

GIRLPOWER

The European Marriage Pattern (EMP) and labour markets in the North Sea region in the late medieval and early modern period

Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden

DRAFT – PLEASE DO NOT CITE

*"How good to be a woman, how much better to be a man!
Maidens and wenches, remember the lesson you're about to hear
Don't hurtle yourself into marriage far too soon.
The saying goes: 'where is your spouse? Where's your honour?'"
But one who earns her board and clothes
Shouldn't scurry to suffer a man's rod...
Though wedlock I do not decry;
Unyoked is best! Happy the woman without a man"¹*

Poem by Anna Bijns (1493-1575) on the benefits of celibacy and late marriage

1/ The problem: Janne Heyndericx and the Hajnal-thesis

In 1505 Janne Heyndericx, living in the Zeeland village of Kouwenkerke, 31 years of age, told a committee of inquiry into the malpractices of the local magistrates² the following story: Eight years ago she promised to marry a young man, Adriaen Jacobsz., and he returned the promise. They slept together and continued to do so without ever officially marrying as was required by the law of the holy church, but it was postponed more convenient times. She still lived in with her mother and stepfather, who refused to maintain her, so that she was forced to find employment elsewhere and went to earn a wage. When she came to work in Kouwenkerke she lived together with another young man, from whom she begot a child. Four or five years ago Adriaen tried to be released from his promise to marry her, although they still saw each other regularly and slept together. She still wanted to marry him, because although they had not been married for the church, they were indeed married for God. Moreover, it was also his fault that she had come so far (= got a child from another man), because he had kept her waiting for so long.³

Although this is hardly acknowledged by its authors, the story of Janne is strikingly 'modern'. Seen in a global perspective, it was indeed very exceptional behaviour; such a 'marriage' occurring in other parts of the world would have been difficult to imagine. It is typical for the North Sea area where in the late Middle Ages a new marriage pattern of which all the features are present in the story of Janne Heyndericx, emerged. One of the elements that makes this story so "modern" is that the decision to marry was taken not by parents or other members of an older generation, but by the marriage partners Janne and Adriaen themselves, who promised each other to marry, and considered this equal to being married for God (in this they followed, as will be discussed below, the teachings of the church). Secondly, mother and stepfather only intervened in this story because they decided that this 'marriage for God' should result in the formation of a new household: they refuse to maintain Janne any longer, thus forcing her to leave the parental household. The third strikingly modern aspect is the fact that

¹ (Wilson 1987: 382)

² The malpractices concerning the levying of arbitrary fines from people living together without being officially married by the church; it is perhaps significant that an official inquiry into this was being conducted in 1505, and that people like Janne had officials record their live stories in this way – she obviously took the opportunity to complain...

³ Story taken from (Bange and Weiler 1987: 404-405)

Janne can actually do this, because she can find employment as a wage earner elsewhere – access to the labour market made this kind of behaviour of both parents and children possible.

This brief story tells us a lot about the European marriage pattern (EMP) as it arose in the late Middle Ages and became characteristic for western European society in the Early Modern Period. The existing literature on this topic has focused primarily on other demographic aspects that were typical for this marriage pattern: on the average age of marriage, the share of the population that never married, and on the effects on fertility and resulting population growth. In this, the literature has followed Hajnal's seminal paper from 1965 in which he stressed these 'distinctive features' of the EMP.⁴ Far less attention has been paid to the underlying structures or mechanisms that led to these outcomes, to the underlying causes of the EMP, which are arguably one of the big mysteries of demographic and social history of the early modern period. The classic 1965 paper by Hajnal does give us a clue about these underlying mechanisms. He mentioned, for example, that "...the conviction that marriage should be decided upon only after the future spouses have got to know each other well..." was to be regarded as "...a relevant factor which distinguishes modern Western populations from the majority of societies".⁵ Besides the importance of mutual consent, there are similar hints to the fact that, unlike in many other societies where marriage consisted of an arrangement between the heads of households, who exchanged a spouse against a wedding gift, marriage in NW-Europe meant the setting up of a new household by the spouses themselves, who therefore needed a conjugal fund. This 'neo-locality' meant that many were unable to marry because they could not afford this 'investment'.⁶ But until recently the literature has concentrated on the 'distinctive features' – on average age of marriage and on the percentage of women never marrying – and not so much on the underlying causes of this phenomenon. In this paper we will try to develop these leads, attempting to explain the structures behind the story of Janne Heyndericx and Adriaen Jacobsz.⁷

Central to this paper is the consideration that a household is a cooperative economic unit aimed at the fulfillment of the needs of its members and characterized by certain inequalities (power-imbalances) between generations and sexes. At its basis are implicit or explicit contracts between the members of the household, of which the marriage contract is the most fundamental; cooperation within the household is however also governed by the implicit contracts between different generations (between parents and children). The hypothesis at the core of this paper is that the European Marriage Pattern (EMP) is characterized by power balances between man and wife and between parents and children different from –more common- forms of marriage/household formation. To be more precise: the most striking feature of the EMP is that the traditional inequalities between the sexes and the generations are instigated by socio-economic, ideological and institutional factors. The EMP in its purest form seems to be a rather 'extreme' case in the spectrum that can be observed, as women have a relatively large say in marriage itself (because it is based on the consent of both spouses) and the position of children – in particular when they start to contribute to the income of the household – is relatively strong. In a nutshell, it is argued that the particular features of the EMP – late and non-universal marriage – are the result of its relatively 'democratic' character.

