r-97v, 1604, f.2169v-73r.

subordinate administrative districts with their own rents such as the archpriesthoods of Saragossa, Daroca and Belchite), whose lands extended from the capital towards the south-west and south-east of Aragon to the borders with Castile, Catalonia and Valencia. Rents owned by the Bishoprics of Teruel and Albarracín, located in the extreme south of the kingdom, the treasury and alms-house of the Cathedral of Saragossa or parishes of nearby villages were leased on occasion. Due to their elevated costs, their exploitation only became relevant in 1596 after ruling out the noble lordships (Graph 1). The leases of the archbishopric's rents cost between 900,000 and 960,000 annual *sueldos* during twelve years from April 1596, to then descend to 660,000 *sueldos* in September 1610 and 770,000 *sueldos* in April 1612, partially affected by the expulsion of the *moriscos*. As evidence of their interest, the Genoese leased these rents for at least seventeen years and three months between August 1592 and March 1616, when they passed to the Florentine merchants Octavio Bartolini and Florentino Dini.[29] Unlike the nobility, the highest ranking members of the secular clergy of Aragon was not in debt thanks to their many rents and they demanded harsher terms when renting them.[30] Regular lessees of their feudal right, Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero negotiated particular terms with each new archbishop of Saragossa after his designation. They even accepted Tomás Borja's imposing his participation as partner with 50% of the capital and profits on the lease initiated in April 1604, and Pedro Manrique that of his sister Ana, Countess of Puñoenrostro, with 33.33% of the lease that began in April 1612. Although these partners contributed their part of the capital, the Gualtero brothers took on the management of the business. Despite the acceptance of arbitration, the disputes between them and Tomás Borja in 1607 on the subject impeded the renewal of the lease until his death in September 1610.[31]

The management of all these leases of feudal rents posed a challenge. Firstly, they involved not only the collection of different agricultural products, but also the utilisation of pastures and woodlands, feudal monopolies such as the local mill or kiln and sometimes taxes and court fines. The lessees had to receive their rights according to the agreed rules and maintain the buildings and infrastructures – mills, granaries, wineries, irrigation canals – used. Given that these rights varied in each manor belonging to nobles or military orders, the lease of the rents of the Archbishopric of Saragossa was more profitable because it allowed a more homogeneous management on a larger territory. In the ecclesiastical lordships and those of military order, in addition to the price of the lease, the lessees had to pay the

[29] HANRS, JE, 1595, f.615r-24v, DF, 1598, f.1269v-84v, 1600, f. 652v-68r, 1604, f.1333r-52v, 1612, f.2785r-20r, 1616, f.517r-40r. The Gualtero brothers leased the rents of the bishoprics of Teruel and Albarracín between April 1596 and March 1599.

[30] Only bishops who governed reduced bishoprics requested credits from the Genoese. When Lucas Durán, Bishop of Albarracín, delayed returning the loan of 50,000 *sueldos* to Benedicto Espínola and Juan Tomás Confredi, arbitration in 1612 consigned his rents of 1611 and 1612 to both merchants as guarantee and in 1613 imposed on him 10% monthly interest on one third of this total amount to be returned in one year. See HANRS, DF, 1612, f.1340r-48r, 1613, f.380r-84r.

[31] HANRS, DF, 1604, f.1349v-50r, 1356v-67r, 1607, f.52v-57v, 261v-79r, 304v-27r, 1612, f.2799r-v, 2823r-35r, 1614, f.29v-44r. In January 1614 Ana Manrique transferred her part of this business to Juan Bautista Espínola.

pensions in kind and money received each year by some vicars working there as salary. If the commander of the military order or the archbishop of Saragossa were Castilian, he could demand to be paid the annual payment for the lease totally or partially in Valladolid or Madrid.[32] Certain Aragonese clerics who moved to Rome demanded that it be sent to them there.[33] As the temporary owner until a replacement was appointed, the Apostolic Chamber or financial body of the Papacy in Rome entrusted the management of the assets of the deceased archbishop belonging to the Church and leased the rents of his office to Juan Jacobo Grillo between August 1592 and March 1593 and to the Gualtero brothers between September 1610 and April 1612.[34] Lacking the money to collect rents and pay back pensions to ecclesiastic officials, Grillo transferred the business to Octavio Marín and the Gualtero brothers transferred two-thirds to Juan Lucas Palavesino, Juan María Cabana and Carlos Strata, all bankers residing in Madrid.[35]

As a result of this management, some large Genoese merchants had access to many agricultural products taxed with tithes and rents: lambs, grain (wheat, rye, oat, barley), grapes, oil, flax, hemp... and installations that permitted their processing and storage. This advantage reduced the need for these buildings to a few granaries and houses equipped with courtyards or pastures for scouring wool, which they leased or acquired in Saragossa or nearby villages.[36] The Genoese usually sold to Aragonese merchants their right to charge for certain agricultural products in the Archbishopric of Saragossa – wine, oil, flax, hemp – in exchange for a sum per unit of weight or capacity.[37] They reserved those products – wool, grain, saffron – whose sale on the domestic or external market was more profitable due to the high prices reached at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth. Their purchase of wool and saffron from nobles, merchants, livestock breeders and farmers in Aragon continued and included wheat and rye.[38] These cereals were also obtained by charging in kind royalties on lands or mills under the lordship they had leased.[39] Already in 1585, they leased to some municipalities the portion of the cereal harvest – and sometimes other crops – that they levied on their *vecinos* (true lay members of the

[32] HANRS, DF, 1599, f.88v-95v, 1612, f.182r-97r, 2801v-02r, 1614, f.747v-48r, 1617, f.87v-100r.

[33] HANRS, DF, 1599, f.583v-84v.

[34] HANRS, MS, 1578, f.399r-401v, DF, 1594, f.256r-60v, 594v-96r, 1611, f.1592v-661r. Already in 1578, the Apostolic Chamber leased the Archdeaconry of Belchite to Antonio Palavesino.

[35] HANRS, DF, 1598, f.556v-64v, 1613, f.454r-68v. Upon leasing the rents of the Archbishop of Saragossa in 1596 for three years, the Bargalli brothers transferred 8% of the business to the Madrid banker Cristóbal Rodríguez Muñoz, who transferred it in 1598 to Mucio Palavesino, a Milanese settled in Madrid. On the Genoese bankers in Madrid during the first half of the seventeenth century, Sanz Ayán, 2015 and Álvarez del Nogal 2005 and 2022.

[36] HANRS, DF, 1591, f.87v-90r, 1599, f.1239r-42v, 1602, f.1598v-602r, 1618, f.635v-37r, 1114r-15r.

[37] HANRS, DF, 1597, f.565r-568r, 648v-651v, 1355v-1359r, 1599, f.187v-93v, 213v-20r, 1600, f.1156v-58v, 1601, f.348r-55v, 1691r-97v, 1604, f.1979r-88r, 1611, f.255r-64r.

[38] HANRS, DF, 1584, f.628v-30r, 1586, f.584v-86r, 1589, f.371r, 737r, 1595, f.702v, 752v-54r, 1599, f.1715v-21v; DC, 1596, f.360r-61r. This wool was also acquired in the east of Castile in the 1580s. See HANRS, MS, 1581, f.1211r-13r, Juan de Lurbe (JL), 1587, f. 1286r and on.

[39] HANRS, DF, 1601, f. 878v-80r, 889r-90r, 1606, f. 1534r-36r, 1612, f. 8r-15r, 145v-48r.

local community with political and economic rights) to pay the annual pensions of the *censales* or long-term loans which burdened the municipal treasury. Or they paid these pensions for several years to the lenders in exchange for receiving wheat from the municipality on agreed date.[40] In 1617, the Gualtero brothers unsuccessfully offered the council of Barbastro to cancel 131,000 *escudos* of its debt in *censales* in exchange for managing all the monopolies of food supply and other municipal revenues for thirty years, including the eleventh of the oil harvest collected from *vecinos*.[41]

The management of the cereal trade by the Genoese shows the fulfilment or avoidance of the laws of the kingdom according to political circumstances, taking advantage of the different jurisdictions and existing legal loopholes. They obeyed, therefore, the frequent restrictions that were imposed on the export of grain between 1580 and 1620 by the *Diputación* or permanent government in charge of representing the kingdom and defending its laws, formed since 1436 by two members for each state – citizens, petty nobility, high nobility, clergy – who had delegates in the *Cortes* or Parliament of Aragon. They collaborated with the municipal officials of Saragossa when they were ordered to declare the inventories of wheat obtained from leasing of rents, purchases or debt collections which were stored in their granaries and to sell them to the municipality at a fixed price to facilitate the supply of the population in view of the shortages suffered in 1584, 1593, 1595 and 1614.[42] However, they took advantage of the political weakness of the *Diputación* after the failure of the rebellion against the power of Philip II that broke out in Aragon in 1591, the special licences of the viceroy and the privileges confirmed by Philip III to the Communities of villages of Teruel and Albarracín in 1599 on the sale of their cereal and livestock to export wheat through the east or south of the kingdom and supply needy cities such as Valencia in 1592 and 1605, Lisbon in 1598, Seville in 1603 and Madrid in 1605.[43] Juan Bautista de Negro even supplied Valencia in 1584 with wheat imported by sea from Sicily.[44]

3.2. Credit, company, representation and arbitration

Being more numerous, active and with more capital, the Genoese, between 1581 and 1600, delved deeper into the exploration of the institutional advantages and obstacles that Aragon offered them. From 1570, these merchants usually turned to insurers residing in Madrid and Barcelona to insure the saffron, wool or the cereal which they loaded on their ships, a fact that could sometimes delay collection for a

[40] HANRS, MS, 1585, f.69r-77v, 622v-37r; DF, 1598, f.907r-17r, 1608, f.603v-18v, 1619, f. 1141v-49v, LA, 1612, f.577r-78r.

[41] Municipal Archive of Barbastro, Records, 1616-17, f.56r-v.

[42] MAS, Serie Facticia, 130-7, 131-3, 131-6, 131-14; AHNS, MS, 1584, f.732r-v.

[43] HANRS, DF, 1592, f.33v-34v, 63v-67r, 117r-18r, 1598, f.86r-87r, 503v-06r, 1603, f.1097r-103v, 1604, f.8r-9r, 1605, f.279r-88v, 1868r-78v. In April 1598 alone, Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli brought 12,711 *cahíces* of wheat down the River Ebro for its transport to Lisbon from Catalonia. The Aragonese *cahíz* weighed 140 kilograms and measured 179.36 litres.

[44] HANRS, MS, 1584, f.165r-66r.

long time.[45] As of 1591 they realised that it was the custom in Saragossa to insure all the goods at an agreed price as there were no laws limiting its amount. The insurance premium varied according to volume and quality of goods and other factors: that year, one insurance on four bales of saffron meant a cost of 4.45% of their value and two others on 672 and around 10,000 *arrobas* of wool reached 8% and 6%, respectively.[46] Despite securing the endorsement of wealthy Aragonese nobles as guarantors, Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli failed in 1596 and 1599 to lease the collection of customs tariffs on the borders of Aragon.[47] Like the French who controlled trade in Aragon between 1620 and 1707, the Genoese were excluded from this business. Either to favour the natives of the kingdom or to avoid fraud committed by foreigners, the *Diputación* leased rights to Aragonese merchants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Gómez Zorraquino 1987, 98-101, 276-77).[48] The Genoese continued importing quality silks from Milan, Genoa or Florence without social opposition as Saragossa lacked a silk guild until 1615[49]. However, faced with lower profits due to the decline of the Italian manufacturers, they did not import woollen fabrics to compete with Aragonese textile production facing difficulties gradually from the early seventeenth century onwards after its peak during the sixteenth. In this way they avoided the criticism of broad social groups that French merchants suffered in Aragon during the second half of the seventeenth century, accused of ruining regional merchants and craftsmen with their textiles, encouraging depopulation and exporting silver and gold coins (Mateos Royo 2013, 360-69).

The Genoese provided good services to the regional nobles by collecting the money coming from their feudal rents in their domains in Naples or Sicily or pensions paid there by the royal treasury as a privilege granted by the Aragonese or Spanish monarchs, sending bills of exchange to their compatriots established in Naples or Palermo[50]. In the case of nobles indebted to Genoese merchants, such as the Duke of Villahermosa, these rents in Italy were included in the leasing of those obtained on their lands in Aragon between 1590 and 1593.[51] Already in the 1570s, as banditry grew on the road between Saragossa and Barcelona, the Genoese were able to send gold *escudos* by means of credits and exchanges to Rome.[52] In addition to lay individuals and municipalities that financed stays or businesses, their most dependable clients were the secular clergy, such as the prior, canon and archbishop

[45] HANRS, MS, 1573, f.520r-21v, 833r-35r, DF, 1589, f.1170v-72v, 1602, f.721v-23r, 1609, f.1276r-78r. The insurance on 1,207 *cahíces* of wheat embarked in Los Alfaques in 1598 heading to Lisbon generated a lengthy lawsuit in Barcelona, still unresolved in 1609.

[46] HANRS, DC, 1591, f.632r-v; DF, 1591, f.765r.-70v, 997r-98v.

[47] HANRS, DF, 1596, f.404v-408r, 1599, f.413r-14r.

[48] Historical Provincial Archive of Saragossa (HPAS), *Diputación*'s Records (DR) Manuscript 280, f.5r, 203r-04r, 241r. At the end of the sixteenth century different lessees of customs rights complained to the *Diputación* that Genoese and other foreign merchants bought false licences from royal officials to export their gold *escudos* as royal property, free of customs duties in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon.

[49] HANRS, JL, 1587, f.1286r and on, DF, 1589, f.1173r-75v.

[50] HANRS, MS, 1583, f.397v-400v, 1585, f.301r-02r, 350v-52v, DF, 1590, f.120v-21r, 1591, f.246v-50r.

[51] HANRS, DF, 1590, f.120v-24v, 1591, f.1200v-02r.

[52] HANRS, MS, 1570, f.253v-54v, 1574, f.2v-3r.

of the Cathedral of Saragossa, who promoted – like so many others in the Spanish and Italian territories under the Spanish monarchy (Díaz Rodríguez 2020)– the obtaining of bulls and other privileges from the Holy See.[53] From the end of the sixteenth century, they extended their credits to western Catalonia and north-eastern Aragon. Nicolás Negro, Aurelio Espínola and Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero established agreements in 1592, 1594 and 1598 with Jerónimo Cescases, Canon of the Cathedral of Lérida. In exchange for part of the profits or a margin on the appreciation of the *escudo* in Rome, Cescases would arrange bills of exchange and credits with individuals in his bishopric paid in cash in Rome by merchants who negotiated with these Genoese. Both parties would be accountable for failure to perform their duties and would submit records every three or six months.[54] In view of the profitability, their Florentine competitors in Saragossa imitated them in the second decade of the seventeenth century.[55]

The Genoese merchants of Saragossa also offered useful fiscal and financial services to the kings Philip II and III, often in cooperation with their main lenders: the Genoese settled in Madrid and Valladolid as capitals of the Spanish Empire and seats of the Royal Court. Between 1584 and 1589 Antonio Palavesino and Juan Baptista de Negro administered and collected in Aragon taxes transferred by the Papacy to the Spanish monarchy throughout its Empire, such as the subsidy, which taxed the lands and rents owned by the church, or the bulls of the crusade, which granted their purchaser spiritual graces for the living or deceased.[56] Between 1592 and 1594 whereas Juan Jacobo Grillo supplied wheat to the royal army quartered in Aragon after subduing the rebellion against the royal authority of 1591, Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli provided the money for the soldiers' salary and maintenance sent by Felipe Centurión and Julio Espínola from Madrid using bills of exchange after negotiating their loan with Philip II.[57] In 1601 Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero paid Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola, an Aragonese scholar and secretary to Queen Margaret of Austria, 134,200 *sueldos* from two credits signed that year in Madrid and Valladolid by Philip III with Ambrosio Espínola. In 1603 both brothers delivered to Cardinal Ascanio Colonna, Viceroy of Aragon, 200,000 *sueldos* to cover the expenses of the Princes of Savoy in Saragossa during their trip to Madrid, sent from Valladolid with a bill of exchange by Juan Baptista Justiniano and Sinibaldo Fresco.[58]

Given the scant income that the royal treasury obtained in Aragon, a fact that limited the salaries and resources of the royal officials, the Genoese merchants loaned money to the viceroys of Aragon. Nicolás de Negro provided 167,328 *sueldos* in 1596 to Viceroy Beltrán de la Cueva, Duke of Albuquerque «for things in his Majesty´s service» in exchange for pensions in money receivable from the royal treasury of the

[53] HANRS, DF, 1589, f.386r-87v, 1591, f.50r-51r, 1603, f.239v-41v, 1604, f.174r-v, 1606, f.1155v-57r, 1607, f.519v-22v, 1612, f. 329v-30v.

[54] HANRS, DF, 1592, f.821v-24v, 1594, f.463r-71r, 1595, f.183v-84v, 1598, f.1639v-45v, 1649r-50r.

[55] HANRS, DF, 1613, f.362v-65v, 1616, f. 845v-47v.

[56] HANRS, MS, 1584, f.572v-78r, 1586, f. 340v-43r; DF, 1588, f. 572v-78r.

[57] HANRS, MS, 1592, f.478v-79v; DF, 1593, f.348r-51v, 391v-92v, 1594, f.265r-66v, 538v-41v.

[58] HANRS, DF, 1601, f.406r-08r, 1603, f.1052v-53r.

kingdom of Valencia that formed part of his salary.[59] In December 1610, the Gualtero brothers agreed with Gastón de Moncada, Marquis of Aytona and Viceroy of Aragon, a credit of 10,000 monthly *sueldos* for one year from that month with the authority to take it in exchange in Saragossa for its repayment at the Medina del Campo fairs at the Marquis' expense if the interest rate did not exceed 16%. As a guarantee, the Marquis would give them 1,000 *cahíces* of wheat, consign pensions in money associated with his salary from the royal treasuries of Valencia and Aragon plus other private ones received in Naples and Madrid, and would recognise a debt of 120,000 *sueldos* with them.[60]

The Genoese adapted traditional forms of credit in Aragon to their business, such as the *censa*l or long-term credit granted by the wealthy elites to individuals or institutions in exchange for an annual pension governed by a fixed interest rate: 5% was the usual rate during the sixteenth century. These *censales* were managed as stable rents linked to the family, distributed as dowry and inheritance among its members. The Genoese purchased these *censales* from 1580 onwards from their lay owners – citizens, petty nobles and nobles – maintaining the same pension as the original *censal*. Due to the indebtedness of the owner of the *censal* or the institution or individual who paid the pension each year, they were often able to acquire them by reducing the amount of the loan or *principal*. In this way the interest rate charged rose from the initial 5% to 5.55%, 6% and 6.66% or to 8%, 9.5% and 9.8% if the owner needed money urgently. Alexandre Gualtero thus raised the interest rate on a *censal* acquired in 1621 from 6.66% to 16.66%.[61] From the end of the sixteenth century, the Genoese avoided acquiring *censales* on councils under lay lordship, the reliability of which deteriorated for the reasons already mentioned. Despite accumulating the most profitable credits, the Genoese also sold *censales* at 5% for the same *principal* to Genoese and Aragonese merchants as payment for goods, loans or services when they lacked liquidity.[62]

The increased expectations for business modified the management of the Genoese companies in Aragon. If between 1561 and 1580 they were formed by traders settled in Saragossa who contributed their money and that of their partners in Genoa, between 1580 and 1595 quite a few Genoese moved from Madrid and Genoa (and to a lesser extent, Barcelona) in order to trade there for some years. Some acted on behalf of their companies; but others associated with local Genoese merchants, taking advantage of family or professional ties.[63] These made it easier for the large merchants to cancel their business and obtain liquidity. In 1583 Borbón Centurión sold to Juan Bautista Espínola for 1,441,000 *sueldos* the rents of the Duchy of Villahermosa and debts pending collection before abandoning Aragon in 1584. Juan Bautista de Negro's assets in Aragon were transferred for their sale to his father-in-law, Nicolás Espínola in 1592 and to Nicolás Lerize and Nicolás de Negro in 1593.

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[59] HANRS, DF, 1596, f.1054r-55r.

[60] HANRS, DF, 1610, f.1808v-14r.

[61] HANRS, MS, 1583, f.333v-49r, 693r-95r; DF, 1602, f.901v-14r, 1264v-77r, 1603, f.291v-93r, 1604, f.702r-07r, 1608, f.1526r-28r, 1621, f.73v-81r.

[62] HANRS, DF, 1604, f.1267r-70r, 1725v- 34v, 1605, f.1606v-14v, 1608, f 560v-66r.

[63] HANRS, MS, 1580, f.80r-96r, 1581, f.693r-98r, 1594, f.381r-96r, 1606, f.1375v-86v.

It was only in 1598 that Nicolás, son of Juan Bautista, could close with his father their final acquisition for 600,000 *sueldos*.[64] Upon terminating the company, those traders domiciled in Saragossa who had received significant financing from their partners in Genoa sent the accounting ledger there via Barcelona for examination and safekeeping.[65]

Endowed with more capital, from Saragossa the Genoese increased their business in Castile from 1580, arranging exchanges and credits in Madrid, Medina del Campo, Lyon and Besançon and from 1590 in Plasencia, which became the main international fair.[66] Daniel Espínola negotiated in Madrid in 1578 and 1579 the purchase of all the business of the company of Esteban and Jerónimo Grillo, absorbed in 1581. Cornelio de Negro participated in a company with Horacio Costa and other partners in Granada, with accounts pending in 1592.[67] Proof of their financial autonomy, when Agustín Cataño and Nicolas Guirardí formed a company in Saragossa in 1589, they invited Franco Espínola and Angelo Ricio, residents of Genoa, to participate, but under worse conditions. In return for each contributing 25% of the capital and taking 25% of the losses, they would only receive 20% of the profits. The company founded in 1606 by Juan María Judice, Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero had business houses in 1610 in Genoa, Plasencia, Medina del Campo and Saragossa, closed deals with traders in Madrid, Genoa, Milan, Venice, Pisa and Naples and went to fairs in Medina del Campo, Plasencia and Besançon.[68] Despite the regular creation and termination of companies until 1615, a few, such as those formed by the Bargalli and Gualtero families, monopolised the most lucrative trade and credit in Aragon from 1596 onwards. With better access to the regional raw materials thanks to the leasing of feudal rents, they used the table of deposits of Saragossa more frequently to receive, give and remit money.[69] Very active between 1585 and 1593, Juan Bautista de Negro liquidated part of his *censales*, houses and land in Saragossa between 1604 and 1606 to return to Genoa in 1607 where he died in 1608.[70] The sale of credits and debts receivable from merchants who left for their native Genoa or other Italian cities and the increased activity of the Florentine merchants from 1616 foreshadowed the decline of the Genoese, which gave way to the denser French mercantile networks from 1620 onwards.[71]

The duration of these companies varied as their members preferred an early separation by mutual agreement if the circumstances made it advisable, as stipulated in the establishing contracts. The association of Juan María Judice with Tobias de Negro in 1590 lasted a whole triennium while that agreed in 1609 with Juan Pablo

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[64] HANRS, MS, 1583, f.591r-94r, DF, 1598, f.1012v-15v.

[65] HANRS, DF, 1592, f.756v-58r, 1602, f.720r-21r.

[66] HANRS, JL, 1587, f.1286r and on, MS, 1587, f.335v-38r, 1592, f.643v-55r, DF, 1594, f.321v-22r, 1284r. The fairs of Burgos were only used at the beginning of the seventeenth century. See HANRS, DF, 1601, f.1561r-63r, 1605, f.1932v-35r.

[67] HANRS, MS, 1581, f.746v-49r, 1583, f.811r-14r, 1592, f.655v-59r.

[68] HANRS, DC, 1589, f.351v-53v, DF, 1606, f.1375v-86v, 1610, f.489v-509r.

[69] MAS, AD, 1603.

[70] HANRS, DF, 1604, f.1705v-34r, 1605, f.1683v-89r, 1606, f.1096r-97r, 1608, f.2256r-63v.

[71] HANRS, DF, 1618, f.1444r-47v, 1620, f.376v-82r.

Torrilla exceeded the three years agreed at the start to reach five.[72] The longest-lived companies were established by two brothers, one of which at least had roots in Aragon. Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli collaborated from 1590 to 1602. That year in April Jorge sold to his brother-in-law Jacobo Vitali the debts receivable and in May both brothers entrusted him with the company's ledger for him to take to Genoa – where Vitali would settle in 1603 – and entrust it to their partners. After the Gualtero brothers had been working together since 1599 and mutually ceded to each other the assets of the company of the one who died without a will in 1600, Pedro Jerónimo bequeathed his half of these assets to his widow and children in his will in 1615; but he stipulated that the company would continue as long as Alexandre wished.[73] These associations could withstand prolonged absences of one member by the other becoming his procurator: Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero represented his brother Alexandre between February 1606 and June 1608 while the latter resided in Genoa. After Jorge Bargalli's departure in 1602 to Madrid, Juan Benito managed the affairs of their already terminated company until 1609.[74]

The closure of the companies reveals the participation of people with no management capacity. They could be Aragonese traders or administrators with whom the Genoese did business, such as Hernando de Paredes, treasurer of the crusade tax, to whom Juan María Judice and Juan Pablo Torrilla returned 10,000 *sueldos* in 1612 with which he entered into their association.[75] Genoese wives, daughters and daughters-in-law of partners contributed their dowries to the company's capital. Only in his will in 1582 did Daniel Espínola consider returning to his wife, María de Negro, the 16,000 *escudos* of her dowry that he took in 1560. After cancelling their association with Juan María Judice, the Gualtero brothers delivered to Juan Pablo Torrilla in 1613 the 26,000 *sueldos* loaned in 1611 at 5% annually by Isabel Mojardín, widow of Juan Bautista Torrilla and resident of Genoa. On the same day this credit with identical interest rate was entrusted to the new company formed by Judice and Torrilla, his son-in-law after marrying Mariana Judice. As Porcia Cataño wanted to return to Genoa with her children after her husband, Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero, died in 1615, arbitration confirmed in 1619 her right to withdraw the 180,000 *sueldos* of her dowry placed in his company, as her husband had stated in his will. But this ruling imposed a delay in its receipt of two or three years from her arrival in Genoa to allow Alexandre Gualtero to raise this money without hardship by selling the company's assets. Until it was paid, Porcia received 9,000 *sueldos* – 5% of the total – deducted annually from the total amount of her dowry except for those paid in the third year, plus an annuity of 4,000 *sueldos* to support her children until they reached the age of sixteen. This arbitration recognised the right of Tomasina Lercaro, wife of Alexandre

[72] HANRS, DF, 1590, f.718r-33r, 1609, f.1950v-62r, 1614, f.1608r-17v.

[73] HANRS, DF, 1600, f.934v-37v, 1602, f.472r-502v, 720v-21r, 1604, f.1998v-2004v, 1615, f.662v-64v.

[74] HANRS, DF, 1603, f.152r-55r, 1606, f.289v-90v, 1607, f.542r-v, 1608, f.238v-42r, 1464v-65v 1609, f. 1276r-78v.

[75] HANRS, DF, 1612, f.913v-14r.

Gualtero, to withdraw the 300,000 *sueldos* of her dowry from this company when Porcia Cataño did so.[76]

The expansion of business and the creation of companies was strengthened by a broad system of representation by means of procuratorships that allowed the Genoese merchants settled in Saragossa to receive and transmit information, money and goods to other towns and cities located in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon, as well as in Italy. By means of documents written in Latin, they could send representatives to Genoa and other Italian cities to settle disputes related to inheritances of family members or to sell movable and immovable property they had there.[77] These connections allowed merchants residing in Genoa to participate in good business in Aragon without the need to move or to participate in a company. In 1603, Juan Jacobo Grimaldo, Horacio de Negro and Pedro María Gentil purchased *censales* from delegates of King Philip III that the *Diputación* during the *Cortes* of 1592 and the Community of villages of Teruel in 1598 charged on their estates and offered to King Philip II as a service. These long-term credits at 5% were desirable because they were backed by solvent institutions. As procurator for their owners or heirs endorsed with powers sent from Genoa, Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero collected these annual pensions between 1605 and 1610, remitting them to Genoa and other Italian cities in cash or bills of exchange.[78] This delegated representation allowed widows and children of merchants already installed in Genoa to preserve pensions on *censales* or landed property they owned in Aragon or western Catalonia several years after their death.[79]

Althought foreign merchant communities living at Saragossa could not designate a *cónsul* or representative to defend their trade interests before public authorities and the city lacked a commercial court to deal with legal conflicts regarding them, the efficiency of the Genoese colony increased from 1585 through the use of arbitration, a traditional method in Aragon that allowed for the omission of long and costly court cases. The conflicting parties designated one, two or three arbitrators with power to examine the evidence during an extendable time and to render either a definitive or a temporary and revisable decision by these arbitrators in a short period. If the dispute was between merchants due to differences regarding payments, credits, company accounts and inheritances, the arbitrators were named from among their Genoese or Aragonese colleagues, whether citizens or petty nobility. If other social groups were affected by the dispute, the arbitrators could include clerics, carriers or craftsmen.[80] When the assets in dispute were more substantial or there was greater distrust between the parties, as was sometimes the case with the leasing of feudal

[76] HANRS, MS, 1582, f.222v-28v, DF, 1613, f.625v-30r, 1614, f.1606v-18v, 1615, f.664v-65r, 1619, f.1099v-113v. This investement of money in exchange for one steady annual interest, involving often relatives, was also used to secure funding by Genoese merchants working in Castile during this period. See Rodriguez de Gracia, 2005, 169-70.

[77] HANRS, DF, 1591-95.

[78] HANRS, DF, 1604, f.975r-1012r, 1606, f.375r-76v, 1841v-42v, 1607, f.739r-40r, 1608, f.630r-34r, 1609, f.199r-200r, 1610, f.360r-70r,

[79] HANRS, DF, 1618, f.374v-78v.

[80] HANRS, DF, 1588, f.1005v-18v, 1594, f.232r-43r, 1600, f.1074v-79r, 1602, f.789v-796r, 1603, f.132v-50r, 1620v-47v, 1612, f.332r-42v.

rents, jurists or members of the *Real Audiencia* and the *Corte del Justicia de Aragón* or a tribunal in charge of preserving the *fueros* (the kingdom´s essential laws formed from local rights granted by the king to municipalities since the eleventh century and laws voted by the *Cortes* since 1247) could be appointed.[81] The majority of the arbitrators accepted a modest gift – two lemons – for their services to show their disinterest and impartiality, but the judges and jurists demanded substantial payments. The sentence was always indisputable and enforceable, subject to heavy fines.

The settlement of these disputes required the examination of notarial and legal documents deposited in Spain and Italy. Along with letters or accounting extracts held by their partners in Genoa, upon examining the company's accounts, the arbitrators could impose the presentation of declarations signed by businessmen in Italian cities to clarify commercial or credit customs foreign to Spain and Genoa.[82] A relevant decision made in 1594 by Beltrán de la Cueva, Duke of Albuquerque and Viceroy of Aragon as arbitrator in a long dispute between Juan Bautista de Negro and the heirs of Juan Bautista Espínola reveal the interest of the Spanish monarchy in making it easier and cheaper for the Genoese to settle disputes brought before the regional courts. He accepted the legal validity of copies of notarial documents signed in Genoa – including rulings of the tribunal of the Rota in civil disputes – if they were certified there by the chancellor of the College of Notaries.[83] This innovative policy was introduced by this viceroy from a position of strengh after the royal army had quelled a rebellion against Philip II in 1591. As this uprising was caused by repeated attempts of the king's officials to circumvent the *fueros* in order to impose his orders in Aragon, public advocates for stric application of these essential laws in all matters were weaker at this time than in the recent past.

4. The rise of the Genoese (1581-1620). Social behaviour

As Genoese merchant communities tended to do in other Spanish towns and cities, their members preserved their identity and reinforced their bonds of trust and solidarity through endogamous marriages (Velasco Hernández 2001, 428-30; Miralles 2003, 496-99; Girón Pascual 2018, 81-84). In some cases, unions like those between Juan Bautista de Negro and Jerónima Espínola or Juan Pablo Torrilla and Mariana Judice brought together assets and business, generating companies between members of different families. In others, they facilitated procuratorial tasks: Jacobo Vitali represented Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli, his brothers-in-law, and Agustín Cataño represented Antonio Palavesino, his uncle. However, the marriages of Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero with Porcia Cataño and Paula Serra did not generate these activities among the two families in Aragon, although perhaps they facilitated financing from Genoa. Unlike the French immigrants, on whom the *Cortes* of 1677-78 and 1684-86 imposed, as foreigners, matrimony with Spanish women and residence in Aragon if they wanted to carry out trade in order to encourage them to

[81] HANRS, DF, 1595, f.934v-42v, 1175v-80r, 1600, f.1213v-24r, 1612, f.332r-42v.

[82] HANRS, DF, 1589, f.734v-40v, 1166r-85v, 1349r-60v; 1594, f.324r-25r.

[83] HANRS, MS, 1594, f.651v-52r, 655r-56r; DF, 1594, f.1284r, 1287v-89r.

settle in Aragon, the Genoese were not restricted in this way as it was considered that their activities were not so detrimental to the kingdom (Mateos Royo 2013, 366-67). No signs of animosity towards the Genoese were noted like those unleashed by the municipal authorities of Valencia in 1547 and Barcelona in 1591 as a result of complaints coming from textile artisans or merchants in view of Genoese`s commercial and financial activities, favoured by the Spanish monarchy (Salvador Esteban 1996, 1148-49; Dantí i Riu 2019, 649-50).[84]

The scant interest of the Genoese merchants living in Saragossa in promoting marriages with Aragonese women resembles the habits of their compatriots in Barcelona (Dantí i Riu 2019, 643-44). This common behaviour contrasts sharply with the attitude of other fellow countrymen residing in Castilian towns between 1580 and 1620, where they sought access to *vecindad* and naturalisation after marrying native women or making prolonged stays there in order to obtain commercial advantages or tax reductions, to access to the ranks of petty nobility or to buy municipal and judicial posts to the Spanish monarchy (Torres Sánchez 1990: 563-68; Velasco Hernández 2003, 685-93; Martínez Miralles 2003, 493-503; Montojo Montojo 2007, 99-102; Rodríguez de Gracia 2005: 172-87; Andujar Castillo 1996, 369-71; Soria Mesa 2011, 28-46; Girón Pascual 2018, 78-79, 264). Genoese's fast progress in some Castilian towns provoked sometimes the rejection of local elites, as several municipal attempts to stop their promotion to the condition of *vecino* show (Andujar Castillo 1999, 371-72).[85] On the contrary, Genoese merchants staying in Saragossa considered that their residence there exempted them from paying royal and private tolls in Aragon without needing the status of *vecino*. Their preference for commercial activity and mobility reduced any aspiration to occupying posts in the *Cortes*, the *Diputación* or the municipality of Saragossa, which could hinder the exercise of the businesses or impose a more sedentary lifestyle on them.[86] For this reason, during this period, the regional elites did not veto foreigners or their descendants from access to honorary offices, rents from public or private institutions and political, administrative or judicial positions in Aragon by means of parliamentary laws such as those in effect between 1626 and 1678 or the local statutes that many municipalities applied between the mid and late seventeenth century, both designed against French immigrants (Mateos Royo 2013, 363-66). Genoese residing in Aragon even neglected the access to some prestigious positions open to them as Catholic believers such as members of the high secular clergy, Spanish Inquisition or religious

[84] In 1547 the Valencia city council unsuccessfully proposed before the Parliament of Valencia that the Italian immigrants not married or domiciled in the city or the kingdom should not be allowed to trade. The Barcelona council expelled Genoese residents from the city in 1591, but they returned and resumed their activities several years later.

[85] The Granada council obtained from Philip II in 1576 a privilege that prohibited the access to the condition of *vecino* of those Genoese who had not married native women from the kingdom of Granada. This local act was extended to several coastal villages in 1578. Huescar obtained in 1564 from his lord, the duke of Alba, the banning of this social promotion to any foreigner living there, although it became possible with the duke's permission in 1589. These laws did not prevent the settlement and rise of Genoese in this kingdom between 1580 and 1630.

[86] The only known exception is that of Luis Antonio Palavesino, a candidate to officer of the *Diputación* in 1595 and councillor of the municipality of Saragossa in 1616 (Gómez Zorraquino 1987, 322, 327).

confraternities, a common way used by their compatriots in Castile to climb the social ladder (Rodríguez de Gracia 2005, 181-87; Soria Mesa 2011, 35-36, Girón Pascual 2018, 264-68). Their skilful adaptation to the laws when carrying out transactions and their financial services to the Aragonese elites earned for the major Genoese merchants some support when facing litigation inside and outside the kingdom. Thus, in 1582, the *Diputación* qualified Borbón Centurión as a *vecino* of Saragossa even though he actually wasn't, in order to facilitate the return of 240,000 *sueldos* in silver seized from his servant by the customs guards of Lérida, as they were not subject to tariffs according to the agreement signed in 1564 between Aragon and Catalonia.[87]

By contrast to bigger and more firmly settled Genoese communities living in southeastern Castilian towns such as Cartagena or Granada, whose members signed marriage contracts before local notaries when either they did wed Genoese or Castilian spouses (Velasco Hernández, 2001, 443-47; Soria Mesa 2011, 36-46), all nuptial agreements involving Genoese residents in Saragossa were negotiated in Genoa for two main reasons. Firstly, the terms of the marriage contracts -which used to include the amount and delivery periods of the dowry- considered the commercial and financial relationships established between Genoese families and companies working in Aragon in the medium term from the perspective of a temporary stay in Saragossa and later return to Genoa either of the husband alone of both spouses together.[88] Secondly, terms of these agreements were governed by the laws and customs of Genoa, a fact that made it easier for both spouses or their heirs to manage their assets in Genoa or solve disputes before the Rota court by designating representatives domiciled there from Saragossa. The gradual recognition of notary documents and court verdicts generated in Genoa by the Aragonese tribunals facilitated this decision. Genoese families were free in this way from being governed by the *fueros* of Aragon that regulated tightly the rights of the married couple regarding their assets and those of their spouse during and after marriage.

The partial avoidance of these laws was proved necessary in the few marriage agreements that joined Genoese with *infanzón* (petty nobles with limited jurisdictional power in their feudal domain) families from Aragon not only because of the distinct legal tradition but also due to the different social and economic positions of the contracting parties. This is reflected in the contracts signed by Antonio Palavesino, a Genoese nobleman already settled in Saragossa in 1572. Despite being involved in trade and finance, as early as 1580 he acquired livestock, properties in Saragossa and nearby lands providing him with a stable income to resemble the lifestyle of the petty nobility.[89] After strengthening his estate in 1595 with the inheritance of Beatriz Moreno, his second wife, in 1599 he arranged the marriage of his daughter Isabel to Gregorio Lacabra, a petty noble dedicated to trade and in 1603 that of his son Luis

[87] HPAS, DR, Manuscript 245, f.232r-v.

[88] Nicolás Espínola paid Juan Bautista de Negro, his son-in-law, 10,000 *escudos* as dowry for Jerónima Espínola, his daughter, in cash and bills of exchange between 1587 and 1597. Arbitration in Saragossa confirmed in 1612 the restitution of her dowry, estimated at 260,000 *sueldos*. This was partially obtained through the sale of houses, lands and credits in Aragon still owned by the couple. See HANRS, DF, 1590, f. 668v-69r, 1592, f.1002v-05r, 1612, f.1357r-77r.

[89] HANRS, MS, 1583, f.394v-95r, DF, 1608, f.3011v-19v, 1610, f.146v-54r, 1615, f.339v-51r, 1617, f. 907v-09v.

Antonio to Polonia Mendoza, the daughter of Pedro Mendoza, Baron of Sangarrén. Both future husbands contributed real estate in Saragossa and olive groves and terrains nearby, but the position of Gregorio Lacabra was much more solid. In addition to having 832,000 *sueldos* in *censales* at 5% and 5.55%, assets worth another 20,000, 1,600 c*ahíces* of wheat and an *escrex* or increase in dowry for his wife of 40,000 *sueldos,* Gregorio had already inherited these assets from his parents. Luis Antonio would do the same in the future, he could only dispose of movable assets for 40,000 *sueldos* plus some livestock and could ensure for his wife an *escrex* of 20,000 *sueldos*. Isabel Palavesino would enjoy 140,000 *sueldos* as dowry provided by her father thanks to the legacy of Beatriz Moreno: 80,000 *sueldos* in *censales* at 5% and 60,000 *sueldos* in cash.[90] The 140,000 *sueldos* in *censales* at 5% available to Polonia Mendoza were a more precarious dowry. As these credits were charged to the municipalities of the Barony of Sangarrén and the county of Ribagorza, the collection of these pensions was conditioned by litigation, prior rights of usufruct and agreements between the municipalities that paid these rents and their creditors. In view of their lack of assets, Antonio Palavesino agreed to allow Luis Antonio and Polonia to live in his house after the wedding.[91]

These two marriage contracts regulated widowhood rights with extreme care because the *fueros* of Aragon established as custom as early as 1247 the *viudedad foral* or the survivor's right to enjoy half of the common property of the marriage (movable assets and acquired or inherited real assets) and the usufruct over the private property (usually real assets) of the deceased spouse until death or further marriage (García Herrero, 1993). In both cases, the assets inherited or acquired by a spouse during the marriage were their exclusive property; but Polonia would not have debts as they were all assumed by Luis Antonio. If the wife died, both husbands would acquire all the dowry of his wife and the *escrex* as a right of *viudedad foral.* As a concession, Gregorio accepted that, if he had one or more children with Isabel and remarried, he would reserve 160,000 or 240,000 *sueldos* as dowry for the wedding. A clause present in other marriage contracts,[92] if the husband died, the wife would reside in the common home with her own bed, furniture and jewellery, as well as would receive an annual pension by restricting the *viudedad foral* to the preservation of a worthy patrimony: 20,000 *sueldos* Isabel, 12,000 *sueldos* Polonia, reduced to 8,000 while Antonio Palavesino was alive to help her. As a sign of her inferior status to her husband, Isabella lost her dowry (which she could not bequeath to her relatives, even though it came from Beatriz Moreno) and the *escrex* while she maintained her widow's condition and rights. As proof of her better position, Polonia did recover her dowry and only had to renounce the *escrex,* which she could bequeath to her descendants. If

[90] In 1603 and 1619 the family of Isabel Palavesino recognised they owed her 60,000 *sueldos* of her dowry. See HANRS, DF, 1603, f.1757-58v, DF, 1619, f.89v-90v.

[91] HANRS, JE, 1595, f.641r, Bartolomé Malo (BM), 1599, f.606v-34r, DF, 1603, f.1752r-68v.

[92] Juan Benito Bargalli granted in 1611 in his marriage contract to Ana María Cosida, a petty noble, 6,000 *sueldos* of annual pension during her widowhood, plus her clothes, jewels and a furnished room. In return, she waived the *viudedad foral*, joint assets and other rights over her husband's properties that the *fueros* and customs stated in Aragon. If Ana María died, Juan Benito would possess the usufruct of her assets as widower, as the *viudedad foral* dictated. See HANRS, Juan Lorenzo Escartín (JLE), 1611, f.456r-59v.

Polonia died without children or if these were minors, the *censales* valued at 120,000 *sueldos* on the Barony of Sangarrén would revert to her father or his heirs. Both agreements stipulated that the signed terms prevailed over the *fueros* and customs in effect in Aragon.[93]

Always conditioned by status, the terms of the wills signed by the Genoese residing in Saragossa ended up adapting to the civil laws of Aragon. Those drawn up in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, mostly for single men, sometimes recounted the pending deals and debts as aid for their heirs. They gave their assets to brothers active in Saragossa, as several members of the Lercaro family did between 1574 and 1580. Nicolás Guirardí came from Genoa in 1587 to take over the business of his brother Agustín and to assess their company project with José María Uso de Mar. The only sisters who received modest donations became nuns in the Genoese convents. The care of illegitimate children born in Saragossa or the provision of aid to their mothers for their social insertion was entrusted to relatives.[94] The wills signed between 1615 and 1620 by Genoese after long stays and marriage in Aragon show clear differences between men and women. Husbands such as Pedro Jéronimo Gualtero bequeathed to his children in 1615 and only granted his wife the return of the dowry used in his company, the right to stay in the family home and an annual income. Married women donated their assets to their husbands during their widowhood or natural life and then to their children domiciled in Saragossa or relatives in Genoa. The widows bequeathed directly to their children and relatives. In both cases, the inheritance was distributed in equal parts without distinctions of gender; but it excluded those joining a religious order, who received a perpetual annuity for their maintenance. Consorts and relatives domiciled in Saragossa or Genoa were appointed as guardians. Better adapted to the civil laws of Aragon, from around 1590 onwards, wills included a minimum donation – either ten *sueldos* or five *sueldos* and an *arroba* of land in the Saragossa hillsides were the common standards – to their descendants to comply with the *legítima* or right to inherit immediately part of the deceased's assets and thus avoid the document being challenged before the courts of Aragon.[95]

Married to Genoese or Aragonese women, the Genoese merchants who remained in Aragon bought houses, land, livestock and *censales* in Saragossa that provided them with a fixed income and brought their way of life closer to that of the petty nobility with whom the Palavesino family or Juan Benito Bargalli were related. As an owner of sheep, Juan Bautista de Negro was a member between 1589 and 1591 of the *Casa de Ganaderos* of Saragossa, a guild of livestock owners created in 1218 and endowed with important grazing and jurisdictional rights in Aragon. Alexandre Gualtero imitated him between 1615 and 1626, owning cattle along with sheep from 1620 (Gómez Zorraquino 1987, 222). As their commercial activity declined from

[93] HANRS, BM, 1599, f.634r-40v, DF, 1603, f.1769r-77v.

[94] HANRS, MS, 1574, f.613r-15r, 1577, f.1012r-14r, 1580, f.670r-v; JL, 1587, f.1286r and on; DF, 1589, f.400r-v; DC, 1596, f.259v-62v.

[95] HANRS, JE, 1589, f.640r-v; DC, 1596, f. 260v, 1599, f.704v; 1603, f.1278v; DF, 1589, f.399v, 1615, f.661r-v, 698v-99r, 1619, f.56r-58r, 1620, f.363v-64r.

1616, the acquisition of land and houses extended to the countryside.[96] Unlike their wealthiest compatriots living in Castilian towns, who could access to nobility through the purchase of manors to nobles and titles or jurisdictions to the Spanish monarchy (Velasco Hernández 2001, 446-49; Soria Mesa 2011, 33-35; Girón Pascual 2018, 278-83), this social promotion was more difficult for the Genoese staying in Saragossa. The key reason was their limited financial services to this monarchy, the only institution able to grant the title and lordship jurisdiction to individuals in Aragon. Even if certain immigrants such as Antonio Palavesino enhanced in notarial records the noble condition of their families as publicly accepted in the city of Genoa, they did not seek its validation for Aragon before regional courts. As a partial solution, some Genoese imitated on a lesser scale the large Aragonese merchants who bought manor lands with their rights from lay nobles in the sixteenth century (Gómez Zorraquino 1987, 147-48). Taking advantage of the indebtedness of the Barony of Alfajarín, whose rents he leased, Alexandre Gualtero was the lord of Castillizuelo in 1621. Already established in the village of Loarre in 1630, Juan Tomás Confredi founded in 1637 an entailed estate after granting the usufruct of his property to his wife for life. If his son Nicolás did not have male descendants, the inheritance would pass – as it did – to the sons of Agustín Confredi, brother of Juan Tomás, if they moved from Genoa to Saragossa within two years of being notified.[97]

Circumstances such as the limited number and usual temporary residence of Genoese immigrants living at Saragossa hindered any attempt to found one religious fraternity and holy place to preserve their identity through the organisation of Catholic rituals, charities and burials of community members, such as the chapels their compatriots built in Valencia and Cadiz in the late fifteenth century or the church they erected in Cartagena by the early seventeenth century (Igual Luis and Navarro Espinach 1997: 282-83; Morand 2013: 254-62; Velasco Hernández, 2001, 415). However, some clauses of the testaments provide information on the emotional ties of the Genoese with their native and host city. Unmarried men, certain of their approaching death by illness, decided to be buried during the last quarter of the sixteenth century in the Church of Jesus or the parish where they lived. Only Daniel Espínola, married and a temporary resident, opted in 1582 for the cemetery of his lineage if he died in Genoa. With formed families and a better economic position, the men and women who made their wills between 1615 and 1620 preferred burial in Genoa, even if they died in Saragossa before moving there. The most desired place was the convent of the Discalced Augustinians, founded by the Gualtero brothers, who since 1600 had been paying masses for their relatives in churches in Genoa. Along with the celebration of a funeral mass, an anniversary mass and a novena, they all ordered hundreds or thousands of masses to be said according to their means. As a sign of their attachment to the city where they had lived and would be buried, as early as 1574 the testators used to donate alms to the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace, the main hospital of Saragossa, and to two others dedicated to the care of orphans. When burial in Genoa was considered between 1615 and 1620, widows and married

[96] HANRS, DF, 1614, f.974v-75v, 1618, f.606v-16v, 1619, f.1372v-75v.

[97] HANRS, 1621, f.368v-79v, 446v-47r, JLE, 1630, f.227r-v, Diego Francisco Moles (DFM), 1637, f.710r-13r, Bernardo de Ziordia, 1731, f.195r-96r.

women alternated alms to the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace with donations and mass payments to charitable and religious institutions in Genoa, especially to the convent of the Discalced Augustinians. Only men with roots in Aragon after marrying native women arranged for their burial, masses and donations in churches in Saragossa and other places in the kingdom, as did Juan Nicolás Confredi in 1637.[98]

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the establishment of the Genoese merchants in Aragon passed through different phases. Between 1561 and 1580, they acquired the most accessible exportable raw materials and designed financial activities that facilitated the consolidation of Saragossa as a trading post, as well as exploiting the tax advantages provided by Aragonese laws. The extinction of the merchant bourgeoisie of Aragon opened up new business opportunities for the Genoese between 1581 and 1600 that attracted merchants from Madrid and Genoa. Together with the exploitation of favourable political circumstances such as the celebration of the *Cortes* in 1585 and 1592 or the accommodation of the Castilian army in Aragon between 1592 and 1594, the Genoese designed a new commercial method: the leasing of feudal rents, begun around 1582. It became the most efficient method of acquiring raw materials such as wool, cereal and saffron as opposed to buying them directly. After the leasing of rents from lay lordships in 1593 declined due to their insolvency, the Genoese dedicated their largest investments of money in leasing the extensive and profitable lordship of the Archbishopric of Saragossa from 1596 onwards. The few merchants who monopolised this business, such as the Bargalli and Gualtero brothers, led the trade and finances of this community from the end of the sixteenth century until its decay before the Florentine merchants in 1616 and the final decline before the French from 1620.

The rise of the Genoese in Aragon was marked by decisions in accordance with the best exploration of the advantages and difficulties of the political and economic context and the legal and institutional framework. Their adaptation to the environment earned them tax exemptions and commercial opportunities, as well as minimising court cases by taking advantage of the different jurisdictions and legal loopholes existing in Aragon for their business. The regional elites – nobility, clergy, citizens – and the royal representatives in Aragon appreciated their financial and management services, especially those carried out in Italy. The Genoese relegated fiscal and commercial activities (leasing of customs duties, importing woollen fabrics) that could arouse the opposition of the elites and institutions of the kingdom and popular groups with political and social influence, such as the textile artisans. They waived political posts and honorary offices in order to enhance their professional mobility and gain public acceptance. For this reason, unlike the French in the seventeenth century, they did not generate strong currents of adverse opinion among

[98] HANRS, MS, 1574, f. 613v; DC, 1599, f. 704r, 1603, f. 1278r; DF, 1592, f. 222v, 1600, 845r-52r, 1615, f. 660v-61r, 698v, 1619, f.55r-v, 1620, f.362r-v; DFM, 1637, f.707r-v. Some donations and the choice of a burial place in 1615 reveal the Marian devotion to the Church of the Pilar in Saragossa developed among the Genoese community.

the population or discriminatory measures on the part of the *Cortes, Diputación* or municipalities.

The social organisation of this mercantile community promoted endogamous marriage to underpin family estates and networks of information and solidarity among its members and with other compatriots in Spanish and Italian towns and cities. To benefit business, some wealthy merchants relegated a wife's right to her dowry until her husband's death. The systems of representation and arbitration facilitated the development of business in Aragon and the management of individual and family assets in Genoa. The costs and delays due to legal disputes were reduced, especially from 1594, when the viceroy introduced as legal practice that Genoese notarial documents and judicial decisions would be accepted by the courts of Aragon. As evidence of their adaptation, few Genoese who made long or permanent stays in Aragon considered its civil legislation for conducting private matters before a notary. From the beginning of the seventeenth century the desire of some wealthy merchants to establish roots led to betrothals with members of the native petty nobility and the partial relegation of trade in favour of the purchase of houses, land, livestock and public debt. With the occasional acquisition of lordships and the creation of entailed estates, this group culminated, around 1620, the social transformation begun by the Aragonese merchant bourgeoisie which had been displaced by the Genoese in 1580.

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An approach to inequality and social mobility in Northern Castile (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries)[1]

1. Introduction

This works aims to study in greater depth the issue of economic inequality (Carvajal and Casado, 2024; Abarca, 2024) and social mobility in the Duero Valley, based on information obtained in middle-sized towns which, due to their geographical position and socioeconomic structure, offer good examples of the situation during this period. We draw mainly on a large stock of documents housed in Spanish archives and, in particular, on the numerous personal wealth censuses preserved from the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. In addition to more general topics concerning inequality and social mobility, we examine some very enlightening cases related to the economic rise, the early signs of decline – which already began to emerge in the decades 1560-1580 – and the crisis and depopulation that affected the northern meseta in the first half of the seventeenth century. Our aim is to try to quantify and qualify, as far as possible, the growing level of social mobility vis-à-vis level of wealth, and to try to link the trends observed with the social and political tensions of fifteenth and sixteenth century Castile.

2. Castile and the Duero Valey

In terms of its geography, the Duero Valley is made up of a myriad of municipalities whose origins date back to the early moments of the Reconquista and repopulation. Together with many small villages – located very close to one another – in the late Middle Ages we find a complex hierarchical urban network (Vela, 1997 and 2021). As well as the principal towns formed by large municipalities (such as Burgos, Valladolid, Segovia, Medina del Campo, Soria, Ávila, Zamora, León, Toro, Salamanca, and Palencia), many of which had the right to speak and vote in the Parliament of Castile, there is also a dense network of middle-sized municipalities. These were towns that in the mid-sixteenth century boasted a population of between 500 and 1000 inhabitants,[2]

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[2] Examples include the towns of Aranda de Duero, Tordesillas, Paredes de Nava, Alaejos, Béjar, Nava del Rey, Becerril, Agreda, Dueñas, Arévalo, Peñaranda, Alba de Tormes, Olmedo, Cuellar, Fuentesaúco, Benavente, Carrión de los Condes, Ampudia, Cebreros, Madrigal de las Altas Torres, Astorga, Castrojeriz, Peñafiel, Monbeltrán, La Alberca, Cisneros, Mayorga, Almazán, Frechilla, Roa, Valderas, Torquemada, Espinosa de los Monteros, Lerma, Frómista and Villafranca del Bierzo.

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located some 20 kilometres apart from one another. Many fell into the legal category of *villas* since most were not episcopal seats. Unlike what occurred in the large towns, the history of these nuclei is not well known. However, the urban network they formed is of enormous importance in terms of understanding the social, political, and economic landscape of Spain between 1430 and 1590; hence, the key role played by the Duero Valley in the history of Spain at the time.

The one hundred and fifty years analysed herein constitute one of the most dynamic periods at the economic, social, and political level in the history of the Crown of Castile and, in particular, of the Duero Valley. Evidence of this is the vast monumental heritage to have survived to the present day in towns and villages. Together with Andalusia, this area became one of the economic pillars of the Hispanic Monarchy thanks to its demographic, fiscal, commercial, and financial contribution – amongst other aspects. Just a few details serve to bear this out. Between 1400 and 1530, Castile's population grew from 3 million inhabitants to 3.9 million, and by 1590 the population stood at around 5.6 million inhabitants (Nadal, 1984). As for the population of Old Castile and León, an area in which the Duero Valley is located, in 1530 this represented 40% of the total population and one third of Spain's population at the time. In addition, at this time the Duero Valley had an estimated population density of 14.85 inhabitants per km^2, higher than the Spanish national average and much higher than other peripheral regions such as Cataluña or the Basque Country, and which differs enormously to what we find today (García Sanz, 1994, 53-68). In addition to the demographic contribution, this region was one of the kingdom's principal financial mainstays, since 62.9% of the tax revenue of the Emperor Charles V in 1530 came from Castile – figures well above those of Italy or the Netherlands (Comín and Yun, 2012, 233-266; Casado 2022). Of this amount, the Duero Valley region contributed one third (Ladero Quesada, 1982). Such quantities bear testimony to the wealth and economic weight of the region in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Economic sectors as a whole in the Duero Valley developed more or less in line with the area's demographic growth. Agricultural development – reflected through the tithes and rent obtained from the land – progressed very similarly. After the 1430s – and indeed slightly earlier – it can be seen how the area emerged from the crisis of the lower-medieval period and how the production of crops and other products expanded. Ploughing new land, organising agricultural land, the growth in wine production, new industrial crops, and the increase in total livestock herds – both transhumant and stable – are just some examples of how this growth in production was achieved during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, Isabel and Ferdinand, between 1475 and 1504. Having overcome the depression that struck in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the 1530s and 1540s and the early years of the 1550s saw enormous growth in agricultural production, reaching levels that would not be seen again until the latter half of the seventeenth century and – in certain respects – even in the nineteenth century. As of the mid sixteenth century, stagnation was to set in, which after 1580/1590 would lead to a major crisis.

This agricultural expansion went hand in hand with a substantial growth in crafts. Together with the major urban textile centres of Segovia and Ávila – which influenced the rural areas around them by carrying out certain tasks through a production system based on supplying domestic orders – there were also various towns and rural centres

that specialised in weaving, and in almost every town there people who engaged in the production of cloths and fabrics. At the same time, in many towns there were other industrial activities linked to leather, metalwork, producing clothes, rope-making, construction, etc. Yet, the most notable area of the economy in the region was the strong emergence of commercial and financial activities. Any understanding of how the Castilian urban network developed must perforce take account of the expansion and growth in many minor towns and villages of small markets and fairs which – spread throughout the year – served as channels for the supply and demand of products, some of which were even sold abroad. These circuits involved a hive of small and medium merchants and even hawkers (regatones), who moved from place to place, when the craftsmen themselves did not. Some of these fairs were more important and attracted people and goods from other regions. Above all of these meeting points were the commercial centres of the towns with their permanent stalls, and which attracted a wide array of clients, and their seasonal fairs. Prominent amongst all of these after the late fifteenth century was the triangle of the General Fairs of the Kingdom; Medina del Campo, Villalón and Medina de Rioseco. Out of these exchange activities emerged an array of professionals in the service sector (scribes, barbers, graduates, doctors, transporters, tavern owners, etc. Together with these activities there were professions linked to finance in the large merchant towns and, in particular in the large market towns, when the major goods fairs became payment fairs and linked up with those in Europe. The spread of these activities shows how in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries we are witness to a growth in markets in the region that had never been seen before and that was not to be seen again until the industrial era.

Parallel to this growth in domestic trade, a further example of the major economic boom that took place in the Duero Valley can be seen in the activities undertaken by Castilian merchants and merchant companies in the main European economic and financial centres. Figures from Burgos, Castrojeriz, Valladolid, Vitoria, Bilbao, Laredo, Segovia or Medina del Campo forged powerful merchant colonies in Italy, England, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Portugal, making huge profits and rising both socially and politically (in those countries as well as in Spain). After the early sixteenth century, this growth continued and embraced trade with the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

Andalusia and the Duero Valley were thus the most important and wealthiest regions in Castile and – by extension – in Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Precisely because of their importance, this work seeks to gain further insights into the economic disparities and social mobility in the Duero Valley region, based on the information obtained concerning some of these mid-size towns, since we believe that this explains to a certain extent their historical development. Our aim is to provide an initial general approach, to study and – as far as possible – to quantify social mobility, based on two areas that were representative due to their socioeconomic characteristics (Castrojeriz and Olmedo), since the vastness of the area in question and the disparity of sources prevent us from making any more fine-grained assessment for the time being.

3. Sources for studying inequality and social mobility in Castile

As regards the sources, analysing inequality in the preindustrial period is by no means an easy task. In the case of Castile, we do have some interesting approaches for the late seventeenth century and for the whole of the eighteenth century. One source is the tithe books, which have aided in the study of inequality based on agricultural production (Santiago-Caballero, 2011). There is also the mid eighteenth century census record (*Catastro de Ensenada*), which has enabled an in-depth analysis, albeit only for this period (Nicolini and Ramos, 2016). As for social mobility, sources are far more diverse; the sale of nobility titles and municipal posts, procedures for joining the military, conferring titles for lower nobility (*hidalguía*), etc.

In recent years we have been working on a research project, funded by the Spanish government, and which has included a systematic study of new sources for exploring economic inequality that has also enabled us to address the issue of social mobility in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. These are none other than fiscal sources, and in particular, fiscal censuses (*padrones* and *repartimientos*) (Carvajal, Casado, Tello and To, 2024), which have gradually joined the other mentioned sources, such as the tithe books and municipal sources such as record books so as to provide an insight into the groups that formed part of the government and urban oligarchies.

3.1 Censuses and *repartimientos*

Sources for exploring inequality and social mobility are based on the same corpus formed by censuses and *repartimientos* since, in general, they share a common basis; they estimate the contribution made by residents of a given area to settle payment of a tax or obligation. This source has been subject to analysis by historians dedicated to fiscal and demographic history, as shown by studies into Seville and its surrounding areas, together with others that look at regions such as La Rioja or the Basque Country for the lower Middle Ages. These works are determined by the availability of censuses, an availability that varies greatly depending on the location and chronology. Medieval censuses and *repartimientos* are scarce and partial, yet as we move into the late Middle Ages the results improve substantially, given municipal and royal fiscal expansion.

With regard to the sources, their diversity in terms of origin, typology and the information they contain should first be highlighted. The range of censuses and *repartimientos* as regards their origin is vast, since drawing up censuses pursued a number of differing objectives; payment of royal taxes – particularly the *servicio* (extraordinary royal tax) – *señoriales* (lay or ecclesiastical taxes) or municipal taxes such as the *sisa*, payment of extra municipal contributions to cover ordinary and extraordinary expenditure or to simply draw up a list of local residents for electoral purposes, such as for municipal posts, etc.

In general, we are speaking of lists that link subjects and quantities. As is well known, each individual who appears in a census represents a «*fuego*» or family unit or household that covers an array of different realities; whole families, widows/widowers, orphans, etc. Types of census are related to the information provided. For example, censuses of goods tend to be linked to a quantification or estimation of wealth, and

censuses of quantities are linked to an amount to be paid, which was normally proportional to the estimated wealth. The most common criticisms levelled at such sources – particularly in the case of censuses that contain financial information – focus on the lack of exemptions, possible concealment of goods, problems quantifying wealth, or on certain individuals who evaded payment. Although information may be only partial, the censuses and *repartimientos* are amongst the best available sources for this kind of study thanks to their consistency, their representativeness and the detailed information provided as well as the possibility of obtaining series in the medium and long term in certain municipalities.

Documentation comes mainly from the censuses included in the legal processes undertaken by those Castilians seeking recognition as nobles and which are housed in the Archive of the Royal Chancellery of Valladolid. Censuses emerged as evidence put forward by those seeking to become hidalgos, since the non-inclusion of the applicant or of their ascendants in a census linked to the *servicio* – from which nobles were exempt – and their inclusion in other censuses, *repartimientos*, extraordinary payments, and so on would provide proof of their status, or that of their ascendants, as residents and would therefore render them exempt as a result of being nobles.

3.2 Other sources: tithe books and municipal record books.

Tithe books offer an approach to exploring economic inequality from the standpoint of agricultural production in the Duero Valley region, at least in the mid-sixteenth century, and to assessing differences when acquiring access to land, capital and technology as well as in agricultural workers' ability to market their products and compete in the markets. These books list the tithes received by the Church from farmers or producers, and can be studied in the medium and long term since they were regular and consistent contributions over time. Although they are detailed records, they do evidence certain limitations such as offering an analysis of only one economic sector and one limited population group.

Finding detailed annual tithes or records of all the farmers or direct agricultural producers in sixteenth century Castile proves difficult due to the lack of surviving sources in ecclesiastical and national archives. Nevertheless, our investigation has located valuable sources such as the *Libros de cuentas formados por los mayordomos de pan y vino de la Catedral de Valladolid de los diezmos percibidos*, which are preserved in the Valladolid cathedral archive. These books contain records of the tithes received by the Collegiate, and later the cathedral of Valladolid for the whole of the modern period, although the studies currently in progress focus on the years 1547 and 1602.

The information gathered reflects the amount and type of agricultural products collected as well as the farmers who produced them and the towns and villages to which they belonged. The records of 1547 are the first preserved in this condition and provide key information on the region's agricultural production in the mid-sixteenth century and offer an insight into inequality similar to the work carried out by C. Santiago for the case of Guadalajara between 1690-1800 (Santiago-Caballero, 2011).

Municipal record books are documents which became relatively common in many Castilian towns and villages after the early sixteenth century. They provide an interesting

source which, amongst other issues, enables us to trace growing social mobility by looking at the families who joined the political and administrative elites of their respective municipalities. One such example is provided by the Valladolid municipal record books of the late fifteenth century and during the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, or those of the city of Burgos from the late fourteenth century. Given the lack of other sources, such as censuses and *repartimientos*, these record books enable us to observe social advancement following the composition of the *regimiento*, which was the institution that together with the royal representative governed the Valladolid municipal council. A systematic review of these sources shows us how new families joined or how others left an institution where permanence through the transfer of posts was key. Likewise, these records offer an insight into other kinds of municipal posts, positions of power that proved pivotal when wielding influence over a town or village, such as procurators – representatives of the town before the king or queen – *mayordomos* charged with overseeing the municipal treasury, tax collectors or farmers, mayors, etc.

4. Economic inequality in the Duero Valley (15th-16th centuries)

Few references are available that offer a deep insight into exactly what happened in the Crown of Castile in terms of inequality in the preindustrial period. The study by C. Álvarez Nogal and L. Prados (2012) offers an initial approach to this reality through the Williamson index, taking into account GDP per worker and the wages of unskilled workers. For the years in question – from the mid-fifteenth century until the late sixteenth century – there are at least three stages in which we find a positive correlation between economic growth and inequality. The first corresponds to the expansion of the Castilian economy between the 1470s and the end of the fifteenth century and which was to coincide with a rise in inequality. The second stage took place in the early decades of the sixteenth century, spurred by the various crises which, together with that of 1503-04, was marked by a stagnation in economic growth and by inequality; and a third expansive phase, which commenced around the 1530s and lasted until the end of the century, and where inequality also grew. The seventeenth century witnessed a divergence between the two. According to the authors, inequality appeared to continue growing, while the weak economic growth that was observed in the last decades of the sixteenth century triggered a profound crisis during the first half of the seventeenth century. Having noted this, it is important to point out that new studies offer certain details that differ from what is set out here, and above all, that there are major differences at a geographical scale, since both the expansive phase as well as the crisis proved to be more intense in regions such as the Duero Valley, whereas inland regions like Madrid or the south, such as around Seville, displayed different dynamics.

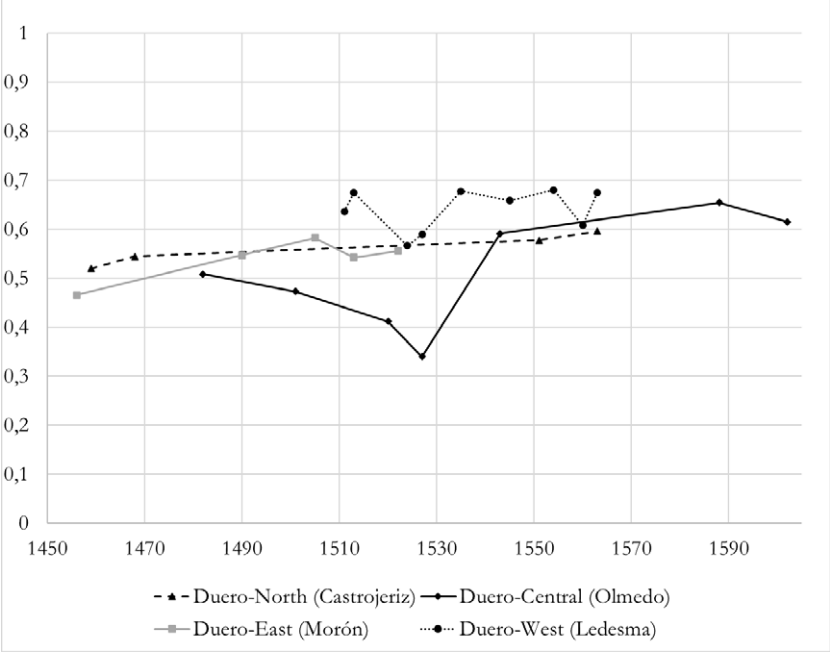
As pointed out, new studies are now beginning to complete this first picture by taking into account the regional factor. The findings to emerge from studies into areas such as La Rioja, the area around Madrid, or the Duero Valley, are helping to profile the trends and, above all, to recognise what were the causes and consequences resulting from the increase or reduction in inequality.

Broadly speaking, current data available in the studies by D. Carvajal and H. Casado (2024) on the central-eastern Duero Valley, by V. Abarca (2024) on the western Duero

Valley, by R. Lanza (2024) on New Castile, and by F. J. Goicolea (2024) on La Rioja, generally concur with what is already known about inequality, although certain particular dynamics, causes and consequences are in evidence. La Rioja shows a sharp increase in inequality over a short period of time. Data from municipalities such as Ojacastro, Arnedo, Santo Domingo de la Calzada or Nájera, whose population stood at around 400 and 500 households, shows growing inequality from the late fifteenth century until the mid-sixteenth century, with Gini indices between 0.39 in Ojacastro (1499), and 0.54 for Nájera (1539). The specific case of Nájera allows us to illustrate – according to F.J. Goicolea (2024) – how the intense mercantile development of the region and the town were linked to the rise of certain families of merchants who grew wealthy thanks to trade and by exporting local products, and also reflects a rise in inequality. As regards New Castile (Lanza, 2024), and in particular the area around Madrid, we also see substantial growth in inequality during the sixteenth century – but which was less intense in the early part of the seventeenth – in municipalities such as Getafe or Chinchón. These towns were home to 450-600 households at the start of the sixteenth century and to over 1000 by the end of the century, thanks to the strong demographic contribution resulting from Philip II's concession of Madrid as the capital of the Spanish kingdom. At the turn of the century, Gini indices stood at around 0.4, and reached around 0.6 by the end of the century. In economic terms, the first half of the seventeenth century was more benevolent in this region, in contrast to the depression that swept northern Castile. As regards inequality, the trend in the seventeenth century differed from what was reported by Álvarez Nogal and Prados de la Escosura, leading us to note a certain divergence between regions in economic terms and with regard to inequality during the seventeenth century.

Focusing on the Duero Valley region, inequality evolved following a similar pattern to the one described for the late fifteenth century and during the sixteenth century. The four regions studied within the Duero Valley (eastern, western, central, and north) witnessed a rise in inequality from Gini indices of around 0.50 during the second half of the fifteenth century to around 0.60 in the mid-sixteenth. It is quite common to see a gradual decline in inequality as the early decades of the sixteenth century advance until the end of the 1530s. This period corresponds to a period of political instability in Castile marked by the succession of Isabel I, urban movements, and conflicts such as the *Comunidades* (Pérez, 1970). After this point, the trend was for inequality to grow until the end of the century, reaching Gini indices of around 0.60-0.70. This was a period of splendour in all areas; economic, social, political, and cultural, and which was reflected in the proliferation of villages, towns with major civil and ecclesiastical buildings, large markets and fairs, etc. Few data have to date been collected on the seventeenth century, although everything would seem to indicate that the crisis which struck the region affected inequality, leading to a reduction, as demographic decline and a fall in production hit towns and villages.

Graph 1. **Gini indices-Duero Valley- (1456-1602)**[3]



At this point, our interest focuses on summing up the factors which explain how the inequality seen in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries evolved in northern Castile. The factors which allow us to understand the changes that took place in trends can be summed up in; the rise in demography, economic growth – which was in turn driven by increased supply (agricultural and craft production) – and increased demand (a growth in domestic consumption and improved external trade relations), institutional change, and the development of the fiscal state.

Demography was one aspect that played a key role. The population of Castile went from some 3.9 million inhabitants around the year 1530 to 5.6 million in 1600. This increase was particularly evident in Old Cadstile, a region that embraced much of the Duero Valley, and which doubled its population (Nadal, 1984, 74). The increase in population ran parallel to the ever-growing use of land, driven by rising production and which reached particularly high levels of per capita production between 1500 and 1580 (Prados de la Escosura, 2020). This can be clearly seen in the area around Ledesma, whose principal economic focus depended on agricultural activities (Abarca, 2024). Improved agricultural production and the rising population were closely linked to the growth in consumption. Ever-increasing numbers of families inhabited the towns and villages, where the proliferation of markets can be seen as reflecting the rise in demand from families and which, in addition to stimulating the supply-related activities that

[3] Including the towns of Ledesma, Castrojeriz, Olmedo and Morón de Almazán. Sources: Carvajal and Casado (2024), Abarca (2024).

enabled many of them to do business – as evidenced in the case of Olmedo – provided a major spur to craft activities such as textiles, particularly in areas like Segovia or Palencia. A further aspect to take into account is the growth in livestock activities, which was once again linked to the supply of meat as well as to the production of raw materials such as wool, which was key to the growth in Castilian exports. The growth in exporting to major European markets and towns in Flanders, Italy, France or England proved key to boosting the large international fairs and markets in the Duero Valley (Casado, 2003). One clear example of this are the fairs at Medina del Campo throughout the sixteenth century, and in which the increased flow of public and private credit – or the rise of financial activity – bear testimony to this phenomenon which was grounded on an intense process of institutional exchange (Carvajal, 2015 and 2018).

The region's economic boom during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries appears to be linked to the high levels of inequality that could already be seen in the fifteenth century in towns such as Castrojeriz, and which continued to rise in the sixteenth century. There specifically seems to be a connection between the growth in commercial activities – from active involvement in international trade (particularly in wool exports, and including trade in local products) – and rising inequality, driven in particular by the growing wealth of merchants, money-changers, storekeepers, as well as major livestock owners or landowners – many of whom were keen to invest in property in rural areas (Casado, 1987). The rise in domestic markets and the subsequent concentration of major Castilian fairs at Medina del Campo, Villalón, and Rioseco were closely linked to the dynamic observed at Olmedo. Peninsular trade with kingdoms such as Aragón accounts for what was seen at Morón de Almazán, a town located on the border between the two kingdoms. International trade was also pivotal to explaining the increased inequality seen at Castrojeriz, a town linked to long lines of merchant families in Burgos. This connection seems to have remained throughout the sixteenth century, except in the early decades, probably due to the impact of successive crises and conflicts of the *Comunidades* in 1520-1521.

As regards the issue of the fiscal state, finding a clear link to inequality during the sixteenth century proves somewhat more complex. sixteenth century Castile was marked by ever-increasing fiscal pressure, although this was more intense at certain moments. The increase in *alcabalas* and *tercias* (ordinary royal taxes) until the general *encabezamiento* (distribution) 1537 seems clear. At this point, 18 towns that had the right to vote in the Parliament, of which nine were located in the region studied (Burgos, Soria, Segovia, Ávila, Valladolid, León, Salamanca, Zamora, and Toro) managed to have this tax frozen for the following decades. The early decades of the sixteenth century began transforming the *servicio* of the Parliament from an extraordinary tax into an ordinary one. Revenue from the *alcabalas* and *tercias*, together with the *servicios*, accounted for around 35% of the Crown's income in the second half of the sixteenth century (Álvarez Nogal and Chamley, 2014). As pointed out by J.I. Fortea (1997), fiscal pressure by the late sixteenth century never ceased to grow – nor did it during much of the seventeenth (Ucendo, 2008). Added to this were other taxes, particularly those of the Church and the local council, which also grew. As mentioned, it is difficult to find a clear link between this gradual increase in fiscal pressure and inequality. Some peaks in fiscal pressure in the early decades of the sixteenth century and in the 1570s and 1580s do seem to be linked to a stagnation in levels of inequality. However, during the

sixteenth century, they do appear to be linked directly, and during the seventeenth, inversely. What is certain is that much of the tax revenue of the treasury and of the local councils was dedicated to paying off public debt interest – long-term public debt in the case of the monarch and long-term loans in the case of towns like Toro[4] – that were in the hands of those who managed to accumulate capital and who had invested it in assets during the sixteenth century.

The rise in inequality seen after the mid-fifteenth century and during the sixteenth century is related to a well-known phenomenon in later early modern Castile; the emergence of new oligarchies and local elites, particularly after the second half of the fifteenth century (Del Val, 1994 and 1996; Monsalvo, 2024). Through an array of mechanisms, members of these groups managed to rise in terms of social, economic and political recognition in their respective municipalities. Access to the urban *regimientos*, ennobling families, access to government by exercising administrative posts, the creation of primogeniture, promoting religious foundations, creating corporate institutions, etc. are some examples of this vertiginous rise. Growing inequality was also linked to external expressions of luxury and ostentatiousness, and it was these new elites who triggered the rise in the consumption of high added value goods and who enjoyed grand and imposing funerary spaces in order to «live nobly» (Álvarez-Ossorio, 1998-99). This lifestyle was soon to be emulated amongst Castilians and became cause for concern for the monarchy, a concern that was expressed through various sumptuary laws in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[5]

All of this leads us to link the increase in inequality to the rise in the most forceful emerging groups in the towns and villages of Castile; merchants, financiers, tax lessors, property owners, landlords, etc. It is well known that such people formed local oligarchies who sought to boost their upward social mobility, giving rise to the appearance of groups such as the «*caballeros villanos*». Nevertheless, at the economic level, it has proved more complex to define these upward movements, beyond what are studies of specific individuals or specific families.

5. Social mobility in Castile (15th-16th centuries)

Social mobility in Castile in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries is an issue about which well-grounded knowledge has been available for decades. These processes of upward and downward mobility are well documented and we know that a key factor in this process was access to privileged groups, such as the nobility or military orders, and that other important forms of social advancement included those related to exercising public posts in local government or in state administration, etc. (Marcos Martin, 2022). Nevertheless – and as recognised by A. Marcos – there are other issues that demand further enquiry, particularly vis-à-vis quantifying mobility and its link to social, economic, and political circumstances. Broadly speaking, studies into mobility tend to

[4] *Libro registro de censos del común del concejo de Toro entre 1559 y 1607*. Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid (ARChV), *Protocolos y padrones*, 23, 2)

[5] For example, Charles I legislated on various occasions in an effort to impose certain rules on dress, such as in the Parliament of Madrid of 1551 – request CXXXI. In the Parliament of Valladolid of 1555, the local representatives requested that the rule be relaxed somewhat – request LXXXVIII.

be confined to these groups and to overlook the bulk of Castilian society. There is, nevertheless, agreement amongst specialists in that processes of mobility – both upwards and downwards – did not trigger any major shifts or lead to any questioning of the social system that had been established since the Middle Ages and that was in place during the early modern period.

As regards upward mobility, J.A. Maravall (1979) showed that early modern Castilian society was governed by a «closed system principle»; in other words, the privileged strove to restrict access to their status as far as possible. Given such a situation, society sought its own mechanisms for achieving the much desired social advancement through small gaps in the system, whether through their own means by accumulating wealth or through temporary permissiveness on the part of the king. Such was the case, for example, through the purchase of positions or titles, a process that increased from the time of the Catholic Monarchs up until Charles II (Álvarez Ossorio, 1998-99, 268), and which led to the «de facto ennobling» of those who achieved it.

Prominent amongst this process of ennobling through privilege was access to lower nobility (*hidalguía)*, which was key in the sixteenth century but in which interest waned in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. It is likely that the theoretical benefits of having one's nobility recognised failed to offset the cost of being granted access thereto through a series of tedious legal procedures. We believe that more in-depth research needs to be carried out on this issue in order to provide insights into how important acquiring lower nobility was – and to what extent wealth was a prerequisite for achieving said status – and that further systematic studies are required into upward social mobility mechanisms.

As pointed out, analysis of social mobility through wealth has traditionally been conducted by examining case studies of individuals, families, or groups such as merchants, money-changers, tax lessors, etc. (Carvajal, 2016). Less is known about social mobility processes in intermediate groups, amongst artisans, labourers and other types of subjects. We also aim to progress in this field and to try to quantify social mobility, linking it to the economic situation in Castile at the time. In a context of growing wealth and inequality in Castilian towns and villages, what was happening in terms of social mobility? It is important to learn about those families and groups who were involved in processes of social mobility beyond the classical rise to nobility, military orders or posts in administration.

In this section, we provide two case studies that aim to exemplify what we have thus far set out. The first deals with social advancement by rising to lower nobility in the town of Castrojeriz. The second is based on a study into the town of Olmedo, and which aims to reveal trends in social advancement based on wealth.

5.1 Access to privilege: lower nobility in Castrojeriz

The town of Castrojeriz – which was the chief town in the area – is located in the present-day province of Burgos on the Camino de Santiago, which endows it with a strategic importance vis-à-vis its position in the Reconquista and subsequently as a communications hub in the urban network of the Duero Valley. This led to its becoming a mid-sized population nucleus, smaller than towns located in the eastern

part of the Castilian meseta such as Burgos, Palencia, Valladolid, Medina del Campo, Segovia, etc., but with a larger population than towns situated on the Cantabrian coast. Its demographic development may be calculated indirectly through the various censuses that have been preserved, and which were presented as evidence to the *Sala de Hijosdalgo* (Supreme Judicial Court of the Kingdom of Castile) of the Royal Chancellery of Valladolid (table 1). In our case, these are original censuses and copies that – as they themselves show – were drawn up by a team of local appraisers appointed for the occasion and set up by the town scribe and four or more other persons, amongst whom there were commoners and hidalgos. They thus provide an accurate calculation of the personal wealth of each family head, since they were used to establish the amounts to be paid by commoners in royal taxes and by everybody – including lower nobility and clergy – in other municipal taxes. When discrepancies arose, they even approved changes.

Tab. 1. **Taxpayers in Castrojeriz (1448-1563)**[6]

	Commoners	Lower nobility	Clergy and canons	Poor and unknown
1448	457	52	47	37
1452	551		55	
1456	237*	39	65	
1459	581	44	79	
1468	668	58	39*	
1503		54		
1504		45		
1513		34		
1518		41		
1519		43		
1534		43		
1551	750			
1557	771	62		
1563	823			
1624	584	15		

*Incomplete

These censuses have yielded 11 *hijuelas* (lists), drawn up from 1448 to 1624, and which cite the names of each member of the lower nobility in the town. Except for those of 1448 and 1452, they also establish the wealth estimated by the municipal authorities for each family head of the lower nobility in the town although, thanks to their position of privilege, they were exempt from payment, at least as regards extraordinary taxes imposed by the king, even though this was not the case when it

[6] (ARChV), *Sala de Hijosdalgo*, c. 129, 8, c. 190, 4, c. 608, 7 and c. 682, 15. The lists of 1448 and 1452 are housed in the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), *Nobleza, Frías*, C.99, D 8-10.

came to municipal taxes.[7] This information allows us to draw certain conclusions regarding social mobility in this lower nobility and with regard to their behaviour vis-à-vis the rest of the town's inhabitants.[8]

Yet, who were these hidalgos? Originally they were the armed lower nobility, ready to serve the king in the wars of the Reconquista. In exchange they were relieved of paying the taxes established by the Castilian monarchy. Likewise, being an hidalgo meant social recognition amongst ones fellow townsfolk, particularly in public acts such as processions, royal visits and membership of certain fraternities. In some places, they also enjoyed the privilege of having certain municipal posts reserved for them, although circumstances here vary enormously and depend on each place, and there was not always a monopoly. In sum, they were the lower rural nobility (Díaz de Durana, 2018 and 2020). Yet, in contrast to what was maintained by XIX century liberals and in some references, although in theory hidalgos could not undertake everyday jobs, such as trading and craftsmanship, the case of Castrojeriz clearly shows a different reality, since there were hidalgos who were merchants, storekeepers, scribes, or artisans. Their increased numbers throughout the early modern period cannot therefore be cited as an example of the «betrayal of the bourgeoisie» or as one of the causes of Spanish decadence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that led to a contempt of productive labour as a result of having opted for a life as a rentier. The issue is more complex, since there were other factors involved that proved to be more decisive.

In the town of Castrojeriz their number varied between 44 in 1459 and 62 in 1557. These figures show how their numbers increased, although they accounted for no more than about 7-8% of the total number of family heads (commoners, poor, hidalgos, and clergy), and even fewer if we also include Jews as well as male and female convent members at the time. These figures are therefore well below those cited by M. Drelichman (2007), who speaks of hidalgos accounting for 34% of the population of Castile. The percentage in Castrojeriz is similar to that of other municipalities in the Duero Valley – the most representative geographical area in terms of population and with the most dynamic economy in the region of Castile; hence, the erroneous conclusions reached by said author.[9]

Did being an hidalgo mean enjoying a comfortable financial position? Did being wealthy mean quickly rising to become an hidalgo? Were there poor hidalgos in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries at a time of strong economic growth and wealth? Or

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[7] Taxes levied «by all three states» to pay for repairs to roads, bridges and local council buildings, legal expenses incurred by the town when dealing with other institutions and persons, defence of the town as well as «other necessary things».

[8] The documentation preserved concerning the various legal cases at the Royal Chancellery of Valladolid proves confusing, mixed and is at times incomplete or lacks a date. There is information for 1456, 1458, 1459, 1468, 1503, 1504, 1513, 1518, 1519, 1528, 1534, 1544, 1545, 1551, 1554, 1557 and 1563. In Table 1, only complete records containing information on taxpayers' wealth have been quantified.

[9] The problem with the figures provided by M. Drelichman are the serious miscalculations the author gives for the town of Briones in La Rioja – the basis for the analysis. The author states the number of local residents in 1530 to be 491. This figure is utterly impossible, as it would mean it was as populated as Nájera and its surrounding districts which, according to the fiscal count of the population of Castile made by Charles V in 1527 was home to 327 inhabitants, or Santo Domingo de la Calzada, episcopal seat, with 481 residents. Briones and its surrounding area only had 199 residents, according to said research (Carretero Zamora 2008, 327, 578 and 799).

did this only come later, as reflected by Cervantes in Don Quixote? In the case of Castrojeriz, having an evaluation of the wealth of all the taxpayers enables us to quantify where hidalgos stood on the scale of economic inequality in the town for some of the years (Table 2).

Tab. 2. **Percentage of hidalgos in terms of the percentage of the population according to their wealth**[10]

	Wealthy		Poor	
	Top 10%	Top 20%	Bott. 20%	Bott. 10%
1456	17.60%	17.50%	10.20%	2.90%
1459	18.50%	12.10%	4.20%	4.20%
1468	18.10%	21.30%	3.90%	1.30%
1557	14.20%	17.30%	4.70%	8.30%

If we look at the concentration of wealth, we see that hidalgos accounted for approximately a sixth of the family heads that made up the wealthiest 20% of the town; in other words, the most powerful, at least in terms of the worth of their estates as estimated by the local council. Within this social group were 17% who ranked amongst the top 10% of the wealthiest residents of Castrojeriz. This confirms the fact that in many instances being an hidalgo went hand in hand with wealth. Yet it did not mean that they had a monopoly on wealth, since many other commoners and certain clergymen – as shall be seen later – were equally as wealthy, or even more so. At the other end of the spectrum there were also poor hidalgos – not necessarily only widows – and whose numbers ranged between 6% of all local residents who were amongst the poorest 20% of family heads. To sum up, being an hidalgo meant social and – albeit partially – political recognition, yet meant nothing as regards their personal wealth, given the wide array of personal situations. The poor hidalgo referred to by Cervantes in Don Quixote in the seventeenth century already existed two centuries earlier.

We now look at the characteristics and development of the social group of hidalgos in Castrojeriz over these two centuries, drawing on their anthroponomy through an analysis of how the surnames and genealogy of certain people evolved over time, thereby enabling us to gain an insight into the social mobility that took place within this privileged social group. Broadly speaking, it can be seen how this lower rural nobility was made up of three types, depending on their origin and economic activity: a) the group comprising families with a military background, some of whom held posts in the service of the Count of Castro (*alcaide del castillo*, *maestresala*, *mayordomo*, etc.); b) the group made up of lineages whose economic base and wealth was grounded on international trade and who had family branches in other commercial nucleuses in Castile, the Netherlands, England, France, and Portugal. At the same time, many of these families

[10] See note 6.

were owners of numerous rural properties and sheep; c) diverse and unknown origins, prominent amongst whom were certain scribes. This diversity did not prevent many of these families from becoming related to one another through marriage.

The 1448 and 1452 censuses are mere lists of the vassals that were drawn up when the Marquis of Villena ceased to be lord of the town (Ruy Díaz de Mendoza took up the position), noting next to the name of each of them their position as hidalgo, commoner, clergy or poor. Around this time, it is important to highlight the notable presence amongst hidalgo families of the Castro (Alonso Fernández de Castro, Fernando de Castro, and Juan de Castro) and Pedro Martínez, who are also cited as knights, and of Alfonso de Castro as *merino* (local officer). All of them were therefore members of the military nobility who served the king or the Count of Castro. These might have been joined by families such as the Sánchez Girón and the Sandoval. Together with these we find Álvaro Daza, who might have been from a different background and who was the first of a long line that wielded power in the town.

The 1456 and 1459 censuses are richer in detail, since they provide us with figures detailing the wealth of all the family heads in Castrojeriz. If we take those who formed part of the wealthiest 20%, we see that the Daza, Castro, and Sánchez Girón remain in the list, but that they are now joined by new wealthy hidalgo families: Gutiérrez, Rodríguez de Palencia, Carrillo, López de la Serna, Álvarez de Miranda, Sánchez de Ubierna, González de Herrera, Bárcena, and Estrada. Yet the most interesting point to note is the presence of Lope Ochoa de la Vega, the first member of a dynasty of local merchants from Castrojeriz with a strong representation in the international wool trade. The Vega family were thus one of the most powerful hidalgo families in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and are buried in the church of San Juan, where they had their own chapel. Theirs is therefore a case of clear social advancement achieved through trade.