Next, we will argue that the EMP was an institutional adaptation of marriage behaviour (and of reproductive behaviour more in general) to a situation in which employment opportunities on the labour market were expanding strongly and were relatively remunerative – during the century or so after the Black Death (although the explanation for its genesis is more complex, as we will try to show). In brief, it was a reproductive strategy developed by wage earners – male and female – and it was embedded in a larger institutional framework in which market exchange (and therefore trust in the functioning of markets) was of fundamental importance. Not only did wage income become a very large part of household income, but these households also had access to capital markets and to markets for consumer goods (a large part of which they did not produce themselves, as their main income consisted of wages). Simultaneously they developed new strategies for survival in the long-

⁴ (Hajnal 1965: 101)

⁵ (Hajnal 1965: 126)

⁶ In his 1982 paper, these thoughts were specified much more in detail. See (Hajnal 1982: 113 and 115)

⁷ This point was already made by Richard Smith in 1979: "The search for the European marriage patterns as a 'statistical' artefact is intriguing, but it would be unfortunate if, in being so preoccupied with actual ages...we failed to detect the wider social structural features that sustained it. Without this, any means of understanding the precise determinants of this unique arrangement will be thwarted." (Smith 1979: 101-102)

term and for enhancing their success and that of their children in the new market environment; among these strategies were increased investment in formal schooling, in training as apprentices or as servants in others' households, and in social capital to the risks of old age or single parenthood. The result was a society in which 30 to perhaps as much as 60% of the population was (partially) dependent on wage labour (by men, women, and children), in which markets permeated all aspects of economic life, and in which small, conjugal households became increasingly interwoven with a social infrastructure (of poor relief institutions) which sustained their reproduction. This society emerged in the late Middle Ages in the North Sea Area – in England and the Low Countries in particular – and it was the long-term dynamism of this structure which helps to explain the long-term success of this region in the world economy of the early modern period. Without expanding too much on these long-term consequences of the EMP, we will also argue that notwithstanding the return to patriarchy from the 16th onwards, the female emancipation movement of the 19th and 20th century would have been impossible without the EMP.

The special characteristics of the EMP and its importance does not become clear without comparison with situations elsewhere in the world. The more general features of the EMP will be clarified on the basis of comparisons with marriage practices east of Hajnal's line Trieste-Sint-Petersburg, and more in particular with China. That what makes the situation of the North Sea area so specific and thus what gave this area the lead in economic development, can however only be clarified on the basis of a comparison with the South of Europe. It has already been indicated by Hajnal, Herlihy and Reher that within Europe there is considerable variety in marriage practices. In our comparisons we will draw attention to certain differences that help show the peculiarity of the EMP.

2/ The genesis of the EMP

In this article we argue that the combination of certain social-economic and ideological factors made the EMP possible:

- consensus versus parental authority
- inheritance systems
- access to the labour market

a) Consensus versus parental authority/Neolocality versus patrilocal households ⁸

The story of Janne Heyndericx illustrates that marriage in the late Middle Ages (amongst wage earners) was to a large extent based on consensus between the two spouses, a factor already mentioned by Hajnal as distinctive for Europe. The first references to the introduction of mutual consent as the basis of marriage date from the 9th century, when this principle was adopted by the Catholic Church. In 866 pope Nicolas I affirmed that the consent of the couple alone was essential for marriage, an approach that was further refined during the 12th century. Around 1140 Gratian stated that it was mutual consent and not the consummation of marriage that confirmed the bonds of marriage since "where there is to be union of bodies there ought to be union of spirits"⁹, thus doing away with St. Augustine 's claim that the act of copula carnalis (physical union) was sufficient to validate marriage.¹⁰ Gratian and followers frequently pointed towards evidence that unwilling marriages usually brought about bad results.¹¹ Gratian's work formed the basis for further theological discussion¹² and eventually led to the inclusion of the doctrine in the decretals of Gregory IX (1234).¹³

⁸ (Herlihy 1985: 81)

⁹ (Noonan 1973: 425)

¹⁰ (Gies and Gies 1989: 138)

¹¹ (Noonan 1973: 434)

¹² Gratian: two people are joined in marriage if they have agreed so in consensus + sexual consumption of the marriage; Peter Lombard (other 12th century legal theorist): no need for copula carnalis because Mary and Joseph were married on basis of consensus BUT did not consume marriage (marriage had been consummated by verbal consent alone). Lombard thus claimed that a marriage was both valid and sacramentally sealed at the moment a couple who were at age and without impediments freely promised one another in good faith to be man and wife. This became known as "present vows o marriage" (sponsalia per verba de praesenti) which is different from the marriage vows in the future (sponsalia per verba de futuro), or "engagement". (Ozment 1983: 26)