Fig 1. **Chapel of the Vega (Castrojeriz)**

Similar examples are Juan de Camargo, Ferrand Gutiérrez de Camargo and the widow of Ruy Gutiérrez de Camargo, who appear as hidalgos in the mid-fifteenth century, although they never figured amongst the town residents with the greatest personal wealth. The Camargo were also a Castrojeriz family dedicated to trade, and this branch might have been related to the Camargo family in Burgos, who were merchants and local council representatives. In the sixteenth century, their descendants continued to figure amongst the hidalgos who had a medium/large fortune and who always held public posts. In contrast, the merchant Pedro de Astudillo, who in 1456 appeared amongst the wealthiest 20% in the town, had not yet managed to gain the title of hidalgo. However, since he does not appear in the following censuses, his descendants might well have moved to Burgos or abroad – lands that offered greater opportunities. The Astudillo family were very powerful throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain, Mexico, Italy, and Flanders (Casado 2021a and 2021b), and are an example of geographical mobility at the time in Castilian towns, wherein new families appeared in the urban oligarchies while others moved elsewhere. In the case of Castrojeriz, the link to the town of Burgos is key since, despite certain rivalries, after 1512 they joined the mercantile corporation (*Universidad de Mercaderes de Burgos*).

A look at the censuses of 1456, 1458 and 1459 reveals how it was not only the hidalgos who controlled the major fortunes in Castrojeriz, since there were others whose trades and positions are unknown to us. In particular, it should be noted how in 1456 a total of 22 clergy – mainly canons from Santa María del Manzano and ecclesiastics from the Church of S. Juan – figured amongst the wealthiest 20% of the town, and represented one third of this tenth, although their presence fell in 1459 (20.7%) and 1468 (8.5%). Nevertheless, judging by some of the surnames, many of these wealthy members of the clergy belonged to some of the town's well-to-do lineages. Gaining control of power in all of its many variations has been a constant throughout history.

The 1468 census displays the same trends, with one group of wealthy hidalgos made up of families dedicated to arms and to the service of the king, together with others linked to trade or unknown activities. Together with these – amongst whom were those 20% with the greatest personal wealth – also appeared four scribes, two weapon-makers, six carpenters, one bachelor and one storekeeper. There were also two local council representatives, who were not hidalgos, and other people whose activity or trade we do not know. One interesting case worth noting is the appearance of the Valle family, through the widow of Gutierre del Valle, who still held a medium-sized fortune. This wealth was increased by the descendants – who were also hidalgos – since at the start of the sixteenth century the Valle family (*Vaille* in Belgian documents) were leading merchants in Antwerp and Bruges, and did much business with the Haro, who financed Magallanes on his first voyage around the world (Casado Alonso 2019). These facts enable us to state that during the final third of the fifteenth century there was relative social mobility, since people dedicated to trade, craftsmanship and public service grew wealthy, without them becoming hidalgos. Indeed, in these years of 1459 and 1468 the wealthiest person in the town was Juan de Castro, son of Juan Martínez Cavallo, a resident of the Barcena district, and not an hidalgo. His origin is unknown, although he was most certainly linked to the powerful family of merchants of the Castros from Burgos, the Castros from Castrojeriz, the Castros from London, and who were also

present in Bruges, Lisbon, and Seville. In contrast to this rise is the disappearance in 1468 of the Daza, who had been the most powerful and wealthiest fifty years earlier; financial ruin or biological extinction?

Fig. 2. **Chapel of the Castro-Mújica (Church of S. Juan de Castrojeriz) with the tombs of Juan de Castro-Mujica I and Juan de Castro-Mújica II**

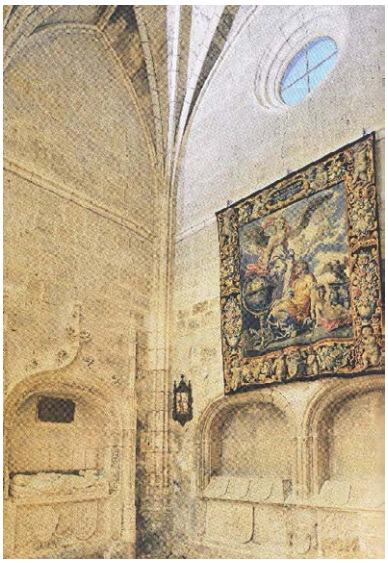
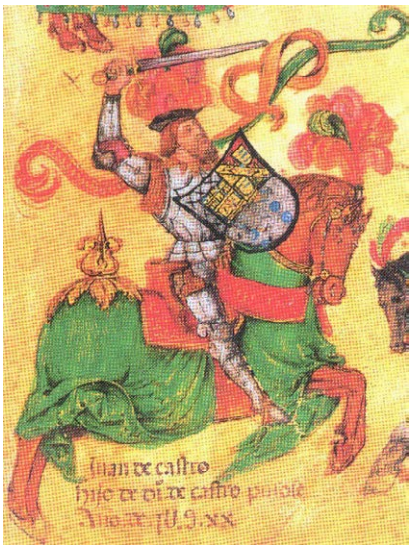


Fig. 3. **Juan de Castro- Mújica I (Libro de la Cofradía de Caballeros de Santiago, Burgos)**



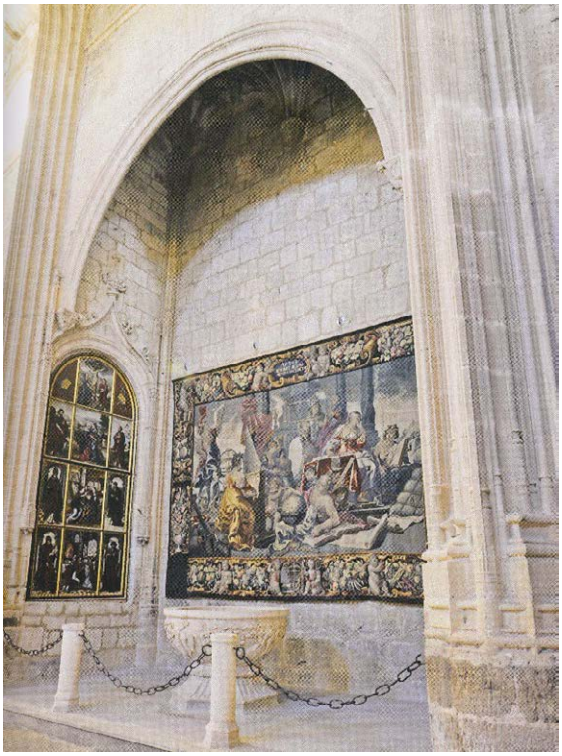
For the first half of the sixteenth century we only have data on the personal wealth of the hidalgos, and so are unable to compare data with the rest of the population from Castrojeriz. In the censuses of 1503, 1504, 1513, 1518, 1519, 1528 and 1534 we see that this privileged social group continues to display major differences in terms of its wealth, although there are notable examples of clear social advancement linked to international trade. In 1503 we see that one of the wealthiest hidalgos was the local council representative Juan de Castro Mújica II. His father – of the same name – was the first in the list of leading international merchants of the Castro Mújica. In the second half of the fifteenth century, he lived – together with his relatives of the Mújica family – in the Netherlands, in Bruges as well as in Antwerp, and was one of the foremost importers of wool and exporters of cloths, canvas, and fabrics, in addition to owning herds of sheep; but he was not yet an hidalgo. The business was continued throughout the sixteenth century by his son and by his grandson, of the same name, with the latter rising to become a Knight of the Order of Malta. In short, the second and third generation belonged to the hidalgos of Castrojeriz, at least after 1503.

Fig. 4. **Tomb of Juan de Castro-Mújica III, merchant and hidalgo of Castrojeriz**

The Castro Mújica were also related to and formed mercantile companies with the Burgos families of Castro de la Hoz, the Castros from London and the Castro Lerma, in addition to doing business with their relatives and fellow countrymen who lived in Antwerp, Bruges, and Castrojeriz (López Gallo, Frómista, Salamanca, Martínez Somero and del Valle). All of them had funeral chapels built in the parishes of the town of S. Juan and San Esteban and in the nearby municipality of S. Cebrián de la Buena Madre, whose manor was purchased by the second Juan de Castro Mújica from the abbey of Santillana del Mar (Casado 2018). Nevertheless, these cases of advancement and social success are not the only ones, as there must have been other similar cases throughout

the first half of the sixteenth century, since the wealthiest hidalgos in 1557 included the Gallo families,[11] the main importers of Castilian wool in the first half of the sixteenth century in the Netherlands. Their relatives in Bruges were amongst the wealthiest residents of Bruges, with one of them – Juan Lopez Gallo – rising to become Baron of Male in present-day Belgium.

Fig. 5. **Chapel of the Gallo, merchants and hidalgos of Castrojeriz**



[11] In the 1448 census, the Gallo are listed as commoners. In 1545 they must have lived in the Barcena district, since the census cites Juan Fernández, servant to Diego López Gallo. In 1551, Juan López Gallo and Alonso López Gallo are listed as commoners in the district of Villajos and Barlada. In these years, they were already leading international merchants and were related to the Castro-Mújica, with whom they set up a company and joined in marriage. However, in 1557 the widow of Sancho Gallo already figured amongst the town's hidalgos.

Fig 6. **Juan López Gallo, Baron of Male, a descendant of the Gallo de Castrojeriz family (P. Pourbus. Groenningenmuseum, Bruges)**

Yet these are not the only cases. The growth of Castilian international trade in the first half of the sixteenth century is reflected through social advancement and even in Castrojeriz by families such as the Barahona, Villegas and Hontaneda – who were also major traders in Spain and Flanders – becoming hidalgos (Childs 1996; Casado 2003; Fagel 1996). As were the Castro Mújica and the Vega, they were amongst the 20% who made the largest contributions in 1557. In contrast, the Camargo family, who were always present amongst the hidalgos, seem to have fallen into poverty during this period.

Likewise – and as pointed out for the previous century – there are examples of extremely wealthy figures who did not become hidalgos. In 1557 the wealthiest figure in the town according to municipal authority calculations was the widow of Bernardino de Padilla, a resident of the Bárcena district and whose profession is unknown to us. According to our censuses, the rise of this family commenced prior to 1459, as for this year we see how the wealthiest figures in Castrojeriz included Ferrand González de

Padilla and his son Ruy González de Padilla, a local council representative, both of whom were residents of the Vallejo district. In 1468 the latter was still local council representative, although he possessed a medium-sized fortune. However, in 1551 the aforementioned Bernardino de Padilla – perhaps the former's grandson – is now listed as the wealthiest, a position he would continue to occupy six years later. The same can be said of the Carrión family of merchants, where the widow of Diego de Carrión – head of the commercial company – in 1563 figured amongst those who were obliged to make the largest contribution, together with other children and relatives, all of whom resided in the Vallejo district, although the latter's contribution was smaller. Similar examples are the Villajos, Francisco, and Juan, families who lived in the Barruelo district, or Francisco Martínez Somero, resident in San Esteban – all of whom were merchants and who figured amongst the wealthiest people in the town in 1551. Yet we find no Padilla, Carrión, Villajos or Martínez Somero amongst the hidalgos of Castrojeriz: might they not have been interested in such a privilege? or was it very costly and difficult to acquire the title of hidalgo by resorting to a plea before the Royal Chancellery of Valladolid, with all that this entailed in terms of expensive legal costs, buying witnesses and inventing family trees?

To sum up, becoming an hidalgo did not go hand in hand with either wealth or social advancement, although many were indeed very wealthy – particularly those who were officers of the king, the Count of Castro or who were leading traders. Yet many others possessed medium-sized fortunes, and a small number were even poor, such as the San Vicente family, who during the second half of the fifteenth century appeared amongst the destitute hidalgos, or the Bárcena family, who were listed as wealthy in 1456, but who fifty years later figured at the lowest level, despite being hidalgos. What we do have solid evidence of in this analysis of social mobility in the town of Castrojeriz are the cases of social advancement, especially in the sixteenth century. These were Castrojeriz families dedicated to international trade, whose rise to wealth enabled them to purchase favours or affirm their origins, since many of them originated from outside the town (Negro, 2010). The economic growth which the Crown of Castile underwent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries no doubt accounts for this phenomenon. What is unfortunate is that we have not yet found censuses from the late 1500s or from the seventeenth century that allow us to ascertain how the profound economic crisis of the 1600s affected social mobility – either upwards or downwards – or whether, in contrast, the controlling groups in the town closed ranks and did not admit new families.

5.2. Social mobility and socioeconomic rise in Olmedo

Increasing one's wealth to a greater degree than one's peers is one of the clearest ways to achieve social and economic advancement. Being wealthier than the rest of one's fellow townsfolk meant that one was positioning oneself above the rest. Following on from this reflection, we now aim to examine upward social mobility through the turnover and renewal of the wealthiest groups in the town of Olmedo, as well as the causes and consequences thereof. For this purpose, we draw on the methodology set out by G. Clark (2014), looking at the continuance of surnames amongst local elites, and which is determined by the level of wealth of the families listed in the censuses.

The town of Olmedo is located 40 kilometres south of the city of Valladolid – the institutional and political hub of the period – and scarcely some 20 kilometres east of Medina del Campo – the venue for the main fairs during the Crown of Castile. Its population must have varied between 1,600 inhabitants towards the second half of the fifteenth century and 3,300 well into the sixteenth century. The town was divided into four parishes – Santa María, San Miguel, San Andrés, and Santo Tomé – and its economic activities were based on crop production, livestock, and on small-scale textile craft production and similar items.

Various censuses have been located from Olmedo linked to the payment of the *servicio* – an extra tax levied by the king – or the *martiniega* and the *sisa*, a tax on meat. Of the censuses mentioned, we know that the *servicio* or *martiniega* were drafted based on quantifying wealth by taking into account income and property (Carretero, 1998). Historians who are most familiar with the contribution to the *servicio* through the amounts registers tell us that wealth could be estimated by the enumerators or census-takers with some degree of freedom, and that this could include assets, income and other rights. Yet this is the best estimation available to us. Although there was no common valuation method in the various towns and although the complexity involved when making valuations should be borne in mind – as shown by J.M. Triano (2018) – this does not particularly affect our objective.

In certain instances, the source does present a problem. On some occasions, censuses were reused to register various taxes and we find two or three lists in the same document which – rather than being the same – in fact differ. Mention should also be made of J.M. Carretero's indications (1998) concerning how the social, economic and political conditions involved in drawing up the censuses exerted an influence and how these could affect the drafting of the censuses; failing to take into consideration personal wealth located outside the area where the taxes were paid or wealthy families employing conjugal strategies by marrying their daughters to hidalgos in an effort to secure exemptions.

As regards inequality, our findings for Olmedo show a downward trend for the Gini index, from 0.51 in 1482 to 0.34 in 1527, later growing substantially in the following 16 years up to 0.59 in 1543, and reaching a peak of 0.65 in 1588, and remaining stable around 0.62 in 1602. Data from the seventeenth century show a different picture, given that there is a decline in inequality, with Gini indices falling to around 0.43-0.49 in the years 1659 and 1665. This was no doubt a period of change in Olmedo which, amongst other fluctuations, suffered a substantial drop in population, from over 600 households to 369, reflecting the impact of the crisis in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Graph 2. **Development of the Gini index in Olmedo (1482-1665)**[12]

What lies behind the trends we see in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? The economic and social context that marked the progress of the Duero Valley, as discussed in the previous pages, provides some clues as to the reasons underlying the gradual decline in inequality observed until 1527. This trend coincides with a time of economic development – particularly in agriculture – which most of Olmedo's residents must have benefitted from (Cuervo, 2006). Improvements in production and in the productivity of the land through crops and vineyards coupled with a rise in local and regional trade flows must have had a positive impact on many of the town's inhabitants. Demographic growth and increased local as well as regional demand must have had a positive effect on the town. For example, we know that Olmedo supplied major urban nucleuses such as Valladolid and its butchers (Carvajal and Casado, 2014). In fact, despite the 40 kilometres that separated the two towns, Olmedo's growth led to the need to mark the boundaries between the two in 1512 (Arenzana, 2019).

At this point, the town must have undergone a difficult period that coincided with a stagnation in production and a demographic crisis that may well have triggered the decline in inequality. These hard years may have particularly affected the more prosperous groups, in which a reduction in accumulated wealth can be seen – the wealth accumulated by the richest 5% grew to 25.7% in 1501 before then falling to 18.9% in 1527. As a result, it is understandable that the crisis at this time should have particularly impacted the wealthiest townsfolk, especially bearing in mind that the period witnessed

[12] Sources: ARChV, *Protocolos y padrones*, c. 137, 9; c. 66, 9; c. 137, 16; c. 137, 17; c. 13, 4 and c. 13, 2-10.

major political and social events, such as the town's inclusion in the brief manor of Germana de Foix – which was repealed in 1520 – or the emergence of the *Comunidades* and their impact on such key centres as Medina del Campo and Valladolid (Pérez 1970; García Murillo 1985). The years between 1520 and 1521 in Castile saw the conflict between Charles V and a number of towns and villages, sparking skirmishes and small clashes. Olmedo lay at the geographical epicentre of the movement, in the Segovia-Valladolid-Medina del Campo triangle. We do not know exactly what impact the conflict had on the town, but its consequences were visible throughout the region for many years to come. These were times of social inequality in Olmedo, as reflected in Lope de Vega's famous play «El Caballero de Olmedo» (ca.1625), in which he recalled the murder of Juan de Vivero, in the midst of the struggle for positions in the local council and the struggles amongst the "«confederations of men» (Blanco 1985).

Tab. 3. **Wealth accumulated by the top 1% and the top 5% in Olmedo (1482-1665)**[13]

	Top 1%	Top 5%
1482	4.90	24.52
1501	5.23	25.70
1520	6.68	22.30
1527	5.04	18.01
1543	12.32	36.19
1588	12.37	35.14
1659	10.02	26.17
1665	7.93	21.71

After the late 1520s and early 1530s a sharp increase in inequality is evident, reaching levels of over 0.60 by the end of the sixteenth century. This rise clearly coincides with the enrichment of the town's most well-to-do groups, whose richest 5% went from owning 18.9% of the wealth to owning 36.19% of it in 1543 and 35.14% in 1588. This period again coincides with strong demographic and urban growth in the central Duero Valley, as pointed out in previous pages, with the subsequent rise in consumption and supply. In addition to the improvements in agricultural production, other sectors also expanded greatly. One indication of this is the increased numbers of shepherds and farmers as well as residents with a trade and – in particular – those dedicated to crafts. Added to all of these factors is the expansion in the fairs at Medina del Campo in the 1550s and 1560s, when they reached a peak. The «great disorder of the fairs», which first became apparent in these years, augured the end of a period of splendour (Ruiz Martín, 1986). This can be seen in the figures for 1543 and 1588, which are quite similar.

[13] Sources: ARChV, *Protocolos y padrones*, c. 137, 9; c. 66, 9; c. 137, 16; c. 137, 17; c. 13, 4 and c. 13, 2-10.

Tab. 4. **Number of local residents with registered trades in Olmedo (1482-1602)**

	1482	1527	1543	1588	1602
TOTAL trades	40	59	103	91	104
Weaver	4	1	10	2	9
Tailor	1	4	6	9	10
Shepherd	2	1	9	5	4
Farmer		1	3	5	4

As regards social mobility, we can provide some preliminary data of our study into upward mobility. For this, we draw on the relative representation of surnames and their persistence rates (b), following Clark (2014) and taking as a reference group the fifth wealthiest part of the town, according to the estimation that appears in the censuses. In other words, we deem there to be upward mobility when we see new families appearing amongst the wealthiest 20% of families and with a surname known in Olmedo. A test was also carried out taking into account the reference group of the 33% wealthiest local residents.

Tab. 5. **Persistence rates in Olmedo (1482-1602)**[14]

	b (top 20%)	b (top 33%)	Total known surnames
1482			251
1501	0.29	0.43	300
1520	0.26	0.40	312
1527	0.24	0.35	287
1543	0.36	0.48	397
1588	0.27	0.25	591
1602	0.38	0.46	553

'Total known surnames' corresponds to the total number of local residents registered in the censuses with a known surname and linked to an amount of money.

The data obtained evidence the existence of a relatively high intergenerational turnover in the town. Upward social mobility towards the wealthiest 20% was particularly high until 1527 and between 1543 and 1588, when persistence ratios are lower. With regard to the first period, it should be remembered that it was a time of

[14] Sources: ARChV, *Protocolos y padrones*, c. 137, 9; c. 66, 9; c. 137, 16; c. 137, 17; c. 13, 4 and c. 13, 2-10.

change, of the creation of new local elites who took advantage of the opportunities afforded by a growing economy and a new monarchy under the *Reyes Católicos*. This culminated in the conflict of the *Comunidades* in 1520-21 and also coincided with minor economic crises, such as that of 1503-1504. All of these changes that occurred in barely four decades are sufficient to understand the changes that took place in the town's wealthiest families. The second period with a low turnover corresponds to the period between 1543 and 1588. We again see a fresh increase in social mobility, this time over a longer period – 45 years – and above all due to the town's demographic growth, which went from 449 households to 630, at a time of thriving economic and trade fair activity around the hubs of Valladolid and Medina del Campo. After this point, upward mobility appears to have again slowed down, probably reflecting a gradual stagnation of local society.

With the succession of the various generations in Olmedo, the consolidation of certain surnames amongst the economic elite can be seen. Taking the ten most prevalent surnames in the censuses as an example, we see the appearance of new families and the consolidation of others such as the Íscar, Martín, Pozo, Santander, or Carrasco.

Tab. 6. **Ten wealthiest families in Olmedo according to the censuses (1482-1602)**

	1482	1504	1527	1543	1588	1602
1	**Bermejo**	**Aguasal**	**Martin**	**Velazquez**	**Hernandez**	**Iscar**
2	**Callejano**	**Bartolo**	**Santander**	**Sepulveda**	**Iscar**	**Santander**
3	**Castillo**	**Calderon**	**Martin**	**Tanago**	**Iscar**	**Pozo**
4	**Garcia**	**Coca**	**Carrasco**	**Carrasco**	**Prado**	**Carrasco**
5	**Garcia**	**Martinez**	**Tanago**	**Pozo**	**Santander**	**Prado**
6	**Iscar**	**Portillo**	**Iscar**	**Medina**	***Salvador***	***Salvador***
7	**Lazaro**		**Velazquez**	**Hernandez**	**Martin**	**Carrasco**
8	**Martinez**	**Sanchez**	**Santander**	**Martin**	**Pozo**	**Hernanz**
9		**Iscar**	**Calzaradios**		**Pozo**	**Dominguez**
10	**Prieto**	**Casado**	**Rogel**	**Santander**		**Martin**

Knowing what people's wealth was based on proves somewhat complex, although we do have information about certain townsfolk, such as Francisco de Íscar, one of the local residents who contributed most to the *servicio* of 1543 and whose position had been increasing since 1527. His business was based on supplying meat and other material of animal origin (leather, fat, etc.). The largest contribution to the 1543 census was made by another rising figure – Sebastián Velázquez – whose economic activity seems to have been grounded on the production and sale of wine, amongst other things, in addition to property that he owned in the town (Carvajal and Casado 2024). If we move forward a few years, we know that other leading figures in the town, such as Francisco Carrasco – who appears in 18th position in the 1547 census – move down the social scale. Things

cannot have gone all that well because in 1577 Francisco Carrasco – the elder – is involved in a lawsuit seeking to avoid paying interest on a long-term debt which he had as a mortgage on a house he had transferred to Diego Obrero.[15] Trying to free oneself of a mortgaged good and becoming involved in legal proceedings to avoid interest payment on a debt is not a good sign. This seems to be confirmed in the subsequent censuses of 1588 and 1602 in which his wife – now widow – appears in a middle position in the list. We do not know what then befell the family, although in 1602 we again find a certain Francisco Carrasco, possibly the son of the first in 1577 who was referred to as «the elder», and other local residents with the same surname amongst those who figure most in the census. Were this to have been the situation, we would be looking at a case of advancement, and then hardship following the death of Francisco Carrasco the elder, and then recovery in the next generation.

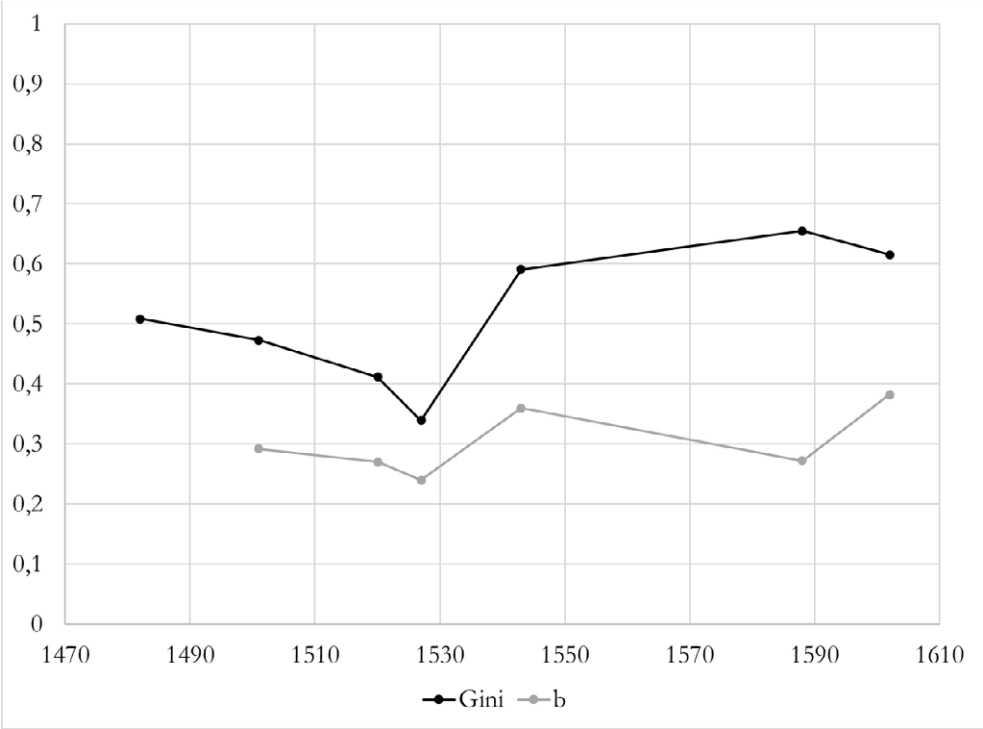
These examples lead us to an important reflection in the case of Castile when appraising social mobility in terms of wealth, and that is linked to inheritance. The system in Castile establishes that all the sons inherit – except in the case of primogeniture, wherein the eldest son inherited all the goods included under this institution. This is key to understanding a process of constant redistribution of wealth and that would help changes in position in terms of wealth, with most families being affected.

At this point, it is worth making one final reflection concerning the link between inequality and mobility. The case of Olmedo does not offer a clear correlation between the two phenomenon, at least if we take the indicators used. It is true that the continuity amongst economic elites seems to have followed a downward trend – greater upward mobility – when at first there is a reduction in inequality up to 1527. Until 1543, the opposite was true – the increase was linked to the consolidation of certain families. Nevertheless, after 1543 the opposite occurred, and reflected a slight rise in inequality and greater mobility – or less continuity – probably related to demographic factors. After 1588, the fall in inequality is again related to the consolidation of families occupying the uppermost echelons of the town, and reflecting the start of a certain stagnation of society at its highest levels.

What happened in the seventeenth century is still to be studied. We know that the crisis which emerged in the late sixteenth century was very deep during the first half of the seventeenth, and triggered a sharp demographic decline. The data – and what we know from Castilian historiography – allow us to assume that the elites in the late sixteenth century changed little vis-à-vis those of the mid-seventeenth century, although this theory is yet to be verified.

[15] ARChV, *Registro de Ejecutorias*, c. 1403, 20.

Graph 3. **Inequality and social mobility – persistence rate – in Olmedo (1482-1602)**[16]



6. Conclusions

It is difficult to establish general conclusions regarding a topic that is still the subject of ongoing research. Nevertheless, we do see the potential offered by studying inequality and mobility – both separately and together – for the case of fifteenth - sixteenth century Castile. We do have sources that can provide us with an initial insight into both issues, particularly through censuses and other complementary sources such as books of tithes, municipal records, notarial *protocolos*, etc. Preliminary approaches to the available data have shown us how both inequality and social mobility have their own connotations, dynamics, causes and consequences. A joint analysis with other phenomena – including economic growth, agricultural production, and so on – will enable us to gain a more comprehensive vision of these phenomena and their link to the economic, social and political dynamics of Castile at a time of both prosperity and crisis, of enrichment and of conflict, and of what proved to be a key period for one particular region – the Duero Valley.

[16] Sources: ARChV, *protocolos y padrones*, c. 137, 9; c. 66, 9; c. 137, 16; c. 137, 17; c. 13, 4 and c. 13, 2-10.

This reflection should be joined by others that have emerged throughout this work and which demand further enquiry through fresh analyses that is currently underway into different regions. For the moment, we can state that from the 1430s until the end of the sixteenth century, the Duero Valley experienced a period of demographic expansion and economic growth which, broadly speaking, triggered a rise in inequality. This is not surprising if we look at other sources and Castilian historiography that have traditionally painted a picture of widespread enrichment but, particularly, of a succession of economic elites – merchants, financiers, and so on. These elites triggered many instances of social advancement through a number of means, two of which stand out in this work: social advancement through wealth – seen in the town of Olmedo; and social advancement by gaining recognition as an hidalgo – a privileged situation that could be acquired by leading families of merchants in Castrojeriz.

Beyond this general trend, the lengthy period studied enables us to see certain shifting trends and the link between the two issues. Changes in Castilian urban elites were more intense after the second half of the fifteenth century and at key moments, such as the accession of Isabel I to the throne in 1474 and the power vacuum that followed her death in 1504. In these years, the social groups of the "nouveau riche" sought to form part of the decision-making bodies in Castilian towns and villages, bolstered by their wealth and by their support for an increasingly centralised monarchy, in contrast to the old lineages (Del Val 1994 and 1997). Conflicts came to a head with the *Comunidades* of 1520-1521 (Perez 1970; Sánchez-León 1998). The solution to the conflict – through the emperor Charles V's policy of attracting said local elites by involving them in collecting and administering extraordinary royal taxes (*encabezamiento*) – partly brought an end to the political conflict and would only re-emerge under Philip II through the opposition to increased taxation (Comín and Yun 2012).

Social mobility and the emergence of new elites continued throughout the sixteenth century through various means, although it appears that this "new" society began to retract in the late sixteenth century due to a major crisis that greatly shook the Duero Valley. After that point, the demographic and economic crisis, the decline in inequality and the difficulty finding new means of social advancement through wealth were to become the tonic of the following decades. However, these are issues which are still to be explored.

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Alberto Concina, Maïka De Keyzer, Jan Peeters

Economic growth and prosperity: two sides of the same coin? A comparison of the countryside of Antwerp and Piedmont in the long eighteenth century

1. Introduction

Could people improve their social position in society? Were they able to change their profession, social status, marital strategy, or income? These are some of the vital questions in the debates on social mobility in the past. Most scholars focus on the profession, marital options, and intergenerational changes. Using demographic data such as marital registers, scholars have looked into the ability of either relatively small groups of individuals or large demographic groups to better themselves in life (Lynch 1998; Van Bavel, Peeters, and Matthijs 1998; Clark and Cummins 2013; Long and Ferrie 2013; Reixach Sala 2020; Éspin-Sanchez, Gil-Guidardo and Vickers 2022). In most of these debates, pre-modern societies are considered relatively stable. Most of the population had an agricultural background and remained peasants or farmers, like their fathers and forefathers. However, recent research has clarified that upward and downward mobility and absolute and relative mobility were more common than previously thought.

Moreover, it has been proven that the presumed drivers of social mobility do not necessarily matter the most. Wars, pandemics, and the Industrial Revolution were often considered cataclysms of social mobility (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1993; Miles 1999; Alfani 2010). If a large segment of the population died, it would create opportunities for others to better themselves by inheriting or applying for jobs that would normally not be available. The industrial revolution would provide a wide range of new jobs and opportunities for the large masses that were stuck as farmers or labourers in a limited set of occupations. Marco Van Leeuwen (2016) shows that neither the French Revolution nor the Industrial Revolution were France's main drivers for social mobility. During the eighteenth century, significant changes could be witnessed. Jan Luiten Van Zanden (1995) has already stated the same. His work on inequality and the long Kuznets curve showed how pre-modern economic growth provided significant opportunities for those who could skill themselves to climb the social ladder and become better-paid and more esteemed workers or professionals. Different push and pull factors for social mobility are at place, calling for a reassessment of the immobility of pre-modern societies.

In this article, we want to join this particular debate and explore the opportunities and pitfalls of different types of sources and methods to study social mobility. We do not want to focus on marital choices or intergenerational mobility. Instead, we want to pay attention to another aspect of social mobility. We will zoom in on land ownership and material welfare. We analyse the prospects of probate inventories and

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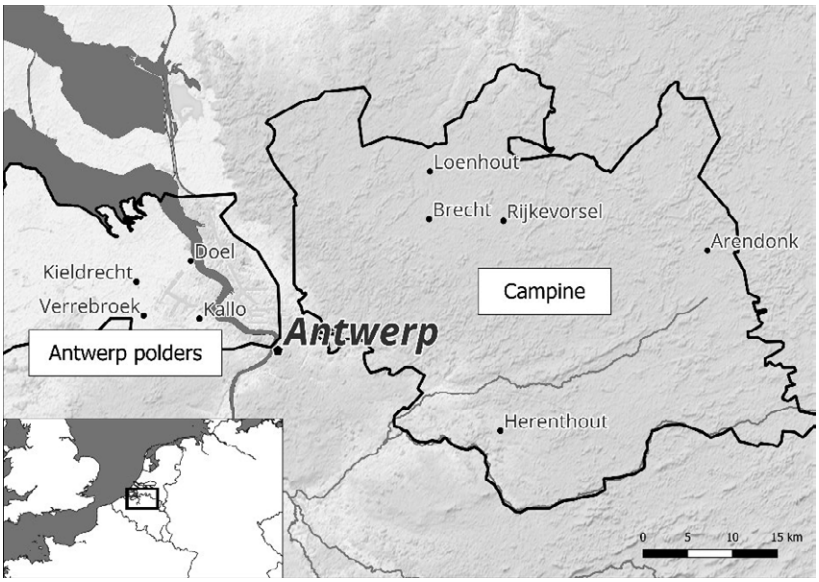
censuses to complement the fiscal and parish records that have dominated the field. According to us, these sources can answer whether households could improve their social status and material welfare in the long eighteenth century. This is a crucial question because multiple hypotheses, like the long Kuznets curve and the industrious revolution, have suggested that commercialised urban and rural regions were able to improve their living standards in the eighteenth century (De Vries 1994; Van Zanden 1995). In this article, we want to test whether we can link this research to material welfare and prosperity and debates about social mobility.

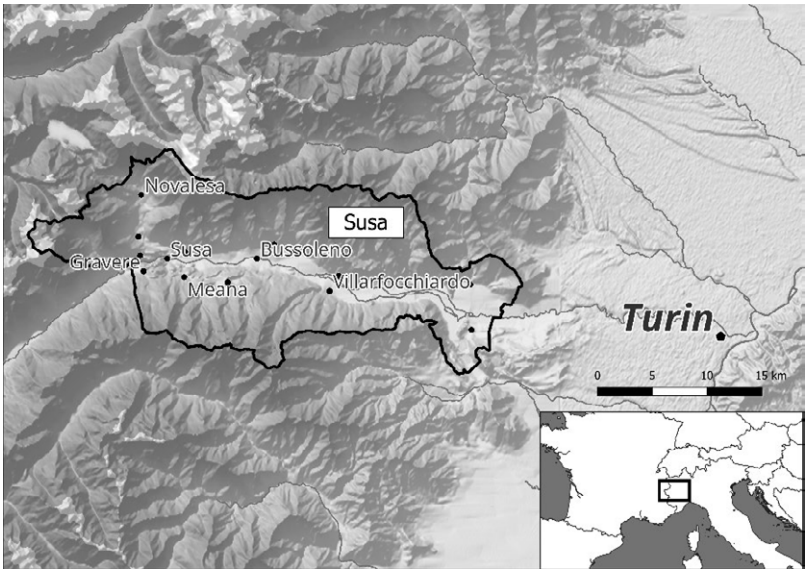
We are exploring two different regions that provide interesting case studies. We compare the North of the Southern Low Countries with the North-West of Italy. Until now, social mobility has mainly been studied from a national or local perspective. Big datasets that provide statistical analysis and microstudies that provide details have been very valuable. By using a comparative regional perspective, we will show that there are significant regional divergences and that the sources used to study social mobility can be biased in fundamentally different ways depending on the selected regions. We picked two rural regions per case study: the Polder and Campine area in the North of the Southern Low Countries (Figure 1), around Antwerp, and the lower valley of Susa and irrigated plains of Vercelli in Piedmont (Figure 2a and 2b). Susa and the Campine area are peasant economies with low inequality levels and subsistence-oriented households. Vercelli and the Polder area are highly market-oriented regions with high inequality levels.

Fig. 1. **Case studies for the Low Countries**



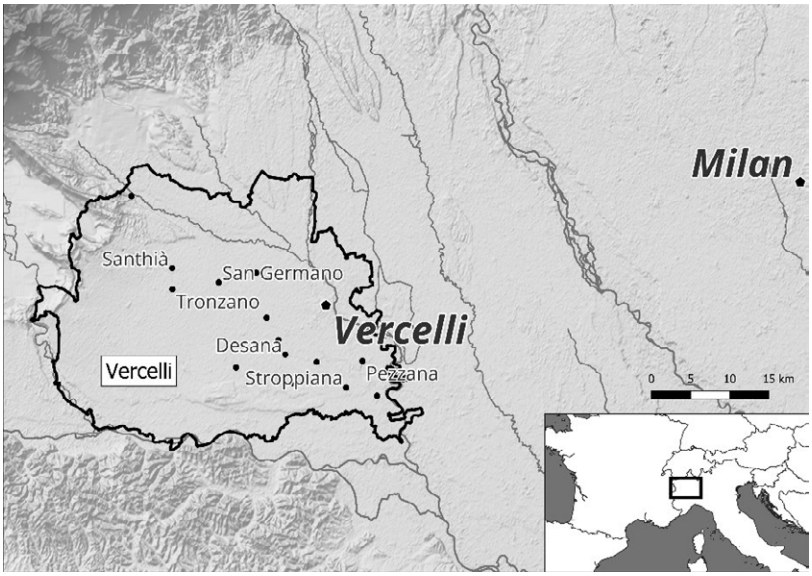
Sampled communities are in black dots. The city of Antwerp has been added for reference but is not included in the sample. Map author: Seb Verlinden. Combination of own work with layers from GIS-torical Antwerp, EU-DEM and EU-Hydro.

Fig. 2a. **Case studies for Piedmont. Lower valley of Susa**



Sampled communities presenting probate inventories are in black dots. Named communities are those for which land registers and census data have also been collected. The cities of Turin and Milan have been added for reference but are not included in the sample. Map author: Seb Verlinden. Combination of own work with layers from EU-DEM and EU-Hydro.

Fig. 2b. **Case studies for Piedmont. Irrigated plains of Vercelli**



Map author: Seb Verlinden. Combination of own work with layers from EU-DEM and EU-Hydro.

We want to test the hypothesis in this paper whether the regions experiencing economic growth and an agrarian revolution witnessed more profound social mobility than the steady-state peasant economies. To test this, we look at different parameters. First, we analyse land and tax registers to calculate inequality levels and whether or not these changed over time. Here, we take a similar approach to Guido Alfani (2015) and Van Zanden (1995). We want to test whether the market economies experiencing economic growth witnessed a more significant polarisation or whether the inequality levels showed a similar trend. Our tax registers of the Low Countries are different from the Italian *estimi*, but the relative changes through time can be compared. We will calculate Gini indices and compare decile ratios to dig into social mobility. If inequality was rising, was it caused by upward social mobility at the top of society or the downward mobility of the middling or the poorest groups?

Second, we look at the material wealth of households through probate inventories. Probate inventories give a good impression of a household's social status and prosperity. We can compare the total monetary value or stock of movable goods, but we will also take a closer look at some indicators of social standing. We will focus on the adoption of new consumer trends, such as the consumption of colonial products and new luxury items. In the abundant literature on the Industrious Revolution, these goods are seen as signals of social status. Jan De Vries (1994; 2008) stated that from the seventeenth century onwards, households increasingly engaged in labour and commodity markets to increase their spending power and adopt a new consumer culture formerly reserved for the upper classes. Even rural dwellers and peasants started an industrious revolution, to purchase new status symbols and heighten their comfort levels. By tracing which social groups could purchase them and how they did or did not trickle down during the eighteenth century, we can assess if lower social strata could climb the social ladder and adhere to this new consumer culture.

Two things stand out by comparing these two case studies and four different regions. Firstly, the eighteenth century did not lead to uniform social mobility trends. While the commercialised and the subsistence-oriented regions witnessed rising inequality, the drivers differed. While the elites in the commercialised regions experienced upward mobility, the lower social classes in the peasant economies faced downward social mobility. Secondly, although households in commercial societies were more capable of embracing aspects of the emerging consumer culture, this remained primarily an elitist phenomenon. The majority of society, particularly agricultural wage workers, were either unwilling or unable to engage in novel consumption practices and did not own even the simplest conspicuous items.

2. Inequality over a long period

Research on early modern inequality highlighted rising trends across Europe (Alfani 2015; Ryckbosch 2015; Alfani and Ammannati 2017; Alfani 2021). From the dynamic and sprawling cities of the Netherlands to the more stagnant countryside of Southern Europe, it seems that no society escaped rising wealth inequality. Whether this phenomenon was caused by a Kuznets curve interpretation of increasing inequality at the beginning of periods of economic growth, by the consolidation of more

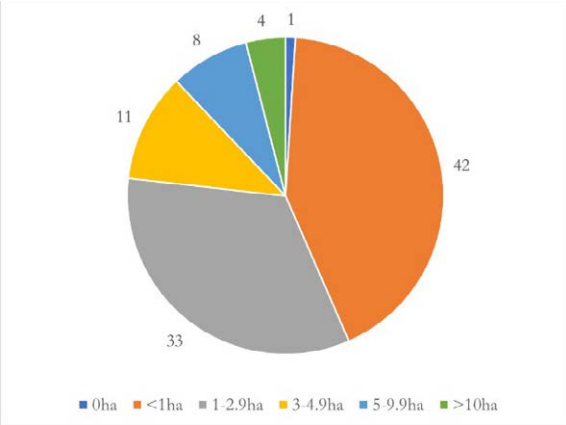
fiscally extractive modern States, or by the societal changes that followed the agrarian revolution is still debated (Van Zanden 1995; Alfani 2021). Structural causes of inequality aside, what has been noticed is that the accumulation of wealth among local elites represented the major *in situ* driver of inequality. The tenth decile, in general, and the top 5 to 1 percent, in particular, had the most considerable influence on inequality trends across all observed societies, vastly outstripping all other percentiles regarding share of overall wealth (Alfani 2015). It has also been observed that in rural areas, the distance between the middling and poorer strata of society did not fundamentally change in the long run, perhaps due to the poorest rural dwellers leaving their homes behind to seek relief or an occupation in the cities. At least regarding wealth distribution, the rise of rural elites oversaw a stagnant society that bled out the poor. Social mobility is expected at the top and bottom of our rural societies. This picture finds a concrete parallel in the societal developments that followed the agrarian revolution, with the rise of large-scale farms worked by wage labourers who eventually became dispossessed of their land. It seems more difficult to argue for it to fit the historical developments of the steady-state peasant economies. As inequality rose even among peasant societies, what were the drivers? How much did the trends between peasant and market societies diverge?

We reconstruct wealth inequality levels based on wealth taxes or registers. In early modern Piedmont, these documents are the *estimi* or *catasti* that each community had to draft to allocate the fiscal burden among households based on the estate. Each parcel of land owned by resident and non-resident households in the community was evaluated and appropriately taxed. While the fiscal value associated with each parcel was not directly its market value, it can be reasonably assumed that the two were proportionate to one another (Alfani 2015). For the Low Countries' Campine region, we have used the "20th penny" registers, wealth taxes levying a 20th of the total value of the land. Just like the *estimi*, the value is a theoretical rather than an actual market value. Still, they are suitable for reconstructing rural communities' social distribution of land and wealth. For the Low Countries' Scheldt Polder region, however, we used "*pointinglijsten*". These tax registers only give a measure of the wealth position of the taxpayer as perceived by the village authorities, based on land use, but also more subjective estimates. The source provides insight into the extent to which the village authorities estimated and allocated the fiscal capacity by distributing the predetermined tax to be collected among the villagers.

Inequality rose steadily in our steady-state peasant economies and market-oriented societies. Nevertheless, the peasant communities in Susa and the Campine area showed remarkably low wealth inequality throughout the long eighteenth century. In the Campine area, inequality never reached a 0.6 Gini coefficient (Table 1a). From the Middle Ages onwards, the area was dominated by small but independent peasant households (De Keyzer 2018). The absolute majority owned between 0 and 3 hectares of land. There was a significant middling group, owning or leasing between 3 and 10 hectares of land, but only 4 percent owned or leased more than 10 hectares, and even the largest estates did not exceed 50 hectares (Figure 3). In the Scheldt Polder region, Gini coefficients rarely dipped below the 0.6 boundary and reached almost 0.7 by the end of the eighteenth century (Table 1b).

Here, we see a different type of society (Soens, Tys and Thoen 2014; Vande Sompele 2021). The Polders were dominated by an elite of wealthy tenant farmers managing large estates. The middling groups were predominantly artisans rather than farmers. Landless labourers and seasonal migrants performed agricultural labour. It is essential to know that seasonal labourers are not included in the tax registers, and therefore, the inequality levels are lower than expected. If we look at the decile ratios, we can see what caused this shift in wealth inequality. In the Campine area, the poorest villagers are becoming poorer than the middling groups and the elites. The poorest group's share of total village wealth was more than halved between 1670 and 1770. The shares of the other deciles remain more or less stable. We are not certain what the causes are, but the partible inheritance system of the Campine area can probably explain this. All land was divided among all children, and therefore the tiny peasant estates quickly dipped below the subsistence line, forcing them to become landless labourers or seek a livelihood elsewhere. The middling and wealthier groups could probably maintain their estates by purchasing or leasing the land that was freed up in this way. These figures do not indicate a real polarisation in the Campine villages between the most affluent strata and the rest, nor a decline in the position of the middle groups. Rather, they show a significant decrease in the position of the lowest decile. In the Polder region, the growing dominance of the tenth decile is most striking relative to the middling and the poorest groups. The share of fiscal wealth accumulated by the tenth decile exceeded 50 percent and grew even further at the end of the eighteenth century. The position of the poorest decile was much worse than in the Campine region but remained stable. In the Polder region, there was not so much a slipping behind the poorest villagers but a growing polarisation of the upper village stratum with the rest.

Fig. 3. **Land distribution in a Campine village (Loenhout) in the eighteenth century (in ha)**[1]



[1] All the archival sources this paper has examined are in the bibliography.

Tab. 1a. **Inequality figures for the Campine area 1672-1766**

Campine Area	Year	Gini	D10/D1	D10/D5	D5/D1	Share D1	Share D10
Rijkevorsel	1672	0.48	13.6	3.43	3.96	1.9	26.4
	1708	0.51	25.47	2.77	9.19	1	24.9
	1752	0.52	30.28	2.83	10.69	0.8	25.6
	1766	0.53	35.57	3.25	10.65	0.8	28.2
Loenhout	1672	0.47	22.52	6.42	3.5	1.8	40.5
	1696	0.57	95.09	12.91	7.36	0.5	50.9
	1750	0.57	78.69	8.22	9.57	0.5	39.5

Tab. 1b. **Inequality figures for the Polder area 1663-1793**

Polder area	Year	Gini	D10/D1	D10/D5	D5/D1	Share D1	Share D10
Doel	1663	0.53	19.8	4.4	4.5	1.5	29.3
Kieldrecht	1741	0.64	223	19	11.7	0.24	53
	1793	0.69	276.4	25.6	10.8	0.2	54.6
Verrebroek	1713	0.67	222.8	22.3	10	0.2	45.3
	1790	0.66	138.5	20.4	6.8	0.3	47.9

Similar trends can be observed in Piedmont (Table 2). In the valley of Susa, inequality levels peaked below 0.6 after a steady rise in line with regional trends (Alfani 2015). Inequality levels remained consistently and notably lower than in the rest of the region and in the province of Vercelli. We can find a picture reminiscent of the Low Countries here. Mountain communities are primarily comprised of small landowners who possess between 1 and 5 hectares. Middle-size landowners possessing between 5 and 10 hectares remained a stable presence throughout the period, and very few households could boast an estate larger than 20 hectares. While the share of families living off less than 1 hectare rose in both areas, by the end of the eighteenth century, it had become majoritarian in the plains. The irrigated lowlands reached high levels of inequality in line with the rest of the region. By the half of the eighteenth century, the processes connected with the agrarian revolution had almost

reached their full conclusion. Large farms belonging to local elites, nobles, and ecclesiastical institutions dominated the landscape. Around these estates larger than 50 hectares stood households of agricultural wage workers who owned increasingly less land at best and none at worst (Table 3). The difference in decile ratios noticed for the Low Countries returns again for Piedmont. The dominance of the rural elites was decisively more pronounced in the market-oriented area. The wealthiest part of society had captured more than half of the community's land-based wealth by the end of the observed period, strongly outstripping all other households from society's middling and lowest strata. By contrast, these last two groups did not experience significant changes in their wealth shares, and the ratio between them remained stable. In the mountains, the rise of the elites mainly came to the detriment of the poorest groups. The distance between the wealthiest and the middle part of society widened slightly in the eighteenth century. Just as for the Campine region, the ratios D5/1 remained consistently higher than that D10/5, meaning that at least in terms of share of overall wealth, the middling groups remained more similar to their wealthier than poorer neighbours.

Tab. 2. **Inequality figures for Piedmont. 1650-1800**

Province	**Year**	**Gini**	**D10/1**	**D10/5**	**D5/1**	**Share D1**	**Share D10**
Susa	1650	0.54	82.3	6.7	12.2	0.5	38.3
	1700	0.50	71.4	6.0	12.0	0.5	35.0
	1750	0.52	75.6	6.8	11.0	0.5	37.8
	1800	0.57	103.1	7.3	14.0	0.4	39.0
Vercelli	1650	/	/	/	/	/	/
	1700	0.62	129.1	13.0	10.0	0.4	48.1
	1750	0.73	305.5	32.3	9.4	0.2	60.4
	1800	0.76	364.4	36.8	9.9	0.2	61.1

The recent findings of inequality hold for our case studies as well. Inequality was rising, regardless of economic growth or stability. Both the peasant societies and the market economies witnessed a rise in wealth inequality. While the relative trend was similar, the difference was significant in absolute numbers. Peasant societies were able to remain highly egalitarian societies with strong middling groups. In a time of proletarianization, the middling groups in the peasant societies showed less downward mobility, and the wealthiest deciles could not widen the gap. The question remains what this meant for their material wealth.

Table 3. **Land distribution among resident households in early modern Piedmont**

Province	Year	<1ha	1-4.9ha	5-9.9ha	10-19.9ha	20-49.9ha	>50ha
Susa	1700	25.6	52.0	18.6	3.3	0.4	/
	1750	38.7	48.7	10.1	2.1	0.2	/
	1800	38.7	47.4	10.7	2.8	0.4	/
Vercelli	1700	22.2	31.2	13.0	15.6	13.8	4.1
	1750	45.9	33.0	10.3	7.0	2.9	0.9
	1800	54.3	29.8	7.3	4.3	3.1	1.2

3. Improving one's material wealth and social position?

3.1 Historiographical perspective

Social standing and status were defined not only by one's landed possessions but also by their consumption culture. From the seventeenth century onwards, scholars have identified fundamentally changing consumption patterns. Elevating oneself also meant adhering to these new fashions, more comfort, and more conspicuous consumption. Noble and urban elites had set a new standard. Light, colourful, linen and cotton items replaced durable, sturdy, and woollen clothes. Inheriting dresses or slightly altering a couple of statement pieces was no option since fashion styles changed more rapidly. Unbreakable tin plates had to give way to breakable majolica and, even better, porcelain. Houses became bigger, spacious, lighter, and filled with more goods and more comfortable furniture. Feather beds, soft chairs and couches, stoves, and abundant candles made houses cosy, comfortable, warm, and illuminated. Finally, the cuisine was revolutionised by introducing spices, tea and coffee, chocolate, and potatoes (De Vries 2008; 122-85).

After a couple of decades of research into the consumer revolution, the consensus seems to be that this was a trickle-down principle and that everybody able to purchase these goods would eventually do so. By looking at material possessions via probate inventories, scholars like Schama (1987) and De Vries (1994) shattered the idea of deprivation in the pre-modern period. Amsterdam showcased embarrassing riches due to global trade, and not only the wealthiest merchants could improve their lifestyles. Rural societies trailed behind urban and noble households, but by the end of the eighteenth century, even the most remote and poor households would improve their lifestyle. According to the historiography, predominantly households engaged in commercial agriculture or crafts were able to adopt these new consumer preferences. Jan De Vries (2008) studied rural households in Holland and Friesland and concluded that thanks to a surge in industriousness, even the middling groups

could afford a new consumer culture and live much more comfortably than before. As a result, they could catch up with the elites and improve their social standing. While firstly considered a phenomenon typical of the most advanced economies of Europe, it is now clear that a shift towards higher and new forms of consumption happened across the continent. Not everybody shared this positive perspective on rising welfare levels, however. The flipside of the industrious revolution coin is that large groups in society did not have the opportunities to improve their lifestyle. Erik Thoen (2001) showed how peasant commercial survival economies did not improve their prosperity. They remained too poor and proletarianised to join any consumer revolution and were impoverished during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

3.2 Probate inventories and material wealth

We use probate inventories to study trends in early modern material wealth. These versatile documents have long been the cornerstone of the historiographical debate about material living standards in past societies (Dean et al. 2005; Poukens 2012; Béaur 2017; Mas-Ferrer 2020; Bovenkerk and Fertig 2023; Viale 2023; Falk 2023). They are widely available across Europe and similar enough for comparison. While studies on urban material wealth levels often focus on one city in particular, our case study has a broader scope as inventories have been drafted across the selected case studies. In early modern Piedmont and the Habsburg Low Countries, an inventory was drafted following certain circumstances around the passing of the household head or spouse, such as death *ab intestato* with heirs of minor age. A notary or alderman accompanied by an estimator, some witnesses from the community's best members, and the legal tutor to the heirs would record and estimate all the movable goods and financial assets of the deceased household head or spouse. While Piedmontese probates do record the deceased's estate, the Low Countries records do not consistently mention immovable goods. The overall recorded patrimony would coincide with the total material wealth found in the household shortly after the death of the household head or spouse. We have analysed 80 probate inventories for the Low Countries, 47 for the Campine region, and 33 for the Scheldt Polder. For Piedmont, 300 inventories were analysed, with 150 for each province.

For how useful they are, inventories come with some critical shortcomings. The level of detail for each inventory varies from case to case, and the criteria to assess the quantity and quality of objects were not set in stone. Often a notary or estimator would pool together similar objects or categories or evaluate them according to weight instead of nominally. More troublesome is their representativeness bias. It is well known that probate inventories overrepresent households from high and middle-high social groups. So far, it has been assumed that the degree of bias in the source is somewhat the same across different types of society. Instead, we discovered that inventories drafted in highly unequal societies are more biased. The underrepresentation of the poorest groups in society is more significant in inegalitarian market economies than in peasant societies. We divided society into socio-professional categories based on the historical reality of the time. These are notables, yeomen, craftsmen, peasants, sharecroppers, wageworkers, and the poor. We determined the

profession of the deceased household head either through direct statements in the inventory or by matching it with entries on the closest available census. In this latter case, we used the closest living relative whenever it was impossible to trace the household head directly. The bias was then assessed by comparing each socio-professional category with its size, as in the two most complete census data sets for pre-modern Piedmont. Unfortunately, copies of the census of 1734 and 1774 for both provinces have not been equally preserved; thus, we have used the former for Vercelli and the latter for Susa. As table 4 shows, wage workers are almost half of the total population of Vercelli, yet only 12 per cent of the probate inventories belonged to wage workers. Notables and yeomen, on the other hand, are at the absolute top of society and constitute only 5,4 per cent of the total population, while almost a quarter (22%) of all probate inventories are from individuals from this social category. The disparity is much smaller for Susa. While notables were also overrepresented, the poorer groups are much better represented in our selection of probate inventories.

Tab. 4. **Percentage of inventories and households based on socio-professional profile. Piedmont**

Source	Notables	Yeomen	Craftsmen	Peasants	Sharecroppers	Wageworkers	Poor
Susa Inventories	12.7	0.0	15.3	64.0	1.3		1.3
Susa 1774	1.0	0.21	13.9	80.6	4.3		/
Vercelli Inventories	15.3	6.7	12.7	23.3	23.3	12.0	0.0
Vercelli 1734	3.6	1.8	12.8	13.5	17.5	46.9	4.1

For the Southern Low Countries, we have more difficulties reconstructing the socio-professional profile of the households in the probate inventories. The biggest obstacle is our inability to link those households to tax registers or censuses covering the entire village population. The available tax registers do not link up to the probate inventories, which are more scattered throughout our time intervals. We have used cattle units mentioned in the inventories to distinguish between social strata. To evaluate the social bias of inventories, we compare the distribution of cattle possession with historical cattle counts based on the entire village, with Rijkevorsel and Kallo representing the Campine and Polder regions, respectively (Table 5).

Tab. 5. **Comparison of cattle units in tax registers and probate inventories to measure the social bias of probate inventories**

Source Rijkevorsel	**No cattle**	**1 cattle units (CU)**	**2-3 CU**	**4-5 CU**	**6-8 CU**	**>8 CU**
Inventories 18th century	16,1	3,2	6,5	9,7	42	22,6
Cattle count in 1741	8	3	11	18	41	19
Source Kallo	**No cattle**	**1 cattle units (CU)**	**2-3 CU**	**4-5 CU**	**>5 CU**	
Inventories 18th century	19	0	38,1	9,6	33,3	
Cattle count in 1736	48,5	17,9	20,1	9,6	3,9	

Using this methodology, it becomes clear that the Campine probate inventories' distribution, like those of Susa, aligns more closely with the cattle register distribution compared to the Polder inventories, where the overrepresentation of the wealthiest cattle owners is conspicuous. The social bias in probate inventories measured by the distribution of cattle is much smaller in the Campine than in the Polder area. This has significant repercussions for research about material living standards and social mobility. Probate inventories and the rise of consumption levels are often compared. Studies from one city, region or country are reference points for other areas. Plus, they are taken as a representative case for societal trends. Our findings here show that we cannot assume this in the future. We can trace the evolution of material living conditions of the upper classes reasonably easily. Still, if we want to grasp the ability of the lower social classes to improve their living standards, we need to adjust our methodologies and source selection.

In the following section, we show how this social bias can skew trends and evolutions that we witness. For pre-modern Piedmont, we reconstructed the distribution of inventories based on the socio-professional profile of the household head (Table 4). In this article, we split our results by social group and calculate weighted averages to correct the social bias of our sources. The circulation of movable goods has been calculated by weighting the frequency in which said goods appeared among determinate socio-professional groups by those groups' sizes in society based on two general censuses. As mentioned, we could not have the same level of detail for the Low Countries and will leave this case study out of the equation.

3.3 Buying your way up the social ladder? Consumption of luxury and new colonial goods

We start by establishing whether both kinds of societies in Piedmont underwent a period of rising consumption. In Piedmont, the total amount of movable goods per inventory has been taken as a proxy for material wealth levels due to a lack of monetary evaluations by notaries. During the long eighteenth century, households from both the steady-state peasant economy (Susa) and the market economy (Vercelli) experienced gains in material wealth (Table 6). Households from Vercelli consistently owned more goods than those in Susa. This could indicate that market economies were better at securing higher absolute levels of wealth. The wealthiest members of market economies were far more prosperous than the elites of the peasant economies. Whether this trend of overall rising household wealth materialised similarly across the different societies remains to be seen. To this end, it is helpful to consider further specific dimensions of household wealth associated with improving one's material living and social condition.

Tab. 6. **Average stock of movable goods across Piedmontese households. Number of recorded items**

Province	1650-99	1700-49	1750-99	Rate of increase XVIII
Susa	54.6	93.9	131.7	1.4
Vercelli	89.9	122.1	157.0	1.3

All items except foodstuff, raw materials, and farm animals have been considered.

While the stock of movable goods indicates trends in material wealth, it still needs to be shown whether households from all social groups managed to improve their social position. The increase could have been spurred by the accumulation of already present items rather than by acquiring new goods, suggesting a possible increase in social standing. For this purpose, we have selected a basket of new luxuries and single items that research has deemed crucial in the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century. New luxuries comprise paintings, mirrors, and clocks. Under the umbrella of colonial goods, we have included spices and all items associated with coffee, tea, and tobacco consumption. Majolica and glazed earthenware have been counted on their own. Unlike porcelain, glazed earthenware is less indicative of higher luxury levels but is still an item associated with a new consumption wave. The most coveted items that have formed the core of previous research into early modern prosperity have been new luxuries and colonial goods. These objects represented a novelty in many pre-modern households and a testimony of their aspiration to better their material and social position. So far, historiography has been almost unanimous in pointing towards rural market economies as inherently more capable than peasant ones in accumulating these types of goods. While it is logical to assume that households that are better integrated in commodity markets have higher access to novelty luxuries,

the degree to which a social trickle-down of the same happened has yet to be adequately established.

Regarding the consumption of new luxuries in Piedmont (Table 7), we can see differences and similarities in how these items circulated across society. New luxuries were scarce in the province of Susa. In the lowlands, the presence of novelties steadily increased and ended with almost a fifth of society owning at least one of these items. Colonial goods that could be found were even more exclusive. They were virtually absent until the middle of the eighteenth century and started to appear in a minority of the probate inventories in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Tab. 7. **Percentage of households owning luxuries. Piedmont**

Province	Period	New Luxuries	Colonial	Majolica
Susa	1650-99	0.5	0.2	9.3
	1700-49	12.0	0.0	0.0
	1750-99	9.6	11.6	12.9
Vercelli	1650-99	9.8	0.0	14.0
	1700-49	14.4	1.8	32.9
	1750-99	18.1	12.9	40.2

3.4 Societal stratification of conspicuous consumption.

But these were just the general trends. The picture becomes more complex but also more interesting if we step away from aggregate figures and break down our calculations based on our social categories. Studying the distribution of significant objects across these categories can convey to what extent early modern society could improve their social standing. We took the more representative groups of the time: notables, peasants, craftsmen, and wage workers. Notables represent the local elite, those who we can assume to be more accustomed to novelties in luxury and consumption trends. Peasants from the plains and the mountains are different groups but share their status as owners of small and medium estates. This said, an estate in the plains differs from one in the mountains, and based on the average stock of movable goods, peasants in the plains were significantly wealthier, with double the amount of goods in the late eighteenth century. Craftsmen have been taken because they represent arguably the most similar group after notables between the two areas, at least going by socio-professional categorization. Regarding wealth, a craftsman's household could be at any point of the distribution from wealthy innkeepers to poor cobblers. Wage workers have been taken as they constituted the majoritarian group

in the rural communities of the province of Vercelli despite being absent from mountain inventories.

Since the probate inventories of the peasant economies are much less biased than those of the market economies, the picture for Susa does not change much (Table 8a). New luxuries and colonial goods remained the privilege of the local elites. The most important finding is that even the notables do not seem keen on investing in conspicuous consumption, with no fundamental change in their consumer culture throughout our study period. The findings on Vercelli, however, do significantly change (Table 8b). New luxuries and colonial products were omnipresent in the households of the rural elites with rising abundance. Colonial products follow the same trend as Susa, but in the province of Vercelli, they were found in more social groups, with around a third of craftsmen and farmers consuming some exotic product. While the rising consumption of new luxuries is undeniable in the market-oriented context and happened especially during periods of economic growth, it remains clear that the largest share of the population was wholly excluded from this phenomenon. No wage worker's household ever owned any luxurious item, not even cheap paper paintings to show. Their only advancement was in the ownership of majolica, whose value as luxury items can be questioned.

Tab. 8a. **Percentage of households with luxuries across social professional groups. Susa**

Group	Period	New Luxuries	Colonial	Majolica
Notables	1650-99	50.0	16.7	33.3
	1700-49	33.3	0.0	0.0
	1750-99	57.1	85.7	14.3
Craftsmen	1650-99	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1700-49	62.5	0.0	0.0
	1750-99	35.7	28.6	14.3
Peasants	1650-99	0.0	0.0	11.1
	1700-49	3.7	0.0	0.0
	1750-99	5.0	8.3	13.3
Wageworkers	1650-99	/	/	/
	1700-49	/	/	/
	1750-99	/	/	/

Tab. 8b. **Percentage of households with luxuries across social professional groups. Vercelli**

Group	Period	New Luxuries	Colonial	Majolica
Notables	1650-99	66.7	0.0	66.7
	1700-49	62.5	50.0	37.5
	1750-99	75.0	83.3	66.7
Craftsmen	1650-99	50.0	0.0	0.0
	1700-49	50.0	0.0	33.3
	1750-99	54.6	36.4	63.6
Peasants	1650-99	7.1	0.0	42.9
	1700-49	18.2	0.0	36.4
	1750-99	50.0	30.0	70.0
Wageworkers	1650-99	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1700-49	0.0	0.0	37.5
	1750-99	0.0	0.0	25.0

We wanted to examine material wealth as a proxy for households' ability to better their social position. Previous historiography has argued for an advantage of market-oriented societies regarding material living standards, pointing at how rising prosperity levels and economic growth accompanied one another even in the pre-modern period. We can partially agree with the previous literature based on the Piedmontese data. On an aggregate societal level, we see an increase in households owning luxury items only in the province of Vercelli. Peasants in the mountains possessed fewer new luxuries. They even demonstrated a contraction during the eighteenth century, possibly indicating a widespread inability to better their social conditions and material living standards. Still, the hypothesis that economic growth or commercialisation would lead to a significant rise in prosperity needs to be questioned once we look at the province of Vercelli.

Even at its peak, less than a fifth of society possessed any novel luxury, a share still higher than in the mountains but also modest. It should be noted that in this fifth of the population, we can find groups that demonstrate a desire to achieve a higher social status, particularly peasants. They did this by investing in status symbols and cultural capital. The highest gain in the consumption of novel luxuries can be

noticed in this social group. Starting from 7 percent, the share of households owning any new luxury item rose to 50 percent, primarily due to art consumption. These peasants were different from their counterparts in the mountains. They mainly possessed arable land, producing the most valuable crops in a province deeply integrated into domestic and foreign markets. They indeed benefitted from the advancement in land productivity and rising grain prices. Still, the largest group in the province of Vercelli, agricultural wage workers, never experienced any significant gain. Aside from the occasional plate in majolica, their houses remained void of novel luxuries.

By critically assessing probate inventories as a source to analyse material living standards, the previously assumed narrative about an inherent advantage for market-oriented societies experiencing higher living standards and social mobility across its strata needs to be nuanced. While novel luxuries and colonial products circulated at higher rates among households in a market-oriented economy, these often remained an essentially elitist phenomenon. This was particularly the case in Piedmont, where, in both the mountains and irrigated lowlands, most of the population remained consistently excluded from experiencing any form of luxurious consumption.

4. Conclusions

We can confirm that the long eighteenth century was a period of significant social mobility. However, by comparing two different types of societies in two different pre-modern states, it becomes clear that there is no uniform trend to distinguish. Depending on the context, the rate of economic growth, the societal structures, and the type and pace of social mobility were different. When we look at inequality as an indicator of social mobility, we see that peasant economies are much more stable than market economies. Inequality levels rose in all four case studies, but the inequality was already much higher, and changes were more pronounced among market economies.

In the Southern Low Countries, economic growth in the Scheldt Polder region provided the opportunity for the rural elites to accumulate land and wealth, widening the gap between the middling and poorest groups in society. The Campine area was a true steady-state economy. Nevertheless, inequality levels did not remain the same, but they steadily rose in line with European trends. Inequality levels here were not determined by the upward mobility of the elites but rather by the downward mobility of the poorest groups. While the middling groups were remarkably resilient and could retain their social position, a part of the peasant households on the verge of poverty or landlessness saw their share of the total wealth decline. They most probably became increasingly landless labourers due to partible inheritance and the subdivision of their farmland beyond a subsistence level.

For pre-modern Piedmont, inequality trends fit the picture described for the Low Countries. Inequality in the mountains rose at the same rate as in rural Piedmont but remained substantially lower. At the same time, in the market-oriented province of Vercelli, the trend was much more sustained and reached higher levels. Crucial in distinguishing the two provinces was the local elites' dominance and the middling groups' strength. Alpine elites never captured the same share of their communities'

wealth as their counterparts in the irrigated plains. At the same time, middling groups in the mountains remained consistently closer to their wealthier than poorer neighbours, at least in wealth levels based on the estate. While in the irrigated plains, the top of society was rapidly outpacing the rest, the trend remained more contained, and the society was more steady in the mountains.

However, wealth is not the only relevant parameter in analysing social mobility. One's social position is not only defined by landed possession or professional status. We claim that it is essential to move beyond fiscal and parish registers and take material living standards into account as well. However, the field of material living standards is facing a big challenge. Probate inventories are socially biased, and in this article, we showed that not all regions have a similar social bias. Scholars need to consider this if they want to prevent studying only the consumption patterns of society's elites and comparing consumption patterns based on unrepresentative sample cases.

For the Italian case study, unsurprisingly, Vercelli stands out with the highest aggregate levels of material prosperity. Rural households displayed an abundance of goods and were able to increase their material wealth throughout the eighteenth century. It seems to confirm the hypothesis that commercialisation and economic growth went hand in hand with rising prosperity. Yet a look across socio-economic groups urges us to nuance this story. The aggregate numbers hide social inequality as the benefits of economic growth were not equally divided. In Vercelli, status goods like new luxuries and colonial products did not trickle down the social ladder. If we split our results into social categories and use weighted averages, it is clear that the upward social mobility of the rural elites stands out. They were able to increase both their landed property and their status. By addressing the social bias of the sources, it becomes clear that the difference between the subsistence and market economy was not that big. The absence of a significant group of rural elites can explain the difference in material wealth rather than a difference in living standard trends.

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Piedmont

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Vercelli

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Wouter Ronsijn, Wouter Ryckbosch

Income and wealth mobility in the smaller towns of the late medieval and early modern Low Countries: an exploratory analysis[1]

1. Introduction

Which societies tend to generate a fair distribution of opportunities, and which societies fail to do so? Although it is a question older than the disciplines of sociology, economics and history themselves, it still occupies a central place within those fields. In fact, recent concerns about the growth of inequality and the decline of mobility have placed the issue of social mobility back on the agenda (Lee and Solon 2009; Chetty, Grusky et al. 2017; Chetty, Hendren et al. 2014; Chetty, Hendren et al. 2014). As such questions are regaining prominence in the social sciences, recent historical research has tended to call into question the long-term impact of the traditional drivers of social mobility: education, economic growth, and inequality (Clark 2014). More empirical research and new methods will be needed in order to more closely study the relationship between social mobility and its determinants prior to the twentieth century.

The current paper seeks to contribute to this challenge by examining long-term trends in social mobility in the smaller towns of the Low Countries between 1400 and 1800. Did the rich in these towns remain rich, and did the poor remain poor? The analysis of newly gathered archival data on intra-generational mobility aims to contribute to our understanding of the long-term history of social mobility, and its relation to economic growth and inequality.

2. State of the art

The evolution of social mobility since the Middle Ages until the onset of modern economic growth in the nineteenth century has – often implicitly – been part of models that attempt to make sense of social mobility today. Ingrained in the very foundations of modern sociological scholarship on social mobility was the belief that modernity had brought about more dynamic channels of vertical mobility than prevailed in the pre-modern past. Already in 1927 Sorokin established a diminishing correlation between the occupational status of fathers and sons, and imagined the growth of opportunities for lifetime mobility – trends which he deemed responsible

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for a deplorable rise of loneliness and moral disintegration in modern society (Sorokin 1998). The functionalist theory of mobility that dominated the sociological discipline in the 1960s and 1970s shared the implicit belief in the contrast between a highly mobile modern society, and a stable, immovable past (Kerr, Harbison et al. 1960). Since modern economies relied on the principles of achievement and universalism, this implied a weakening of the association between social origins and destinations. By contrast, traditional societies were supposed to have been dominated by principles of ascription and particularism – and thus by low rates of social mobility (an overview in Goldthorpe 2005). Most influentially, Treiman argued that industrialization and technological advances necessarily made recruitment processes more universalistic and meritocratic (Treiman 1970).

Historians of the medieval and early modern period did not necessarily disagree with such an assessment. Following in the footsteps of nineteenth-century greats such as Werner Sombart, Jacob Burckhardt and Max Weber, many historians believed that there was at least some truth to the appeals of religious and moral authorities to the god-ordained and immovable nature of social rank and status (Herlihy 1973, 624). Both the industrial and the French Revolution were then seen as events that put an end to this period of relative immobility. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s a rich historiographical tradition attempted to chart the rise of new social groups in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries comprised of individuals who had earned their wealth in trade and industry, and had managed to gain access to the political, social and economic elite of western societies. The underlying premise was that the ascent of the bourgeoisie was a marker of how elites were opened up, and how this resulted in unprecedented levels of social mobility (Daumard 2017; Vanhaute 1999).

In recent decades, different developments have given rise to serious challenges to this distinction between modern and pre-modern societies. For one thing, functionalist explanations have given way to more individual-level approaches to explaining social mobility rates (Goldthorpe 2000). As a growing body of empirical work has tended to show little variation over time in modern mobility rates (Goldthorpe 2005), it has again become more common to stress long-term continuity rather than change. Moreover, many sociologists and economists have turned their attention away from structural or absolute mobility, and have focused instead on the study of relative mobility (Featherman, Lancaster Jones et al. 1975). This shift in attention has made it less straightforward to assume that relative mobility changed radically between the early modern and modern period, since abstraction should then be made of the absolute effects sorted by the structural transformations of industrialization and globalization.

This is especially so since studies of migration, apprenticeship, and guilds in early modern Europe have consistently indicated that many types of mobility were more frequent well before the nineteenth century than had previously been assumed (Wallis 2008; Winter 2013; Lucassen, Lucassen et al. 2010; Epstein and Prak 2008). Local studies of wealth and income mobility, although limited in chronological scope, have similarly suggested that relative mobility was higher than expected in early modern Europe (Friedrichs 2014; Hanus 2012). This revisionism has been complemented by

a growing body of historical work indicating no increasing openness of elites during the period of industrialisation (van Leeuwen and Maas 1991).

As a result of these developments, there is now no longer a generally accepted model of long-term growth in social mobility from pre-modern and modern societies. In fact, the most notable major attempt to chart trends in social mobility levels from the Middle Ages until today arrived at the remarkable conclusion that there were no trends in the long run (Clark 2014). Nevertheless, on-going debates about the growing oligarchisation of political elites in early modern Europe (Liddy 2017), the creeping closure of guild institutions (De Munck 2017) and confraternities (Van Dijck 2012; Ryckbosch and Decraene 2014) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the growth of inequality across early modern Europe (Alfani and Ryckbosch 2016; Alfani 2021; Alfani 2024; Federico, Nuvolari et al. 2023; Nigro 2020) call for a reconsideration of the development of social mobility in the centuries preceding the industrial revolution. Given the limitations of the surnames-based methodology employed in Clark's study (Torche and Corvalan 2016; Betzig 2007), it thus far remains impossible to chart temporal changes in rates of mobility in a more fine-grained way. It will thus be up to a new generation of mobility studies to show in which direction mobility evolved, where rupture or continuity prevailed, and which historical contexts influenced mobility outcomes.

3. Cases and sources

The present paper aims to contribute to the debate on pre-industrial social mobility by taking the Low Countries as a case study. Already around the end of the medieval period, and throughout the early modern era, the Low Countries were among the most densely populated and highly urbanized areas of Europe. During the high Middle Ages the core of (urban) economic development was situated in the Southern provinces of the Netherlands, particularly in the centres of urban textile (woollens) production such as Ghent, and in the main commercial hub for long-distance trade, Bruges (Murray 2005; Blockmans 2010). Around the end of the fifteenth century, political strife and geographic vagaries relocated the dominant commercial (and to a lesser extent industrial) activities northwards towards Antwerp and its surroundings (a recent interpretation of this relocation in Gelderblom 2013). During the first half of the sixteenth century Antwerp became the principal hub for trade in North-Western Europe, serving as a staple market for English textiles and Portuguese spices, but also stimulating industrial production within its own walls and hinterland (Van der Wee 1963). After the closure of the Scheldt, following the Spanish re-possession of Antwerp during the Eighty Years' War in 1585, the focal point of international trade routes shifted northwards again, this time towards Amsterdam and the rest of the Maritime Dutch provinces. The Northern Low Countries experienced their Golden Age in the seventeenth century, based on their involvement in global maritime trade and a highly specialised and commercialised domestic economy (Prak and van Zanden 2022). In the Southern Low Countries this marked the end of a period of economic and urban growth, although a successful economic reconversion (towards regional trade in the case of Flanders; and high-quality luxury goods in

the case of Brabant) postponed a deeper process of secular economic decline until the second half of the seventeenth century. While the Northern Netherlands stagnated in the eighteenth century, in the South a new phase of rapid demographic growth set in from the middle of the eighteenth century, and came hand in hand with commercial expansion, retail growth and modest forms of labour concentration in the form of (non-mechanised) workshops (*manufactures*) based on considerable numbers of wage labourers (Dejongh and Segers 2001). Proper industrialization started only from the beginning of the nineteenth century in Ghent, Aalst and Sint-Niklaas, and approximately two or three decades later in Bruges and Kortrijk. Flanders was thus among the earliest industrializing areas on the Continent.

Our estimates of social mobility are based on tax lists from six towns in the Low Countries: Diksmuide, Hoeke, Lo and Sint-Niklaas in Flanders in the Southern Low Countries, and Schiedam and Brielle in Holland in the Northern Low Counties. A map with the location of these cases is shown in Fig. 1; the years for which we use tax lists is shown in Fig. 2.

Our oldest data are for Hoeke and Diksmuide in Flanders in the fifteenth century. Hoeke was a very small settlement with urban privileges. In the first half of the fifteenth century it may have counted between 500 and 600 inhabitants. It functioned as an outer port of nearby Bruges, but its citizens were also involved in agriculture, which became its main activity as its commercial functions dwindled in the late Middle Ages (Dillen 2017, 116-19; Dillen 2018; Aernoudts 2001; De Smet 1937). Diksmuide was larger, with about 3000 inhabitants in the middle of the fifteenth century. The town of Diksmuide was a regional centre of meat, dairy and leather goods production and trade, and with a cloth industry in decline (Schacht 1974, 119-20).

Later data for Flanders are for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Lo and Sint-Niklaas. Lo consisted of two parts, a rural and an urban section, each with its own fiscal administration. Only the urban part is considered here (Lo-town). It counted about 430 inhabitants in the middle of the 1690s. At that time, about half of all heads of households were active in industry, of which textiles and construction were the main sectors. Slightly more than twelve percent were active in trade (Dalle 1953, 106, 120). By the 1790s, population had grown to almost 700 inhabitants (Vanderpijpen 1968, 313).

Sint-Niklaas never had urban privileges in the early modern period, but was a large village growing into a town during this time. It grew from about 2900 inhabitants in 1571 to almost 11,000 around 1800 (Laureys 1986, 119-120). It functioned as a regional commercial centre, with a major weekly market for agricultural products and many tradesmen, and also an industrial centre, particularly for textiles. Industrial production was modernised in the eighteenth century and Sint-Niklaas became a major industrial town in the nineteenth century (Boon 1990; Boon 1991; Ronsijn 2013).

For Holland, we have data for Brielle (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and Schiedam (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries). Both were small port towns in the Dutch river area near Rotterdam, living mainly from fishing. Fishing declined in the course of the early modern period, but in the eighteenth century Schiedam became a major gin producer (de Vries and Van der Woude 1995, 298, 381, 416, 556). Both towns grew, Brielle from about 2000 inhabitants in 1514 to over 3600 in 1622, and

Schiedam from about 2400 in 1514 to almost 6000 in 1622. Afterwards, the population of Brielle declined to below 3200 in 1795, while Schiedam continued growing, reaching over 9100 inhabitants in 1795.[2]

The choice for these locations is in part based on the availability of tax lists. However, these tax lists from different locations and periods are not uniform. They come under different names: in Flanders, we use *pointingen*,[3] (forced) loans,[4] and *ommestellingen*;[5] for Holland, we use *penningkohieren*[6] and *verpondingen*.[7] These sources differ in terms of what is taxed, and from whom the tax is required.

The terms *pointingen* and *ommestellingen* in Flanders refer to the distribution among all taxable subjects of the total amount to be raised in tax. In urban locations, such direct taxes are comparatively rare, as the towns tended to rely on indirect taxes, usually on trade, instead. Concomitantly, we know little about the way urban administrations distributed the total sum among their taxpayers. Scholars generally assume that this happened in proportion to the taxpayers' means, but it is unclear whether the resulting distribution reflects differences in income or wealth. Tax assessors sometimes considered income from labour, trade, capital investments or real estate, but this varied from place to place (Zoete 1994, 72-74, 89-91, 118-25; Geens 2023, 145-53; Hanus 2012, 22-24; see also Craeybeckx 1949; Maddens 1968).

Likewise, there are no indications in the sources on how taxpayers' means were assessed for the *pointingen* of Hoeke and Diksmuide. That is also the case of the accounts of the forced loans we use for Diksmuide, though each person's share also seems to have been in proportion to their means. The loans of 1440 and 1441 use the same terminology by which taxes were distributed among the taxpayers ('*ghepoint ende ommeghestelt*'). For Diksmuide, there is the additional problem that the population subject to these taxes and loans is unclear and probably variable. Some apply to the stricter category of citizens of the town (*poorters*, 1416, 1425, 1427), some to the broader category of citizens and inhabitants (1441, 1450, 1458), and others to less precisely indicated groups (*poorters achter de stede*, 1408; *goeden lieden ende commune van dese stede*, 1440). For consistency, we split up the Diksmuide data in two series: (1) the period 1408-1440 covering (presumably) citizens only, and (2) 1441-1458, covering both citizens and other inhabitants.

Nothing is known about the *ommestellingen* in Lo before 1788. In that year, we have three types of taxes: contributions for poor relief, personal tax and house tax. Personal taxes appear to be based on people's or households' professions or rents;

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[2] Van der Woude (1972, 688 (note 81)) estimates Brielle in 1514 counted 400 hearths, corresponding to 1350 communicants, which using his conversion rate comes to 2037 inhabitants. Schiedam counted 470 hearths in 1514 (Stein 2021, 183). Using the conversion rates from Van der Woude, this corresponds to 2395 inhabitants. Figures for 1622 and 1795 from de Vries and Van der Woude (1995, 88).

[3] Diksmuide, 1416, 1450, 1458; Hoeke, 1410, 1427, 1428.

[4] Diksmuide, 1408, 1425, 1427, 'leenynghe ghepoint ende ommeghestelt' in 1440, 1441.

[5] Sint-Niklaas, 1675, 1692, 1709, 1727, 1745, 1763, 1780, 1795; Lo-town, 1672, 1682, 1692, 1702, 1717, 1728, 1781, 1788, 1794.

[6] Brielle, 1575 (100e penning), 1580, 1628, 1639 (all three 50e penning); Schiedam, 1557, 1561 (both 10e penning), 1607, 1614, 1622 (all three 50e penning).

[7] Schiedam, 1658, 1668, 1678, 1688, 1699, 1715, 1724, 1731, 1736, 1751, 1763, 1781, 1790.

the house tax is based on the rental values of houses, probably going back to the estimation of 1751.[8] The basis for the poor relief tax is not mentioned, but it is strongly correlated with the personal tax in 1788 (R = 0.87). Because the poor relief tax is available for three years, and the other taxes only for two years, we use the former.

Since Sint-Niklaas was officially a village, its *ommestellingen* have the characteristics of those in the countryside. Taxpayers were taxed based on two proxies of income: land use and *gestaedhede*. In theory, the latter included income from commercial and artisanal activities, ownership of real estate and capital, although we do not know how these were assessed in practice (Maddens 1972, 22-24; Maddens 1985, 73; Buntinx 1967). While Sint-Niklaas was growing into a town, it contained a large rural area. Because we focus on urban areas, we select only households occupying 0.5 hectare or less, and only consider the *gestaedhede*. We believe the latter tax corresponds best to the proxies of income we have for the other towns.

Contrary to the Flemish cases, the basis for taxation in the Holland cases is better documented. Taxes in the *penningkohieren* en *verpondingen* are all based on the estimated rental value of real estate. Most of these are houses, but other properties are sometimes also included, such as mills or storage spaces. Which properties are taxed and which are not, appears to differ between years, and where possible we have removed certain properties for the sake of comparability. The rental value of all real estate may have been re-estimated for each new tax list in the sixteenth century, but tax lists from the seventeenth century onwards probably relied on earlier estimations. For Schiedam, we know that the estimation of 1632 was used until 1732. A new estimation of that year, updated in 1754, was used for the rest of the eighteenth century. We only consider the owners of real estate. The earlier sources often mention both owners and (in case of tenants) occupants, but only owners are mentioned in later sources. Consequently, whereas the Flemish tax lists proxy income, the Holland lists proxy wealth (de Vries and Van der Woude 1995, 135-136; Soltow and Van Zanden 1998, 25-36; Bos-Rops 2001; Boeschoten and van Manen 1983).

Fig. 3 shows the number of people in the tax lists. These are all natural persons: institutions (e.g. municipalities, hospitals, orphanages), companies (e.g. *participanten* in Holland), or properties without a documented owner, have been removed. Also removed are non-residents where the sources indicate people as such. As port towns, the sources for Schiedam and Brielle do not mention people recurrently residing in these towns in boats without officially being part of their inhabitants. Where available, the poor (i.e. those listed but exempt from taxes and/or whose properties have no (estimated) value), are included. In the Flemish cases, people in the tax lists are generally the heads of households, and the number of people shown in this graph will correspond to the number of households in these locations. Lo and especially Sint-Niklaas grew in the eighteenth century; for Hoeke and Diksmuide in the fifteenth century we cannot discern a clear trend. In the case of Holland, these are the owners, which excludes the propertyless. In Fig. 4 we compare the number of people with the number of properties in the Holland towns. We assume the number of properties, most of which were houses, better reflects changes in the population of these towns. Properties are here proxied by the number of records in the sources

[8] State archives Bruges, Gemeente Lo (TBO 63), 95.

(though not all records include a house while some records include multiple houses). Our results confirm that Brielle and Schiedam both grew strongly between the middle of the sixteenth and the middle of the seventeenth century, but that the number of owners did not follow. On the contrary, certainly in the case of Schiedam the number of owners declined in the second half of the seventeenth century, leading to a concentration of real estate in the hands of a (slightly) smaller group of people. During the eighteenth century, both the number of properties and the number of owners stagnated in Schiedam. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the average owner in both towns had about 1.2 properties; by the end of the seventeenth century, this was about 1.7 properties in Schiedam. Throughout the eighteenth century, this ratio stagnated.

The trend in the number of properties per owner in Schiedam and Brielle closely follows the trends in Gini coefficients between owners in these towns, shown in Fig. 5. The Gini coefficient is a widely used measure of inequality, ranging between 0 (perfect equality) and 1 (perfect inequality). In these two towns, inequality rose from the middle of the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, and stagnated during the eighteenth century. Trends in inequality in the Flemish towns are less straightforward. Inequality appears to have risen massively in Diksmuide in the first half of the fifteenth century. Between the late seventeenth and the end of the eighteenth century, inequality grew in the urban part of Sint-Niklaas, whereas it stagnated or declined in Lo-town.