¹³ The parts on marriage in the Decretals of Gregory IX were based on the decrees of Pope Alexander III, who according to Brundage (Brundage 1990: 332-33) thus "consistently sought to free marriages from the control of parents, families, and feudal

Thus, boys and girls of legally marriageable age (fourteen for boys, twelve for girls) were hereby permitted to perform the sacrament of marriage themselves. Marriages were made by God (which was also the conviction of Janne); a priest only proclaimed his will for a couple after the fact. Eventually the doctrine would lead to the problem of secret marriages, marriages that occurred privately without witnesses and disconnected from any public institution.¹⁴

Although in practice the father's authority in deciding upon the marriage partner probably remained strong, Gratian's canons acknowledged rights of the individual not dependent on family, by recognizing an area of freedom where parents should not trespass. To cite Noonan: "...Gratian recognised the place of individualistic, unsocial decision-making in the choice of spouses".¹⁵ If a father beat his daughter severely to enforce his choice, the marriage was null. Equally so it was considered as coercion if the father threatened to disinherit his daughter, thus giving her an argument to have the marriage declared as a nullity. If parents coerced their daughter, this could be punished by refusal of the sacraments, as the practice was considered a sin.¹⁶ However, sanctions on coercion were not executed frequently.¹⁷ The teaching was more significant than the sanctions.¹⁸

Although studies have shown that the doctrine received resistance among the aristocracy, it did reach the common folk via conciliar and episcopal legislation and sermons. On the basis of the analysis of English pastoral manuals that were increasingly used after the 4th Lateran Council of 1215 to instruct local pastors on their guidance of the laity, Murray concluded that the doctrine of consensual marriage had spread widely and quickly to the parish level by the middle of the 15th century.¹⁹ The problems that resulted from the application of the new doctrine – such as bigamy and clandestine marriage- were increasingly dealt with in the manuals during the 13th and 14th centuries, the new marriage practices had been widely and successfully disseminated.²⁰

The fact that both the man's and wife's consent was necessary for marriage meant that it was a contract between 'equals' (since neither man nor wife could impose consensus upon the other partner). This means that – again, in principle – the bargaining position of women in such a marriage pattern is relatively strong: she can (try to) select the kind of husband that suits her. In the more romantic interpretations of the EMP, marriage was based on the love between the two partners, which must also have had a strong equalizing effect, assuming that love presupposes a certain equality between the partners. This equalizing effect was also visible in the way partners dealt with their property. Schmidt mentions that in 17th century Leiden, in more than three quarters of the testaments, partners indicated each other as the most important heirs, and thus not their children or other relatives, and in some cases they indicated in the testament that they did this because of "conjugal affection" or "love".²¹

overlords and to place the choice of marriage partners under the exclusive control of the parties themselves".

¹⁴ (Ozment 1983: 25-27)

¹⁵ (Noonan 1973: 425)

¹⁶ (Noonan 1973: 434); Noonan refers to an example whereby a father could be denied absolution on his deathbed if he disinherited a daughter if she refused to marry as he directed.

¹⁷ Compare to Protestantism 16th century -Luther on marriage by force: Luther claims that a marriage that has been forced upon a woman cannot be dissolved (<-> to Catholic Church): "What if a child has already been forced into marriage? Shall this be and remain a marriage? Answer: Yes, it is a marriage and shall remain one, for although she was forced into it, she still consented to this coercion by her action, accepted it, and followed it, so that her husband has publicly acquired conjugal rights over her, which no one can now take from him. When she feels that she is being coerced, she should do something about it in time, resist, and not accept it, call upon some good friends, and if that were of no avail she should appeal to the authorities or complain to the pastor or give public, verbal testimony that she did not want to do it, and thus cry out openly against the compulsion... However, if a case could be found where a child was closely guarded and could not gain access to these means and was betrothed without her cooperation through intermediaries who married her off by force, and she could afterward furnish witnesses that she had not given her consent, I would pronounce her free, even after the consummation....". (taken from Luther's work 1530) (Karant-Nunn and Wiesner 2003: 113-114)

¹⁸ (Noonan 1973: 434)

¹⁹ (Murray 1998: 140-144). For the Low Countries: (Bange and Weiler 1987). The dissemination of the doctrine of consensual marriage went hand-in-hand with the spread of the Church's ideas on the right to (re)marry for widows. In 1160, Bartholomew, Bishop of Exeter writes a penitential that confirms the Church's doctrine of a widow's right to marry or not. This type of consent was shortly thereafter extended to freedom to consent to the formation of all marriages (Murray 1998: 131). Some manuals even went as far as promoting clandestine marriage. Murray refers to the work of the 14th century English William of Pagula *Oculus sacerdotis* (Murray 1998: 138)

²⁰ See for Ghent (Nicholas 1985: 54)