Fig. 1. **Map of selected cases**

Fig. 2. **Selected cases: selected years with tax lists**

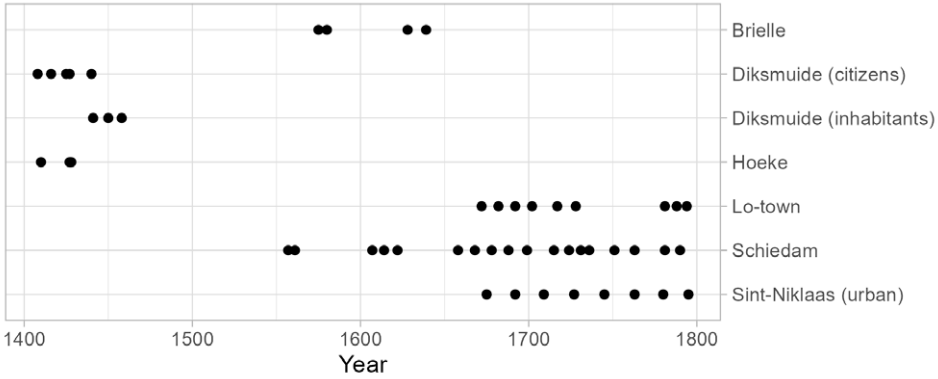
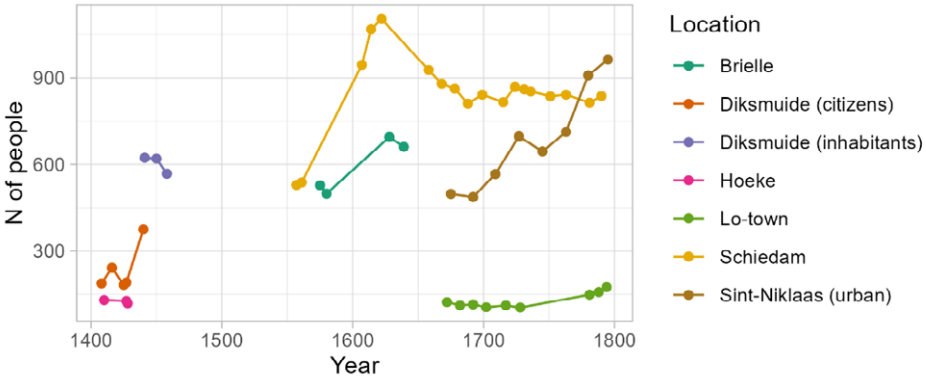
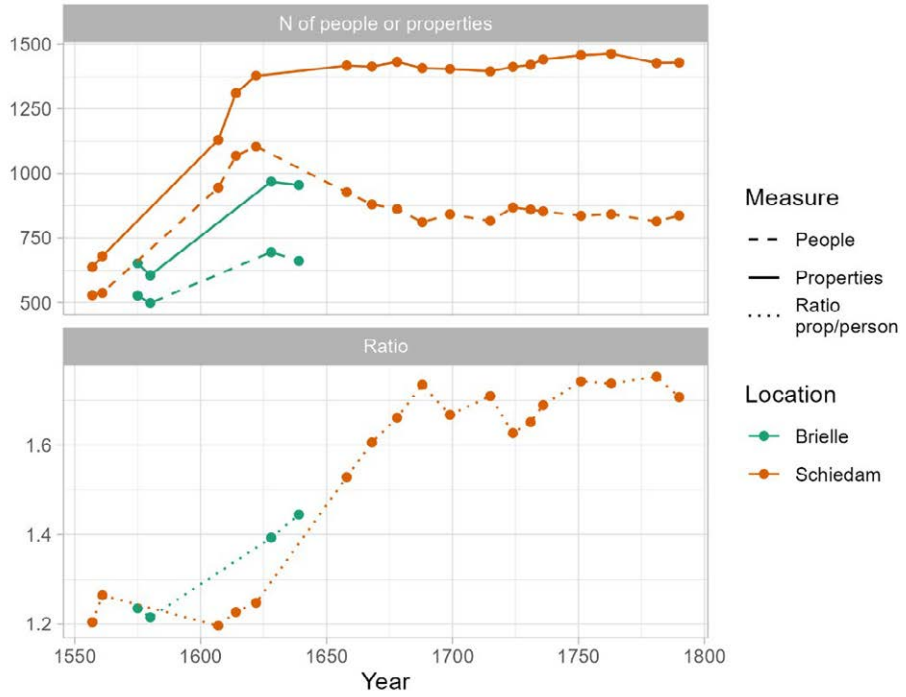


Fig. 3. **Number of people in the tax lists**



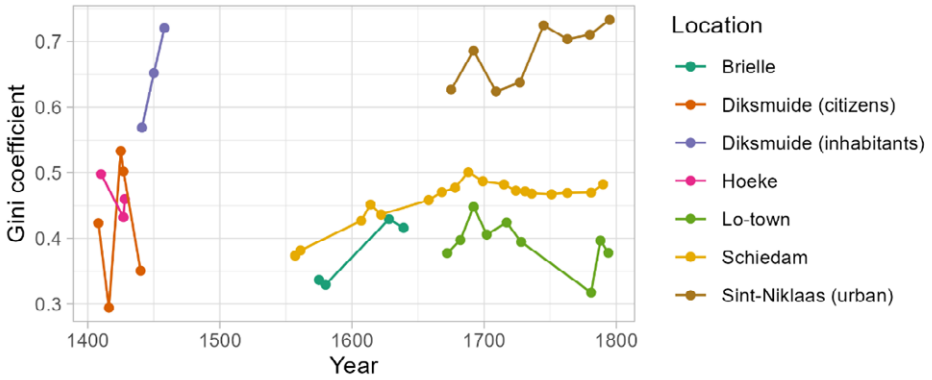
Note: Only natural persons included, excluding among others institutions or companies, and excluding non-residents where information on residence is available.

Fig. 4. **Number of people and properties in the tax lists of Brielle and Schiedam**



Note: Number of people as in Fig. 3; number of properties proxied by the number of records in the sources.

Fig. 5. **Gini coefficients**



4. Method

We measure social mobility using mobility tables. A mobility table compares the income or wealth group to which households belonged in Year 1 and Year 2. Between these two years, some households might have remained in the same group (immobile households), while other households might have moved up or down (mobile households). We calculate mobility levels as the proportion of mobile households.

These mobility tables are drawn up using pairs of tax lists. We use surviving tax lists that are proximate enough in time (almost always less than 20 years) to allow us tracking the same people across successive lists. People (or rather households) are linked when we find them, or their widow or heirs (when those widows or heirs are not listed by their own name, but as «the widow/heir of…») in the next list. To avoid linking two different people with the same name, the order in which people appear in the list, the mention of a father's name or in a few cases even aliases, can be used for disambiguation. Often, people appear in almost the same order in each list, since lists are often drawn up by updating a previous list, and/or by tax assessors drawing up their lists street by street. Still, this procedure is not error-proof, and some people may have been linked incorrectly.

In theory, income or wealth groups in the mobility tables can represent both absolute income or wealth (households with an income ranging between the same specified lower and upper limits in both years) and relative income or wealth (e.g. quintiles or deciles, with possibly different lower and upper limits in the beginning and end years). In practice, the sources only allow us to draw up mobility tables based on relative income or wealth groups. This is due to variation, between successive tax lists, in the rate of taxation, the community's prosperity, the selection criteria for inclusion in the tax list, and the total population. If a person pays twice the amount of taxes as in the previous list, we do not know whether this is because s/he earned twice as much, or was simply taxed twice as heavy. Furthermore, we only divide people linked to both tax lists into income or wealth groups, rather than all people in the tax lists. If we would do the latter, then a person's relative position might go up simply because of the immigration or inclusion of many poor people in the second year. For that reason, our estimates of relative mobility refer to the mobility of linked households relative towards each other. This approach has the disadvantage that income mobility due to collective impoverishment or enrichment (i.e. absolute mobility) is missed. For our analyses, we divide the observed distribution into quintiles of growing wealth or income (from the poorest 20 per cent, to the richest 20 per cent). Hence, our mobility estimates indicate the proportion of linked people moving up or down into a different quintile group.

An additional problem is that some tax lists only work with a small number of different values, and hence that many people pay the same amount of tax. If those values overlap with the boundary values of the quintile groups, then the quintile group to which people belong is partly determined by chance. For that reason, for each pair of tax lists we determine people's quintile group in the first and last list twice, each time using two levels to sort the data: the tax list for which quintile groups are determined is always sorted with values rising; we use the other tax list as a second sorting level, once sorted upwards, and once sorted downwards.

Take for example lawyer De Cock in Sint-Niklaas. We find him in 1675 paying £1.33 in tax. In 1692, we find his widow only paying £0.10. Originally, in 1675 De Cock belonged to the fifth quintile group, but his widow in 1692 could be put either in the second or third quintile group. That is because £0.10 corresponds to the second quintile value, and there were in total 11 people paying £0.10. Without additional information, which quintile group these 11 people end up in (the second or third), is random. That is where the second sorting layer matters. We sort those 11 people paying £10 in 1692 according to what they pay in 1675, once upwards, once downwards. Hence, of those 11 people, the ones paying the highest tax in 1675 once end up in the third quintile (1675 values sorted upwards), once in the second quintile (1675 values sorted downwards). Accordingly, we can draw up two mobility tables for each pair of tax lists: one where the De Cock household drops from the fifth to the third quintile, and another where this household drops to the second quintile.

As an example, we show this for Sint-Niklaas between 1675 and 1692. The number of people in the tax list in the urban part of Sint-Niklaas declines slightly between these war-torn years, from 498 to 487. On average, these people paid 0.36£ and 0.41£ respectively. Inequality among them, measured by the Gini coefficient, was 0.63 and 0.69 respectively. Of these, only 152 people appear in both lists (31 per cent of the people in the first tax list), paying on average 0.39£ and 0.49£ in 1675 and 1692 resp.; inequality among them was 0.62 and 0.73 resp. It is with these 152 people only that we can draw up the mobility tables in Tab. 1 and Tab. 2. Many people stay in the same income group, but the proportion of people ending up in a different income group in the first mobility table is smaller than in the second table. Total mobility is 43 per cent in the first table (22 per cent up, 21 per cent down), and 66 per cent in the second table (35 per cent up, 31 per cent down). Of these two estimates, we take the mean: social mobility was 55 per cent over seventeen years. We use the extremes of both tables as error margins.

Because we can only work with the people found in both tax lists, our results apply to a selection of the population. The time interval between tax lists affects this selection: the longer the time interval, the fewer people we can link (see Fig. 6). If the time between tax lists is less than five years, we usually find over 60 per cent of all people in the first tax list. This ratio drops to about 40 per cent after ten or fifteen years, with large differences between locations. This selection is biased: on average, the people we can link are usually somewhat better off than their fellow citizens (see Fig. 7). This selection effect is likely due to social differences in mortality and migration patterns. It seems poorer people are more likely to die sooner or seek their fortunes elsewhere. In the first tax list, linked people pay about ten per cent more in taxes than the average citizen, a ratio that does not seem to change in proportion to the time interval between tax lists. In contrast, duration may affect their position in the second tax list: the longer the time interval between tax lists, the higher they end up relative to the other people in the second tax list.

The time interval between tax lists has a similar effect on our mobility estimates: the longer this interval, the more likely we are to find people in a different income or wealth quintile (see Fig. 8). To neutralise the effect of variations in this time interval, we normalise our mobility estimates and the percentage of people linked (for a similar approach, see Alfani, Ammannati et al. 2022). We normalize our results to 10-year

intervals. A normalized result for a specific location and year is the expected result for a 10-year interval, multiplied by the ratio of the observed and expected result for that specific location and year:

$$Normalised\ result_{Loc,\,10\ yrs} = Expected\ result_{Loc,\,10\ yrs} * \frac{Observed_{Loc,\ \ x\ yrs}}{Expected_{Loc,\ \ x\ yrs}}$$

The expected results are estimated with a regression model with only two predictors, the time interval between tax lists, and location dummies. That means that we assume the slope is the same for each location, and that only the intercept differs by location.

$$Expected\ result_i = \alpha + \beta_1 TimeInterval_i + \beta_2 LocationDummy_i$$

The normalised ratio of people linked and mobility estimates are shown in Fig. 9 and 10. These normalised estimates still show a lot of variance, but they are no longer a function of the time interval between tax lists.

Tab. 1. **Mobility table Sint-Niklaas (urban), 1675-1692: first sorting**

Destination quintile (1692)	**Origin quintile (1675)**					**total**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
1	21	8	2	NA	NA	31
2	4	11	11	2	3	31
3	6	9	10	3	2	30
4	NA	3	6	20	1	30
5	NA	NA	1	5	24	30
total	31	31	30	30	30	152

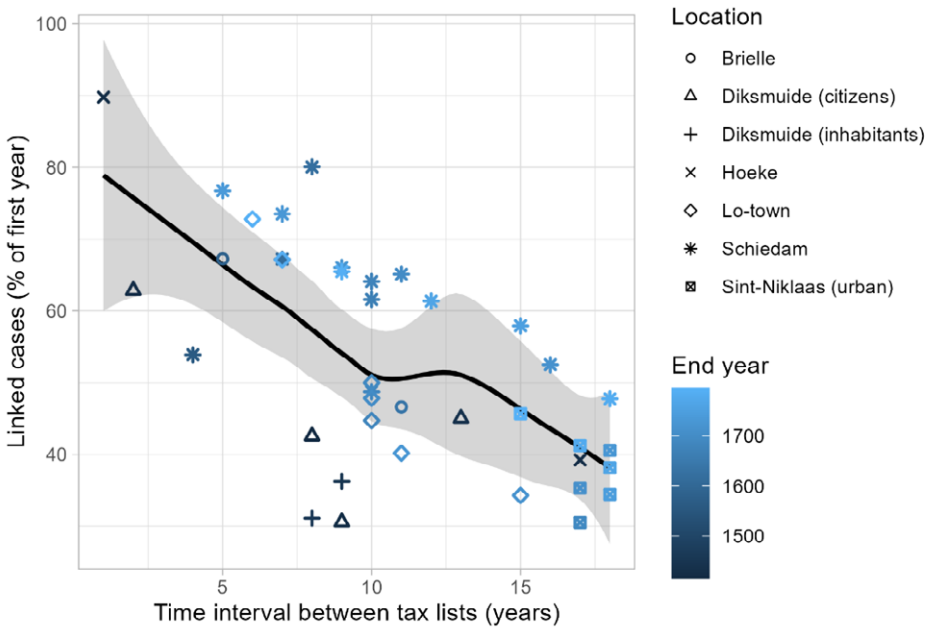
Note: This table shows the 152 people (heads of households) that appear in both the 1675 and 1692 tax lists in Sint-Niklaas. They are distributed into quintiles for the applicable year (1675 or 1692), using as second sorting layer the other year (resp. 1692 or 1675) sorted upwards.

Tab. 2. **Mobility table Sint-Niklaas (urban), 1675-1692: second sorting**

Destination quintile (1692)	**Origin quintile (1675)**					**total**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
1	4	15	7	2	3	31
2	11	9	4	5	2	31
3	11	5	6	6	2	30
4	5	2	11	11	1	30
5	NA	NA	2	6	22	30
total	31	31	30	30	30	152

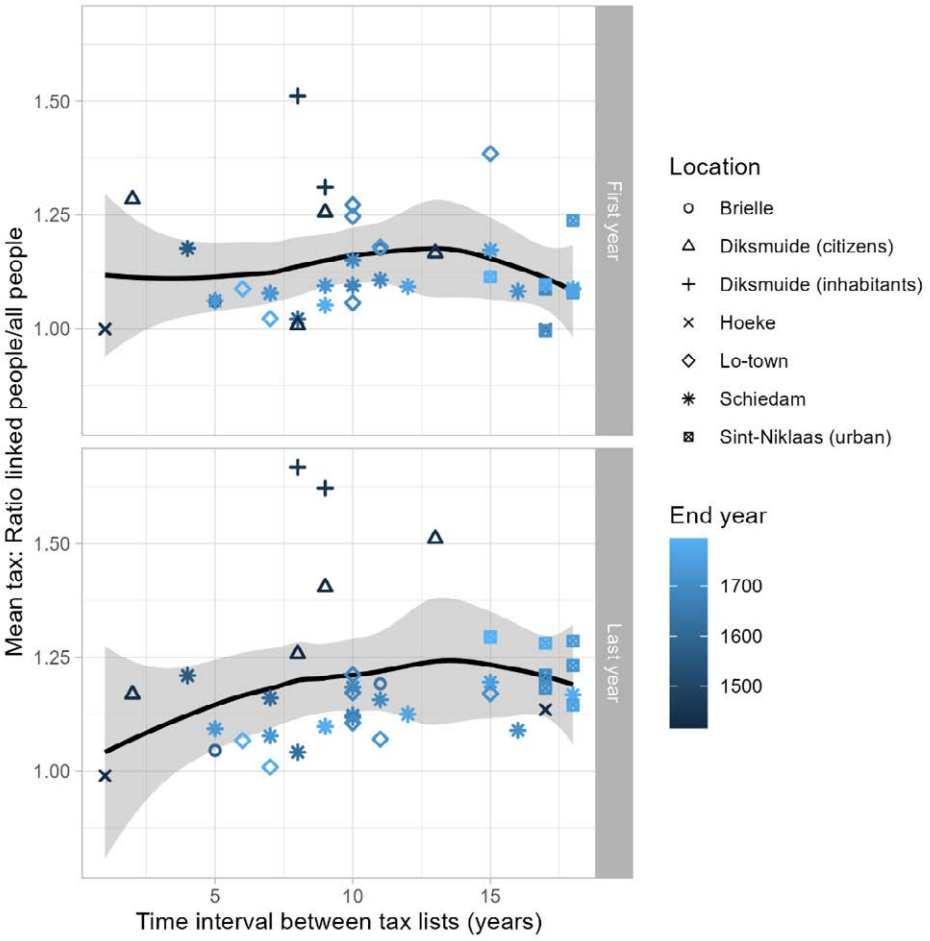
Note: This table shows the same 152 people as in the previous table. They are distributed into quintiles for the applicable year (1675 or 1692), using as second sorting layer the other year (resp. 1692 or 1675) sorted downwards.

Fig. 6. **People linked as per cent of all people in the tax list of the first year, by time interval between tax lists**



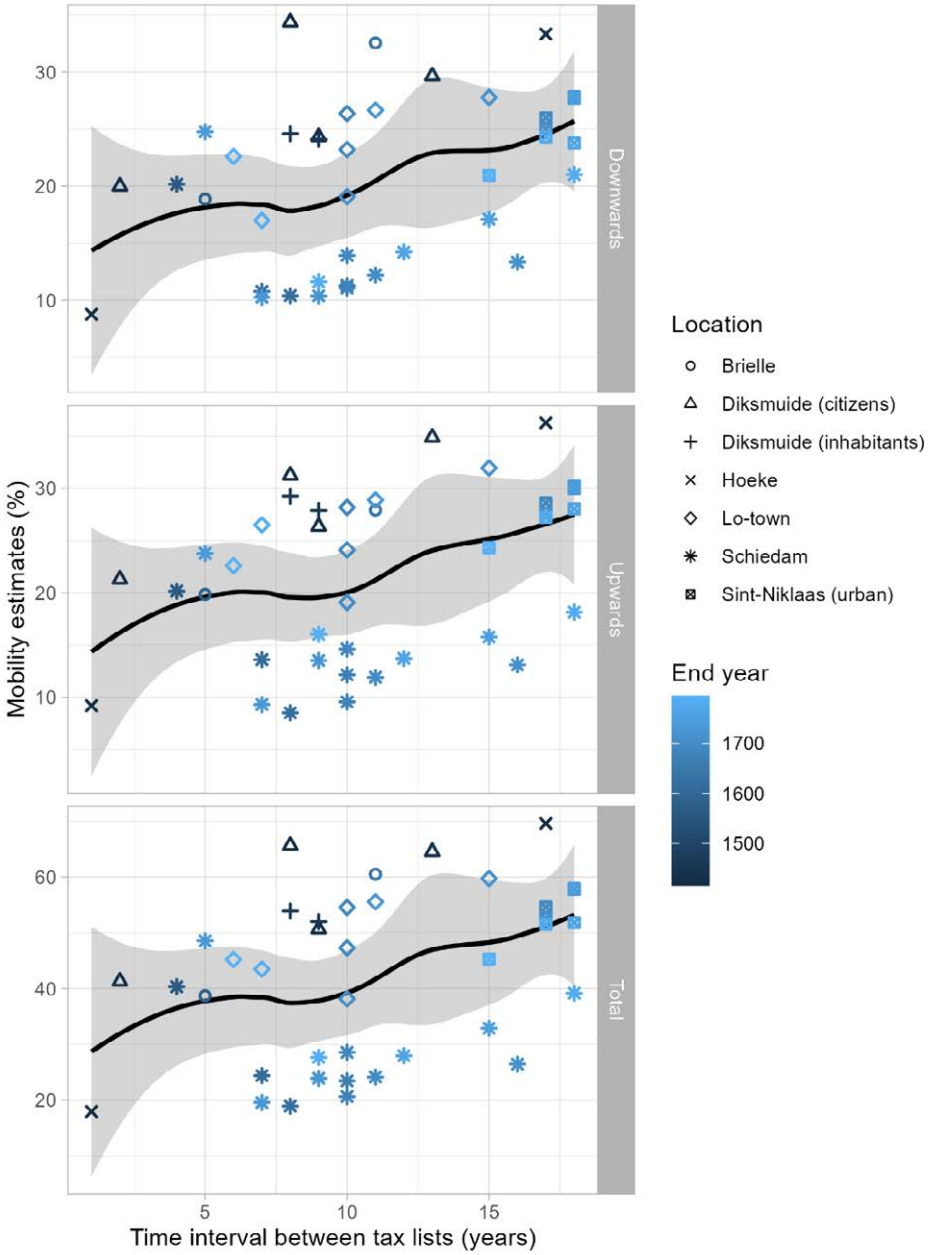
Note: The end year (year of the second tax list) indicated by shades of blue (darker shades for tax lists closer to 1400; lighter shades for tax lists closer to 1800). Each location has its own symbol. The black curve and grey shaded area indicate the trend with confidence intervals.

Fig. 7. **Ratio between mean tax paid by people linked and all people in tax list, by time interval between tax lists**



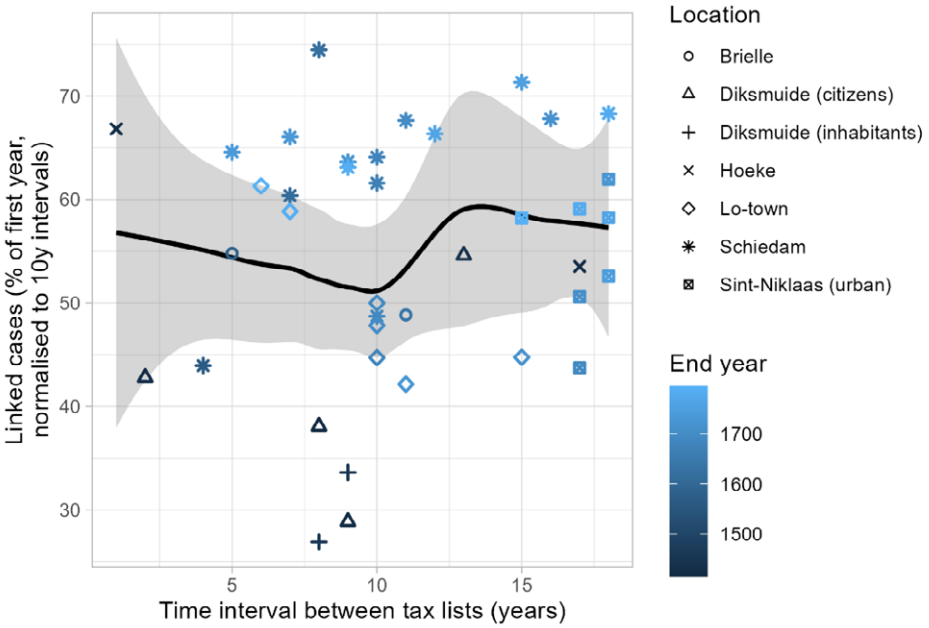
Note: see Fig. 6.

Fig. 8. **Mobility estimates, by time interval between tax lists**



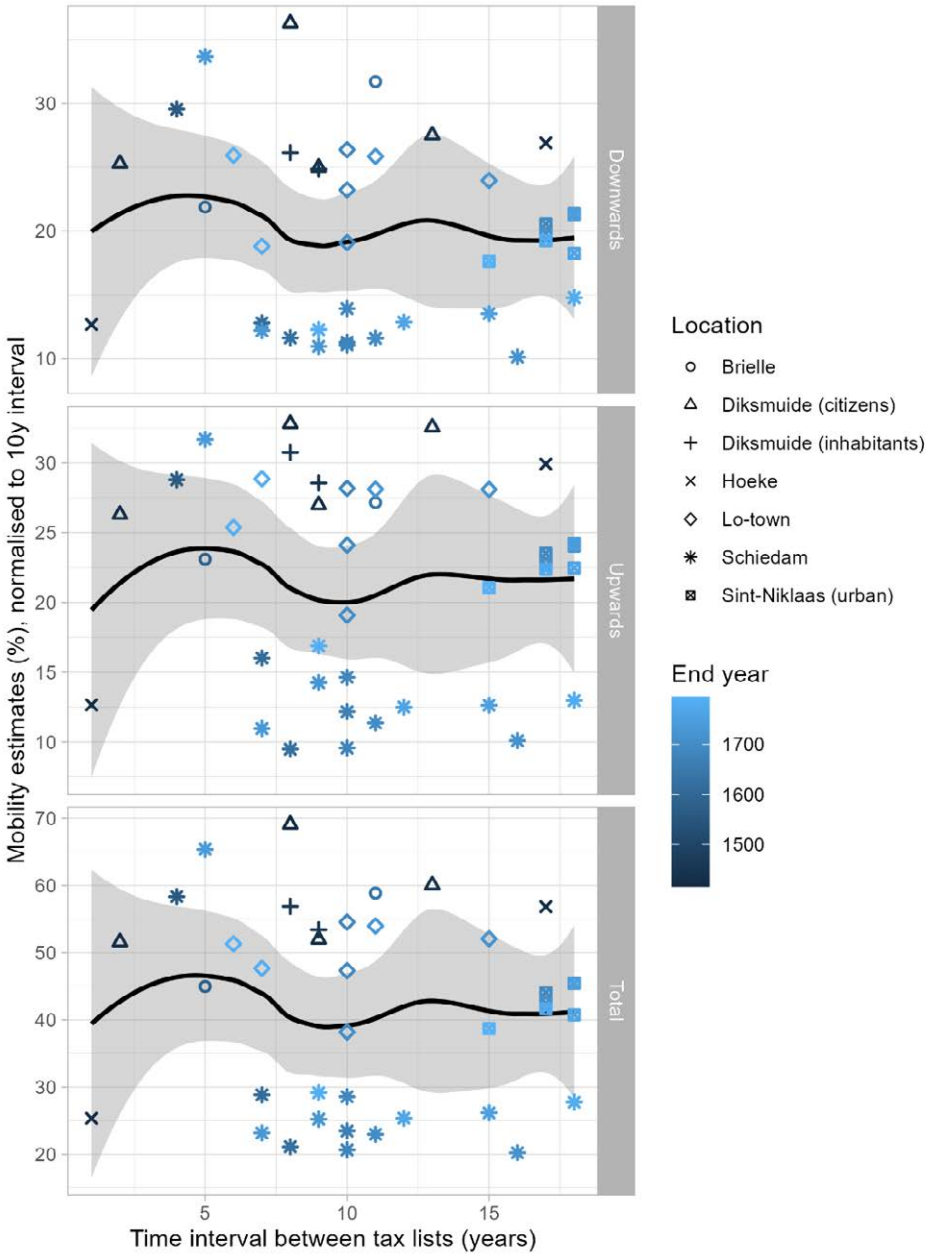
Note: see Fig. 6.

Fig. 9. **People linked as per cent of all people in the tax list of the first year, by time interval between tax lists, normalised to 10-year intervals**



Note: see Fig. 6. Observations are normalised as described in the text, to remove the effect of differing time intervals between pairs of tax lists.

Fig. 10. **Mobility estimates, by time interval between tax lists, normalised to 10-year intervals**



Note: see Fig. 9.

5. Results

Trends in our normalised mobility estimates are shown in Fig. 11. These are based on the averages of the two mobility tables that can be derived from each pair of tax lists. The error bands are based on the minima and maxima of the two mobility tables.

A first observation to be made from this, is that estimates for Schiedam in the seventeenth and eighteenth century are much lower than those of the other towns. Only the estimates for 1557-1561 and 1731-1736 are higher and comparable to the estimates we obtain for other places. This points to an importance feature of the sources for Schiedam. People's wealth was assessed based on the rental value of the properties they owned, but during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries these rental values were fixed in time. Only in 1632 and 1732 were the values of properties re-estimated, producing the high mobility estimate for 1731-1736. The same applies to Brielle: the high mobility estimate for 1628-1639 is probably due to the revaluation of 1632 falling in between this time interval. The mobility we measure for Schiedam in most years is therefore the result of people acquiring or losing properties, not the result of changes in the values of those properties.

A second observation is that we find no common long-term trend in mobility levels. Our estimates for the late Middle Ages are somewhat higher than those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but we consider this evidence too weak to conclude there would be a structural downward trend in mobility levels during the early modern period. An additional caveat is that when we compare our estimates for the Middle Ages with those for later periods, we are comparing different locations with perhaps differences in their methods to assess people's means.

While the results do not exhibit a clear long-term trend, they do display fluctuations in the shorter term. These fluctuations differ between cases. Mobility in Diksmuide and Hoeke in the fifteenth century was relatively high and at a similar level for both towns. Only Hoeke between 1427-1428 was a low outlier, and is presumably an artifact due to the small time interval between both tax lists. Mobility in Lo-town displayed a u-curve between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; and was at a similar level when we have more data for the late eighteenth century. Mobility in Sint-Niklaas from the late seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century did not display strong fluctuations but shows a gradually declining trend. Finally, mobility in Schiedam displayed an inverted u-curve during the late seventeenth century, and a gradually rising trend during the eighteenth century (disregarding the peak during 1731-1736).

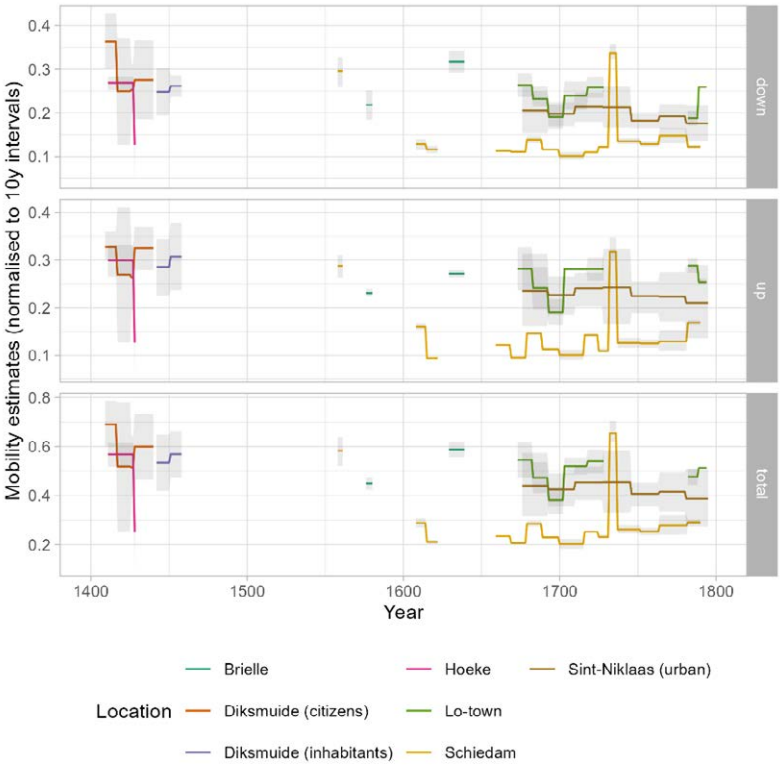
What explains these fluctuations? We can explore whether total mobility levels are related to the proportion of people linked between pairs of tax lists, to Gini coefficients and to population change. We do this only for those cases for which we have a sufficient number of mobility estimates to establish a meaningful correlation: Lo-town, Schiedam and Sint-Niklaas. The results are shown in Fig. 12 through 14. They suggest a negative correlation between mobility levels and the proportion of people linked between tax lists, but this correlation appears very weak. They also suggest a negative correlation between mobility levels and inequality. This correlation is very strong in the case of Sint-Niklaas ($R = -0.90$), but much weaker in the other cases, and in the case of Schiedam it is distorted by the outlying estimates of 1557-

1561 and 1731-1736. A correlation between mobility levels and population change appears to be non-existent.

Finally, we explore the relationship between total mobility levels, the proportion of people linked, Gini coefficients and population in a more rudimentary way, by merely looking at changes in these indicators (rising or dropping) between periods. We do this for all cases, but only for connected estimates (i.e. estimates based on connected pairs of tax lists, e.g. for Lo-town we compare the estimates based on the tax list pair 1717-1728 to those based on the previous pair, 1702-1717; but since we have no tax lists for the intervening period, we do not compare 1781-1788 to 1717-1728). That leaves us with 28 observations of changes (connected estimates). The results are shown in Tab. 3.

These show that there may be a weak relationship between total mobility levels and the proportion of people linked: in periods when the proportion of people linked drops, mobility rises. However, this relationship is only borderline significant (Chi-square test, p-value = 0.063; Cramers V = 0.35). There is no relation with the other variables.

Fig. 11. **Normalised mobilit**y estimates, by year



Note: Estimates based on the two mobility tables that can be drawn up from each pair of tax lists; error bands show the minima and maxima of the two tables.

Fig. 12. **Relation between mobility estimates and proportion of people linked (normalised estimates)**

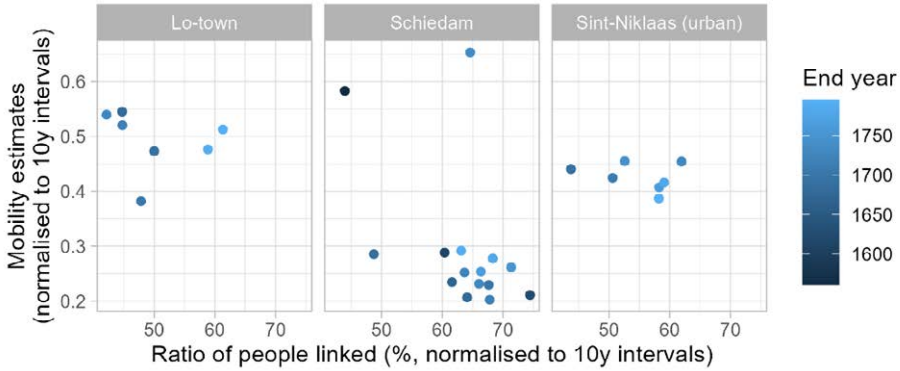


Fig. 13. **Relation between mobility estimates (normalised) and Gini coefficients**

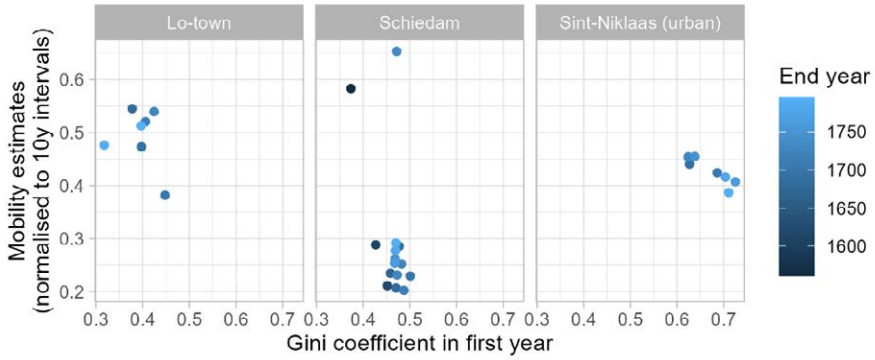
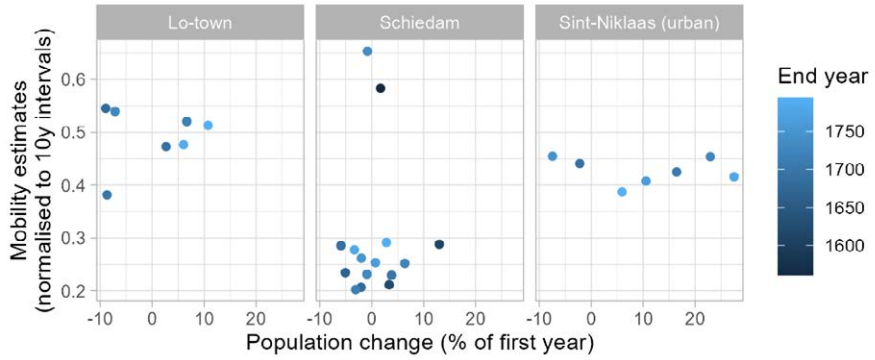


Fig. 14. **Relation between mobility estimates (normalised) and population change**



Tab. 3. **Crosstabulations: changes in mobility estimates, linkage ratios, Gini coefficients and population**

	Linkage		**Gini coefficient**		**Population**	
	dropping	**rising**	**dropping**	**rising**	**dropping**	**rising**
mobility dropping	4	11	9	6	7	8
mobility rising	8	5	5	8	6	7

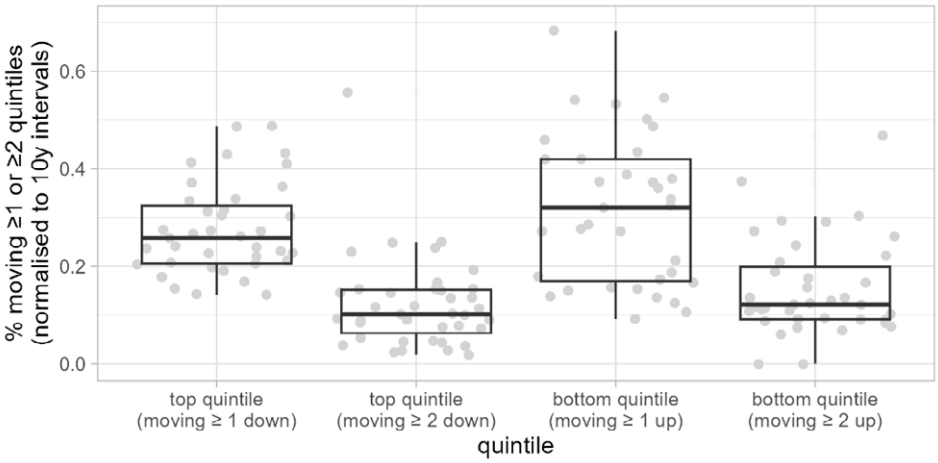
Note: This table crosstabulates 28 observations (of *changes*, relative to the previous observation, in mobility levels, linkage rates, Gini coefficients and population numbers), exploring the relationship between changes in mobility levels (rows) and changes in the other indicators (columns).

The results shown so far represent total mobility, the sum of upwards and downwards mobility. It includes each move from any quintile into a richer or poorer quintile. We can also look specifically at the mobility of the poorest and richest segments of society. This is one of the questions we posed at the start of this paper: to what extent did the rich remain rich, and the poor remain poor?

This is shown in Fig. 15. Using our pairs of tax lists, it shows how many percent of the linked households moved out of the top or bottom quintile between tax lists. People at the top could only move down, people at the bottom could only move up. Firstly, this shows that there is some fluidity in the social structure of preindustrial towns: some of the people at the top moved down, some of the people at the bottom moved up. However, this was almost always a minority, less than half of the people in these quintiles. Secondly, it shows that mobility levels at the top differed from those at the bottom. Mobility at the top was comparatively low. Many people at the top tended to remain at the top. Mobility at the bottom appears to have been higher, meaning that a comparatively larger group of people at the bottom managed to climb up.

Fig. 15 also distinguishes people at the bottom and the top moving at least 1 quintile, and those moving at least 2 quintiles. For the top and bottom, moving two quintiles means rising or dropping to at least the third quintile, or in other words from the extremes of the distribution to at least to the middle of the distribution. Apparently, this happened only rarely, usually less than 20% of the people at the bottom or the top. In other words, about 80% of the people at the top or bottom quintiles, remained in the top or bottom half of the distribution. It shows that a large part of mobility took place between adjacent quintiles: people rising from the first to the second quintile, people dropping from the fifth to the fourth quintile. Only rarely did people at the bottom or the top make it to the third quintile.

Fig. 15. **Mobility from the top (downwards) or bottom (upwards): % of people linked (normalised to 10-year intervals)**



Note: Observations are our mobility estimates for specific quintile groups, based on our pairs of tax lists. The grey dots in the background show the separate estimates for particular locations and periods; the boxes summarise the distribution of these estimates. Top and bottom of the boxes correspond to the third and first quartiles; the middle line of the box shows the median.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we set out to explore trends in mobility levels in six smaller towns in the Northern and Southern Low Countries during the late Middle Ages and early modern period. We use pairs of tax lists reflecting income or wealth to divide the people we can track into quintile groups and draw up mobility tables. We estimate mobility as the proportion of people moving into a different quintile group. The longer the time interval between tax lists, the lower the share of the population we find again in the second list, and the higher the likelihood they have moved into a different quintile group.

Overall, we did not find a long-term trend in mobility levels: we have insufficient evidence to conclude that mobility levels at the end of the early modern period were higher or lower than during the late Middle Ages. In other words, there are no indications that the urban societies of the Northern and Southern Low Countries became more open as the modern period approached, which is consistent with Clark's claim that in the long run, there were no trends in mobility.

Mobility levels did fluctuate in the towns we investigate, but we did not find any relation to trends in or levels of population or inequality. There might be an association between mobility levels and the ratio of people linked between tax lists. Mobility appears to be higher in one period when, compared to the previous period, we find fewer people in the second tax list. Finding a comparatively low share of people in the second tax list might be indicative of periods of greater instability, when more

people disappear (by death or migration), providing opportunities that benefit part of the people who remain. However, the evidence we have provides only weak support for this association.

Finally, our results suggest that preindustrial urban societies remained fairly rigid. Many people remained either in the top or bottom half of the distribution. Particularly people at the top managed to stay at the top.

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Inequality in pre-industrial Luxembourg (1766-1842): comparing the effects of the end of feudalism in rural and urban area[3]

1. Introduction

Explaining the origins of wealth inequality remains a challenge for researchers in a variety of fields. It is commonly posited that inequality emerged and escalated alongside the increasing complexity of society. The phenomenon – linked to unequal treatment and to differences in access to essential resources such as food, housing, and land – has been studied by researchers from various disciplines including archaeology, history, and economic history, resulting in new estimations of wealth inequality (Bogaard et al. 2024, Fochesato et al. 2019, Kohler and Higgins 2016, Piketty 2014). Furthermore, in attempting to understand the trends in inequality, various mechanisms have been examined as potential explanations. Institutions, demographic shocks, and economic growth patterns have emerged as prominent factors, yet a definitive and comprehensive explanation remains elusive. While in certain contexts, such as the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, economic growth may suffice to elucidate long-term trends (Van Zanden 1995), in other cases, such as the Republic of Venice, economic growth, demographic trends and institutions do not prove adequate if considered in isolation (Alfani and Di Tullio 2019). The complexity intensifies when considering the transmission of wealth across time and generations. The study of social mobility is challenged by the collection of longitudinal wealth data on individuals and the reconstruction of family ties across different historical periods. To address these challenges, researchers have employed diverse methodologies and datasets to generate estimates of intergenerational social mobility (Borgerhoff-Mulder et al. 2009, Clark and Cummins 2015, Piketty et al. 2006, Schifano and Paccoud 2024, Van Leeuwen et al. 2016).

In the recent years, there has been a notable emphasis on investigating pre-industrial societies, particularly concerning the collection and analysis of data pertaining to wealth inequality across different countries and historical times (Alfani et al. 2020). Several European nations have gained significant attention due to the availability of well-preserved archival materials, facilitating the examination of the

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wealth distribution within various communities over extended periods. Notably, Italy, Spain, France, and the Low Countries have emerged as focal points for research on pre-industrial wealth inequality, as evidenced by multiple studies conducted in these regions (Alfani and Ammannati 2017, Alfani et al. 2020, Alfani and Ryckbosch 2016, Brea-Martínez and Pujadas-Mora 2019, Nicolini and Ramos-Palencia 2021, Ryckbosch 2016). In recent years, scholars have also directed their attention towards exploring wealth inequality dynamics in Germany, Sweden, and Finland (Alfani et al. 2020, Bengtsson et al. 2017). Despite the considerable recent attention for the topic, numerous countries remain underexplored in terms of long-term wealth inequality trends. Many regions of the world, including several European countries, exhibit sparse data availability, particularly for the period before the 1950s. This scarcity is particularly pronounced in underdeveloped or developing nations, but it is not limited to them (Milanovic et al., 2011; Alfani and Schifano 2021). One economically advanced European region lacking comprehensive studies on the long-run accumulation, inequality, and transmission of wealth is Luxembourg.

The study presented in this paper tries to fill this gap in the literature through the analysis of the evolution of wealth inequality in pre-industrial Luxembourg between 1766 and 1842. The data used are partly new and collected from the archival source «Cadastre de Marie Thérèse»[4] and the land registry of 1842.[5] The information contained in these archival sources makes it possible to analyse inequality levels and social mobility in both the urban area of Luxembourg City and the rural municipality of Dudelange. The paper aims to understand how areas with different socio-economic characteristics respond to the same institutional change in terms of inequality and social mobility. The data provide insights into whether the lower end of the distribution influenced inequality in pre-industrial societies, as conjectured by Milanovic et al. (2007), and to explore the impact of the abolition of feudalism and its associated practices in Luxembourg. It is already demonstrated that despite the reduction of inequality in Dudelange from 1766 to 1872, the abolishment of feudal relations did not translate into higher social mobility in the long run (Schifano and Paccoud 2024). The analyses presented here extend these results to a comparison between the city and the countryside. This paper details the historical socio-economic landscape of Luxembourg between 1766 and 1842, describes the data employed, presents the results of the analyses and ends with concluding remarks.

[4] Luxembourg, Archives nationales (ANLux), A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds). Monst-St-Jean (seigneurie) (Sous-série), A-XIV-79 and A-XIV-80, Dudelange (justice) - Budersberg et Buringen (Dossier). Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Ville de Luxembourg - haut-command (Sous-série), A-XIV-1, A-XIV-2, A-XIV-3, A-XIV-4, A-XIV-5, A-XIV-6, A-XIV-7, A-XIV-8, A-XIV-9, A-XIV-10.1, A-XIV-10.2, A-XIV-10.3, A-XIV-11.1, A-XIV-11.2, A-XIV-11.3.

[5] Luxembourg, Archives de l'Administration du Cadastre et de la Topographie (ACT), Matrice cadastrale des propriétés foncières bâties et non-bâties de 1842 et 1872, Commune de Dudelange et Luxembourg Ville.

2. Historical context

Throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Luxembourg's trajectory was significantly influenced by broader European dynamics, particularly the War of the Spanish Succession, triggered by the death of the childless Spanish Habsburg, King Charles II. This conflict, which lasted from 1701 to 1714, culminated in the treaties of Utrecht (1713) and Rastatt (1714), which transferred control over Luxembourg to Charles VI of Habsburg (Kreins 2007, 39-68). This transition heralded a new era of Habsburg domination, which lasted until the French Revolutionary forces claimed Luxembourg in 1795. During this period, Charles VI was determined to secure the succession for his daughter, Maria Theresa, despite legal provisions favouring his brother Joseph's daughter. Despite the prevailing Salic law, which barred women from succession in many European realms, Charles VI's determination saw him undertake extensive diplomatic manoeuvres, culminating in the Pragmatic Sanction. This was a legal framework designed to ensure Maria Theresa's unchallenged succession to the Habsburg dominions (Mahan 1932).

Maria Theresa's ascendancy to the throne in 1740 after her father's death saw her initiate a series of reforms aimed at reducing inequalities (Kreins 2007, 52-53). These reforms, which included the pioneering Maria Theresa land survey introduced in 1766, sought to redistribute the fiscal burden, placing a greater onus on the wealthiest segments of the population, including the clergy and nobility, while alleviating financial pressures on the poorest. These measures were partly instrumental in financing the establishment of state schools and a healthcare system across the Habsburg domains, reflecting Maria Theresa's commitment to welfare and equity (Mahan 1932).

The period of reforms that started with Maria Theresa aimed at increasing and supporting industrial and agricultural production and at protecting the private ownership of land (Trausch 1993, 35). However, the government's intention to protect the poorest is visible in the conflicts that emerged between the State and the feudal lords with respect to the latters' practice of regularly increasing the amount of work and resources asked from the peasants. The nobility and the clergy also opposed the introduction of the *dénombrement* of 1766 that in addition to recalculating the fiscal distribution according to the family units populating the region, did not exempt the upper classes from paying the taxes that were until that time shouldered solely by peasants, farmers and artisans. The society of that era was stratified into various social groups with specific functions and responsibilities, including villagers, the clergy, the nobility, guild members, and officials. As in other pre-modern societies, despite constituting 98 percent of the population, the third estate remained unrepresented in direct governance, with elected representatives predominantly drawn from the ranks of the bourgeoisie and officers rather than from peasants and farmers.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, Luxembourg predominantly functioned as a rural society, its connectivity with neighbouring France, Belgium, and Germany hampered by the rugged Ardennes and a lack of paved roads. These geographical challenges contributed to elevated costs and limited the import of goods and food, marking the Grand Duchy's economy with a degree of isolation (Trausch 1993). Despite this, Luxembourg City emerged as an economic hub, fortified by its strategic fortress and a vibrant community of artisans and a foreign garrison, distinguishing

itself from the broader agricultural economy that characterized much of the region, including areas like Dudelange. Agricultural production across Luxembourg was modest and faced with challenges in productivity. Wheat emerged as the predominant crop, while potatoes, introduced in the mid-eighteenth century, became increasingly popular following efforts by Maria Theresa to promote their cultivation. This initiative, aimed at preventing famines and addressing malnutrition, showcased the Empress's foresight in agricultural innovation. The land registry introduced during her reign categorized arable lands based on their cultivation potential, from lands suitable for regular farming to *terre sartable*, which were less fertile and cultivated only once every two decades due to their inferior quality. Beyond agriculture, Luxembourg witnessed the nascent development of its steel industry and textile manufacturing, leveraging the natural availability of charcoal, water, and iron-ore. The economic landscape of Luxembourg City, in particular, was enriched by the presence of skilled artisans, among whom the most affluent was a tanner, as noted in the Marie Thérèse cadastre. The endorsement by Charles VI in 1736, allowing the nobility to engage in steel production without forfeiting their titles, marked a significant shift in the economic practices of the time. This move underscored the evolving economic landscape and the adaptability of Luxembourg to emerging industrial opportunities, setting the stage for the gradual transition from its agrarian roots towards industrialization and economic diversification.

Parallel to these overarching political and economic reforms, the feudal system that had long governed property relations within Luxembourg, as in much of Europe, was slowly undergoing its own evolution. Outside of Luxembourg City, which was emancipated in 1244 by Countess Ermesinde, the relationship between lords (the owner of the land) and tenant (the owner of the right to cultivate the land) was traditionally defined by the tenants' obligations to pay dues, render services, and perform *corvée* labour. However, the introduction of the legal notion of 'custom' in 1623, following an imperial ordinance, marked a pivotal shift towards recognizing the rights of tenants, including granting them lands in perpetuity, thereby ensuring land conservation and altering the traditional dynamics of property ownership (Pauly 2011, 55). The evolution of property relations in Luxembourg became markedly evident with the implementation of the Maria Theresa land survey, wherein both lords and tenants were ordered to pay taxes on land used or owned. In the years preceding the French Revolution, property relations in Luxembourg further shifted in favour of tenants. It was Joseph II of Habsburg-Lorraine, the eldest son of Emperor Francis of Lorraine and Empress Maria Theresa, who, in 1782 – two years after assuming control of Luxembourg following his mother's death – reinforced the property rights of the inhabitants and abolished serfdom, eliminating forced labour throughout the Habsburg territories (Pauly 2011, 61). However, lords continued to exercise control over their domains. In Dudelange, for instance, feudal dues were not officially abolished until July 24, 1796 (Thiel 1947, 58). The comprehensive concept of property ownership in Luxembourg was solidified with the introduction of the Napoleonic Civil Code in 1804, following Luxembourg's integration into France as part of the *Département des Forêts* in 1795, subsequent to the capitulation of Luxembourg City. This legal framework effectively provided tenants with almost immediate

ownership of their lands, thereby dismantling the feudal system in both principle and practice.

The Congress of Vienna in 1815, the result of Napoleon's defeat, split Luxembourg, with its eastern part going to Prussia and the remaining forming the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, thus ending the French domination over the region. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg was under Dutch control, which lasted until 1839, and introduced new taxes and customs tariffs that limited commercial activities, leaving Luxembourg predominantly rural. While Luxembourg was acknowledged as a distinct entity, William I of the Netherlands treated it as part of his kingdom, seeking to prevent its incorporation into the newly formed Belgian Kingdom after the Belgian Revolution in 1831. The 1839 Treaty of London resolved the dispute, leading to a partition: a significant portion of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg joined Belgium (now constituting the Walloon province of Luxembourg), while the remaining area became the independent Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, in its current-day borders. The nation's sovereignty was reaffirmed by the second Treaty of London in 1867.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Luxembourg remained primarily rural, engaging minimally in the textile industry, particularly in fabric and shoe production. It was only in the latter half of the century that Luxembourg experienced the ascendancy of the steel industry, which ultimately became the country's dominant economic sector until well into in the twentieth century.

3. Data

Luxembourg, at the time of the introduction of the Maria Theresa land survey and until 1795, was part of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. The Maria Theresa cadastre in Luxembourg is the sum of the individual declarations made by the owners or users of the land in the municipality where the land was situated. The law clearly stated that the property tax had to be paid by owners and users alike, with no distinction made between the nobility, clergy, and the rest of the population. This reform aimed, on the one hand, at collecting more taxes to finance wars and, on the other hand, at creating a more egalitarian social state. The declarations of the 1766 cadastre are self-reported and do not rely on real measurements done by professionals. The law clearly stated that if someone was reported to the authorities as having declared less than what they really owned or used, they would have lost the net revenues associated with the part of property that was not declared. The net revenues linked to the unreported land were to be shared equally by the State and the person who had correctly reported the fraudulent declarant.[6] Despite this dual control system, historians estimate that a quarter of the land surface of the region of Luxembourg was missing from the declarations (Thewes 2008, 350). Since the declarations were not based on real measurements, it is probable that this is the result of imprecise knowledge of the real surface owned or used. Although the Maria

[6] ANLux, B-0103 Cadastre de 1766 - Lois et instructions sur le nouveau cadastre, 1227-1238 (Dossier), Placcard concernant le rapport et l'estimation générale de tous les biens fonds de nos Pays, Duché de Luxembourg et Compté de Chiny, du 12 Mars 1766, Art. 4.

Theresa land survey is imperfect, it represents a valuable and reliable source to study inequality in 1766.

Each declaration starts with details related to the district where the *biens fonds* (property owned or used) were situated, followed by the name, surname, profession, and declarant's place of residence. The declaration table continues with the list of the property to declare arranged in different sections and categories. The first section groups seven categories of land, including arable land, gardens, forests, vineyards, meadows, enclosures, ponds, pastures, and wastelands. The second section in the tables relates to buildings, which includes real estate such as houses. The last section is called *droits et prestations*, which are fees paid to the owners to use or cultivate the land or to rent a building. We are still in a feudal system based on the payment of fees to the clergy and nobles. The different categories of fees reported are the tithe, *cens* and rents, *banalités* (a tax to pay to use the facilities of the owner such as mills and ovens), the *terrage* (the right for the feudal lord to keep part of the harvest), and other feudal taxes not included in the previous categories (Hudemann-Simon 1985). When the declarant was not the one receiving the *droits et prestations* but the one paying them, this amount was subtracted from the sum of the revenues to obtain the total. Each declaration ends with the total revenues left after the payment or reception of the feudal burdens (total revenue was set at 0 if these payments were superior to the potential revenue generated from the land owned or used).

For Luxembourg City, there are 1,119 declarations; after merging the declarations made by the same individual (most of the time representing the head of the household) and after the exclusion of institutions and groups, we obtain 839 individual observations. In Luxembourg City, 16 percent of the declarants are female. For Dudelange, there are 273 declarations; after merging the declarations that share the same name and excluding the declarations related to the church of Ottange, the abbey of Marienthal, the church, and the commune of Dudelange, we have 266 observations, and only 10 percent of the declarants are female. The monetary unit used to fill in the declarations is not always the same. In Dudelange, declarants use deniers, sols (one corresponds to 12 deniers), escalins (one is made of 7 sols), and écu (one is made of 8 escalins). The declarations for Luxembourg City are mostly in deniers, sols, and florins; the latter is made of 20 sols. For comparability reasons, we converted the total net revenues into écu.

The profession is available in around 70 percent of the declarations. The most common professions in Luxembourg City are daily labourer, merchant, and bourgeois, while in Dudelange, there is an overrepresentation of daily labourers and ploughmen. This reflects, of course, the different economic structure of the two municipalities, with one being an urban centre and the other a feudal rural area. In 1766 and 1842, 96 and 93 percent of the declarants in Luxembourg City were residents of Luxembourg respectively. This percentage is similar in Dudelange even though the municipality borders France: the percentage of declarants that were residents of Luxembourg was 95 percent in 1766 and 97 percent in 1842.

The land registry of 1842 includes the list of property owners and the monetary evaluation associated with the land they owned (always expressed in florins and centimes). The land or estate was evaluated according to specific criteria established at the municipal level and computed by civil servants. The land registry also presents

information on the residence and profession of the owners. For both places, we also have information on the value of the house or of the industrial factory in a separate column. In this context, we will use only the total value associated with all of the property owned. Additionally, the land registry includes transactions that occurred between one registry and the following one. If a hectare of land was sold or donated, the registry reports the name of the new owner. This information helps in identifying a specific property owner and in reconstructing his or her family tree. In 1842, feudalism was already abolished, translating into full ownership, meaning that propertyless individuals do not appear in the land registry.

4. Inequality analysis

In 1766 Luxembourg City was a fortified city and the economic centre of the region while Dudelange was a feudal lordship reliant on agriculture. The average wealth in the two places is 23.1 and 17.2 *écu* respectively. The average wealth associated with land and real estate is not so different among urban and rural places in Luxembourg. However, the main question is whether wealth is equally distributed among declarants and if the potential productivity of the land and of real estate are enough to assure the same standards of living in the two municipalities. Figure 1.a illustrates two distinct wealth distributions for 1766 using the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation.[7] The wealth distribution for Luxembourg City appears more normally distributed, while Dudelange's distribution is skewed to the right, indicating a higher concentration of individuals with very low wealth and fewer individuals owning a significant percentage of wealth.

The two distributions share the widow de Chanclos among the richest 5 percent, a resident of Brussels who was the owner of part of the Dudelange lordship. She is also the richest in absolute terms if we consider the declarations filled in in both municipalities. The wealth owned by de Chanclos is more than three times what is declared by François-Albert de Boland, the second richest person and owner of the rest of the Dudelange lordship, and more than eight times the wealth declared by the third richest person, a merchant residing in Luxembourg City. Dudelange reflects the feudal system, with a social structure revolving around the figure of the feudal lords. Luxembourg City presents a different picture based on industrial and craft activities that laid the foundation for the development of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, the richest person in the city of Luxembourg was a tanner as reported in Sprunck (1980, pp. 94) and confirmed by the cadastre.

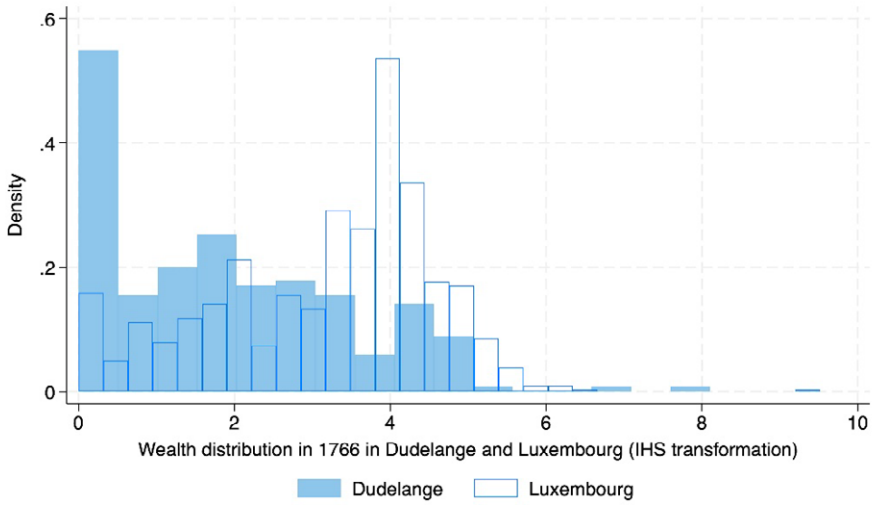
Figure 1.a shows that the two wealth distributions in 1766 are very different, despite the source and the year of study being the same for the two municipalities. This difference is confirmed by the Lorenz curves and the Gini coefficients. The Lorenz curve serves as a valuable tool for graphically comparing two distributions. When the two curves do not intersect, it becomes feasible to compare the degree of egalitarianism by examining the gap between each curve and the equality line, which corresponds to a 45-degree angle. In essence, the lower the curve, the higher the level

[7] IHS(x) = log(x + sqrt(x^2 + 1))

of inequality. Complementarily, the Gini coefficient is an index utilized to quantify inequality, ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 signifies perfect equality and 1 signifies perfect inequality. The Lorenz curves in Figure 2.a show that inequality is lower in Luxembourg City and that in Dudelange the high number of declarants reporting null wealth leads this trend. These people, visible on the left-hand side of the Dudelange distribution, had net revenues that were lower than the feudal taxes that they had to pay to the feudal lord. They represented around 16.5 per cent of the total number of declarants. It is worth noting that in Luxembourg City, we have very few declarants that have duties higher than their revenues, thus wealth is almost always greater than zero and the Lorenz Curve starts to outdistance the x-axis from the very beginning. For Luxembourg City the Gini is 0.51 while for Dudelange is 0.84.

Fig. 1. **Land distribution in Dudelange and Luxembourg City in 1766 and 1842 (IHS transformation)**

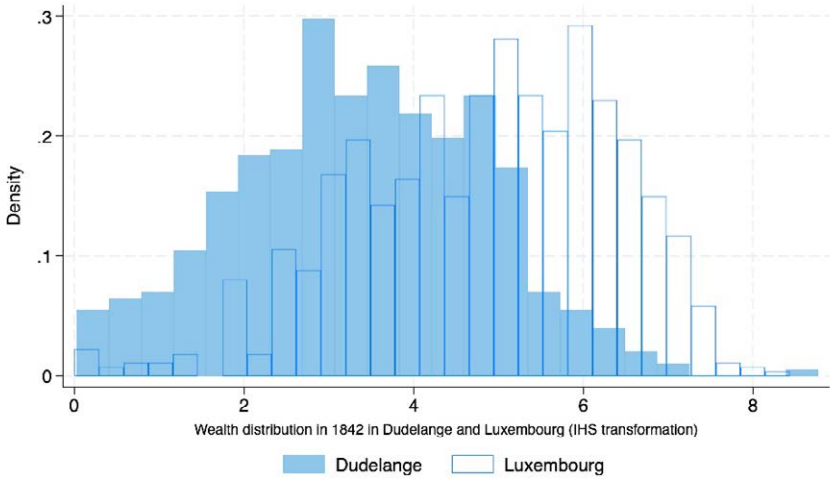
a. 1766



Source: Authors' elaboration based on the data extracted from:
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Monst-St-Jean (seigneurie) (Sous-série), A-XIV-79 and A-XIV-80, Dudelange (justice) - Budersberg et Buringen (Dossier).
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Ville de Luxembourg - haut-command (Sous-série), A-XIV-1, A-XIV-2, A-XIV-3, A-XIV-4, A-XIV-5, A-XIV-6, A-XIV-7, A-XIV-8, A-XIV-9, A-XIV-10.1, A-XIV-10.2, A-XIV-10.3, A-XIV-11.1, A-XIV-11.2, A-XIV-11.3.

Note: Distribution of land in Luxembourg City and Dudelange in 1766. Inverse Hyperbolic Sine transformation applied.

b. 1842



Source: Authors' elaboration based on the data extracted from the Luxembourg, Archives de l'Administration du Cadastre et de la Topographie, Matrice cadastrale des propriétés foncières bâties et non-bâties de 1842, Commune de Dudelange et Luxembourg Ville.

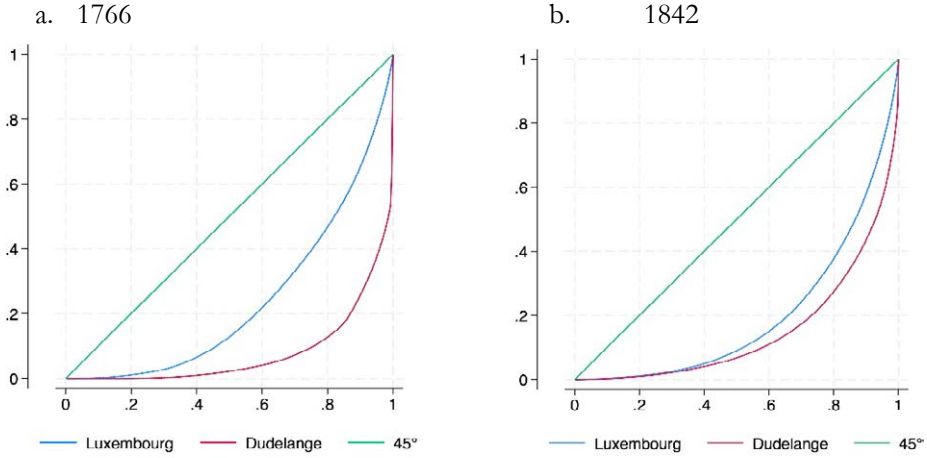
Note: Distribution of land in Luxembourg City and Dudelange in 1842. Inverse Hyperbolic Sine transformation applied.

This confirms the political and economic differences between the two places considering that only Luxembourg City was a city while Dudelange was a lordship. For Dudelange, the Lorenz Curve lies on the x-axis for the bottom 40 per cent of the distribution, showing that its high inequality level is driven by the high feudal burdens weighing on the population.

We have different hypotheses on why the Gini coefficient for Luxembourg City is lower than in Dudelange in 1766. One possibility is self-selection among people living in the city, meaning that declarants in Luxembourg City had a higher probability of owning land or buildings reported in the declaration rather than merely being users, and that the nobility probably resided in cities where economic and political powers were concentrated. The second explanation strictly relates to the nature of the cadastre and the city itself. In cities, the majority of the property-less do not work the land contrary to what happens in rural areas. Many of them were probably employed in commercial activities as shop boys or apprentices, and probably lived in the shops where they worked or were provided accommodation by the shop owner. If the living space was provided in exchange for hours of work and not in exchange for a rent, these people would not have been obliged to make a declaration. If this second hypothesis is true, the Gini coefficient for Luxembourg would be downward biased compared to Dudelange, where those without property had to rent land and cultivate it for survival. This second hypothesis seems more

probable, especially considering that the number of declarations for Luxembourg City is lower than expected given the city's population in 1766.

Fig. 2. Lorenz Curve for Luxembourg City and Dudelange 1766 and 1842



Source: Authors' elaboration based on the data extracted from:
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Monst-St-Jean (seigneurie) (Sous-série), A-XIV-79 and A-XIV-80, Dudelange (justice) - Budersberg et Buringen (Dossier).
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Ville de Luxembourg - haut-command (Sous-série), A-XIV-1, A-XIV-2, A-XIV-3, A-XIV-4, A-XIV-5, A-XIV-6, A-XIV-7, A-XIV-8, A-XIV-9, A-XIV-10.1, A-XIV-10.2, A-XIV-10.3, A-XIV-11.1, A-XIV-11.2, A-XIV-11.3.
- Luxembourg, Archives de l'Administration du Cadastre et de la Topographie, Matrice cadastrale des propriétés foncières bâties et non-bâties de 1842, Commune de Dudelange et Luxembourg Ville.

Note: Lorenz Curves based on the distribution of land in Luxembourg City and Dudelange in 1766 and 1842.

To account for this second hypothesis, we recalculated the Gini coefficient after including an estimated number of individuals without property who did not fill in a declaration. Considering that the population of Luxembourg City in 1765 was 8,500 inhabitants (Atten 1989, 31), and that according to the *dénombrement*, the family multiplier was between four and five, while for nobles it was 3.5 (Hudemann-Simon 1986), the Marie Thérèse Cadastre should include around 1,800 declarations. The individual declarations recorded from the cadastre amount to 839. When 938 property-less individuals are added to the analysis, more than doubling the number of observations originally considered, the Gini coefficient increases to 0.77. Even accounting for the different social and economic structure between Luxembourg City and Dudelange, adding property-less individuals who, in the city, do not work the

land and are free, inequality in the city remains lower. If we assume that these people are absent from the Maria Theresa land survey because they were working for someone else, then they were likely better off than declarants in Dudelange who had to pay a fee to live and work the land in the lordship, and who often ended up with negative net wealth due to the feudal taxes they had to pay.

Regardless of the explanation for this low inequality, Luxembourg in 1766 appears to be less unequal than Dudelange a century later, as in 1872 Dudelange registered a Gini coefficient of 0.69 (Schifano and Paccoud, 2024). Additionally, if we exclude de Chanclos from the analysis, the Gini coefficient of Dudelange is 0.76 in 1766. If we further exclude both de Chanclos and de Boland, along with those not resident in Dudelange, the Gini becomes 0.72. In contrast, performing a similar exercise for Luxembourg City leaves the Gini coefficient almost unchanged. This suggests that, in addition to the wealth owned by the richest, the fact that there are so many people with little wealth also drives inequality in the rural place, as Figure 1.a predicted.

Table 1 illustrates the percentage of wealth owned by each decile of the distribution in 1766. In the city of Luxembourg, the percentage of wealth owned grows gradually from one decile to the next. In Dudelange, the tenth decile owns 74.3 per cent of wealth, with 48 per cent of this being owned by the top 1 per cent of the distribution. This reflects the different economic and institutional background of the two places, considering that Dudelange was still trapped in a feudal and rigid society.

Tab. 1. **Distribution of wealth in Luxembourg and Dudelange in 1766: deciles and top percentages**

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	95-100	99-100	N
Luxembourg City	0.2	1.1	2.1	4.3	6.8	8.9	11.1	13.4	18.4	33.7	20.5	5.9	839
Dudelange	0	0	0.2	0.7	1.2	1.9	3.1	5.5	13.0	74.3	62.5	48.0	266

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the archival data extracted from:
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Monst-St-Jean (seigneurie) (Sous-série), A-XIV-79 and A-XIV-80, Dudelange (justice) - Budersberg et Buringen (Dossier).
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Ville de Luxembourg - haut-command (Sous-série), A-XIV-1, A-XIV-2, A-XIV-3, A-XIV-4, A-XIV-5, A-XIV-6, A-XIV-7, A-XIV-8, A-XIV-9, A-XIV-10.1, A-XIV-10.2, A-XIV-10.3, A-XIV-11.1, A-XIV-11.2, A-XIV-11.3.

Note: Percentage of wealth owned by each decile of the distribution, the top 5 and top 1 percent in 1766.

Figure 1.b presents the two distributions in 1842 (using the IHS transformation), showing that they are more alike than in 1766. This similarity is related to the abolishment of feudal privileges, which clearly translates into an observable reduction

in inequality resulting from the absence of the feudal taxes that peasants had to pay to the feudal lords or to the Clergy. If we focus on table 2, the distribution of wealth is more similar between the two places than what it was in 1766, although we can still observe important differences when we look at the percentage of wealth owned by the top 5 percent or the top 1 percent of the distribution. Indeed, the richest 1 percent of the population owned 8.1 percent of the overall wealth in Luxembourg while in Dudelange the percentage of wealth owned is 29.9%, still very high but much lower than in 1766.

Tab. 2. **Distribution of wealth in Luxembourg and Dudelange in 1842: deciles and top percentages**

	D1	**D2**	**D3**	**D4**	**D5**	**D6**	**D7**	**D8**	**D9**	**D10**	**95-100**	**99-100**	**N**
Luxembourg City	0.3	0.8	1.4	2.4	4.0	6.0	9.2	13.4	20.3	42.1	26.6	8.1	941
Dudelange	0.2	0.7	1.2	1.9	2.7	4.2	6.4	10.1	16.1	56.5	49.4	29.9	530

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the archival data extracted from:
- Luxembourg, Archives de l'Administration du Cadastre et de la Topographie, Matrice cadastrale des propriétés foncières bâties et non-bâties de 1842, Commune de Dudelange et Luxembourg Ville.

Note: Percentage of wealth owned by each decile of the distribution, the top 5 and top 1 percent in 1842.

Tab. 3. **Different Gini coefficients and samples**

	Original Sample 1766		Original Sample 1842		Estimated full population 1766		Estimated full population 1842	
	Obs	**Gini**	**Obs**	**Gini**	**Obs**	**Gini**	**Obs**	**Gini**
Luxembourg City	839	0.51	941	0.61	1,777	0.77	1,954	0.81
Dudelange	266	0.84	530	0.7	266	0.84	530	0.7

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the data extracted from:
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Monst-St-Jean (seigneurie) (Sous-série), A-XIV-79 and A-XIV-80, Dudelange (justice) - Budersberg et Buringen (Dossier).
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Ville de Luxembourg - haut-command (Sous-série), A-XIV-1, A-XIV-2, A-XIV-3, A-XIV-4, A-XIV-5, A-XIV-6, A-XIV-7, A-XIV-8, A-XIV-9, A-XIV-10.1, A-XIV-10.2, A-XIV-10.3, A-XIV-11.1, A-XIV-11.2, A-XIV-11.3.
- Luxembourg, Archives de l'Administration du Cadastre et de la Topographie, Matrice cadastrale des propriétés foncières bâties et non-bâties de 1842, Commune de Dudelange et Luxembourg Ville.

Note: Gini coefficients on different sample of the distribution. Dudelange 1766 and 1842. Luxembourg City 1766 and 1842, Luxembourg City extended sample 1766 and 1842.

Inequality in 1842 exhibits a somewhat different trend between the two places. In Luxembourg City, the Gini coefficient is 0.61, precisely in the middle between the Gini coefficient of 1766 based on the original sample and on the estimated full population. This indicates that there was no significant redistribution of property among citizens, especially given that the number of declarants did not increase. In Dudelange, the abolition of feudal privileges and taxes led to a decrease in the Gini coefficient to 0.70, primarily driven by the abolition of feudal taxes rather than by a redistribution of land (for a more in-depth discussion, see Schifano and Paccoud, 2024). If we account for the property-less individuals that are missing from the declarations in Luxembourg also for 1842, we get a Gini coefficient of 0.81, which confirms the increasing inequality trend in Luxembourg City in contrast to what happened in Dudelange with the abolishment of the feudal system.

5. Social mobility analysis

The social mobility analysis was realised based on intergenerational links between declarants in 1766 and in 1842. For Dudelange, Pauly (2014) was used to create genealogical links between ancestors in 1766 and descendants in 1842 based on the work presented in Schifano and Paccoud (2024). Starting from the declarants in 1766, their descendants were identified and linked with the declarants in 1842. The declarants in the two sources are linked through the mother and father lineages. This means that we can have more than one ancestor for each declarant in 1842: for example we may have the grand-father from the father's side and the great grand-father from the mother's side. To account for this, we weighted ancestor wealth according to the generational distance between the declarant and the different ancestors that were present among the 1766 declarants and we then computed an average wealth based on the weighted wealth declared by each ancestor. This allowed us to use all of the available information.

To establish the links between property owners in Luxembourg City in 1842 and their ancestors in 1766, we relied on the website Luxroots.org, a comprehensive digital genealogy database. This platform provided access to extensive records of births, deaths, and marriages, facilitating the identification and tracking of family lineages across generations. For every person listed in the 1842 land registry, we tried to trace their and their spouses' ancestral roots as far back as possible, often reaching into the mid-16th century. This process involved a detailed examination of civil records alongside land registries from multiple years, ensuring a robust connection between past and present family ties. The method takes into account both the patrilineal and matrilineal lineages, offering a holistic view of marriage and inheritance patterns, as well as of property transmissions.

This information was also used to adjust wealth according to the generational distance between ancestors and descendants in the case of Luxembourg City and we also used the average adjusted wealth for all the ancestors we were able to find in 1766.

Tab. 3. **Social mobility tables for Dudelange and Luxembourg between 1766 and 1842**

Social mobility table Dudelange 1766-1842

Quartile:	1842				
1766	1	2	3	4	Tot
1	38	25	20	6	89
2	18	22	24	25	89
3	19	25	26	25	95
4	14	17	19	32	82
Total	89	89	89	88	355

Social mobility table Luxembourg City 1766-1842

Quartile:	1842				
1766	1	2	3	4	Tot
1	24	19	7	6	56
2	19	14	13	9	55
3	7	11	20	17	55
4	6	12	14	23	55
Total	56	56	54	55	221

Summary table

	Dudelange	Luxembourg
UM	35.2%	32.1%
DM	31.5%	31.2%
0M	33.2%	36.7%
TM	66.8%	63.3%

Legend: UM=Upward Mobility; DM=Downward Mobility; 0M=No Mobility; TM=Total Mobility (UM+DM)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the data extracted from:
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Monst-St-Jean (seigneurie) (Sous-série), A-XIV-79 and A-XIV-80, Dudelange (justice) - Budersberg et Buringen (Dossier).
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Ville de Luxembourg - haut-command (Sous-série), A-XIV-1, A-XIV-2, A-XIV-3, A-XIV-4, A-XIV-5, A-XIV-6, A-XIV-7, A-XIV-8, A-XIV-9, A-XIV-10.1, A-XIV-10.2, A-XIV-10.3, A-XIV-11.1, A-XIV-11.2, A-XIV-11.3.
- Luxembourg, Archives de l'Administration du Cadastre et de la Topographie, Matrice cadastrale des propriétés foncières bâties et non-bâties de 1842, Commune de Dudelange et Luxembourg Ville.

Note: Social mobility tables show the number of declarants in each quartile of the distribution and for 1842 combined with the number of ancestors in the different quartile for the ancestors in 1766.

Table 4 shows the declarants in 1842 in each quartile of the distribution according to the position of the ancestors. The number in the cell corresponding to quartile 1-1 counts the number of declarants in 1842 that are in the first quartile and that have ancestors that were in the first quartile of the distribution according to their average weighted wealth. This signals that there was no change in the social class of destination of the descendants with respect to their ancestors. The number in cell 1-2 provides information on the number of descendants in 1842 that are in the second quartile of the distribution but whose ancestors were in the first quartile. For the people in this cell, it means that there was upward mobility. The remaining cells can be read in the same way.

Tab. 5. **Social mobility analysis Dudelange and Luxembourg between 1766 and 1842 (controlled by age at the declaration)**

	Dudelange Rank 1842	Luxembourg Rank 1842
Avg rank 1766	0.34***	0.48***
	(0.05)	(0.058)
N	355	221
R-squared	0.19	0.20

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the data extracted from:
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Monst-St-Jean (seigneurie) (Sous-série), A-XIV-79 and A-XIV-80, Dudelange (justice) - Budersberg et Buringen (Dossier).
- Luxembourg, Archives nationales, A-XIV Cadastre de Marie-Thérèse, 1752-1772 (Fonds), Quartier de Luxembourg (Série), Ville de Luxembourg - haut-command (Sous-série), A-XIV-1, A-XIV-2, A-XIV-3, A-XIV-4, A-XIV-5, A-XIV-6, A-XIV-7, A-XIV-8, A-XIV-9, A-XIV-10.1, A-XIV-10.2, A-XIV-10.3, A-XIV-11.1, A-XIV-11.2, A-XIV-11.3.
- Luxembourg, Archives de l'Administration du Cadastre et de la Topographie, Matrice cadastrale des propriétés foncières bâties et non-bâties de 1842, Commune de Dudelange et Luxembourg Ville.

Note: Results of the regression of wealth of declarants in 1842 on averaged adjusted wealth of ancestors in 1766. The higher the coefficient the higher the persistence of wealth over generations. Ranks post sample selection. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Overall, the total social mobility registered between 1766 and 1842 is 66.8 percent in Dudelange and 63.3 percent in Luxembourg City. This is an interesting result since Luxembourg City is shown to be less mobile despite the lower level of inequality registered in both 1766 and 1842 in comparison to Dudelange, at least when we consider only the declarations we officially have.

This phenomenon may be explained by the fact that affluent individuals, already situated in the top quartile in 1766, accrued additional land, thereby exacerbating inequality within this upper class. In fact, by 1842, the top 20 percent in Luxembourg owned 10 percent more of overall wealth compared to their counterparts in 1766 (tables 1 and 2).

The results are confirmed if we consider the regression analysis presented in table 5 and that is based on the ranks of the declarants computed after the sample was selected. The coefficients reported, corresponding to the average weighted wealth declared by the ancestors in 1766, tell us that there is a stronger persistence between the wealth declared in 1766 and the one declared in 1842 for Luxembourg City as compared to Dudelange.

The results that we obtain from the social mobility analysis and the Gini coefficients generated after including the property-less individuals in Luxembourg City shed light on the influence that including or not the property-less may have on the interpretation of the inequality estimates for pre-industrial periods when we focus on urban places. Overall, for both Luxembourg City and Dudelange, the reduction in inequality linked to the abolishment of feudalism is not really associated with a

redistribution of land. In addition, the lower amount of upward social mobility that we register in Luxembourg City may be explained by the fact that the economy of the city was less constrained by feudal practices than Dudelange already in 1766, as confirmed by the larger economic diversification of the capital city as compared to Dudelange.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we conducted an analysis of the wealth distribution in Dudelange, a municipality in the south of Luxembourg, and in Luxembourg City, the capital of the Grand Duchy. The use of the same sources, the Maria Theresa cadastre of 1766 and the 1842 land registry in both locations, allows for a comparative analysis as well as an estimation of inequality in both areas. This study reveals that inequality was significantly lower in the city than in rural Dudelange, which was entirely immersed in the feudal system in force in 1766, as evidenced by the fact that the two wealthiest declarants were also the owners of the lordship. In Dudelange, the high number of individuals with zero net wealth in 1766 influences the Lorenz curve, as it follows the x-axis for the poorest 40 per cent of the distribution, a fact clearly reflected in the Gini coefficient. In Luxembourg City, very few property-less declarants appear in the Maria Theresa land survey, while a considerable number likely did not fill in a declaration as they were guests in houses owned by the employer or multiple families were sharing the same apartment. The estimated number of property-less for Luxembourg City in 1766 is around 900 and adding them to the analysis narrows the gap between the Gini coefficients in Luxembourg City and Dudelange in 1766 but does not fully explain the disparity.

The inequality analysis in 1842 reveals the impact of the abolition of feudal privileges and of the reduction in inequality between Luxembourg City and Dudelange. The land registry of 1842 compiles information on assets owned by declarants in the two places and demonstrates, as expected, that the abolition of feudal taxes had a more significant positive effect in Dudelange, still organised around a feudal society in 1766, than in Luxembourg City. This effect is exacerbated if we include in the analysis the property-less in Luxembourg City: doing so generates a Gini coefficient higher than that of Dudelange. The social mobility analysis showed that the effects of abolishing feudalism were not as clear as those observed in the context of the inequality outcomes. The substantial reduction in inequality witnessed in Dudelange, principally due to the alleviation of fiscal burdens on peasants, did not result in the redistribution of land. Similar estimates of social mobility are found in Luxembourg City, notwithstanding its lack of a reduction in wealth inequality between 1766 and 1842.

The abolition of feudalism in Luxembourg exerted a more pronounced impact on the distribution of wealth in rural areas. In Dudelange, even in the absence of property redistribution, the abolition of the feudal system made poorer people richer. In Luxembourg City, however, the lack of a society structured around feudal institutions facilitated the accumulation of greater wealth by the affluent class, not only the nobility, over time. In terms of social mobility, we find similar results in both

places, which seems to indicate a limited impact of changes in the institutional rules governing property relations on wealth social mobility. Overall, these results may suggest the importance of fiscal policies that target specific social classes in order to get a more egalitarian society and the importance of an inheritance tax to increase social mobility over time. This is especially important in Luxembourg, given the lack of such fiscal tools and the high level of land and property inequality that is still found in the country today (Paccoud, 2020).

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Mobilità sociale, mobilità geografica e dinamiche demografiche

Social mobility, geographic mobility and demographic dynamics

Antoni Furió, Carlos Laliena, Pere Verdés

Social Mobility, Economic Growth and Inequality in the Late Medieval Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia and Mallorca, 13th-15th centuries)[*]

1. Introduction

Social mobility, both upward and downward, was a phenomenon that occurred in the Crown of Aragon during most of the late Middle Ages. Many families rose socially from one class to another or improved their position within their own group, while, conversely, many others fell down the social ladder and ended up disappearing in the mass of documentation that either confirms their social descent or simply fails to mention them. However, as in other kingdoms and territories of the Iberian Peninsula, it is possible to highlight three important moments in these processes of social mobility, linked to other significant phenomena in both Iberian and European history.

The first one is the great territorial expansion – the misnamed 'Reconquest' – of the Christian kingdoms of the north into the southern half of the peninsula, that is, into what was left of al-Andalus. This involved a vast process of colonisation of the territories taken from the Muslims with Christian settlers from the north or even from the other side of the Pyrenees. Tens of thousands of families, mostly but not only peasants, moved from the northern kingdoms to the newly conquered territories in search of land and freedom, in other words better living conditions – both material and social – than they had hitherto enjoyed in their regions of origin (Guinot and Torró 2007; Eiroa 2012; Garcia-Oliver 2015). Secondly, there is the reduction of inequality that followed the great calamities of the fourteenth century and in particular the outbreak and recurrence of the Black Death. Contrary to what is commonly believed, and despite the great mortality rates caused by the epidemic, and the chaos and disorder that followed it, the second half of the fourteenth century and the first decades of the fifteenth century were not necessarily a time of economic crisis or recession. Iberian societies, like those in Europe in general, did not take long to recover, to resume growth and to restore the social ladder to its previous dynamism

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(Epstein 2000; Jover and Morey 2003; Feliu 2004; Furió 2011; 2017; Viciano 2012; Álvarez Nogal, Prados de la Escosura and Santiago-Caballero 2020; Alfani 2020; Laliena 2022). In fact, not only social mobility *per se* but also ascent to a higher social class continued apace throughout most of the late Middle Ages. Only in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries did social boundaries become more rigid, and an evident process of the nobiliary and urban elites closing ranks and forming oligarchies took place (Bernabé 1994; Sabaté 1998; Narbona 2001; Fernández Trabal 2001). This can be considered a third phase of the processes of social mobility observed in the Crown of Aragon in the closing stages of the medieval period.

Taking these dynamics into account, this paper is divided into four sections. The first deals with the processes of social mobility associated with both the colonisation of territories taken from the Muslims in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the impact of the Black Death and other calamities in the second half of the fourteenth century. The second section addresses both the shorter-range migrations, especially from the countryside to the city, and the dynamics of social mobility in rural and urban society. Although related to the latter, we wished to highlight, as a separate section, the case of the *conversos* (converts from Judaism), as an original and important phenomenon both quantitatively and qualitatively, and both its successes and failures, in the Crown of Aragon and the other Iberian states. Finally, the fourth section is devoted to some questions of approach and methodology, in particular political (from the lists of families who held public offices in certain cities) and economic ones (from tax records or wealth registers).

2. Geographical mobility and the dynamics of long-term economic and social change

In the course of a century and a half, between 1148 and 1300, the Crown of Aragon almost tripled its territorial extension, from around 43,000 square kilometres to over 115,000, successively incorporating 'New' Catalonia (west and south of the river Llobregat), Lower Aragon and the kingdoms of Mallorca and Valencia. This process gave rise to a vast movement of people in order to resettle the new territories with Christian colonists. In total, the number of settlers involved in this transfer of people from north to south and to the Balearic Islands may be assumed to be in the region of 100,000 (calculations based on Garcia-Oliver's 2015 estimates for the kingdom of Valencia), a figure so impressive that it could not fail to have important consequences both for the migrants and for those who remained in their regions of origin. Of the latter, in Old Catalonia (east of the river Llobregat), lords imposed the *remença* on their peasants, the obligation to pay for their redemption in cash if they wanted to leave the manor. This was designed to hinder and prevent them from fleeing to the lands of Valencia and Mallorca. As a result, their living conditions worsened and, in short, they were reduced to serfdom (Freedman 1988; 1993; To 2000; Benito 2003; Lluch 2005). This opened up a divide between the north-east of Catalonia, a region of scattered farms and servile men, and Catalonia south of the Llobregat, Lower Aragon, Valencia and Mallorca, where peasants were free men.

The peasants and settlers in general who moved to populate the recently conquered territories did so mainly in search of land and greater freedoms, of movement especially, attracted by the franchises granted by monarchs and lords to recruit settlers (Font Rius 1969-1983; Guinot 1991). Even the Muslim peasants who remained there after the Christian conquest did not see their freedom of movement or their legal status as free men diminished, although their social and economic conditions were worse than those of their Christian counterparts. In the feudal society that was being created in these new kingdoms and territories, peasant dependence was not expressed through attachment to the land, through servitude, but through other jurisdictional rights and, above all, the payment of agrarian rents in exchange for the land they had received and held in emphyteusis. Abundant land, better legal conditions and great possibilities to prosper and advance socially were the chief factors that had lured the new settlers.

Tab. 1. **Land concessions in the Valencian area, 1237-1244 (in *jovades*)**

Jovades	Landholdings	%	Arable land	%	
0.5	4		2		
1	842	46.5	842	19.6	
1.5	14		21		
2	359	19.8	718	16.7	
2.5	67		167.5	3.9	
3	158	8.7	474	11	51.8
3.5	2		7		
4	139	7.7	556		
5	55		275		
6	98	5.4	588		28.6
6.5	1		6.5		
7	9		63		
8	27		216		
9	1		9		
10	32		320		
12	2		24		
TOTAL	1,810		4,289		

ARITHMETIC MEAN	2.4
MEDIAN	2

Source: Furió forthcoming.

An extraordinary source is available for understanding both the human occupation and the distribution of the land expropriated from Muslims among the Christian settlers, as well as the earliest economic inequalities between them. These are the *Llibres de repartiment*, that is, the books of apportionment, distribution or allocation, dating from the thirteenth century, which have survived for the kingdoms of Valencia, Mallorca, Murcia and a large part of Andalusia. A sort of Domesday Book, but on a regional scale and not, as in the English case, for the entire peninsula. Tables 1 and 2, corresponding to the *Llibre de Repartiment* of Valencia show respectively the size of the land grants in the region of the city of Valencia – in the unit of measurement of the time, the *jovada*, equivalent to about 3 hectares – and the same, already converted into hectares (Furió, forthcoming).

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of grants (46.5%, almost half) were of 1 *jovada* (3 hectares) only, although there were also concessions of 3, 6 and as many as 12 *jovades* (36 hectares). However, more than half of the newly formed holdings were of 3 *jovades* (9 hectares) or fewer. Two things need to be taken into account: that these were essentially holdings on irrigated land, so the size – however small it may seem – was more than sufficient to ensure the survival and reproduction of a farming family; and that the intention of the king, in this case James I, was to set up self-sufficient single-family tenancies to ensure that the new settlers put down roots.

Tab. 2. **Land concessions in the Valencian area, 1237-1244 (in hectares)**

Hectares	Landholdings	%	Arable land	%
≤ 3	846	46.7	2,532	19.7
4-6	373	20.6	2,217	17.2
7-9	225	12.4	1,924.5	15
10-15	196	10.8	2,514	19.5
+15	170	9.4	3,679.5	28.6
TOTAL	1,810		12,867	

ARITHMETIC MEAN	7.1
MEDIAN	5

Source: Furió forthcoming.

In total, in this first phase of colonisation (between 1237 and 1244) 1,810 families settled in the countryside around Valencia, among whom almost 13,000 hectares were distributed (Tab. 2). The allocation was not homogeneous, and as a result society was hierarchical from the outset: half of the settlers, those possessing 3 hectares or fewer, owned only 20% of the land; a top stratum, around 10%, with holdings of more than 15 hectares, owned 30% of the total, while the rest of the land was distributed to groups holding between 4 and 15 hectares. This is not a homogeneous

society, because there are disparities in wealth, but the inequalities are not yet too pronounced. The same applies to a neighbouring region, that around Alzira, whose land was distributed between 1242 and 1249. In total, 2,533 hectares were allocated to 289 settler families, an average of around 9 hectares per family (Tab. 3). With the exception of around 30 grants larger than 9 hectares, the vast majority, 88%, held 9 hectares or fewer. The relative homogeneity here is more pronounced, with just over half of the settlers also owning just over half of the total land, while the poorest third own a quarter of the total and the wealthiest, just 12%, own less than a fifth of the land (Furió, forthcoming). There are no great differences in wealth here in the early stages of settlement, at the time of or immediately after the conquest.

Tab. 3. **Land concessions in the area of Alzira, 1242-1249 (in hectares)**

Hectares	Landholdings	%	Arable land	%
≤ 9	100	34.6	655.5	25.9
9	154	53.3	1386	54.7
10-29	34	11.8	462	18.2
30	1	0.3	30	1.2
TOTAL	289		2,533.5	

ARITHMETIC MEAN	8.7
MEDIAN	9

Source: Furió forthcoming.

Obviously, neither the data nor the figures obtained from them reflect the enormous social and economic inequality of medieval society. For a start, they only include unprivileged groups, most of whom were peasants. Nobles, knights and ecclesiastics do not appear in these documents, nor in tax sources, which generally exclude the privileged. Of course, feudal magnates, both lay and ecclesiastical, also benefited from grants of land by the conquering king, but these were castles, towns and villages, not parcels of land. We must insist: the wealth and poverty to be found in these sources is the wealth and poverty of the taxpayers – rural and urban dwellers, peasants, artisans and bourgeois, who are also the only people to appear in the tax registers. And for the central years of the thirteenth century, the period when the new feudal society was being constructed after the destruction of the old Muslim society, what these sources reveal is a relative initial equality, a certain initial homogeneity. Signs of inequality, however, were already starting to appear.

The case of Mallorca, shown in Tab. 4, is very similar to that of Valencia. The bulk of the beneficiaries of land grants – almost half, 47.6% – received between 30 and 70 hectares, most of them on dry land, as opposed to those in Valencia, which were on irrigated land. A very small percentage (2.6%) owned 30 hectares or fewer,

but almost half (48.8%) owned more than 100 hectares, with some landowners even holding more than 500 and 1000 hectares (Bisson 1968-1972).

Tab. 4. **Land concessions in Mallorca in the 13th century (in hectares)**

Hectares	Landholdings	%	Arable land	%
20-30	7	2.6	159.04	0.5
30-50	53	20	2,067.52	6.5
50-70	73	27.6	4,534.00	14.2
70-100	30	11.3	2,613.12	8.2
100-150	57	21.5	6,930.00	21.8
150-300	31	11.7	6,463.20	20.3
300-500	5	1.8	1,896.12	5.9
500-1000	6	2.2	4,697.36	14.7
+ 1000	1	0.3	2,056.16	6.4
TOTAL	264	99	31,787.96	98.5 / 99.8

ARITHMETIC MEAN	120.4
MEDIAN	72.5

Source: Bisson 1968-1972, 55.

After this initial homogeneity and equality (only relative, as we have seen), economic inequality increased, due both to demographic growth and, above all, to the inheritance system and the dynamism of the land market. In Old Catalonia, the prevailing system of indivisible inheritance concentrated the family patrimony in the hands of a single son, the heir, while the other sons had to seek their livelihood elsewhere, with only a minimal family endowment. In the rest of the Crown of Aragon, the divisible and equal inheritance among all the siblings entailed the fractioning of the family patrimony, which had to be recomposed by each new generation. Here, the peasant land market was crucial, both to recompose peasant holdings and to transfer properties, so that the richer peasants could accumulate a larger number of plots and more land, taking advantage of the indebtedness and insolvency of the poorest ones, who were forced to sell (Salrach 1995; Furió 1995; 1998; 2004; Furió and Mira 2005; To 1997; Laliena 2005).

Population and economic growth were to be abruptly interrupted by the Black Death and the other calamities of the second half of the fourteenth century, although this did not halt social mobility. Contrary to the assumption made by Álvarez Nogal et al. (2020), the epidemic did not set economies on a lower path of development, at least not in the whole of Spain. As Guido Alfani (2020) and other authors rightly point out, the shock caused by the Black Death was asymmetric. The pandemic and

the ensuing crisis did not affect all regions – either in Europe or within the Crown of Aragon itself, where Catalonia suffered more than Aragon and Valencia – and all people equally. As in any other crisis, there were winners and losers. The former, in Old Catalonia, included the *pagesos grassos* (wealthy farmers) who increased the size of their holdings with the annexation of the *masos rònecs* (ruined farms) abandoned due to the death or flight of their previous tenant farmers. In addition to the abandonment of many farms and their annexation by the surviving landowners, other consequences of the Black Death that favoured the peasants were the rise in agricultural wages, thanks to the shortage of labour, and the formation of a well-off peasantry throughout the peninsular Crown of Aragon, linked to the production of cash crops (wheat, rice, sugar, saffron). This improvement is also reflected in the increased consumption of material goods by peasant households. Quantitative research based on probate inventories and public auctions reveals that the Valencian peasantry possessed a wider and more specialised repertoire of food-related objects, for storing, cooking and serving their meals, particularly from the 1360s onwards. Compared to the period before the plague, expenditure on the consumption of goods made of ceramics and glass could have been twice or three times as high among peasant families. The same phenomenon of peasant prosperity and the emergence of a rural upper class occurred in Mallorca, where, as we shall see later, this led to the formation of a small local nobility that had its origins in old peasant families (Ferrer 2001; Mas 2000; 2003; Blanco de la Lama 2003; Jover and Morey 2003; Jover and Pons 2013; Furió 2017; Almenar 2018).

3. From the countryside to the city

3.1. Social mobility in the rural world

Although the main population movements in a southward and eastward direction took place in the thirteenth century, after the conquest and territorial expansion of the Crown of Aragon, migration continued – to the kingdom of Valencia especially – from Aragon (Navarro 2002) and Catalonia, but also from the north of France, Castile and Andalusia. This continuing influx of immigrants helped to mitigate the devastating effects of the Black Death and facilitated a speedier recovery. This recovery was also aided by short-range migrations, from the countryside to the city, from one city to another, or directly, as a final destination, to the four capital cities of the Crown (Barcelona, Valencia, Zaragoza and Ciutat de Mallorca). These movements were widespread, just as they were in the rest of western Europe.

There were three main types of social actors and motivations in these shorter or – in some cases – inter-regional migrations, always with the ultimate goal of achieving social and economic advancement. The first of them were salaried workers attracted by the greater opportunities offered by the urban labour market. On the one hand, we are talking about unskilled workers, former agricultural labourers, who did not hesitate to return to the countryside during the sowing season and especially at harvest time. And on the other hand, the numerous young men and women (coming, in the case of Valencia, from the interior of the kingdom and from the south of

neighbouring Aragon), who came to work as apprentice craftsmen or as servants and maids (Vaquer 1989; Sixto 1993; López Lorente 2021; Laliena 2023; Furió 2024). A second type of immigrant, who sought to improve their working and living conditions by making the most of their professional qualifications, were the artisans who moved from one place to another, always with their sights set on a large city (Navarro 1997a; Navarro, Igual and Aparici 1999). Finally, the last group of rural-to-urban migrants came from the ranks of the rural elites. This is the case of affluent peasants who, after accumulating land and wealth in the countryside, culminated their social ascent by moving to the city, while retaining ownership of their agricultural holdings as well as the credits and loans they had lent to their former neighbours, and likewise of notaries and other professionals of rural origin who also ended up settling in the city. Some of these wealthy peasants or their children would even attain noble status or a prominent place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy – such as Pope Callixtus III, the first Borgia pope, whose ancestors were rich farmers – at the end of a successful path of social advancement, based on economic prosperity or service to the monarchy or the Church (Batllori 1979; Navarro Sorní, 2005).

Tab. 5. **Nobles and lords of vilain/peasant origin (Majorca, 14th-15th centuries)**

Bernat Cerdà, peasant of the parish of Santa Margarida

- It has a large farm (*alqueria*) of about 700 ha.
- In 1331 he bought the tithe and manorial rents of another *alqueria*.
- In 1339 he bought another large farm (*rafal*).
- In 1346, although he was one of the main cereal producers in the area, he obtained most of his income from sheep and cattle farming.
- In 1361, he was granted the status of *ciutadà* (citizen).

His son **Antoni Cerdà** (1364) because of his wealth, had to own a horse to contribute to the defence of the kingdom.

- In 1374, he was an important sheep owner.
- In 1380, he invested in the council's public debt and, in the same year, his son Esteve became a juror (councillor).
- Esteve married twice, the second time to the sister of the largest landowner in the area.

Antoni Cerdà, born in 1390, obtained a doctorate in law and canon law at the University of Lleida.

- In 1447, archbishop of Messina; in 1448, cardinal; in 1449, bishop of Lleida; in 1455, bishop of Ravenna.

Gabriel Cerdà, nephew of the former, canon of the cathedral of Mallorca.

Antoni Cerdà, nephew of the former, a citizen and married to the daughter of a citizen. He leaves three children:

- Antoni, who pursued an ecclesiastical career and became a canon of Mallorca.
- Eleonor, married to a *donzell* (squire) from a family also with peasant roots.
- **Antoni Salvador**, the first-born son and heir, was knighted before 1506, thus culminating the social ascension of the family, lord of numerous large farms in the region.

Source: Mas 2000.

Many noble families in the kingdom of Mallorca in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, such as, among many others, Descatllar, Ripoll, Montaner, Ballester, Andreu, Truiols, Cerdà, Safortesa and Albertí, were descended from wealthy peasants, whose origins in some cases dated back to the thirteenth-century conquest and colonisation and who consolidated their position after the Black Death and the repression of the peasants' revolt in the fifteenth century. The Cerdà family, for example, were originally peasants from the parish of Santa Margarida who, after becoming wealthy during the fourteenth century, achieved the status of *ciutadans* (citizens). During the fifteenth century we find jurists and canons of the Cathedral of Mallorca among its members, and in the early sixteenth century they were knighted. (Tab. 5). Situated at the economic and social summit of the peasantry, these rural landowners already had more in common with the interests of urban landowners and the petty nobility than those of their fellow peasants. Their economic and social advancement was based on the accumulation of land and livestock, the leasing of tithes, rents and taxes, credit investment, and finally on a meticulous and costly marriage strategy that led them to be related to both the urban oligarchy and the landed gentry (Mas 2000; Jover and Pons 2013).

Enrichment does not necessarily entail social advancement, and this does not necessarily lead to ennoblement. These same fiscal sources, but also the notarial sources and in particular the *post mortem* inventories, give us powerful insight into the differences within the peasantry, from the day labourers with no assets other than the strength of their arms, to the rich farmers, whose wealth could equal or even surpass that of the knights with smaller estates. A few well-off peasants were richer than some noblemen, knights or squires. This, however, did not mean that their social consideration was higher or that they were allowed to sit at a knight's table. They had become rich by accumulating land or livestock, leasing mills, butcheries, tithes and manorial rents, as well as farming royal and municipal taxes, investing in commercial operations, private credit and public debt. They also monopolised local power, holding municipal offices. But they were still lowborn, illiterate and uncouth, even if they emulated the nobility in the consumption of expensive goods (and here material culture appears as another source for the study of social mobility) (Furió 2007; 2021; Benito 2012; Navarro 2012; Verna 2012; Aparisi and Royo 2014; Aparisi 2015; 2022; Garcia-Oliver 2017; Almenar 2018; Zamora 2019).

However, the sons of rich peasants could go further than their fathers, especially if they had studied and entered the service of the state or the Church. An important step was already taken if they managed to become notaries, but the condition of notary was acquired through practice. It was even better if they managed to study at university, obtain a doctorate in law and become a jurist, a lawyer. Jurists did get to sit at the nobility's tables, even marrying their daughters and eventually being ennobled themselves. Many jurists, themselves the sons of peasants, ended up as knights (on the social ascent of jurists and notaries, Cruselles 1992, Planas 1996; 2009). Upward social mobility was not only economic. One also had to cross social and cultural boundaries to acquire respectability, a quality that a rich peasant lacked, but which his educated son possessed. Studies and an ecclesiastical career are what enabled

Alfonso de Borja, the son of a Valencian farmer, to become Pope Callixtus III. Or Jaume Casanova, the son of a master builder (*mestre d'obra*) from Xàtiva, and Joan Llopis, the son of a notary from Valencia, after obtaining their doctorates in Bologna, to become cardinals (Cruselles 1986; Pons 2005; Fernández de Córdoba 2017). Others rose to the nobility by serving the king in wartime or in the administration of the state, such as, among many others, the Vic, Marrades and Mercader families. These are the most striking cases of a constant process of social mobility, which also had its negative side with the decline of formerly powerful lineages, and which can also be studied from the same sources that allow us to follow the rise of the successful families.

3.2. The urban world's greatest opportunities

The second area of study with regard to social mobility in the Crown of Aragon is the urban world. As in other European territories, the urban laboratory has been the main observatory for the analysis of this phenomenon during the late Middle Ages. However, the historiography on the subject is still insufficient, and in many cases the available data provide us with an impressionistic view (Laliena 2010; Igual 2018a). Nevertheless, we can glimpse some of its main features and we have illustrative examples that allow us to situate the Aragonese case within the international context.

A first circumstance that must be taken into account is the differences existing within the urban network. As in other parts of the continent of Europe, there is a great diversity of urban centres which we could classify according to their size, administrative function or economic structure. The social mobility that takes place in each of them has particular features, since the scale or the actors involved in this process vary depending on factors such as, for example, the greater or lesser preponderance of a socio-professional class; compare, for example, the extreme cases of Valencia and Castellón (Narbona 1995; Viciano 2008). Likewise, a specific feature of the Crown of Aragon and other peninsular kingdoms was the frontier nature of certain areas. As we shall see, this basically resulted in the important presence of an urban nobility, especially in the southern part of the kingdom of Aragon or in Valencia, which enjoyed privileges associated with warfare (Laliena and Iranzo 1998; Barrio 1998; Ríos 2016).

On the other hand, in order to analyse social mobility in the Crown of Aragon, we must also bear in mind the social scale on which it took place. Beyond the variants mentioned above, between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries the main reference point for observing the phenomenon is undoubtedly the municipal council, which generally enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and, despite some formal differences, was similar in structure everywhere (Narbona 2007; Barrio 2023). Specifically, belonging to one political stratum or another, holding office or participating in municipal finances, are clear indicators of upward social mobility (Iranzo 2005; Viciano 2008; Reixach 2018, 2019).

The urban community was however not limited to this municipal *universitas*, which did not constitute an impenetrable body, nor did it exclusively determine the

pathways of social ascent and descent. Indeed, there were also other parallel channels. These channels could be more or less connected to the municipal circuit, acting in many cases as catalytic elements. Thus, the holding of posts or the provision of services in royal or noble courts clearly contributed to the advancement of certain families (Reixach 2020). The ecclesiastical institutions were also affected by families' strategies of social advancement (Conesa 2020). Special mention should be made of the mobility observed within groups – in principle – outside the Christian sphere of influence, such as the numerous Jewish and Muslim communities (see, for example, the case of the Valencian Mudejar Alí Xupió: Ruzafa 1995).

Finally, a third element to bear in mind in the Crown of Aragon is the existence of a patchwork of territories which, it should be remembered, had political autonomy and consequently their own particular systems. We must also highlight the dense urban fabric and in particular the demographic and economic weight of the four large regional capitals. In addition to the rural workers and elites referred to above, merchants such as the Catalan Coscó in Zaragoza and Puig-roi in Valencia flocked to them from within the Crown (Mainé 2006; Narbona et al. 1995) and from abroad (especially but not only Italians and Germans: Igual 1998; Soldani 2010; Cruselles 2015).

In the Crown of Aragon, if we group the available works together, we can outline some dynamics which are comparable to those observed in other territories in western Europe, especially with regard to certain social classes. As elsewhere, the one that has traditionally received most attention in Aragonese historiography is the urban oligarchy or patriciate, regarded as the group that monopolised political, and also, to a large extent, economic power (Narbona 1998; Laliena 2010).

In general, the studies available for the capital cities of the Crown of Aragon, or other large urban centres, present the so-called 'honourable citizens' as the main members of the political and economic elite. This elite had diverse origins and was distinguished among other things by accumulating municipal offices, investing in rents (especially *censals*) and buying land or small manors that placed them on a par with the nobility (Sabaté 1998; Fernàndez Trabal 1999; Daileader 2004; Mainé 2006; Lozano, 2007; Cruselles 2018; Viciano 2018). Elsewhere, an important feature of the upper class was its presence in the political or jurisdictional bodies in these cities or, in the case of smaller cities or towns, its participation in the predominant economic activities in each of them (see, for example, the cases of Cervera, Castelló, Manresa and Alzira: Turull 1990; Viciano 2008; Fynn-Paul 2015; Bernabeu 2014). The group of the merchants is the one that has received most attention, although it is not always easy to define it precisely. In the cities of the Crown of Aragon mercantile activity could encompass a wide range of activities: trade, banking, taxation, and the supply of cereals. (Iradiel et al. 1995; Cruselles 2001; Igual 2010; 2013; Torre 2018).

Besides this, though, there was a common denominator: the opportunities offered by the economic growth that took place in the Crown of Aragon throughout the late Middle Ages. Despite the economic crises, the cities in this territory experienced an important boom in mercantile, financial and manufacturing activity, from the thirteenth century onwards especially. This development was markedly Mediterranean in nature, although it was not unrelated to the opening up of new horizons in the Atlantic. In parallel, economic activity related to taxation and public finances also

boomed. It is not surprising, therefore, that many merchants and bankers diversified their activities and also went into tax-farming or purchasing public debt; a phenomenon, the latter, which was especially significant in the Crown of Aragon (Narbona, 1992; Torre 2018; Viciano 2018).

It should likewise be noted that this economic situation (in both the public and private spheres) did not occur exactly at the same time in all the territories of the Crown of Aragon. Thus, up to the end of the fourteenth century, Catalan and Mallorcan merchants and financiers played a special role in the general scene (Reixach 2021). Subsequently, the Aragonese and above all the Valencians, who were the main beneficiaries of the advent of the new Trastàmara dynasty and the conquest of the kingdom of Naples, picked up the baton. This is shown by some of the examples already mentioned, and also those of families like Sorell (from dyers to knights), Vic (from *ciutadans* to nobles), Bou (from merchants to nobles) and Valleriola (from bankers to nobles), all of them from Valencia, or the Bell-lloc family, from Girona (Fernàndez Trabal 1995; 1999; Igual and Navarro, 2002; Navarro, 2015b; Torre, 2018).

Although manufacturing was not as important in the cities of the Crown of Aragon as trade, we can also observe clear examples of social mobility within the artisanal sector. It is no coincidence that the aforementioned economic and urban development which took place in the Crown of Aragon was also the result of the boom in certain manufacturing activities. The most important of these was undoubtedly the textile industry, which from the mid-fourteenth century benefited from the expansion of varied local production. This explains the prosperity achieved by many wool carders in the different territories of the Crown (in the kingdom of Valencia: Iradiel et al. 1995; Navarro 2000; Bordes 2006; Martínez 2010; Piqueras 2011; Llibrer 2014; in Catalonia: Daileader 2004; Reixach 2019). More specifically, we should also mention the importance acquired by the specialised production of silk fabrics, especially in the city of Valencia during the fifteenth century (Navarro 2000; 2015c).

The oral testimonies of some immigrants and written documents suggest that Ligurians first arrived in Valencia around 1457, and from then on the migratory flow was considerable. Between 1450 and 1525, notarial sources record the presence of several hundred silk workers, with different professional categories, often combined: merchants, masters and artisans *velluters, mestres de seda* or *seders* (velvet and silk craftsmen), who initiated the growth of an industrial activity with few precedents. The *Manifestació* of the Art of Silk in Valencia (1475) showed the commercial and productive hegemony of the Genoese in this activity, which did not wane until the second decade of the sixteenth century, when merchants from other parts of what is now Spain entered this commercial movement as a result of the expansion of silk factories in other Iberian regions. The foundation in 1477 of the *Art dels Velluters* in Valencia is an example of this predominance. The corporation was managed by Ligurian merchants as a consequence of their technical superiority and the demand for very specific products, produced exclusively by these silk merchants. In particular, the huge European-wide boom in black satins and velvets, which required special machinery – silk spinning wheels – and manufacturing and dyeing skills, explains the privileged position of Genoese immigrants. From an economic point of view, it is important to note that these immigrants were artisans with high technical skills, but whose

economic and social advancement took place in a Crown of Aragon where silk was an unregulated industry that it took a long time to organise (Navarro 1994; 1997b; 1999; 2015a; Igual and Navarro 1997).

One last factor to be taken into account in the processes of social mobility documented at the end of the Middle Ages in the Crown of Aragon is the cultural one. The leading exponents of this were jurists, notaries and, to a lesser extent, doctors. As we have said, the institutional development that took place during this period at different levels (royal, seigniorial, municipal, ecclesiastical) was fertile ground for the social advancement of individuals who had the necessary technical knowledge to ensure the proper functioning of the different governmental institutions. Likewise, in a context of economic growth, it also became essential to have specialists (above all, notaries) to provide legal security for the different businesses. Nor must the growing importance of medical professionals be overlooked in the face of periodic epidemics, to the point of their becoming fundamental figures in towns and cities, as shown by, among others, the cases of the Sarriera, Ros d'Ursins and Lacabra families, from Girona, Valencia and Zaragoza, respectively (Planas 1996; 2004; Cruselles 1998; Ferragud 2005; Graullera 2009; Marín 1998).

These professions did not always appear in the same social stratum, but this depended on the place, the privileges that regulated the municipal regime, and the prestige acquired by each individual. In general, jurists and doctors were the most highly regarded, probably because of their university training and small numbers. This explains why in several cities they appear as part of the patriciate, even being equated with the urban nobility (Planas, 1996; Mainé 2006; Lozano 2007; Reixach 2019; Batlle et al. 2007). Notaries did not always occupy the same position within the urban hierarchy. In some cities (especially smaller ones, although not exclusively) they were also part of, and even the most prominent members of, the local elite (Turull 1990; Iranzo 2005; Mainé 2006; Viciano 2008; Bernabeu 2014), but in others, such as Barcelona, Valencia, Mallorca or Girona, we find them on the second and third rung of the ladder (Günzberg, 2001; Planas, 2004; Batlle et al. 2007; Reixach 2019). Be that as it may, we have an extensive list of cases that show in all places the social ascent, to a greater or lesser extent, of those who worked in all of the aforementioned professions and their families (Narbona 1990; Planas, 1996; Barceló 2001; Ferragud 2005; Mainé 2006…).

Finally, we should remember the social mobility (upward and downward) that took place within the civil service, in the royal court especially, but also in manorial courts or ecclesiastical institutions. As we have pointed out, this pathway of advancement was sometimes associated in one way or another with the municipality, but there are also examples of individuals and families who basically made their fortunes outside the city council. The earliest urban elites of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were in fact formed around royal, seigniorial or ecclesiastical power, as municipal councils were still in the process of formation (Bensch 2000). Thereafter, during the fourteenth century, the enormous development of the state apparatus also explains trajectories of this kind. All this without forgetting the situations associated with the changes of monarch or dynasty, which involved the rise of certain families and the decline of others; for example, the accession of the Trastàmaras in the early fifteenth century, which led to the rise of the Marrades, Santàngel and Valleriola families and

the fall of the Vilaragut family (Igual and Navarro 2002; Batlle et al. 2007; Reixach 2020; Velasco 2022).

In all cases, we find examples of individuals or families belonging to different social and professional spheres. Thus, there are cases of members of the urban nobility or patriciate who consolidated or improved their social position in the service of the monarchy (Narbona et al. 1995; Batlle et al. 2007). Illustrative examples are also documented of merchants and bankers (some of them foreign) who did the same by taking advantage of the economic services they could offer the monarchy or other institutions (Baydal 2012; Navarro 2015b; Torre 2018; Reixach-Tello 2019; Reixach 2021).

4. A singular case: religious conversion as a pathway of social advancement

Between 1391 and 1414, the Crown of Aragon witnessed the large-scale conversion of the Jewish population in the main cities. This was partly the result of a series of violent pogroms that took place in the first of these years, the most obvious manifestation of which – apart from looting and some massacres – consisted of the forced baptism of a large number of people in extremely tense public ceremonies (Narbona 2013, Garcia-Oliver, 2019). King John I and some royal authorities tried to prevent these outbreaks of violence from spreading and succeeded in doing so in a number of important cities, including most of those in the kingdom of Aragon proper (Gampel 2016). However, social pressure on the Jews grew progressively in the following years and culminated a quarter of a century later when Pope Benedict XIII and King Ferdinand I organised a Disputation in Tortosa on the respective merits of the Christian and Jewish religions, as a result of which riots broke out anew and were again quelled by massive conversions. This phenomenon is well known because the descendants of these converts were accused a century later of continuing to practise Judaism, and an inquisitorial persecution was unleashed against them with dramatic results (Sesma 2013a). These social and cultural aspects have obscured the fact that this conversion was a phase of intense social and economic mobility among the urban elites of the Crown. The argument is simple. Many of the Jews who became Christians in the collective baptisms in the context of these massacres were undoubtedly artisans, shopkeepers, service sector workers or farmers. For all of them, men, women and children, integration in Christian society was a form of upward mobility, insofar as they were able to gain access to markets for goods, credit and labour that had hitherto been forbidden to them (López Juan 2024). Although they suffered discrimination in everyday life, the laws did not encourage such attitudes and would not do so until the beginning of the early modern period (Narbona 2006). But the most radical change took place in the upper classes in the cities, the patriciates. Within a very few years, these elites absorbed a group of formerly Jewish and now Christian magnates, who had enormous capital at their disposal and used it in economic areas to which they had previously had no access.

There are a large number of studies on the Jewish communities of the Crown of Aragon and many of them show that some of their members were involved in moneylending and operated in the credit markets of Christian society. A close

examination of this activity reveals (as Giacomo Todeschini pointed out in relation to the development of Hebrew moneylending in late medieval Italian cities in 2016) that Jewish moneylenders specialised in loans for consumption or the investment of small sums. In other words, a large number of small loans. Moreover, their predominance seems to have been widespread among the rural clientele, in both the areas of influence of the cities and those corresponding to the villages and rural towns where Jewish communities had formed in the fourteenth century (Aleixandre 2015; Schraer 2018; Furió 1993; García Marsilla 2002). Although authorised interest rates reached 20% and often exceeded it, short-term loans – with pledges – were a flexible and widely used instrument for rural populations. Jewish financiers also lent money in larger amounts to municipal councils in the form of *mutua,* or loans with high interest rates and short repayment periods. They were, however, not part of the great fiscal bonanza that began in the middle of the fourteenth century with the boom in public debt, channelled through the sale of rents/annuities (*censals* and *violaris*) (Sánchez 2009; Furió 2018). This lavish segment of the market was off-limits to Jewish businessmen. Apart from credit, Jewish merchants traded with Christians, for example, in drapery, but we do not know to what extent they were in a position to step outside the relatively narrow framework of the Jewish quarters to trade in certain essential goods. In any event, they were excluded from the circulation of goods such as wool or grain, which moved very large amounts of capital.

Conversion radically changed the mercantile prospects of some families who, with their traditional names – such as La Caballería in Zaragoza – or with new ones – such as Santángel or Roís in Valencia – were in a position to become part of the leading group in the cities and, in the medium term, to participate in municipal government and in the royal administration. Economic activity, political power and presence in the state apparatus were three exceptional advantages acquired with the change of religion. In Valencia, the new converts were quickly integrated in the municipal management and financing of the city and the *Diputación del General* (Narbona 2013; López Juan 2021). It is not easy, in the present state of our knowledge, to pinpoint the details of this process, which took place at the level of the large and medium-sized towns, as well as the Crown as a whole. There are two major difficulties. The first is homonymy: many converts adopted similar surnames in different localities and without any family or business ties between them. The most visible case is that of the converts called Santángel, who formed large groups of families in Zaragoza, Barbastro, Daroca and Valencia, and among whom there were some extraordinarily wealthy people, alongside others of far more modest means. The second difficulty lies in the dispersion of information regarding the fortunes of the elite *conversos*. In this respect, the Roís of Valencia are exemplary, since the confiscation of their assets by the Inquisition shows that their members together owned more than 7 million *sous* (approximately 636,300 florins). They were descended from a member of the Jewish family Najari, from Teruel, who had loaned large sums to the Community of villages of Teruel in the years 1380-1390. In 1417, Martín Ruiz, the initial convert, moved to Valencia where he started a successful wool trading business. Years later, not only was he a *donzell* (nobleman), but he had also founded a bank, with branches distributed throughout the cities of the western Mediterranean, which his sons inherited before being persecuted by the inquisitors (Cruselles 2013; 2019).

Another significant example is the merchant Jaime Sánchez de Calatayud, who operated between Zaragoza and Barcelona in the middle of the fifteenth century; the importance of his economic activity is shown by the export of wool from Aragon to Tortosa in various fiscal years: in 1444-1445 there were 123 tons (with Pere Servent); in 1446-1447, 125.5 tons (with Pedro Sánchez de Calatayud, his brother); and in 1449-1450, 131 tons. This volume of wool can be estimated at 146,400 sj. (14,640 fl.), 149,430 sj. (14,943 fl.) and 156,000 sj. (15,600 fl.), respectively (Sesma 2013b; Lozano 2004). The Sánchez de Calatayud family descended from a Jew, Alazar Uluf, or Golluf, baptised Luis Sánchez. His grandson of the same name became royal treasurer around 1470, a position inherited by his brother Gabriel Sánchez (d. 1505), while the other brothers held important positions in the royal treasury: Guillem Sánchez was *mestre racional* (the head of the Exchequer) in Catalonia, Alfonso was lieutenant to the treasurer in Valencia and Francisco, chief pantryman. The nephew of all of them, Pedro, was involved in the trial against the 'Banco de Valencia' in 1503 for the illegal export of gold coin from Castile to Valencia. This bank managed payments through exchanges between Castile, Aragon, Valencia and Italy in the context of the wars against France. Gabriel Sánchez had to pay between 3 and 6 million *maravedíes* (approximately 8,000 to 16,000 ducats) to cover for Pedro Sánchez when he was condemned (Lozano 2007; Ladero 1987).

Outside the mercantile sphere, *conversos* also made service to the Crown a means of social advancement. A paradigmatic case is that of Pau Rossell, who worked as a notary in the middle decades of the fifteenth century and had a solid career in the municipal government of Valencia. *Sots-obrer de murs e valls* in 1443, councillor for the parish of Santa Catalina in 1449 and *Justícia dels 300 sous* in 1450 and 1453 (Narbona and Bernabeu, 2021). He also wrote a book, the *Descendentia regum Sicilie*, which legitimised King Alfonso the Magnanimous' claim to the throne of Naples. Rossell was clearly an individual aligned with the political interests of the Crown, whose *converso* status did not prevent him from holding both representative and managerial posts in the Consell. His professional career, far removed from the commercial and credit sectors, is further proof of the rapid assimilation by converts of the mechanisms of social advancement typical of the Christian community (López Juan, 2024).

These data are too fragmentary, insofar as these families have not been examined in great detail, but there is no doubt that their social rise – throughout the fifteenth century – was closely related to the conversion of their ancestors at the beginning of that century.

5. A question of approach and method: levels of wealth and municipal positions

So far, we have reviewed the main ways or processes of social mobility which, from a general point of view, have been studied in the Crown of Aragon at the end of the medieval period. This study has been carried out mainly on the basis of prosopographical analysis and/or the data provided by notarial documentation. Thanks to this methodology, it has been possible to reconstruct in detail the trajectories of individuals, families or social groups in both urban and rural areas. As we

have seen, notarial documentation has also allowed us to observe the transformation of consumption patterns associated with the dynamics of social ascent. This type of study is however not as useful for reconstructing general trends in the evolution of social mobility in a given place or in the long term. To this end, Aragonese historiography currently has only two indicators for formulating hypotheses in this respect: registers of wealth and lists of municipal positions.

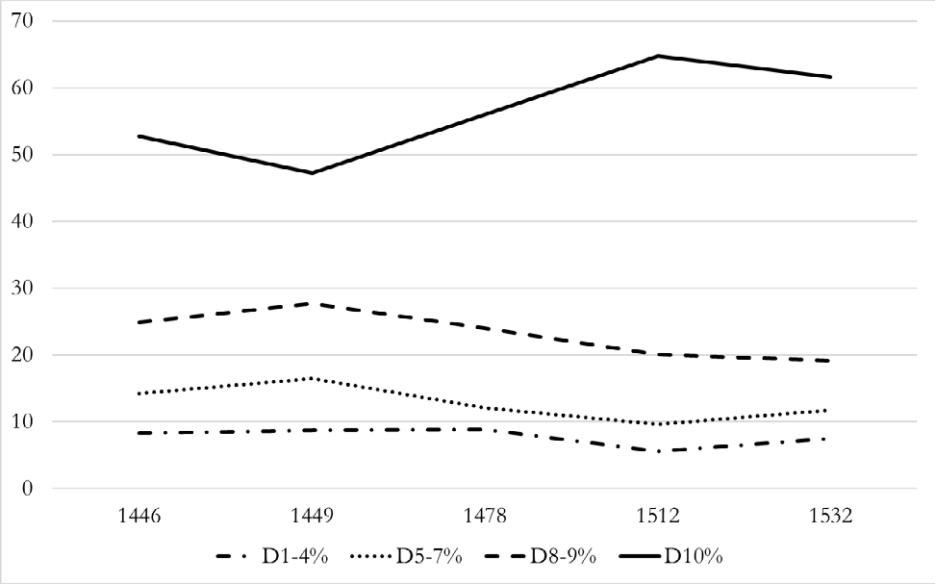
Before dealing with the former, it should be noted that in the Crown of Aragon it is not easy to attempt the quantitative approach, based on fiscal and judicial sources, as Gregory Clark has done for England. His methodology, based on onomastics, although suggestive, does not convince us. Clark distinguishes between six different origins of English surnames and assumes a strong association between surname type and economic status. And so, while the bearers of locative surnames belonged to the upper classes, occupational surnames (especially in the case of humble trades such as Smith, Carter, Taylor or Shepherd) belonged to the lower classes (Clark 2014).

We do not know if this method is suitable for the English case, but it is certainly not for medieval Iberia and in particular for the kingdom of Valencia and the Crown of Aragon, which is our area of study. In the Iberian Peninsula, the thirteenth century was characterised by the territorial expansion of the Christian kingdoms to the detriment of al-Andalus, an expansion that was not only military but also demographic and social, with the replacement of the Muslim inhabitants by Christian settlers, mainly Aragonese and Catalans. Many of these settlers, who had travelled hundreds of kilometres from their regions of origin, are recorded in contemporary documentation with locative surnames indicating their place of origin, such as the aforementioned family of the future Pope Callixtus III, who came from the Aragonese town of Borja, hence the family surname De Borja, "from Borja". The thirteenth-century colonisation was a period of great geographical and social mobility, with thousands of peasant families moving southwards in search of land and better living and working conditions. Most of the locative surnames correspond to these families and not to the upper classes, who were also rewarded with gifts of land in the new kingdoms. Conversely, among the Valencian nobility we find surnames related to trades (such as Ferrer/Smith, Mercader/Merchant or Escrivà/Clark) that are not related to the social climbing of families that had previously exercised such trades, at least in the two and a half centuries following the creation of the kingdom of Valencia.

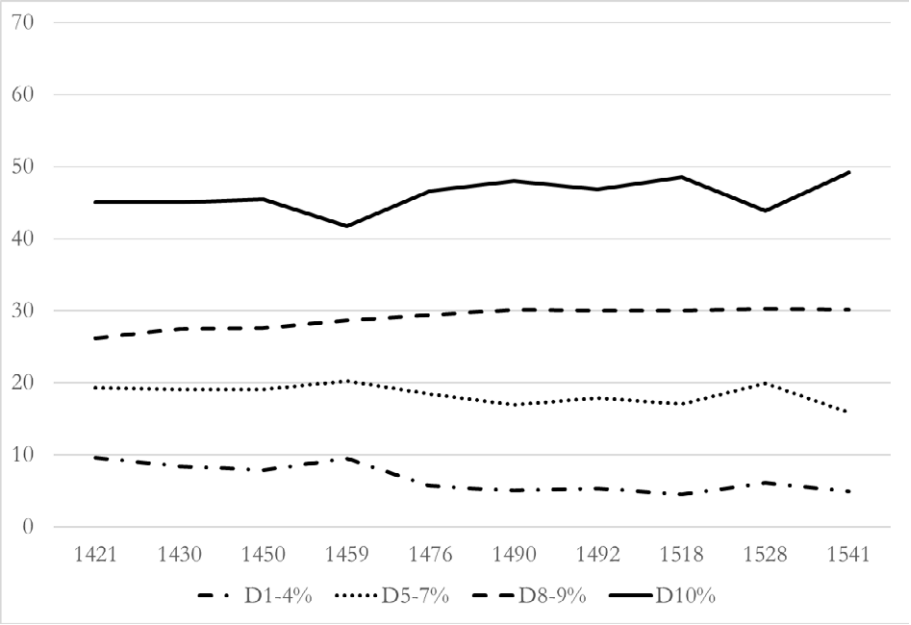
But onomastics is not the only method with which to attempt a quantitative approach to social mobility. The evolution of family wealth, from parents to children, can be traced over long periods of time from fiscal sources, in particular property registers drawn up to estimate the wealth of taxpayers and apply the corresponding tax. In the first instance, the studies dedicated to these registers allow us to observe that, from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, the cities and towns of the Crown of Aragon were the scene of a progressive increase in inequality (Ribalta and Turull 1992; García Montero 2015; 2020; Almenar, Chismol and Ruiz 2017; Morelló, 2017; Furió et al. 2020; Morelló et al. 2020; Reixach 2022; Tudela and Pascual 2023; Miquel and Verdés 2024). This means that not all members of urban society benefited equally from the economic growth that, as we have said, took place after the Black Death. As can be seen in Graphs 1-4, it was mainly the richest decile (the top 10%) of taxpayers who, to a greater or lesser extent, managed to accumulate a greater amount of

wealth during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This is most evident in the largest city, Ciutat de Mallorca, whose tax records contain a maximum of 3,552 declarations of assets in 1532-33. It is also quite clear in the case of the Catalan town of Cervera, where the population numbered about 1,000 households during the fifteenth century. It is less evident in the Valencian town of Castelló, in which there were fewer than 900 households during the fifteenth century, although an increase in inequality is detected at the end of the sixteenth century, when 1,239 taxpayers were counted. The place where least divergence is observed is another Catalan town, Igualada, whose population oscillated between 200 to 300 households until the middle of the sixteenth century (Furió et al. 2020; Tudela and Pascual 2023; Miquel and Verdés 2024).

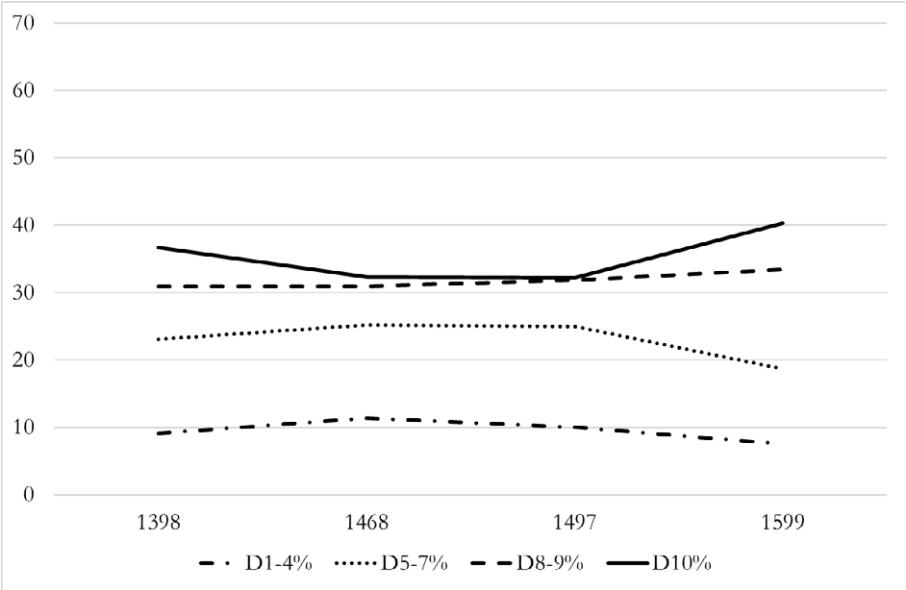
Graph 1. **Distribution of wealth in Palma de Mallorca according to *talles* (percentage/deciles)**



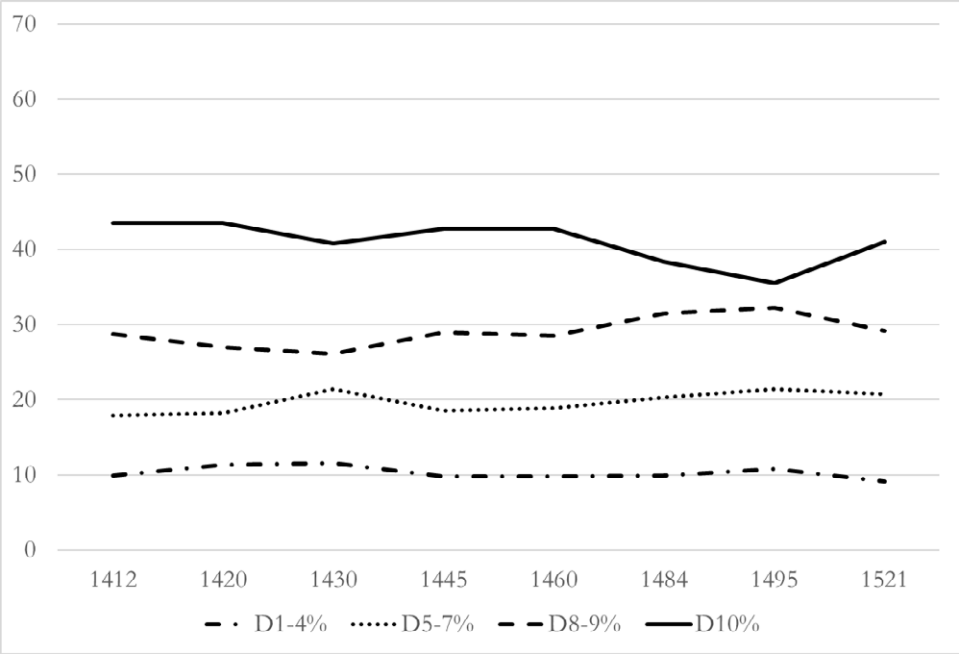
Graph 2. **Distribution of wealth in Cervera according to *talles* and *manifest* (percentage/deciles)**



Graph 3. **Distribution of wealth in Castelló according to *peita* (percentage/deciles)**



Graph 4. **Distribution of wealth in Igualada according to *talles* and *valies* (percentage/deciles)**



As well as this, tax documentation also allows us to observe who comprised the upper stratum of the aforementioned localities and how its composition evolved. Pending a more in-depth analysis of the available data, in the specific case of the Catalan towns of Cervera and Igualada we can observe some interesting dynamics in the families that occupied the upper decile. In the case of Cervera (Tab. 6), we have analysed who the ten main taxpayers were between 1400 and 1550 through a selection of six tax registers, one every 25 years approximately (that is, six generations). The names of the richest families are repeated from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, and there is also an increasing presence of ennobled lineages (known as *mossèns* or *donzells*). Another circumstance to point out is the importance of legal entities, especially religious institutions (monasteries, confraternities, commanderies) and the pious foundation (*marmessoria*) of one of the lineages, the Roqueta family, whose name appears throughout the period.

Tab. 6. **Top 10 richest people/taxpayers in Cervera (1421-1541)**

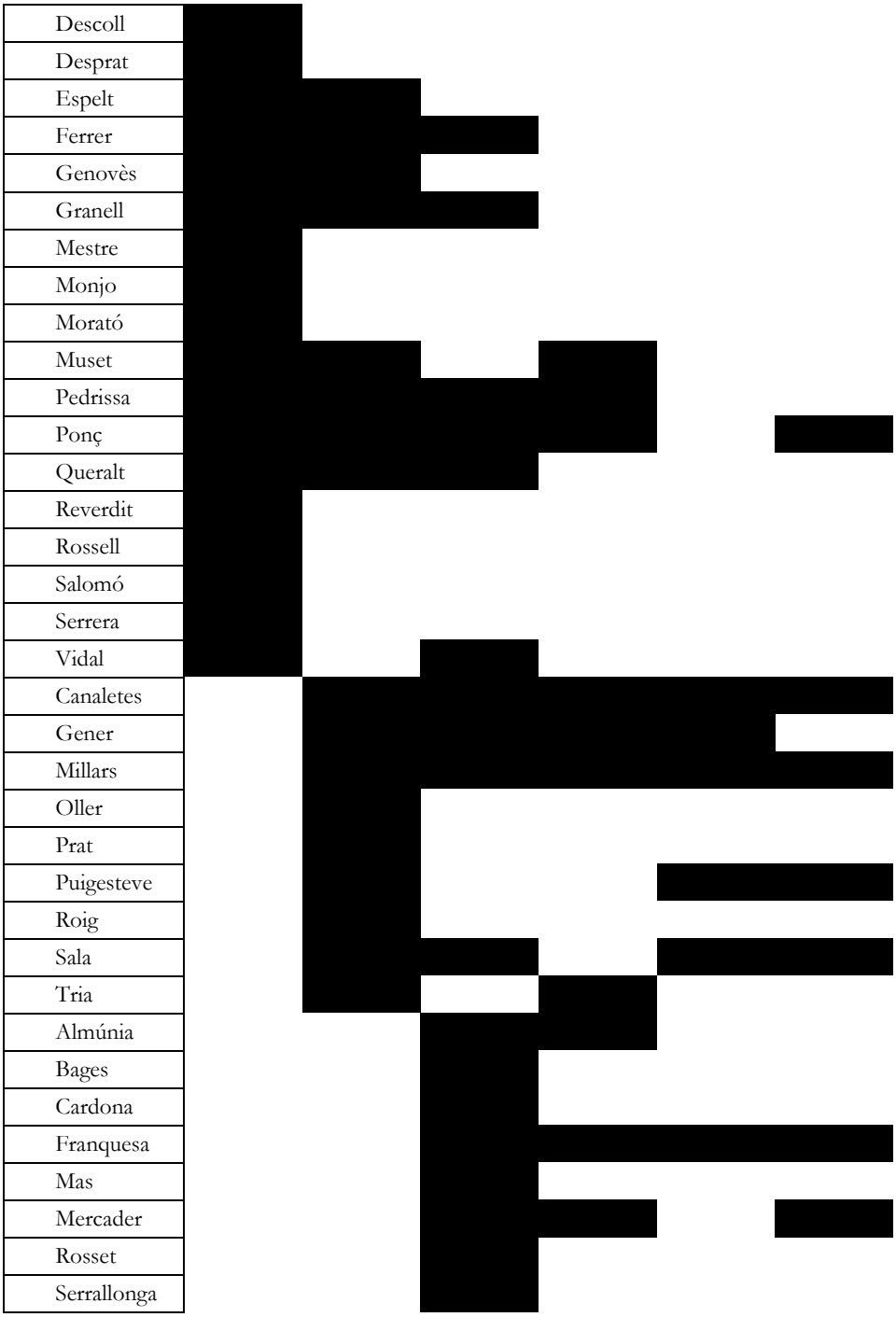
1421	1450	1476	1492	1518	1541
Serra, wife	Roqueta	Gilabert	Gilabert, *mossèn*	Altarriba, *mossèn*	Altarriba, *mossèn*
Roqueta	Gilabert, *mossèn*	Gilabert, *mossèn*	Altarriba, *mossèn*	Sacirera, *donzell*	Vilaplana, *mossèn*
Berga	Tàrrega, *misser*	Saciera, *donzell*	Boix	Gilabert	Gilabert, *mossèn*
Arnau	Sacirera, *donzell*	Martorell	Sacirera, *donzell*	Vilaplana, *mossèn*	Lledó
Vilagrassa	Gilabert	Boix	S. Antoni, command	Boix	Alentorn, *mossèn*
Borràs	Miquel	Asbert	Avellaneda, *mossèn*	Palau	S. Domènec, convent
Palau	Berga/Castellet	Avellaneda, *mossèn*	Jutglar	Vilaplana, *mossèn*	S. Esperit, brotherhood
Gilabert	Mir	Palau	Roqueta, *marmessoria*	Altarriba	Vilaplana, *mossèn*
Messina, wife	Asbert	Roqueta, *marmessoria*	Vilaplana, *mossèn*	Altarriba	Sacirera, *donzell*
Gilabert	Canelles	Miquel	Palau	Roqueta, *marmessoria*	Giscafrè

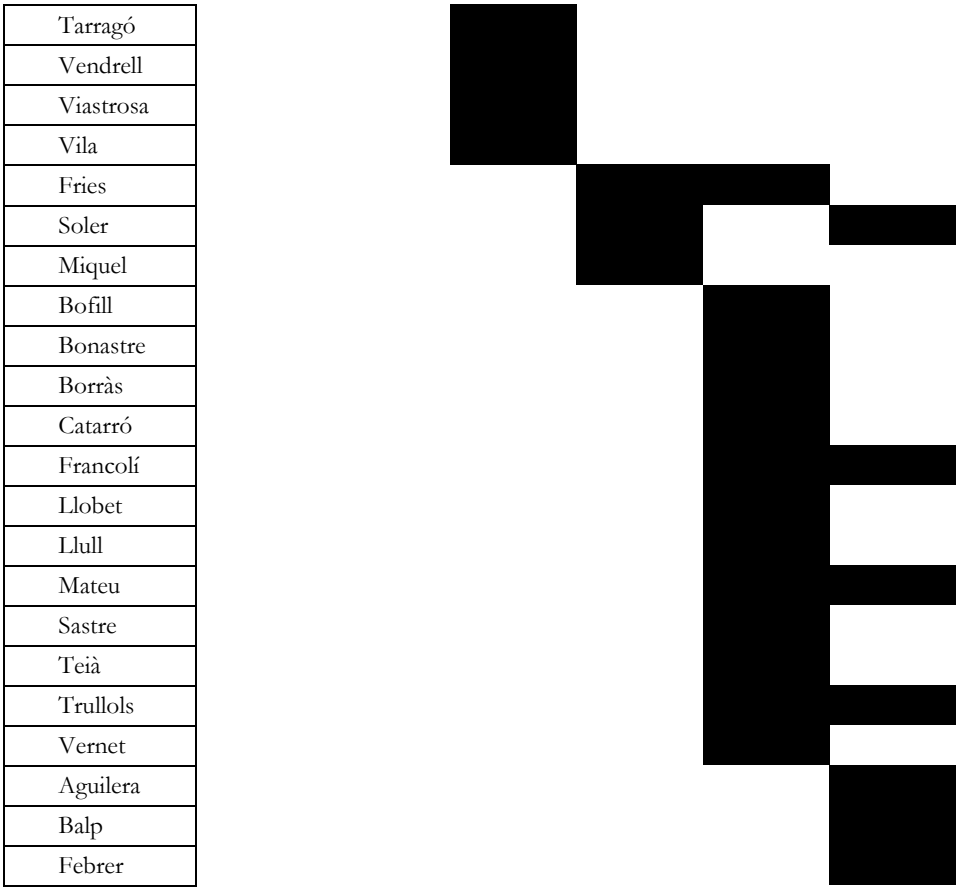
Source: Own elaboration.

As far as Igualada is concerned (Tab. 7), it can be seen who the 62 families (or different surnames) were that formed the top decile during the aforementioned period. Only two of these families (Cornet, Ponç) are named during the century and a quarter under consideration (1412-1537) and six (Cornet, Ponç, Canaletes, Millars, Puigesteve, Sala) during the century from 1430 to 1537. The renewal that took place after the Catalan Civil War (1462-1472) should also be mentioned, coinciding with a transformation of the town's economic structure. Specifically, after the civil conflict, Igualada went from being a town dedicated mainly to agriculture and trade to a centre more oriented towards the manufacture of textiles and leather (Miquel and Verdés 2024).

Tab. 7. **Families/surnames documented in decile 10 of Igualada (1412-1537)**

Surname	1412	1430	1460	1484	1503	1537
Alisó	■					
Artigó	■	■	■			
Barrufet	■					
Carrió	■	■				
Cornet	■	■	■	■		■


Descoll
Desprat
Espelt
Ferrer
Genovès
Granell
Mestre
Monjo
Morató
Muset
Pedrissa
Ponç
Queralt
Reverdit
Rossell
Salomó
Serrera
Vidal
Canaletes
Gener
Millars
Oller
Prat
Puigesteve
Roig
Sala
Tria
Almúnia
Bages
Cardona
Franquesa
Mas
Mercader
Rosset
Serrallonga



Source: Own elaboration.

Another place where social mobility can be analysed in more detail through tax records is the Valencian town of Alzira, specifically the quarter of Sant Agustí, made up mostly of peasants and craftsmen, for which tax data are available between 1426 and 1515. In total, 205 taxpayers are listed here in 1426, 248 in 1465, 146 in 1474, 139 in 1485, 124 in 1500 and 117 in 1515. Two different systems have been used to study and quantify social mobility here. The first is based on the determination of quintiles and movement from one to another, up or down, in a very similar way – though not exactly the same – to the one used by Francesco Ammannati in his intervention in this *Settimana* (Ammannati 2025). Thus, the 205 taxpayers in the Sant Agustí neighbourhood in 1426 have been divided into five quintiles of 41 families each, and the same has been done for the other years, logically with a different number of families in each one. There is no room here, nor is it the place, to explain the method in detail and provide full results, as it is still a work in progress. In any case, it can be advanced that of the 41 families in the fifth quintile, the richest in the neighbourhood, 9 (22%)

disappear and do not re-emerge in successive wealth registers, 10 (24.4%) drop down to a lower quintile (9 to the fourth quintile and 1 to the second) and 22 (53.6%) were still in the fifth quintile almost forty years later. More than half of the families in the fifth quintile remained unchanged in these 40 years at the top of the quarter's wealth. As for the families in the fourth quintile in 1426, 4 had disappeared by 1465, 8 had moved up to the fifth quintile, 10 had moved down (3 to the third quintile, 2 to the second and 1 to the first), while 19 had stayed put. And so on for the remaining quintiles, an operation that must also be conducted for all six time periods in order to confirm the results. The overall results, once they have been obtained, will make it possible to measure social mobility from one chronological cut-off to another over a timespan of almost 100 years. Two problems, however, should be noted. The first is obviously that of homonymy, since many families share the same surname and we cannot always be sure of the correspondences between them. The second has to do with the life cycle, since many of the cases of upward mobility correspond to young taxpayers who have hardly any assets in their early years – only what they have obtained from their parents as a dowry or *donatio inter vivos* when they marry or shortly thereafter – but who have increased it throughout their lives, thus moving from one quintile to another. By contrast, parents' property decreases as they distribute it among their children, thus moving down from one quintile to the next. There has definitely been social mobility in both directions, upward and downward, but within the same family and over the life cycle of two generations. In the end, however, the family's level of wealth has remained the same (Furió 1995, and forthcoming).

Tab. 8. **Social mobility in the quarter of Sant Agustí in Alzira (1426-1500)**

1426			1465			1485			1500		
N	*Taxpayer*	*Wealth*	*N*	*Taxpayer*	*Wealth*	*N*	*Taxpayer*	*Wealth*	*N*	*Taxpayer*	*Wealth*
1	Domingo Ferrer	303	11	Dº Ferrer	138	5	Dº Ferrer	164	7	Dº Ferrer	162
2	Miquel d'Aranda	176	3	Pere d'Aranda	180	9	P. d'Aranda	115	23	P. d'Aranda	35
4	Pere Barberà	136	23	Pere Barberà	97	7	Pere Barberà	128.5	4	P. Barberà	203
6	Joan Palau	131	24	Pere Palau	93	3	Joan Palau	177	1	J. Palau	261
			44	Joan Palau	65						
10	Antoni Vilabetran	113	1	A. Vilabertran	286	4	A. Vilabertran	172		*Disappears*	
18	Andreu Cleriana	85.5	2	Jaume Cleriana	235	1	Jaume Cleriana	252	17	J. Cleriana	87
27	Nadal Soler	69.5	6	Martí Soler	160		*Disappears*				
39	Llorenç Jordà	52.5	4	Ll. Jordà	180	13	Ll. Jordà	82			
			5	Ll. Jordà	169						

Source: Furió forthcoming.

The second system, rather than measuring mobility by moving up or down from one quintile to another, tracks the individual trajectory of different households. Table 8 shows the mobility of a dozen families in the same quarter of Sant Agustí between 1426 and 1500. The structure is the same in all five time periods: the order number, with number 1 being the richest of the taxpayers, their name, and the value of their wealth in *lliures* (pounds). The 205 families in 1426 and the 248 in 1465 have been placed in order according to the value of their assets. The table shows examples of both upward and downward mobility. The sons and successors of Domingo Ferrer, who in 1426 occupied first place, with a fortune valued at 303 *lliures*, dropped in 1465 to eleventh place with less than half the wealth Ferrer had possessed forty years earlier, although they subsequently recovered. By contrast, the Vilabertran, Cleriana, Soler and Jordà families, who in 1426 were between the tenth and fortieth fortunes, are to be found in the top five forty years later. One of them, Antoni Vilabertran, was even elevated to the status of squire. As in the previous case, we do not have enough room here to go into more detail. Suffice it to say that we are analysing both the urban neighbourhoods and the rural communities of the district of Alzira, which had some 1,600 families – about 8,000 people – in the first decades of the fifteenth century, whose patrimonies have been summarised and hierarchised in tables such as the one in the sample.

On the other hand, as we have said, we also observe some general trends in the evolution of social mobility through the lists of municipal positions in different municipalities of the Crown of Aragon. Thus, taking as a reference the very existence of urban oligarchies and the control they exercised over the municipal institution, everything seems to indicate that these were being shaped until the end of the fourteenth century, and that from then on, the upper stratum of urban society gradually began to close ranks (Bensch 2000; Daileader 2004; Turull 1990; Reixach 2018, 2019; Viciano 2008; Bernabeu 2014). In general terms, this was due to a greater initial permeability of this stratum, which could be explained by more intense geographical mobility of the population, the porosity of the legal concept of citizenship and, above all, the existence of a municipal institution still under construction; nor should we forget the effects of the Black Death in 1348 and its successive aftershocks. During the fifteenth century the urban oligarchy gradually became impenetrable to outsiders, due largely to the maturity of the municipal institution and the resulting control acquired by its leaders. This situation was only overcome at specific moments and by specific elements of urban society, who took advantage of external circumstances (for example, wars or royal interventions in local government) to penetrate the hard core of municipal power or to alter the existing status quo (Batlle 1986-1987; Bernabeu 2014).

The general increase in political conflict within local communities, from the end of the fourteenth century onwards especially, would be one of the most evident symptoms (or consequences) of this situation (Narbona 2004; Reixach and Verdés 2023). Historians have traditionally associated these conflicts with the negative effects of the so-called 'late medieval crisis'. However, as we have pointed out, the studies carried out in recent years for the Crown of Aragon show that, despite the economic difficulties and territorial differences, the final centuries of the Middle Ages were a time of economic expansion (Laliena 2016; Furió 2016-2017). Certainly, there

are cases documented of cities and towns that were severely affected by the difficult situations (epidemics, famines, wars, indebtedness) that arose during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Ultimately, however, the overall balance seems to be positive, at least from an economic point of view and across the whole of the Crown of Aragon. This was largely the result of increased commercial and manufacturing activity, as well as migration from the countryside and other parts of the country (Furió 2016-2017; Viciano 2019; Tortosa 2023).

As we have seen, in this context there were many urban dwellers who, in addition to the members of the patriciate, managed to prosper and demanded greater representation within the municipal institution. In the context of a political society divided into three 'hands' *(mans)*, these demands were capitalised in most cases by the so-called 'minor hand' *(mà menor)* and part of the 'middle hand' *(mà mitjana)*, basically made up of artisans and some merchants, respectively. The reaction of the 'greater hand' *(mà major)* or patriciate to this pretension is tremendously illustrative, especially the whole discourse elaborated from the fifteenth century onwards to highlight the 'honour' of its members, as well as their superiority, not only economic but also intellectual and moral (see, for example, the Catalan case: Fernández Trabal 1999). This phenomenon is also confirmed by the aforementioned urban conflicts, in which the 'popular' demands were often the result of the convergence of interests of the part of urban society that was increasingly disadvantaged and the well-off elements that longed for greater power on the local political chessboard (Reixach and Verdés 2023).

Tab. 9. **Evolution of political lineages in Castello during the 15th Century**

Decade	Political lineages/years	Index	Total lineages	Total index
1401-10	20	100	332	100
1461-70	8.8	44.3	255	76.8
1491-00	5.9	29.5	193	58.1

Source: Viciano, 2008, 45-46.

Unlike what we have seen in the case of the tax records, the available studies do not yet allow us to carry out a quantitative and comparative analysis of the evolution of the families that occupied the main municipal posts in the Crown of Aragon. This is due to the lack of a common, standardised methodology such as the one we have seen in the case of the study of inequality. Nevertheless, we do have some specific examples, where the figures clearly confirm the tendency towards the growth of oligarchies that took place during the fifteenth century in the cities of the Crown of Aragon and the consequent reduction of social mobility in the upper stratum. Thus, in the case of the aforementioned Valencian town of Castelló, it can be observed that throughout the fifteenth century the political group tended to shrink and, at the same time, the most powerful families monopolised more municipal posts. Specifically, from the end of the fourteenth century to the end of the fifteenth century, the number of different people who gained access to the main posts in the municipality was reduced by two-thirds. It is true that the decrease in population that also took place

during this period may condition this interpretation. However, as can be seen in Table 9, if we take into account the evolution of the total number of families documented in the town and those who held political posts, the conclusion is that, in proportion, the concentration of posts is much greater than the fall in population (Viciano 2008).

6. Conclusions

Social mobility in the territories of the Crown of Aragon during the late Middle Ages was related to geographical mobility, both long- and short-range, the legal and institutional framework, political evolution, and above all to the changing economic context, with stages of upswing and decline, in a general trajectory, nevertheless, of complex and diversified growth. As in other parts of Europe, demographic stagnation and the relative depression of agriculture after the Black Death were no obstacles to an evident commercial boom that affected all the regions of the Crown during the period from around 1380 to 1440. The expansion of trade based on wool, wheat and other products responded to intense demand on a European scale – Italy, southern Germany, Castile, the Low Countries – and showed a growing degree of integration in the most dynamic economic areas, especially the western Mediterranean. These products are related to agricultural specialisation, but some semi-luxury and even luxury wares, such as Catalan and Valencian cloth or Valencian ceramics, are also of considerable importance. In the course of this half-century, there was also a large-scale mobilisation of financial capital, facilitated by the development of credit instruments such as *censals* (rents), which sustained a high public demand for monetary resources. The central years of the fifteenth century, on the contrary, witnessed a divergence in the fortunes of the different regions of the Crown. On the one hand, the kingdom of Valencia and, above all, the capital, enjoyed an intensification of growth, thanks to a variety of favourable circumstances: the continuity of migratory flows, the consolidation of maritime circuits between Italy, Castile, Portugal and the Low Countries with a stopover in Valencia; the intermediation between Castile – and especially Andalusia – and Italy; the wealth of exportable products; contacts with Aragonese Italy – Naples, Sardinia and Sicily – and the development of a powerful mercantile and financial community. Conversely, internal tensions within the Barcelona elite led to increasing instability in Catalonia, and from 1460 to a confrontation with the monarchy and a civil war, the echoes of which lasted until 1480. The consequences of a conflict of this magnitude for the economy are obvious: devastation in rural areas, interruption of trade, financial crisis, and the destruction of fixed capital in practically every town and city. Aragon, for its part, suffered no such damage, but its location between Castile and the Mediterranean meant that difficulties on the Castilian and Catalan borders minimised trade and economic activity as a whole. Peace in Catalonia and with France, as well as the recovery of contacts with an economically expansive Crown of Castile, explain the return of growth from 1480 to 1510. This phase witnessed the evident growth of the population, which formed the basis of the demographic upswing of the sixteenth century.

Against this backdrop, it is possible to observe social mobility in general terms, but specific studies will still be needed to measure and describe it in detail. Despite these shortcomings, we are reasonably sure that it was a period of intense economic and social dynamism. Firstly, the capital cities of the Crown and some regions continued to attract migrants, as had been the case since the mid-thirteenth century. These migratory flows contributed to the success of Valencia, but they were also important in Zaragoza and other smaller towns. Some of the migrants came from the mountains and disadvantaged areas of the Crown itself, but there were many others who came from the Crown of Castile and from different regions of Europe, especially Italy. To some extent these movements explain the increase in economic inequality. It is not only that the rich became very rich during the final century of the Middle Ages, but also that in rural communities and towns there was a divergence between the local elites, with large families, economic means, the ability to invest in rents (*censals*) and various businesses, and the plebeian groups, with little land or small workshops, small families, dependence on wages, debts and a strong tendency to emigrate. It is true that real wages grew moderately, and with them the possibilities of popular consumption, but an analysis of the lists of inhabitants of some of these communities shows the continuity of well-off families and a sharp rise in poor families; in other words, downward mobility as a consequence of inequality.

On the previous pages we have seen that in the fifteenth-century Crown of Aragon – as in other Iberian territories – there was a reorganisation of the components of the economic elites. The move to the cities of some members of the rural elite, the rise of merchants and above all urban professionals to the ranks first of the patriciate, and in some cases even to the nobility, were signs of this upward social mobility at a time when social boundaries were still fluid, not rigid or closed as they would become at the end of the Middle Ages. The conversion of many Jews as a result of the pogroms of 1391 and the difficulties of the following two or three decades led a group of *conversos* to integrate with their wealth and financial knowledge in the patriciates of Zaragoza and Valencia, mainly. Towards the end of the century, with the inquisitorial persecution, this panorama became more complicated, but, with some exceptions, the very wealthy *conversos* avoided the crisis and maintained their economic positions. The integration of Italian merchants and artisans was also a factor in the transformation of the elite and of urban society as a whole. Some of these immigrants were members of extraordinarily wealthy families in their cities of origin and their residence in the capitals of the Crown was temporary, but others were commercial representatives or members of families of middle or low rank and their rise came about thanks to the commercial drive of Barcelona, Valencia or Zaragoza. A particular case was that of specialised craftsmen, such as the Genoese silk makers in Valencia, whose success depended on their professional skills in an artisanal environment in which the silk industry was underdeveloped.

In this period, the traditional channels of economic prosperity and social advancement remained in place, and in fact they were probably more effective than at other times. The example of the Borgia popes, who came from a family of peasants ennobled and elevated in the service of King Alfonso the Magnanimous, is indicative of the possibilities that royal and ecclesiastical administration offered. These possibilities were especially useful for the minor nobility – knights, squires, *donzells* or

gentry – who advanced thanks to their knowledge and bureaucratic skills. Many of these members of the minor nobility had a university education in law. At this time, universities such as Toulouse and Bologna had such students, destined to improve their position by serving in the state apparatus. These jurists, unfailingly qualified with the honorific title of *misser* (from the Italian *messer*), also rose socially in a more moderate way due to the progressive closing of ranks of urban governments. The introduction of systems of drawing lots from lists of persons eligible for public office meant, in practice, a firm restriction on the presence in these civic bodies of the artisan strata and the middle classes. Access to power in the cities made it possible to do interesting business, especially to intervene in tax farming or collection and the contracting of public debt. Unlike other European urban societies, the mercantile and artisan world of the cities of the Crown of Aragon was quite open and allowed for the advancement of apprentices and salaried workers, as well as the insertion of craftsmen from other towns and even foreigners. There were regulations for the craft guilds, which became more and more numerous from the beginning of the fifteenth century, but they did not seem to be very coercive. The introduction of new trades and the division of traditional ones raced ahead of the legislative possibilities of the cities and the monarchy, which facilitated this upward economic mobility within the manufacturing organisation. Finally, the importance of the public debt based on the sale of rents (*censals*) to consolidate certain forms of enrichment should be noted. Thus, Valencian nobles who owned manors that were barely profitable found in investment in *censals* an alternative instrument to secure their position. They were definitely not the only ones, in view of the enormous amounts of capital invested in the consolidated debts of the cities and provincial councils of the kingdoms.

Social mobility, both upward and downward – although the latter is more difficult to trace – was a characteristic feature of European societies, including the Crown of Aragon, in the late Middle Ages, both in times of economic growth and in those of crisis and recession. Despite the persistence of the trifunctional system – *oratores, bellatores, laboratores* – of the social order in the collective imagination, the boundaries between one class and another were not hermetic, nor did they prevent social advancement, and much less economic prosperity. It was even possible to climb from the upper strata of the peasantry to the nobility. The main routes were through service to the Crown or the Church, up to the highest hierarchies, and also in the great aristocratic courts. Other avenues for economic and social advancement were professional qualification and enrichment, as well as university education. In addition, appropriate marriage and inheritance strategies were used to preserve and increase the family's economic base and social prestige, as well as a culture of ostentation and social emulation, which marked the differences or helped to bridge them. In any case, a qualitative approach to provide us with characteristic examples of this upward or downward mobility, and a quantitative approach to establish its scope, dimensions and limits, are needed.

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Socioeconomic mobility and inequality persistence. The area of Barcelona, 16th-19th centuries[3]

1. Introduction

In the last decade, with the advancement of the digital era in social sciences, the number of sources and studies devoted to preindustrial inequality increased significantly, and the current knowledge about income and wealth inequality is now vast. We have been learning that economic disparity before the onset of the Industrial Revolution was already high (Alfani 2021). The increasing literature brought evidence partially contradicting traditional views on preindustrial inequality related to Kuznets' well-known *modern economic growth*, which assumed inequality to increase only from the first stages of industrialization (Kuznets 1955; 1973; Van Zanden 1995). Moreover, thanks to studies on preindustrial inequality(Milanovic, Lindert, and Williamson 2011), the research community has also learned important methodological innovations to the topic, contributing to contemporary studies, such as the *inequality possibility frontier* (IPF).

A natural step forward in the field should then be knowing how persistent long-term inequality could be across generations, as some authors have recently pointed out for contemporary periods. Accordingly, higher socioeconomic mobility is related to lower levels of economic inequality (Corak 2013). Nevertheless, preindustrial social mobility is still primarily understudied in present times. Among the various reasons for this, we find the difficulty of obtaining sufficient quantitative and temporal data, given that apart from demanding time and budget-costing sources' digitalization, social mobility research also requires more significant amounts of nominal and (or) genealogical data. In this regard, different from inequality estimations, wisely pooled cross-sectional samples are not enough.

Additionally, most of the existing preindustrial and early-industrial social mobility research has focused strictly on occupational mobility, not fully capturing the important socioeconomic disparities within occupational groups that presumably always existed. In this paper, we attempt to contribute to the literature by estimating long-term trends in intergenerational social mobility in the area of Barcelona and by assessing likely disparities between socially and non-socially mobile individuals within occupational and social groups through unique data, the Barcelona Historical Marriage Database. Our preliminary results suggest that socioeconomic mobility

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increased since the beginning of the 18th, during the Catalan protoindustrialization. However, within-occupational groups, upward-mobile individuals would have always been disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms compared to immobile, a constant characteristic from the preindustrial periods until the end of the 19th century.

1.1 Preindustrial and early-industrial social mobility

Although social mobility is a well-researched topic in economics nowadays, sociologists were the first to devote attention to how individuals performed socioeconomically in their adult lives (destination) compared to their backgrounds, namely their parents' social positions (origin). According to the traditional sociological view, the new conditions prompted by industrialization transformed social mobility. Therefore, social mobility would have been much higher in industrial societies compared to preindustrial periods. In the early-industrial periods, it was first led by increasing downward mobility (occupational change from farming to factories). However, once industrialization consolidated, upward mobility rocketed as rising middle classes demanded more workers, usually born in the working class (Lipset and Zetterberg 1956; Grusky and Hauser 1984).

The growth of better-off white-collar occupations automatically increased absolute social mobility, but it did not always directly mean social openness in relative mobility. Some authors argue that social mobility does not necessarily have to be caused by the degree of industrialization of societies. Many countries with varying levels of modernization achieved similar levels of social mobility (Featherman, Jones, and Hauser 1975; Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Goldthorpe 1992). Still, in most traditional research, industrialization continues to be seen as a fundamental watershed in terms of the take-off of social mobility. In this regard, scholars argued that contrary to preindustrial periods, the industrial occupational structure progressively turned from a social status inheritance (ascription) to status achievement, easing social mobility (Treiman 1970).

Nevertheless, most of these studies were mainly based on wider groups' social class and/or occupational mobility. In recent years, thanks to a significant improvement in the collection and availability of historical demographic and socioeconomic data, new studies have changed the classical view of preindustrial and industrial social mobility. For example, research in the United States and England argues that social mobility would have increased well before the traditional Industrial Revolution calendar (Long and Ferrie 2013; Boberg-Fazlić and Sharp 2018). On the other hand, new studies in the field of sociology using marriage data from the Netherlands indicate that although social mobility increased during industrialization, it would have done so at a much slower and progressive pace than traditionally advocated by modernization theory (Knigge et al. 2014). Finally, authors such as Gregory Clark and Neil Cummins have provided the most innovative findings in the study of long-term social mobility in recent years. Thus, with studies based on surnames (Clark and Cummins 2015; Clark 2014) and more recent research on marriage records (Clark and Cummins 2022), the authors argue for a consistently low long-term social mobility from preindustrial times to the present day.

Moreover, most studies dealing with preindustrial social mobility have also marked a significant shift from the more traditional ones (in sociology). This change is mainly due to how the socioeconomic status of parents and children is measured. In this sense, although occupational information remains the primary source of status information, new studies have increasingly used more standardized and international classifications (e.g., HISCO) with the concept of prestige or occupational ranking (e.g. HISCAM or CAMSIS). In methodological terms, this change allowed linear regressions (OLS) to calculate the associations or elasticities between the status of parents and children in a manner more similar to that used by contemporary economists and sociologists today. This methodological change simplified the interpretation and comparability of the results, mainly concerning the traditional log-linear models based on mobility matrixes.

However, despite methodological progress, the new generation of studies on historical social mobility continues to be characterized by a significant limitation that also existed in previous studies. This limitation comes from using only occupational data, which by default treats any individual in the same occupational group homogeneously, ignoring socioeconomic disparities that always existed within each occupational group. Thus, we know that any study of social mobility should ideally have socio-occupational information and economic variables.

In short, analyses should consider occupational prestige and economic mobility, as they reflect different aspects of a person's relative position in society. Conversely, in our study, we benefit from the unique data in the Barcelona Historical Marriage Database (BHMD), which has both occupational information (measured with HISCO, HISCAM, and HISCLASS) and an economic variable measured through marriage taxes. This allows us to create an indicator of socioeconomic capacity that reflects occupational prestige but simultaneously captures inequality within the same occupations.

1.2 The long-term socioeconomic context in the area of Barcelona (16th-19th centuries)

The city of Barcelona and its hinterland, which we refer to as the area of Barcelona, have been Catalonia's social and economic center since medieval times, apart from being the most populated area. Since the 16th century, this territory faced the progressive consolidation of an agrarian structure composed of the medium-sized farm—the *mas*—based in family units (Gifre 2012). Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, land transmission functioned through the universal inheritance, in which eldest sons were usually the heir. Marital strategies contributed to the formation of a new landowning class. This intermediate peasant group accumulated large land areas, resulting in more limited access to land (García Espuche 1998).

Hence, in order to increase production and income, many landowners, rather than hiring additional workers, hired out part of their estates. It prompted the establishment of emphyteutic lease, one of the most common forms of which was

the '*rabassa morta*'[4]. However, this latter option did not solve the problem of land access, and, in many cases, non-heirs opted for artisan careers (Torras 1998; J.-M. Pujadas-Mora et al. 2018).

The constraints in the economic and legal contexts led to a shift in the population facing the early stages of the life cycle, from tangible assets to human capital investments. This also marked an early change in the occupational structure in previously rural zones, thanks to a considerable presence of proto-industrial activities in the Barcelonese hinterland. Besides, since the 17th century, the demand for wine in urban centers and Atlantic areas led to the expansion of vineyards in the coastal zones (Badia-Miró and Tello 2014), a project requiring new sharecropper families for slash-and-burn land preparation for planting vines. The expansion of vineyards in Catalonia occurred in several waves between the 17th-19th centuries.

Moreover, among the growing industries, woolen textile production had, since the 18th century, begun to expand in the Barcelona area, driven by the crisis in some sectors of guilds in urban areas like Barcelona. The expanding industry moved from Barcelona into the hinterland surrounding the city and zones in the pre-coastal area. The resulting boost to proto-industrial activities and the associated proto-industrial population was fundamental for industrial development in Barcelona and its hinterland (Torras, 1998). Finally, as early as 1830, the Barcelona area was a groundbreaker in Spanish industrialization (Nadal Oller 1975). This sets the region as a forerunner in socioeconomic stratification and inequality changes.

Some studies have shown that this region had already faced a significant increase in economic inequality since the 16th century, with a specific downward trend during the early 18th century and rocketing towards the industrial era. However, preindustrial social mobility research in the area is much more scarce. In this regard, (J.-M. Pujadas-Mora et al. 2018) studies of the occupational mobility of farmers and artisans during the 16th-17th centuries showed an overall high social inheritance, which was higher among first-married sons because of the single-heir system.

2. Data and Methods

2.1 The Barcelona historical marriage database (BHMD)

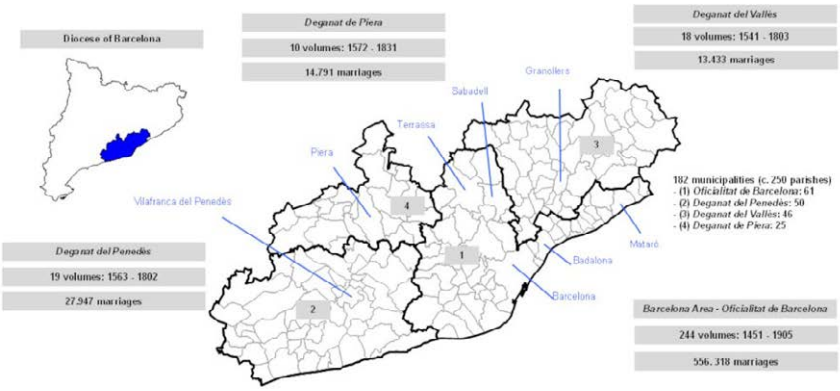
The BHMD brings together the 612,487 marriages recorded in the so-called Marriage Licenses Books of the *Ius Tabulae* of the Cathedral of Barcelona, covering the Diocese of Barcelona (made up of 250 parishes in 1900) between 1451 and 1905. This is a unique data source dating back to 1409, when Pope Benedict XIII (1328–1423) visited Barcelona and granted the new cathedral the power to impose a tax on marriage following the socioeconomic status of the couple to fund the cathedral's construction and maintenance (J. M. Pujadas-Mora et al. 2022).

The territorial coverage of the BHMD is the Diocese of Barcelona was made up of four deanships: Barcelona's Oficiality (The area of Barcelona) the main one, Piera,

[4] *Rabassa morta* refers mainly to a leasehold contract of long duration based on the life cycle of grapevines whereby a sharecropper could work the land as long as the plant lasted) in which the land was let out to peasant families.

Vallès, and Penedès. This territory covered the main population centers of the time, including Barcelona, Mataró, Sabadell, and Terrassa, and a conglomerate of rural towns located in the current counties of Baix Llobregat, Barcelonès, Maresme, and Vallès Occidental (figure 1). In 1900, the diocese was comprised of 250 parishes. This source is extraordinary for its territorial coverage and chronological amplitude, starting a few centuries before the parish marriage books, and its state of preservation compared with the low conservation of the parish archives in Catalonia, especially in the study area.

Fig 1. **Territorial coverage of the BHMD**



The names and surnames of the grooms were registered (one surname up to 1876 and two surnames thereafter), while the names of the brides started to be registered from 1481 onwards. Previously, unmarried brides were related to their fathers and widows to their late husbands. Grooms' occupations, spouses' nominal information, and the tax paid were also recorded throughout the source's entire duration, as were the first and surnames of the spouses' parents, except for the period 1645 – 1715. However, the BHMD also carry some important limitations, as the lack of systematic recording of parental occupations upon their children's marriage, except for 1545-1643, and a rare recording of female occupations, meaning information about women's work refers to their husbands' occupations, and birth dates or ages were not recorded, given that by its fiscal nature, the source was not so focused in demographic aspects.

The occupational titles in the source were subsequently codified using the Historical International Classification of Occupations (HISCO). This classification enables a specific codification based on a historically adapted version of ILO's ISCO68 (Van Leeuwen, Maas, and Miles 2002). HISCO occupations have also been

classified using two international schemes of social stratification widely used with historical demographic data, HISCAM and HISCLASS (Van Leeuwen and Maas 2011; Lambert et al. 2013). The former works as a ranking ranging from 0 to 99, where the most advantaged occupations have the highest scores. Each occupation's individualized score is assigned as a continuous variable. On the other hand, the latter establishes social categories based on the degree of skill and more classical divisions such as manual and non-manual occupations.

From 1570 onwards, marriage taxes were organized on a proposed guideline on a seven- or eight-tiered scale, ranging from the highest tax paid by the nobility to an exemption from tax for those declared poor. In this 7-level system, the first level corresponded to the titled nobility and the next two to the knights and honored citizens, or those who could hold public office. The fourth and fifth payment levels corresponded to the commercial bourgeoisie, liberal professionals, and masters of guilds. Farmers and artisans paid the sixth; the last group was exempted. The highest tax level was 120 times higher than the lowest and 40 times more than the average tax. Throughout the source's existence, taxes were always charged in unities of accountancy of Carolingian origin, namely *Lliures* (pounds) and *Sous* (shillings). However, they were always paid with the currency in circulation at each period. Having the same fiscal values across four centuries is an advantage for long-term studies, as we can conceive BHMD's fiscal information as something similar to contemporary economic variables adjusted for the Consumer Price Index (see table 1)[5].

Tab 1. **Proposed tax categories' guidelines in the Marriage license books**

Category	Tax	Tax in Sous
Nobility	24 *lliures*	480
Military citizens	4 *lliures* and 16 *sous*	96
Honored Citizens	2 *lliures* and 8 *sous*	48
Merchants, Lawyers, Physicians	1 *lliura* and 4 *sous*	24
Guild Masters	12 *sous*	12
Farmers and Small artisans	8 *sous*	8
The Poor	*Amore Dei*	0

Note: Calculations are based on all marriage license fees available in the Barcelona area. Source: Same as Figure 1

[5] For more details on the fiscal information of the BHMD and its distribution see (Brea-Martínez and Pujadas-Mora 2019; J. M. Pujadas-Mora et al. 2022)

However, although the source had, by default, a guideline proposing specific taxes to specific grooms' occupations, the clergy members responsible for charging taxes usually had certain flexibility in adequating it to the economic capacity of the to-be-married couples. Table 2 shows on its left part the main occupations by social groups (classified with HISCLAS) and the proposed taxes for each occupation in *sous* between parentheses. In the right part of the table, we see the actual distribution of taxes for each occupation instead, divided into three categories: taxes lower than the proposed, same as the proposed, and higher. As seen, among all the most common occupations, there was a remarkable disparity in paid taxes. For instance, only about 25% of physicians paid the proposed tax of 24 *sous*, while around 37% paid lower or higher than the one assigned in the guideline. The same happened to all other occupations in the source, denoting the existing economic heterogeneity within occupations and validating the use of the BHMD's fiscal information for capturing it.

Tab 2. **Proposed taxes by main occupations in each social class in the Marriage license books and their actual distribution between 1570-1880 (N=328,456)**

HISCLASS	Occupation (Tax proposed in the source)	Less	Proposed	More
Non-manual	Trader (24) *sous*	44.99%	53.64%	1.38%
Non-manual	Physician(24) sous	37.05%	25.34%	37.90%
Skilled	Blacksmith (12) *sous*	56.70%	28.64%	37.21%
Low-skilled	Weaver (8) *sous*	20.99%	77.42%	1.59%
Farmer	Farmer (8) *sous*	23.17%	76.40%	0.43%
Unskilled	Day laborer (8) *sous*	46.13%	53.79%	0.08%

Source: Same as Figure 1

2.2 Aim and genealogical reconstitution

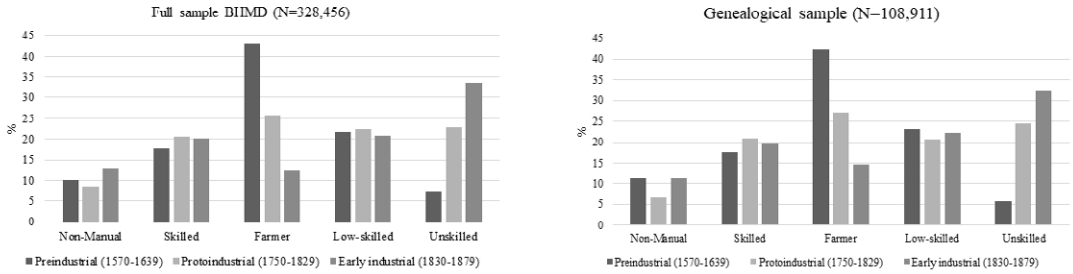
In this paper, we had a twofold aim. First, we wanted to measure long-term social mobility (parents-children) from the 16th to the 19th to place southern Europe in the context of new studies of historical social mobility. Second, given the optimal characteristics of the data available in the BHMD, we set out to assess the presence of inequalities between socially mobile and immobile individuals. For example, would the son of a weaver (low-skilled) in the 18th century who managed to become a Merchant (Non-Manual) have had the same socioeconomic capacity as a merchant son of a merchant? We hypothesize that social mobility, mainly between classes, would have increased in the long run. Still, it would hide substantial inequalities, which cannot be seen only with socio-occupational information.

To attain such aims, we followed a record linkage strategy to reconstruct genealogical links of two levels, connecting parents and children. We used two string distance measures (*Bag* and *Levenshtein),* linking the names and surnames of grooms' and brides' parents with their marriage licenses (Villavicencio, Jordà, and Pujadas-Mora 2015). Therefore, from the 458,752 marriages recorded between 1570-1649 and 1750-1880, we found around 377,500 links parent-children. Our genealogical reconstitution focuses solely on individuals at their first marriage, excluding remarriages. A conservative approach handles potential false positives, retaining only children with a single-parent connection.

Once we selected only those with a single link parent-children, our sample decreased by 50%, totalling 192,292 single links. A potential issue in record linkage involves the differential recording of sons' and daughters' parental information. This discrepancy in the 18th and 19th centuries, with more detailed data for grooms than brides, resulted in a higher proportion of daughters in the earlier period, although this discrepancy exists, the socio-occupational structure's similarity between the whole and genealogical samples mitigates potential bias. However, in any case, given that their husbands' occupations implied women's socioeconomic and occupational status, we only studied men (sons) in the main analysis, leaving the inclusion of daughters only as robustness checks. In this regard, our sample ended up with information on 108,911 father-son links.

Finally, following the historiographical economic phases in Catalonia, we focused on three divisions, each one encompassing two periods. The **Preindustrial phase**: 1) Early (1570-1609) and 2) Late (1610-1640). The **Protoindustrial phase**: 3) Early (1750-1779) and 4) Late preindustrial (1780-1830). The **Industrial phase**: 5) Early Industrial (1820-1849) and 6) Industrial culmination (1850-1880). Overall, in socioeconomic terms, the genealogical and full samples in the 16th-19th centuries had similar shares of social classes (see figure 2). Moreover, by periods, the linked parents and children marriage distributed relatively uniform (see figure 3).

Fig 2. **Social classes in the BHMD's full sample and in the genealogical sample (16th-19th centuries)**



2.3 Methods

For capturing occupational prestige and same-occupational heterogeneity in economic terms, we considered that the combination of inherent taxes and HISCAM could provide a proxy for socioeconomic capacity. Hence, a multiplication of tax paid and the HISCAM score gives the result shown below, where C_i is the individual's socioeconomic capacity, T_i is the tax paid by a certain individual and H_i is the HISCAM score.

$$Ci = T_i * H_i$$

To calculate social mobility, we classified the socioeconomic capacity of children in percentiles by their annual marriage cohort and the socioeconomic capacity of their parents in percentiles (by the children's marriage cohort). Next, for calculating the long-term trends of socioeconomic persistence, we employed rank-rank associations in a similar method as in (Chetty et al. 2014):

$$y(Children\ SES)_i = a + \beta_1\, father\ SES_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Finally, to assess inequalities between classes, especially comparing socially mobile and immobile, we computed the socioeconomic capacity quartiles within classes for children and parents to know each individual's relative socioeconomic position within its own class. In this regard, we believe that traditional class social mobility should be complementary to occupational prestige and economic capacity. Class mobility implies other essential factors in shaping SES, such as class identity and networks (Kocka 1984; Curtis 2016) and the transmission of tangible and intangible assets and traits, e.g. Bourdieu's Social Reproduction concept (Bourdieu and Passeron 1999).

We run two different linear probability models (LPM) on the probability of an individual (i) being in the socioeconomic capacity of the top quartile of his own HISCLASS *(k)*. The first model focuses on capturing likely intergenerational transmission of advantages within classes and looking at the association between social mobility direction and the probability of being in the top 25% of the socioeconomic position at the social class destination group.

$$y(top\ quartile)_{i,k} = \beta_1\,(father's\ top\ quartile\ in\ his\ own\ HISCLASS)_i + \beta_2\, Social\ Mobility_i + \Sigma\beta_3\,(family)_i + \varepsilon_j$$

Finally, in order to compare if socially mobile had differences in SES capacity when compared to immobile, we separate our sample into subsamples by social class of destination *c*:

$$y(top\ quartile)_{i,k,c} = \beta_1\,(father's\ top\ quartile)_i + \beta_2\, HISCLASS\ Origin_i + \Sigma\beta_3\,(family)_i + \varepsilon_j$$

Table 3 summarizes the main demographic and socioeconomic variables in the genealogical sample.