²¹ (Schmidt 2001: 186)

As a result, one would expect inequality within marriage to be much smaller than in marriage systems in which the consent of the wife is not required. Of course the degree to which the girl/young women really had a say in this will have varied from time to time and from place to place.²² By contrast, in China for example, marriage was a contract not between two individuals, but between two families; Eastman cites Mencius stating that 'marriage is a bond between two surnames', a family matter, by the family, for the family.²³ In China –until today- the principle of lineage plays a dominant role in all parts of society. Chinese girls often met their husbands for the first time on their wedding day, even though they were groomed from their birth for marriage; the marriage partners were chosen by their families, with a matchmaker as to make the arrangements.²⁴

The fact that marriage was based on the consent of the two spouses meant of course that the power of the male head of the household was much more circumscribed than in other systems (such as the Chinese marriage pattern). David Herlihy is convinced that 'The father.... could neither force a son or daughter into an unwanted marriage, nor prevent him or her from marrying.... The Church's doctrine was a damaging blow to paternal authority within the medieval household, and by itself assured that the medieval family could never develop into a true patriarchy'.²⁵ In a still unpublished research document Theo Engelen has stated that the essence of the EMP was that European fathers (and mothers for that matter) 'lacked the means of controlling their adult children. They therefore let them find their own way in the world and hired other people's children to do the work that in China would have been done by their own children.'²⁶ In his view, differences in parental authority - strong in China, weak in Europe –explain the fact that in Europe children were allowed to choose their wedding partner and to set up their own household.

Critics of the idea that marriage based on consent was related to the preaching of the Catholic Church have maintained this cannot explain the rise of the EMP because it arose only in the north-western part of the continent, whereas, as Hartman states, 'in other parts of Christian Europe, ... families maintained sturdy patriarchal marriage strategies, often in open defiance of ecclesiastical dictates'.²⁷ This is an important point, although it should also be acknowledged that eventually the prevalence of the EMP, which became the dominant marriage pattern in Europe west of the line Trieste-Peterburg, more or less coincided with the medieval presence of the Catholic Church; it is highly unlikely that that was completely coincidental. But the point made by Hartman and others is that other factors must have been at work in order to explain why the EMP emerged first in northwestern Europe, most clearly in England and the Low Countries. In both regions we find already in the 15th century a marriage pattern dominated by the actual consensus between the partners, although average ages of marriage were still relatively low at the time. We will now turn to the other factors that have contributed to the formation of the EMP, and help to explain why its genesis occurred in the North Sea area: inheritance systems and access to the labour market.

Neo-locality – the fact that marriage means the setting up of a new household – was, as already explained by Theo Engelen, the direct result of the adults' lack of control over their offspring (after marriage). The story of Janne shows that some parents may have lost the appetite to do so as well under certain circumstances. To a large extent, the relatively high age of marriage of the EMP thus also follows from these considerations. Marriage under the EMP is the result of a search process that can only be undertaken by relatively mature young men and women (e.g. those that are considered mature enough to select their own partner), a search process that can take years before it results in finding the right partner. So one would not expect an average age of marriage to be much lower than 18-20 years –depending also on culturally (and perhaps also biologically – by the age of menarche) factors. This determined conceptions of the age at which one becomes sufficiently mature to start

²² See (Laiou-Thomadakis 1993). Two other characteristics of Chinese MP: concubinage for elite men and norms which discouraged widow remarriage. China: widows were not expected to remarry out of respect and honor of her belated husband. She cannot remarry without the consent of the husband's family. Divorce is not common in China, as partners are supposed – within the Confucianist tradition- to resolve disagreements among each other. Islam: woman must give consent for marriage (depending on the interpretation of the Qu'ran)

²³ (Eastman 1988: 24)

²⁴ (Maynes and Waltner 2001)

²⁵ (Herlihy 1985: 81)

²⁶ (Engelen 2005)

²⁷ (Hartman 2004: 98)

looking for a partner.²⁸ When times were tough and real wages low, the combination of a long search process to find the right one and the norm of neo-locality, which implied that marriage was an investment decision (and for many wage laborers perhaps the biggest investment decision they would take), meant that the average age of marriage increased to the high level first analyzed by Hajnal (eg. 25-30 years), which became characteristic for Europe in the Early Modern Period. However, before the decline of real wages in 16th century Europe, the same mechanisms might have resulted in much lower average ages of marriage – which is exactly what we find in 15th century Holland in this period (see below). So within the EMP a lot of variation is possible. In other words, one should not define the EMP as a system with average ages of marriage higher than (for example) 25 years, but focus on the underlying definition of the mechanisms, that it is a system that requires neo-locality, and that is based on the consensus between the marriage partners. In short: a system whereby not the family ties but the individual motivations play a dominant role.