Tab 3. **Demographic and socioeconomic composition of the genealogical sample by periods**

	1570-1609			**1610-1640**		
	Mean	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**Min**	**Max**
Marriage year G1	1562	1482	1594	1596	1560	1626
Marriage year G2	1591	1506	1609	1625	1610	1641
SES index G1	246.43	0	4800	257.88	0	4800
SES index G2	280.31	0	4800	276.95	0	4800
Marriage difference in years (G2-G1)	29.32	15	50	29.25	15	50
Sibship size	1.55	1	8	1.47	1	8
Class Upward Mobility G2	0.29	0	1	0.27	0	1
Class Downward mobility G2	0.26	0	1	0.25	0	1
Within-class top quartile-G1	0.05	0	1	0.13	0	1
Within-class top quartile- G2	0.14	0	1	0.14	0	1
Within-class bottom quartile-G1	0.66	0	1	0.59	0	1
Within-class bottom quartil- G2	0.55	0	1	0.55	0	1
N	6,134			6,381		
	1750-1779			**1780-1819**		
	Mean	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**Min**	**Max**
Marriage year G1	1733	1700	1764	1766	1730	1804
Marriage year G2	1765	1750	1779	1799	1780	1819
SES index G1	414.37	0	47520	405.97	0	48000
SES index G2	416.03	0	48000	423.34	0	48000
Marriage difference in years (G2-G1)	31.42	15	50	33.25	15	50
Sibship size	1.81	1	9	1.88	1	12
Class Upward Mobility G2	0.23	0	1	0.24	0	1
Class Downward mobility G2	0.26	0	1	0.23	0	1
Within-class top quartile-G1	0.21	0	1	0.16	0	1
Within-class top quartile- G2	0.19	0	1	0.19	0	1
Within-class bottom quartile-G1	0.18	0	1	0.47	0	1
Within-class bottom quartil- G2	0.50	0	1	0.50	0	1
Traditional Occupation	0.68	0	1	0.54	0	1
N	17,719			21,394		

	1820-1849			1850-1880		
	Mean	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**Min**	**Max**
Marriage year G1	1802	1770	1834	1834	1800	1865
Marriage year G2	1835	1820	1849	1867	1850	1880
SES index G1	433.64	0	48000	422.40	0	48000
SES index G2	436.53	0	48000	394.24	0	9600
Marriage difference in years (G2-G1)	32.92	15	50	32.59	15	50
Sibship size	1.98	1	15	1.85	1	15
Class Upward Mobility G2	0.27	0	1	0.28	0	1
Class Downward mobility G2	0.28	0	1	0.33	0	1
Within-class top quartile-G1	0.19	0	1	0.18	0	1
Within-class top quartile- G2	0.16	0	1	0.17	0	1
Within-class bottom quartile-G1	0.52	0	1	0.51	0	1
Within-class bottom quartil- G2	0.48	0	1	0.42	0	1
Traditional Occupation	0.05	0	1	0.09	0	1
N	23,867			33,416		

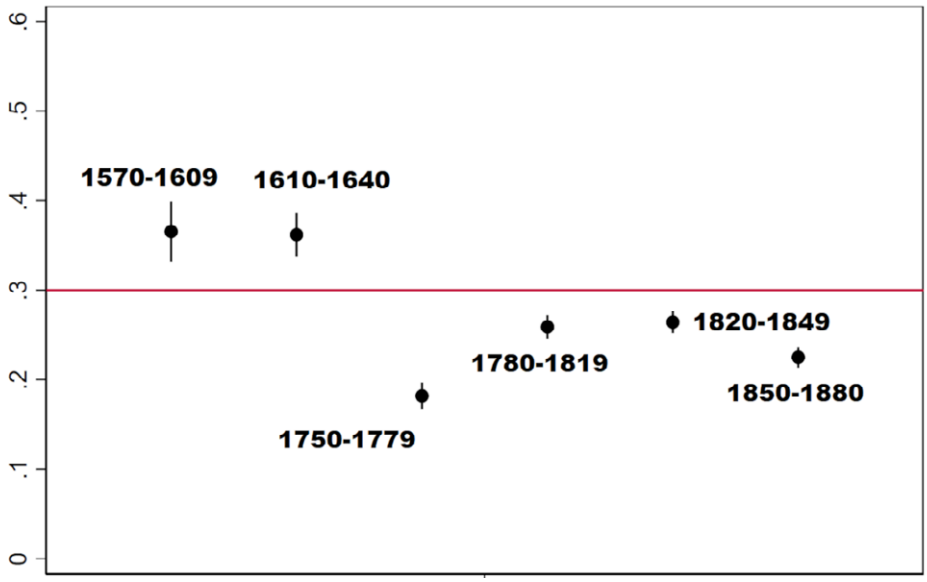
3. Results

3.1 Socioeconomic persistence across generations

Figure 3 presents the long-term trends of intergenerational social mobility calculated as the socioeconomic association between fathers and sons in different models for the periods in which the G2 marriages took place. The results are read in terms of the higher the value, the higher the socioeconomic association between parents and children (i.e. the more similar the status of children to their parents), and therefore the lower the social mobility, higher intergenerational socioeconomic persistence).

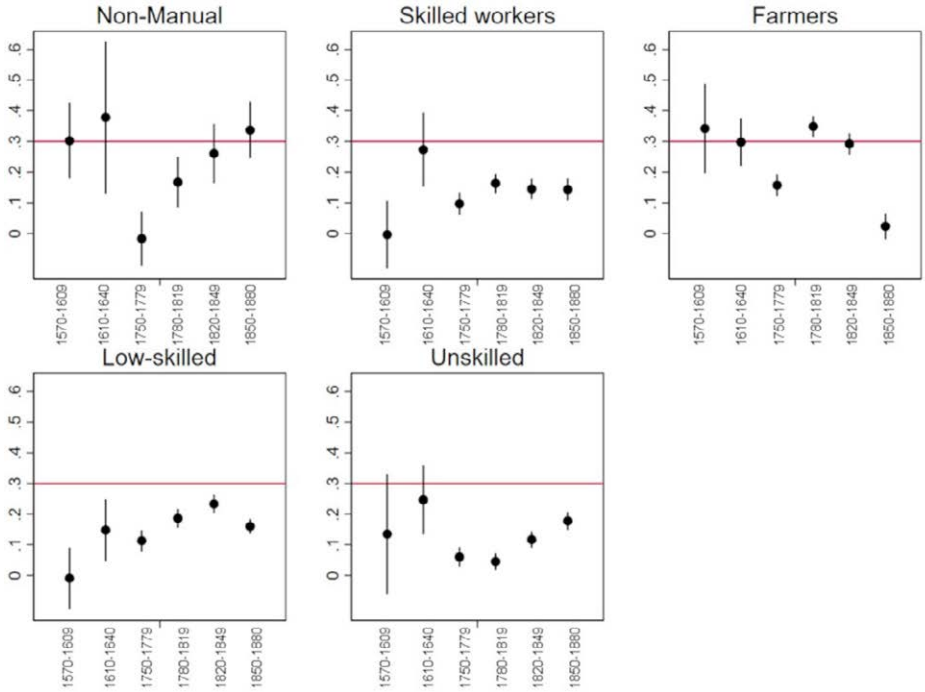
Figure 3 results suggest that social mobility had increased before the industrial phase, as originally suggested in the most classical literature. More specifically, since the 1750-1779, the intergenerational association was between 0.2, while between 1580-1640, it was between 0.4. Moreover, the differences between the proto-industrial and industrial periods are minimal. Therefore, social mobility would have already increased before industrialization, but the industrial period did not mean a sizeable increase in social mobility. Overall by periods, the rank-rank estimations would show a similar to class.

Fig 3. **SES intergenerational persistence (Rank-Rank) by sons' marriage period (1580-1879)**



Additionally, the trends in social mobility hide significant disparities between social groups. Focusing only on the proto-industrial and early industrialization periods, we repeated in figure 4 the association models separately for social origin (parents' HISCLASS). In that case, we see that since 1830 trends in social mobility have been very different. Socioeconomic persistence would have increased among parents and children of parents of Non-manual groups. Conversely, mobility would have remained the same for children of artisans; and would only continue to rise for children of peasants (which would be mainly due to a structural fact due to the reduction of people in rural occupations). This contradictory insight regarding an increase in social mobility, albeit with remarkable social class differences, suggested the need for a more profound look into within-class differences, as shown in the next section.

Fig 4. **SES intergenerational persistence (Rank-Rank) by children's marriage decade separated by social class of origin (1750-1879)**



3.2 Socioeconomic inequality between mobile and immobile

We first run a linear probability with a dummy variable that marks individuals in the top quartile (top 25%) socioeconomic capacity within the destination social class. This helps us target those who could presumably be better off within similar social networks or social environments. First, we can see that being children of a father in the top 25% of his social class would increase the probability of children being class advantaged with similar levels regardless of the period (Figure 5).

Next, in figure 6 we inquire on the association between the direction of the class social mobility children faced. In this regard, only coming from a higher background during the preindustrial era, although meaning downward mobility, would still be positively associated with being in the top 25% of SES capacity during most periods, only changing in the last industrial period (1820-1880). However, interestingly when looking at class upwardly mobile individuals, there is a clear period gradients, while facing upward mobility (being in a higher class than fathers) was beneficial for sons during preindustrial periods, it becomes progressively negative towards the last protoindustrial periods and industrial ones. This suggests that class mobility actually became a negative factor for being better-off among peers within the same social class (See figure 6).

Fig 5. **Linear probability models (LPM) coefficients on the sons' (G2) probability of being in the within-class top quartile of SES index conditional of fathers (G1) also being in the within-class top quartile of SES index themselves by periods**

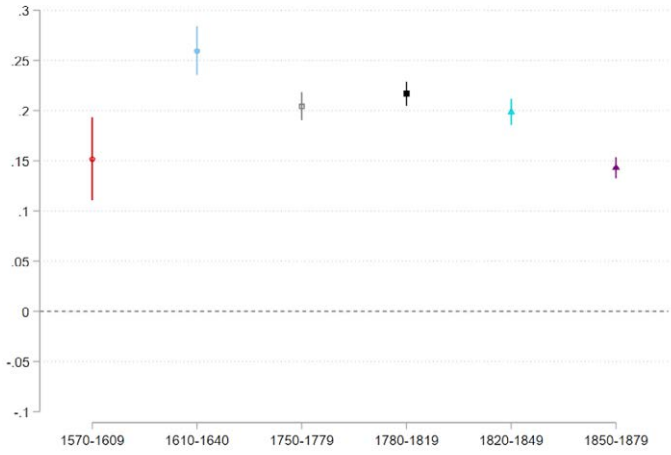
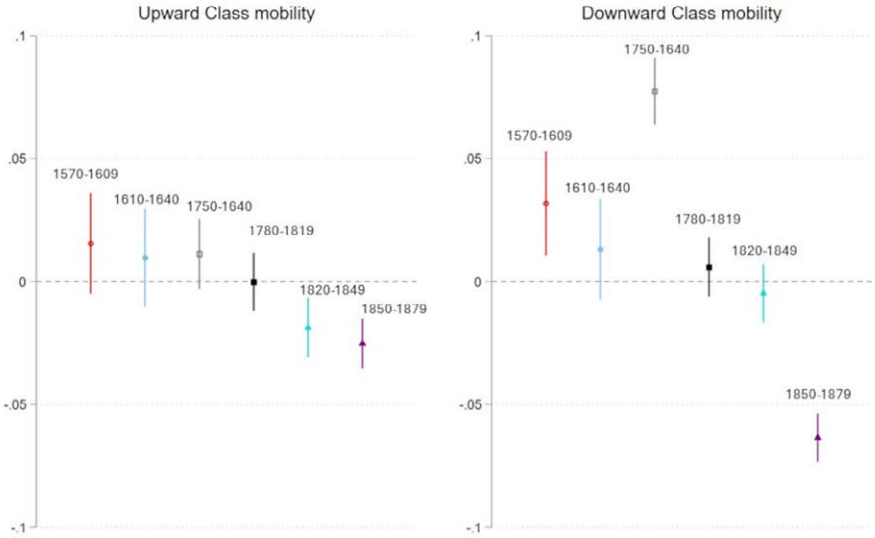


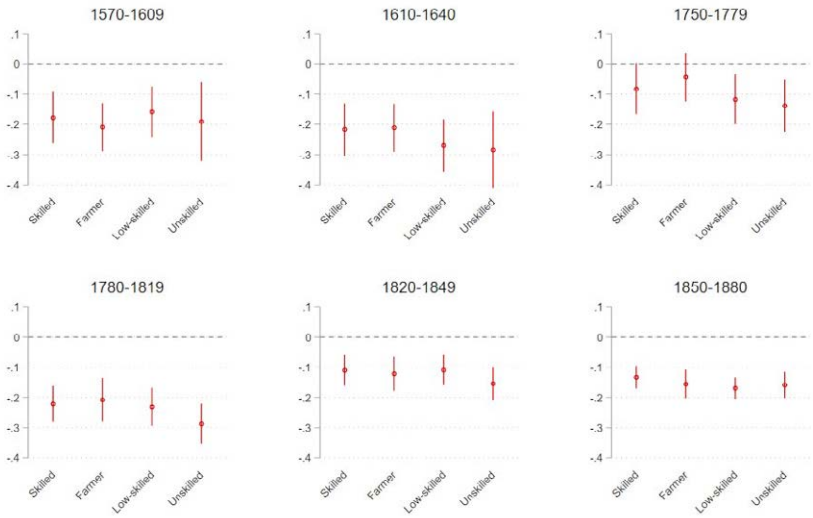
Fig 6. **Linear probability models (LPM) coefficients on the sons' (G2) probability of being in the within-class top quartile of SES index conditional whether they had upward or downward class mobility in comparison to their fathers by periods**



Finally, in order to understand how social mobility could also entail the existence of important inequalities, we see how socioeconomic origin could mark these differences. The model presented in figure 7 calculates the probability of a child being in the upper quartile (top 25%) of the socioeconomic capacity of individuals in the group of non-manual occupations (Liberal Professionals; Merchants; the elites). As independent variables, we have information on their socioeconomic origin. Firstly, the social class of the father. Here, only the children of non-manuals are individuals who did not have upward social class mobility, while coming from a different group means they all experienced upward social mobility.

By focusing on the differences between the social classes of origin (HISCLASS of the parents), we compare the socially immobile children (individuals in the elite who had parents in the elite) with those who had class mobility upward. In this sense, the difference between the preindustrial and early industrialization eras remains almost the same. Having a father in the elite always gave socioeconomic advantage. The coefficients show that even if an individual had social mobility upward in terms of class and were part of the occupational elite, they would always have a lower probability (between 30 and 20 percentage points on average) than the elite children. Accordingly, the class barriers would have remained intact despite industrialization's great change in occupational structure.

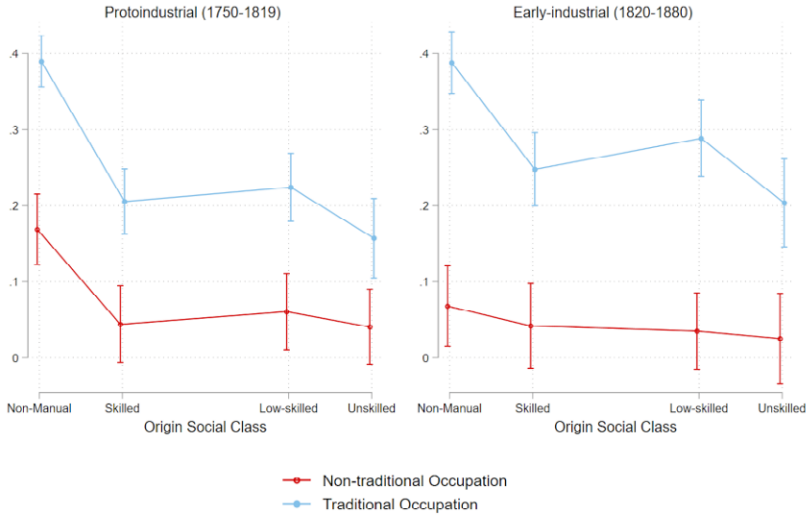
Fig 7. **Linear probability models (LPM) coefficients on the sons' (G2) probability of being in the within-class top quartile of SES index among sons who had a Non-manual occupational class comparing socially mobile sons to immobile sons (fathers who were also Non-manual)**



Finally, in order to test likely mechanisms explaining the difference between mobile sons and immobile sons, the latter always having a much higher advantage than the former in the within SES indexes, we have focused again on the case of non-manual occupations only. We define a set of dummy variables to indicate whether sons within the non-manual classes had a traditional occupation. In this regard, having a traditional occupation during proto-industrial periods would mean that the same occupational title was already found during preindustrial periods. Likewise, the same way of categorizing traditional occupations would be used for the industrial periods; traditional occupations would be considered as such if they already existed during protoindustrial periods.

As shown in Figure 8, when looking at sons with non-manual occupations, those traditionally regarded as 'traditional' consistently had a much higher probability of being in the top quartile of the SES index within the non-manual group. These differences were substantial across periods and regardless of social class origin. This difference might explain why even social mobility (when compared to class immobility) was always associated with a lower likelihood of attaining the top quartile of the SES index within non-manual groups. High intergenerational class transmission (immobility) levels were more prevalent within traditional occupations. In fact, as seen in Figure 9, we calculated the probability of having a traditional occupation by social origin, and as expected, traditional occupations were associated with higher levels of intergenerational transmission than new occupations.

Fig 8. **Predicted probabilities of being in the top quartile of SES index conditional on whether they had a traditional occupation (already existing in previous periods) among Non-manual sons**



4. Conclusions and future agenda

From the results of our study, we found some interesting insights. First, using a combined SES approach (occupational prestige and economic capacity), we can capture class differences and within-occupation disparities. Second, by looking at socioeconomic persistence, it seems that social mobility has increased from the pre-industrial periods. However, looking in more detail, we also saw that since industrialization's take-off (in 1830), social mobility had different directions and magnitudes by different social classes. SES persistence would have increased for Non-Manuals' children, stagnated for Artisans' children, and declined for Farmers'.

Besides, class mobile individuals would have uneven performance in SES capacity over the whole studied period depending on their destination. Such inequality was substantial among the Non-Manual group. These results suggest that much more still needs to be researched when dealing with the long-term trends in social mobility, especially during preindustrial and early industrial periods. Specifically, the rise in social persistence and clear advantage for immobile children with non-manual backgrounds seems to recall the concept of class ceiling coined by (Friedman and Laurison 2020). In this regard, these authors show the social barriers individuals from lower-class backgrounds face to become or establish themselves in advantaged positions among higher classes. We see that socially immobile (intergenerationally) would perform better than mobile, independent of the period. Accordingly, by having a look at traditional and non-traditional occupations, it seems that a likely mechanism explaining class ceiling (class immobile with better SES attainment within the Non-Manual class). Traditional occupations usually had a better SES attainment within the Non-Manual groups, and those occupations were also much more endogamic, being intergenerationally transmitted.

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Hannelore Pepke

La mobilité sociale ascendante des vignerons dijonnais dans le contexte d'une crise multiforme à la fin du Moyen Age (XIVe-XVe siècles)

La fin du Moyen Age est connue comme une période de mutations, voire de crises, malgré les débats que cette dernière notion a suscités depuis plusieurs décennies. En Bourgogne, c'est une période marquée par la double rupture dynastique entre Capétiens et Valois dans la décennie 1360, puis entre les ducs Valois et la royauté française après 1477.[1]

La guerre de Cent Ans a globalement moins fait souffrir la Bourgogne et notamment la région dijonnaise que d'autres régions françaises. Elle l'a cependant affectée à plusieurs reprises, notamment dans la décennie 1360 et dans les années consécutives à la conclusion du traité d'Arras en 1435, deux périodes marquées par la présence endémique de troupes de mercenaires démobilisés (Bove 2020, carte 4. Les divagations des grandes compagnies après 1360 et carte 9. Les dommages de guerre supportés par des diocèses français au XVe siècle).

C'est aussi la période des épidémies récurrentes, souvent de peste, parfois d'autres, mal ou non identifiées, à partir de la peste noire[2] qui arrive dans la région de Beaune à l'automne 1348 et à Dijon en 1349 (Pepke-Durix 1997, 201-02). Les populations de Dijon et des environs en furent frappées à intervalles irréguliers jusque dans la seconde moitié du XVe siècle (Galanaud 2009, 363).

La question d'un refroidissement du climat reste posée (Le Roy Ladurie 2010). Des recherches récentes ont mis en évidence quelques années plutôt douces (Labbé et Gaveau 2013) à partir des dernières décennies du XIVe siècle à Beaune, mais des dégâts causés par les inondations et le gel au milieu du XIVe siècle et dans la première moitié du XVe à Dijon et dans son bailliage, le long de la Saône ainsi que sur d'autres rivières moins importantes, donnent un tableau plus contrasté. Outre les nombreux exemples d'inondations perturbant les foires de Chalon cités par Dubois (1976), on

[1] A l'exception du comté de Charolais et de la Franche-Comté qui allaient rester entre les mains des Habsbourg jusque sous Louis XIV.

[2] Les sources bourguignonnes ne permettent pas de mesurer l'impact de la crise frumentaire de 1315-1317 dans la région.

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Hannelore Pepke, *La mobilité sociale ascendante des vignerons dijonnais dans le contexte d'une crise multiforme à la fin du Moyen Age (XIVe-XVe siècles)*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9.21, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *La mobilità sociale nelle società preindustriali: tendenze, cause ed effetti (secc. XIII-XVIII) / Social mobility in pre-industrial societies: tendencies, causes and effects (13th-18th centuries)*, pp. 439-460, 2025, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0667-9, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9

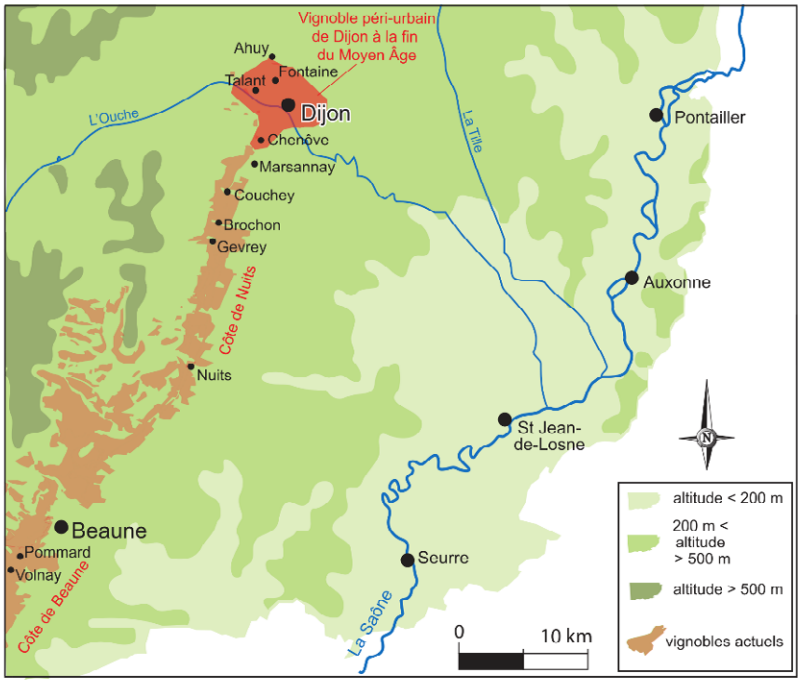
relève ainsi plusieurs périodes de gel prolongé de la Saône, en 1351,[3] 1354,[4] 1408,[5] pour ne citer que les événements les plus spectaculaires.

Dans ce contexte de crise multiforme, le vignoble de Bourgogne, en particulier autour de Dijon, offre un terrain de choix pour l'étude des relations sociales. Le recoupement de sources normatives et fiscales, de comptabilité seigneuriale et des registres de notaires éclaire particulièrement la mobilité sociale ascendante des vignerons.

1. Le vignoble de la région dijonnaise dans la crise de la fin du Moyen Age

1.1 Le cadre géographique et chronologique

Fig. 1. **Le vignoble bourguignon entre Dijon et Beaune**[6]



[3] Archives départementales de Côte d'Or (ADCO) B 2892 Compte de la prévôté d'Auxonne (1351-1359) fol. 3v. La glace a emporté le moulin d'Auxonne.

[4] ADCO B 1398 Compte de Geoffroy de Blaisy, receveur général de la gruerie de Bourgogne (1354-1355), fol. 40r.

[5] ADCO B 5640 Compte de Guillaume de Maxilly, châtelain de Pontailler (1407-1408), fol. 18v.-19v.

[6] Carte aimablement réalisée par le professeur Jean-Pierre Garcia de l'université de Bourgogne, responsable du programme de recherche « Construction des terroirs viticoles » au sein de l'axe « Fabrique du paysage » de UMR 6298 ArTeHiS, que je remercie chaleureusement.

Le vignoble bourguignon de la Côte, une mince bande de terrain privilégiée, favorable à cette culture, s'étend à flanc de coteau le long de la bordure orientale du plateau calcaire dominant la plaine de la Saône, des alentours de Dijon en direction du sud, et s'élargit autour de Beaune (fig. 1). Avant la crise du phylloxera au XIXe siècle, on distinguait la Côte de Nuits et la Côte Dijonnaise dont les parties subsistantes sont aujourd'hui comprises dans la précédente (Garcia et Rigaux 2012). Dans les découpages administratifs du duché, cette zone faisait partie du bailliage de Dijon et des «sièges» de Nuits (aujourd'hui Nuits-Saint-Georges) et de Beaune, démembrés du premier.

Les sources utilisées concernent essentiellement la ville de Dijon et ses environs immédiats ainsi que la partie de la Côte au sud de la ville, avec des compléments d'information provenant de la Côte de Beaune et du nord du duché (Auxois, Avallonnais) ainsi que de l'Auxerrois. Les décennies 1320 et 1480 marquent les limites chronologiques maximales de l'étude.

1.2 Vigne et vin, un secteur dynamique en Bourgogne

Contrairement à d'autres régions françaises comme l'Anjou (Le Mené 1978) ou étrangères comme le cœur de la Toscane autour de Florence (De La Roncière 1978) et malgré des revers sérieux, voire des problèmes structurels, le vignoble bourguignon de la Côte et l'économie du vin dans la région dijonnaise connurent un remarquable essor à la fin du Moyen Age.

Dijon était alors une grande ville viticole, et son territoire urbain était largement dédié à la vigne, comme le révèle, parmi d'autres sources, une enquête sur la disparition de chemins publics réalisée en 1455[7].

Les vignerons y formaient le groupe social le plus nombreux parmi les chefs de feux (ménages). En 1447, année la mieux documentée, 578 chefs de feux sur un total de 2087 exercent une activité de vigneron, soit 27,7%, ce qui en fait le métier le plus représenté dans la ville (Galanaud 2009, 253). Dans les villages viticoles, cette proportion a été estimé à 70 à 80% (Lachiver 1988, 237).

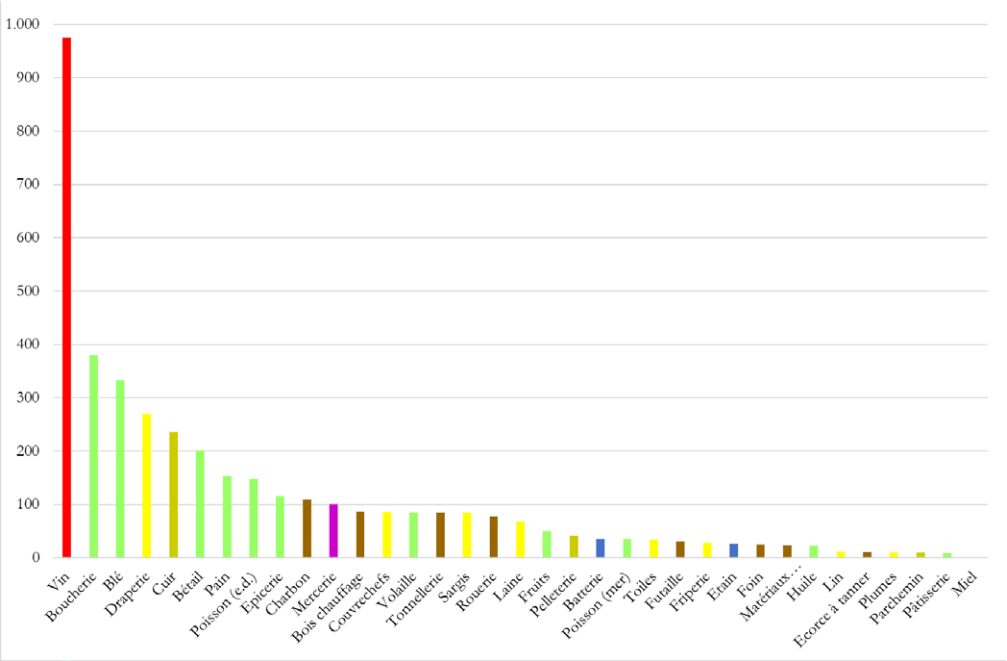
Toutes les catégories sociales étaient alors impliquées peu ou prou dans l'économie vitivinicole, que ce fût comme possesseurs de vignes, comme gestionnaire de vignes d'un seigneur ou d'un bourgeois, comme travailleur journalier ou à la tâche, ou encore en faisant commerce de vin, avec toutes les combinaisons possibles entre ces activités. Françoise Piponnier (1998) était la première à relever l'omniprésence des activités vitivinicoles dans toutes les strates de la société dijonnaise à travers les inventaires après décès. Comme elle, Thomas Pfirsch (2002, 12) dans son analyse des contrats d'apprentissage conclus devant les notaires dijonnais résume:

> Au total, la viticulture apparaît bien comme l'une des activités les plus répandues dans la population dijonnaise de la deuxième moitié du XIVe siècle. Elle était exercée par quelques spécialistes, mais aussi et surtout par un nombre considérable de citadins pour qui elle n'était qu'une activité annexe.

[7] Archives municipales de Dijon (AMD), J 126, Procès-verbal de la visite des chemins de la partie orientale du finage de Dijon pour vérifier les usurpations de terrain par les riverains, 1455

La prépondérance de l'économie vitivinicole à Dijon se reflète aussi dans la fiscalité indirecte: sur la période de 1386 à 1403, soit 17 années consécutives couvertes par les comptes conservés, loin devant toutes les autres branches du commerce dijonnais (Graph. 1), le vin représentait, bon an, mal an, un quart du volume du commerce soumis à l'imposition du 20e, c'est-à-dire de toutes les marchandises exposées publiquement à la vente à l'exception du sel et des métaux précieux, monopoles ducaux (Pepke-Durix 1997, 281). Sa part était au minimum de 20,12% (en 1395-96) et au maximum de 30,69% (en 1390-91), seules les deux valeurs extrêmes étant situées sensiblement en dehors de la fourchette de 22 à 27% (Graph. 2).

Graph. 1. **Valeurs moyennes des fermes des l'imposition du 20e à Dijon entre 1386 et 1403**



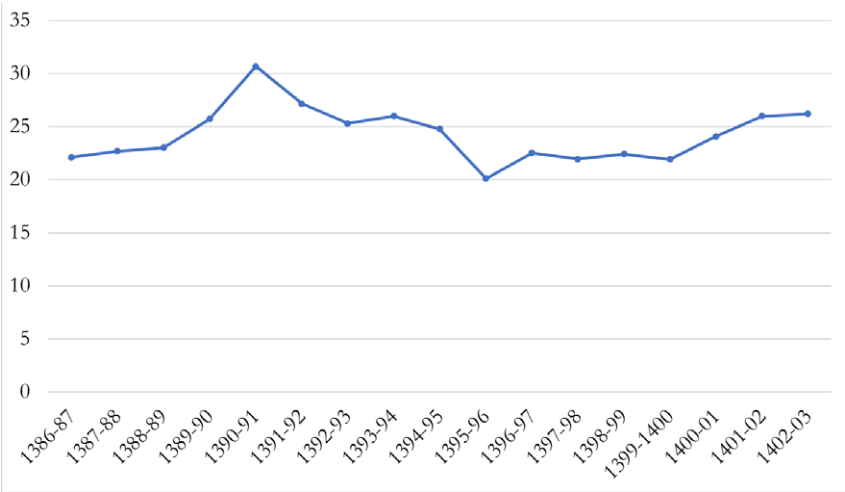
C'était en grande partie un commerce d'exportation. Les sources concernant les quantités exportées sont peu nombreuses, mais les comptes des fermes de la traite des vins conservés pour les années de 1372 à 1376[8] et un compte journalier des exportations au départ de Dijon en 1450[9] permettent de constater l'essor considérable pris par cette filière en trois quarts de siècle. D'une moyenne de 895 queues par an, avec un minimum de 480 et un maximum de 1 600, le volume exporté dans l'année est passé à 5 551,5 queues, soit plus de 20 000 hl, contre environ

[8], ADCO B 1440, Compte des fermes des impositions en Bourgogne (1372-1376).

[9] ADCO B 4500, Compte journalier de Jean de Saint-Dyer pour l'aide de huit sols parisis par queue de vin exportée (1450).

3 300 hl en moyenne et un maximum ne dépassant pas 6 000 hl[10] au siècle précédent (Pepke-Durix 2009b).

Graph. 2. **La part du vin dans les fermes du 20e à Dijon**



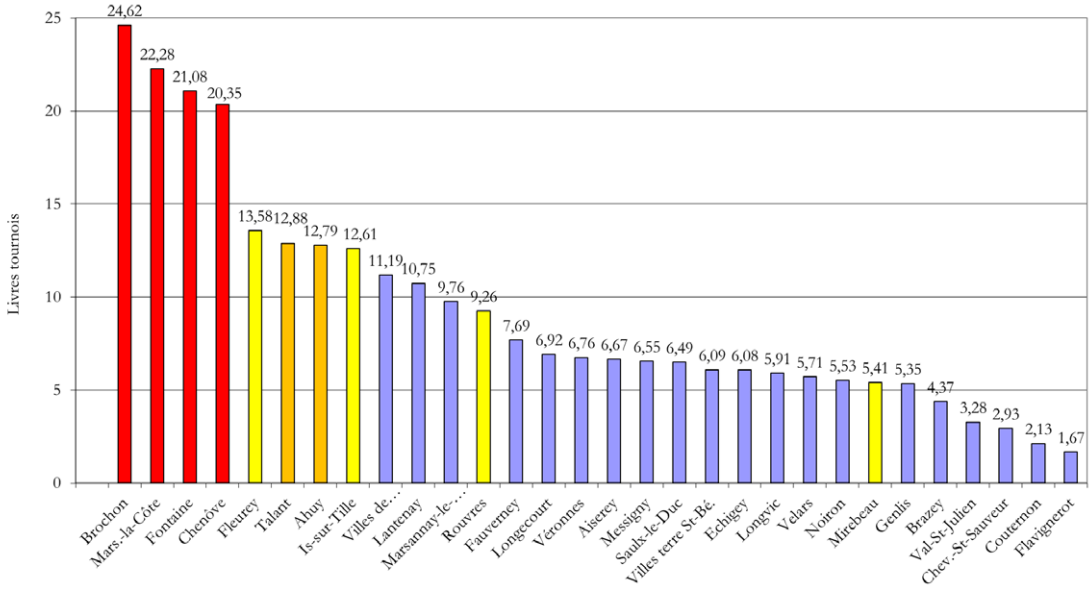
L'essor global spectaculaire des exportations de vin au départ de Dijon ne doit pas faire oublier les difficultés que ce secteur dut traverser, que ce fut pour des causes naturelles comme des parasites de la vigne ou des accidents météorologiques (gel, grêle,…), à cause d'épisodes guerriers (présence des Ecorcheurs entre 1435 et 1438) ou encore de problèmes plus structurels comme une surproduction et la qualité des vins affectée par une évolution des pratiques culturales (Pepke-Durix 2000).

Le vin, denrée essentiellement destinée à un marché, proche ou lointain, valait aussi au vignoble une activité marchande supérieure à celle des autres zones rurales du bailliage de Dijon. Vers la fin du XIVe siècle, le croisement des comptes de l'imposition du 20e avec les cherches des feux (listes de ménages pour l'assiette de l'impôt direct) permet pour quelques années de calculer un quotient indicateur chiffré de l'activité marchande annuelle par ménage et de le cartographier (Pepke-Durix, 2002; méthode reprise par Rauzier 2009). Il en ressort une hiérarchisation nette: en 1397, la ville de Dijon vient en tête avec un volume marchand annuel minimal par ménage de 37 livres tournois, suivie des circonscriptions du vignoble (Brochon, Marsannay, Fontaine-les-Dijon et Chenôve) où le quotient se situe entre 20 et 25 livres tournois (Graph. 3). Dans les autres circonscriptions, le volume du commerce par ménage ne dépasse pas 15 livres tournois. Pour l'année 1391, les sources permettent une comparaison avec les circonscriptions de Pontailler et Saint-Jean-de-Losne (Pepke-Durix, 2004b), deux petites villes du Val de Saône qui étaient alors

[10] La queue de Dijon était légèrement plus grande que celle de Beaune qui, elle, contenait environ 365 litres (Dubois, 441; cf. Bailly 1902). Aux deux périodes considérées, les chiffres indiqués n'incluent pas les quantités considérables exportées par les exemptés, à commencer par le duc lui-même.

d'importants lieux de passage de la frontière du royaume de France (Dubois 1976), absents de la cherche de feux de 1397. Avec environ[11] vingt livres tournois pour Saint-Jean-de-Losne et une douzaine pour Pontailler, leurs quotients du vingtuple des fermes de l'imposition indirecte par le nombre de feux de chaque circonscription se situent à égalité ou légèrement en-dessous du niveau des circonscriptions viticoles. Le vignoble en ressort donc clairement comme une zone particulière, où l'activité marchande annuelle dépasse même celle des bourgs ayant un marché hebdomadaire dans les autres campagnes du bailliage, à dominante céréalière ou avec un fort élevage (ovins sur le plateau calcaire, chevaux dans le Val de Saône).

Graph. 3. **Volume minimum du commerce attendu par « feu » dans le bailliage de Dijon en 1397**



En rouge: circonscriptions de la Côte viticole; en orangé: circonscriptions partiellement viticoles; en jaune: circonscriptions hors vignoble avec marché hebdom.

1.3 Les « perdants »: les possesseurs de grands domaines et les employeurs en général

Ce dynamisme général ne favorisait pas de la même manière tous les acteurs en présence. Des sources seigneuriales, il émane clairement que les maîtres traditionnels du sol ayant les possessions de vignes les plus vastes, le duc et les abbayes, étaient confrontés à de sérieuses difficultés dans l'exploitation de leurs domaines viticoles.

[11] Les cherches de feux n'incluent pas les localités situées outre-Saône, en terre d'Empire, contrairement à l'imposition indirecte.

Pour y faire face dans la châtellenie ducale de Beaune, on tente, dès les années suivant immédiatement la peste noire, d'endiguer la hausse du coût du transport des vendanges en améliorant la productivité. En 1352, s'observe ainsi une diminution du nombre de charrois effectués pour le transport du raisin récolté, en chargeant davantage les véhicules utilisés – un rare exemple de témoignage direct d'une augmentation de la productivité du travail au Moyen Age (Pepke-Durix 2008, 22).

Une autre façon d'améliorer la rentabilité des vignes ducales était d'exclure les éléments les moins productifs de l'exploitation directe. Entre 1366/67 et 1373/74, les deux tiers des vignes ducales dans les territoires du nord du duché (Auxois, Avallonnais) mais aussi des parcelles au cœur du vignoble beaunois, auparavant compris dans le grand clos ducal de Beaune, le clos de Bouache, sortirent de l'exploitation directe en étant amodiés (Rauzier 2000, Beck 2001). Entre la fin du XIVe siècle et les années 1430, l'étendue des clos paraît à peu près stable (Nouvion 2021, 482). Chaque châtellenie ayant son propre fonctionnement, il ne semble pas possible de détecter une stratégie d'ensemble d'adaptation des domaines ducaux aux mutations en cours (Nouvion 2021, 590).

Parmi les seigneurs ecclésiastiques, l'abbaye Saint-Bénigne de Dijon se distingue par des sources particulièrement riches concernant la gestion de son temporel où les vignes tenaient une place importante bien qu'évolutive jusqu'à la fin du Moyen Age (Nouvion 2021, 269-342). Aux XIVe et XVe siècles, elles étaient presque entièrement regroupées à Dijon et dans les environs immédiats de la ville. L'exceptionnel état des revenus de l'abbaye dressé en 1438-39 (Pepke-Durix 2012a; Pepke-Durix 2012b; cf. Nouvion 2021, 278-79) permet d'évaluer cette part à pratiquement 89% sur un total de 80,35 hectares. La pièce maîtresse en était le clos de Larrey. Il entourait le prieuré du même nom, donné à l'abbaye dès 584 par le roi Gontran de Bourgogne (Nouvion 2021, 108 et 276). Le reste était très morcelé. Le domaine abbatial situé à Marsannay-la-Côte bénéficiait néanmoins d'une attention particulière, expressément en raison de la qualité des vins produits, réservés pour partie à la cave personnelle de l'abbé[12].

Le document de 1439, véritable audit interne, montre aussi que les problèmes de rentabilité des domaines seigneuriaux ne relevaient pas uniquement de causes externes, mais qu'une gestion défaillante pouvait y être pour beaucoup, à l'instar de celle d'Amyot Bonne ou « Messire Amyot » expressément mis en cause par l'enquêteur (Pepke-Durix 2012a, 461; cf. Nouvion 2021, 283-284). Ce dernier, dans ses préconisations, pose aussi la question de la consommation de vin du couvent qui mériterait selon lui d'être évaluée, question pouvant paraître anodine considérée isolément. Elle prend un autre relief au regard d'une dissension attestée un siècle plus tard entre le couvent et l'abbé commendataire Frégose à propos d'une réduction de la portion journalière de vin que ce dernier souhaitait instaurer. Il ne semble pas avoir eu gain de cause (Nouvion 2021 284-85). Ces faits illustrent bien les difficultés d'une institution ancienne et prestigieuse, malgré des efforts sérieux de certains (Nouvion 2021, 269-342), à s'adapter dans son fonctionnement à un contexte qui avait changé en sa défaveur.

[12] ADCO 1H171 Etat du revenu de l'abbaye (1438) Ce document a en réalité été rédigé en 1439 (Pepke-Durix 2013a).

Si les sources sur la gestion des vignobles seigneuriaux sont lacunaires, celles concernant les bourgeois possesseurs de vignes sont si rares que leur rôle ne peut être abordé que de manière indirecte. Des contrats de travail ou de mise en location peuvent être glanés dans les registres de notaires, mais ils sont trop ponctuels pour éclairer une évolution. Les sources normatives, les échos des débats préalables et ceux de conflits surgis à leur suite permettent d'en saisir des traits: requêtes des bourgeois auprès de l'autorité du prince pour réglementer des pratiques culturales et protestations contre l'attribution d'amendes perçues au trésor ducal, enquêtes de terrain pour constater des abus et procès verbaux témoignant des tensions sous-jacentes. Ils seront au cœur des développements qui suivent.

2. L'ascension d'un groupe social: des affrontements à la consultation

Entre le milieu du XIVe siècle et la fin du XVe, le positionnement du groupe social des vignerons au sein de la société dijonnaise connut des évolutions notables. Sans véritable organisation collective, ils acquirent lentement un statut de corps reconnu dont l'expertise pouvait être sollicitée pour la gestion du territoire viticole, en partant d'une image négative de perturbateurs de l'économie locale. Des débats autour de leur rémunération et de la qualité des vins marquèrent les grandes étapes de cette évolution.

2.1 Chute démographique et hausse des salaires

La viticulture médiévale était une branche où la force musculaire humaine était la ressource énergétique essentielle, presque unique. Les vignes n'étant pas plantées en rangs avant le XIXe siècle, la traction animale y jouait un rôle très mineur, pratiquement limité au transport de la vendange. L'impact de l'hémorragie démographique consécutive aux épidémies et renforcée par des famines dues aux épisodes guerriers et/ou aux aléas météorologiques y était donc particulièrement fort. Globalement, le bailliage de Dijon perdit environ les deux tiers de ses feux (ménages) entre le début du XIVe siècle et 1420 (Pepke-Durix 1997, 258), puis une remontée s'amorça par l'arrivée massive de réfugiés venant de régions davantage affectées par la guerre de Cent ans (Galanaud 2009, 445 et 468).

Dans les premières décennies suivant la peste noire, on observe un enchaînement de faits et de réglementations pour les contrecarrer. La chute démographique provoque un manque de main d'œuvre entraînant une hausse des salaires. Le pouvoir royal y réagit en 1351 par des édits de Jean le Bon limitant les salaires de nombreux métiers dont les vignerons (Isambert 1823, 605-06), dont les effets restent cependant sujets à caution (Bove 2020, 424; cf. Braid, 2003).

Les comptes de la châtellenie de Beaune, Pommard et Volnay des alentours de 1350 font ressortir la difficulté des gestionnaires locaux à faire face à la hausse brusque des rémunérations exigées et aux difficultés pour occuper les postes à compétences techniques. Tout le monde savait vendanger, mais il fallait une forte technicité pour fabriquer cuves et tonneaux et encore davantage pour tailler une grande vis en bois pour un pressoir, par exemple. Pour éviter de se trouver sans

vendangeurs au moment de la récolte, les gestionnaires des domaines étaient amenés à trafiquer les comptes en déclarant un nombre de journées largement supérieur à celui réellement effectué afin de respecter, en apparence, l'édit royal de 1351 car, comme écrit Berlow (1980), « Their numbers could be replaced relatively quickly but not their skills ».

Deux générations plus tard, en 1393 à Auxerre, un conflit social ouvert entre vignerons et bourgeois est attesté par un procès devant le Parlement de Paris (Stella 1996, cf. ci-dessous 3e partie). Il se cristallisait autour de la durée de la journée de travail des vignerons. Aucun affrontement organisé semblable n'est connu à Dijon, mais le lien entre la journée de travail et le niveau des rémunérations est fait en 1420 dans des lettres patentes de la duchesse Marguerite de Bavière portant règlement au sujet du salaire des vignerons. Ce texte dénonce les exigences des « *ouvriers qui ont accoustumé laborer lesdittes vignes, par manier de monopole, conspiration ou autrement* ».[13] L'application – ou non – de ces lettres patentes est inconnue, mais elles ont dû être rapidement dépassées par la crise monétaire car en janvier 1421, la Chambre de Ville s'abstient prudemment d'inclure la rémunération des vignerons dans son ordonnance bloquant de nombreux prix et salaires en plein pic d'inflation (Pepke 2017).

La hausse des rémunérations se reflète également dans la fiscalité puisqu'elle donne lieu à des « crues des marcs », des hausses individuelles brusques, y compris sur des contribuables parmi les plus modestes, de l'impôt dû au duc par la commune de Dijon en contrepartie de son autonomie, ainsi en 1421 « *pour occasion des grosses et excessives journées que les vignerons et autres ouvriers ont prises en ladite annee* » (Galanaud 2009, 368).

2.2 Qualité du vin et enjeux de pouvoir

A partir de la fin du XIVe siècle, le débat se plaça aussi sur le terrain de la qualité des vins. La première grande intervention ducale en matière de réglementation viticole fut le célèbre édit de Philippe le Hardi du 31 juillet 1395. Donnant suite aux plaintes des bourgeois de Dijon, Beaune et Chalon, le duc y interdit le « tres mauvaiz et tres desloyaul plant, nommez gaamez » (Berlow 1982) ainsi que la fumure des vignes.[14] Les représentants des villes s'étaient plaints du tort fait à la réputation de leurs produits par des vins de mauvaise qualité issus du cépage gamay et / ou produits avec des méthodes impropres.

La ville de Dijon protesta contre l'application des amendes et confiscations au profit du duc, faisant valoir un privilège ancien compris dans les franchises de la commune, si bien que les arrachages n'eurent probablement pas lieu (Beaulant 2018).

En 1441, le problème de vins nuisant à la réputation commerciale de Dijon ressurgit à propos des « tres chetifs lieux, et qui rapportent de tres petits vins et chetifs », situés essentiellement à l'est et au sud de la ville, contrairement aux meilleurs coteaux situés à l'ouest, et donna lieu à une nouvelle intervention ducale. Philippe le Bon demanda au bailli de Dijon d'organiser une réunion avec toutes les catégories de

[13] AMD, I 147 et AMD, Trésor des Chartes, liasse 17, n° 3

[14] AMD, B 138 Papier du secret 1395-1396, fol. 13. Edité dans Lavalle 1955, 37-40.

personnes compétentes afin de savoir s'il fallait effectivement arracher les vignes incriminées en raison de leur localisation. Ce texte déplorait « la grant quantite desdittes meschans vignes, ezquelles quant on ne donne aux vignerons de laditte ville journees a leur plaisir, ils vont occuper et employer leur tems » (Lavalle 1855, 41).

Beaulant (2018) pense que ce mandement, comme l'édit de 1395, se bornait à interdire de nouvelles plantations, sans obligation d'arrachage effectif, «au détriment de ce qu'envisageait initialement le conseil échevinal». Il voit dans le document et les mesures qu'il envisage, plus modérées que l'ordonnance de 1395, «une forme d'arbitrage princier entre la mairie et le monde vigneron qui n'est pas consulté dans cette affaire, mais dont les menaces de recours à la violence semblent avoir été entendues par l'autorité échevinale qui modère ses ambitions».

Ce n'était pas un cas isolé à cette époque. Le bailli de Dijon tendait à s'approprier de plus en plus de droits au détriment de la commune, tout comme le pouvoir ducal tendait à grignoter peu à peu les privilèges des juridictions des territoires septentrionaux bourguignons (Bubeniček 2002, 366-67).

En fin de compte, les vignerons bénéficièrent de la rivalité entre le duc et la ville en évitant d'être contraints à l'arrachage de leurs vignes plantées de gamay et/ou dans des terroirs de moindre qualité.

2.3 Une association progressive des vignerons aux décisions

Un premier témoignage d'une prise en compte organisée de l'expertise des vignerons apparaît en 1455: le procès-verbal d'une enquête concernant le réseau viaire dans la partie orientale du finage de Dijon.[15] De nombreux possesseurs de vignes, y compris des personnages éminents de la ville et des communautés religieuses, avaient tellement empiété sur des chemins et sentiers que la mairie se vit obligée de nommer une commission chargée de vérifier les abus afin que l'on puisse contraindre les contrevenants à réparer les dégâts et matérialiser le tracé des voies publiques par des bornes. Purement technique, l'enquête fut confiée à une commission composée presque exclusivement de vignerons, supervisés simplement par un échevin. La précision de la source permet *grosso modo* de suivre l'itinéraire des enquêteurs sur le terrain. Même en l'absence d'indications directes sur les surfaces consacrées respectivement aux ceps et aux labours, ce document reflète la vigueur de l'expansion de la viticulture dans la moitié est-sud-est du finage, ne serait-ce qu'à travers les innombrables mentions d'usurpations de terrains publics, le plus souvent au bénéfice de la vigne, ce qui justifie la composition de la commission d'enquête.

Dans la seconde moitié du XVe siècle, plusieurs témoignages concernent l'arrachage de vignes, dont une campagne réalisée en 1472.

En janvier 1472 (n.s.), les comptes de la ville signalent en effet des dépenses pour le salaire et la nourriture des ouvriers chargés d'arracher « plusieurs nouvelles plantes de vignes qui puis nagueres avoient esté commencees faire en plusieurs lieux ou finaige et banlieue dudit Dijon » ainsi que du défraiement des responsables encadrant

[15] AMD, J 126, Procès-verbal de la visite des chemins de la partie orientale du finage de Dijon pour vérifier les usurpations de terrain par les riverains, 1455

l'opération.[16] Les lieux-dits visés n'y sont malheureusement pas spécifiés. Cette mesure, tout comme le mandement de 1441, provoqua une violente réaction de la part des vignerons visés (Beaulant 2018). Ce fut une affaire d'importance, puisque le maire en personne, le lieutenant du bailli et plusieurs échevins, conseillers, prud'hommes, sergents et autres officiers de la ville furent mobilisés.

Une quinzaine d'années plus tard, la population ayant retrouvé un niveau comparable à celui d'avant 1376 (Galanaud 2009, 698, Fig. 98), la Chambre de ville demanda au roi Charles VIII l'autorisation de faire arracher toutes les vignes plantées depuis cinquante ans sur les terres arables du finage de la ville, en arguant du manque de blé qu'il fallait aller chercher au loin à grands frais, tandis que l'approvisionnement en vin était largement suffisant[17]. Une nouvelle enquête fut menée du 3 au 5 octobre 1486, couvrant l'ensemble des vignes dijonnaises et débordant sur quelques localités voisines. Le procès-verbal de la réunion finale du 6 octobre, qui récapitule les résultats des visites de terrain, se distingue par l'atmosphère tendue qui transpire à travers ses lignes. Il énumère les participants à la réunion organisée au domicile du maire, à savoir onze représentants de la ville dont le maire, le procureur de la commune et des échevins ainsi que vingt-deux habitants, bourgeois comme vignerons, « qui sont des plus principaulx et anciens vignerons de chacune paroisse de cette ville de Dijon »[18]. L'inquiétude des vignerons fut grande devant les réactions potentielles de leurs voisins, collègues, amis ou parents, une fois le résultat des délibérations rendu public. Malgré les incertitudes sur les suites réelles des décisions prises (Beaulant 2018), la participation de leur groupe social aux décisions marque une étape dans la gestion du finage de Dijon par la commune. La parité en nombre des vignerons avec les bourgeois n'est pas sans importance non plus, même si ces derniers ont pu avoir une plus grande proximité sociale (voire familiale) avec le corps échevinal. Pour la première fois, les vignerons eurent voix au chapitre avec une expertise allant au-delà du simple constat d'infractions lisibles dans la topographie comme cela avait été le cas en 1455. Leur groupe social, au sein duquel des personnages éminents avaient été identifiés dans chaque paroisse pour les représenter, faisait désormais littéralement partie du paysage économique de la ville viticole qu'était Dijon.

3. L'ascension sociale individuelle: les vignerons en quête de capital

Comme vu plus haut, la possession d'une vigne en propre, évoquée – pour ne pas dire vilipendée – dans plusieurs sources normatives depuis la fin du XIVe siècle, était l'ambition principale de nombreux vignerons. Pour atteindre ce but, plusieurs possibilités s'offraient à eux, à commencer par une pluriactivité traditionnelle, au sein du vignoble comme en combinaison avec d'autres métiers. Elle leur offrait des possibilités de travail pratiquement tout au long de l'année, indépendamment du cycle végétal de la vigne.

[16] AMD, I 147, Mémoire des dépenses pour l'arrachage des vignes du 23 janvier 1472 (n.s.), et M 74, Comptes rendus par Guillaume Jaumart, receveur général de la ville, durant l'année 1471-72.

[17] AMD, J 126

[18] AMD, I 147, États dressés à la suite d'une ordonnance de Charles VIII.

3.1 La pluriactivité généralisée des vignerons

La gamme des statuts des travailleurs du vignoble était vaste, et depuis longtemps, les constats convergent sur la place aussi éminente que multiforme de cette branche essentielle dans l'économie de la ville (Garnier 1891). Elle allait du journalier louant la force de ses bras au gestionnaire d'un ensemble de vignes, habituellement appelé « closier » en Bourgogne, en passant par toutes sortes de statuts intermédiaires. La grande variété de situations concrètes des travailleurs de la vigne, tous statuts confondus, a aussi été étudiée en détail pour le vignoble de l'Auxerrois par Marcel Delafosse qui en brosse un tableau très vivant (Delafosse 1948).[19]

Les embauches à la journée se faisaient sur la place publique devant la Sainte-Chapelle de Dijon, tandis que les contrats de service comme ouvrier chez un maître, à durée déterminée ou non, avec apprentissage ou non, les « tâches », c'est-à-dire vignes prises à faire pour une durée courte (une ou plusieurs « façons » parmi les travaux de l'année viticole) ou plus longue (quelques années) étaient conclus devant notaire[20], de même que les baux à part de fruits, c'est-à-dire différentes formes de métayage dont le « bail à tiers » qui laissait à l'exploitant les deux tiers des fruits moyennant fourniture des supports des ceps (« paisseaux » ou échalas, perches) (Tournier 1952). Ces différentes formes de travail rémunéré pouvaient être combinées entre elles.

L'abbaye Saint-Bénigne, de loin le plus grand acteur économique de la région dijonnaise à la fin du Moyen Age hormis le duc, appliquait un système différent. En 1411, « des parsonniers proches de l'abbaye mettent en valeur ses vignes contre une rémunération globalement assez modeste » (Nouvion 2021, 277). Ils sont une centaine, dans leur immense majorité domiciliés dans les quartiers entourant l'abbaye, et emploient à leur tour une main d'œuvre limitée par les sommes qui leur sont allouées.

Mais ce sont les contrats de travail et surtout d'apprentissage qui renseignent le mieux sur la pluriactivité des vignerons, qui pouvait elle-même prendre des formes variées. Il n'est guère surprenant, étant donnée la place du vin dans l'économie dijonnaise, de voir des valets d'artisans obligés de participer aux vendanges et autres travaux de la vigne.[21] Plus inattendu, l'apprentissage pouvait porter sur deux voire trois métiers à la fois, que le maître devait donc lui-même maîtriser. « L'art de la

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[19] Si les unités de mesure de la terre comme des volumes de vin diffèrent par rapport à la région de Dijon et Beaune, la nomenclature des statuts est sensiblement la même à ceci près que le « closier » semble y être le plus souvent un contremaître payé à la journée, alors qu'à Dijon, au début du XIVe siècle, les compétences du personnage de la maison de marchands Frerouhot désigné comme « Arnulphus clouserius » sont même nettement plus larges que la seule gestion des vignes, à en juger d'après les actes variés conclus par lui au nom de son maître devant le notaire Dominique Griffon, dont un seul porte sur un achat de vignes. ADCO B 11225, fol. 3r., 28r., 34r., 37r., 41r. et 51v.

[20] Des exemples de contrats de tâches figurent dans ADCO B 11.375 Registre de Huguenin le Binget de Dijon, fol. 60v. et 61r. Baux pour « lier » (attacher les sarments à leurs tuteurs) deux vignes appartenant au marchand Jean Labireaul, dont le premier avec un consortium de quatre vignerons dijonnais, les deux autres avec un seul prestataire chacun, Nicolas Nivoy et Laurent le Gontaulet.

[21] ADCO B 11.234, registre de Thierry Quasset (1354-1358), fol. 19v., servante chez une tisserande; ADCO B 11.286, registre de Guillaume Girard (1382-1386), fol. 301r, valet d'un tanneur

vigne »[22] s'y trouve associé aussi bien à la tonnellerie[23] qu'à la couverture « en aissanne comme en lave »[24], voire à la maçonnerie.[25]

Notons que la vigne peut aussi jouer un rôle « inversé » dans les contrats de travail de valets et servantes. Certains possèdent eux-mêmes une vigne dont ils confient l'exploitation à leurs maîtres en s'engageant chez des vignerons. Ces derniers disposeront alors de toute la récolte mais supporteront aussi les frais et charges liés à son exploitation, une compensation financière déduite de la rémunération du valet étant également possible.[26]

Quel que soit le métier, les contrats d'apprentissage prévoient en général une clause importante pour l'avenir du jeune – voire très jeune, dès l'âge de six ou huit ans[27] – ainsi placé: au terme de sa longue formation, d'une durée de quatre à seize ans (sic !), le maître doit lui donner les outils essentiels pour l'exercice de son ou plutôt de ses futurs métiers, sans compter le pécule plus ou moins important et les habits éventuellement prévus. L'exemple le plus complet repéré en est le contrat de Perrenot Marion de Ternant auquel son maître, Girart le Laineret de Couchey, promet une rémunération d'un franc d'or par an pendant les trois dernières années de son apprentissage sur un total de six, ainsi qu'à son départ un marteau à maçon, une cuiller et un plomb à maçon, un marteau à lavier[28] ainsi que les deux outils de base du vigneron, la goix[29] à tailler la vigne et le « fessour », nom bourguignon de la pioche à vigne à deux dents.[30] L'équipement n'est pas sans importance pour les perspectives d'avenir et de mobilité sociale du jeune adulte ainsi formé, car il lui permet de proposer immédiatement ses services à d'autres employeurs, en étant d'autant moins dépendant de l'offre saisonnière de travail qu'il sera polyvalent.

3.2 Le vignoble, plaque tournante d'un commerce de céréales

Mais à Dijon comme dans les villages du vignoble, on savait aussi saisir des possibilités plus originales et surtout plus complexes pour constituer le capital initial nécessaire, y compris des transactions commerciales spéculatives. Le rôle des Lombards dans le commerce international, à la fin du Moyen Age, est connu de

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[22] ADCO B 11.300, protocole d'Aubertin de Sauxurettes (1381-1384), fol. 55v, contrat d'embauche d'un valet

[23] ADCO B 11.294 (1391-1392), fol. 93r. et B 11.296 (1398-99), protocoles d'Aubertin de Sauxurettes, contrats d'apprentissage

[24] Bardeaux de bois comme pierres plates calcaires similaires aux lauzes. ADCO B 11.302 (1386-1389), registre d'Aubertin de Sauxurettes, fol. 105r. contrat d'embauche d'un recouvreur salarié

[25] ADCO B 11.286, registre de Guillaume Girard (1382-1386), fol. 99r.

[26] ADCO B 11.302 (1386-1389), registre d'Aubertin de Sauxurettes, fol. 105r. et ADCO B 11.324 (1407-1408), protocole de Jean Lebon

[27] Ce sont alors des orphelins de père ou des deux parents, dont les maîtres doivent prendre soin comme s'ils étaient leurs propres enfants, par exemple ADCO 11.368, Registre de Jean Boyert (1418-1439), fol. 56 r. et B 11. 378, protocole de Jean Jacquinot (1429-1448), fol. 159v.

[28] Fabricant ou recouvreur de « laves », pierres plates de calcaire

[29] Serpe plus grande que celle servant à vendanger, cf. Piponnier 1998.

[30] ADCO B 11.286, registre de Guillaume Girard (1382-1386), fol. 99r.

longue date (Gauthier 1907) et leur contribution à l'exportation des céréales de Bourgogne a été mise en évidence par Dubois (1976).

Deux registres de notaires,[31] couvrant la période 1356-1366, renferment un grand nombre d'actes conclus entre avril 1356 et octobre 1362 devant un notaire dijonnais par des marchands lombards installés à Pontailler, appartenant pour la plupart aux familles Turchi et Paganini (ou Paanin, comme écrivait le notaire). Sur les 215 actes relevés, la grande majorité – 177, soit 82% – porte sur des achats de céréales, stipulant la livraison de grandes quantités de grains par leurs fournisseurs, le prix de vente ainsi que le terme de la livraison. Au total, furent ainsi négociées environ 2 500 émines de Dijon de froment, soit plus de 10 000 hl.[32] La moyenne des quantités était de 21,37 émines, soit plus de 91 hl par contrat.

S'agissant de froment, on s'attendrait à trouver, dans le rôle des fournisseurs, principalement des fermiers seigneuriaux des villages de la Plaine dijonnaise ou des marchands dijonnais capables de réunir, par leurs réseaux de relations, les quantités demandées. Or, les Dijonnais n'en représentaient qu'environ 8%, plus de 90% des achats de céréales étant conclus dans des localités que l'on peut considérer comme appartenant au vignoble, d'Ahuy au nord jusqu'à Gevrey-Chambertin au sud (Pepke-Durix 2004a).

Avec 168 noms pour 177 contrats, le nombre des vendeurs égalait pratiquement celui des affaires conclues. Parmi eux, les Lombards avaient quelques partenaires fidèles, certains noms revenant jusqu'à sept fois dans les registres du notaire, mais ils sont la minorité: un quart seulement apparaît plusieurs fois. La concentration des affaires variait d'un lieu à l'autre. A nouveau, Chenôve, où la proportion des « fournisseurs fidèles » approchait de 50%, et à Talant, où ils constituaient près d'un tiers du total, sortent du lot. Les 55 noms relevés à Talant et les 43 à Chenôve comme pourvoyeurs des Lombards correspondaient à plus d'un tiers, peut-être même, pour Chenôve, à la moitié des chefs de feux y existant à cette époque.[33] Il s'agissait donc d'une activité très largement pratiquée dans les villages viticoles.

Mais ce sont avant tout les conditions des transactions qui incitent à voir dans les vignerons des intermédiaires de commerce. Il s'agissait systématiquement de ventes à terme payées dès la conclusion, donc de ventes à crédit. Le terme de la livraison se situait, dans la grande majorité des cas, environ un an après la conclusion. Une comparaison des prix pratiqués par les Lombards avec ceux qui avaient cours pour les ventes au détail à Dijon est possible pour l'hiver 1361-62. A cette époque, dans les moulins de la ville de Dijon, l'émine de froment est vendue au prix de deux florins et demi.[34] Les sommes versées par les marchands lombards, en revanche, ne dépassent pas un florin et demi par émine – le prix au détail de 3/5 d'une émine. Si

[31] ADCO B 11.256 (1355-1360) et B 11.257 (1361-1366), registres de Geliet Symonet de Blaisy

[32] 1 émine = 16 quarteranches de 26,714 l chacune, soit 427,456 l. Les quantités indiquées en d'autres mesures que celle de Dijon ont été converties d'après les indications contenues dans Richard (1944-1945), à l'exception d'un contrat conclu avec un fournisseur de Gevrey, à la mesure de ce lieu, absente de l'article cité.

[33] Les « cherches » les plus anciennes, postérieures d'une dizaine d'années aux derniers contrats étudiés, indiquent respectivement 134 et 78 feux: ADCO B 11.572, Cherche de feux, Dijonnais, 1376

[34] AMD L 337, Octrois (1359-1365), compte de l'imposition du 1/16 sur la mouture des blés, du 1/12 sur le vin vendu au détail et du droit de « réfugière » sur les vins mis à l'abri à Dijon

on considère les transactions conclues entre les Lombards et leurs pourvoyeurs comme des crédits remboursables en nature, sur une émine livrée aux marchands, 60% correspondaient donc au remboursement du principal et 40% aux intérêts. Par conséquent, le taux d'intérêt pratiqué était, avec 66,7%, certes très élevé, mais non exceptionnel par rapport aux habitudes de l'époque.

Les contrats conclus entre les Lombards du Val de Saône et leurs partenaires de la région dijonnaise étaient réels et non des ventes fictives, comme cela existait dans le Namurois (Balon 1948), car certains actes sont annulés[35] ou comportent des garanties sous la forme de biens fonciers ou de bétail.[36] Des prêts d'argent sont ouvertement désignés comme tels. Par ailleurs, l'activité des Lombards comme marchands de grains est indubitable et se maintenait même dans des phases conflictuelles avec l'autorité ducale (Gauthier 1907).

Les échanges réguliers de main-d'œuvre entre le vignoble d'une part, le plateau et la plaine d'autre part, à l'occasion des récoltes annuelles, offraient aux vignerons une facilité évidente à nouer des contacts avec des fournisseurs potentiels, même si ces embauches temporaires traditionnelles ne donnaient pas lieu à des contrats conclus devant notaire. Ils répondaient à un besoin des campagnes en manque chronique de numéraire, tout particulièrement avec le développement de la fiscalité d'état et la conversion de nombreuses redevances seigneuriales auparavant payées en nature (Bove 2020, 124-27).

Il se pose alors la question de la rentabilité de ce type d'opérations pour les clients des Lombards. C'étaient des contrats fortement spéculatifs, conclus pour une bonne part en période de soudure, à la fin de l'hiver et au début du printemps. Le vendeur disposait, en général, d'une année pour se procurer au meilleur prix la marchandise promise. Lorsqu'il se trouvait dans l'incapacité de livrer la quantité convenue, il lui était possible de racheter sa dette en argent.

Il est impossible que tout ce froment ait pu provenir des champs et de la propre production des pourvoyeurs. L'état des revenus de l'abbaye Saint-Bénigne dressé en 1438-39 (Pepke-Durix 2012a et 2012b), qui donne la liste des redevances dues aux moines par les habitants de leurs seigneuries, n'en mentionne aucune de froment pour les villages viticoles proches de Dijon. Un vigneron ne pouvait pas promettre à des marchands étrangers, un an à l'avance, sur sa propre récolte, des quantités aussi importantes que 25, 40, voire 60 émines de froment, là où le principal seigneur du lieu ne percevait, pour toute redevance en grains, que trois ou six émines de blé tourte (méteil) et autant d'avoine – et aucun froment.

Dans les actes, aucune provenance géographique des grains vendus n'est indiquée. Les documents dépouillés n'ont révélé aucune trace de contrats, spéculatifs ou non, avec leurs propres fournisseurs. Mais l'un au moins, à Talant, pratiquait lui-même le prêt d'argent à une échelle non négligeable, puisque trois de ses concitoyens – dont deux figurent également parmi les fournisseurs des Lombards – reconnaissent lui devoir des sommes allant de cinq florins et demi à quinze florins et demi, pour cause de prêt.[37]

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[35] ADCO B 11.256, fol. 47 v.

[36] ADCO B 11.257, fol. 12 r.

[37] ADCO B 11.256, fol. 159 v.

Quels que fussent leurs circuits d'approvisionnement, leurs affaires avec les Lombards laissent percevoir plus en détail la plus forte monétarisation de l'économie dans ce vignoble périurbain, déjà constatée à partir des données fiscales, et interrogent plus généralement sur le profil économique des élites villageoises.

3.3 La vache du vigneron, un capital intermédiaire?

Dans la première moitié du XVe siècle, une autre pratique liée à la capitalisation par des vignerons s'observe à travers les affaires du marchand dijonnais Jean Labireaul, à savoir de nombreux baux à cheptel. Dix d'entre eux furent conclus avec des habitants de Dijon, expressément désignés comme vignerons, et de Fontaine, village alors fortement viticole. Ils portaient sur une vache ou une vache et son veau, dite alors « suitée » (Pepke-Durix 2007, 20).

La fonction de crédit agricole de ce type de transactions – la vente d'un ou plusieurs animaux par un rural à un marchand urbain, suivie immédiatement par la reprise en location du même animal ou des mêmes animaux – est bien connue, y compris à Dijon (Masson 1935; Dutour 1978). Habituellement, le bail à cheptel est plutôt mal considéré. Françoise Fortunet y voit un indice d'appauvrissement paysan et de difficultés à faire face aux charges à l'ère moderne et au XIXe siècle (Fortunet 1985), tandis que G. Sicard (1965) a comparé les vues des juristes et des théologiens des derniers siècles médiévaux, les premiers étant moins rigoristes dans le rejet de l'intérêt que les seconds.

Dans la perspective du vigneron vendeur et repreneur, l'opération apparaît comme une façon commode de liquider un capital tout en continuant de profiter de ses produits (reproduction et lait transformable en beurre, crème et fromage). Dans une société où le prêt à intérêt était en principe prohibé et en même temps pratiqué avec des taux parfaitement usuriers (cf. ci-dessus), le fait d'économiser de l'argent, de le placer dans une vache, puis de continuer d'économiser un complément suffisant pour pouvoir acheter une petite parcelle avec le capital total ainsi constitué ne paraissait-il pas la voie la moins difficile à suivre pour un vigneron pragmatique désireux de gagner sa part de l'essor qui l'entourait?

En attendant une étude plus approfondie du marché du foncier viticole, on peut observer à partir des baux à cheptel conclus par Labireaul que la valeur d'une vache, suitée ou non, se situait régulièrement entre cinquante et soixante-dix sous tournois, soit 2,5 à 3,5 livres tournois, tandis que le seul prix d'une vigne mentionné dans la source se monte à 26 livres tournois pour une superficie de cinq quartiers et demi, ce qui revient à un prix de deux livres sept sous et trois deniers tournois par ouvrée,[38] soit un peu moins que la valeur d'une vache. Autrement dit, la vente d'une vache reprise à bail permettait au vigneron de disposer d'un montant sensiblement du même ordre de grandeur que celui nécessaire pour acquérir une ouvrée de vigne.

[38] L'ouvrée est la superficie qui pouvait être bêchée par un homme en une journée. Huit ouvrées équivalent à un journal, c'est-à-dire la superficie labourable en une journée. Le quartier, un quart de journal, est donc le double d'une ouvrée. L'ouvrée de Dijon correspond à 4,76 ares, celle de Beaune à 4,28 ares (Bailly 1902).

Tab. 1. **Baux à cheptel de vaches conclus par Jean Labireaul avec des habitants de Dijon et Fontaine**

Folio	Date	Animaux	Capital (en sous tournois)	Client(s)	Lieu de résidence
38v	Vendredi avant Saint-Clément 1427	1 vache, poil rouge[39]	70 s.t.	Jehan Jailloup, vigneron	Fontaine
41v	Samedi après Oculi 1428	1 génisse de 2 ans 1/2, poil rouge	50 s.t.	Hugues Gaiffier, vigneron	Fontaine
46v	Mercredi après Translation saint Martin 1428	1 vache, poil bis	50 s. t.	Guiot Breton d'Ahuy, vigneron	Dijon
48r	Samedi avant Saint-Clément 1428	1 vache, poil rouge fleuri 1 veau d'un an, poil rouge fleuri	6 l.t.	Villemot Denisot	Fontaine
49v	Mardi Conversion saint Paul 1428	1 vache, poil rouge fleuri	60 s.t.	Seronete fille feu Jacques le Nain	Fontaine
52r	1er juin 1429	1 vache, poil fleuri	50 s.t.	Thevenin le Gornet	Fontaine
54r	Mercredi après la Décollation de saint Jean Baptiste 1429	1 vache, poil rouge	60 s.t.	Jehan Moriset	Fontaine
55r	Lundi veille de la St-Luc Evangéliste 1430	1 vache, poil rouge	50 s. t.	Jehan Fourneret, vigneron	Dijon
59r	19 avril 1430 = mercredi après Pâques	1 vache, poil brun 1 génisse, poil rouge	60 s.t.	Guillaume Ramaille, vigneron	Dijon
59r	22 mai 1430 = lundi avant Ascension	1 vache, poil rouge	70 s.t.	Jacques le Pacotet et Richenette sa femme	Fontaine

ADCO B 11. 375 Registre de Huguenin le Binget de Dijon

Mais quelle était alors l'utilité de l'investissement initial dans la vache plutôt que directement dans un lopin de terre, planté de vigne ou non? Au moins trois explications complémentaires peuvent être avancées. Tout d'abord, la taille de l'unité initiale achetée pouvait être nettement supérieure à une ouvrée, en fonction des parcelles disponibles à la vente. Le manque de parcelles à vendre ou disponibles dans une zone géographique particulière intéressant l'acheteur potentiel pouvait inciter à

[39] Rien n'indique la signification précise des qualificatifs de la robe des animaux, « rouge » ou « fleuri », dont le sens était suiffisamment clair pour les contemporains; « poil bis » renvoie à la couleur gris beige du pain bis.

différer l'achat tout en plaçant le capital correspondant de manière à ce qu'il rapporte un intérêt. Il en va de même d'autres raisons personnelles potentielles: le vigneron tenu encore pour quelque temps par un autre engagement tout en ayant déjà une somme intéressante à placer de manière sécurisée, l'attente qu'un ou plusieurs enfants de la famille atteignent un âge suffisant pour aider à l'exploitation de la vigne une fois acquise, par exemple le terme d'un contrat d'apprentissage comme vu ci-dessus… Enfin, le prix d'achat du bovin pouvait être inférieur à celui d'un terrain s'il s'agissait d'un animal jeune, veau ou génisse, l'acheteur spéculant sur la hausse de sa valeur.

Ce type de contrats, courant chez Labireaul, est absent, un siècle plus tôt, des affaires de la famille Frérouhot, elles aussi bien documentées[40], et ce n'est probablement pas un hasard mais dû à la hausse séculaire des rémunérations intervenue depuis la peste noire. Cette étude demanderait à être étendue à travers les registres de notaires, accessibles en ligne mais non indexés, raison pour laquelle elle se heurte au problème de la surabondance de ce type de sources, un « embarras de richesse » bourguignon comme celui constaté par Werner Paravicini à propos des archives financières de la Maison de Bourgogne-Valois (Paravicini 1996).

Conclusion

En conclusion, dans cette période de mutations profondes de la société et de l'économie avec une redistribution des rôles à grande échelle, les vignerons, et notamment ceux qui travaillaient auparavant comme journaliers, sont indéniablement les gagnants des mutations sociales intervenues depuis la peste noire. Les clés de leur succès tiennent à la fois aux conditions externes et à leur capacité d'en tirer profit. Ils possédaient des compétences, certainement partielles, plutôt pour les travaux de la vigne que pour la vinification dans la plupart des cas, mais qu'ils pouvaient combiner avec d'autres activités dans l'artisanat. Leur ambition d'accéder à leur propre vigne était facilitée par le fait que l'investissement initial se limitait pour l'essentiel au foncier, la force de travail de leurs bras étant l'énergie principale, sans besoin d'attelage sauf pour le transport de la vendange qui pouvait se faire en recourant au service d'autrui. Peut-être un registre de notaire – ou de justice – livrera-t-il un jour des informations sur la manière dont les plus humbles des vignerons indépendants s'organisaient pour cette tâche.

Cette dernière phase du travail viticole laisse aussi entr'apercevoir la capacité des gestionnaires de domaines importants comme ceux des ducs d'adapter leur organisation du travail aux contraintes de la conjoncture et d'obtenir des gains de productivité. Cette catégorie de « cadres moyens » de la société médiévale a jusqu'à présent peu retenu l'intérêt des chercheurs, contrairement aux élites et aux défavorisés, et mériterait une attention spécifique.

Portée par le manque de main d'œuvre et la hausse séculaire des rémunérations, l'ascension sociale des vignerons était ambiguë face à la forte demande locale et étrangère. Cette dernière était soutenue par le contexte historique politique créant ou renforçant une certaine mode, car les ducs de Bourgogne utilisaient largement le vin

[40] ADCO 11.225 Registre de Dominique Griffon (1323-1328).

comme outil diplomatique et comme élément de leurs fastes. Mais elle nécessitait un niveau de qualité des vins qui n'était pas toujours au rendez-vous car la production pâtissait de la course au rendement.

Le revers de la médaille du succès des vignerons de la région dijonnaise n'était donc pas tant l'absence, contrairement à l'Auxerrois, d'organisation collective entre eux que la recherche de profit rapide au détriment de la qualité. Cette dernière nuisait à la réputation des vins de la « Côte », dans une période où le départ de la Curie d'Avignon pesait déjà sur les débouchés.

Le facteur le plus fort limitant l'ascension individuelle des vignerons fut certainement le retour de la croissance démographique entraînant un recul des surfaces plantées en vignes à long terme. Le bilan des mutations intervenues était néanmoins positif pour eux et renforcé par la reconnaissance collective obtenue. Plus généralement, dans la seconde moitié du XVe siècle, tout le vignoble dijonnais était certainement géré de manière plus fine qu'un siècle auparavant, à en juger d'après l'organisation du ban des vendanges (Pepke-Durix 2009a).

L'évolution observée soulève de nouveaux questionnements, en particulier celui des différentes formes de crédit, notamment foncier, au sein de la population rurale. Il sera peut-être possible de mieux connaître l'équipement technique des vignerons et leurs circuits d'approvisionnement en exploitant de façon ciblée les testaments et inventaires après décès ainsi que les registres de notaires en général. Ensemble avec les sources de la fiscalité directe, ils recèlent une riche matière pour des études prosopographiques. C'est peut-être aussi par ce biais que l'on pourrait aboutir à des comparaisons avec d'autres régions, difficiles à cause de la richesse exceptionnelle des sources bourguignonnes.

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A new method of expanding the reconstruction of the occupational structure in Renaissance Florence: A preliminary investigation with insights into the economic impact of political and economic changes

1. Introduction

In recent decades, several scholarly contributions from the social sciences, particularly history, have attempted to reconstruct the occupation structures of the regional and urban economies of Western Europe during preindustrial times. Some of these studies have provided overviews and estimates that attempted to determine the trends of occupations among the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of preindustrial economies (Allen 2000; Malanima20 05; Malanima 2011; Wallis et al. 2018; Chilosi and Ciccarelli 2022). Others have focussed more precisely on urban centres, reconstructing the distribution of the labour force across the main professions, primarily those in the secondary and tertiary sectors (Zucca Micheletto 2013).

With the current paper, we contribute to the literature in this field by analysing the changes that occurred to the occupational structures in Florence from the second half of the fourteenth century until the mid-fifteenth century. We do so by exploring the demographic and economic information reported in the seven fiscal censuses redacted by the government of Florence during this period. These documents, some of which have never been previously analysed in detail, provide information on the occupations of some recorded household heads residing and living in Florence at the time of their realisation. We first explore this information and provide initial insights into the changes in the distribution of occupations in Florence among those who declared them during the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. We do so by using the taxonomy for occupations in preindustrial times proposed by Whittle and Hailwood (2020), which follows the criterion of identifying a profession through the description of the main activity performed. Next, we explore a possible method of integrating this information and inferring the professions of some household heads who did not declare their occupations. In particular, by systematically analysing the demographic information of the households living in four of the sixteen neighbourhoods of Florence, one from each quarter of the city (the *gonfalone della Scala, gonfalone Chiavi, gonfalone del Leon Nero* and *gonfalone della Vipera*) recorded in the *Catasto*, the fiscal cadastre of 1427, we demonstrate how the additional information contained in the fiscal censuses might provide a valuable basis for extending the information on the occupational structure at that time. We anticipate that future analyses will extend this method to all the neighbourhoods included in the 1427 *Catasto* and the other fiscal censuses that constitute our dataset.

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The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the demographic, economic and political changes that occurred in Florence after the Black Death in 1348 until the mid-fifteenth century. In Section 3, we describe the sources used for the analysis. Section 4 provides the preliminary descriptive results on the occupational structure of the subset of household heads who declared their occupations. Section 5 presents an example of the method used to integrate the declared information for four neighbourhoods of Florence in 1427. Finally, Section 6 provides some preliminary conclusions to the work.

2. Economic and occupational changes in Florence in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries

The city of Florence, which emerged during the 12th-mid-fourteenth centuries as one of the liveliest, most vibrant demographic and economic urban centres of North and Central Italy (Fiumi 1958; de la Ronciere 1976), entered into a period of dramatic change during the second half of the fourteenth century. This phase of transformation, which lasted for at least one century, involved the city's demographic, economic and political structures (Cherubini 1974; Hay 1977; Caferro 2011).

The Black Death, a plague epidemic that hit most of the Western European regions during the years 1348-52, also affected the urban and rural areas of Florence. In particular, the urban centre experienced an estimated population reduction of 40%-60% of the preplague population (Goldthwaite 1982; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985). During the subsequent decades, the city was recurrently hit by several waves of new plagues, at least four times before the end of the fourteenth century and eight times between 1400 and 1458, the year of the last census analysed in the present work (Cohn 2010; Morrison et al. 1985). The recurrence of these plague epidemics and other diseases and famines halted the population's ability to recover. From an urban population that ranged between 90,000 and 120,000 inhabitants before 1348, at the time of the 1457 fiscal census, Florence was likely the size of 41,500 inhabitants, a number not so far from the population figures of the years that immediately followed the Black Death (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985).

The economic performance of the city's leading productive and service sectors was also hit by the transformation resulting from the dramatic demographic collapse of the second half of the fourteenth century. On the one hand, the supply of the urban manufacturing labour force dramatically decreased, a condition that induced a short-term improvement in the economic conditions attained by the surviving workers (Cohn 2021). On the other hand, the entrepreneurial side of the leading economic sectors entered a phase of transformation. During the century before the Black Death, high-quality wool clothes, particularly those produced in Florence, spread throughout the main markets and fairs of the Mediterranean basin and Western Europe.

After the mid-fourteenth century, two macroeconomic changes caused a crisis for this sector. First, the increased income per capita enjoyed by the middle and upper classes in Western Europe, consequent to population reduction, changed the consumption patterns and shifted the demand of these socioeconomic groups towards

higher-quality products, such as silk (Franceschi and Molá 2006; Franceschi 2019). Second, the emergence of competitors in wool clothes production, especially those from northern Europe specialising in the manufacture of lower quality products than Florentine ones, reduced the market shares of Florentine entrepreneurs (Hoshino 1980; Franceschi 1993). The Florentine manufacturing sector naturally reacted to the decline of wool, resulting in several entrepreneurs and investors entering the newly rising silk production. This transformation, which occurred in the first half of the fifteenth century, changed the demand for labour, which should have now been more qualified than the one employed in wool production. The market-driven change in labour qualification also interacted with an overall decline in the workers' economic conditions, which began in the second quarter of the fifteenth century (Tognetti 1995; Cohn 2021).

The political changes that occurred during the period – especially those that shaped the economic transformations in the same decades to some extent – were also considerable, marking the beginning of a long decline in the Florentine Republic's institutions. The first significant change was the short-lived but dramatic government of wage workers in the wool sector, the so-called *Ciompi*, which ruled Florence after their revolt in the summer of 1378. Notably, this short-lived government failed in its initiatives, most of which aimed at reforming political and fiscal institutions in favour of the less well-off. However, their short rule had a crucial impact on the city's subsequent political trajectory. After the fall of the *Ciompi* at the end of August 1378, the Florentine political system reorganised itself around the restored power of the major guilds of the city, now animated by the influential role played by one of the wealthiest Florentine clans, the Albizzi (Najemy 1982). The new oligarchic system, which co-opted most of the political representatives from the families affiliated with the Albizzi, lasted until the 1430s, when a new network of economically rising clans emerged, now centred on the rapidly growing economic and political influence of the Medici (Kent 1978). Their government, which emerged through the sophisticated control of the Republican institutions of Florence implemented by the head of the family, Cosimo (1389-1464), lasted until the end of the fifteenth century when new dramatic changes accelerated the process of decline of the Florentine Republic (Rubinstein 1997).

In summary, a brief overview of the demographic, economic and political changes that occurred in Florence between the mid-fourteenth century and 1458, the date of the last census in our analysis, shows that several changes occurred to the city's socioeconomic structure. The considerable impact of these changes on the supply and demand of labour in the city motivated our investigation of the changes in the occupational structure in the period. We specifically analysed these changes from the information reported in a selected set of fiscal censuses of the city.

3. The sources of the reconstruction of the Florentine occupational structure

At the beginning of its communal history, the fiscal system of the city of Florence was based on the *fodro*, a direct tax implemented in previous centuries, which was derived from the impositions made by the feudal lords in rural areas. During the second half of the thirteenth century, the Commune introduced taxation mechanisms that considered the different payment capacities of individual households. These mechanisms implied the redaction of an *estimo*, an assessment reporting a fiscal index for each household proportionate to its wealth and relative to the wealth of the other households, assessed by the tax officials of the city (Ciappelli 2009, 15-17). Since the first half of the fourteenth century, Florence used these fiscal indexes to collect a new form of fiscal revenues, the so-called *prestanze*. The city requested these sums in the form of forced loans, which entitled its citizens to receive interest rate payments and the restitution of the sum lent to the polity. Later in the century, the unrepaid debts of the city were consolidated in public debt when the number of resources requested by the city increased and Florence proved unable to repay the forced loans collected; from then on, the newly imposed *prestanze* would have only entitled the creditor-citizen to receive the payment of the interest rate (Becker 1967, 156).

The distribution of the *prestanze* among the taxpayers was not made by census, but by the so-called *metodo induttivo*, which was made by the officials based on the assessed relative wealth among the households and reported in the *estimo*. For our analyses, we documented the distribution of occupations in Florence by selecting five series of documents reporting information about the repartition of forced loans. The first one is a new *estimo*, also called *Libro della Sega*, ordered by the Florentine government on June 3rd 1352. The document reported the following information for each household head: names and surnames, place of origin and, in some cases, the profession. This system included all the households residing in the city, '*cives et habitatores*'. At the same time, those who were considered unable to pay taxes (*impotenti ad solvendum et mutuandum prestantias*) and the *miserabili* (miserables) were recorded in a separate list that was also included in the document. This source, used to impose the *prestanze,* represents an almost unique, near-to-complete description of the Florentine population for the period.

The second source is the new *estimo* ordered by the city in 1363. The assessment was used to repartition the *prestanze* collected in 1363 and 1364. A third source is the *estimo* redacted in 1379 and was used to collect four *prestanze* during the same year. We also included, among our sources, the assessment made in 1395, called the *Accatto 1395*. This document recorded all the citizens, including the *miserabili*, on a separate list and presented several characteristics that distinguished it from the previous records. For example, the *Accatto* was written in Italian rather than in Latin; it distinguished three classes of citizens based on the tax imposition, namely *maggiori* (major), *minori (*minor) and *miserabili*; and it differentiated the inhabitants of the city from those possessing the formal qualification of citizens. The final source among the records

used to collect the *prestanze* is the list redacted in 1403 for collecting forced loans in the same year.

In 1427, the town adopted a new assessment system of household wealth, based on which it imposed a new method of fiscal burden repartition. The system, called the *Catasto*, consisted of the redaction of a wealth assessment based on self-declarations made by each household residing in Florence's city and *contado* (the countryside). The self-declaration should report the values of the household head's assets, including credits, debts, shares of public debts and investments (Conti 1984; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985). The sums of the wealth declared were then used as the basis for computing the amount due by the taxpayer obtained through the same coefficient imposed on all households (Molho 1971). Therefore, each declaration reported an unprecedentedly large amount of demographic and socioeconomic information. The demographic information included the names, ages and gender of all the household members, while the socioeconomic information included the *gonfalone* of residence, the household head's occupation and the complete list and values of his/her possessions, except for the house of residence.

The first redaction of the *Catasto* was completed in 1427, after which subsequent updates and new assessments were made in 1434, 1442 and 1457/58 (Conti 1984, 124; Ciappelli 2009, 84-87). Our analyses included two documents: the *Catasto* of 1427 and that of 1457/58. The *Catasto* of 1427 included three series of data: the *Portate*, the self-declarations for every *gonfalone*; the *Campioni*, the official transcription of the declarations in a standard layout with the examination of the fiscal assets, the *valsente* and the fiscal coefficient; and the *Repertori*, a summary list of household heads with their fiscal coefficients. We used the information reported in the *Campioni*. The *Catasto* of 1457/58 included two copies of self-declarations, reporting the officials' notes for the estimation of *valsente* and the tax coefficients. The information reported for each household was the same as that reported in the *Catasto* of 1427 (Conti 1984).

Table 1 summarises the availability of information on the occupations of the household heads during the period under analysis. As shown in the table, the percentages of declarations reporting information on the profession of the household heads changed over time, varying from low shares in 1363-1364 and 1458 to nearly half of the set of declarations in 1352, 1395 and 1403, with a peak of over 60% coverage in 1378.

Before proceeding with the preliminary analysis, we must acknowledge at least three intrinsic limitations of our sources, which inevitably reduce the potential for generalising our findings regarding the occupational structure in Florence.