By contrast, it is logical that systems of arranged marriages often lead to patterns characterized by low average ages, in particular for girls. Obviously, the beginning of the search process, undertaken by parents, family and/or matchmakers, is not constrained by the maturity of the future spouses. Moreover, it is probably safer to organize such a marriage when the partners are still relatively young and lack the human capital to disagree with their parents. Perhaps the most extreme case of a pre-arranged marriage was in Ancient Greece, where men were between 30 to 40 years could marry a girl less than half their age²⁹ – this coupled strong inequality between the sexes within marriage (in view of the sizeable age difference) to strong inequality between generations.

b) Inheritance systems

One of the factors that can contribute to understanding the emergence of the EMP in North Western Europe, and not in the South, is the difference in inheritance arrangements. European women –in general- already had an exceptional position in the inheritance arrangements in comparison to the rest of the world. Goody stresses that the distinguishing features of the Western inheritance system were women's rights to inherit, and the possibility of transferring landed property to and through women, as inheritance or as dowry. Within Europe, both the groom's and the bride's side of the marriage had property rights in their union.³⁰ But, internally there were a lot of differences, in particular concerning the timing of the access women had to their share of the inheritance. Marriage played a crucial role in this timing: the daughter's share of the inheritance was either transferred to her at the start of her marriage (in the form of a dowry) or at the end of her parents' marriage. The first was more typical for the South of Europe, the second for the North.

The border between the two regions was in France, where these differences have been studied carefully. In the South (of France), what is referred to as the *pays d'écrit* or the land of written law, marital property regimes were, for ordinary people as for elites, dotal in form. In the *pays d'écrit* regions, decisions about marital property relations and succession were made in rough accordance with principles of law derived from Roman law, and the rules were written down, commented upon, and authorized by legal scholars, judges, and magistrates. In this system, custom did not govern inheritance as it theoretically did in the North. Individuals had choices about how property was used and transferred, and those people considered as owners of family assets were given much more leeway than Northerners in these decisions. In theory, it was possible for fathers to endow children differently at marriage, for husbands to deny their widows. The southern system is often referred to as "separatist" because the property of either spouse brought into the marriage was considered distinct, and no conjugal fund was created by wedlock. However, Howell writes that the South was not uniform in this practice and considerably less devoted to the notion of separatism. At least until about 1500,

²⁸ There are indications, for example, that before the 16th century/in the 15th century this maturity threshold was lower than in the 17th/18th century (in Holland, 12 year was the age at which one was considered mature enough to decided about marriage during the 15th century, but this age increased to 18 years during the 16th century, see (Hoppenbrouwers 1985).

²⁹ Sallares: "The marriage structure of classical Athens, with marriage at a very late age for males and a very early age for females, was a power structure in which husbands were entitled to exercise authority over their wives by virtue of their greater age" (Sallares 1991: 149-150)

³⁰ Such regimes are called "diverging devolutionary" because in all of them property goes to both sons and daughters ("diverges") as it descends ("deolves") (Goody 1976).

marital property law in the South was like Northern communal systems in its hybridity and mobility.³¹ By 1500 the dotal system had however become hegemonic. A dotal system as could be found in the South of France and elsewhere in the South of Europe is considerably different from the bridegift that could be found in the North of Europe. Chojnacki claims that in the Roman dowry practice, the main purpose of the dowry was to help the groom bear the burden of matrimony (*sustinere onera matrimonii*). In its medieval Italian version, however, the Roman *dos* had received a special twist. Unlike original Roman practice, the medieval Italian dowry came to be regarded as the girl's share of the patrimony. From this principle flowed several important effects. One was that girls were excluded from a share in the patrimony (the *exclusio propter dotem*). The *fraterna*, or enduring joint inheritance, was for brothers alone; sisters, provided with dowries, had no further legal part to play in their paternal family's economic life.³² These *fraterna* or *frèresches* were a form of peasant inheritance established in parts of the North of Italy (Tuscany, Lombardy and Venice) and central France in order to avoid fragmentation of the property. This phenomenon led to coresidence of several family members and thus a de facto situation of extended families.³³ Laslett sees in the occurrence of these *frèresches* a distinctive feature of in particular the east and also the South of Europe. Whereas the proportion of *frèresches* among the households was described as absent in the West and low in central Europe, they could make up some 9% of all households in the east.³⁴

In the North (of France), in contrast, systems were "customary" or unwritten, and the status of heirs and their property rights were determined by birth, not by fiat. In much of this region of customary law, instead of the dotal systems characteristic of the South, we find systems that were "communal" and not "separatist" in spirit.³⁵ In these regimes, the property a bride brought into the marriage was not held apart as it was in the South, but was instead, contributed to a communal account that was under the full control of the husband but to which the widow had rights.³⁶ In the North, one did not have the same freedom of choice in terms of endowing at marriage or inheritance when the husband deceased. In the few cases where they did have some freedom of interpretation (like in Douai), they owed their freedoms to a peculiar interpretation of "community" rather than to general principles that vested absolute ownership rights in individuals.³⁷