First, the historical sources we analyse do not allow us to capture the nuanced labour conditions of the declarants who may have performed two or even more professions but declared only one of them. This limitation implies that all the evidence presented here concerns only the profession *declared* by the household head; it does not capture the multiple professions that the household heads might have performed in their working time. A second shortcoming of the fiscal sources analysed here is that they underreport females' occupations. The declarant household heads were

usually males, and in the few cases in which a female was the household head – usually a widow of a deceased male household head – her occupation was not reported. The only case in which it was reported was when she was employed in a care job. Therefore, future analyses of the late mediaeval and renaissance occupational structures throughout the urban centres of Western Europe should ideally consult different sources (e.g. records of labour litigation) to uncover the historical patterns of women's labour, which were almost totally neglected by the institutional sources analysed here. A third and final limitation concerns the underrepresentation of the professions typically performed within the house by other household members, such as females and young daughters and sons. Of these, the activities related to food processing were among those performed more frequently in the house. Our fiscal data do not include such information, and this limitation will likely result in the category being underrepresented in our analyses.

Notwithstanding such limitations, the massive and consistent fiscal data for Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries constitute a *unicum* that deserves further investigation. Although preliminary and partial, the results might still enhance the understanding of the occupational structure in the urban centre of Western Europe during the late Middle Ages.

Tab. 1. **Summary of the sources for the Florentine demography and occupational structures**

Name of the document	Year of redaction	Number of households recorded	Numbers and percentages of households with reported occupation
Libro della Sega	1352	10,145	4,221 (42%)
Prestanze	1363-64	8,393	2,097 (25%)
Estimo	1378	10,302	6,606 (64%)
Accatto	1395	11,660	5,670 (49%)
Prestanze	1403	7,530	3,173 (42%)
Catasto	1427	9,780	3,767 (39%)
Catasto	1457/58	7,718	1,930 (25%)

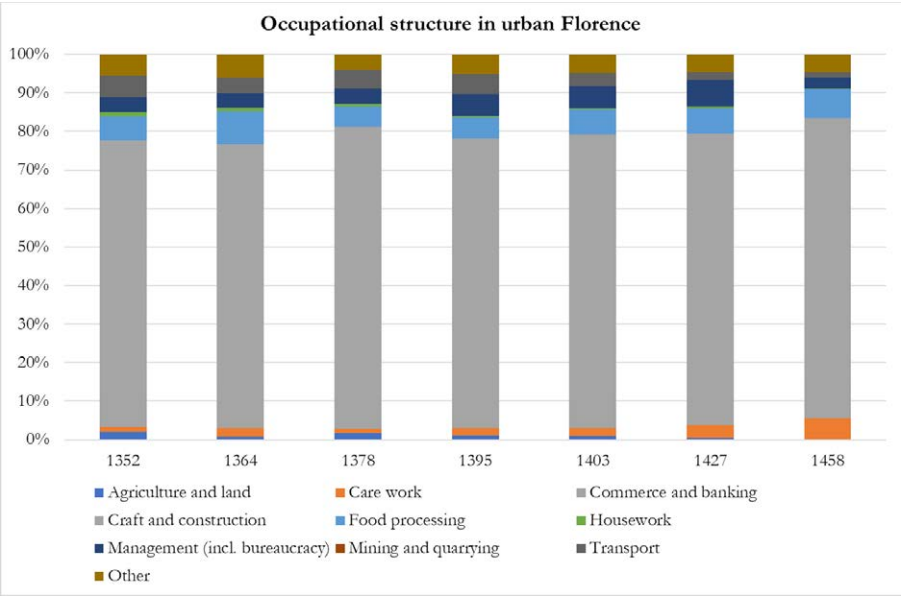
4. Preliminary evidence on the Florentine occupational structure

In this section, we provide a preliminary analysis of the occupational structure in urban Florence between 1352 and 1457 by looking at the household heads who declared their occupations in the registers analysed. Initially, we grouped the heterogeneous professions into ten categories, which we adopted from a recent contribution that analysed the distribution of urban professions in five counties of southwestern England between 1500 and 1700 (Whittle and Hailwood 2020). The categories, which were constructed following the information on the tasks reported by the analysed

historical sources, included workers who lived in the city but worked in jobs related to the rural areas (*Agriculture and Land)*; those who provided care services, such as barbers (*Care Work*); all the workers employed in the trade and private credit sectors (*Commerce and Banking*), an overarching category encompassing all the manufacturing professions, including also the building sector (*Crafts and Construction*); the workers who performed jobs in the food production sectors, such as bakers and butchers (*Food Processing*); the house helpers (*Housework*); those who managed several decision processes, including the bureaucrats (*Management*); those in the mining sectors (*Mining and Quarrying*); those who provided transportation services (*Transport*); and a final residual category (*Other*), which in our case included other professions, such as artists.

The distributions of workers across categories and their changes over time show relevant insights (Graph 1). As expected, the largest share of those with declared occupations were employed in the crafts and construction sectors, with percentages ranging between 62% and 70%. Similarly, another category that maintained a constant trend throughout the century was that of merchants and bankers (*Commerce and Banking*), whose percentages ranged between 7% and 11% through the century. Interestingly, among the minor categories of jobs, a slight increase can be observed in the share of declarants employed in care work (from 1% in 1352 to 5% in 1458) and of those employed in the management and bureaucracy sectors (from 4% in 1352 to 7% in 1427, decreasing to 3% in 1458).

Graph 1. **Changes in the reported occupational structure by macrosectors**



A deeper investigation into the most significant occupational category among the ones declared by the Florentine taxpayers, Crafts and Construction, reveals additional insights into the distribution of jobs in Florence. Within the overarching manufacturing category, we identified six subgroups, each capturing the main productive sectors of late mediaeval and renaissance Florence. The groups included all the workers in the wool sector (*Wool*), those employed in silk production (*Silk*) and the ones employed in any other area of textile manufacturing (*Other textile*), including the shoemakers. We grouped all sector workers in each of the three groups, regardless of their hierarchical position or qualification. A fourth group included all the workers in the building sector (*Building sector*), whom we categorised to distinguish them from the other more proper artisans and manufacturers. A final category included workers in any manufacturing activity involving metals, such as smiths and goldsmiths, and those who produced swords and other weapons (*Metal manufacturers*). Meanwhile, a final residual category group consisted of other types of work for which we could not identify a substantially large stand-alone group (*Other manufacturing*). This group included, for example, glassmakers, whose number was relatively small in the fiscal records under analysis.

The evidence shows additional insights into the changes in the distribution of occupation among those employed in the manufacturing and building sector, who declared their professions between the 1350s and 1450s (Graph 2). The trends revealed that, among those employed in textile production, the share of workers in the wool sector first increased in the last quarter of the fourteenth century and then declined since the beginning of the fifteenth century. The observed increase corresponded to when wool workers, especially those at the bottom of the production process, acquired civic and political recognition (Brucker 1962). Improving their condition might have attracted workers to this sector, as well as pushed a more significant fraction of them to declare their profession to acquire recognition on the political scene. Their share then declined at the beginning of the fifteenth century, confirming the Florentine wool sector's downturn (Dini 1984; Franceschi 1993).

Interestingly, the share of workers employed in the other textile manufacturing sectors was somehow inverse to that of the wool labour force. In particular, the share of workers employed in the other minor textiles decreased during the last three decades of the fourteenth century, but increased since the beginning of the fifteenth century. These trends suggest that the rise and decline of jobs in the wool sector might have taken from or liberated the labour force for other minor textile productions. Similarly, the evidence shows that the silk sector might have substituted wool not only as a target of Florentine entrepreneurs' investments but also as an employment opportunity. From a tiny share of declarants employed in the small silk sector of the fourteenth century (2%), we observe an increase during the first half of the fifteenth century, with the share of manufacturing workers employed in the silk sector reaching 10%-11% in 1427-1458, thereby confirming the increased importance of silk production in Florence during the fifteenth century (Tognetti 2002). Finally, the building sector also shows an increasing share of the labour force during the

fifteenth century, thus confirming the increasing importance of construction works in the Tuscan city during the period (Goldthwaite 1982).

Graph 2. **Changes in the reported occupational structure within the manufacturing sector**

In summary, the preliminary descriptive analyses presented in this section reveal at least two exciting insights into the occupational distribution of those who declared their professions in the fiscal records in Florence between the 1350s and 1450s. First, the most significant part of this segment of the Florentine labour force was continuously employed in the manufacturing and building sectors, a tendency that remained the same despite the ever-changing demographic, economic and political events that occurred during the century under analysis. Second, deeper investigations into the building and manufacturing sectors reveal variations in the share of the labour force, which, in turn, are associated with economic and political changes.

5. An example of the integration of occupation-related information

During the period under analysis, household heads who had to declare their economic status were not obliged to report their profession. For this reason, our sources inform us about the occupation only for a portion of taxpayers. In particular, those who were more willing to declare their profession were citizens who wanted to leverage that declaration to identify themselves and acquire or increase their social, civic and political recognition. Such behaviour represents an additional bias in our dataset because those with an already identifiable surname, which allowed them to be recognised based on their family's aristocratic or high socioeconomic status, did not usually need to declare their occupation, and they might have more likely failed to do that. At the same time, the presence of a surname, combined with additional information provided by some of the sources used in this study, might be used to integrate

information on the occupations of the taxpayers. This is the case of the 1427 *Catasto*, in which the combination of the information about surnames, the attributes sometimes added to names and the information on the business partnerships often reported in the records can be matched to reconstruct a sizeable number of occupations for the taxpayers.

We illustrate the procedures used to integrate this information for four of the sixteen neighbourhoods of Florence, one from each quarter: the *gonfalone Scala* (the 'ladder') from the quarter of *Santo Spirito*, the *gonfalone Chiavi* ('keys') from the quarter of *San Giovanni*, the *gonfalone Vipera* ('viper') from the quarter of *Santa Maria Novella,* and the *gonfalone del Leone Nero* ('black lion') from the quarter of *Santa Croce*. Each neighbourhood is a good sample of the quarters they were part of. For example, the *gonfalone Scala* included both rich residential areas of the time (*via de'Bardi, Piazza dei Mozzi*) and areas inhabited by poorer economic groups (*San Niccolò, Costa San Giorgio*). As shown in Table 2, from a total of 2,118 households recorded in the 1427 *Catasto* for the four *gonfaloni*, in *Scala*, 38% (821) reported the occupation of the declarant. Notably, the proportion of household heads in the four *gonfaloni* with an identified profession is very close to that in the whole 1427 *Catasto* (Table 1), making the neighbourhoods a good case to start our investigation.

We implemented two separate methods to infer the occupation from additional information included in the tax declarations or from that provided by other declarants from the same *Catasto*. First, we investigated the information on the business partnerships as reported within the household heads' tax declarations. It was possible, in fact, that while certain taxpayers did not declare their professions, they might have nonetheless appeared as business partners in a joint venture with other tax declarants. In several cases, we cross-validated this information, adding it to those who had not declared their occupation.[1] For example, Bardo di Francesco de' Bardi, residing in the *gonfalone Scala*, declared that he had no occupation, but we were able to identify him as the main shareholder in a company that produced and traded silk. Second, we used honorary titles, which were typically added to the name and unequivocally identified a profession, such as the use of '*ser*' before the first name to indicate a notary.

Using the two methods above allowed us to reconstruct information on the occupations of 193 household heads without declared occupations in the four *gonfaloni*. This number represents 9% of the declarations without reported occupation, thus allowing us to increase the percentage of household heads with known occupation from 38% to 47% of the total number of declarants in the four neighbourhoods (Table 2).

[1] This work was made possible by analysing all the economic activities reported in the 1427 *Catasto*. Dr. Bettarini completed the analysis during a project on the Florentine society that was funded and supervised by Prof. John Padgett, Chicago University.

Tab. 2. **Summary of the declared and reconstructed occupations in the four selected *gonfaloni***

Gonfalone (quarter)	Number of declarants households	Number of declarants with reported occupation	Number of reconstructed occupations	Total number of occupations (declared and reconstructed)
Scala (Santo Spirito)	537	195 (36%)	66 (12%)	261 (49%)
Chiavi (San Giovanni)	944	439 (47%)	51 (5%)	490 (53%)
Leone Nero (Santa Croce)	423	124 (29%)	54 (13%)	178 (43%)
Vipera (Santa Maria Novella)	214	40 (19%)	22 (10%)	62 (30%)
Total	2118	798 (38%)	193 (9%)	991 (47%)

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the percentages of the number of declarant households.

Upon analysing the distribution of the occupations reconstructed through our method, we observe at least two important results (Table 3).

First, the distribution of the occupations among the households who did not provide the information to the officials redacting the *Catasto* did not follow the same distribution of those who declared it. In particular, a large fraction of the reconstructed occupation fell within three main categories: Commerce and Banking (40.9%), Crafts and Construction (27.5%) and Management and Bureaucracy (18.1%). Two of these categories, Commerce and Banking and Management and Bureaucracy, were a minority of the occupations declared in the *Catasto* of the four sampled neighbourhoods, representing 6.3% and 10.0% of their totals, respectively. Therefore, our method provides a way to reconstruct the actual extent of the diffusion of the professional categories that are less represented in the *Catasto*.

This result, in turn, suggests a second important implication of the analysis: the integration of the declared information on occupation with the details derived from other information contained in the same historical sources is a promising method to expand and decisively change, in future analyses, prevailing knowledge about the Florentine occupational structure. In fact, aside from adding more cases to the set of households with a known occupation, our analysis also seems to be able to significantly change the perspective of the distribution of professions. For example, among the four sampled neighbourhoods, an analysis of the percentages of household heads employed in the Commerce and Banking and Crafts and Construction categories, based on the sole declared occupations, would return a possibly imprecise assessment of the two percentages. After adding the reconstructed occupations, the results showed that while the fraction of those employed in Crafts and Construction

dropped by over 8% (from 67.8% to 59.5%), the fraction of those employed in Commerce and Banking more than doubled (from 6.3% to 13.4%).

Tab. 3. **List of reconstructed professions by macrosectors in the four selected *gonfaloni* in 1427**

Macrosector	*Scala*	*Chiavi*	*Vipera*	*Leone Nero*	Sum of the 4 *gonfaloni*	Percentage among the reconstructed occupations in the four *gonfaloni*	Percentage among the declared professions in the *Catasto* of the four *gonfaloni*	Percentage among the declared and reconstructed occupations in the four *gonfaloni*
Agriculture and Land	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%
Care Work	1	0	0	0	1	0.5%	4.1%	3.2%
Commerce and Banking	24	15	15	25	79	40.9%	6.3%	13.4%
Craft and Construction	28	14	0	11	53	27.5%	67.8%	59.5%
Food Processing	0	4	0	4	8	4.1%	7.9%	6.7%
Housework	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	1.0%	0.7%
Management and Bureaucracy	10	18	7	0	35	18.1%	10.0%	13.7%
Mining	0	0	0	13	13	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Transport	0	0	0	1	1	0.5%	0.8%	0.6%
Other	3	0	0	0	3	1.6%	1.8%	1.8%
Sum	66	51	22	54	193	100%	100%	100%

6. Conclusion

In this study, we conducted a preliminary investigation on the information about the occupations reported by a share of the Florentine taxpaying population in seven archival sources dating from 1352 up to 1458. To the best of our knowledge, information on the Florentine occupational structure, which can be derived from these fiscal sources, has never been systematically presented and analysed. Thus, for the first time, we demonstrate that even relying only on the group of taxpayers who declared their information might reveal important insights about the structure and trends of the labour force distribution across jobs in late mediaeval and renaissance Florence. In particular, over half of the labour force was consistently employed in the crafts and construction sectors throughout the century under analysis. Further investigation within this category showed that the distribution of manufacturing labourers followed the economic trends of the main productive sectors of the city. For example, the decline of the wool sector since the beginning of the fifteenth century

and the almost simultaneous rise of the silk sector were, in fact, associated with a decline and rise of the labour force within these sectors.

Finally, some of the additional information included in these fiscal sources can provide details regarding the occupations of those who did not declare them. In particular, a preliminary integration conducted on four of the sixteen neighbourhoods has allowed us to increase the percentage of declarants with a plausible occupation from 38% to 47%. In addition, we have shown that, using only data on the declared occupations, the proposed method can expand current knowledge about sections of the occupational structures that are likely underrepresented in analyses. We have also provided evidence of how the distribution of professions changes once the reconstructed occupations are considered. We suggest that further developments of this method will extend the reconstruction of the occupational structure to all other neighbourhoods in Florence in 1427, thus providing a more accurate picture of the distribution of professions across the urban male population of the time.

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Interazioni tra la mobilità sociale e l'evoluzione
delle strutture familiari e dei sistemi ereditari

Interaction between social mobility
and the evolution of family structures and inheritance systems

Gabriel Ramon-Molins

*Prosperare a credito, rovinarsi con i debiti: l'indebitamento come catalizzatore della mobilità sociale nel nord della Catalogna (1785-1799)**

1. Introduzione

Lo studio della rivoluzione finanziaria, le grandi reti creditizie internazionali o l'emergere del sistema bancario moderno hanno spesso lasciato in secondo piano lo studio del credito notarile. Un credito che nel corso del Settecento fu egemonico in gran parte dell'Europa, e, certamente, non solo perché era più accessibile alle economie domestiche dell'epoca, ma anche perché consentiva una maggiore diversificazione dei creditori.

Lo studio dell'indebitamento nella Catalogna preindustriale, soprattutto attraverso i censi, è stato un argomento abbastanza studiato dalla storiografia catalana negli ultimi decenni in alcune zone del paese, ma mancano ancora molte aree che restano da trattare e, soprattutto, manca una visione generale che ci permetta di mettere in relazione il sistema creditizio con la realtà produttiva di ciascuna regione e confrontare l'esempio della Catalogna con altre economie agrarie dell'Europa mediterranea.

Seguendo la strada tracciata da Pierre Vilar nello studio dell'agricoltura catalana del XVII secolo (1964), fondamentale per una struttura economica in fase di trasformazione, si è stimolato un interesse per la relazione tra il sistema di indebitamento e la produzione agricola. Dai lavori già classici di Enric Tello sulla regione della Segarra (1986, 18) o di Llorenç Ferrer sul Bages (1983, 4), incentrati principalmente sul credito, o studi agricoli più ampi come quelli di Rosa Congost sulla regione di Girona (1990a) o Enric Vicedo su quella di Lleida (1991), è stata evidenziata l'importanza di questo elemento fondamentale per la storia economica. In questa stessa direzione, è di grande interesse l'approccio recentemente intrapreso da Rosa Congost, Ricard Garcia-Orallo e Enric Saguer che analizzano come il credito abbia permesso ai gruppi agrari inferiori della regione di Girona di ascendere socialmente (2022, 76).[1]

Il XVIII secolo va inteso come un periodo di crescita economica più o meno generalizzata in cui si accelerano i processi di differenziazione sociale. Infatti, l'analisi delle disuguaglianze nel periodo di fine Antico Regime è stato un tema classico della

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[1] Nel loro studio, tuttavia, a causa delle limitazioni del fondo del registro di proprietà con cui hanno lavorato, non sono riusciti ad esaminare la regione di Figueres per gli anni precedenti al XVIII secolo, che è ciò che abbiamo cercato di fare con questo lavoro.

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Gabriel Ramon-Molins, *Prosperare a credito, rovinarsi con i debiti: l'indebitamento come catalizzatore della mobilità sociale nel nord della Catalogna (1785-1800)*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9.24, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *La mobilità sociale nelle società preindustriali: tendenze, cause ed effetti (secc. XIII-XVIII) / Social mobility in pre-industrial societies: tendencies, causes and effects (13th-18th centuries)*, pp. 479-491, 2025, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0667-9, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9

storiografia che, negli ultimi anni, ha ripreso slancio, in parte grazie a progetti come quello guidato da Guido Alfani, focalizzato sull'analisi dei fattori che accelerano questo processo (2024). Per quanto riguarda la Regione di Girona, disponiamo anche della recente tesi di dottorato di Josep Mas-Ferrer, il quale, soprattutto attraverso lo studio di inventari post mortem, ha analizzato le disuguaglianze tra le classi agricole della comarca di La Selva (2023).

Con questo lavoro, ancora in fase iniziale, vogliamo analizzare come, in un periodo specifico di fine Antico Regime, quando i processi di differenziazione sociale accelerano, si dinamizzi anche la mobilità sociale, sia ascendente che discendente, e come il sistema creditizio agisca come un chiaro catalizzatore di questa mobilità. Infatti, cominciamo già a disporre di approcci a questa realtà per la Catalogna del Settecento, come l'opera già citata di Congost, Garcia-Orallo e Saguer (2022, 76), così come un recente studio di Céline Mutos, che analizza il ruolo del microcredito fornito da alcune entità di beneficenza, che le rafforza economicamente e offre anche possibilità di progresso ai gruppi sociali più umili (2024). Allo stesso modo, il ruolo del microcredito a livello italiano ed europeo è da anni oggetto di studio del gruppo guidato da Paola Avallone presso l'Istituto di Studi sul Mediterraneo (2007; 2013).

Se entriamo a commentare lo schema finanziario della Catalogna di fine Settecento, vediamo che i censi (o *censals*), che sono i titoli più frequenti nei processi di indebitamento agrario durante l'Antico Regime, hanno lasciato posto nel corso del Settecento ad altri meccanismi di indebitamento, come *debitoris* o pegni (vendite *a carta de gràcia*), che si combinano e si adattano alle condizioni socio-economiche di ciascuna area economica. Tutti e tre i meccanismi diventano onnipresenti nel corso del Settecento, ma spesso rispondono a bisogni e contesti diversi.[2] In questo stesso tempo, nel 1768 verrà creata la *Comptaduria d'Hipoteques*, una nuova istituzione che, anche se non trattiamo direttamente per mancanza di documentazione per questi anni, aiuterà a dinamizzare il mercato del credito notarile (Peña-Mir 2022; Congost 1990b; Villalón 2018).

Attraverso il presente studio, ci concentreremo sull'analisi di un'area come è la regione dell'Alt Empordà, il distretto notarile di Figueres, con una economia a base organica e una crescente specializzazione viticola che combina elementi caratteristici sia del modello di produzione feudale che del modello capitalista (Congost 2007). Infatti, durante il Settecento, tutta la Catalogna vive un processo di specializzazione produttiva regionale che porterà infine alla complementarità delle diverse zone. Inoltre, durante il periodo studiato, questo territorio subisce gli effetti della Guerra del Rossiglione (1793-1795), che agisce anch'essa come catalizzatore del cambiamento economico. Lo studio del sistema creditizio, che ci permette di avvicinarci a questa realtà, ci facilita anche la conoscenza delle reti creditizie locali, lontane dalle grandi reti internazionali e fondamentali per comprendere i processi di mobilità sociale.

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[2] La transizione nell'uso dei meccanismi di indebitamento nella regione di Girona tra la metà del XVIII secolo e la metà del XIX secolo, in particolare la fine del sistema di indebitamento tramite censi, è stata ampiamente studiata da Sebastià Villanón nella sua tesi di dottorato (2023). Altri riferimenti a questo processo di cambiamento in altre aree della Catalogna si possono trovare anche in: (Ferrer Alòs 1983, 4, Tello 1986, 18; 2004, 15, e Ramon-Molins 2019, 30-31).

Partendo da queste premesse, con questo articolo vogliamo soffermarci su come il debito notarile, sia attraverso censi, pegni o *debitoris* (che sono i tre meccanismi creditizi più utilizzati sul territorio), abbia giocato un ruolo fondamentale nella mobilità sociale sia ascendente che discendente. Da una parte, seguendo il ciclo classico dell'indebitamento contadino: in molti casi, a causa di cattivi raccolti o di qualsiasi situazione avversa che spinga al limite la capacità di sopravvivenza economica dell'unità produttiva, che viveva in una situazione di estrema difficoltà, ha portato a ottenere crediti, sempre più onerosi, per culminare infine nella perdita del dominio utile della terra. Un processo che ha ovviamente due facce; davanti a chi perde la terra c'è chi la guadagna, o chi, attraverso l'interesse generato dal credito, riesce ad avviare un processo di accumulazione del capitale. D'altra parte, anche grazie al credito, i gruppi sociali tradizionalmente più svantaggiati possono avere l'opportunità di acquistare terreni in un processo che consente loro di crescere socialmente e persino uscire dalla povertà (Congost, Garcia-Orallo e Saguer 2022, 76). In questo caso, un processo che è guidato anche dalle esigenze produttive del momento e dalla pressione demografica, favorendo la coltivazione dei terreni meno produttivi e fino ad ora dismessi, disboscando e immettendo sul mercato terreni relativamente economici.

Attraverso lo studio degli atti notarili sull'indebitamento registrati presso i notai di questa regione economica del nord della Catalogna, ci siamo chiesti quali fossero i motivi che portavano a contrarre nuovi debiti (nonché a trasferire quelli già esistenti), chi fossero i debitori e i creditori e, quando è stato possibile, abbiamo cercato di delineare traiettorie ascendenti e discendenti di mobilità sociale in entrambe le direzioni.

2. Fonti di lavoro

Per condurre questo studio abbiamo lavorato basandoci sui libri di sei degli otto notai attivi nel distretto notarile di Castelló d'Empúries tra gli anni 1785 e 1799. Si tratta di anni particolarmente interessanti a causa dell'accelerazione del processo di trasformazione socioeconomica causato dalla Guerra del Roselló. In totale, 32 libri di protocolli con 7460 atti, di cui ci siamo concentrati in particolare su 1132, legati direttamente o indirettamente al credito: 294 censi (in catalano *censals*), 246 trasmissioni di censi (*encarregaments de censal*), ovvero rivendite o cessioni di censi già creati, 132 cancellazioni di censi (*lluïcions de censal*), 183 pegni (*empenyoraments* o *vendes a carta de gràcia*), 107 rivendite di questi, 162 *debitoris*, 7 vendite di parti di frutto e 1 ipoteca (che abbiamo trattato formalmente come un *censal*).[3]

I *censals* erano il meccanismo di indebitamento dominante, equivalgono in certo modo ai *censos consignativos* castigliani o ai censi italiani e consistevano nella vendita del diritto a percepire un reddito annuale chiamato *pensions*, che corrispondeva al 3% del valore del censo e generalmente non aveva una data di scadenza. Il debitore, quindi, purché pagasse le *pensions* annuali, aveva il potere di decidere quando cancellare il titolo, restituendo il valore del capitale. Questo atto è chiamato *lluïció*. La garanzia del

[3] Arxiu Històric de Girona [AHG], Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries, notai M. Sabater, R. Francesc, M. Morales, F. Batalla, E. Camps e S. Casals.

censo era costituita dall'intero patrimonio del debitore. Tuttavia, era comune anche vendere titoli di censi già esistenti, specialmente quando questi erano stati creati per l'acquisto di una proprietà immobiliare ed essa tornava sul mercato. Questo atto, chiamato incarico (*encarregament* in catalano), consisteva nel fatto che un nuovo censuario assumeva il vecchio titolo. Inoltre, sono state trovate anche rivendite di titoli da parte dei creditori.

Oltre ai censi, troviamo anche i pegni, che di solito compaiono con il nome di vendite *a carta de gràcia*. Sebbene in altre zone della Catalogna fosse comune che avessero una data di scadenza tra i tre e i cinque anni dal momento della vendita, nelle regioni dell'Empordà le troviamo sotto la formula "da riscattare in qualsiasi momento". Ciò ha comportato che il diritto di riscatto fosse anche oggetto di scambio. Di questi pegni abbiamo anche tracciato le vendite fatte, sia da parte del vecchio debitore che da parte di chi aveva acquistato il diritto di riscatto da qualcuno che rinunciava completamente a recuperare il bene.

Infine, ci siamo concentrati anche sui *debitoris*; questi atti consistono nel riconoscere un debito che può essere contratto per molteplici motivi e che di solito ha una data di scadenza che raramente supera i due anni. Tuttavia, di solito si usa sempre la formula «*sense interès algun*» (senza interessi), il che ci fa pensare che l'interesse sia incluso nel valore dovuto e risulti difficile da conoscere.

L'analisi del distretto notarile di Castelló d'Empúries, un comune che aveva avuto una certa importanza nel Medioevo alla guida del territorio dell'Empordà ma che già nel XVII secolo si trovava in una certa decadenza, ci ha permesso di delineare il funzionamento del credito in una regione eminentemente agricola con una certa presenza del settore della pesca (generalmente legato ai gruppi sociali più svantaggiati) e un processo di specializzazione produttiva intorno alla viticoltura.

3. Debitori e creditori

Per cercare di capire chi fossero i creditori e i debitori, ci baseremo principalmente sulle etichette di professioni che compaiono negli atti notarili. Prima di iniziare a parlare dei protagonisti, però, è importante fare una piccola precisazione che ci sarà molto utile nel momento in cui li analizzeremo: i libri di protocolli della Catalogna «*Vella*» attribuiscono l'etichetta «*pagès*» (contadino) unicamente a coloro che erano proprietari di un maso, cioè il livello superiore all'interno del mondo agricolo. Alcuni di loro sono indicati persino come «*pagès hisendat*», in altre parole: grande proprietario terriero; d'altra parte, gli altri contadini e lavoratori agricoli (inclusi i braccianti), anche se potevano essere proprietari della terra, vengono identificati come «*treballdors*» (lavoratori). Questa differenziazione, quindi, ci permette di delineare due livelli sociali differenti e di avvicinarci meglio alla realtà e alla mobilità di entrambi i gruppi. Per sfruttare al meglio questa potenzialità, abbiamo mantenuto la definizione di contadini per i primi, specificando che possiedono un manso, e di lavoratori per i secondi, chiarendo che sono sia piccoli agricoltori proprietari che lavoratori.[4]

[4] Lo studio dei lavoratori della regione di Girona ha permesso di mettere in evidenza un interessante esempio di ascesa di un gruppo sociale piuttosto umile lungo il XVIII secolo che, nonostante i

Tab. 1. **Principali debitori (1785-1799)**

	Gruppo	Capitale (in lire catalane)	%	Numero di titoli
1	Contadini (di maso)	54408,5	40,1	183
2	Lavoratori (agricoli)	22475,9	16,6	216
3	Negozianti	7161	5,3	21
4	Farmacisti	4964,5	3,7	7
5	Commercianti	4519	3,3	5
6	Maestri di case (muratori)	4351,6	3,2	21
7	Padroni di barca	4226	3,1	14
8	Pescatori	3093,4	2,3	26
9	Droghieri	2601,1	1,9	2
10	Nobili	2283	1,7	6

Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

Tab. 2. **Principali creditori (1785-1799)**

	Gruppo	Capitale (in lire catalane)	%	Numero di titoli
1	Contadini (di maso)	30058,6	22,2	173
2	Istituzioni religiose	17411,3	12,8	103
3	Negozianti	14880,8	11	54
4	Esecutore testamentari	13438,1	9,9	37
5	Lavoratori (agricoli)	8858	6,5	68
6	Religiosi	7362,6	5,4	12
7	Commercianti	5177,3	3,8	9
8	Ospedali	3305	2,4	19
9	Droghieri	3130	2,3	2
10	Padroni di barca	3072,5	2,3	17

Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

Una prima analisi dei debitori e dei creditori (dei diversi titoli di credito studiati) ci permette di constatare che sono i «lavoratori» coloro che richiedono il maggior numero di titoli di credito (prestiti), ma sono i «contadini» quelli che necessitano di più capitale. Allo stesso tempo, sono anche i contadini i principali creditori sia per quanto riguarda il numero di titoli che per il loro valore.

È interessante menzionare anche il peso della Chiesa tra i creditori; questa si è principalmente caratterizzata nella creazione e vendita di censi, poiché la natura di questi titoli «non usurai» le facilitava entrate di capitale perpetue che favorivano la sua vocazione originaria di perdurare eternamente. Infatti, le diverse istituzioni legate alla Chiesa sono diventate i grandi creditori nella Catalogna medievale e moderna e i grandi monasteri e cattedrali hanno contribuito attivamente a organizzare attorno a

cambiamenti sociali di questo periodo, riesce in molti casi a evitare la proletarizzazione. (Congost 1990a; 2007, 20).

sé regioni economiche, mentre aggiungevano alla loro influenza morale un vero potere economico (e politico).[5]

Tornando alla relazione economica tra contadini e lavoratori, ci siamo chiesti quale interazione ci fosse tra i due principali gruppi agricoli quando si rivolgevano al mercato del credito, così come quale grado di 'endogamia' esistesse. Per avvicinarci a questa realtà, ci siamo concentrati sui censi, i *debitoris* e i pegni in cui entrambe le parti erano lavoratori e/o contadini e abbiamo realizzato un piccolo modello che consisteva nell'assegnare un valore 0 agli atti notarili registrati tra pari, un valore 1 a quelli richiesti dal gruppo superiore (lavoratori a contadini) e un valore -1 a quelli richiesti dal gruppo inferiore (contadini a lavoratori) (Tabella 3). Quindi, più il valore si avvicina a 0, più endogamia c'è nel credito.

Tab. 3. **Credito richiesto da e tra contadini e lavoratori (1785-1799)**

	Censi	***debitoris***	**pegni**
Contadini (di maso)	-0,20	-0,28	-0,39
Lavoratori (agricoli)	0,81	0,63	0.56

Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

Con questo, osserviamo innanzitutto, e come ci si poteva aspettare, che abitualmente è più comune richiedere capitale agli strati superiori che a quelli inferiori; tuttavia, analizzando separatamente i tre tipi di credito, vediamo che nel caso dei contadini, più forzato è il tipo di credito (e intendiamo che un prestito su pegno risulta più forzato rispetto alla vendita di un censo), meno reticenze ci sono nel rivolgersi al settore sociale inferiore, proprio il contrario di quanto accade con i lavoratori.

4. Cause di indebitamento

Le cause per cui si contraeva un debito possono essere molto varie; dalla necessità di affrontare pagamenti improvvisi o problemi di liquidità a causa di anni agricoli avversi fino a facilitare l'acquisto di un bene immobiliare per il quale non si dispone della totalità del capitale richiesto. Allo stesso modo, anche se in alcuni casi non possiamo conoscere la vera causa della contrazione di un debito, possiamo anche intuire che non tutte le tipologie dei titoli di credito servivano allo stesso scopo, né erano ugualmente onerosi o volontari, poiché un pegno poteva essere, in molti casi,

[5] L'analisi del ruolo della Chiesa come grande creditore nella Catalogna moderna (in questo caso nella regione di Lleida) e come questo abbia contribuito alla creazione di una regione economica, l'abbiamo effettuata in Ramon-Molins 2022. In questa stessa direzione, sono anche di grande interesse le riflessioni fatte da Íñigo Ena sull'impatto della riduzione dei censi dal 5 al 3% nell'anno 1750 nei territori dell'antica Corona d'Aragona, e come ciò abbia influenzato creditori come la Chiesa, che ne è uscita parzialmente danneggiata ma è rimasta molto attiva in questa attività economica (Ena Sanjuán 2023). Un altro interessantissimo approccio al ruolo della Chiesa nel mercato creditizio è fatto da Cyril Milhaud, che si avvicina all'organizzazione stratificata di questa per ottimizzare l'accesso a tutti i mercati territoriali (2017).

il preludio alla perdita del dominio sulla terra e rifletteva un processo di impoverimento, mentre un censo, specialmente quando era legato a un terreno, poteva servire ad aumentare il patrimonio familiare.

Con questa idea, abbiamo cercato di individuare le cause dell'indebitamento riportate nei titoli e abbiamo potuto raccogliere una quindicina di motivi di indebitamento, che abbiamo diviso in due blocchi; quelli che abbiamo considerato 'negativi', come ad esempio la necessità di capitale, l'obbligo di affrontare un pagamento, le spese ordinarie di un'azienda o di affrontare debiti precedenti, e quelli che abbiamo considerato 'positivi', come ad esempio l'acquisto di terre, case, bestiame o negozi, spese per ampliare l'attività, accedere a un dominio o subdominio enfiteutico, acquistare diritti per riscattare un pegno, riacquistare beni impegnati (propri o altrui), fare altri investimenti o creare fondazioni per vegliare sulla salvezza dell'anima.

Certamente, il principale svantaggio che abbiamo riscontrato in questo punto è stata la mancanza di informazioni; su 884 atti di creazione e trasmissione di credito con cui abbiamo lavorato, siamo stati in grado di ottenere queste informazioni solo da 484 di essi.

Tab. 4. **Motivi dell'indebitamento (1785-1799)**

	Censi	***debitoris***	**pegni**	**incarichi di censi**
Positivo	46,28%	26,28%	0%	87,40%
Negativo	8,45%	21,25%	8,79%	5,69%
Non specificato	45,27%	51,88%	91,21%	6,91%

Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

Con questo, abbiamo potuto constatare che, ad eccezione dei pegni, che concettualmente, sia quando il motivo è specificato che quando non lo è, possiamo attribuire a cause negative, negli altri tipi di credito predominano i fattori positivi, specialmente nell'acquisto di nuovi censi e soprattutto nell'acquisizione di censi già esistenti.

Ciò è dovuto, da un lato, al fatto che i censi sono un tipo di credito a basso costo (3%), che può essere supportato da garanzie ipotecarie come la stessa terra comprata e che, quindi, lo rende adatto per questo tipo di acquisizioni. Tuttavia, siamo consapevoli che le cause che abbiamo attribuito come positive siano sovrastimate, poiché creare un censo per acquisire un terreno o assumersi il pagamento di un censo già esistente legato alla terra che si acquista sono motivi che devono necessariamente essere menzionati nell'atto notarile.

Nella stessa direzione, considerare motivazioni positive nel contrarre un debito può contribuire a renderlo meno gravoso rispetto a quando è visto come un'azione disperata per ottenere liquidità.

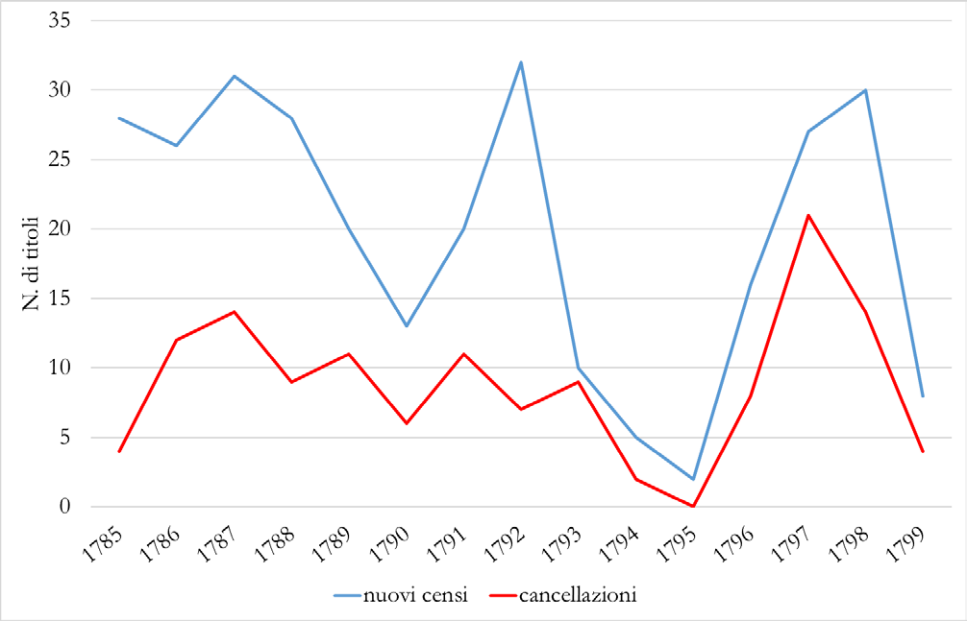
In ogni caso, anche nel caso in cui ci avventurassimo a considerare come cause negative tutte quelle che non sono specificate negli atti notarili, potremmo affermare

che poco meno della metà dei debiti siano attribuibili a fattori positivi, permettendoci così di rompere la visione negativa tradizionalmente attribuita all'indebitamento.

5. Cancellazione e trasferimento dei debiti

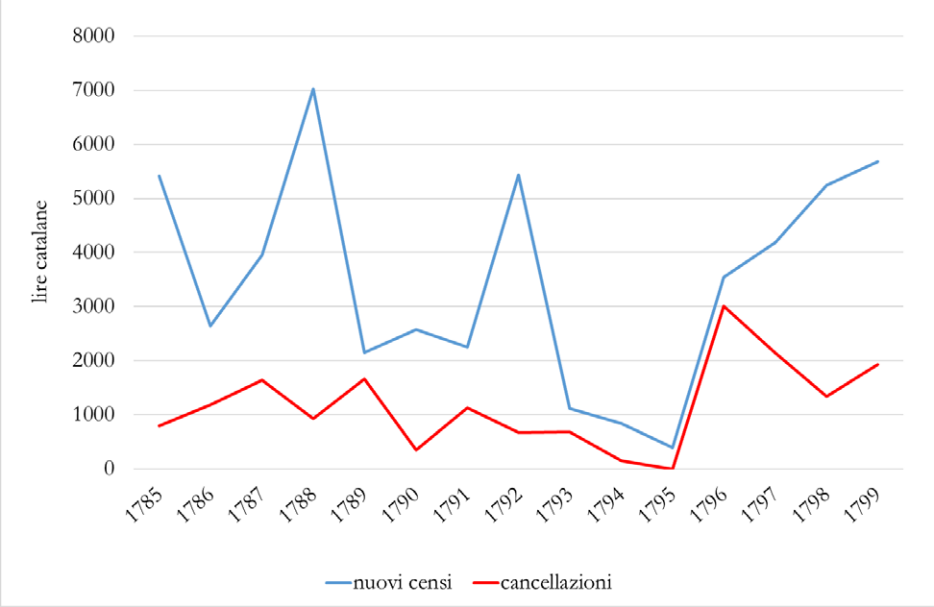
In questa stessa direzione, se ci concentriamo sulle cancellazioni o trasmissioni di censi, supponendo che i dati degli anni studiati rimanessero stabili nel tempo, l' 84% dei titoli di nuova creazione cambierebbe proprietario e il 45% verrebbe cancellato nei successivi 30 anni dalla data di creazione. Infatti, osservando i documenti di cancellazione dei titoli dove è indicato l'anno di creazione (118 del totale di 132), notiamo che la media degli anni trascorsi dalla loro creazione è di 40,81.

Graf 1. **Creazione e cancellazione di censi (numero di titoli) (1785-1799)**



Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

Graf 2. **Creazione e cancellazione di censi (capitale) (1785-1799)**



Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

Altri dati significativi emergono se ci concentriamo sui pegni, che sono il tipo di credito che abbiamo considerato più negativo: il 58,5% dei pegni verrebbero riscattati nei successivi 12 anni. Tuttavia, in questo caso, chi riscatta non è sempre colui che aveva impegnato il bene, poiché il diritto di riscatto era oggetto di commercio.

Tab. 5. **Cencellazione di censi per gruppo sociale (1785-1799)**

	Capitale (valore in lire catalane)	**%**	**Numero di Censi**	**%**
Contadini (di maso)	5016,5	28,4	32	25,8
Lavoratori (agricoli)	2517,6	14,3	35	26,5
Commercianti	1804	10,2	3	2,3
Comuni	1260	7,1	3	2,3
Fornai	710	4	3	2,3
Negozianti	698	4	6	4,5
Altri	5638,7	32	48	36,4

Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

Per quanto riguarda i gruppi sociali, coloro che cancellano più censi sono i lavoratori, anche se in valore gli appartenenti ai gruppi più benestanti sono superiori. Tuttavia, se confrontiamo i tassi di creazione e cancellazione dei censi, i contadini ne

creano il 19,6% e ne cancellano il 25,8%, mentre i lavoratori, pur creandone il 37,2%, ne cancellano il 26,5% del totale. Una differenza che serve a mettere in luce come, nonostante la documentazione possa sovrastimare i fattori positivi del credito, continuiamo a vedere come il credito abbia giocato un ruolo importante anche nel processo di accentuazione delle disuguaglianze sociali.

5. Analisi delle traiettorie di mobilità sociale

Per cercare di effettuare un'analisi delle traiettorie di mobilità e data l'impossibilità di sistematizzare questa ricerca, abbiamo cercato di individuare tra i protagonisti degli atti notarili, coloro che si ripetevano sia come debitori sia come creditori. In totale, abbiamo trovato 311 nomi ripetuti (129 compaiono in 3 o più occasioni). Una volta individuati, abbiamo cercato di raggrupparli in 3 categorie. La prima, che abbiamo considerato ottimale, include tutti coloro che appaiono sempre come creditori. Nella seconda categoria, che possiamo definire come ascendente, abbiamo incluso coloro che passano da debitori a creditori, così come coloro che avviano processi di accumulo di terre, da debiti per necessità a piccole fortune. Infine, abbiamo creato una terza categoria per coloro che seguono il processo inverso.

Tab. 6. **Mobilità sociale (1785-1799)**

Considerazione	**traiettorie**	**%**	**3 o più atti**	**2 atti**
Ottimali	72	23,15	31	41
Positive	74	23,79	34	40
Negative	79	25,4	30	49
Poco chiare	86	27,65	34	52
	311	100	129	182

Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

Dentro il primo gruppo, quello dei soggetti con percorsi ottimali, troviamo ad esempio le istituzioni religiose, che come abbiamo menzionato in precedenza, si sono chiaramente distinte come grandi creditori della regione e della Catalogna.

Tuttavia, osserviamo nuovamente che, da un lato, i percorsi ottimali ci indicano come il credito abbia svolto un ruolo importante nella consolidazione di élite economiche, ma anche, seguendo percorsi positivi, possiamo vedere l'altra faccia, quella dell'ascesa sociale.

Infine, concentriamoci su quei personaggi che, oltre a essere nominati in più di un atto notarile, hanno utilizzato un'etichetta differente; cioè coloro che hanno cambiato l'appartenenza socio-professionale. A questo punto, tuttavia, disponiamo solo di informazioni su 23 casi; 17 hanno effettuato cambiamenti che abbiamo catalogato come ascendenti e 6 come discendenti, evidenziando quei lavoratori (agricoli) che sono passati a gruppi più benestanti come i commercianti, i « menestrals » (che nelle regioni di Girona di quegli anni sarebbero stati a metà strada tra i lavoratori e i contadini) o direttamente a contadini (Tab. 7).

Tab. 7. **Cambiamenti nella designazione professionale legati ai processi di mobilità sociale (1785-1799)**

Processi ascendenti	Processi discendenti
5. da lavoratore a negoziante	2. da contadino a laboratore
3. da lavoratore a "menestral"	1. da lavoratore a falegname
2. da lavoratore a contadino	1. da negoziante a "menestral"
2. da pescatore a padrone di barca	1. da negoziante a commerciante
1. da mugnaio a "menestral"	1. da negoziante a lavoratore
1. da commerciante a negoziante	
1. da contadino a contadino e negoziante	
1. da marinaio a padrone di barca	
1. da negoziante a contadino	

Fonte: AHG, Districte Notarial de Figueres, Castelló d'Empúries.

6. Note finali

Il credito ci aiuta ad avvicinarci al dinamismo economico e sociale che si è verificato alla fine del XVIII secolo e, con questo breve studio, abbiamo potuto constatare come l'indebitamento abbia avuto un ruolo attivo in questo momento di cambiamento.

Abbiamo potuto constatare come, in aggiunta alla visione classica che considerava l'indebitamento come un elemento che poteva condurre a un circolo vizioso che portava alla miseria, esso abbia anche avuto un ruolo attivo, da un lato, nell'evidenziare le disuguaglianze e, dall'altro, nel permettere che in determinate circostanze si verificassero movimenti di mobilità sociale ascendente.

Tuttavia, vogliamo sottolineare che questo è ancora uno studio preliminare; certamente, ci sono molte evidenze che indicano l'esistenza di processi ascendenti, addirittura maggiori dei processi discendenti, ma molti degli elementi non sono ancora stati classificati e, prima di poterlo affermare con certezza, rimane da realizzare ancora un grande lavoro per cercare di chiarire alcuni di questi esempi.

Infine, crediamo anche che i processi ascendenti, che sono innegabili, siano sovradimensionati nella documentazione; quando un personaggio aumenta di livello e inizia a essere attivo nel mercato del credito, lascia dietro di sé una lunga eredità documentale, mentre, quando finisce in rovina, il suo tracciato documentale scompare. Allo stesso modo, le cause "vergognose" difficilmente vengono registrate nei documenti notarili.

Inoltre, abbiamo constatato anche un chiaro dinamismo economico in quest'area che la avvicina più ad altre zone all'avanguardia della Catalogna in trasformazione, piuttosto che a dinamiche proprie di un sistema feudale classico. Un fatto che, recentemente, è stato anche constatato con altri approcci nel settore finanziario della regione di Girona (Villalón 2023).

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Aristea Gratsea

*Marriage alliances and socio-economic mobility in Venetian Crete (16th century)**

1. Introduction

Pre-industrial societies and most specifically Medieval societies have been characterized by a non-existent or very low level of social mobility, a myth that recent scholarship has demolished. Instead, it is believed that significant social stratification and the development of less permeable social boundaries actually culminated towards the end of the Middle Ages and into the early Modern period (Carocci 2011, 368). The thirteenth century saw merchants adopting new family practices that altered pathways of social mobility. Practices such as forming brotherhoods, marrying late, remaining unmarried, and practicing endogamy helped create cohesive and complex socio-political groups. These groups were well-suited to the new trade systems and were effective in managing and preserving their political power within the communes (Carocci 2011, 389). Towards this direction, several studies (Pirenne 1925; Cipolla 1997) have debated about the social mobility of the medieval merchant in relevance with the growth of the cities, the rise of mercantile groups to political power, the crisis of feudal society and the emergence of a proto-bourgeois urban class (Petralia 2010, 248).

Additionally, most recent research has also been devoted to the relationship between social mobility and family practices. The study of the European family in the Medieval and early Modern period reveals a complex and dynamic institution at the heart of societal development. Families were foundational to the economic, social, and cultural formation of Europe, navigating and shaping the transformation of their times. Understanding family life in these periods offers critical insights into the broader historical processes that has shaped the modern world (Goody 2000). Regarding the Venetian Republic, the literature for the social history and the history of the family has been an active scholarly field in the last decades, with a focus on identity, marriage practices, inheritance system and dowries. Nevertheless, the study of family and marriage strategies has focused on the nobility (De Giorgio, Klapisch-

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Zuber 1996; Dean, Lowe 1998; Chojnacki 2000; Pomata 2002; Cowan 2007). Concerning the Venetian dominions of the Eastern Mediterranean and specifically Venetian Crete, the research is also limited and focused on the upper classes (McKee 2000; Tsourapa 2010; van Gemert 2013; Markaki 2021). Additionally, there is no study that examines the family practices and marriage alliances in the maritime sector of Venetian Crete, despite the importance of the island in the Venetian Maritime State and the broader Mediterranean network.

Within this context, the present paper aims to contribute to the debate on pre-industrial social mobility and its relation to mercantile development and family practices during the early Modern period. Sixteenth century Venetian Crete is an ideal case study for the examination of socio-economic mobility. The island of Crete was a multicultural environment with diverse ethnic (Greeks, Italians, Venetians), religious (Orthodox, Catholics, Jews), and social groups (Venetian nobles, Cretan nobles, *cittadini*, popolo). Additionally, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were transformative in political, economic, and social terms: the creation of a new title of nobility (Cretan nobility), the acknowledgment of more political rights to the middle social stratum (*cittadini*), the rise of private maritime trade, the active participation of Greek subjects from the Venetian colonies in the long-distance trade, the changes in the geographical borders due to the Venetian-Ottoman wars and the massive arrival of Greek refugees as a result of these conflicts.

The study is organized into the following sections. Section 2 provides a brief historical overview of Crete and its role within the Venetian Maritime State (*Stato da Mar*) from the beginning of the Venetian occupation until its loss to the Ottomans. In this section the system of social hierarchy in Venetian Crete is also analyzed (section 2.1). The study then focuses on the theoretical framework related to family structure and the legal framework of marriage established both in Venice and its colony, Venetian Crete. This section also explores the implementation of this legal framework by the society (section 2.2). The third section of the paper provides a short outline of the archival documentation available for reconstructing marriage patterns and socio-economic mobility in Venetian Crete (section 3).

The core of the paper, Section 4, focuses on marriage alliances within the maritime sector of sixteenth century Venetian Crete. The emphasis is on a specific citizen-family, the Curcumeli family[1], who by taking advantage of the socio-political changes of their era managed to advance their socio-economic status and expand their maritime and business activities through the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Drawing on the analytical framework of Charalambos Gasparis (2019) on Byzantine families

[1] The spelling of this particular family's name varies across the documents of the period, reflecting the linguistic and administrative practices of the time. While, in the Greek documents the surname appears as *Κουρκουμέλης*, in the Italian documents, the surname appears as *Curcumel(l)i, Corcumel(l)i, Corcomel(l)i,* showcasing its adaptation to the local linguistic patterns. Since the family had Greek origin, their surname is presented in its Greek form, transcribed into Latin characters in order to preserve its original linguistic and cultural context. For this reason, the surname of the male members of the family is written as «Curcumelis», while for female members, the final -s is omitted, as is the case in the Greek language (Curcumeli). The same pattern is applied to the given names of the family members (i.e the Greek version of the name). For instance, one of the brothers, Alexandros, is recorded in the sources with various forms of his name *Alessandro*, *Alexander*, *Αλίσαντρος*. Similarly, in phrases such as «Curcumeli family» and «Curcumeli brothers» the final -s is also omitted to align with this convention.

in Venetian Crete, this section is divided into four sub-sections: firstly, the number of members and branches of the Curcumeli family is presented (section 4.1). Secondly, the marriages of the family members and the link between these marital unions and the development of the family's maritime business is analyzed (section 4.2). The last two sub-sections delve into the family's attitude towards the Venetian regime (section 4.3) and the family's wealth and economic activities, both in rural and urban contexts (section 4.4). This last sub-section draws particular attention to the dowries given to the female members of the family, since their examination can provide insightful data about the family's economic status, the wealth distribution, inheritance system and social hierarchies within the family. Subsequently, the study examines other practices used by certain family members to improve their socio-economic status. The study concludes with some final remarks (section 5).

2. Crete in the Venetian Maritime State (Stato da Mar)

The Fourth Crusade which ended with the conquest of Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, contributed to the growth and power of the Venetian Maritime State enhancing Venice's commercial, political, and territorial influence across the eastern Mediterranean. After 1204, the vast Byzantine territories in the central and northeastern Mediterranean were divided among the conquerors according to a partition agreement made on the eve of the conquest. Crete, as part of these territories, was given to Boniface of Montferrat, who later sold the island to the Venetians for one thousand silver marks. Despite the official act of 1204, Venetian rule in Crete was not firmly established until after 1210, due to the military conflicts on the island between Venice and the Genoese pirate-Count of Malta, Enrico Pescatore, who was acting with the support of Genoa. The consolidation of Venetian rule resulted in a radical change in the administrative structure and the arrival of Venetians to the island (Gasparis 1993; Maltezou 2008; Papadia-Lala 2008).

Crete held immense importance for the Venetian Republic due to its strategic geographical position, abundant agricultural production, and significant cultural influence. Situated in the eastern Mediterranean, Crete served as a vital node within the Venetian maritime empire (Stato da Mar). Positioned at the crossroads between Europe, Asia, and Africa, the island acted as a strategic outpost facilitating Venetian control over crucial sea lanes and trade routes connecting Venice to the Levant, Egypt, and other parts of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. With the exception of Cyprus, whose Venetian dominance was relatively short (1489-1571), Crete stood as the largest and most populous Venetian territory in the Eastern Mediterranean from the early thirteenth century until the mid-seventeenth century (1669).

The Venetians implemented a colonial administration designed to consolidate their control and maximize economic gains. Initially, the island was divided in six provinces (*sestieri*), mirroring the administrative divisions of Venice itself, which latter merged into four distinct territories (Candia, Chania, Rethymno and Sittia). Venetian nobles were granted large estates, and a feudal system was established, with Cretan peasants often subjected to heavy taxation and feudal obligations. During the first

two centuries of the Venetian rule in Crete (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), the island experienced numerous revolts as the native Cretan population resisted the foreign domination and the severe policies imposed by the Venetians (Papadia-Lala 2021, 91-96). After the cessation of these revolts, Crete entered into a period of relative peace, heralding its golden age from the late fifteenth century. During this transformative era, fueled by various geographic and political shifts, Candia (now modern Heraklion) evolved from a small Byzantine provincial port into a major Mediterranean emporium (Panopoulou 2017, 383).

The fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries marked a period of profound transition in the political, economic, and social realms of the Eastern Mediterranean. This period witnessed the dawn of Oceanic discoveries, the emergence of new commercial networks, Portugal's involvement in the spice trade, and northern invasions into the Mediterranean Sea. Influenced by the aforementioned changes, the Mediterranean entered a period of economic readjustment and reorientation, impacting traditional maritime powers like Venice and Genoa. For the Venetian Republic, these changes manifested in several ways: the decline of state-organized merchant convoys and their substitution with privately organized shipping enterprises; the gradual disengagement of the Venetian nobles from trade and shipping, accompanied by their transition to alternative career paths and the participation of the Venetian colonies in the long-distance trade· these shifts were also linked to the significant social and political transformations of the late fifteenth century, which resulted in the recognition of political rights to the middle class (Venetian subjects and subjects from the Venetian colonies), alongside the concurrent consolidation of the bourgeois aristocracy at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy. Within this context Cretan commercial and maritime enterprises flourished during this period; the Cretan subjects participated in the long-distance trade and created commercial networks through the Mediterranean both in other Venetian, as well as, in Ottoman territories (i.e. Constantinople), and other regions (i.e Black Sea and Egypt). In a nutshell, this participation provided them wealth and social recognition which subsequently aided to their socio-economic mobility (Pagratis 2013; Gluzman 2021; Gratsea 2021).

Nevertheless, the loss of Cyprus during Fourth Ottoman-Venetian War (1570-1573) led to socio-political transformation in Crete, since the island stood as the last Venetian stronghold in the Eastern Mediterranean. Subsequently, the loss of Crete to the Ottomans in 1669, as a result of the Cretan War (also known as the Fifth Ottoman-Venetian War, 1645-1669) resulted in a radical change in both the Venetian Republic and the Mediterranean. The Venetians lost their last dominion in the Eastern Mediterranean, while the Ottoman conquest of Crete resulted in a vast amount of migration both to the Ionian islands and Venice. This migration affected the composition of the population and their socio-economic status.

2.1 The social hierarchy in Venetian Crete

The social hierarchy in Venetian Crete followed a medieval framework, with specific privileges and duties assigned to each social stratum based on inherited social standing. Initially, this structure was not tied to economic considerations and often diverged from them. The criteria for each social status were meticulously outlined by stringent legal regulations, and any possibility of upward mobility depended on decisions made by authorities through a thorough legal process (Papadia-Lala 1985, 61).

The elite in Venetian Crete initially comprised from feudal lords originating from Venice, many of whom later attained the title of Venetian nobility (*nobilità veneta*), the sole fully recognized social class both politically and legally. While the social category of Venetian nobility was closely tied to the origin of being Venetian, there was a notable exception to this rule. Alexios Kallergis was the sole Cretan nobleman to receive the title of Venetian noble (*nobilus venetus*). The Venetian nobility in Crete «closed» in relevance to the *Serrata* of the Venetian Republic. Thus, by the mid-fifteenth century (1463) a secondary title of nobility emerged, known as Cretan nobility (*nobilità cretese*). Despite its designation, this category was not exclusive to individuals of Cretan descent. Initially, it was granted to Venetian nobles who had lost their titles, illegitimate offspring of Venetian nobles, Venetian citizens (*cittadini originarii*), and Italians, such as the families of Zacco, Clodia (Chioggia), Sanguizzano, Daferrara, Dapiasenza, Gribia and Lombardo. Additionally, it was extended to Greek refugees from former Venetian territories occupied by the Ottomans, with the intent of facilitating their integration into the island's social structure. Venetian and Cretan nobles constituted the dominant class and played pivotal role in public life, serving as members of urban communal councils, from which the vast majority of the island's population was excluded (Maltezou 1981, 7; Lambrinos 1996, 218; 2011, 222; 2014, 57).

The middle social class of Venetian Crete, known as *cittadini*, primarily consisted of indigenous residents of urban centers, who were more numerous than the nobles. By the late Venetian period (seventeenth century), they constituted the majority of the island's population. Engaged in respected non-manual occupations, they distinguished themselves from the lower social stratum, which included manual laborers from both urban (*popolani*) and rural (*contadini*) areas. Additionally, they were exempt from the obligations imposed on lower social classes, such as serving as rowers in Venetian galleys or participating in fortification work (Arbel 2013, 195-96; Lambrinos 2015).

This intermediate social category (*cittadini*) like the corresponding group in the city of the doges, began to take shape after the full determination of the ruling class (closure of Venetian nobility and establishment of Cretan nobility) and the exclusion of the non-nobles from the communal bodies and from higher local offices. Towards this direction, of great importance was the government decision of the year 1499, which significantly elevated the middle social stratum by granting them increased political influence and formal acknowledgment. The status of citizens was not defined on the basis of some potent legal attribute comparable to the titles held by the ruling class. On the contrary, their presence in the social fabric became increasingly

distinct owing to features of a socio-economic nature, such as the prosperity derived from the exploitation of real estate, trade, special literary or technical knowledge. Their education, especially from the late fifteenth century, was able to facilitate their access to salaried positions in the mid-level public bureaucracy. This transition meant that individuals from this social status, equipped with education, could now secure positions within the local bureaucracy, while those with economic influence could invest in long-distance trade, thereby achieving greater economic prosperity and social recognition. Throughout the sixteenth century, they actively sought to fortify their bureaucratic identity and consequently elevate their social status by monopolizing intermediate public offices (Lambrinos 2014, 58). Additionally, they began to participate in long-distance trade. By exploiting the above-mentioned political and economic conditions, they managed to expand the island's commercial, maritime, and ship-building activities, leading to both Cretan and Venetian commercial growth (Panopoulou 2017, 383). Consequently, their presence in the social fabric became increasingly distinct. This recognition paved the way for the formation of marriage alliances between individuals from the middle social stratum (*cittadini*) and the elite (Cretan nobles) and led to their socio-economic mobility.

2.2 Family and marriage in Venetian Crete

The family, in its various configurations and facets, has always been considered the organic basis of all forms of associational and relational life. It has often been described as a structure inherently capable of assuming a primary function not only in terms of social discipline, but also in terms of political stabilization and the definition of legal and associative structures (Orlando 2023, 89). Marriage, as a form of creating family, was the most immediate means of sealing alliances and cementing power relations not only at the economic level. Marriage for the upper social class represented an instrument capable, like few others, of influencing politics and controlling power centers. In this context, it pursued two main objectives: to rear children, preferably boys, so as to guaranty the continuity of the lineage or more simply to support the domestic household; to consolidate the parental and community network (Orlando 2023, 90-91).

A good marriage also encouraged and consolidated the community balance and strengthened civil ties. In Venice, family and marriage held a fundamental role; they were considered a main action in the political and economical administration, since they defined and perpetuated nobility as an inherited status. Regulations concerning marriage became a focal point for authorities, particularly after the transformation of Venetian nobility into a closed and hereditary system through the «closure» of the Grand Council (Serrata). The emergence of «huomini civili» (*cittadini*) prompted marriages between the middle social stratum and the nobles. These marriages were the outcome of political and economic shifts during the period. A significant portion of the cittadini class, whose fathers were predominantly lawyers, merchants, doctors, and high-level administrators, belonged to a distinguished occupational group characterized by economic prosperity. Patricians came to realize that they did not hold a monopoly on the qualities of «civility», even within their own society. This

recognition allowed them to view other families as ideologically sound and worthy of forming marriage alliances. The increasing occurrence of marital unions between nobles and non-nobles prompted legislative action, resulting to the meticulous documentation of noble marriages and births. The best-known measure of the period is the law passed by the Council of Ten in 1506 instituting the famous *Libro d'Oro*, registers of male noble births. Additionally, other procedures were also imposed to nobles by the Venetian State for proving their social status, specifically in cases, in which the mother did not belong in the higher social class. More precisely, Venetian nobles were required to produce a set of documents, including wills, administrative acts, and genealogies, that provided the necessary legal backing for the recognition of their social identity (Chojnacki 2000, 63; Cowan 2007, 5-6; 29; 67; Orlando 2023, 91).

In Venetian Crete, notable instances of intermarriages were evident from the last decades of the thirteenth century and mostly in the fourteenth century with the purpose of keeping or improving their social, economic and even political status. These marital unions were either between members of Greek families or between Greeks and Latins (Gasparis 2019, 18-19). Marriages between Greeks were not just a result of doctrinal, social or cultural homogeneity, but also a conscious strategy to keep the land they already possessed in Greek hands. On the other hand, mixed marriages, between Greeks and Latins, offered to Greek families many chances to improve their position among the Venetian leading class, and the opportunity to get benefits directly from the Venetian state or indirectly from their economic activities in a friendly environment. While these types of marriages were originally prohibited by Venice, they gradually came to be accepted (Gasparis 2019, 19). Furthermore, another category of marriages involved individuals of differing social status, which were also initially prohibited according to prevailing Venetian norms. At the beginning of the Venetian rule, marriages were primarily confined to noble families, but legislation later expanded to encompass unions between Venetian nobles and Cretan nobles. During the sixteenth century, the political recognition of the middle social stratum (1499), precipitated marriages between the elite (Cretan nobles) and the middle class (*cittadini*), largely motivated by economic and social factors (Papadia-Lala 2004, 92). The concern of these type of marriages led to the establishment of the «*prova di matrimonio*» in Venetian Crete in 1526.[2] According to this decision, marriages were mandated to be «appropriate» meaning that the bride (or her family members) should not have been involved in manual occupations (*arte meccanica et manuale*) for at least three generations. Her father and grandfathers must have had no criminal record, and both she and her mother had to adhere to the highest standards of morality (*vita civile*). The *arte meccanica et manuale* was a key criterion used to determine the dividing line between social acceptability and social unacceptability, and more specifically, it was crucial in defining the social status of a woman according to the activities carried out by her father and paternal and maternal grandfathers (Cowan 2007, 24; 91, van Gemert 2013, 788-790, Lambrinos 2014, 58, Markaki 2021, 148).

Lastly, it should be mentioned that marriage itself did not lead to a change in social status (upward or downward). It is known that in cases of intermarriage between a *cittadino* and a Cretan noble, both individuals retained their social status after

[2] This legal framework was further enhanced in 1533 and 1606. See Lambrinos 2004, 86.

marriage. The children from such unions always inherited the father's social status. Nevertheless, this was not the case for descendants from illegitimate relationships. In Venice, as was the case in Medieval and early modern Europe illegitimate offspring children, even though they were taken care by their fathers, they suffered considerable economic and social disadvantages as a result of the circumstances of their birth (Brundage 1987, 543; Lambrinos 2004, 99; Chatzakis 2004).

3. The Archival documentation

The meticulous documentation of marriages and birth certificates among the upper class aimed not only at preserving nobility, their «purity» and thereby ensuring the unity of the regime. This approach facilitated the study of marriage practices within the ruling class, making data abundant and accessible. In contrast, information regarding marriages within the middle class is limited, and for the lower social strata is rare.

As was the case in the Venetian Republic, in Venetian Crete during the sixteenth century, there was a detailed recording of noble marriages and births. However, researching marriages between different social groups (nobility and the middle class) is challenging due to scattered records across various archival sources. Exploring marriage practices and their socio-economic implications in Venetian Crete necessitates delving into diverse archival sources, both administrative and private. These archival sources are kept in the Venetian State Archive (Archivio di Stato di Venezia).

The primary archival source for retrieving marriage contracts is the archive of notaries. The notarial records are valuable for their detailed documentation of marriage contracts, dowries, and familial alliances, shedding light on the socio-economic strategies and mobility of the families. Wills can also provide supplementary information, since they pertain information regarding property transfers. Concerning the marital unions of the family under examination (the Curcumeli family), records were discovered in the registers of Cretan notaries (*Notai di Candia*), reflecting the family's permanent residence in Crete. Additional information was found in Venetian notaries (*Notarile, Atti*), particularly since a member of the family relocated from Crete to Venice. The meticulous documentation found in both Cretan and Venetian notarial records underscores the significance of these unions in consolidating wealth, social status, and political influence across generations and geographical locations.

Additionally, information regarding their property and inheritance practices was also found in the administrative archives of Venetian Crete (*Archivio del Duca di Candia*). This archival source contains the official registers of the Duke of Crete and includes amongst other information about legal and administrative cases and inheritance disputes. Another important archival source for tracing socio-economic mobility is the archival series *Collegio, Risposte di fuori*, which includes requests from the inhabitants of Venetian-ruled areas to the Serenissima. These requests pertain to petitions for improving their socio-economic status, pursuing public offices, acquiring land, or achieving upward social mobility. This improvement was often related to services, that they had offered to the Venetian state during difficult periods, such as famines or wars. These requests included efforts to renegotiate their social standing,

which had also been affected by political and geographical changes of the period like the Ottoman-Venetian wars and subsequent migrations to other regions.

4. The case of a mercantile citizen family: The Curcumeli family

Recent scholarship has focused on the importance of the examination of specific case studies or collective biography in order to reach to wider conclusions regarding several historical aspects. Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz emphasized the significance of analyzing maritime networks in the Mediterranean, focusing on specific cities and, whenever possible, individual traders within them, as starting points. Several examples of this phenomenon are the renowned Francesco Datini (1335-1410) and his network or the case of George Giese, who was a burgher of Danzig in the sixteenth century (Wubs-Mrozewicz 2019, 386).

Within this context, the focus of this study is on a citizen family of sixteenth century Venetian Crete originating from the social stratum of *cittadini*. The period under examination is marked by the extensive involvement of Venetian subjects in long-distance trade across the Mediterranean. Originating from regions in Greece under Venetian control, these subjects played significant role in shipping activities, maritime commerce, and trade. Their status as Venetian subjects during the sixteenth century afforded them the same legal rights and commercial opportunities as Venetian-born citizens (Pagratis 2013; Gluzman 2021, 268-171). Prominent examples of these entrepreneurs were the Verghis from Corfu (Pagratis 2007), the Episcopopulo family from Rethymno in Crete (Lambrinos 2014) and Samariari from Zante (Kolyvà-Karaleka, 2024). These individuals employed broadly similar strategies for organizing their shipping and commercial enterprises, as well as for cultivating robust trade networks. Within this context, the study of the Curcumeli family should be seen as an illustrative example rather than an isolated case; The Curcumeli family, and specifically the brothers Andreas and Alexandros Curcumelis were one of the most active merchants of their period. The study of the Curcumeli family offers a compelling example of how a middle-class family adeptly leveraged the political landscape of their time to build influence through shipping and commercial enterprises. Towards this direction of great importance is the analysis of the family's marriages, which were instrumentally used in order to retain and expand their socio-economic status.

The analysis and examination of marriage alliances and socio-economic mobility within the Curcumeli family, is based in the following factors that were used by Gasparis (2019, 20) in the study of Byzantine families in Venetian Crete. The number of members and branches of the Curcumeli family (4.1); The marriages of its members and the link between those marriages and the development of their maritime business (4.2); The family's attitude towards the Venetian regime (4.3); The family's wealth and activity in the local urban and/or rural economy (4.4). These factors decisively contributed to their mobility in the new political, social and economic context.

4.1. The number of members and branches of the Curcumeli family

The Curcumeli family exhibited a complex and expanding lineage with multiple branches. The family's growth is reflected in the number of its members, spanning several generations. The term «family» here encompasses individuals who bear the same surname. They are connected by kinship, which may not always be of the first degree, but they have strong actual or perceived common origins. Additionally, they belong to the same social class and share common interests (Gasparis 2019, 12). Abundant archival data, despite their fragmented nature, have facilitated the documentation of twenty members of the Curcumeli family, all with ties to Venetian Crete.

The origin of the family has been primarily linked to the Ionian Islands, where it continues to survive to this day. One of the first references relies in the *Libro d'Oro de la Noblesse Ionienne* (Rangabe 1926, 205), which was the Golden Book of the Ionian Nobility; a genealogical registry used to document and recognize the noble families of the Ionian Islands. This book served a similar purpose to the more widely known *Libro d'Oro* in Venice, which recorded the nobility in the Venetian Republic. According to this registry, the Curcumeli family had a Greek origin and was established in Cephalonia in 1490. By the sixteenth century, the family had splintered, with some members remaining in the above-mentioned island, while others moved to Corfu.

In relation to the under-examination family branch, scholars have linked the family to a Byzantine lineage (Kaklamanis 1989, 383). Additionally, Fani Mavroeidi (1976, 122) suggested that the family's distant origin might be traced back to Nafplio (Napoli di Romania). Nevertheless, the origin of individuals from other former Venetian dominions who resided in Crete is explicitly stated in the documents (e.g., the case of Michel Psara from Napoli di Romania).[3] On contrast no archival evidence has been found to prove the origin of the family from Nafplio. Such migration from Nafplio (*Napoli di Romania*) to Crete primarily took place after the third Ottoman-Venetian War (1537-1540).

The residence of Curcumeli family in Venetian Crete is traced back at least to 1493.[4] According to archival documents, the *pater familias*, Anastasios Curcumelis, son of Johannes, owned land in Crete and played an active role as a representative of the Orthodox population. These characteristics demonstrate their long-term presence on the island and highlight the prominent role of the *pater familias* in the Cretan society. Moreover, in later documents their origin from Crete is clearly mentioned.[5]

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[3] The origin of Michalis Psara and other subjects from Nafplio, who migrated to Crete after the Third Ottoman-Venetian War (1537-1540), are clearly mentioned in the archival documents. See for example Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Notarile, Atti, (NA), busta 10638 (not. Agostino Pellestrina), libro (lib.) 2, follio (f.) 6r (8 January 1544): «*ser Michali Psara dictus Dafni de Nafplio Romanie ad presens Crete habiti*».

[4] ASV, Notai di Candia (NC), b. 31 (not. Giorgio Cummo), protocollo (prot.) 4 (1493), f. 99r (8 May 1493).

[5] In an archival document of 1525, the city of Candia (modern Heraklion) is referred as Andreas Curcumelis' origin.

Fig. 1. **The Genealogical family tree of the Curcumeli family**

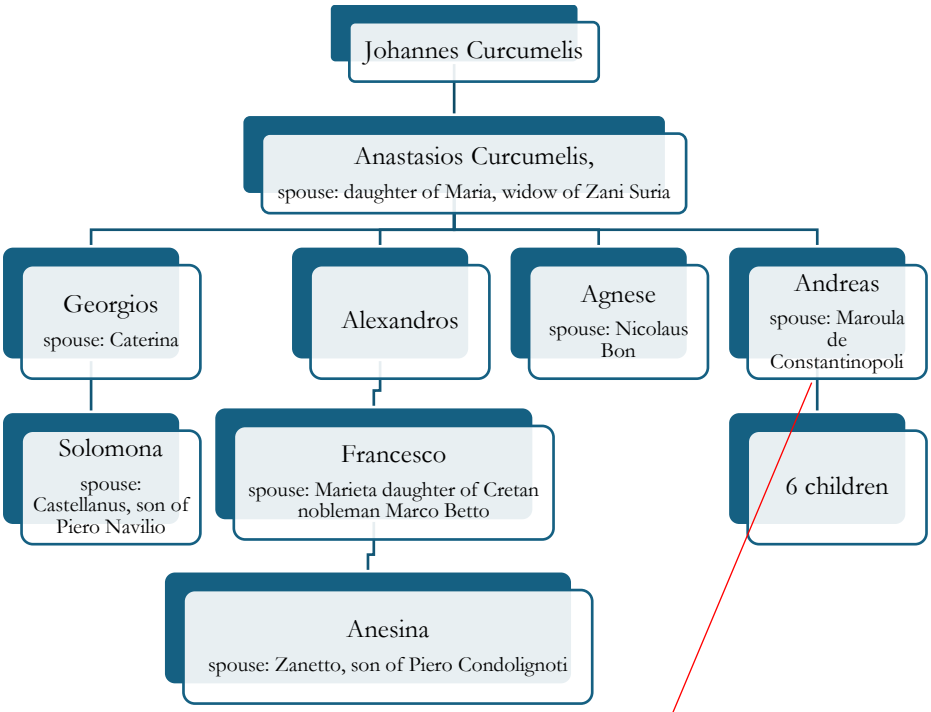
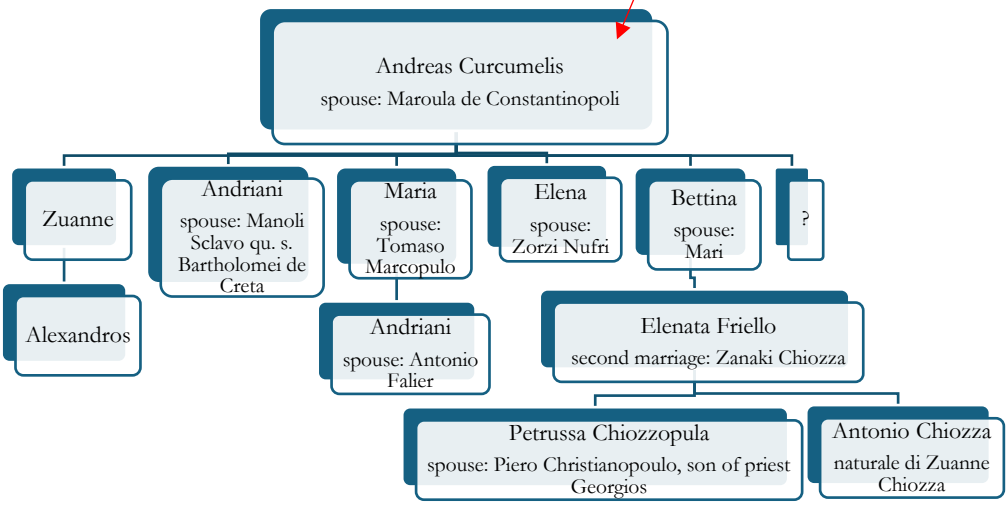


Fig. 2. **The Genealogical family tree of Andreas' Curcumelis family**



Among the twenty members mentioned in the archival documents with the surname «Curcumelis», seventeen of them have been safely identified and linked together (See Figures 1 and 2). Detailed archival records are available for these individuals, enabling accurate tracing of their roles and activities within their family history or societal involvement. Additionally, the majority of these individuals has also been linked to other families in Venetian Crete through marriage. This identification has facilitated the reconstruction of the Curcumeli family tree spanning over five generations (Fig. 1 and 2).

Anastasios Curcumelis, son of Johannes, is the first known member of the family for whom information is well documented in the archival records. In contrast, no archival records have been found for his father, Johannes Curcumelis. Additionally, the name of Anastasios' wife has not also preserved. The only known information is that she was the daughter of Maria, who was the widow of Zani Suria. Anastasios' wife belonged to the same social standing, and together they had four children: Andreas, Alexandros, Georgios, and Agnese (Fig. 1).

Andreas married Maroula de Costantinopoli, daughter of Alexandros (Fig. 2). Fani Mavroeidi (1976, 122) argued that Andreas had a total of four children: three daughters, whose names she does not provide, and a son named Alexandros. Regarding the number of Andreas' children, the previously mentioned number is not accurate. According to a letter sent by Alexandros Curcumelis, Andreas' brother, to the Venetian Republic, Andreas had six children in total. Unfortunately, none of their names are referred in the letter.[6] However, archival records of various types have aided in identifying five of his six children (Fig. 2). It is certain that Andreas had four daughters (Andriani, Maria, Elena, and Bettina) and a son (Zuanne). Regarding the identity of the sixth child, only a hypothesis can be made. Fani Mavroeidi (1976, 122) suggested that Andreas Curcumelis had a son named Alexandros, though no archival records substantiate this hypothesis. During the period under examination, there is no documented individual named Alexandros Curcumelis aside from Andreas' brother, who is the only Alexandros clearly referenced in archival sources from that period. The only individual named Alexandros Curcumelis, aside from Andreas' brother appears in records from 1622. According to these archival documents, this later Alexandros was actually Andreas' grandson, as his father was Zuanne Curcumelis, son of Andreas (Fig. 2).[7] It is possible that Fani Mavroeidi confused this later Alexandros with Zuanne's son, as no other reference to an Alexandros Curcumelis, son of Andreas, has been found in the archival records from the sixteenth century.

Alexandros Curcumelis, son of Anastatios, had five children according to his own letter to the Venetian Republic. Their names are not mentioned in the letter.[8] From them only his son has been identified, named Francesco (Fig. 1). His wife's name has not also survived. For the remaining four children of Alexandros only a hypothesis can be made regarding a certain individual named Anastasios Curcumelis,

[6] ASV, Collegio, Risposte di fuori, b. 312 (1557-1558), f. 219r: «qu. Andrea Curcumeli mio fratello nuovamente morto... lasciato sei suoi figli». This documented is first referred by Ploumides 1985, 7.

[7] ASV, NC, b. 260 (Giorgio Sanguinazzo), lib. 4 (1621-1625), f. 58r.

[8] ASV, Collegio, Risposte di fuori, b. 312 (1557-1558), f. 219r: «con altri mei cinque». This documented is first referred by Ploumides 1985, 7.

who participated in a marital contract in 1553.[9] While his name is the same as that of the pater familias, it is certain that these two references pertain to different individuals, since the pater familias passed away in 1543.[10] Thus, it could be assumed that this individual was another son of Alexandros. Another possibility is that this individual could be the sixth child of Andreas Curcumelis, as archival evidence does not conclusively identify all of Andreas' offspring. Alternatively, he could have been the son of Georgios Curcumelis, the third son of Anastasios, and his wife, Caterina. However, a key archival document found after Georgios' death makes no mention of any additional children within this family line. In this document, Anastasios Curcumelis, father of Georgios and father-in-law of Caterina, is identified as the family representative, further suggesting that there were no other heirs or direct descendants of Georgios at that time. If any did exist, they were most probably underage and as a result not involved in legal matters. Due to these uncertainties and the inability to conclusively trace this individual's lineage, he has not been included in the genealogical tree depicted in the figures.

For the other two children of Anastasios Curcumelis, Georgios and Agnese, more limited information has been found. Georgios Curcumelis' wife was named Caterina, but there is no additional information about her. Most probably she belonged in the same social status (*cittadina*). Together they had a daughter named Solomona (Fig. 1).[11] For Anastasios daughter, Agnese, the name of her husband has been traced (Nicolaus Bon), but no descendants have been found.

Lastly, there is an archival document of another Georgios Curcumelis from Cydonia in Chania during 1543.[12] While the timing of the contract suggests the possibility that he could be linked to the family, it is also possible that he was an unrelated individual or from a different branch of the Curcumeli family. Without additional records his identification remains obscure and thus he is not included to the genealogical trees in the figures.

4.2. The marriages of its members and the link between those marriages and the development of their maritime business

The analysis of marriages within the Curcumeli family will explore their connection to the development of their maritime and shipping activities. This includes investigating how marital alliances may have influenced their access to trade networks, resources, and commercial opportunities. It also proves how marriages were mainly arranged for strategic and economic reasons and were in relation to the family's commercial enterprises. Before analyzing these marital unions, an overview of the family's wealth and activities is given.

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[9] ASV, NC, b. 127 (not. Michel Geriti), lib. 10, f. 255v-256v (5 February 1553).

[10] Anastasios Curcumelis died between April and October 1543. In the partnerships formed by his son, Andreas in Venice he is first mentioned as *quondam* in 15th of October of that year. See ASV, NA, b. 10638 (not. Agostino Pellestrina), f. 243r.

[11] ASV, NC, b. 194 (not. Pietro Pellegrino), lib. 1528-1570, f. 228v-229r (18 April 1534).

[12] ASV, NC, b. 282 (not. Zorzi Vasmullo), lib. 7, f. 93r (1543).

The commercial enterprises of the Curcumeli family commenced during the late fifteenth century with the involvement of Anastasios, the pater familias, who as seen by the archival documentation of the late fifteenth century (1493), belonged to the social group of wealthy and educated *cittadini*. He participated in commercial partnerships (*compagnia*) for the transportation of goods (*mercandantia*) in regional and small-scale shipping.[13] Moreover, in 1510 Anastasios represented the Orthodox community before the ducal secretary for the reconstruction of a church (Church of Christ in Karteros). He also contributed to the restoration of this church with his own funds.[14] His role and actions demonstrate that he had the qualifications (education and wealth) to take advantage of the socio-political changes that took place in the end of the fifteenth century (1499) in order to improve the socio-economic status of himself and his family. This formal recognition of the middle social stratum (*cittadini*) led to their subsequent participation in long-distance trade and acquisition of public offices.

Two of his sons, Andreas and Alexandros Curcumelis, like many other examples of their era, were dynamic participants in the Venetian maritime and commercial enterprises. Abundant data from administrative and notarial records, illustrate that the pater-familias, Anastasios Curcumelis, and mainly his sons, pursued opportunities arising from the above-mentioned shifting political and economic landscape, systematically striving to improve their socio-economic status. The Curcumeli brothers, Andreas and Alexandros, stood among the most affluent merchants of their era, engaging vigorously in ship ownership and trading activities, a sector that required flexibility in dealing and entailed financial risk. Their commercial and shipping activities were based on the distribution of Cretan wine throughout the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and export/import of other agricultural products and goods. They were also engaged in ship ownership and land and real estate property (Mavroeidi 1976, 122-24; 1989, 59).

According to the esteemed values of the Venetian Republic, engagement in wholesale trade – traditionally Venice's primary source of wealth – held decisive social significance, serving as a clear indicator of non-involvement in manual work, which was disdained by the dominant ideology (Lambrinos 2014, 59). The Curcumeli family, particularly Andreas, were pioneers among citizen-status families to embark on long-distance trade as early as 1527, aiming to bolster their economic and social standing. Their initiative was echoed by others in the mid-sixteenth century, like Costantino Episcopopulo from Rethimno, who also ventured into commercial activities for the first time in 1543 (Lambrinos 2014).

The commercial and shipping activities of the Curcumeli family can be divided in three periods: i) The period of growth of their commercial network (1524-1536) ii) The period of prosperity (1537-1548) and iii) the period of decline (1549-1570). The first period (1524-1536) is characterized by the involvement in regional trade with medium sized vessels (i.e. grippo). During this initial period, Andreas Curcumelis owned several ships with his brother Alexandros, and engaged in partnerships

[13] ASV, NC, b. 31 (not. Giorgio Cummo), prot. 4 (1493), f. 99v.

[14] ASV, Archivio del Duca di Candia (DC), b. 33, Memoriali Serie II, registro (reg). 1bis 1508-1510), f. 133v (18 July 1510).

to transport wheat to Crete (Kaklamanis 1989, 384; Mavroeidi 1989, 50). Participation in large-scale maritime trade, if successful, could ensure significant revenues and a high level of social prestige. Similar to other Greek merchants residing in Venetian territories in the Eastern Mediterranean, Andreas relocated to Venice in 1526 and became a member of the Greek Confraternity of Venice. Within this Confraternity, he swiftly assumed different administrative roles (*vicarius, gastaldo, governatore*) from 1527 until 1555, demonstrating his esteemed status and education (Mavroeidi 1976, 123-24).

The period of prosperity is characterized by the development and the flourishing of the commercial and economic activities. During this period the brothers owned a large number of vessels (more than thirteen) and participated in long-distance Mediterranean trade (West, East and Black Sea) by exporting Cretan products (mainly wine and cheese) and importing goods from these destinations to Venice and Crete. The wealth and education of the family are further evidenced by intermediate public offices held by both Georgios and Alexandros Curcumelis in Crete. Georgios Curcumelis was a banker (*banchiere*). Information about the banking system, particularly the private sector, in Venetian Crete during this early period is limited. It is highly likely that Georgios operated as a private banker, underscoring the wealth of the family.[15] On the other hand, Alexandros was a secretary (*cancelliere*) in the public treasury (Camera Fiscale) of Candia from 1538[16] and a leaser (*conductor*) of the properties of the diocese of Kissamos between 1541 and 1546 (Kaklamanis 1986, 173).

During the period of the decline (1549-1570) the presence of Andreas Curcumelis in the mercantile enterprises decreases significantly. In the 1550s, their commercial structure collapsed due to their extensive ship ownership and trading activities, leading to an inability to settle their debts. This financial strain was further exacerbated by the eight thousand ducats debt that Andreas left to Alexandros after his death (Kaklamanis 1989, 382).

The use of marriage alliances to promote their business activities and achieve social distinction is prominently illustrated in the family of Andreas and Alexandros Curcumelis. The study of the family's marital alliances confirms that marriage was controlled by wider kin in the economic and social interests of the family. While it was not used as a factor of upward social mobility, these strong marital unions served as strategic measures to sustain and enhance their business ventures, ultimately fostering economic growth and social acknowledgment· a practice also observed among salaried agents of English trading companies or the Levant Company (Fusaro 2012, 703).

During the initial period of their enterprises, Anastasios Curcumelis, arranged in 1521 the marriage of his daughter, Agnese Curcumeli, with Nicolaus Bon (Fig. 1).

[15] ASV, NC, b. 135 (not. Nicolo Longo), lib. 30, f. 345r (1516)· ASV, NC, b. 136 (not. Nicolo Longo), lib. 35, f. 42v (1521).

[16] ASV, NC, b. 274 (not. Marco Trivisan), lib. 1, f. 61r (23 March 1538).

The latter was actively involved in the maritime sector and became a partner in the mercantile activities of Andreas and Alexandros Curcumelis.[17]

Andreas Curcumelis' commercial ventures were significantly built on interpersonal connections. From the beginning of his career as a merchant and shipowner, and throughout his life, he cultivated lasting collaborative networks in ship ownership and commercial partnerships. These networks primarily involved individuals from Venetian Crete, although there were instances where he collaborated with individuals from other Venetian-ruled territories as well.[18] This decision highlights the preference of Andreas to collaborate with Greek seafarers, despite residing in Venice, from where he could have chosen «local» captains. It also underscores the dominant role of Greeks in trade and maritime activities during the sixteenth century.