The differences in inheritance arrangements can to a certain degree explain the differences in the EMP. Firstly, the timing of the inheritance: If women had a right on part of their parents' inheritance without having to marry, then there is no reason to hurry for marriage. The southern dowry system did give women a certainty about a certain share they would obtain after their marriage as the dowry was to return to the wife after her husband's death, but, the bride had no certainty about the size of her dowry, as this was dependent upon the goodwill of her parents. Less certainty might encourage women to marry earlier (compare to women in industrial revolution: why wait?). Thus in areas with partible inheritance, where women were certain about their share of the parent's cake women could wait. We even may suggest that they used this time in a useful way by collecting some funds to make themselves more attractive as a marriage partner. Wage labour thus replaced the dowry. In those areas where women were dependent on marriage to receive part of the dowry, they could thus speed up the process by marrying. One could argue that dowry systems were also more paternal; it is here however that again the mutual consent argument comes into defense: the presence of the Catholic church assured that also in the South of Europe, women had a right to decide upon their marriage partner.

Secondly, a dowry system may not only have encouraged girls to marry, it most likely also encourages the parents to get their daughters married. Botticini comes to the conclusion for 15th century Tuscany, that the larger the contribution of the bride to the marital household (in terms of household work, the number of children she can still give birth to), the smaller the dowry her parents will have to pay to convince the groom to accept their daughter. A woman waiting too long before marrying would

³¹ (Howell 1998: 212-213). See also Howell for examples of this flexibility.

³² (Chojnacki 1975: 575)

³³ (Gottlieb 1993: 215)

³⁴ (Wall 1983: 527 and 533)

³⁵ The principles of marital property law in the South have long been labelled "separatist" because the property either spouse brought to the marriage was considered distinct, and no conjugal fund was created by wedlock (Howell 1998: 212).

³⁶ Taken from (Howell 1998: 199)

³⁷ (Howell 1998: 212)

become too expensive to “sell” in the marriage market: her parents would have to pay a larger dowry to compensate the groom’s household for the smaller net positive contribution the bride would provide in the marital household.³⁸ The younger the bride, the larger her net positive contribution to the marital household and, therefore, the smaller the dowry her parents had to pay. On the basis of the Catasto of 1427 it also became clear that the EMP was absent in Tuscan society: in late medieval and early Renaissance Tuscany, women married in their late teens while men married much later. Celibacy was virtually unknown among the Tuscan women.³⁹

Thirdly, the Southern system might also have kept women from contributing to the labor market (after marriage) because it remained uncertain if they would ever benefit from their efforts, after the death of their husbands. But even if they had not had such overtly opportunistic ideas before moving into marriage, their early motherhood would probably have prevented them from being as active as NW-European women anyway. In the North women contributed to their future share of the inheritance, realising that they would receive their share of the cake in the end. Such a set of rules also facilitated the rule that widows took over the business of their deceased husbands. The Southern system gave fewer opportunities to widows to continue the business of their husbands because they (necessarily) did not get their share of the inheritance, nor had they mostly been that actively involved as their northern colleagues.⁴⁰

These possible links between the inheritance system and the EMP, are for the most part tentative. It remains unclear kind of inheritance arrangements would have contributed to women’s decision to early marriage and their participation in the labour market. In some cases it is argued that the lineal marital property regime was made to control women,⁴¹ others claim that dotal regimes might have been better for women than community property regimes because they protected wives from the misadventures or ill will of their husbands and give them, as wives, property of their own.⁴²

c) Access to the labour market

The preaching of the Church and inheritance patterns may have made it easier for young men and women to defy parental authority, decide themselves whom to marry, and set up an independent household. Yet, we argue that a fundamental factor was the rise of labour markets in Europe at the time, which supplied men and women such as Janne Heynderix with the necessary means to become independent from their parents. Already before 1348 in many parts of Western Europe a well developed labour market had arisen, in which a not insignificant share of the population earned a living. But this trend accelerated after 1348, when the sudden fall in population levels after the Black Death led to a very strong demand for labour – of both men and women – resulting in a strong increase in real earnings, in particular for women. This triggered the rise of the EMP in the century or so after 1348.

Initially, the EMP was the marriage pattern of the poor, the wage earners who did not own or rent a farm or any other substantial property. This is brought out clearly by Barbara Hanawalt in her analysis of marriage patterns among English peasants, who pointed out that marriage among the poor was characterized by the (more or less) free choice by the partners themselves: “Marriage for love has traditionally been assumed to be the dubious privilege of those without property. The lord would not bother to impose a merchet, parents would have no property to bestow and thus have no control, and the Church would not dissolve a marriage even if all the young couple did was to agree to marry while lying together in a haystack. When a young woman, through her initiative and wages, managed to accumulate a bit of chattels and land and paid her won merchet, she could choose her own marriage partner. But the freedom in choice of marriage partner may have been a larger phenomenon, going far beyond those without property”.⁴³ The focus on the choices made by young women that is evident from the quote by Hanawalt, is very interesting. A similar focus is present in the important study by Goldberg,

³⁸ (Botticini 1999: 110)

³⁹ For analysis of catasto, also see (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985)

⁴⁰ See also paper by Saito in (Engelen 2005)

⁴¹ See examples given by (Howell 1998: 223)

⁴² (Howell 1998: 224)

⁴³ (Hanawalt 1986a: 202)

who compared the reactions of two societies (England and Tuscany) to the consequences of the Plague of 1348. Goldberg links women's freedom to make marital choices to their economic independence. This would explain the spatial differences in the degree of autonomy at marriage. In the century after the Black Death young men and women working as servants in the city of York were able to make marriage choices much more autonomously than were their country counterparts in rural Yorkshire.⁴⁴ This spatial difference became less significant in the second half of the 15th century, probably, as Goldberg suggests, due to the contraction of women's employment opportunities after 1450, which led to less matrimonial freedom.⁴⁵ Goldberg also compared the reactions of two more different societies to the consequences of the Plague of 1348. 'In England, the labor shortage produced by the huge increase of mortality from the plague prompted an influx of unmarried women into the towns, a rise in marriage age, and an increase in the proportion of women never marrying. In Italy, however, the employment of single women did not increase much in the post-plague era, nor did women's marriage rate increase.... New employment slots in Italian cities were filled by men from the countryside, producing high urban male sex ratios by contrast with low ratios in northwestern European cities, where women often outnumbered men'.⁴⁶ Lawrence Poos, in a detailed case study of Essex after the Black Death, also documents that perhaps more than half of the rural population were wage earners with little or no land, and suggests that almost all men and women during part of their life-cycle (in particular during their teens) had the experience of being a wage laborers.⁴⁷ Against this background Hartman makes the point that 'within the broader perspective of preindustrial economies, wage-labour markets of sizeable proportions tend to be associated with mobile populations, most of whose children "are expected to leave home, accumulate their own wealth, choose their marriage partners, and locate and occupy their own economic niche"; again, the links between wage labour and the marriage pattern are clear from this research'.⁴⁸

If this analysis is correct, the labour market for women played a key role in the genesis of the EMP; it was access to employment, which increased suddenly after the Black Death, which may have set a process in motion resulting in the features characteristic of the EMP. The information on wages for women in medieval Europe is quite scarce, but a few data are available which give an impression of what might have happened after 1348. In Zaragoza – one of the few places for which wage data for women have been published – there is a clear improvement of women's wages after 1348: before the Black Death they earn about 50% of the wages of unskilled labourers, and only about 20% of the wages of craftsmen; after 1348 the former ratio increases to 79% in 1368,⁴⁹ the latter to 33% in 1356 and 42% in 1368. Real wages of women in terms of wheat also increase sharply from two to three liters before 1348 to 6.5 in 1355, and continue to fluctuate around four liters in the decades thereafter. Similar evidence is available for England. Thorold Rogers estimated that 'Before the Plague, labour which is specially designated as women's work is paid ordinarily at the rate of a penny a day',⁵⁰ which was about half of the daily wage of an unskilled labourer; the helpers of thatchers, for example, often were women, who earned a wage of about one third of that of the thatcher himself (1 versus 3 pence). This changed after 1348: wages of thatchers' helpers went up to 2 pence in the 1360s and almost 3 pence at the end of the 14th century whereas the wages of thatchers themselves increased by only a third to about 4 pence.⁵¹ Government regulation was also quite friendly for women: the Statutes of Labourers of 1444 set the wages of female labourers at four and a half pennies, which was in fact higher than that of unskilled labourers ('every other labourer') according to the same regulation (which was set at three and a half pence). A number of authors (Beveridge, Hilton) have noted this strong increase in nominal and real wages of women after 1348, also pointing out that almost always women were paid the same as men for the same kind of work – another remarkable feature of the labour market in the North Sea region. Hilton noted also that 'around 1400, countrywomen were doing the same manual jobs as men, such as haymaking, weeding, mowing, carrying corn, driving plough oxen, and breaking stones for road-mending'.⁵² In short: the Black Death caused a strong improvement in

⁴⁴ (Goldberg 1992: 236, 243-255, 261-63, 273-275)

⁴⁵ (Goldberg 1992: 261-623)

⁴⁶ (Hartman 2004: 77, citation)

⁴⁷ (Hartman 2004: 73)

⁴⁸ (Hartman 2004: 73)

⁴⁹ But this ratio shows large fluctuations after 1368: 63% in 1387, 45% in 1392 and 72% in 1409 for example.

⁵⁰ (Rogers 1866-1982: vol 1 281)

⁵¹ (Rogers 1866-1982: vol 1 321) and (Rogers 1866-1982: vol 2, 274-334); See also (Dyer 1989: 215)

⁵² (Hilton 1975: 102-3); (Lord Beveridge 1955-1956: 18-35)

the labour market situation of women, in terms of the number of jobs they had access to and in terms of relative remuneration. The degree to which European women took advantage of this situation was however quite different from region to region.