Regarding the marriage alliances, Andreas Curcumelis formed marital connections with families distinguished for their maritime engagement. Specifically, Andreas married Maroula, daughter of Alexio de Constantinopoli (Kaklamanis1989, 389).[19] While Andreas was in Venice and throughout the peak of his commercial enterprises, he arranged the marriage of his daughter, Andriani, to his associate Manoli Sclavo in 1546. The latter originated from Crete and was also engaged in commercial and shipping activities. It is probable that Andriani lived in Venice throughout her lifetime, as suggested by her will. There is no indication of her having any children, as her will does not mention them. At the time of her will, her husband had also passed away, leaving her brother, Zuanne, as the sole family member entitled to a portion of her inheritance.[20]

Andreas Curcumelis died unexpectedly in 1556, leaving a great debt behind (Kaklamanis 1989, 379). Following Andreas' passing his wife, continued this strategy and wedded two of her daughters with collaborators (or their sons) of her husband: Tomaso Marcopulo and Zorzi Nufri. Both individuals were from Venetian Crete and had collaborated with Andreas Curcumelis for years, engaging in ship ownership and commercial activities. In terms of social mobility, these marriages were characterized by homogamy, since both parties belonged to the same social status (horizontal mobility) driven by strong economic and career factors. Carocci (2011, 385) has pointed out the importance of internal (horizontal) mobility in the medieval world· this mobility not from one social group to another, but within the same class, doubtless

[17] ASV, NC, b. 15 (not. Giovanni Bonasseri), lib. 2, f. 280r-v (19-11-1521): The dowry of Agnese was 6000 yperpera.

[18] Among those were Andreas (A)licudi, Manoli (Manolachi) Comita, Zanni Sclavo, Nicolo de la Cania, Georgios (Zorzi) Nufri, Georgios Postichi, Constantino Fundoschiadi, Antonio Lidiaco, Zuan Sfachioti, Manea Calopoda, Manoli Sclavo, Tomaso Marcopoulo, and Ioanni Sfakioti. All of them originated from Crete. Furthermore, Tomaso Avloniti from Corfù, and Markos Samariari from Zante often emerged as his associates and collaborators.

[19] Fani Mavroeidi (1976, 122) and Kaklamanis (1989, 389) argued that Andreas Curcumelis married in 1548/1549 based on a patriarchal letter of the year 1549 (Manousakas 1968, 11-14). Nevertheless, this letter does not clearly mention Andreas' marriage nor his wife. The reference to the marriage may be in relation to his daughter's marriage, Andriani, who married in Venice in 1546. Furthermore, the timeline of Andreas' children and their marriages do not align with the hypothesis that he married in 1548/1549. There is also no indication that he married twice.

[20] The will of Andriani Curcumeli and information about her presence in Venice will be published in an article in Thesaurismata (forthcoming).

played a more important role than it does in today's societies and therefore any study of medieval social dynamics must not fail to take into account this type of mobility.

The study of the Curcumeli family highlights the importance of horizontal mobility in early modern societies. While obtaining a higher social status could benefit individuals, marital strategies that led to internal mobility were equally important. In the dominant ideology of the Serenissima, marriage did not provide social mobility, but was a means to achieve social recognition and retain or enhance the family's economic situation and wealth. Legal and lawful marriage, non-involvement in manual work (*arte meccanica*), and an honorable life (*vita honorabile*) spanning through the three previous generations were closely tied and equally important for any attempt to improve the financial standing (obtaining public offices) or changing the social status (through a strict legal framework). The failure to meet even one of these conditions, or the mere suspicion of non-compliance, could prevent individuals from achieving socio-economic advancement.

Within this context, both Andreas and later his widow, Maroula Curcumeli, felt the need to forge stronger alliances with other renowned merchants and shipowners of the period in order to firstly expand and later preserve the family's business enterprises and possibly reduce their debts. After Andreas' death (1556), the first marriage alliance was formed in 1558 between Maria Curcumeli and Tomaso Marcopulo.[21] This marital strategy is further underscored by the age of the groom, who at the time of the agreement was sixty years old.[22] Their daughter married Antonio Falier, a wealthy *cittadino* (Fig. 2).[23] The second marital union was of Elena Curcumeli, who was also daughter of Andreas and Maroula. She married Zorzi, son of Zuanne Nufri in 1561.[24] Zorzi was not only a captain of Andreas' vessels, but also a renowned shipowner. The interesting part about these two marital unions except the establishment of collaborating networks, regards the dowry of the brides and the correlation with the family's land property in Xerocamara (area in the village named Venerato in Heraklion-Crete), an aspect that will be analyzed in the next section of the paper (section 4.4).

The effort to form marriage alliances in order to preserve their maritime enterprises is also evident within Alexandros's family. The wife of Alexandros Curcumelis remains unknown. They had five children, of which only his son named Francesco Curcumelis is identified.[25] Francesco married Marietta, daughter of the Cretan nobleman Marco Betto. Francesco stands out as the first member of the Curcumeli

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[21] ASV, DC, b. 5, reg. 64, f. 50r-51r (23 July 1563).

[22] The reference of the age is an extremely rare archival information of the period. It has survived in a catalogue with the names and ages of the captains (*patroni)* of ships (nave) in Venice in 1558. See Museo Civico Correr, Donà dalla Rose, b. 217 (Mercanzie e Dazii), f. 39r. This document was first found and published by Kaklamanis 1991, 302.

[23] ASV, NC, b. 198 (not. Antonio Pantaleo), lib. 11 (1575-1582), ff. 210r-211r (23 July 1581). Antonio Falier was a descendant of one of the Venetian families that had settled in Crete during the thirteenth century. Throughout the Venetian rule, numerous members of this family (Falier) had transitioned from Venetian nobility to either the Cretan nobility or the middle class (*cittadini*).

[24] ASV, DC, b. 5, reg. 64, f. 50r-51r (23 July 1563).

[25] ASV, Collegio, Risposte di fuori, b. 312 (1557-1558), f. 219r: «con altri mei cinque». This documented is first referred by Ploumides 1985, 7

family, who had married a woman from an upper social status, that of Cretan nobility. Although the marriage of a *cittadino* to a noblewoman did not lead to social advancement, it nevertheless entailed social recognition and prestige. This is directly related both to the wealth of the family, especially during the period of flourishing and development of their commercial enterprises, and to the assets of the family: land holdings (renting and exploitation of agricultural areas), real estate ownership in the city of Candia, and contributions to the Venetian state.

The last attempt of preserving some of their former commercial activities or ship ownerships', was perhaps the marriage of Anesina Curcumeli, daughter of Francesco, with Zanetto, son of Piero Condolignoti *detto Velona.*[26] This marital union was initiated by Alexandros Curcumelis, the grandfather of Anesina, in 1561, during a particularly difficult period. The groom's father, Piero Condolignoti, originated from Nafplio (Napoli di Romania), but resided in Chania (Crete). He was a merchant of various commodities, a shipowner, and also captained his own and foreign vessels. Additionally, he was a partner in commercial ventures and a moneylender. He conducted transactions with Crete and Zakynthos, where he maintained representatives. Like Andreas Curcumelis, he was a member of the Greek Confraternity in Venice from 1528. During the 1560s, when the marital union was formed, Piero was actively involved in the commercial and maritime sectors. In 1560, he collaborated with Marco di Giacomo da Venezia, a mariner on the Barbarossa ship for the load of goods from Crete to Western Europe. In recognition of his services to Serenissima, the Venetian State conferred Cretan nobility upon him and his descendants (Mavroeidi 1976, 128-129).[27] This meant, that while this marital union of Anesina Curcumeli and Zanetto Condolignoti was most probably between two people of the same social standing (*cittadini*), as no reference of nobility is made in the marital contract, their descendants belonged to the Cretan noble class.

4.3 The family's attitude towards the Venetian regime

A common practice in many Mediterranean societies for achieving upward social mobility was by the provision of services to the State. In the Venetian Republic, due to the growing Ottoman threat and the ongoing Ottoman-Venetian wars, the Serenissima faced an increasing need to safeguard its maritime territories in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this political climate, the authorities welcomed any private initiative that could help address the various challenges. Such services were the contribution of a large amount of money to the public coffers, participation in military operations against the Ottomans, donation of a horse to reinforce the feudal cavalry and successful service as important state functionaries (Lambrinos 2014, 60, 62).

[26] ASV, NC, b. 170 (not. Zorzi Maganari), f. 22r-v (21-04-1561).

[27] Piero Condolignoti, also known as Velona, had seven children. He served the Venetian State during the Third Ottoman-Venetian War (1537-1540). In 1537, he transported wheat to Chania, Crete, and captured an Ottoman ship (zurma turchesca) carrying wheat, animals, and eighty people, all of whom were delivered to Nafplio. In 1538, he transported water to the same city three times. Throughout the war, he contributed by capturing Ottoman subjects and rescuing Venetian ones. During these operations he was injured in the ear. See Sathas 1890, 26; Ploumides 1998, 45.

Within this context, the Venetian Republic, by adapting its social values to the needs of the times, had modified her earlier austere policy toward the local population in order to ensure the support of individuals outside the circle of nobility. These individuals, if their services were exceptionally important, in addition to seeking positions that would enhance their economic status, also sought social mobility. This had been a tried and tested political practice, and it was intensified in the decades after a war (Lambrinos 2014, 61).

In Venetian Crete during the sixteenth century the title of Cretan nobility was given to indigenous people as a reward for significant economic or military services rendered to the Venetian State, or granted after consideration of certain elements of social prestige, such as respectable origin, descent from a lawful marriage, wealth and absence of manual labour (Papadia-Lala 2004, 86). The privilege of Cretan nobility was particularly attractive due to the economic, social, and administrative advantages it provided, as well as the possibility of being elected to important public offices (Lambrinos, 1996, 219; 2015, 41-42· Papadaki 1998, 305; 314; 317). In this context, the socio-economic mobility of the individuals is closely tied to their attitude towards the Venetian regime. A distinctive example is Piero Condogliniotti from Nafplio who actively participated in the third Ottoman-Venetian War (1537-1540). For his services, the Venetian Republic bestowed upon him and his descendants the public office related to the collection of the cheese tax («*officio del deputato sopra la decima di formaggi in Candia*»), as well as the Cretan nobility.[28]

The Curcumeli family and especially Andreas and Alexandros actively participated in the third Ottoman-Venetian war by providing assistance to the Serenissima (financial aid and ships). While by assisting the Venetian State during war, they could elevate their social status and claim the Cretan nobility, the family employed it primarily as a means to expand their property holdings, thus enhancing their financial position. Particularly, Alexandros applied for the allocation of land (*bovine*) in the region of Lasithi (Agios Nikolaos, Crete) for exploitation.[29]

Nevertheless, the social status and prestige of the family is highlighted in the later family descendants of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who for improving their socio-economic status, made specific reference to their ancestors. Towards this direction, a petition of a later descendant of the family in Venetian Crete is documented. In 1641, Tomaso Musalo, «*avvocato et colonello delle cernide di Candia*», whose mother originated from the Curcumeli family requested to be elevated in the status of Cretan nobility. In his petition he made specific reference about the character of his mother («*per parte de madre tengo honorato carattere et parimenti verso heredi di un lungo giro di meriti della famiglia Curcumela*»). In the strict system of the Venetian Republic adhering to the highest standards of morality («*vita civile et honorovole*») was of primary importance for obtaining an upper social status. Moreover, it is well known that a woman's or her family's humble professional background could negatively impact

[28] See note 27 for references. For the cheese tax in Venetian Crete see Panopoulou 2005.

[29] ASV, Collegio, Risposte di fuori, b. 312 (1557-1558), f. 219r. This document is first referred by Ploumides 1985, 7.

the candidacy of her son, son-in-law, or grandson for a title or admission to the ruling class (Lambrinos 2004, 58; 87).[30]

On the other hand, another way of improving one's social status was through immigration particularly as a result to major political events. This mobility is characterized by Carocci (2011, 386, 393) as exogenous or conflictual. It arises from factors external to normal workings of society, such as political conquest, the migration of people, a devastating war, or an epidemic such as the Black Death. Even a channel of mobility such as migration, which has been common in every era, could lead to a horizontal shift or even a decline in social standing. Countless studies have shown how migration, usually to cities, often marked the starting point of a fortunate pathway toward social ascent.

Plentiful examples from the Venetian Archives have shown how immigrants tried to regain their previous social standing in the new areas to which they migrated. The most representative examples include several cases of Nafpliot subjects in Crete (Kolyvà-Karaleka, Moatsos 1979-1985) and Cypriots in Venice (Papadamou 2019). During the Fifth Ottoman-Venetian War, commonly known as the Cretan War (1645-1669), Crete came under Ottoman rule, marking the significant loss of Venice's largest and wealthiest overseas possession in the Eastern Mediterranean. This event triggered a substantial wave of migration, as residents of Venetian Crete, fearing Ottoman rule, sought refuge in other Venetian territories such as the Ionian Islands, Dalmatia, and Venice itself. This migration had profound social and cultural impacts (transfer of identity, customs, religious beliefs, and artisanal skills), influencing both the migrants and the regions they resettled in. It contributed to the spread of Cretan culture and reshaped social dynamics in their new communities.

After the loss of Crete to the Ottomans, a major number of refuges relocated to the Ionian islands, a choice strongly in relation to the socio-economic possibilities, that were given from the Venetian Republic to its citizens, specifically with the decision of September 2nd 1669. According to this decision, Cretan nobles, who would settle in a Venetian domination could claim admission to the city communal councils and participation in public offices. However, this decision was not accepted by the local councils, and the community of Corfù tried to keep the Cretan refugees out of its body (Karydis, Tzivara 2022, 189).[31] Within this context, in 1716, Spiros Curcumelis from Corfù sought a higher-ranking public position (*Campo bombista*), in return to the military contribution of his father (Zuanne Curcumelis) during the Cretan War and for the slavery of him and his family (mother and sister).[32] This last petition

[30] ASV, Collegio, Suppliche commesse ai Savi, b. 539 (21 August 1641). This document is first referred by Ploumides 2016, 39.

[31] For this decision see Antoniadi 1967, 46: «*Totalmente conoscemo di convenienza che in qualunque città maritima del Serenissimo Dominio ove s'allogeranno di questi Nobeli Feudati e Cretensi habbino da godere l' ingresso nel Consiglio di dette Città e le Cariche officii e dignità che li Nobeli e Gentie huomini d' esse godono, eccettuato quelle de Nobili Veneti, et habbitando nell' inclita Città di Venetia habbino a consequire le cariche de cittadini Originali nel modo ch' essi fruivano quelle de nobili Cretensi et attinenti a Feudati in questa Città et s'intendi di dover esser approvato dall' Eccelentissimo Senato, come pure quanto contiene*».

[32] ASV, Collegio, Suppliche commesse ai Savi, b. 580 (17 August 1716). This document is first referred by Ploumides 2016, 151.

indicated that after the Cretan War and the loss of Crete by the Ottomans (1645-1699), this specific family has relocated in Ionian islands (Corfù).

4.4 The family's wealth and activity in the local urban and/or rural economy

In the political and ideological system of the Venetian Republic, land ownership could be perceived as a symbol of a quality of life aligned with aristocratic ideals (Lambrinos 2022, 338). Land ownership and even the exploitation of large areas of free or feudal land was a strong indication of a comfortable and respectable life that could yield wealth and social prestige. Especially, the possession of a feudal land and the consequent military obligations to the Serenissima implied greater prestige for a *cittadino* at a time when the landowning aristocracy was experiencing economic decline and several feudal lands had passed into the hands of the rising middle class. The major social and ideological aspiration was to possess enough wealth to avoid personal involvement in agricultural work (*arte manuale et meccanica*). Towards this, urban or agricultural property was a decisive factor that distinguished the middle social stratum from the lower class, which included both city and rural inhabitants (*popolani* and *contadini*). It also served as proof that the family did not engage in manual labor (Lambrinos 2015, 125).

As was the case with many entrepreneurs of this period, who engaged in unstable financial environments (Lambrinos 2014, 59), some members of the Curcumeli family, held administrative positions (i.e Georgios Curcumelis, Alexandros Curcumelis, Francesco Curcumelis). Furthermore, like many other citizens of the period, the family had additional income from urban and/or agricultural property, which they sought to expand in different ways, such as buying real estate property in Candia, leasing several vineyards, such as those that belonged to Saint Thomas of Burgognoni of Torcello in 1545[33] and those of the diocese of Kissamos (Mavroeidi 1976, 122-24; Kaklamanis 1989, 387).

During the initial period the wealth of the family and their land property is demonstrated in the dowry of Solomona Curcumeli, Georgios' daughter. After Georgios' death, likely at a young age, his wife arranged a marriage for their daughter with Castellanus, son of Piero Navilio (April 1534). Solomona took a dowry (*repromissa, dote et donis*) of an extremely high value, including fourteen thousand yperpryra, land *(metochio*) in the village Selopulo and real estate property in Candia (*domus et magazenis*). Anastasios Curcumelis, grandfather of Solomona and father-in-law of Caterina, was present during this marital arrangement and acted as guarantor.[34]

Andreas Curcumelis had at least from 1538 land property in the region of Xerocamara, which is part of the village named Venerato, a location near the city of Candia. This land most probably was part of his wife's dowry and Andreas expanded it in 1554. The acquisition of feudal lands was also a common practice of wealthy citizens in this period. This land was previously owned by Zorzi Franchini, and

[33] ASV, NA, b. 10640 (not. Agostino Pellestrina), lib. 2, f. 30v-31r (22 March 1545).

[34] ASV, NC, b. 194 (not. Pietro Pellegrino), lib. 1528-1570, f. 228v-229r (18 April 1534).

Andreas acquired it through a public auction.[35] This property was used as a form of dowry by Andreas' wife to their daughters after his death.

The analysis of the dowries given to the female members of the Curcumeli family in different time frames, which are closely tied to the above-mentioned phases of their commercial enterprises, demonstrate their wealth and activity in local and urban economy. Usually during the marital contracts, the dowry was divided in two parts: the *dote*, which primarily constituted real estate property, movable property in the form of clothes, linen, and sometimes liquid capital. The second part of the dowry was the gift (*donis*) to the spouse, which was mainly given in cash. The analysis of these elements and their comparison with other data of the period aid in identifying the socio-economic status of the families. The strongly patriarchal structure built on the control of the assets and its transmission only to male heirs had well excluded women from the paternal inheritance system. Only the male children inherited the family patrimony, while daughters were excluded from the inheritance. In this context the dowry served to release the patriarchal and patrilineal family from any potential claims by women on paternal assets (Orlando 2023, 34). This idea is strongly demonstrated in Anastasios Curcumelis will, where he emphasizes that the land he leaves behind must remain strictly within the family's descendants.[36]

Archival records document the dowries provided to three of Andreas' daughters (Andriani, Maria, and Elena), as well as to one of his granddaughters (Andriani Marcopula) and one of his great-granddaughters (Petrousa Chiozza). During the first two periods of the family's enterprises (growth and prosperity), the marriage strategies were linked to the establishment and expansion of their commercial and shipping activities. The grooms originated from Venetian Crete and were actively involved in ship ownership and long-distance commercial activities (grooms: Manoli Sclavo, Tomaso Marcopulo, Zorzi Nufri).

Andriani, who married in 1546, while Andreas was still alive, received a dowry of two hundred fifty ducats, whereas both Maria and Elena Curcumeli, who were married after his death, received a dowry of one thousand ducats.[37] Since Andreas' wife, Maroula, did not have liquid capital to provide to the grooms, she allowed them to derive financial benefit from her property in Xerocamara. This land property was part of her dowry, which was now transmitted to her daughters. Otherwise, it would likely have passed to Andreas' son, Zuanne. Tomaso Marcopulo, husband of Maria Curcumeli, received as part of the dowry the third fifth of the property in Xerocamara. He also had the authority to utilize the entire property and specifically the vineyards, for a period of three years until the amount of one thousand ducats was settled. Additionally, as part of her daughter's dowry, Maroula Curcumeli bestowed upon Marcopulo a house situated in Candia, in the Agia Kyriaki area, along with a furnished bed (*letto fornito*) and clothing (*vestimenti*).[38]

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[35] ASV, DC, b. 5, div. loc., ff. 132rv-133r (23 Febuary 1554).

[36] ASV, DC, b. 36bis, lib. 25 (1558-1559), f. 153r-v (28 March 1559): "*quod dicta stabilia non possint eundi alienum… procideme de heredibus in heredibus in perpetuo*".

[37] ASV, NA, b. 10641 (Agostino Pellestrina), lib. 3, f. 34v-35r (31 August 1546).

[38] ASV, DC, b. 5, reg. 64, f. 50r-51r (23 July 1563). It is mentioned that the house in Agia Kyriaki was given to Maria from her father in 1540: «*una casa posta in Candia nella contra de Santa Chiriacki la qual*

Three years later, in 1561, Maroula Curcumeli made a similar marital agreement with Zorzi Nufri. A part of Elena's Curcumeli dowry was also the same amount of one thousand ducats: Nufri would be granted six hundred ducats worth of land property, amounting to one-fifth of the property in Xerocamara. Additionally, he would receive two hundred ducats in movable assets, and another two hundred ducats which he could obtain by utilizing half of the above-mentioned land property.[39] As was the case with many active businessmen, wholesale merchants, shipowners and tax farmers who operated in unstable financial environments, Nufri's wealth collapsed leading to depts.[40] During the marriage, the dowry remained property of the wife, while the spouse could benefit from it and invest in it. Also, it represented the bride's contribution to the expenses of the common household *(dos sustineat onera matrimonii*) and after the husband's death it would provide support for the widow or facilitate her remarriage (Kirshner 2015, 9). Within this context, in 1570, Zuanne Curcumelis, tried to protect his sister's dowry (Elena Curcumeli-Nufri) both from Zorzi Nufri and his creditors. In his petition to the local authorities, he claimed that according to the law, Elena had the right to claim her property, as it was part of her dowry, even though it was sold from Zorzi Nufri to Tomaso Marcopulo.[41] The same land property was bestowed, almost a decade later, to Antonio Falier for his marriage to Andriani Marcopula, daughter of Tomaso Marcopulo[42].

On the contrary, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the geographical character of these marriages was further redefined to individuals hailing from the same region in the city of Candia (Xerocamara and the village of Venerato). This strategy was used by the family as a last attempt to preserve their socio-economic status from a different perspective· rather expanding their commercial relations, they focused on securing and/or expanding their land holdings. This shift can be strongly related not only to the collapse of their commercial enterprises, but also to the changing political and economic realities the period. The loss of Cyprus (1570) changed once again the political dynamics of the period and strongly affected Venetian Crete and shifted its maritime enterprises.

In the Curcumeli family, representative examples of this marital practice are later descendants of Andreas Curcumelis. Andreas' last daughter, Bettina Curcumeli, married a man named Macri (Fig. 2). Although no further information about this marriage or her husband has been found, evidence exists regarding their daughter, Elenata. The latter wedded a certain Friello, whose name does not appear in the archival documents found. After her husband's passing, Elenata entered into a second

casa fu dona a ditta sposa dal suprascritto m. Andrea suo padre come appar per instrumento pubblico fatto del 1540/14 april de man de m. Lunardo Sanson».

[39] ASV, NC, b. 195 (Antonio Pantaleo), lib. 3 (1566-1568), f. 181v-183r (September 1567).

[40] Same was the case not only of Andreas and Alexandros Curcumelis, but also of Nicolo Episcopopulo and Manusso Theotocopulo, brother of Domenico Theotocopulo (El Greco). See Panagiotakis 1999, 80-90; Lambrinos 2014, 63.

[41] ASV, DC, b. 36bis, reg. 44, f. 154r-v (1570): «*territorio che la predetta donna Helena Nufri si possi assicurer della sua dote conforme alla citation sua senza per iuditio delle raggione de signor Tomaso*».

[42] ASV, DC, b. 40bis, mem. 50 (1580), f. 215v (14 July 1580)· ASV, NC, b. 198 (Antonio Pantaleo), lib. 11 (1575-1582), ff. 210r-211r (23 July 1581).

marriage with Zuanne Chiozza (Fig. 2). The Friello family, with numerous members, owned property in the village of Venerato, close to the abovementioned location of Xerocamara. Her second husband, Zuanne Chiozza, also hailed from the village of Venerato. Petrousa Chiozzopoula daughter of Elenata and Zuanne Chiozza, married Piero Christianopoulo, son of priest Georgios, from the same village of Venerato in 1635 (Fig. 2).[43] Her dowry pertained movable assets (dresses, pillow-cases, under-shirts) worth of eight thousand hyperpyra. The above-mentioned amount exceeds the typical dowries given in that region (the village of Venerato) during this period (first half of seventeenth century). Specifically, out of the thirty-two dowry records preserved by this notary during the period 1637-1650, the above-mentioned sum represents the second-largest amount, while the usual dowries ranged between two hundred fifty-five and five thousand one hundred thirty-six hyperpyra[44].

This strong correlation between marital unions of people originating from the same region has been pointed out by several other recent studies regarding Venetian Crete. For instance, the study of Eleni Tsourapa (2010), has shown than in sixteenth century Venetian Chania the majority of the marriages of a noble family (Premarin) were with individuals from the same abovementioned region and mainly within the same status of nobility. This strong phenomenon of marriage alliances and land ownership is also highlighted by Maria Mondelou (2016) in her study about sixteenth century Venetian Sitia (Crete).[45] According to her research, Sitia, a small town with a predominantly settled population, demonstrated a strong preference for intermarriage. Male residents of the town commonly chose brides from either the town itself or the villages within the Sitia district, accounting for 51% of marriages. Marriages between a resident of Sitia and an «outsider» were much less common, comprising only 26.9% (13.5% for men and 12.9% for women) of unions (Mondelou 2016, 8-9).

The same marriage strategy is also applied in several descendants of Andreas' Curcumelis family. The majority of these marital unions was important for the horizontal mobility of the family and social recognition, even after their depts and the collapse of the family's mercantile enterprises. The analysis of the dowries reveals that the family had access to liquid capital and retained a diverse array of land properties and real estate in the area of Candia. These resources helped the family to maintain their social status and recognition. The importance of the family's land property and the wealth that derived from it aided to socially acceptable marriages (i.e unions with other wealthy *cittadini* or Cretan nobles). It also provided an amount of wealth to the family, even during the period when their commercial enterprises declined.

These elements (land property, wealth derived from its exploitation and socially acceptable marital unions) helped to uphold and maintain the Serenissima's criteria for social standing. Such criteria (marriage, the avoidance of *arte meccanica* and an

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[43] ASV, NC, b. 140 (Zuanne Lubina), lib. 1, f. 217v (15 October 1635).

[44] These sums have been concluded after the analysis of the dowries preserved in the notary Zuanne Lubina, who was active in the village of Venerato and its nearby territories. See ASV, NC, b. 140 (not. Zuanne Lubina), lib. 1, ff. 5r, 5v-6r, 49r, 173r, 217v-218r.

[45] Her study pertained 155 dowry contracts of the Sitia region in Crete during the sixteenth century regarding couples of the newlyweds, at least one of whom was a resident of Sitia.

honorable life) were essential for facilitating the upward social mobility of a family's descendants within Venetian society. In this context, Elenata Friello, granddaughter of Andreas Curcumelis, made a significant transition during the seventeenth century – from the status of *cittadini* to the elite class (nobile). Archival documents reflect her elevated position by designating her with the title «evgenestati» (*ευγενεστάτη*).[46] Her husband also originated from the above-mentioned region of Xerocamara.

5. Conclusion

The study of the Curcumeli family reveals that marriage was controlled by wider kin in the economic and social interests of the family. Through the period under examination marital unions were used to strengthen their enterprises. Nicolaus Bon, Manoli Sclavo, Tomaso Marcopulo, Zorzi Nufri and Zanetto Condolignoti, all married within the Curcumeli family were engaged in the commercial activities and ship ownership. They were also collaborators of the commercial enterprises of the Curcumeli brothers, proving that family was a default mechanism of business partnerships.

The examination of these marriage practices shifts through the decades in correlation to the decline of their commercial enterprises. Nevertheless, family continued to be used as a form of strategy, but in another context. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, these marriage alliances had a stronger geographical character and were connected to the family's landownership. Following the collapse of their commercial enterprises and their depts, marriage strategies were formed with individuals who owned land and/or originated from the region of Venerato, where the Curcumeli family had land property. The grooms (Friello, Chiozza, Falier, and Christianopoulo) who entered into marital unions with descendants of the Curcumeli family were all connected to the village of Venerato and the region of Xerocamara; a phenomenon already presented in other families of Venetian Crete (Chania and Sitia).

According to the Venetian norms, marriage itself could not lead to upward or downward social mobility, but it aided to the social recognition and economic prosperity of the family. Legal and legitimate marriage, avoidance of manual labor (*arte meccanica*), and maintaining an honorable life (*vita honorabile*) across three preceding generations were all closely interconnected and held equal importance in efforts to enhance financial standing (such as securing public offices) or to elevate social status in a strict legal framework. Within this context of major importance was marrying through the same social stratum with families that had socio-economic recognition.

The study of the Curcumeli family highlights the importance of horizontal mobility in the Medieval and early Modern societies. In the dominant ideology of the Serenissima, marital strategies that led to internal mobility were equally important, since it was a means to achieve social recognition and retain or enhance their economic situation and wealth. While the majority of the members of the Curcumeli family were married within their social group, there are some exceptions. Francesco

[46] ASV, NC, b. 140 (not. Zuanne Lubina), lib. 1, f. 203v (2 April 1635).

Curcumeli and his daughter both married with individuals from an upper social status (Cretan nobles). The family member who transitioned from the *cittadini* status to the elite (nobile) class was Andreas' Curcumelis granddaughter, Elenata Friello. Also, the grandchildren of Francesco Curcumeli belonged to the Cretan noble class, since Cretan nobility was granted to their father (Zanetto Condolignoti) and his descendants. This upward social mobility was mainly achieved through strategically arranged marriages, which contributed to their social recognition, and facilitated their financial advancement, both in the maritime sector and through landownership.

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Josep Mas-Ferrer

Female social mobility in an impartible inheritance society at the end of the pre-industrial era (north-eastern Catalonia, 1750-1805)

1. Introduction

Social mobility has been a central phenomenon in the organisation of human societies throughout history. Since ancient times, the ability of individuals to move up or down the social ladder has been a crucial issue. Indeed, as forms of inequality and social stratification have existed for millennia (perhaps millions of years) (Scheidel 2017), the degree of social mobility is a determinant of progress, stagnation or regression in the hierarchy of a given human group. Particularly, social mobility has traditionally attracted the attention of scholars, in order to understand certain political attitudes in contemporary societies. In this regard, there is a certain consensus around the idea, pioneered by Tocqueville (1835), that greater social mobility induces political attitudes that are less favourable to welfare and distributive policies, as individuals perceive greater equality of opportunity (Piketty 1995). This would make social mobility a key element in understanding political development in the contemporary world.

With regard to pre-industrial societies, characterised by the predominance of agrarian economic systems and hierarchical social structures, social mobility has historically received less attention. With power dynamics, class relations and status inheritance playing a prominent role in shaping people's lives, destiny tended to be seen as predetermined and, therefore, social mobility might be a phenomenon of limited scope. However, in recent years, as knowledge of economic inequality in the pre-industrial era has consolidated (Jackson 2022; Alfani 2021), a considerable literature has also emerged on the opportunities (or not) that individuals had to move up or down in the unequal distribution of economic resources. Thus, using mainly records of vital events (births, marriages, deaths), studies have been carried out on the evolution of social mobility in the long run and in different countries, such as England (Boberg-Fazlic and Sharp 2018; Clark and Cummins 2014), France (Van Leeuwen et al., 2016) or Spain (Brea-Martínez and Pujadas-Mora 2022), among others.

Theoretically, scholars distinguish between two types of social mobility: absolute and relative. The former measures the number of people who change social class during their lifetime, either upwards or downwards, while the latter compares the social class of parents with that of children and/or successive generations (Schifano 2022, 7-8). Whether absolute or relative, it should be noted that most studies have focused on male social mobility, not because of a scientific gender bias, but because

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the sources are already biased. Indeed, historical sources very often attribute a job only to adult men, although it is well known that women (and even infants) worked and contributed to the domestic economy, both inside and outside the home (Humphries and Sarasúa 2012).

Moreover, social mobility in pre-industrial societies had a strong female accent, especially where the inheritance system was based on male primogeniture. In this inheritance model, the first-born son usually receives full inheritance and status from his parents and then they usually remain together in the family household. By marrying a woman who gives a dowry commensurate with the inherited patrimony, the heir forms an extended family with his parents, wife, future children and perhaps another relatives. In this way, the woman's mobility is twofold: literaly, by moving into her husband's home, and social, by integrating into her new family unit.

Bearing the latter in mind, this paper presents a case study of social mobility from the point of view of women and, more specifically, brides, since it will focus on marriage, during the second half of the eighteenth century, that is, in the late pre-industrial era. Indeed, it will be used a database of marriage contracts, which, as will be explained later, are the notarial deed in which the act of inheritance from parents to sons was recorded, as well as the dowry to be paid by the bride. Thus, by comparing the occupation of both the groom and the father of the bride, we can assess the sense of mobility experienced by the bride (upward, horizontal or downward). In addition, the value of the dowry, paid by the bride to the groom, provides an element to situate their specific socio-economic status, which should bring a deeper understanding of the social mobility experienced in each case. Specifically, this case study focuses on a rural sector from north-eastern Spain, within the geographical scope of what is known as Old Catalonia, where male primogeniture was still strongly predominant in those times, as will be explained in the next section.

Thus and from here onwards, the paper is structured as follows: section 2 presents the characteristics and reasons for the prevalence of male primogeniture in Old Catalonia, as well as for the payment of dowries. Then, section 3 presents in detail the database we have worked with, as well as some aspects and methodological choices made in order to measure social mobility. Section 4 presents the evolution of social mobility and controls for some factors that could explain it. In section 5, the mobility data are crossed with the value of dowries, allowing a more in-depth discussion of the results obtained. Lastly, the paper ends with some brief conclusions in section 6.

2. Male primogeniture and dowry payments in Old Catalonia

From the tenth century onwards, in north-eastern Spain, in the area known as Old Catalonia, the rural landscape was structured around a type of holdings, made up of a house, some land and often livestock, with dimensions and characteristics that were essentially family-run and that have survived to the present day: the *masos*. Some of them would simply replace the old Carolingian villas, while others would be created in the process of expansion and colonisation. From the very beginning, there were larger and smaller *masos*, in the mountains and on the plains, on dry and irrigated

land. What they all had in common, however, was that they were holdings designed to be worked by family labour. In other words, they were not vast extensions designed to incorporate large amounts of salaried labour, but they were big enough to allow the subsistence of the families that lived and worked on them (Lluch and Mallorquí 2015).[1]

This predominance of medium-sized holdings, combined with the fact that families were servilely tied to the *masos*, required the search of a mechanism that would guarantee the viability of the family holding and prevent it from disintegrating from one generation to the next. This particular context explains why, between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, a series of fundamental changes took place in the organisation of the family and in the transmission of wealth. Visigothic inheritance practices, which were more egalitarian, were gradually abandoned in favour of a model in which one son was privileged over the others, usually the first-born male (To 1997). In addition, the act of inheritance from parents to son did not take place at the death of the parents, but through the marriage of the son, often with the agreement of a common residence and the joint use of the property for as long as the two generations were alive.

All this, made marriage a key institution in the intergenerational transmission of wealth. From the perspective of the sources, it could be said that the instrument that regulated the transmission of wealth was not so much the will, but another type of notarial deed known as the 'marriage contract', which was usually drawn up some time before the wedding. Moreover, since marriage was the chessboard for the transmission of wealth, it created some kind of a 'competitive marriage market' in which heirs (and their parents) sought a bride from the best possible family and, at the same time, brides and their families sought to join the heir of the best patrimony within their reach. The mechanism that regulated this market was the dowry, which was negotiated between families and tended to be related to family wealth and/or social status (Congost and Ros 2013, 276-7). It should also be noted that the dowry was mostly paid in cash (in addition to the bride's trousseau of clothes and jewellery), so that dowries constitute a quantifiable indicator of social status and, with appropriate precautions, can be used as a proxy of family wealth, and therefore, also to measure inequality and other economic indicators (Mas-Ferrer 2023a).

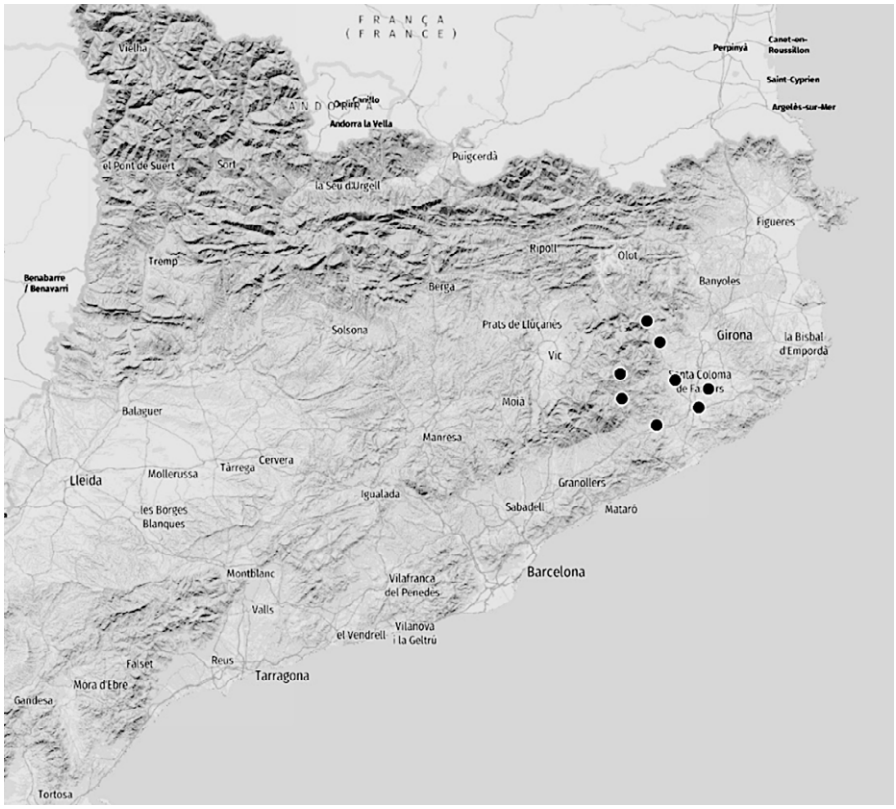
3. Data and methodology

For this case study, we worked with the notarial records of eight municipalities that make up a rural sector in north-eastern Spain (Fig. 1). We collected all the marriage contracts registered in three chronological periods, namely 1750-1755, 1775-1780 and 1800-1805. As can be seen in Table 1, this involved the collection of a total of 819 marriage contracts. Among these, 83.27%, or 682 marriage contracts, contain a dowry in cash given by the bride to the groom. The remaining 16.73% are either marriage contracts where the dowry is paid in movable property, or marriage

[1] For a comparative analysis of the organisation of rural space in the Mediterranean world, see Congost, Jover and Biagioli (2003).

contracts that correspond to other family casuistry.[2] Thus, there are 682 marriage contracts in which the occupation of the groom and the father of the bride are indicated and a dowry in cash is given, which is supposed to reflect the value of the groom's inherited wealth and social status. These contracts form the basis of our study, the results of which are presented in the following sections.

Fig. 1. **Notarial offices included in the study**[3]



[2] Basically, these other casuistries respond to three cases. Firstly, there are marriages in which both spouses are heirs (in the case of the bride, presumably because she has no male sibling), in which case there is a merger of both estates. Secondly, there is the opposite case, when neither of the two spouses is an heir and they also pool any assets they may have. The third casuistry would respond to those cases where the roles are reversed and it is an heiress bride who receives a dowry from a non-heir groom. In any case, it should be noted that all of them represent a very low share of all marriage contracts.

[3] The eight notarial offices with which we worked correspond to the current municipalities of Anglès, Amer, Arbúcies, Caldes de Malavella, Hostalric, Sant Hilari Sacalm, Santa Coloma de Farners and Vidreres. Most of the records are kept in the Historical Archive of Girona (AHG), except for a few that are deposited in the Regional Archive of Santa Coloma de Farners (ACSE).

Tab. 1. **Marriage contracts analysed**

	Marriage contracts	With monetary dowry from bride to groom	% With monetary dowry from bride to groom
1750-1755	306	268	85.62%
1775-1780	265	218	82.26%
1800-1805	248	202	81.45%
Total	819	682	83.27%

Nonetheless, before going into the actual analysis of the results, a major methodological challenge has to be faced, which is the classification of the different occupations in order to assign an upward, horizontal or downward sense of social mobility to each marriage. In order to standardise methods and facilitate comparability with other works, the Hisclass classification (van Leeuen and Maas, 2011) has been used. However, some modifications have been made to adapt to the type of information provided by marriage contracts, as well as to the socio-professional structure of the region under study (Congost, Ros and Saguer 2016). Indeed, as can be seen in table 2, the classical 12-class model has been adapted to a 5-class one, which, in our opinion, better reflects the social organisation and hierarchical relations in the rural world under analysis. Thus, as far as the agricultural professions are concerned, the first class would include all the large landowners, both those with titles of nobility or distinction and those without. The second group concerns medium-sized landowners (families owning *masos*), while the grain millers are in the third group. Then, the fourth level includes both the tenant farmers and the smallholders of land parcels that do not reach the category of *masos*. Finally, the fifth level would be for landless labourers, although this is a label that very rarely appears in marriage contracts.

Tab. 2. **The relation between Hisclass and the classification used in this paper**

Hissclass 12	5 class model	Most common trades
1. Higher managers	1	Noble, prestige title landowner, major landowner, notary, doctor, apothecary
2. Higher professionals		
3. Lower managers	2	medium landowner, surgeon, scribe, druggist, salesperson
4. Lower professionals, clericals and sales personnel		
5. Lower clerical and sales personnel		
6. Foremen	3	Artisan, carrier, grain miller
7. Medium-skilled workers		
8.Farmers and fishermen	4	Smallholder, tenant
9. Lower-skilled workers		
10. Lower-skilled farmworkers		
11. Unskilled workers	5	Day-labourer
12. Unskilled farmworkers		

Regarding the non-agricultural professions, these marriage contracts never referred to individuals as workers or apprentices, so essentially a three-class classification has been established. Thus, class 1 includes the three most prestigious professions of the rural world (notary, doctor and apothecary); class 2 comprises the three 'ancillary' professions of these (scribe, surgeon and druggist) as well as merchants; and finally class 3 covers all the artisan and carrier professions.

4. Trends in social mobility

Table 3 shows the weight of each of the five levels in the sample, both for the grooms (panel A) and for the brides' fathers (panel B). First of all, it should be noted that there are no cases in the fifth level (day-labourers) because, as mentioned above, landless labourers rarely appear in this type of source. It must be said that, the predominance of small and medium holdings implies that the number of landless labourers should not have been excessively high and, moreover, those that were very poor, probably did not draw up marriage contracts when they married. Indeed, in Mas-Ferrer (2023a, 29), it was estimated that, in this region under study, approximately 20% of adult men could be landless labourers and that they rarely participated in the marriage market, which makes sense, since if dowry is a way of valuing patrimony, in the absence of patrimony there would be no dowry either. Considering this, we must assume that this work has a certain class bias, because if, roughly, the poorest 20% are excluded (because they did not make marriage contracts), this implies that we are studying mobility among the remaining 80%. Then, this fifth class in our model was created in order to have a more standardised and comparable model that could also be used in other contexts, but the results shown below are in fact a comparison of mobility at four levels, while assuming the aforementioned class bias.

Either way, it is worth noting from the table that, from the point of view of both the grooms and the fathers of the bride, classes 2 and 4 are the most represented, closely followed by 3, while class 1 concerns only a small elite. These results should not be surprising, considering that groups 2 and 4 include the three most common occupations in a rural region with a predominance of smallholdings: the owner of *masos* on the one hand (class 2) and tenants and smallholders on the other (class 4).

The data in Table 3 also show that the percentage of people in class 2 decreases while the other classes increase over time. Certainly, the occupations that make up class 2 are not very elastic in terms of numbers, as they are specific professionals and owners of *masos*, whose numbers do not change. Therefore, the strong demographic growth experienced in the eighteenth century (Ferrer 2007) might explain why a fewer percentage of individuals are owners of *masos*. So, the reduction of class 2 is in fact the reduction of medium-sized owners, to the detriment of tenants, smallholders, artisans, etc. Moreover, thanks to the economic growth characteristic of the eighteenth century (which was also a growth in inequality), it is possible that some of these medium-sized landowners became richer, and moved into class 1, being classified by the notaries as large landowners or even acquiring a distinction title.

Tab. 3. **Share of each class within the grooms and the bride's fathers sample**

Panel A: Grooms

	1750-1755	**1775-1780**	**1800-1805**
1	1.15%	2.75%	2.97%
2	43.13%	25.69%	21.29%
3	27.10%	33.03%	36.63%
4	28.63%	38.53%	39.11%
5	0%	0%	0%

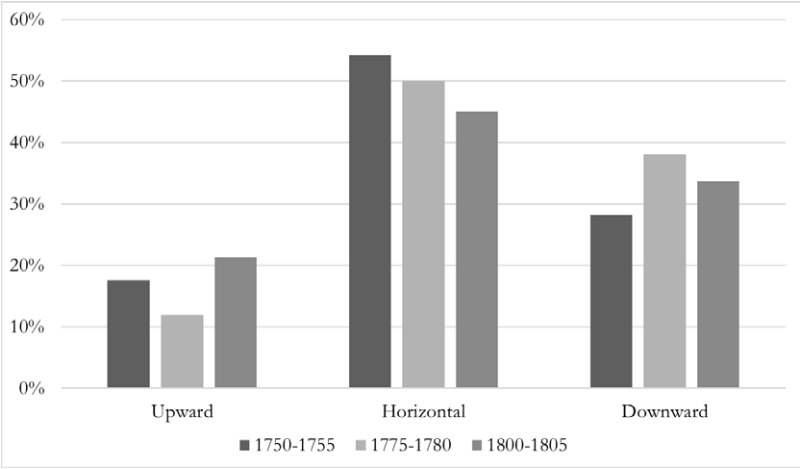
Panel B: Bride's fathers

	1750-1755	**1775-1780**	**1800-1805**
1	1.91%	6.88%	4.46%
2	54.58%	38.99%	31.19%
3	18.32%	32.57%	33.17%
4	25.19%	21.56%	31.19%
5	0%	0%	0%

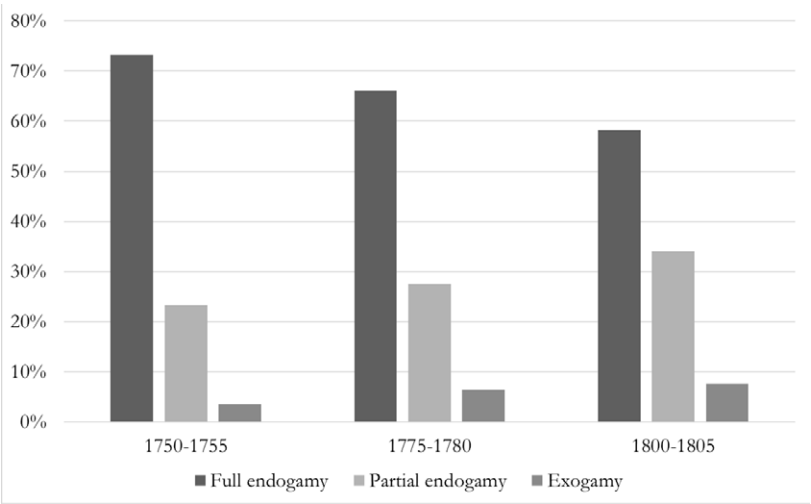
Nevertheless, the key aspect to highlight in Table 3 is that, in all periods, the sum of classes 1 and 2 is higher for fathers of brides than for grooms (and vice versa for the sum of classes 3 and 4). In other words, the top two classes are better represented among fathers of brides than among the grooms. This finding therefore implies that downward social mobility should be more common among brides than upward social mobility, because there are more brides from the higher groups than grooms. Indeed, this is exactly what happens when we measure their social mobility trends (Graph 1): downward mobility exceeds upward mobility in all three periods and by more than ten percentage points. The most striking difference is for marriages in the period 1775-1780, where the downward rate surpasses the upward one by about 20 points. In any case, the long-term trend is similar and the gap is maintained, since between the middle of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, both the upward and downward trends increase moderately, from 17.6% to 21.3% for the former and from 28.2% to 33.7% for the latter.

However, the most common type of mobility was the absence of mobility, i.e. horizontal mobility. Hence, horizontal mobility exceeded the 50% threshold in the middle of the eighteenth century and, despite a downward trend, was still above 40% half a century later. Within horizontal mobility, a distinction should be made between absolute endogamy, which would be the case if the groom and the bride's father had exactly the same occupation; partial endogamy, when they had different occupations but in the same economic sector; and finally exogamy, when they belonged to different economic sectors. As can be seen in Graph 2, in the mid-eighteenth century more than 70% of cases of horizontal mobility corresponded to marriages of full endogamy. This proportion tended to fall to just under 60% at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it can be said that throughout the period under study, the most common type of social mobility was horizontal, and within this, absolute endogamy was hegemonic, i.e. those types of marriages where the groom and the bride's father had exactly the same socio-professional label, according to the notarial deed.

Graph 1. **Trend in social mobility experienced by brides**



Graph 2. **Trend of each type of horizontal mobility**



Whether they were more or less endogamous, it is interesting to highlight that these rates of horizontal mobility are similar to those found by Brea-Martínez and Pujadas-Mora (2022, 24) for the neighbouring geographical area of Barcelona, since in the period they refer to as proto-industrial (1750-1829), the lack of social mobility affected around 45% of marriages. However, according to the same study, upward and downward mobility showed very similar results. Thus, their findings show a somewhat more favourable context for ascending the ladder compared to our context, where downward mobility outweighs upward one. Indeed, the opportunities offered by the economic development of Barcelona and its surroundings at the end

of the eighteenth century (proto-industry, commerce, etc.) could be an explanatory factor for this difference.

At this point, it should be noted that finding greater downward social mobility than upward is also fully consistent with those thesis which suggest that impartible inheritance systems favoured greater inequality and downward mobility. Indeed, for both contemporary (Piketty 2014) and pre-industrial societies (Borgerhoff et al 2009; Bowles, Smith and Borgerhoff 2010), the degree of inheritability of wealth has been hypothesised to be a determinant and explanatory factor of inequality (Alfani 2021, 31). Therefore, in single heir societies, where many individuals have a very low degree of inheritability, the forces pushing towards increasing inequality and downward social mobility would appear to be stronger. Moreover, this phenomenon would have a strong gender bias, as it only takes one male child to reduce the inheritability degree of all daughters to almost zero. Women are thus the main candidates to bear the burden of downward social mobility (Marfany 2020, 145). This phenomenon is also particularly relevant during periods of population growth (such as the period under study), when the number of non-inherited daughters (and sons) increases.

Given that the results obtained, as well as the literature on impartible inheritance systems, suggest that this form of social organisation favours downward rather than upward social mobility for women, we wondered whether the latter might be benefited by some factors that leaves a trace in the marriage contract itself. We then controlled upward social mobility by means of three elements that we can find out from the marriage contracts: geographical mobility, widowhood of the groom, and whether the bride had done any salaried work prior to the marriage. Indeed, since the marriage contracts indicate the village of residence of both spouses, we can find out whether the bride moved from one village to another when she get married. Then, by also indicating the marital status of the spouses, it is possible to assess whether the 'remarriage grooms market' had an effect on brides social mobility. Finally, it was also recorded whether at the time of the marriage the bride brought, as dowry, something that she had earned through some form of waged labour, whether in the form of money or in household goods. Marriage contracts thus provide information, albeit indirectly, on women's pre-marriage work, and for this study case, make it possible to assess its impact on social mobility.

Table 4 shows the results of the possible correlation between these three variables and upward social mobility. As can be seen, both geographical mobility and premarital salaried work do not seem to have an impact on upward social mobility. The case of salaried work is particularly relevant in our opinion, as its practice and diffusion are usually interpreted as something positive, in the sense of being an engine of empowerment, independence and disengagement from the parental rule. Without questioning this theoretical framework, this does not mean that it is conducive to upward social mobility. All the more so in a society such as the one we are analysing, where medium-sized agricultural holdings were still predominant. Hence, for a girl or adolescent to leave the family holding to go and work on another holding is basically an indication of the precariousness of her family of origin. However, it could be argued that, once in this precarious situation, premarital salaried work provided them with a certain financial endowment, allowing, for instance, to improve their dowry, or even simply to have something to constitute as a dowry, and thus to participate in

the marriage market. In this case, salaried work might have spared them from social demolition or even from having to join the ranks of permanent celibacy. In a nutshell, it is worth noting that salaried work is apparently not correlated with upward social mobility, maybe because in an agrarian society with a predominance of small and medium holdings, it was probably carried out by young girls in a precarious situation.

Finally, marrying a widowed groom seems to be positively correlated with upward social mobility, although not very robust, with p-values below 0.1 but above 0.05. Certainly, turning to the 'market' of second and subsequent marriages might have been a somewhat easier way to climb the social ladder compared to the market of first marriages, i.e. of single grooms. In these cases, and leaving aside elite families, it could be said that precariousness changes sides. Indeed, for families operating small or medium holdings, the premature dissolution of the family unit (due to the death of one of the spouses) must have been a very critical moment in the life cycle, as it took away a significant part of the available labour force (perhaps 50% of it). Moreover, in the case of families who were running *masos* under tenancy contracts, these always included a clause whereby the tenants undertook to improve the land and cultivate it properly, at the risk of being evicted if they failed to do so.[4] In the light of this clause, it was important to overcome the situation of widowhood as soon as possible by bringing a new adult into the family unit. It could therefore be that this favoured opportunities for upward mobility, as less chrematistic elements became more relevant. Thus, it would not be so much the exact dowry that the bride could pay, or the status of her family, but rather that she had some experience in the management of such a holding, and/or had the best skills to help overcome the situation in the shortest and most satisfactory possible way.

Tab. 4. **Effect of geographical mobility, widowhood of the groom, and premarital salaried work, on female upward mobility**

	1750-1755	**1775-1780**	**1800-1805**
Geographical mobility	-0.061 (0.198)	0.045 (0.317)	-0.090 (0.131)
Widow groom	0.079 (0.257)	0.107 (0.084)*	0.121 (0.071)*
Premarital salaried work	0.023 (0.801)	0.002 (0.968)	-0.015 (0.830)
Constant	0.196 (<0.001)***	0.076 (0.041)**	0.240 (<0.001)***
Observations	262	218	203
Observations with geographical mobility	141	130	120
Observations with widow groom	34	32	52
Observations with premarital salaried work	19	39	43
R^2	0.012	0.019	0.025

Note: p-values are given in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

[4] The clause was known as «a ús i costum de bon pages» («by the use and practice of a good farmer»). See Congost (1991, 153).

5. Dowries and social mobility

Having observed the general trend of mobility and discussed some possible causal factors, this section will try to assess whether the sense of mobility and the dowry given by the bride are in line with each other. For each marriage contract, we have analysed whether the dowry paid was above or below the average dowry paid by the bride's social class, and also whether it was above or below the average dowry received by the groom's social class. It is important to note that we distinguish between the dowries paid by brides from that received by grooms. Certainly, since there is no social homogamy at all, the average values of dowries paid and received are different in each social echelon. Indeed, table 5 shows the average value of dowries paid and received for each social class. It is not the aim of this paper to assess the movement of dowries and their evolution,[5] but it is worth noting that in all periods the average dowry received by class 1 grooms are higher than the average dowry paid by class 1 brides. In our view, this supports one of the theoretical underpinnings of this paper: that dowries are a way of valuing family wealth that is passed on through marriage from father to (eldest) son. Therefore, class one grooms, who are always heirs from distinguished families with considerable wealth, tend to attract the largest dowries.

Either way, by crossing the social class of the bride and the groom with the value of the dowry in relation to the average dowry of each class, the three possible directions of mobility (upward, horizontal, downward) have been converted into nine types of mobility, ranging from absolute upward mobility to absolute downward mobility, as can be seen in table 6. Thus, in cases of upward or downward mobility, these have been classified as absolute, relative or doubtful, depending on whether the value of the dowry points in the same direction as the mobility, is somewhat ambiguous or points in the opposite direction. For horizontal mobility cases, they have been classified as positive (above average), neutral (above paid, but below received or viceversa), or negative (below average).

Tab. 5. **Average dowry (in *lliures barceloneses*)[6] paid and received by each social class**

Class	1750-1755		1775-1780		1800-1805	
	Bride	Groom	Bride	Groom	Bride	Groom
1	930	1733.3	600.1	770.2	580.6	925
2	203.5	218.2	202.1	296.1	354.4	345.6
3	96	132.8	106.4	125.6	159	203.8
4	95.4	72.4	70.8	81.1	68.2	90.4

[5] A complete analysis of these dowries, and especially of the inequality that can be deduced from their distribution, can be found in Mas-Ferrer (2023a).

[6] The *lliures barceloneses* were the coin of account in Catalonia from medieval times until the adoption of the *pesseta*. Its value in grams of silver during this period ranged from 13.166 in the mid-18th century to 12.778 in the early 19th century (Feliu 1991).

Tab. 6. **Types of social mobility according to the dowry**

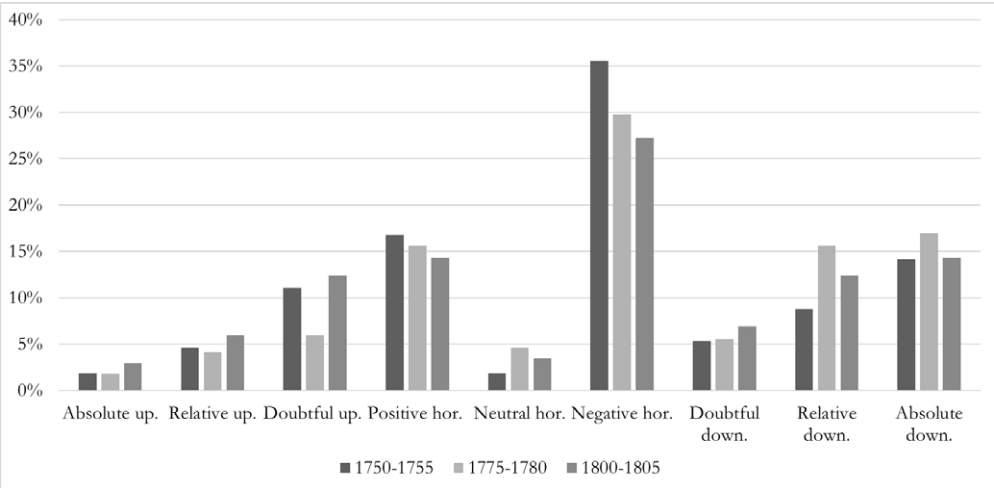
Type of mobility	Description
Absolute upward mobility	The groom belongs to a higher class than the bride. The dowry is above the average of both groom and bride classes
Relative upward mobility	The groom belongs to a higher class than the bride. The dowry is below the average of the groom class and above the average of the bride class
Doubtful upward mobility	The groom belongs to a higher class than the bride. The dowry is below the average of both groom and bride classes
Positive horizontal mobility	The bride and the groom belong to the same class and the dowry is above the average of their class
Neutral horizontal mobility	The bride and the groom belong to the same class and the dowry is above the average of the dowries received by their class and below those paid, or vice versa.
Negative horizontal mobility	The bride and the groom belong to the same class and the dowry is below the average of their class
Doubtful downward mobility	The bride belongs to a higher class than the groom. The dowry is above the average of both groom and bride classes
Relative downward mobility	The bride belongs to a higher class than the groom. The dowry is above the average of the groom class and below the average of the bride class
Absolute downward mobility	The bride belongs to a higher class than the groom. The dowry is below the average of both groom and bride classes

Graph 3 shows the weight and trend of each of the nine possible types of social mobility. The first thing to note is that the most common type is negative horizontal mobility (same social class, below average dowry), which accounted for more than a third of all cases in the mid-eighteenth century, and gradually fell to just over 25% in the early years of the nineteenth century. In cases where there was social mobility, i.e. where the bride and groom belonged to different classes, the most common type was absolute downward mobility, with a share always close to 15%. The second and third most common types, both with a share of 12.4% at the beginning of the nineteenth century, are relative downward and doubtful upward. At the other extreme, we find absolute upward mobility, which shows a slight upward trend but affects a very small proportion of cases (2-3%).

Looking only at the data on social mobility presented in the previous section, it could be argued that by far the most common form of social mobility was horizontal, and also that the differences between downward and upward mobility were not

particularly exaggerated, since, in both the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was little more than a ten percentage point difference in favour of downward mobility. However, when incorporating the value of dowry, it has been observed that the most promising cases of social demolition (absolute downward mobility) accounted for about 15%, while the most promising cases of of having climbed the social ladder (absolute upward mobility) affected only 2-3% of the analysed cases. Moreover, the most common type of horizontal mobility is negative horizontal mobility, i.e. cases in which the value of the dowry is below both the average dowry paid and the average dowry received by that social class. All this seems to confirm what was introduced in the previous section: that the system of impartible inheritance based on male primogeniture pushed many women towards downward social mobility, that is, towards the impossibility of maintaining the family's socio-economic status, which was inherited by a male sibling, usually the eldest one.

Graph 3. **Trend in social mobility according to the dowry**



However, the latter does not mean that systems of impartible inheritance were insensitive to the effects of downward social mobility affecting their non-heir sons and daughters. In this regard, it is worth noting that in a recent work on this same geographical area, relatively high rates of celibacy were detected by the end of the eighteenth century (Mas-Ferrer 2023b, 225-28). Indeed, based on information from the 1787 Census, and considering singles over the age of 50 as a proxy for definitive singleness (Marfany 2006, 80), the celibacy rate for women was 8.1%, rising to 13.3% for men. These figures are not too far removed from the 10-15% rates considered typical of the north-west European marriage pattern (popularly known as EMP).[7] Furthermore, when disaggregated at parish level, the highest rates of celibacy were

[7] A term introduced by the seminal contribution of Hajnal (1965). See also De Moor and Van Zanden (2010).

found in sparsely populated parishes, where almost all families lived in *masos*, that is to say, in impartible medium-sized agricultural family holdings, which constituted the core of the Catalan extended family model. It is difficult not to interpret these levels of singleness as a mechanism for managing family resources in order to take pressure off the marriage market. Thus, while it is clear that the patrilineal family system, based on the single heir, favoured the downward social mobility of women, it also seems that these same families were able to limit this downward mobility through celibacy, i.e. by limiting the number of participants in an atomised and inelastic market such as marriage one.[8]

6. Conclusions

Having presented and discussed the main results of this case study, some brief conclusions can be drawn about female social mobility in a society based on the impartial inheritance system at the end of the pre-industrial era. Firstly, it has been established that about half of the women practised horizontal mobility through marriage, and that the vast majority of them did so through endogamy, i.e. by marrying a groom who, according to the sources, had exactly the same occupational label as their father. However, in the other half of the cases where mobility occurred, it was more likely to be downward than upward. This is in line with the literature on inheritance systems, and in particular with the thesis that in impartible inheritance societies, where many individuals have a very low degree of inheritability, the forces pushing towards downward social mobility appear to be strong, especially for women, whose chances of inheritance virtually disappear if they have only one male sibling who reaches adulthood.

So, given that upward mobility was less common, it was tried to see if there were any elements that might favour it. Since marriage contracts report whether brides bring money or other assets acquired through salaried work, we control for upward mobility in relation to having worked before marriage, but there seems to be no correlation. This is interpreted in the sense that having worked before marriage was, more than anything else, a sign of family precariousness. Conversely, marrying a widowed groom shows some positive correlation. This could be interpreted in the sense that widowhood must be a very critical moment in families with medium or small holdings, as the death of a spouse can mean the loss of half of the usual labour force. Thus, the plight of the widowed grooms may have favoured the social advancement of those brides who took the plunge.

Then, when comparing the direction of mobility with the value of the dowry, the thesis of downward mobility being more common than upward seems to be further strengthened, as the most promising cases of upward social mobility (grooms from a higher social group receiving an above-average dowries) represent only 2-3% of the

[8] At this point it is worth mentioning works such as those from Dennison and Ogilvie (2014) and Le Bris and Tallec (2023) who have proposed that in southern Europe, characterized by regions of slower economic development and with a predominance of the extended family, some of the mechanisms usually attributed to north-eastern nuclear family models, such as high rates of celibacy, were also present.

cases. In contrast, the clearest candidates for social demolition (cases with a groom from a lower class and a below-average dowry) affected 15% of marriages, that is to say, more than five times the absolute upward mobility. Lastly, it might not be fair to end the paper assuming that impartible inheritance societies were insensitive to the downward social mobility of their non-heir sons and daughters. In the case studied here, the preference for an only son was a decision made on the basis of the agrarian structure derived from the way in which land was colonised in the early Middle Ages. From previous work we know that in the late eighteenth century celibacy rates were relatively similar to those in north-western Europe, and were particularly high among extended families living in *masos*, which is therefore interpreted as an attempt to take pressure off the marriage market.

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Sabrina Corbellini

Reading and writing for success: literacy, knowledge and social mobility

Introduction

In February 1448, the Tuscan-Emilian apothecary Giovanni Antonio da Faie began writing his *ricordo e chronica*. His goals were clear: to remember his whereabouts, and to educate his offspring (Ciappelli 2014; Biagioni 2019; Bordini 2009, 169-204; Sforza 1904; Cavalli 1971).[1] Giovanni had been born on 1st January 1409, about five months after his father died in July 1408. Fatherless and indigent, he had a difficult start in life and was forced to work from a very young age: first as servant, then a cattleboy, then apprenticed to a shoemaker and then a clothmaker. Finally, at the age of 12, Giovanni apprenticed himself to a *speziale* [apothecary]. According to the *ricordo*, this was a very deliberate career switch. Giovanni writes explicitly that he knew working as an apothecary would allow him freedom as well as intellectual development. We can also read this choice in the context of his efforts to attain a satisfactory level of literacy, which Giovanni characterizes as necessary not just to perform his professional activities, but also to develop his «vertù» (Biagioni 2019, 11-12).[2]

Giovanni's detailed description of these efforts, and in particular his stress on the process of acquiring graphic skills, offer a unique vantage point from which to investigate the connections between literacy and text-related activities and social transformations in late medieval Europe. The present study analyses a number of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century primary sources ((auto)biographical texts, manuals for merchants and artisans and manuscripts), and brings them into conversation with

[1] Faie was a small village in the Emilian Appennines, near Berceto. The writings of Giovanni Antonio da Faie have received considerable attention in scholarship; however, their cultural relevance has not yet been fully acknowledged. The text in question is preserved in an autograph manuscript (Massa, Archivio di Stato, ms. 34). It is written on paper in *mercantesca* cursive, bound with a limp parchment cover, and it counts 63 folia: the first 28 contain the autobiography, followed by a chronicle written by Giovanni (35 folia). Giovanni son's Raffaello placed a note on the last folium (63v), referring to his father's death on 6th September 1470. This note confirms that the manuscript, at least during the fifteenth century, was kept within Giovanni's family. Although an accurate codicological and palaeographical description of the manuscript is lacking, an analysis of the digital reproduction on the website of the Archivio di Stato di Massa (https://archiviodistatodimassa.cultura.gov.it/?p=3346) demonstrates that Giovanni's autobiography and chronicle show clear resemblances with the materiality and layout of late medieval Italian administrative sources (e.g. account books).

[2] Massa, Archivio di Stato, ms. 34, fol. 9v.

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current secondary research to demonstrate the role of literate activities (reading, writing, collecting books, and fostering access to knowledge) in processes of identity formation and patterns of representation in (Northern) Italy. These materials are then further contextualised and evaluated in a European perspective, with references in particular to medieval France and Low Countries.

The role of education in social mobility is widely discussed by scholars in early modern history, but that of literacy/literacies in the same during the late medieval period has not yet been systematically approached and evaluated.[3] In order to fill this gap, the present contribution asks how we can relate the performance of reading and writing, as well as engagement in the production, discussion, and distribution of textual knowledge, to personal and societal transformations in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Whereas traditionally a quantitative approach has been employed in the study of social mobility, I here show the value of qualitative methods, concentrating on modes of presentation and self-representation. Late medieval subjects, as we shall see, stressed education, literacy and participation in literate activities as instruments for the creation of new social identities.

Several considerations are crucial to this approach. First, we must take into account broad linguistic transformations, specifically the emancipation of the vernacular and the creation of vernacular linguistic identities. Second, we need to address graphic transformations, e.g. the use of specific graphic, palaeographic and documentary conventions. And third, we must think about the development of literacy on an individual level, and in particular about the acquisition of specific *habitus* in literate practice: the mastery of particular reading and writing techniques, the ability to use documentary models, and familiarity with accounting and registration systems.

The difficult path to literacy

Giovanni da Faie's autobiography offers one of the period's most striking testimonies on the process of literacy acquisition, a path which for him was indeed

[3] Studies on schooling in late medieval Europe (Black 2007; Sheffler 2008; Lynch 2017; Ferrari-Piseri 2013) stress the importance of education in processes of social transformation. Lynch 2017, 128 states for example: «The majority of children who attended schools in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century France came from urban backgrounds. They did not, however, come from the municipal elites of towns and cities alone, but from the mercantile, the artisan, and even from the labouring classes. Education became increasingly essential to these sections of society during this period and carried with it the idea of social and financial advancement. Businesses could be run more efficiently and profitably if owners possessed the ability to read, write, and count. More skilled, and better paid, employment might be gained».

A specific focus on the *impact* of the acquisition of literacy and elementary education (especially in the vernacular) is however still lacking. Guilbert describes as one of the exceptions discusses schooling as «promotion sociale» and «savonnette sociale» (Guilbert 1981). As far the early modern era is concerned, the connection between university education and social mobility and the evaluation of the impact of the Reformation and intellectual development of larger groups within European society are often subject of study. Although this Protestant Paradigm has repeatedly been challenged, the connection between Reformation, promotion of reading activities, schooling and economic success is still is a strong narrative in premodern studies (Mosher 2016).

paved with challenges. In his first job with the *speziale* Niccolò di Sagremoro in Pontremoli he had no spare time to follow any programmatic schooling. By asking customers to help him, Giovanni was able to learn the «abe» [the abecedarium] and to recognise «tute letere molto bene» [all letters of the alphabet very well], but not to «compedare» [read and write].[4] A second position in Lucca, in Gabriello da Siena's shop, also failed to satisfy his hunger for knowledge. Neither was his third master, Jacopo Calandrini from Sarzana, willing to teach him «de letera, che saperebe lezere e scrivere sua ragione» [literacy, i.e. to independently read and to write], even though it was an essential skill for his professional development.

Giovanni was only able to achieve his dream of literacy while working at the *spezeria* owned by Benedetto Santini in Borgo a Mozzano (about 20 km from Lucca). There he had time after work to study for a couple of hours on his own, motivated by his eagerness to learn how to read and to write [«tanto era lo grande animo ch' io avea de imparare»] (Biagioni 2019, 12-13).[5] This was the starting point of his journey into a satisfactory career, economic success and social prestige, as he carefully recorded in first part of his autobiography.[6] His literate skills are then put to new use in the second part of the manuscript, in which Giovanni compiles a chronicle describing local, national and international events – an achievement made possible by that early dedication and years of hard work (Biagioni 2019, 79-87).

Giovanni da Faie's focus on the literacy as fundamental for success is to a certain degree exceptional, but it is certainly not unique. A description of primary literacy education is often part of autobiographical writing (Guiglielminetti 1977, 246, cited by Balestracci 2004, 46).[7] It is however true that the overall importance, and in particular the social impact, of literacy tends to be stressed in cases in which the process of its acquisition is less obvious or more demanding. We see this for example with the Bolognese stonemason Gaspare Nadi, who recalls at the beginning of his autobiography the challenges of his education. Working as a servant in the house of a lawyer, Gaspare di Guido, he writes that he gained the rudiments of literacy by listening to the lessons given by a master to the lawyer's male children. Over the following years, Gaspare Nadi built upon this basic education, developing the skills that allowed him to keep a diary about both his personal circumstances and political events at local and national level (Balestracci 2004; Bordini 2009, 204-246; Ricci and Bacchi 1886, 5).

Even those operating within the traditionally literate environment of professional commerce might reflect on the difficult path to literacy. One example, from the

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[4] Massa, Archivio di Stato, ms. 34, fol. 9v.

[5] Massa, Archivio di Stato, ms. 34, fol. 11v.

[6] It is not a coincidence that the last event narrated in Giovanni's autobiography dates to 1466, when in December he was established as notary by the count of Bagnone (Massa, Archivio di Stato, ms 34, fol. 29v: «L'ano de 1466, del mese de decenre, Antonio conte e vesco de Brugnato m'à fato notaro: à fato la carta messer Lionardo da le Tualie»).

[7] Guiglielminetti refers, in his description of references to education as a topos in humanistic (autio)biographies, to the chronicle by Donato Velluti, who writes «apparai grammatica, e poi logica; e poi nel 1329 n'andai in studio a Bologna». Black 2007 also frequently refers to life-writing sources in his study of education and society in Florentine Tuscany, and on 613-724 (Appendix five) lists references to education in unpublished Florentine *ricordanze* (up to 1507).

Datini archive, is found in a letter written by Piero di ser Lapo Mazzei to Francesco Datini on 4 February 1399. The letter constitutes a sort of medieval 'job application', a very common procedure for joining such a commercial enterprise, as is clear from a series of such letters kept in the same archive (Hayez 2012, note 93).[8] Here Piero, son of Lapo Mazzei, a notary and Datini's business and intellectual associate, expresses his willingness to join the Datini enterprise and stresses his graphic education, detailing the start of his training at the *abaco* school as well as his appropriate and disciplined behaviour. Like those of the other applicants, Piero's letter itself testifies to the graphic abilities of its author.

Piero's reflection on those abilities is particularly illuminating. Having only started his graphic education in November 1398, he is aware that his skills are still lacking, but he hopes that within a few months his «lettera […] non paresse d'uno piçicagnolo» [writing will not resemble that of a grocer] (Hayez 2018).[9] He is training his hand by using models and drawing guide lines, which help him avoid making letters that resemble «cichaloni di que' maschi» [male cicades]. Learning to write is a huge, but necessary, undertaking, and the pen is as heavy as a spade.[10] Although, as Hayez (2018) notes, Piero's letter already contains some of the characteristic formal features of the mercantile letter (such as the usual invocation and dating «Al nome di Dio, amen. Dì 4 di febraio 1398»), the presence of those guide lines to demarcate the writing space testifies to an ongoing learning process. This process continued after Piero joined the Datini enterprise; the archives in fact also hold Piero's exercise notebook, in which he practices his writing skills by alternating short sentences and epistolary formulae (Hayez 2012, image nr. 2).[11]

The difficulty of gaining a satisfactory level of literacy is also apparent in the learning process of Francesco Datini's wife, Margherita, whose training ran chronologically parallel to that of Piero Mazzei. Margherita's learning curve has been described accurately and in detail in the last decades, but two specific components in

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[8] See https://books.openedition.org/pup/13867. Hayez refers to a number of letters (at least 5) that were explicitly written to display writing abilities. These testimonies are extremely relevant, as in some cases apprentices were not allowed to continue a traineeship due to the lack of graphic expertise.

[9] This reference is particularly interesting, as it reveals an informal ranking of writing abilities based on the social and economic position of the writer. It is clear from Piero's description that the graphic skills of one in a mercantile position were expected to be more advanced than those of *piçicagnoli*.

[10] See https://correspondancesdatini.lamop.fr/fr/lettre-132719/ and https://correspondancesdatini.lamop.fr/fr/la-graphie-comme-sesame-dune-carriere-marchande/. Thanks to Hayez reconstruction, it is possible to assess that this is probably the first letter ever written by the young Piero. The comparison between holding the pen and handling a spade is a common medieval description of the act of writing. The fourteenth-century Antwerp town clerk Jan van Boendale, in his *Der Leken Spiegel* (The Layman's Mirror, 1315), stresses the physical discomfort of writing, which is also described as mentally very demanding (Reynaert 2011, 133-135, with reference to standardized complaints of medieval scribes in manuscript colophons, who often describe the act of writing as an extremely painful exercise).

[11] The letters and the notebook by Piero, composed in the vernacular, illustrate important steps in late medieval graphic education and show notable resemblance to the materials from the Foligno area in the State Archives of Rome discussed by Cherubini (1996). As in the case of Piero, the learners discussed by Cherubini train by writing and rewriting individual letters of the alphabet and short sentences (often religious and moralistic in content) and exercises using basic calculations and measurements, until they reach the desired level of graphic mastery.

her learning process can be further elucidated (Murano 2018, xi-xiii and 44-47; Crabb 2007; James 2008; Hayez 2008; James and Pagliaro 2012). The first we can access through a letter from Domenico di Cambio to Francesco Datini (21 October 1396). Domenico wrote that Margherita had started to learn to read and to write, making clear that she had some basic skills («she is able to read the Hours of Our Lady»), but that she was not yet able to read the letters in *mercantesca*, the script traditionally used by merchants. He declared that he was keen to help Margherita by regularly sending her letters and by paying attention to their «graphic qualities» and readability, which must have helped her better her own skills (Murano 2018, xii).[12] The second is the involvement of Lapo Mazzei and his evaluation of Margherita's progress. In a letter to Francesco Lapo, he states that he is curious about the development of both Margherita's writing abilities and her graphic style. Lapo distinguishes between two scriptural options for Margherita: «dettato di monacha o di romita» [hand of a nun or anchorite] or «di commune donna» [mercantile hand]. This categorization of female writing styles is particularly revealing, as it names the two «realms» of women's literate activities: the world of religion and monasticism and the world of mercantile and artisanal activities. While the «dettato di monacha o di romita» is essentially based on textualis script, the hand of a «commune donna» can be typified as a cursive writing, mostly used in mercantile and artisanal circles by vernacularly literate writers (Murano 2018, xiii).[13]

The connection of different scripts to specific activities during the late Middle Ages is mirrored in advertisement sheets by European writing masters. For example, surviving sheets by Herman Strepel, a writing master from Münster (1477), display samples of several hands, each used to write its proper name (e.g. «fracta», «rotunda» and «modus copiistarum») in golden letters. Different scripts were moreover connected specific types of text, for example prayers, excerpts from the Psalms, letters and charters. The texts in writing specimens also stress the importance of reading and writing: «illa scientia coronata cuius auxilio maiores indigent mediocres et minores» [that crowned science, helping all kind of persons, the highest in rank, the average citizens and the lower classes] to climb the social ladder (Reynaert 2011; Hébrard 1995; Van Dijk 1956; Van der Heijden 2016; Schaap 2005).

In 1399, Margherita and Piero joined forces to govern the alphabet (Miglio 2008). On 19 February 1399, Margherita sent a letter from Florence to Marco Datini, who was at that moment in Prato. She starts the letter by writing that she has a new errand boy, Piero, and she that she has «set him to writing, as he would have to do to work as a secretary». Among a list of things that she asks be sent from Prato to Florence, she mentions the «book on the Passion that is in Monna Margherita's room and has an 'M' at the beginning [and also] that small book on the desk» (James and Pagliaro 2012, 322). Thus after a difficult start and much effort over three years, books have become part of Margherita's life.

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[12] Murano includes in her discussion a transcription of Domenico's letter, in which he states that he is willing to adjust his writing style in order to facilitate Margherita's access to the written text.

[13] Lapo Mazzei also helped Margherita by buying at least six manuscripts for her, in order to develop her reading abilities and provide good writing samples. Female literacy and writing activities have recentely been at the center of research activities (Miglio 2008; Graziani 2019; Gavinelli 2019).

The cases of Piero and Margherita underscore the importance of the construction of and the belonging to graphic communities and communities of practice (Long, Snijders, and Vanderputten 2019) in the process of literacy acquisition. Graphic abilities become a key to access these communities, and to fully participate in their social and economic networks. Learning to write, whether through formal schooling, a self-devised practice plan, training on the job, and/or lessons from a writing master is a crucial step in processes of personal growth and transformation.[14]

The attainment of expertise

An essential concept for framing the described experiences of acquiring skills in reading and writing is «expertise». As reconstructed by Denjean 2021 in the volume *Expertise et valeur des choses au Moyen Âge*, the terms «expert» and «expertise» in this age were tightly linked to «l'action qui transforme l'homme et manifeste une qualité» (Denjean 2021).[15] Thanks to this action,

> la connaissance pratique qui fait le 'bon homme, voire la 'bonne' femme, vaste et de bon aloi […] peut, in fine, par la qualité de cette connaissance, conférer un pouvoir décisionnaire légalement reconnu. Il est ainsi apte à donner un conseil avisé, respectueux de la norme sociale dont il mesure la profondeur chronologique, à proposer une solution socialement acceptable (Denjean 2021, 7).[16]

Two elements are connected in this reflection on the meaning and value of expertise: the visibility of the gaining of expertise through the performance of «expert activities», and the personal qualities of the expert («bon homme» or «bonne femme»), which transform mastery through morality, ethics and social status.

These ideas are stressed in Benedetto Cotrugli's *Book of the Art of Trade*, probably the most extensive reflection on the formation, duties, and social status of the merchant. Written in 1458, the manual discusses of the principles of trade, the civic life and economic virtues of the merchant, and the role of religion in the merchant's daily life (Cotrugli 2017).

For Cotrugli, «a merchant must be open-minded and ready to learn himself before instructing others, because 'he who knows himself, knows everything'». The best way to attain wisdom is by reading widely, and the author encourages his fellow

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[14] The term «graphic communities» was introduced in Bertrand 2015, and it combines Brian Stock's concept of «textual community» and Roger Chartier's notion of «graphic culture». For Bertrand graphic communities were defined by shared writing tools and graphic attributes devised to facilitate administration and foster communication.

[15] "The action which transforms the person and manifests a skill"

[16] "The practical knowledge, which 'makes' the 'good man' or the 'good woman', broad and of genuine quality, has the power *in fine* (thanks to the quality of this knowledge) to confer legally recognized decisional power. It is also suitable to give an informed advice, respecting social norms evaluated in their chronological framework and to propose socially acceptable solutions".

merchants «whenever [they] have a spare moment, to read». One should also find a dedicated space to perform reading activities. In fact,

> those who delight in literature should not have to keep their books in the common writing areas, but should have a little desk of their own either in their bedroom or at least nearby, where they can study when they have spare time, which is a most honourable activity and worthy of glorification (Cotrugli 2017, fol. 63v and 79v).

This linking of mercantile activities with reading is more than a *desideratum*.[17] Research into book ownership among both mercantile and artisanal groups in late medieval Europe has demonstrated that books were a constant presence in the household and the workshop. A case in point are the inventories of the Florentine *Magistrato dei pupilli*, which served to protect the interests of dependent minors whose family members had died intestate (Bec 1984; Verde 1987; Fiesole and Somigli 2009; Corbellini and Hoogvliet 2013).

These inventories reveal the frequent presence of manuscripts and early printed texts in the domestic environment. The quantities and physical descriptions of their books vary, ranging from one single book in a home, for example a Book of Hours with silverwork and a silk binding that was in the possession of the butcher (*beccaio*) Antonio di Luca d'Antonio di Domenico (1485), to midsized and larger collections, some of twenty books or more (Verde 1987, 110; Fiesole and Somigli 2009, 127; Corbellini and Hoogvliet 2013). The doublet maker (*farsettaio*) Chimenti d'Andrea Chimenti had in his house on the Via Larga a manuscript containing the lives of the Church Fathers, a book with the Epistles and the Gospels, five account books and three unidentified volumes. His inventory also references three «reading books» kept in the «bottegha» (Verde 1987 112; Corbellini and Hoogvliet 2013). Though the contents of these books are unspecified, their location in the *bottega* intriguingly suggests that the doublet maker's reading naturally fit into his commercial life.

Some contemporary inventories indicate even more clearly the locations of different types of books within the home. In the case of the goldbeater (*battiloro*) Romolo d'Andrea di Nofri (1473), the inventory differentiates between the books found in an unspecified place in his house (a Book of Hours and a book of Psalms) and those found in a room described as his *iscrittoio*, the place where writing activities took place. There Romolo kept a small personal library of vernacular translations of classical authors, juridical books, and grammar texts (Verde 1987, 59; Corbellini and Hoogvliet 2013). Similar patterns have been uncovered for late medieval France and the medieval Low Countries (Zwart 2021; Uphoff 2021). In fact, research conducted on wills, probate inventories and book catalogues reveals that books were ubiquitous in the medieval household (Hoogvliet 2019). As Hoogvliet (2019, 278) has stated, late medieval artisans and merchants were «avid readers and consumers» of texts, and medieval domestic spaces often transformed into «hubs» of textual learning (Hoogvliet 2019, 278; Hoogvliet 2020; Corbellini and Hoogvliet 2023).

[17] Mercantile is in this contribution used in the broadest possible sense and includes all those participating in commercial activities.

According to Cotrugli, it was crucial not just to be able to read, but also to master writing, as «the pen is so noble and excellent an instrument that it is extremely necessary not only to merchants but to all of the arts, liberal and mechanical». He continues:

> And you can readily see how a merchant whose pen weighs heavily, that is, one who is indisposed to put it to paper, can hardly be said to be a merchant. And he must not only have skill in writing, but must know how to organise his writings […] A merchant should not […] conduct his business by memory alone, unless he be Cyrus the Great. […] And given the impossibility of [working only by memory], we must move on to the practicalities of mercantile writing, which serves not only to preserve and make accessible to the memory all the matters negotiated and brought to a conclusion, but also to avoid problems, quarrels and disputes (Cotrugli 2017, fol. 32v).

That the pen is at the very core of mercantile «expertise» was also expressed by the Tuscan merchant Paolo da Certaldo in his *Libro di buoni costumi,* who stresses the importance of recording every transaction in order to build up a personal archive. Leon Battista Alberti, in his *Libri della famiglia*, is particularly clear in his instructions on this matter. He exclaims that «dimostrava essere officio del mercante e d'ogni mestiere, quale abbia a tramare con più persone, sempre scrivere ogni cosa» [it seemed to be the task of the merchant and of everybody involved in transactions with others to write down everything] (Balestracci 2004, 42). It is indeed well established in the scholarship that merchants and artisans were particularly keen to document their daily activities, and to thereby protect themselves from fraud, preclude disagreements, and fulfil their role as *experti* (Ciappelli 2014; Tognetti 2012; Ricci 2014; Fresu 2014; Goldthwaite 2015). As Balestracci 1999 and 2004 has demonstrated, these practices characterized the practice of trade not only in urban environments but also in the (Tuscan) countryside.

To be fully understood within the framework of this contribution, the concept of *expertise* needs to be combined with the notion of *discipline*, as it applies both to the sometimes complicated performance of the act of writing, and to the acquisition of specific conventions for different types of texts, such as family books, diaries and *livres de raison*. As Mouysset (2007) affirms, «l'art de bien écrire consiste à savoir choisir sa plume mais aussi à discipliner son corps et se résoudre à ce geste douloureux qui donne tout son sens à l'expression 'être rompu à l'écriture'». Following Chartier, Mouysset states that learning to write in premodern times is seen as a harsh physical discipline (Chartier 1996, cited in Mouysset 2007, 134). The empty page is a space, and it needs to be conquered, appropriated and organised through the design of its topography, which involves decisions around layout, pagination or foliation, and organisation through the use of paratexual elements. It is a matter of «discipline scripturaire» [writing discipline], which needs to be assimilated and then put into practice (Mouysset 2007, 137). As the act of writing is intimately connected, both intellectually and physically, to the performing person, the composition of

egodocuments can be seen as testaments to the «logique de la representation et de la conscience de soi» [logic of representation and self-awareness] as well as building blocks of «un honneur organisé sur les bases techniques de la professionalité» [an honour organised on the base of their professional skills] (Claustre 2021, 165).

The importance of gaining not just pragmatic skills but real expertise in writing is reflected in the high number of manuscripts copied by merchants and artisans, like saddle makers, barbers, wool makers and wine sellers, for personal use or for circulation within informal networks (e.g. family, guilds and confraternities).[18] An interesting peculiarity of such manuscripts is the explicit mention of these (non-professional scribe) copyists' actual occupations. For example, on 21 February 1445, the saddle maker Jacopo di Lione recorded his completion of a copy of *Homilies on the Gospels* by Gregory the Great («Qui finiscono l'omelie di santo Gregorio a dì 21 di febraio mille quatro cento quaranta quatro, la seconda domenica di quaresima. Prigo in carità chi ll'à, che gliele deba rendere per l'amore di dDio. Deo gratias amen»).[19] A few days later, on 7 March, the shoemaker Giovanni di Zanobi Amadori 'signed' his religious miscellany by adding a colophon with his name («Giovanny di Çanobi Amadory»), his profession («chalçaiuolo») and a restatement of his authorship and ownership («questo libro di è di […]" and «el quale scrisse di sua mano e chompiessi di scrivere»).[20] A few years later, the *lanaiuolo* Nicola di ser Dino di Nicola was even more explicit in asserting his involvement in the copying of a manuscript containing a commentary on Dante's *Comedia*. He states that he worked on the manuscript from 14 March to 19 October 1458 («Finito et chompiuto per me Nichola di ser Dino di Nichola dell'Arte della Lana questo dì XVIIIo d'otobre a ore quatro di note») at the request of «Lazero di Michele di Piero da Varna del Popolo di San Piero Ghattolino».[21] The addition of the statement «di sua propria mano» [written in his own hand] is particularly relevant: these non-professional scribes are claiming a scribal role, proclaiming their literacy, and stressing their ability to write both for themselves and kindred spirits.[22] They thus present themselves with a kind of double identity, as both professional merchant or artisan and expert involved in the production or reproduction of knowledge.

In his study of English medieval manuscripts with ownership notes and colophons, Wakelin (2016) states that records of scribal performances «have the effect of characterizing that person's life as a narrative of bookish activities» (Wakelin 2016, 28). Evaluated as micro-autobiographies registering the interconnections

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[18] This point emerges clearly from the analysis of catalogues of dated and datable manuscripts also mentioning the name of scribes. See for example *Manoscritti datati d'Italia* https://www.manoscrittidatati.it/mdi/, Mattiazzo 2015; Giovè 2008; Caldelli 2010).

[19] Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana 1275, fol. 111r [Here finish St Gregory's sermons on 21 February 1444 (Florentine dating), the second Sunday in the Lent. I sincerely hope that the one who has it will take it back for God's love. Deo gratias amen].

[20] Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana 1361, fol. 109v.

[21] Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana 1028, fol. 241r.

[22] Through the study of German sources, Neuber (2011) developed the concept of *excribo ergo sum*, which is very much in line with the results of the research conducted on Italian, French and Dutch materials. See Hoogvliet and Corbellini 2021 and the results of the research project "Cities of Readers", conducted at the University of Groningen (https://www.openedition.org/18611?lang=en).

between users of the manuscript book, colophons and ownership notes become testimonies to a learned life meant to be shared with other readers (Wakelin 2016, 32).

The colophons in the manuscripts copied by the *pizzicaiuolo* [seller of wax, paper and colours] Nicolò di Giovanni da Siena show an awareness of the performance of exceptional writing activities. Nicolò skilfully wrote and illustrated two manuscripts, both now kept at the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati in Siena: ms. I.VII.12, a copy of Filippo Ceffi's Italian translation of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* (dated 1403), and ms. A.IV.5, which contains a very famous narrative of the Montaperti battle in 1260 (dated 1443; Cavinato 2010). Nicolò adds to the original texts long colophons in which he explains why he undertook these two manuscript projects. The subscription to the *Historia Troiae* is particularly revealing:

> Udite udite state a udire al nome di Dio amen. Io Nicolò di Giovani da Siena facitore di questo pretioso libro nostante ch'io avessi alcuno disagio, com'è a la fragielità humana, ond'io fusse ritratto dell'opera e no·llo avessi tratto a fine, ma io tanto mi studiai favoregiando la gratia de lo Spirito Santo che infra VI mesi, ciò fu a dì primo di settenbre perfinono uttimo di feraio prossimo seguete nel MCCCCIII [...] Anco vi prego signori in cortesia che preghiate e·crucifisso Idio, che per riconpraci sostenne passione, che perdoni a lo scrittore, se ofeso l'avessi per scrivare questo libro; poniamo ch'elli non à saputo meglio fare, per questa volta volio che mi perdoniate se male scritto fusse questo libro. In buona verità signori intendete che poi ch'a scrivare comincia', ma delle cose grosse asai e male scritte ci sono, e io vi ringratio poi che di tanto udire m'avete fatto dono, per ifinita asacula aseculorum amen (Cavinato 2010, 233-235).[23]

Nicolò demands the readers of the manuscript to pay attention to his colophon and to 'listen' to his self-presentation («udite, udite, state ad udire»). He portrays himself as the maker of a «precious» book, which has been completed with great effort over six long months (from 1st September 1403 to the end of February 1404). He also asks readers to pray for him, and in a clear process of *captatio benevolentiae*, to forgive his limited writing skills («se male scritto fusse questo libro»). His satisfaction with the completion of his copying shines through his own awareness of his 'amateurship'. Nicolò is also particularly clear in his desire that his book be used

[23] Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, I.VII.12, fol. 2r: "Listen in the name of God, amen. I, Nicolò di Giovani da Siena, maker of this precious book in spite of my disabilities and my human frailty, which could have led me to stop this work. But I was able to succeed thanks the grace of the Holy Spirit and complete this work in six months' time, from the first of September to the end of February in the year 1403 [...] And I beg you sirs to pray to the crucified Jesus, who suffered the Passion to rescue us, that he may forgive the scribe if I have offended him by writing this book; just consider that you could not do any better and please forgive me if I have badly written this book. Please believe me that after I had started writing I realized that there are some unpleasant and badly written parts and I thank you for listening to me for such a long time for ever and ever amen".

within private or family circles: «Iste liber fecit Nicholaus Iohannes Francise Venture de Senis anni. Domini M CCCC IIII el quale à·ffatto per non prestare» (Cavinato 2010, 230) [This book was made by Nicolò di Giovanni da Siena in the year Our Lord 1403; it should not be lent out].

The choice to create a literate identity through the composition of extended colophons confirms the high value placed on writing and reading in late medieval European societies. As the sociologist Bourdieu and the book historian Chartier affirm, «reading [and writing are] not universally done or valued; [they] only thrive when cultures have systems and ideologies for encouraging, valuing, and justifying [them]» (Bourdieu and Chartier 1985, 226 cited by Wakelin 2016, 32).

Sharing books and creating networks

While Nicolò is keen to keep his manuscripts within the family, many amateur-scribes and book owners zealously participated in book exchange, fostering networks that could help them improve their social positions.[24] Traces of such efforts towards 'cultural brokerage' (Gantner and Rychterová 2024) can be detected in the same types of egodocuments and account books discussed above.[25] Illustrative are the family books and notebooks written by Francesco di Matteo Castellani, who was described by Ciappelli (2014) as «not in the strict sense an intellectual or a man professionally involved in culture, even though he was in contact with similar figures» (Ciappelli 2014, 36), not only avidly acquired manuscripts from bookshops and fellow citizens, but also engaged in a very lively exchange of books. Francesco notes, for example, in his *Quaternuccio e giornale B* on October 1459, that he has loaned to his brother-in-law his «*Corbaccio*, a folio volume, written in italic script on paper with wooden covers, and also *La buca* and *Gli studianti d'Atene*, by Za *buffone*, on paper, and *Dell'invidia* by *messer* Antonio degl'Agli, in quarto» (Ciappelli 2014, 41-42). A few months later, on 4th January 1460, he loaned his *Chronicle* by Giovanni Villani to his father-in-law, Boccaccino Alamanni. Boccaccino sent back the manuscript some days later and borrowed the «vernacular *Old Testament* in *bambagina* paper with wooden covers» (Ciappelli 2014, 42).[26] These details show that books circulated within a trust network of relatives, friends and neighbours, who were in turn bound together by a shared use of manuscripts and texts.

The book lending system created in fifteenth-century Lucca by Michele di Giovanni Guinigi probably constitutes the culmination of a project to employ literate activities in the creation of an extended social network (Polica and Martini 2024).[27]

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[24] In a discussion of this practice in Italy, France and in the Low Countries, Corbellini and Hoogvliet 2020 have evidenced similarities in the social value connected to book ownership.

[25] The link between cultural brokerage and social prestige is theorised by Reimitz 2015 (cited by Gantner and Rychterová 2024), who defines the act of brokerage as a «creative performance in social contexts, that are characterized by a complicated interplay between different social groups and identities that fuel the broker's actions and form the basis of their social prestige».

[26] Ciappelli pleads for the use of narrative sources, such as family books, diaries and notebooks, for the reconstruction of book ownership and reading activities in mercantile and artisanal circles.

[27] The contribution is an extended version of Polica 1988.

Michele left six registers, three of which (covering the period 1432-1453, with a hiatus for the years 1434-1442 and 1446) concern the manuscript collection. Some of the roughly one hundred entries in the *notitiae librorum* contain invaluable information about the acquisition and selling of books, but most refer to their lending to a large number (141) of Lucca citizens. As Polica and Martini (2024) state, the Guinigi book collection functioned as a 'public library', with borrowers from every stratum of Lucca's urban society. Merchants, members of the clergy, schoolmasters, women (lay and religious) and poorer city dwellers were all involved in this vernacular book network. The diversity of these readers is further reflected in the language of the texts. All of the manuscripts mentioned in the registers have been identified with vernacular titles; they include translations of classical texts (Ovidius, Titus Livius, and Cicero), Italian literature (Dante, Boccaccio and the *Novellino*), religious literature (Life of Christ, psalters, and Cassianus) and prophetical texts (Polica and Martini 2024, 85-86).

The presence of borrowers from lower social groups is particularly interesting for our purposes. One such individual was Pietro da Matraia, from the eponymous small hamlet in Lucca countryside. The fact that he paid one of his debts to Michele with three pounds of olive oil implies that he was involved in rural agriculture (Polica and Martini 2024, 75). Pietro borrowed a psalter and a *Donatus*, two texts that were often used by learners grappling with the rudiments of literacy. As the creator of this lending library, Michele was thus actively creating possibilities for those in his community who wanted to attain literacy but faced challenges in accessing texts and other learning instruments.

The exchanges registered in Michele's registers are very much in line with Petrucci's (1983) statement that

> the circulation of books [during the late Middle Ages, SC] ignited by the exchange between private persons, for reading and copying, was not an exclusive practice of humanistic circles; witnesses of the circulation through interpersonal loans of vernacular books testify of the efforts of urban readers to compensate for the absence of public institutions for the study and the reading in the vernacular (Petrucci 1983, 546, cited by Polica and Martini 2024, 66).[28]

Thanks to a new scholarly interest in medieval private book collections and libraries, we now know that interpersonal lending systems like that revealed in Michele Guinigi's records were also developed in other Italian urban centres (Corbellini and Hoogvliet 2020). At least three examples are now known for Venice, including that of Venetian citizen Lorenzo Sanudo, whose account book contains the rubric «Libri e cose imprestad ad altri», dated 1455. Moreover, in 1451-58, the patrician Girolamo da Molin kept a register titled *Alphabetum librorum mutuatorum Hieronymi De Molino Veneti D.M. Patricii (Quaternus librorum quos prestiti vel accomodavi*

[28] This point is fundamental for understanding the impact of book circulation in late medieval Europe. As a matter of fact, book ownership is not a necessary prerequisite for book readership.

amicis), describing a book exchange network. Among its participants Girolamo mentions an artisan, the glass blower Angelo Barovier, who has lent a *tabulam super libro moralum beati gregorii* and used it in his private home in Murano (Fremmer 2001; Nebbiai 1991).

Along similar lines, new studies of French book collections have revealed «hubs for reading in French» (Hoogvliet 2020). One important source is the impressive booklist (267 items), of manuscripts kept «in Tours in front of the hôtel [townhouse] of monseigneur de Dunois» and possibly listing titles available «pour des copies à la demande» (Hoogvliet 2020, 136; Hasenohr 2017, 132). Another interesting parallel is found in the records of the public scribe and bookseller Jan de Clerc, active in Ghent at the beginning of the fifteenth century. As Brinkman (1998) has reconstructed, Jan acquired in 1402 a collection of about 30 books from a hospital sister in Ypres. Archival research has revealed that these manuscripts, containing literary and religious texts, were rented by Jan on a daily basis («diemen daghelix verhuert») to Ghent citizens, in order to be copied or read. City residents had another possibility for accessing texts: Everaert Taybaert, municipal poet, had rented a room opposite the bookshop of Jan de Clerc, «where he read texts aloud for an audience and where texts could be read by his clients» (Hoogvliet 2020; Brinkman 1998).

The creation of these personal libraries and lending systems not only facilitated the circulation of vernacular literature, but was also pivotal in creating networks of enduring relationships. When the enterprise is looked at from this angle, the ethical, moral, social and religious dimensions of transmitting knowledge and literate values in late medieval Europe become apparent (Corbellini and Hoogvliet 2020). Providing access to vernacular literature (in the form of edifying texts) was synonymous with providing access to religious and moral education. This point was stressed in a famous letter from Marco Datini to his friend and confidant Lapo Mazzei (3 June 1395):

> [I] buy many books in the vernacular, to read when I renounce mercantile activities and to do what I owe God. These are all books that tell of virtuous things. As a matter of fact, they are all Gospels, Epistles, Sayings and Lives of Saints and many other good things.

Marco's decision to accumulate books in this way formed the starting point for a complex network of transactions, which included the further acquisition, the use, the lending and the borrowing of books, as has been reconstructed by Brambilla (2007).

Conclusions

The analysis of the selected sources, as well as the historical and theoretical exploration of the concepts of *expertise* and *discipline*, has here demonstrated the importance of the performance of literate activities in the medieval construction of social identities and creation of networks of knowledge exchange. Social positions were reinforced, and prestige was gained, through reading, writing, copying,

borrowing and lending books. These actions were a form of 'cultural brokerage', a means to affirm identity and increase one's social status, and via robust moral and ethical components connected individuals with their communities and social groups in which they wished to participate.

The methods and findings presented here offer a fresh perspective on social mobility in this period, which includes the tension between tradition and innovation, openness and closure, individuality and sense of belonging, and the negotiation and the formation of new social identities. They further show just how essential it is to combine individual case studies, and in particular autobiographical sources, with the reconstruction of larger patterns among groups. The importance of the creation of «communities of practice» and «graphic communities», within which members supported each other in gaining skills while implementing processes of selection, inclusion, and exclusion, is paramount: they are indeed at the very core of social and societal transformations. The choice for a focus on Italian sources in dialogue and comparison with European source materials revealed moreover the existence of shared patterns and attitudes and a widespread attention and engagement for literacy acquistion and development, as well as a pervasive awareness the social relevance of literacy and literate practices in medieval society at large.

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Tavola rotonda

Round table

Franco Franceschi

Intervento alla Tavola rotonda

Definendo la struttura della call relativa alla mobilità sociale per la Settimana di Studi 2024 ci eravamo prefissati alcuni obiettivi ben individuati: fare dialogare i diversi approcci di ricerca rispetto ad un soggetto che contava già una certa tradizione di studio, sia con ricerche individuali che collettive;[1] discutere metodologie e fonti per individuare le più adatte, i loro punti di forza e di debolezza; comparare risultati ottenuti con metodi diversi; arrivare a definizioni quantitative più precise senza trascurare il contributo di ricerche a carattere prevalentemente qualitativo capaci di valorizzare le fonti e di contribuire in modo significativo a completare il quadro. Il concetto di mobilità sociale che proponevamo era piuttosto largo: mobilità intesa non tanto come semplice passaggio da una data collocazione socio-economica a una diversa (e misurabile), ma come processo attraverso il quale singoli, famiglie e altri insiemi sociali ridefiniscono la propria posizione in rapporto alle gerarchie imperniate su alcuni indicatori fondamentali: ricchezza, accesso alla politica, sapere, prestigio come risultante dell'incrocio fra questi e altri indicatori significativi nelle società prese in considerazione.

Mi sembra di poter dire che i lavori delle quattro intense giornate cui abbiamo partecipato hanno in buona misura rispettato le aspettative muovendosi nell'ambito delle coordinate su cui è stato impostato l'incontro. Ma soprattutto hanno offerto dati, ipotesi, idee, suggestioni e la possibilità di confrontare i risultati delle ricerche in regioni diverse sparse in numerosi Paesi europei: l'Italia centro-settentrionale, i regni iberici, la Creta veneziana, l'area germanica, Le Fiandre e il Lussemburgo, l'Inghilterra e la Francia, l'area polacco-lituana; campagne e città, comprese grandi città, come Anversa, Barcellona, Firenze e Venezia.

Spunti di notevole interesse sono arrivati innanzitutto dal confronto sulle fonti prese in considerazione e sulle metodologie con cui sono state trattate. Abbiamo constatato una volta di più la centralità della documentazione fiscale, e in particolare degli estimi italiani e dei loro equivalenti europei, che per la loro distribuzione nel

[1] Lasciando da parte i contributi più risalenti, si vedano almeno Payling 1992; Dambruyne 1998; Bellavitis, Croq e Martinat, dir. 2009; Boberg-Fazlic, Sharp e Weisdorf 2011; Clark 2014; *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano* 2016-2019; Pujadas-Mora et al. 2018; Alfani 2020; Carocci, a cura di 2020; García González e Chacón Jiménez, eds. 2020; *Mobilità sociale e circolazione* 2021.

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Franco Franceschi, *Intervento alla Tavola rotonda*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9.29, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *La mobilità sociale nelle società preindustriali: tendenze, cause ed effetti (secc. XIII-XVIII) / Social mobility in pre-industrial societies: tendencies, causes and effects (13th-18th centuries)*, pp. 559-564, 2025, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0667-9, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9

tempo permettono, oltre che di misurare la ricchezza, anche di seguire l'andamento dei patrimoni e quindi dei destini individuali. Ma abbiamo osservato anche casi di utilizzazione di registri notarili, con atti di matrimonio, doti, testamenti, e anche libri di ricordi e fonti letterarie.

Solo qualche esempio delle questioni che le relazioni hanno sollevato. Sul versante della classificazione delle attività economiche sono stati descritti i molti pregi del sistema internazionale HISCO, il cui punto di forza è proprio la proposta di uno standard internazionale e dunque applicabile comparativamente (Van Leeuwen, Maas e Miles 2002 e 2004). Un sistema dove non tutto è risolto, se è stata ricordata, per esempio, la difficoltà di separare in modo certo i produttori dai venditori, ma che esprime comunque un notevole livello di raffinatezza visto che è capace di distinguere le denominazioni degli artigiani che compiono operazioni di dettaglio sui panni di lana come la 'cimatura di molle' e quella 'di compiuto'. Di grande interesse anche la proposta di una lettura integrale e integrata della fonte fiscale – nello specifico parliamo del catasto fiorentino del 1427 – con l'obiettivo di innalzare la soglia massima di mestieri dichiarati nei censimenti a scopo fiscale, difficilmente superiore al 50% del totale; soglia che rappresenta un limite a qualsiasi analisi basata sulle informazioni di carattere occupazionale. Anche l'intelligenza artificiale ha fatto capolino nel discorso sul trattamento delle fonti, laddove si è parlato di trascrizioni automatiche e di come ridurre la percentuale di errori.

Vi sono pochi dubbi sul fatto che la peste del 1348 abbia innescato un processo che, oltre a ridurre le disuguaglianze, ha stimolato la ripresa di una mobilità sociale già in fase di rallentamento, anche se non certo bloccata (Luongo 2020 e 2022, cap. 5; Poloni 2023), mentre non si può dire sistematicamente lo stesso a proposito delle altre ondate epidemiche, visto che gli effetti positivi sembrano essere diminuiti con il procedere dell'Età moderna e comunque non generalizzabili, come ci aveva già ricordato, in occasione della LI Settimana Datini, Bas van Bavel (van Bavel 2020, 441-44). Certo, il verificarsi di nuove acute epidemie, come di carestie o di crisi politico-militari, determinò qualche periodo di ripresa, ma il punto sembra essere la durata breve di queste fasi. Quanto al rapporto fra disuguaglianza economica e mobilità sociale, centrale in diversi interventi, i lavori hanno confermato che, sebbene fra i due fenomeni si possa rilevare spesso una correlazione negativa, è bene non indulgere a facili generalizzazioni: diverse, infatti, ci appaiono le combinazioni generate dall'intreccio dei due processi, anche a causa della diversità dei contesti spaziali e temporali. L'accelerazione della mobilità sociale non era necessariamente associata alla riduzione della disuguaglianza, ma neppure al suo aumento, che però poteva essere correlato all'incremento della mobilità discendente.

Un aspetto che è emerso e sul quale vorremo sapere di più è la capacità di resistenza dei ceti eminenti all'ascesa della 'gente nuova', o meglio delle strategie che questi mettevano in atto per cercare di neutralizzare la riattivazione della mobilità sociale a causa di fattori esogeni o endogeni che sconvolgevano la struttura della società. In queste strategie rientrava probabilmente anche il discredito e la cattiva fama, insomma l'atteggiamento di chiusura nei confronti di quelli che oggi chiameremmo

parvenu, atteggiamento che non rispondeva – a mio avviso – solo a un calcolo razionale a tutela della difesa dei propri interessi ma anche a una *forma mentis*. Nella novella *La città di Scio liberata de' villani* di Gentile Sermini, databile al secondo quarto del XV secolo, un contadino trasferitosi in questo centro urbano immaginario, dove aveva acquisito una certa agiatezza, viene ridicolizzato perché rovina con le sue dita callose e screpolate dal lavoro la fodera di seta della bella veste che indossa (Sermini 1968, p. 519). Il racconto, normalmente inquadrato nel genere della 'satira del villano', comunica però anche altro, ovvero la critica moralistica dell'autore nei confronti di stili di vita che non dovrebbero essere permessi alle categorie sociali più umili.

Potrei fare altri esempi, ma ne aggiungerò solo uno. In una lettera famosa Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi parla del futuro marito della figlia, Marco Parenti, e si compiace, nel complesso, di aver fatto un buon parentado per i mezzi di cui dispone, ma è consapevole del fatto che se lo sposo è «ricco», i suoi congiunti «ànno un poco di stato» (Macinghi Strozzi 1877, 4), ovvero sono una famiglia poco inserita nell'élite di governo. L'accettazione di questa gente da parte di un casato importante quali erano gli Strozzi, a ben guardare, riposava sulla disponibilità economica relativamente scarsa di Alessandra (la famiglia era stata esiliata da Firenze) e sulla convinzione che i Parenti fossero sulla strada buona per entrare a far parte del ceto dirigente.

Giustamente è emersa l'importanza delle migrazioni, per esempio di quelle mercantili, visto che gli uomini d'affari sfruttavano la loro posizione già elevata nella scala sociale per diventare gruppi economicamente e talvolta politicamente egemoni, come i genovesi in Aragona fra fine Cinquecento e inizio Seicento. Ma penso anche ad un tema che non mi pare sia stato toccato, quello degli specialisti, dei tecnici portatori di nuovi saperi, innovazioni, invenzioni, ambìti da città e regni, blanditi con privilegi di vario tipo, tra cui spiccano – e *pour cause* – gli incentivi fiscali (ma non solo), che li collocavano in una posizione spesso più elevata di quella che li contraddistingueva nei luoghi da cui provenivano. Su un piano più generale è senz'altro da approfondire la questione della mobilità sociale nell'ambito delle minoranze, per la quale è stato illustrato il caso della comunità ispano-giudaica, e non solo delle minoranze religiose.[2]

Sapevamo già che i canali della mobilità sociale ascendente in età preindustriale erano molteplici, e queste giornate lo hanno confermato: la qualificazione professionale (per esempio attraverso un secondo apprendistato), l'alfabetizzazione e la formazione superiore (fino a quella universitaria), il servizio presso un'amministrazione regia, principesca o signorile, la possibilità di intraprendere la carriera ecclesiastica, militare o giuridica, matrimoni vantaggiosi. Analogamente potevano diventare strumenti per costruirsi un prestigio e una reputazione superiori a quelli di cui si godeva l'emulazione sociale e l'ostentazione: in società in cui le apparenze erano fondamentali determinati stili di vita erano di per se stessi un passaporto per un processo di elevazione sociale. Il credito stesso, pur nella sua natura ambigua, poteva essere

[2] Nell'ambito della vastissima bibliografia sulle migrazioni si sono ritagliati uno spazio, almeno in Italia, gli studi sulle minoranze meno favorevolmente accettate, quali i corsi, gli slavi e gli albanesi, studi che spesso ne hanno seguito il contrastato progresso nella scala sociale. Per un primo approccio al tema si vedano Orlando 2014; Esposito 2014 e 2022; Costantini, a cura di 2021; Franceschi 2024.

utilizzato per il raggiungimento di una posizione sociale migliore; e lo stesso valeva per le doti, spesso fondamentali per gli uomini, a tutti i livelli sociali, ma anche per le donne, limitatamente ai luoghi in cui riuscivano a mantenerne il controllo, cosa per niente scontata e che dipendeva comunque dai diversi sistemi normativi vigenti.

Come altri aspetti dell'*agency* femminile illuminati dalle ricerche recenti, l'argomento della mobilità sociale femminile è affascinante e fecondo di spunti per l'avvenire (Reyerson 2010; Zanoboni, 2016) anche se rappresenta indubbiamente una sfida assai impegnativa ma che può essere vinta con nuovi approcci metodologici e inventiva nell'individuazione delle fonti. Nei nostri lavori è stato considerato solo in parte, e, più che nella prospettiva dell'ascesa sociale, sotto il profilo della mobilità discendente. Quest'ultimo tema, d'altra parte, sebbene fosse stato posto in evidenza nella call della Settimana, non è stato affrontato come oggetto specifico di indagine, probabilmente perché le storie di successo interessano gli storici molto più dei fallimenti e dei declassamenti. Si tratta però di un aspetto assai importante per comprendere come le società del passato si evolvevano e per mettere a fuoco le interrelazioni con le fasi di sviluppo ma anche di stagnazione. Occorre inoltre di guardare alla mobilità da un altro punto di vista: non esistevano solo le strategie per progredire nella scala sociale, ma anche quelle finalizzate a non regredire o a non far regredire i propri figli.

Un'ultima osservazione: si è insistito, da parte di alcuni relatori, sulla necessità di combinare analisi quantitative e qualitative, per esempio indagando singole famiglie e individui ben documentati. In queste giornate non lo si è fatto forse abbastanza, ma si tratta di una indicazione da seguire per il futuro, considerato che certe fonti sono in grado di restituire vicende capaci di illuminare dall'interno le motivazioni e le strategie dei protagonisti. Il caso dell'autobiografia dello speziale lunigianese Giovanni Antonio da Faie, nella quale emerge la sua tenace determinazione ad alfabetizzarsi, ma anche a trovare il mestiere che più rispondeva alla sua vocazione per migliorare la sua posizione sociale, è davvero esemplare. Tanto più se si considera che il suo sforzo era finalizzato più precisamente a ripristinare uno status che la famiglia deteneva già e che gli effetti della peste del 1400 avevano tragicamente compromesso.[3]

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[3] Per i dettagli delle vicende che avevano portato il padre Francesco a disperdere totalmente il patrimonio di famiglia vedi Franceschi 2010. Di Giovanni Antonio da Faie e di numerosi altri «all'arrembaggio dell'alfabeto» è tornato a parlare recentissimamente, dopo le pagine che gli aveva dedicato nel suo *Cilastro che sapeva leggere*, Duccio Balestracci (Balestracci 2004 e 2025).

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Guido Alfani

Round table comments

I will take advantage of the opportunity of this final round table to return to some of the topics that I have touched upon during my Prolusion – and maybe, to clarify a few additional aspects, and to propose a few examples.

First, I would emphasize the fact that mobility can be both upward, and downward. Indeed, when we measure mobility by looking at movement between portions of the wealth distribution defined in a 'relative' way, for example, movement between quintiles of wealth (as done by the papers presented at this Settimana Datini that relate to the SMITE project), mobility is symmetric. In other words, the fact that some individuals or households move up implies that a corresponding number moves down. And yet, we tend to focus more on upward mobility than on downward mobility: something which has also been apparent throughout the Settimana. This is partly due to the fact that those who succeed tend to leave a stronger imprint in the historical records than those who meet failure. However, we should also ponder the possibility that this is also because of a sort of instinct, or an unacknowledged preference, which we tend to have – but that we should resist. After having preached virtue, I will now turn my attention to upwards mobility: historians are all sinners, after all.

In my recent book As Gods Among Men. A History of the Rich in the West (Alfani 2023) I argue that, if we look at western history as a whole, three main paths towards affluence need to be highlighted: that of nobility, that of entrepreneurship/innovation, and that of finance (which should be distinguished from that of entrepreneurship because 'making money out of money' has always attracted a much stronger social reprobation compared to growing rich by means of, say, long-range trade or manufacture). There were, of course, others, and I'll recall some of them soon enough, but these three are to be considered the main ones, not only because of how many people became rich by following them, but also because of their importance for our understanding of the processes of wealth accumulation.

Here, I will focus particularly on the path of nobility, which I could not fully highlight in my Prolusion due to time constraints. Let me provide three examples, taken from my book, of nobles who rose high in different epochs.

The first example is that of Alan the Red, who followed William the Conqueror in the conquest of England and who probably fought by his side at the battle of Hastings in 1066. The cadet son of a Breton count, he remained in England after the Conquest and established his own dynasty – exploiting his speciality, which was quenching rebellions. Every time that he defeated a rebel, the King gifted him parts

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of the rebel's lands, so that he soon became fabulously wealthy: possibly, in at least some respects, the richest person ever to walk the British Isles. This example serves to remind us that nobility (the acquisition of noble status) was not only the outcome of a process of social ascension (Kula 2001), but that within nobility itself we can encounter dramatic processes of upward (or downward) mobility.

And yet, in many cases the acquisition of nobility truly was the culmination of the rise of an individual, or of a dynasty. The second example that I wish to discuss is that of Antoine II Crozat. His father, Antoine I, was a merchant from Albi whose fortunes grew from the mid-seventeenth century, when he successfully added banking to his previous trades. Antoine I was also the first to try to pursue a path towards ennoblement, but not without facing resistances. He bought the fief of Barthecave and started wearing a sword and acting as a noble himself – until he was found guilty of 'usurpation of nobility' and repeatedly chastised. It was his son, Antoine II, who became fabulously rich by acting as tax farmer of Louis XIV and by exploiting his monopoly over the Louisiana trade, who finally convinced the king to ennoble him, in the early eighteenth century. Antoine II's descendants would be fully integrated in the French nobility. For Antoine II, ennoblement was not only the achievement of a long-term family objective of upward mobility, but also a way to be closer to the court: which offered its own opportunities for additional wealth accumulation.

The third example is that of Lodovico Manin, the last doge of Venice. I'll discuss his case shortly – but first, let me propose some considerations based on the two previous cases. That of Alan the Red pertains to a period during which the feudal system was strong. This system, as we have seen, offered its own opportunities for social advancement, but at the same time worked actively to hinder the rise of new non-noble groups. As argued by the great German sociologist Max Weber, «Feudalism, with its closely delineated rights and duties, does not only have a stabilizing effect upon the economy as a whole, but also upon the distribution of individual wealth» (Weber 1978[1956], 1099). In other words, although it established a fairly high degree of economic inequality, feudalism, precisely because it constrained the ambitions of the emerging groups, tended to prevent economic disparities across societies from reaching even higher levels, and it did so by constraining the potential for upward mobility of members of the bourgeoisie. It is for this reason that, arguably, in the Middle Ages the path of enrichment through entrepreneurship and innovation was easier in places where the feudal system was weak or almost absent: the Italian communes, and particularly the merchant republics, the 'free cities' of the Hansa League, and so on. However, Weber failed to notice that the rise of commoners' wealth could not have occurred without the presence of the nobility, because it was precisely to service the needs of the nobles that the Commercial Revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries had started: it was their desire for consuming luxury goods that led to the initial emergence of that network of long-range trade routes which made the fortune of so many merchants (Alfani 2023, 90-91).

The second point relates to how, especially in the early modern period when state bureaucracies began to expand vigorously, service to the state offered plentiful opportunities for upward mobility. In my Prolusion, I mentioned the service to the

army, but now I would like to highlight how interacting with the state in various ways offered much broader opportunities for advancement to people with very varied skills. The case of Antoine II Crozat, who was a tax farmer, is just an example. Another very interesting case is that of the Tasso family, originally from a village in the Alps of northern Lombardy, who developed the postal services of the Holy Roman Empire from the late fifteenth century and later expanded them to cover all corners of the Habsburg domains, from Germany to the Low Countries and Burgundy, to Spain. They became fabulously wealthy, and from 1624 were ennobled, becoming Freiherren of the Empire – and changed their name to Thurn und Taxis. To this day, they remain one of the richest families of Germany.

Also the final case that I would like to highlight, that of Lodovico Manin, somehow involves a process of ennoblement: the Manin family acquired the status of patricians of Venice 'only' in 1651. In fact, they bought it, paying the enormous sum of 100,000 gold ducats. It has been argued that, by the middle of the eighteenth century, in the Republic of Venice the only thing that mattered, to define the limits of one's political ambitions, was wealth (Del Negro 1984). It is not by chance, then, that when Lodovico Manin was elected doge, in 1789, he was the richest man in the entire Republic. Unfortunately, old patrician families considered him a parvenu, as his forebears had acquired their seat in the Maggior Consiglio just a century earlier. His election was seen as a sign of the decadence of the once-proud Republic – just a few years later, in the face of the advance of the French revolutionary army led by Napoleon, the Maggior Consiglio voted for its own dissolution.

The right to sit in the Maggior Consiglio had been made hereditary in 1323 already. Indeed, the Republic of Venice was precocious in following that path of oligarchic closure that, as I have noticed in my Prolusion, befell many Italian polities during the early modern period. The fact that the Maggior Consiglio of Venice, like the senate of Milan, was never entirely impermeable to accepting new members should not hide the fact that newly-minted patricians had one feature in common: they were very rich. A possible way of looking at this, then, is that for a very rich, or even super-rich, 'bourgeois' family entering the nobility was not only the mark of further advancement, or an opportunity to exploit the additional opportunities that were open only to those who were close to the court – very often, it was also a way to expand the family's political power. And whenever the future looked dark, those in power, including the 'new' families, collectively acted as the enemies of mobility, trying to protect their privileges and socio-economic status. As a matter of fact, this happened even where and when formal nobility was lacking: again Max Weber introduced the useful concept of aristocracy, which is broader than that of nobility as it does not require the presence of inheritable titles. For Weber, an aristocracy is defined by its high social status and by enjoying certain privileges. Wealth aristocracies, then, could arise also in the context of republican democracies, such as the United States during the nineteenth-century Gilded Age.

Here, what is important to highlight is that, as aristocracies (of wealth or otherwise) are defined by their privilege, they must also be defined by exclusion, as a privilege shared too widely is no privilege at all. Consequently, at some point they'll have to act to actively try to keep the newcomers down, limiting upward mobility, then joining the ranks of the enemies of mobility. Historically, social closure,

economic closure, and political closure are often intertwined. In the past, often the richest individuals flocked to politics when they perceived troubled times ahead for the economy, and increased their grasp on public resources to defend their own socio-economic position. Let's hope that, in this regard, history does not provide any useful insights into what awaits us in the twenty-first century.

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Wouter Ryckbosch

Towards a new history of old mobility: obstacles and prospects

1. The waning of an old social order

In his masterpiece *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga described more than a century ago how late medieval society was eminently hierarchical (Huizinga 1991 (2024), chapter 3). Huizinga saw orders and estates everywhere he looked in the late medieval world. Not just in the classic trifunctional division of social estates into clergy, nobility and peasantry, but also in the ranks at court, in church, guilds, fraternities, and marriage. Society was composed of groups of people who were bound to specific functions and who presumably aimed for little more than to carry this burden as well as they could, and thereby to honour God's creation.

Huizinga was too good of a historian not to know that this was largely a fiction – propaganda even. He was well aware that in actual practice the Third Estate was incredibly heterogeneous, and that the trifunctional system had failed to properly reflect the rise of cities, the bourgeoisie, and proletarian labourers since at least the eleventh century. Huizinga did not argue for a complete 'histoire immobile', and noted how the nobility was constantly replenished from the ranks of the wealthy bourgeoisie (compare to Le Roy Ladurie 1974). Nevertheless he maintained that the pervasive ideal of the society of orders remained alive and well until the eighteenth century. If not in practice, then at least in culture and politics. The discrepancy between ideal and reality fit well in Huizinga's pessimistic interpretation of a society that continued to live by nostalgic ideals that were well past their prime and were increasingly obsolete.

Given his fairly nuanced views on the matter, it is unlikely that Huizinga would have been particularly surprised by the recent literature on social and economic mobility in medieval and early modern Europe (Carocci and Lazzarini 2021; Padgett 2010; Sala 2020; De Bellaigue et al 2019; Alfani, Ammannati and Balbo 2022). Superficially at least, most of these findings would have confirmed his basic insight that despite the generally accepted rhetoric of a stable hierarchy individual social mobility was in fact rather common. Thanks to a renewed interest in social mobility today, caused at least in part by a creeping sense of diminished opportunities in late capitalism (Chetty 2017), historians of medieval and early modern Europe have begun to enlist an impressive array of new sources, methods and interpretive frameworks to analyse social mobility in the past. However, the contributions in the current volume also indicate that a new synthesis to surpass Huizinga's paradox between ideal and

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reality, is not yet around the corner. In fact, there are reasons to suggest that the 'new history of old social mobility' based on a newfound empiricism should not lead to hasty new narratives any time soon (compare Jackson 2023).

2. A confusion of tongues

The implicit acceptance of shifting social fortunes should not lead us to conclude that concerns over social mobility were of no interest to medieval and early modern Europeans. A popular late medieval tale – recounted in different versions and varying endings – told the story of Griselda (Howell 2010, 254-56). She was a simple peasant girl until an Italian nobleman decided that he wished to marry her. Since she did not possess a dowry herself, he provided her with a dress appropriate for a lady of noble status, and in doing so thereby bestowed a new social rank upon her. In the remainder of the tale, he proceeded to test her inner 'nobleness' in various cruel ways: by sending her away, claiming to marry someone else, and telling her that he murdered her children. Griselda showed how her true nature was indeed worthy of noble status by remaining patient and untouched by all of this, and accepting her fate. According to Martha Howell the story and its many variations appears to play on the difficulties of determining what one's rank and social identity was: could it be transformed by marriage and lifestyle – or was Griselda aristocratic all along, despite her peasant bearings, as proven by her reaction to the tests of her husband?

Such popular preoccupations suggest that social mobility was not necessarily uncommon, but could nevertheless provoke uncertainty and confusion. However, as the story of Griselda indicates, with its focus on marriage, appearance, and behaviour – instead of on wealth or income, such concerns were not necessarily the same as the ones that pervade discussions of social mobility today.

A first obstacle towards a new synthesis, is based in its conceptual diversity. The recent upsurge in interest in social mobility of the past has also led to a conceptual broadening of the topic itself. Part of the allure of social mobility as a topic of interest is perhaps the wide array of loosely connected issues to which it seems to refer, often with little more in common than a vague association with ideas of openness, fairness and modernity. Although such limited conceptual delineation has produced a vibrant and stimulating research field, it can also lead to the understatement of contradictions and dissimilarities. Grand trends of growing openness or oligarchisation can present themselves too easily when the criteria are insufficiently delineated or heterogeneous phenomena are amalgamated to singular phenomena.

Although historians are keenly aware of the distinctions between different types of social mobility, it is not always recognised how such different types do not necessarily evolve in parallel to one another (Van Leeuwen and Maas 2010). The desire to add new empirical data to the debate has led to an admirable creativity in enlisting new sources and approaches to study social mobility, but has also broadened the conceptual scope. The contributions to the current volume give testimony to the variety of mobility types of potential historical interest, but one would be ill-advised to attempt to draw general conclusions from such different and sometimes conflicting phenomena. Many, if not most, chapters are concerned with issues of absolute

mobility, which refers to the rising incomes or living standards of individuals or groups over time. In most cases changes in absolute mobility are the result of wider processes of economic growth or decline: tides that lift all boats, even if some are lifted higher than others. Relative mobility on the other hand refers to the changing of individual positions in a hierarchy that does not necessarily change: some get rich, others become poor – but inequalities remain the same. Although this relative mobility is often colloquially understood as 'genuine' social mobility, many historical case studies of individuals, social groups, or areas on the ascent do in fact refer to absolute mobility instead (see also Chetty 2014).

Not only the movements up or down, but also the subjects doing the moving are more problematic than often recognised. Most often historical studies of social mobility refer to the changing of social positions by individuals, but there are also many cases in which groups or collectives are discussed instead, such as merchants, political elites, or religious minorities. A traditional literature which has recently received a second lease on life, are those studies of social mobility in which family lineages are the units of analysis. It would be hard to generalise across the conclusions from such diverse studies, as individual and group mobility are not logically, technically or causally related to one another. The attestation of the rise of a new dynasty in a city's political elite does not automatically affect the ability of socially inferior individuals to move up or down the social ladder.

A third distinction between different mobility types relates to the timeframe under scrutiny. Inter-generational mobility – usually measured from parent to child – most closely corresponds to the conceptions of mobility that figure in narratives of modernisation and the transition from a society of estates to a society of classes, but also intra-generational, career mobility has recently been studied more often. However, intra-generational and inter-generational mobility are not necessarily governed by similar mechanisms, since life-cycle and household changes in large part determine the former, whereas education, employment and inherited wealth tend to impact the latter more forcibly. There is no a priori reason to suppose that societies with low levels of inter-generational mobility would also have lower levels of intra-generational mobility – in fact, both might conceivably be inversely related to one another.

Finally, and perhaps less obviously so, the dimensions along which mobility is measured also tend to vary significantly. Most influential among sociologists and modern historians are studies on occupational class positions, while studies of income and more recently wealth mobility have recently been gaining in importance (Bowles and Gintis 2002; Clark and Cummins 2014, 2015; Solon 2018; Fagereng et al 2021). However, studies of older historical periods also frequently focus on access to political power or legal status such as nobility (for instance Padgett 2010; Buylaert 2010; Buylaert and Geens 2017).

Although in some historical periods several mechanisms and types of mobility might have moved in tandem – twentieth-century postwar Europe would conceivable have been such a case – this is neither theoretically nor logically necessary. Conflating different types of mobility thus tends to superficially contribute to overarching narratives of democratisation, fluidity, openness and meritocracy – and thus to modernisation – without making such hypotheses empirically falsifiable.

Although the lack of conceptual rigour perhaps adds to the vibrancy and dynamism of the field of historical mobility studies, the wide-ranging nature of the results it produces can not easily be synthesised. Any attempt at grand narratives therefore best avoids adding more confusion by conflating and amalgamating different objects of study.

3. Mobility and (early) modernisation

Perhaps the most eye-catching results from the current volume attest to the role of economic expansion in case studies of social mobility across pre-modern Europe. Commercial growth during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries across much of Western and Southern Europe, or proto-industrial and capitalist expansion in Catalonia or France during the eighteenth century, seem to have given rise to structural, absolute mobility: a growth in absolute living standards for specific groups of people. Such studies are closely linked to economic histories in which economic growth, structural changes in occupational structure, or rising living standards take central stage. Absolute mobility informs us first and foremost of the rise or fall of social groups – such as landowners, merchants or urban magistrates – but has relatively little to say on how easy it is for individuals to move in or out of these social groups.

Relative mobility was not absent from pre-industrial Europe either, as indicated by the first results from ongoing large-scale projects measuring relative social mobility based on name-linking between subsequent tax registers (Ronsijn and Ryckbosch in this volume, for instance and more results will emerge from Alfani's SMITE projects in the near future). Interpreting relative mobility requires not only an assessment of economic and political change, but also a consideration of perhaps more prosaic and definitely more commonplace changes related to family and lifecycle. David Herlihy already noted that demographic mechanisms alone were enough to explain the regular renewal of medieval elites, without necessarily diminishing the unequal nature of social structures (Herlihy 1973). If aristocratic families in the late medieval and early modern period appear obsessed with establishing family trees in order to show how deep their roots stretched back perhaps this was a hotly contested attempt at negotiating social positions and hierarchies, rather than vain pastimes for the rich (Buylaert and Haemers 2016; Friedrich 2023).

Despite their best attempts, elite renewal in the late medieval and early modern period was indeed quite normal, as Huizinga had already observed. Whereas the nobility as a social group did not necessarily grow or shrink much, their ranks had to be constantly replenished by newly ennobled families (Buylaert 2015). A similar process characterised many late medieval and early modern urban magistrates.

Demography alone does not tell the whole story. It has been suggested that the early modern period was in many places characterised by a gradual process of oligarchisation, thus pointing to long-term changes in the openness to relative social mobility at the top of the social hierarchy (for instance Malinowski 2024). A bold synthesis of this literature could perhaps begin to narrate the emergence of a high degree of absolute and relative mobility from the commercial revolution of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, followed by a tendency towards oligarchisation in

the centuries after the late medieval crisis, and the return of a more absolutely mobile dynamic - at least in some areas – from the eighteenth century onwards.

However, I believe it would be wise to resist this temptation, and to learn from some of the errors of our ways in the historical literature on inequality. Of course all new insights into pre-industrial mobility are valuable, even if we have to be careful not to arrive too quickly at syntheses and grand claims based on heterogeneous methods, definitions, and case studies. Many students of pre-industrial mobility argue that their findings are of particular importance because little evidence or consensus currently exists on the topic of pre-industrial mobility levels and trends – an argument familiar to anyone who read the literature on pre-industrial inequality about a decade ago (a recent synthesis of the status quaestionis in that field in Alfani 2021, 2024). The implicit straw man for many of these studies is the baseline assumption of many a sociologist, economist or modern historian that the history of social mobility was essentially immovable before 1800 (see Sorokin 1998; Van Leeuwen and Maas 2010). Staple images of a rigid and static pre-industrial world are of course helped by the mental image of the three estates, which was evoked up until the end of the eighteenth century as a structuring principle for society (in general see Mousnier 1972).

Narratives of a stable society in which estates were fixed by birth chimed well with nineteenth- and twentieth-century modernisation theories in need of an immutable pre-industrial society as a starting point for their own, contrasting social imaginary. The presumed fluidity of modern societies was imagined as precisely opposite to pre-industrial estate societies based on ascription. Joseph Schumpeter famously compared the 'modern' wealthy elite to a bus of which the passengers changed continuously, suggesting a constant process of renewal based on 'creative destruction' that distinguished modern – benevolent – elites with pre-industrial, extractive ones (Schumpeter 2013 (1942); Beckert 2022). When visiting the United States, Alexis de Tocqueville was struck by the social, political, and cultural ramifications of a society without a landed elite and inherited, aristocratic wealth (De Tocqueville 2003 (1838)). He believed that American wealth changed hands so quickly that two succeeding generations could rarely find themselves in its full enjoyment.

This modern imaginary has been in an increasingly desperate state of besiegement in recent years. Recent studies on social mobility today – especially with regards to wealth - have shown how wealth positions are passed on more often than previously expected (Pfeffer and Killewald 2018). It has been shown, for instance, that parental wealth is associated with educational attainment, labour market outcomes and transition to homeownership, while individual wealth facilitates self-employment and transition into homeownership and affects life-cycle decisions such as marriage, parenthood, and retirement (Killewald, Pfeffer, and Schachner 2017). Not only the effect of parental wealth appears to correlate with the wealth of adult children, but also the wealth of grandparents (Long and Ferrie 2018; Braun and Stuhler 2018).

As far as social mobility, meritocracy and the 'American Dream' are concerned, especially if both wealth and a longer timeframe are taken into account, most countries seem to be a lot less modern than they had imagined themselves to be (compare to Latour 2013). If modernisation theory has proven to be quite mistaken in its

interpretation of mobility today, what about the implications for pre-industrial mobility studies?

4. Conceptual challenges ahead

Although most medieval or early modern historians would feel little hesitation over abandoning notions of an immobile pre-industrial past with low levels of social mobility, other implications of modernisation theory have become more subtly entrenched in the discipline. The implicit focus of modern mobility studies – also those applied to the pre-industrial past – is often inherently individualistic, as it situated modernity in the free movement of individuals in and out of voluntary social groups. The dimensions of interest are also deeply tied up in theories of modernisation, by focusing on income, wealth or occupation they adopt modern conceptions of political economy.

The problematic origins and anachronistic nature of its central concepts is not unique to the field of historical mobility studies, nor does it invalidate results obtained by applying them. The ways in which we measure or interpret many aspects of social and economic history in the distant past are anachronistic and would have been foreign to the categories of analysis available to contemporary observers. Few would dispute the relevance of measuring economic growth in the twelfth century, or CO_2 emissions in Ancient Rome despite the fact that these concepts were entirely unknown to people living during those times. However, when empirical observation makes way for interpretation, the conceptual categories and knowledge structures of contemporaries should not be taken for granted based on modern assumptions tied up with modern concepts.

Households in medieval or early modern Europe were not necessarily as much motivated by individual desires for increasing their wealth, income or class position as political economists from Adam Smith onwards would advise them to be. Not much is known with any certainty, or indeed knowable at all, of popular conceptions of political economy before the enlightenment, but individualistic conceptions of relative social mobility – central to modern conceptions of social mobility – are unlikely to have been a central concern. When analyses of social mobility connect their findings to instances of social and political uprising such as the Florentine Ciompi (1378), or the Communidades (1521), it would be tempting to find causal links – from closed societies to popular resentment – which are not necessarily straightforward. Political analyses of late medieval and early modern revolts usually do not stress individual, relative social mobility as a central point of contention. Instead, they emphasise the language of the 'bonum commune' – or the common good – and how it was threatened by individual members of the elite who enriched themselves for selfish reasons (Haemers and Eersels 2020). When social and economic concerns were raised during such times of upheaval (Dumolyn, Speecke and Ryckbosch 2021), it was often about transparency and fair competition, fair wages, or decent living standards for collectives (such as craft guilds or labourers) – not about a lack of individual, relative mobility (Van Gelder 2018; Farge 1993; Wood 2017).

The relationship between popular understandings of fairness, social mobility, and political agitation is complex, not only in the past – but also today. Studies in political sciences have often demonstrated how poorer social groups are not necessarily in favour – let alone vote for – the most redistributive policies (Bartels 2005). Many of the losers of a free-for-all market capitalism are often the greatest supporters of keeping the American dream alive. If such relationships are difficult to disentangle today, we must be wary not to assume their existence in the more distant past. It would be tempting to attribute great significance to social mobility, or the lack thereof, in the pre-industrial world – but in fact it remains hard to assess what the causes and effects of such mobility patterns were.

5. Pre-modern visions of mobility

If we can not take our own assumptions about the interpretations of mobility for granted – neither about the kinds of mobility that matter most, nor about their inherent desirability – perhaps more attention should be directed to the interpretative frames available to medieval and early modern Europeans when trying to make sense of shifting social trajectories. Although this was not a major point of concern for most of the contributions to this volume, it will be necessary in order to better understand the meaning of these results. A.T. Brown has argued that in late medieval England the fear of downward social mobility was a more important driver of economic change – both in consumption and in land exploitation – than the desire for upward mobility (Brown 2019). Regardless of the direction, it seems clear that concerns over social mobility became greater from at least the fourteenth century onwards, even if it is unclear whether this corresponded to actual changes in rates of mobility at all.

Against the moralists regarding any path of social mobility as an aberration, medieval and early modern individuals could always invoke the idea of the wheel of fortune ('rota fortunae'). Fortune was a classical trope used to explain, predict, or warn against the unpredictable changes in economic or social status that could befall everyone. Fortune already played a central role in Chaucer, and was a common invocation in many mercantile letters, but its domain seems to have been quite limited otherwise. Over the course of the early modern period, fortune seems to have gradually expanded her reach, imposing a degree of fluidity, mobility and unpredictability on an ever wider range of social contexts and domains.

When in the decades before the French Revolution social positions began to be understood more in terms of political economy and less in the moralistic terms of an estate-based society (Sewell 1994), this was perhaps the temporary culmination of a longer process with potentially more impact in affecting social and economic behaviour than any lived experience of social mobility itself (compare to Levy and Immerwahr for similar interpretations on fortune and social status in late nineteenth-century US: Levy 2014; Immerwahr 2024).

In the discussion on the fiscal sources used by several of the contributions included in this volume, it is frequently noted that medieval tax regimes often exempted specific groups or assets from taxation. Although it has been discussed

here primarily as a point of source criticism or a methodological hurdle to overcome, the gradual disappearance and abolishment of fiscal privileges and exemptions over the course of the period that we cover here in itself indicates the loosening grip of the order-based society of the old regime (Kwass 1998).

In recent decades, the growth of the early modern market for consumer goods has been interpreted as an indicator and a driver for economic growth and growing market specialisation (De Vries 2008; Kwass 2022). It does not take much imagination to interpret the gradual decline of sumptuary legislation across early modern Europe (Hunt 1996), as well as the growing participation of consumers from across the social spectrum in a consumer culture based on shared values of novelty and fashion, as indications of a growing acceptance of social fluidity, and a rejection of a fixed social order (Sewell 2014). Whether the acceptance of social mobility also led to more mobility in practice is a question which the new empirical literature on the latter can hopefully help to answer.

6. Mobility and marginalisation

If despite the obstacles outlined above, a general theory of changes in pre-industrial social mobility were nevertheless to emerge, it would be important to consider explicitly to whom it applied. The scarcity of data to analyse mobility in the more distant past often limits our ambitions to establishing a few snapshots here and there. Yet it is important to consider whether the processes and mechanisms such snapshots reveal were applicable to all in equal degrees. In the literature on medieval social mobility patterns, attention has often been aimed at those social groups who left sufficient source trails: often relatively wealthy men (see also comments on this in Brown 2019; Carocci 2011). In the current volume a wide range of social groups has received attention, including merchants, sons of peasants, craftsmen, serfs, and members of the urban patriciate or parliament. Yet it would be a stretch to claim that all social groups present in medieval and early modern society are equally represented. Quite a few groups, such as women, or colonised people overseas, barely figure in our analyses of social mobility.

The drive for more and better empirical data also threatens to exacerbate the implicit social bias in historical social mobility studies. Linking different archival sources over time in order to create trajectories of mobility directs attention to citizens over transitory or migrant populations. The implicit bias towards less mobile, sedentary, and traditional household structures falsely gives the impression that everyone could potentially achieve social mobility. But was this actually the case? Moreover, the tendency to focus on upward rather than downward trajectories of social mobility threatens to implicitly bring back older viewpoints on the history of empire and colonialism. Post-colonial perspectives again have become quite distant when mercantile capitalists, protoindustrial entrepreneurs, and colonial administrators become re-centered in the analysis, whereas those whose opportunities for improving their wellbeing were negatively impacted as a result – in Europe or overseas – quietly disappear from the narrative again.

7. Conclusions

In a recent essay in Past and Present, Trevor Jackson has suggested that the historical literature on pre-modern inequality might hold more insights for the near future than the study of the more recent past (Jackson 2023). It might be interpreted as a rather pessimistic interpretation of late modernity as an autumn tide. A growing literature in sociology and economic anthropology draws on suggestive terminology from the pre-modern past to describe new and often alarming trends in social structures (Beckert 2022). 'Neo-feudal', 'patrimonial', 'oligarchic', 'plutocratic', and 'dynastic' would at first sight appear as anachronistic terms to describe modern societies (McGoey and Thiel 2018; Piketty 2013; Winters 2011; Freeland 2012; Savage 2021), yet they are meant to invoke the return of an undesirable and unjust past with high inequality and rigid social structures. Not unlike Huizinga's invocation of a society whose chivalric ideals no longer corresponded to its more prosaic reality, the social conditions of modernity appear to many to be similarly paradoxical.

If the rise of nepo-babies and the death of the American Dream today suggests that the modernisation paradigm of social mobility is over, then what lessons would pre-industrial Europe have to offer? One possible answer could perhaps be found not so much in the desire, but the fear for social mobility apparent in much of late medieval and early modern Europe. Voluntary associations such as guilds and confraternities, taking oaths of mutual support and assistance as measures against the threat of individual impoverishment, and markets organised for transparency and fairness rather than growth or accumulation, might hold some clues as to the ways in which those with less power protected themselves against the downward spin of the Wheel of Fortune.

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Antoni Furió

Round table comments

Vorrei cominciare facendo un elogio di ciò che la Settimana di Prato ha rappresentato e continua a rappresentare per gli storici medievisti della mia generazione, in un momento in cui la storia economica non attraversa il suo momento migliore.[1] Per molto tempo, fin dai tempi fondativi di Fernand Braudel e Federigo Melis, più di cinquant'anni fa, la Settimana di Studi organizzata dal Datini è stata al contempo la vetrina più rappresentativa della migliore storia economica che si stava scrivendo all'epoca e un faro illuminante, una guida preziosa, sui temi, problemi e percorsi che si dovevano affrontare. E addirittura un anno la Settimana è stata dedicata proprio al tema *Dove va la storia economica? Metodi e prospettive*, esplorando e discutendo vecchie e nuove sensibilità, strumenti e rapporti con altre discipline (Ammannati 2011).

La Settimana, inoltre, è sempre stata molto attenta ai grandi e gravi problemi del nostro tempo e ha saputo reagire opportunamente alla crisi finanziaria del 2008, che ha messo fine al sogno di una crescita economica ininterrotta, all'aumento del *gap* tra i più ricchi e i più poveri, tra chi ha di più e chi non ha nulla o quasi, e al deterioramento e al crollo degli ascensori sociali. Ascensori che sono sempre più fuori uso e non garantiscono più che i figli vivano meglio dei loro genitori. E Prato ha reagito alle urgenze del presente dedicando una Settimana alle crisi finanziarie dell'età preindustriale (Nigro 2016), un'altra alla disuguaglianza economica (cause ed effetti) (Nigro 2020) e una terza – questa, l'edizione di quest'anno– alla mobilità sociale. In qualche modo, l'analisi della mobilità sociale è stata la continuazione logica degli studi sulla disuguaglianza economica che hanno dominato il secondo decennio del XXI secolo, come dimostrano anche molti dei progetti di ricerca, cominciando da quelli diretti da Guido Alfani sull'Italia – e pure sull'Europa occidentale – (Alfani 2015, 2020a and 2020b), ma anche quelli realizzati in altri paesi, come i Paesi Bassi (Blondé et al. 2020) o la Spagna, dove l'attenzione si è riorientata passando dalla disuguaglianza alla mobilità.[2] O meglio, ciò che abbiamo appreso e continuiamo ad

[1] Il suo arretramento è evidente tra gli storici, oggi più interessati alle diverse declinazioni della storia culturale, e i quali l'hanno progressivamente abbandonata nelle mani dei cliometri, attualmente egemoni nella disciplina. Tra le molte voci critiche che ne hanno fatto eco, si veda il libro di Francesco Boldizzoni (2011), così come le reazioni sulfuree che ha suscitato, tra cui quella di Deirdre McCloskey (2013).

[2] Si vedano, oltre al recente libro a cura di Carvajal de la Vega et al. (2024), i progetti di ricerca passati e in corso guidati da David Carvajal e Hilario Casado, *Crecimiento económico, consumo y desigualdad social al norte de la Corona de Castilla en el largo siglo XVI (ca. 1450-ca, 1580)* e

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Antoni Furió, *Round table comments*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9.32, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *La mobilità sociale nelle società preindustriali: tendenze, cause ed effetti (secc. XIII-XVIII) / Social mobility in pre-industrial societies: tendencies, causes and effects (13th-18th centuries)*, pp. 581-588, 2025, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0667-9, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9

apprendere sulla disuguaglianza economica ci permette di capire meglio la mobilità sociale e di stabilire quali sono state le connessioni e correlazioni, ma anche quali le divergenze – poiché le tendenze non sono sempre parallele – tra crescita economica (e il suo opposto, la recessione), disuguaglianza e mobilità.

After these introductory words of acknowledgment, focusing on the discussion of the topic that occupies us, I shall start by talking about sources and methodology. Most of the studies on economic inequality and social mobility, and of the papers presented during the *Settimana,* are mainly based on fiscal and, to a lesser extent, notarial sources. Despite the at times significant differences between one region and another, we can speak of a common fiscal and financial culture that extends not only throughout Mediterranean Europe, from the Italian *estimi* and *catasti* to the Occitan *compoix* and *livres d'estimes*, the Catalan *manifests*, *estimes* i *vàlues,* and the Castilian *padrones de riqueza* (Rigaudière 2006; Abbé 2017; Morelló 1992), but also extends beyond the Mediterranean arc and even reaches Portugal and England (Scrase 1996; Rosa 2023), where there are also wealth registers. This common culture that inspires the production of this type of sources not only allows us to better understand the underlying logic behind them, but also to share critical reflections on their possibilities and limitations, such as the presence or not of nobles and ecclesiastics, and of the poor, in this type of document, and also to share methods and analytical tools, such as the use of deciles, the Gini coefficient (and the Theil and Palma indexes) or Lorentz curves.

Although the spread of notarial sources is more restricted to southern Europe, to the Europe of notaries, the same is not true for the main documents for studying social mobility. These are found in notarial registers, and also in other very similar archival series in countries where notaries did not exist, such as dowries, wills and inventories of assets.[3] Despite the differences between one country and another I insist on the need to have a global conversation about the possibilities and limitations of this type of sources which, notwithstanding local and regional differences, are found in most of Europe and are the ones that historians fundamentally use to study economic inequality and social mobility from different perspectives. A third type of sources, less used so far, but equally rich in information on social mobility, are the municipal minute books, in which the composition of the political bodies and the names of the different magistrates and councillors are recorded, thus allowing us to trace the persistence and perpetuation of certain families and individuals in municipal positions, the incorporation of new members, and the closing of ranks and

Desarrollo comercial, desigualdad económica y movilidad social en la Castilla septentrional (1450-1580); Pere Verdés, *La desigualdad económica en las ciudades catalanas y mallorquinas durante la baja Edad Media a través de las fuentes del impuesto sobre la riqueza* e *Desigualdad, movilidad y conflicto social en el mundo urbano: Cataluña y Mallorca, s. XIII-XVI*; e Antoni Furió, *Crecimiento económico y desigualdad social en la Europa mediterránea (siglos XIII-XV)*, *¿Crecimiento sin desarrollo? Distribución de la riqueza, movilidad social y acción política en la Europa mediterránea (siglos XIII-XV)* e *Breaking hierarchies. Social Mobility, Economic Dynamism and Institutional Development in the Western Mediterranean (13th-17th centuries).*

[3] See, among the abundant bibliography on notarial records, inventories of assets, auctions, wills, dowries, and other documentary sources for the study of social mobility, Antenhofer, (2020), García Marsilla and Almenar Fernández (2022).

oligarchisation of political power (Angoy García 1988; Vicano 2011; Narbona and Bernabeu 2021).

After the sources, I shall talk about methodology. In particular – but not only – the need to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. A large part of the historian's work consists of quantifying, measuring (Fourquin 1972; Lemercier and Zalc 2013). We cannot just give merely an impressionistic account, using only qualifying adjectives, such as high or heavy tax burden, high or low social mobility. We need to quantify it, to use figures, numerical indicators, as has been done admirably these days here, either by calculating the mobility rate, constructing quintiles and matrices, establishing annual averages, or by analysing socio-professional variations from one generation to the next, from fathers to sons. But we cannot just present the numbers either. Historical explanation cannot be limited to tables, graphs and logarithms, to the use of increasingly refined and sophisticated methods, in order to come to very simple and platitudinous conclusions. The backbone, the skeleton, provided by the quantitative approach needs the flesh that the qualitative approach brings, the singular, microhistorical or prosopographical study of individuals, families and lineages (Levi 1992; Robisheaux et al. 2017; Lambert 2021; Kowaleski 2022; Bulst 2022), the analysis of careers and lives, economic, professional, academic and political trajectories (De Ridder-Symoens 1986; Verger 2006; Luengo 2016; Petracca 2023), in order to better understand social mobility, as the cases of Francesco di Marco Datini himself or the Borgia popes show (Nigro 2010; Boriaud 2021; Carrasco 2021). Cases that illustrate better than any number or index the pathways of advancement or, on the contrary, of falling down the social ladder – although the figures will help us to understand and explain the magnitude and generalisation of the rise and fall.

To quantitative and qualitative approaches, I would add the need for context. Long-term analyses, spanning several centuries, are all very well, but they have the major problem of the lack of context to explain the results at each point in time. In addition to often being teleological, arriving at an end that we already know from the start, they are comparing realities that have very different meanings and sources, and data that are not comparable. Data are constructed by historians on the basis of both the sources and their own knowledge of those sources and the social reality of the time, and the fourteenth century is not the same as the eighteenth century, even if they both fall under the common label of pre-industrial times or societies.

Examples of contexts in which to frame and explain social mobility in late medieval and early modern Europe are the processes of expansion and colonisation in the thirteenth century, the Black Death in the fourteenth century, and the plague in the seventeenth century, which have been discussed here these days. But I would like to highlight another process that has not received the attention it deserves, namely political and administrative centralisation and the rise and development of what was formerly known as the modern state and later the fiscal state, from the fourteenth century onwards, with the need for an ever larger and more specialised administrative bureaucracy (Blockmans and Genet 1995-2000; Bonney 1999; Béguin and Genet 2015). If the kings of the eleventh century had only a dozen servants and the monarchs of the thirteenth century a few hundred, those of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had by then thousands of officials and political and administrative

posts, not to mention those required by the municipal and provincial councils, or the Church itself. And that meant huge new possibilities for prosperity and social advancement, through the tenure of political posts or the pursuit of an administrative career in the service of the State (Autrand 1981; Monsalvo 1987; Álvarez 2003). Likewise, taxation, linked to the new political bodies, offered enormous business opportunities to those who leased taxes, whether royal or municipal, or invested in public debt, sustained by tax revenues (Boone et al. 2003; Cavaciocchi 2008; Zuijderduijn 2009; Béguin and Murphy 2017; Menjot et al. 2023).

On the other hand, although due attention has been paid to economic, socio-professional and, to a lesser extent, political mobility, in my opinion important aspects such as cultural, sociological and even anthropological ones have been overlooked. In particular, when studying social mobility, social and cultural markers as important as consumption, living standards, emulation, ostentation, reflected in aspects such as food, clothing, domestic furnishings, table etiquette, deserve more attention. I will end my comments with three examples. The first is the clear awareness of change and general improvement that could be perceived in Piacenza at the end of the fourteenth century, as is shown in a fragment of the chronicle of Giovanni di Musso quoted by Carlo Cipolla:

> The people of Piacenza live at present in a clean and opulent way and in their houses they now possess implements and tableware of a much better quality than seventy years ago. The houses are more beautiful than they were then because they now have beautiful rooms with fireplaces, porticoes, courtyards, wells, gardens and attics. Each house now has several chimneys, whereas once there used to be no chimney at all and one had simply to make a fire in the middle of one of the rooms, and then everyone in the house would gather round that one fire and it was there that food was cooked. In general, the people of Piacenza now drink better wines than their parents did.[4]

The second is the complaints and lamentations of the privileged elites about the social ascent of the lower classes. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the archbishop of Granada and confessor to Queen Isabella the Catholic exclaimed with great compunction that such is the pomp and vanity today of all the labourers and low people. He lamented the presumption and vainglory of the popular classes, who dressed in clothes far above what corresponded to their status, in order to appear more socially important than they really were. There is no longer, said the archbishop, a poor peasant or artisan who does not dress in fine cloth and even silk, which is more to be pondered (Furió 2021). The archbishop's complaint expresses the unease and even the fear of the elites in the face of the changes in and the subversion of the social order. If there were no social markers already in place, if even the poorest peasants and artisans could dress like lords, in the same beautiful clothes that the

[4] The *Chronicon Placentinum*, which covers the period from 222 to 1402, was published by Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1730, cols. 441-634). The English translation is by Carlo M. Cipolla (1993) and is reproduced and commented on in the unpublished doctoral thesis of Luis Almenar Fernández (2018).

latter had worn exclusively until then, social differences would vanish and with them the world as God commands.

Precisely to prevent or hinder this social ascent, and this is my last concluding remark, sumptuary laws were passed everywhere from the fourteenth century onwards, and in the Renaissance very rigid rules of protocol were codified, such as table etiquette and the way to use cutlery (knives and forks for meat, fish and desserts) directed against the parvenus, as Norbert Elias states in his beautiful work on the process of civilisation (Elias 1939). A rich farmer, a merchant, could be rich, richer even than a nobleman, but that did not make him a gentleman or a member of the privileged elite. This also required a good upbringing, a good education and manners, how he spoke, dressed, sat at the table, the way he behaved, which was exclusive to the upper classes and which the parvenus tried to emulate. Wealth, enrichment, was not enough for social mobility. To be accepted by the elites, it was also necessary to behave like them and share the same social and cultural values.

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Abstract[1]

GUIDO ALFANI, Social and economic mobility in preindustrial Europe

This article surveys and discusses the available literature on socio-economic mobility in preindustrial societies. Beginning with the mobility-promoting impact of the Black Death, the article explores more generally how "calamities" of various kinds offered (or not) opportunities for upward mobility. Thereafter, it discusses long-term mobility trends, also in the light of new research about economic inequality. Finally, the article discusses how, in certain historical phases, ruling elites acted as the "enemies" of mobility, defending their positions – but possibly contributing to entrench economic stagnation.

GUIDO ALFANI, Round table comments

This brief article expands on the Prolusion given to the LV Settimana Datini, clarifying some additional aspects and proposing a few examples of upward socio-economic mobility. Particular attention is given to two topics: the importance of the acquisition of nobility for social ascension in medieval and early modern times, and the connections between historical processes of social closure, economic closure, and political closure.

FRANCESCO AMMANNATI, Misurare la mobilità sociale in Toscana tra Medio Evo ed Età Moderna

Questo studio esplora la mobilità sociale in Toscana dal Medioevo all'Età Moderna, concentrandosi sulle metodologie e prospettive interdisciplinari che hanno rinnovato l'interesse per questo tema storiografico. Partendo dall'analisi di alcune comunità del Contado fiorentino sulla base dei registri fiscali, in particolare degli *estimi* per il basso Medioevo e della *Decima granducale* per i secoli dal Cinque al Settecento, la ricerca si propone di analizzare le dinamiche e i fattori condizionanti

[1] In questa sezione del volume abbiamo inserito gli abstracts inviatici dagli Autori.

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)
Angela Orlandi (edited by), *La mobilità sociale nelle società preindustriali: tendenze, cause ed effetti (secc. XIII-XVIII) / Social mobility in pre-industrial societies: tendencies, causes and effects (13th-18th centuries)*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0667-9, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0667-9

la mobilità socio-economica, sfidando la nozione di una società di ancien régime rigidamente strutturata.

This study explores social mobility in Tuscany from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, focusing on the methodologies and interdisciplinary perspectives that have renewed interest in this historiographical theme. Building on the analysis of a number of communities in the Florentine countryside on the basis of tax registers, in particular the estimi *for the late Middle Ages and the* Decima granducale *for the period from the 16th to the 18th century, the research aims to understand the the dynamics and possible determinants of socio-economic mobility, challenging the notion of a rigidly structured ancien régime society.*

GABRIEL BREA-MARTÍNEZ, JOANA-MARIA PUJADAS-MORA, Socioeconomic mobility a nd inequality persistence. The area of Barcelona, 16th-19th centuries

Preindustrial social mobility is still primarily understudied in present times. Most preindustrial and early-industrial social mobility research focused strictly on occupational mobility, not fully capturing the substantial socioeconomic disparities within occupational groups that presumably always existed. In this study, we aim to contribute to the literature by estimating long-term trends in intergenerational social mobility in Barcelona and its hinterland. We use the Barcelona Historical Marriage Database to assess disparities between socially and non-socially mobile individuals within occupational groups through unique data covering occupational prestige and economic information via genealogical reconstitutions. Using a combined SES approach (occupational prestige and economic capacity) can capture both class differences and within-occupation disparities. Socioeconomic mobility increased since the beginning of the 18th century, during Catalan protoindustrialization, but with significant class disparities. SES persistence increased for Non-Manuals' children, stagnated for Artisans' children, and declined for Farmers'. Moreover, within occupational groups, we find that intergenerational class-mobile individuals had always been disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms compared to the immobile, a constant characteristic from preindustrial times until the end of the 19th century. These results suggest that socially immobile (intergenerationally) individuals always benefited from the privilege of having fathers within the same occupational class, independent of the period, which recalls the sociological concept of the class ceiling.

DAVID CARVAJAL DE LA VEGA, HILARIO CASADO ALONSO, VANESA ABARCA ABARCA, An approach to inequality and social mobility in Northern Castile (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries)

This work is a first approach to economic inequality and social mobility in the north of Castile in the 15th and 16th centuries, aspects that are little known and, especially, scarcely measured. On the one hand, the sources for their study are analysed. The second part establishes some quantifications of the evolution of economic inequality in different parts of the Duero Valley (the most populated and richest region in Spain at that time), showing how inequality increased as economic

growth progressed. The third part studies social mobility in these two centuries, starting with two specific cases: access to the lower nobility in Castrojeriz; and socio-economic mobility and advancement in Olmedo. In both places, which are very representative of Castile as a whole, we observe a growing social mobility and the emergence of new elites in the heat of economic growth and, especially, the rise of trade.

ALBERTO CONCINA, MAÏKA DE KEYZER, JAN PEETERS, Economic growth and prosperity: Two sides of the same coin? A comparison of the countryside of Antwerp and Piedmont in the long eighteenth century

This paper proposes a comparative study of social mobility between peasant and commercial societies in two distinct rural areas of Europe, namely the Low Countries and Piedmont. The paper focuses on changing consumption patterns under the frame of the premodern consumer revolution to identify what kind of society was more mobile. The adoption of new facets of consumption especially in the form of novel luxuries and colonial products has long been identified as an effort from households to adopt more refined lifestyles thus improving their prestige and status relative to the rest of society. It will be shown that while commercial societies appeared better at promoting the circulation of prestigious goods across social groups, the phenomenon remained highly elitist.

SABRINA CORBELLINI, Reading and writing for success: literacy, knowledge and social mobility

This contribution examines the nexus between literacy and social mobility during the late medieval period. Proceeding from an analysis of autobiographical Italian primary sources, it concentrates on patterns of presentation and self-representation, particularly as they concern education, literacy and participation in literate activities as instruments for the creation of new social identities. The various source materials (e.g. diaries, libri di famiglia, treatises discussing the performance of literate practices, manuscript colophons and probate inventories), are then contextualised within a broader European perspective, specifically with reference to France and the Low Countries.

BENEDETTA MARIA CRIVELLI, La mobilità occupazionale a Verona tra tardo Medioevo ed Età Moderna: fonti e questioni metodologiche

Recenti studi sulla relazione tra ineguaglianza economica e mobilità sociale hanno dimostrato che un contributo significativo alla comprensione del grado di mobilità sociale viene della misurazione della mobilità occupazionale. Le fonti disponibili per la città di Verona permettono una classificazione delle professioni che si avvale degli strumenti utilizzati nelle ricerche internazionali. Ancor prima che fornire risultati sull'andamento della mobilità occupazionale nel lungo periodo, questo paper intende confrontare la classificazione fornita dall'Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations (HISCO) con i dati raccolti dai registri

fiscali della città di Verona al fine di elaborare una codificazione che possa adattarsi al contesto italiano.

Recent studies on the relationship between economic inequality and social mobility highlight the significant role of measuring occupational mobility in understanding social mobility. The available data for the city of Verona enables the classification of professions using internationally recognized methodologies. Before presenting long-term trends in occupational mobility, this paper seeks to compare the Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations (HISCO) with the data collected from Verona's tax records. The goal is to develop a coding system tailored to the Italian context.

MATTEO DI TULLIO, La mobilità sociale a Bergamo tra tardo Medioevo ed Età Moderna: fonti e metodi d'indagine

Il saggio discute fonti e metodi utili ad analizzare le dinamiche della mobilità sociale nelle società d'antico regime, focalizzandosi sul caso di Bergamo tra Quattrocento e Settecento. Dopo una breve riflessione metodologica, si delinea l'evoluzione del contesto economico e demografico orobico nel corso dei secoli presi in esame. Grazie all'analisi di fonti estimative e allo spoglio dei registi delle deliberazioni del comune, si propongono dunque due indicatori per misurare la mobilità sociale in relazione alla di distribuzione della ricchezza e all'accesso al potere politico locale. Infine, selezionando alcuni casi famigliari esemplari, si considera la possibile relazione tra le due dinamiche della mobilità prese in esame.

This article discusses sources and methods to analyze the dynamics of social mobility in the ancient régime, focusing on the case of Bergamo between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. After a brief methodological reflection, the evolution of Bergamo's economic and demographic context over the centuries examined is outlined. Thanks to the analysis of fiscal sources (tax-land registers) and the registers of municipal deliberations, two indicators are then proposed to measure social mobility in relation to the distribution of wealth and to the access to local political institutions. Finally, by selecting some exemplary cases among the local kinships, the possible relationship between the two mobility dynamics examined is considered.

MAS FERRER JOSEP, Female social mobility in an impartible inheritance society at the end of the pre-industrial era (north-eastern Catalonia, 1750-1825)

This paper aims to contribute to the study of female social mobility through marriage, by presenting a study case for north-eastern Catalonia, during the second half of the 18th century. This is a region where there was a strong system of impartible inheritance based on male primogeniture, so that it was women who moved into the families of the heirs, while paying a dowry accordingly. It is precisely the combination of the value of the dowry with the occupation of the bride's and groom's family that permits to better understand the dynamics of social mobility that brides experienced at the time of marriage. The results obtained

suggest that male primogeniture pushed many women towards downward social mobility, despite certain mechanisms to mitigate it.

MATTIA FOCHESATO, FRANCESCO BETTARINI, A new method of expanding the reconstruction of the occupational structure in Renaissance Florence: A preliminary investigation with insights into the economic impact of political and economic changes

Previous analyses of occupational structures in the urban centres of Western Europe in the late Middle Ages and Early modern times have attempted to estimate the shares of the labourers employed in different sectors using the information reported in the fiscal censuses. These contributions have often had to deal with the unavoidable limitations of the sources, such as their coverage of almost only the male declarants or that only a fraction of those censed declared their profession. As a result, the reconstruction of the occupational structures and the derived analysis of labour mobility based on these sources presented severe coverage limits of the labour force, for a large part of which, usually 40-50% of the active labourers, it was not possible to know the actual profession. We analyse seven fiscal censuses from Florence, ranging from the second half of the 14th century until the mid-15th century, to reconstruct the urban occupational structure among the male declarants. In addition, for a selected sample of neighbourhoods in one of the fiscal documents, we show a possible new method to integrate the existing information to increase the fraction of known occupations among the urban labour force. We show that our proposed method 1) significantly increases the proportion of the labour force with a known occupation and 2) substantially improves the knowledge of the occupational structure compared to the one obtained from the analysis of the sole declared occupations.

FRANCO FRANCESCHI, Intervento alla Tavola rotonda

Muovendo dalle indicazioni contenute nella call, l'intervento prende in esame i dati, le ipotesi, le idee e le suggestioni emerse dai lavori della LV Settimana di studi. Il commento si concentra su alcuni degli aspetti più rilevanti trattati dai relatori: gli effetti delle epidemie sulla mobilità sociale, il rapporto fra mobilità e disuguaglianza economica, la resistenza degli esponenti dei ceti più elevati all'ascesa della 'gente nuova', le interrelazioni fra mobilità geografica e progresso nella scala sociale, il ruolo dell'emulazione e dell'ostentazione nella scalata alle gerarchie sociali. Indica inoltre un certo numero di temi suscettibili di ulteriori ricerche e di approfondimenti, come la mobilità sociale delle donne, delle élite tecniche e delle minoranze, ma anche i processi di declassamento.

Based on the indications contained in the call, the text examines the data, hypotheses, ideas, and suggestions that emerged from the work of the LV *Settimana di studi*. The commentary focuses on some of the most relevant aspects addressed by the speakers: the effects of epidemics on social mobility, the relationship between mobility and economic inequality, the resistance of the upper classes to the

rise of the 'new people,' the interrelations between geographical mobility and social advancement, the role of emulation and ostentation in climbing social hierarchies. It also points out a number of themes that could be subject to further research and insights, such as the social mobility of women, technical elites, and minorities, as well as processes of downward mobility.

ANTONI FURIÓ, Round table comments

The comments made at the round table focused first of all on the sources (fiscal, notarial and other) and methodology (the necessary combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, including prosopography and individual trajectories) for the study of social mobility. Secondly, the need for context was stressed in order to better understand and explain the results. In particular, in the chronology that concerns us, the rise and development of the so-called fiscal state, from the 14th century onwards, with the need for an ever larger and more specialised administrative bureaucracy, as well as the opportunities for prosperity and social advancement, through the tenure of political posts or the pursuit of an administrative career. Finally, the importance of cultural, sociological and anthropological aspects (such as consumption, living standards, emulation, ostentation), hitherto rather overlooked, is highlighted.

ANTONI FURIÓ, CARLOS LALIENA CORBERA, PERE VERDÉS PIJUAN, Social mobility, economic growth and inequality in the late medieval Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia and Mallorca, 13th-15th centuries)

This paper examines social and economic mobility in the Crown of Aragon in the long term. It is divided into three main sections. The first deals with the processes of social mobility linked to both the colonisation of territories taken from the Muslims in the 12th and 13th centuries and the impact of the Black Death and other calamities in the second half of the 14th century. The second section addresses both the shorter-range migrations, especially from the countryside to the city, and the dynamics of social mobility in rural world and urban society. Although related to the latter, we wanted to highlight, as a separate section, the case of the converts from Judaism, as an original and important phenomenon both quantitatively and qualitatively, and for both its success and failure, in the Crown of Aragon and the other Iberian states. Finally, the third section is devoted to some questions of approach and methodology, in particular political (from the lists of families who held public offices in certain cities) and economic (from tax records or wealth registers) ones.

JAN MICHAEL GOLDBERG, Transformation of urban occupational structure and mobility (Leipzig, 1550-1850)

Located at the intersection of two major trade routes, Leipzig in Saxony, Germany, became a European trading hub, presumed sensitive to economic shocks. This

study examines the effects of upheavals, shocks, and trends on Leipzig's occupational structure using data from over 200,000 genealogically linked residents between 1550 and 1850. Occupations are coded using HISCO and KldB 2010, enabling detailed analysis of occupational changes, including intergenerational shifts. Results show surprising stability in Leipzig's occupational structure despite significant upheavals. Only the Saxon Rétablissement after the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) significantly increased intergenerational occupational mobility and altered the occupational structure, contributing to Leipzig's significant economic rise in the 19th century.

ARISTEA GRATSEA, Marriage alliances and socio-economic mobility in Venetian Crete (16th century)

This study examines socio-economic mobility and marriage alliances in sixteenth-century Venetian Crete, focusing on the Curcumeli family from the middle social stratum (cittadini). It analyzes the marital strategies and motivations behind the formation of unions and their connection to the business practices highlighting how marriage was used as a tool to forge alliances, consolidate wealth, elevate social status and enhance their role in the public sphere. Additionally, the study delves into the transfer of dowries, which provides valuable information about the wealth distribution, financial strategies, and familial dynamics of the time. Lastly, it examines other practices employed by the Curcumeli family in order to rise in social hierarchy and/or retain their wealth.

MARCO H.D. VAN LEEUWEN, INEKE MAAS, Social class mobility in the early modern Europe: a first international comparison

Preindustrial occupational datasets do exist, and in sufficient quantity. So, although they are rare compared to those for later periods, it is quite possible to extend the debates regarding intergenerational social class mobility into the preindustrial era. This article is the first attempt to do so for several countries comparatively. We reanalysed existing datasets and coded the data from France, Germany and Sweden uniformly in the occupational coding scheme HISCO and the social class scheme HISCLASS - and for a few analyses into the social status scale HISCAM. We investigated total, upward, downward and sectorial mobility. The questions we seek to answer are: (1) How did intergenerational social class mobility change over time? (2) Are there variations in intergenerational social class mobility between countries and regions? The focus is on observed rates of mobility (total mobility), that is the share of persons that change classes, in this case between the generations, and not on unequal chances of mobility (relative mobility.
We begin by a literature review and discuss two main theories on social mobility, namely modernisation theory and status maintenance theory. And we describe the potential disrupting force of wars and revolutions. We also give an overview of other possible determinants of social mobility, pertinent to early modern societies. Next we discuss the various datasets in the three countries, and the social class scheme used.

In the country for which we presently arguably have the best data, France, the rate of intergenerational mobility increased, albeit irregularly from the 1720s until 1850 (and from there on until the end of the twentieth century, as we showed in another study). For the German and Swedish places, no clear picture can yet be observed: total mobility trajectories vary among places and over time, as do upward and downward mobility. Sweden stands out by a relatively high rate of downward mobility, mostly consisting of farmers' sons becoming farm laborers. More than expected, however, sons with fathers from outside the farming class succeeded in becoming a farmer. Barriers between the sectors seem to have been weak in Sweden.
We raw two broad conclusions. The first is that pre-modern social class structures were not as stable as either modernization or status maintenance theories claim. The second is that in the case of France, for which we have excellent long-term records, even the major shock of the French Revolution and its aftermath did not cause an observable Sorokin effect for men.

LUCIANO MAFFI, *La mobilità sociale nel Basso Piemonte durante la prima Età Moderna. Gli estimi del territorio di Tortona: fonti e metodi d'indagine*

L'articolo intende illustrare e analizzare le fonti utili alla ricostruzione della mobilità sociale nel Basso Piemonte nei secoli XVI e XVII, con specifico riferimento al territorio tortonese, che nel periodo considerato apparteneva al Ducato di Milano. A tal fine vengono presentate e descritte le fonti conservate negli archivi dei comuni di Tortona e Castelnuovo Scrivia, mettendo in evidenza limiti e opportunità offerte da questa tipologia documentaria, al fine di monitorare l'evoluzione dei patrimoni familiari in quel periodo. Tali riflessioni sono relazionate al contesto socio-istituzionale sia di ambito locale sia di livello regionale. Si effettua infine un'analisi di queste fonti per studiare la mobilità sociale a Castelnuovo Scrivia per alcuni decenni del Seicento.

The article aims to highlight and analyze the sources relevant to the reconstruction of social mobility in Southern Piedmont during the 16th and 17th centuries, with specific reference to the Tortona area, which belonged to the Duchy of Milan in the period considered. The sources preserved in the archives of the municipalities of Tortona and Castelnuovo Scrivia are presented and described, highlighting the limitations and opportunities offered by this type of documentation in order to monitor the evolution of family assets during that period. These reflections are connected to the socio-institutional context at both local and regional levels. Finally, an analysis of these sources is carried out to study social mobility in Castelnuovo Scrivia for a few decades of the 17th century.

JOSÉ ANTONIO MATEOS ROYO, Peaceful conquest or skilful adaptation? The rise of genoese merchants in Aragon (1580-1620)

This study analyses the strategies used by Genoese merchants to control trade and credit in Aragon between 1580 and 1620 without arousing social opposition, unlike the French merchants in the rest of the seventeenth century. The adaptation of their business both to the political and economic context and to the legal and

institutional framework of the kingdom made it easier for them to gain the acceptance of the elites of Aragon and the representatives of the Spanish monarchy. Endogamous marriages were encouraged among the Genoese and any aspiration to political posts or honorary offices was sidelined to favour their professional progress. Only some decided to establish roots by marrying into regional petty noble families, acquiring houses, land and long-term debt in order to obtain income and create lordships and entailed estates, bringing their way of life close to that of the petty nobility.

HANNELORE PEPKE, La mobilité sociale ascendante des vignerons dijonnais dans le contexte d'une crise multiforme à la fin du Moyen Age (XIVe-XVe siècles)

In the troubled period of the Late Middle Ages, the Burgundian vineyards and Dijon experienced great changes. The secular rise in wages allowed winegrowers to gain economic autonomy. The exceptional richness of the Burgundian archives permits to identify various techniques used by them, especially structural pluri-activity, speculative trade in cereals, and intermediate investment of their savings in cattle (one or two cows), acquisition of own vines. Collectively, they acquired recognition in Dijon for their expertise, taken into consideration for the management of the local vineyard.

GABRIEL RAMON-MOLINS, Prosperare a credito, rovinarsi con i debiti: l'indebitamento come catalizzatore della mobilità sociale nel nord della Catalogna (1785-1800)

Il paper si concentra sullo studio del sistema creditizio agricolo e la sua influenza sulla mobilità sociale e sui cambiamenti economici in Catalogna, specialmente nell'area dell'Empordà, durante gli ultimi anni del setecento. Si analizza come l'indebitamento fosse strettamente legato all'attività agricola e allo sviluppo economico di quel periodo. Si descrive l'uso del credito e si indagano le motivazioni che portavano a contrarre debiti, così come le conseguenze sui diversi strati sociali. Si mette in rilievo il ruolo dei censi come principale forma di indebitamento e ne viene esplorato l'impatto sulla configurazione economica e sociale della regione. L'articolo offre una visione dettagliata di come il credito agricolo abbia modellato le dinamiche sociali ed economiche della Catalogna durante quel periodo storico.

This paper focuses on studying the agricultural credit system and its impact on social mobility and economic changes in Catalonia, especially in the Empordà area, during the late 18th century. It analyzes how indebtedness was closely linked to agricultural activity and the economic development of that period. The use of credit is described, and the reasons for incurring debts are investigated, as well as the consequences on different social strata. Emphasis is placed on consignative census as the main form of indebtedness, and their impact on the economic and social configuration of the region is explored. The article provides a detailed view of how agricultural credit shaped the social and economic dynamics of Catalonia during that historical period.

ALBERT REIXACH SALA, PAU VICIANO, Social mobility in the towns and countryside of late Medieval Crown of Aragon (c.1300-c. 1550): sources and methodological approaches

This chapter deals with the sources and methodologies available to study dynamics of social mobility in Late Medieval Crown of Aragon. We discuss the strengths and limitations of three different kind of sources: fiscal registers, municipal records and notarial sources (wills, probate inventories and wills). Secondly, we present four case studies based on the cities of Girona and Majorca, as well as the small towns of Sant Mateu and Castelló de la Plana (both in northern kingdom of Valencia). In Girona we trace family names through local tax registers combined with an approach centered on lists of municipal offices. We compare the latter approach with another on Palma (Majorca). Finally, we seek to detect changes in socioeconomic status through the minimum threshold of income fixed in general tax records in Sant Mateu, along with the evolution of families recorded in local wealth registers in Castelló.

WOUTER RONSIJN, WOUTER RYCKBOSCH, Income and wealth mobility in the smaller towns of the late medieval and early modern Low Countries: an exploratory analysis

In this paper, we set out to explore trends in mobility levels in six smaller towns in the Low Countries during the late Middle Ages and early modern period. We use pairs of tax lists to divide the population into quintiles and draw up mobility tables. We estimate mobility as the proportion of people moving into a different quintile. We did not find a long-term trend in mobility levels. Mobility levels did fluctuate in the towns we investigate, but we did not find any relation to trends in or levels of population or inequality. Our results suggest that preindustrial urban societies remained fairly rigid. Many people remained either in the top or bottom half of the distribution. It seems particularly people at the top managed to stay at the top.

WOUTER RYCKBOSCH, Towards a new history of old mobility: obstacles and prospects

A new wave of empirical and data-driven studies on the history of social mobility in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period has been emerging in recent years. This trend bears some resemblance to the wave of historical inequality studies that successfully changed the consensus of long-run trends in inequality in the past decade. In this short reflection, I argue that there are important obstacles to overcome before a similar consensus in the field of historical mobility studies can be reached. Pre-modern historians should be careful to distinguish between different types of mobility, should take contemporary perceptions of social ambition or fear into account, and should Always specify which social groups their results apply to.

SONIA SCHIFANO, TIAGO FERREIRA FLORES, ANTOINE PACCOUD, Inequality in pre-industrial Luxembourg (1766-1842): comparing the effects of the end of feudalism in rural and urban areas

This paper uses the land distribution derived from the Maria Theresa cadastre in Luxembourg from 1766 and a land registry of 1842 to compare wealth inequality in Luxembourg City and Dudelange, a rural municipality in the south of the country. The Gini coefficients for the two areas show a big difference in inequality. In 1766, Dudelange, with a Gini coefficient of 0.84, seems to be much more unequal than Luxembourg City that registers a Gini coefficient on land distribution of 0.53. The inequality analysis in 1842 shows a reduction in the inequality estimates mainly driven by the abolishment of the feudal taxes and a reduction in the inequality gap between Luxembourg City and Dudelange. When looking at social mobility, however, the results for the two places are quite similar.

MATTIA VIALE, The *estimi* of the Republic of Venice as a resource for studying social mobility in rural areas during the pre-industrial era

This paper illustrates the sources and methods for reconstructing social mobility in the rural communities of the Republic of Venice, focusing on the territory of Vicenza. Vicenza was consistently subject to neighbouring powers during the Middle Ages, fostering the development of rural communities that gradually gained significant autonomy from the provincial city. Venice recognized and promoted this autonomy after taking control of the Mainland in the early fifteenth century. Tax collection was largely entrusted to local communities, which had considerable freedom in managing their tax registers. Some of these registers, characterized by annual revisions, allow us to analyse social mobility with high detail and precision through methodologies developed within the SMITE project.

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LA MOBILITÀ SOCIALE NELLE SOCIETÀ PREINDUSTRIALI: TENDENZE, CAUSE ED EFFETTI (SECC. XIII-XVIII)
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