The case studies by Poos and Goldberg strongly suggest that the after 1348 booming labour market and high real earnings made it possible for women in England and the Low Countries to escape parental authority by becoming independent wage earners. The link between the labour market and the EMP has been stressed already in the literature. Seccombe connected the appearance of the EMP with the transition from feudalism to capitalism,⁵³ and with the parallel rise of the labour market. In a paper on European household patterns Anderson and Sanderson (1991) have also stressed the nexus between household structures (simple vs. complex),⁵⁴ the organization of the labour market and the (rural) economy at large: in the Wallersteinian core of Europe, where wage labour dominated, the simple family household dominated, whereas in the periphery, where various forms of bounded labour occurred, the so-called joint-household system prevailed.⁵⁵

The expansion of the labour market – in particular for women - fundamentally changed the power balance between generations. In China, and elsewhere, households centered around the collaborative exploitation of a farm, and the material basis for the authority of the father was control over productive resources. If, as happened in North Western Europe during the late Middle Ages, the household does not own productive resources on a substantial scale, the economic basis for parental authority becomes weak. If, at the same time, young adults gain access to the labour market – in particular when strong differentiations of forms of wage labour occurs, and options arise to be living in another household as a servant or maid living, to be a casual day labourer in agriculture, to migrate to cities for the summer season or for a longer period etc. etc - when, in short, young people have many different options to escape the authority of the parents, the power balance between generations will be fundamentally affected. Young adolescents, say beyond the age of 16 or 18 years, are moreover able to earn a considerable surplus over what they need for subsistence: they can work hard, have probably finished their training, but their level of consumption is still relatively low and they do not have the fixed costs that come with the setting up of their own households. In short, it is in the interest of parents to bind them to the household – as they will be net contributors to income; at the same time, they are very attractive for employers, and will often find it relatively easy to find a job (once labour markets are relatively well developed). So, in our view the rise of the EMP and the changing power balance between generations may to a large extent have been caused by the growth of labour markets and proletarianization of the working population in town and countryside in late medieval Europe, which tended to undermine the position of parents and strengthen that of maturing children. This dramatic change was made possible by the doctrines of the Church – they gave the necessary ideological backing of the emancipation of the young (women) – but the growth of the labour market created the material basis for it.

One can – and should – perhaps go one step further. Young women and men withdrew from parental power and established their own households, a strategy that was made possible, in fact stimulated by the high real earnings in the century and a half after the Black Death. In the process, they developed strategies which were completely oriented towards the labour market: wage labour became a key stage in each life-cycle, starting with the work as a servant (girls) or apprentice (boys) during their teens, during which they also acquired the skills and the savings to set up their own household. The process of leaving the parental household at the age of 12 or 14 created a very mobile and flexible labour force that migrated to cities when job opportunities were growing there, or moved to other regions and/or jobs when prospects seemed good. And even after marriage and the setting up of a new household, wage labour remained a very important if not the most important source of income. So not only did the booming labour market induce men and women to change their marriage pattern, but the changed marriage pattern in its turn resulted in an increased dependence on wage labour. This cumulative process – this co-evolution of marriage pattern and labour market – explains, in our view, the very high levels of proletarianization that can be found in the North Sea region in the 15th and 16th centuries. A number of studies have now documented the remarkable growth of wage labour in late

⁵³ (Seccombe 1992)

⁵⁴ (Anderson and Sanderson 1991)

⁵⁵ For a comparison of simple and joint household See (Cornell 1987: 150-152)

medieval Western Europe. Estimates of the share of the population dependent on wage income range from more one quarter to a third (by for example Chris Dyer) for late medieval England to as high as 60 percent for parts of the Low Countries (by Bas van Bavel). Or as Poos argues in the passage already quoted: being a wage labourer in the North Sea region was a normal part of the life cycle of a very large part of the population. These extremely high levels of proletarianization can be compared with an estimate for Ming China, where perhaps 1 to 2 percent of the population was a wage earner.⁵⁶

As soon as the labour conditions in terms of supply and demand led to a higher participation of women, the absence of youngsters from their homes also contributed to their independent decision making in terms of marriage. The father's will was confined to the household sphere. Many youngsters left that household in order to become servants before getting married, thus they also got away from their fathers' authority. In the actual decision upon marriage they had the marriage law to support them, even if the father preferred another marriage partner.

Through their participation in the labour market, women could also create a substantial amount of social capital, for themselves and for their household members, which is again another asset in comparison to women who are part of a patrilocal system. Although it is rather difficult to measure to what this was, we can assume that the joint household system whereby patrilocal residence was the norm had considerable disadvantages in terms of social capital for the women who moved in with their family-in-law, which was often in another village.⁵⁷ Those who could stay in the same family and village had considerable advantages because of their longer relationship with members of the family, because they were more familiar with the local community, and so on. A girl that left her house to get married left behind all that was familiar.⁵⁸ To a certain degree this was also the case for European girls who emigrated in order to work as a living-in maid or servant. However, because of their participation to the labour market they did manage to create new social capital, for themselves, and their future spouses.

Conclusion on basis of discussion in this paper on main characteristics of household structure and labour organization: Europe is since 1348 characterized by a very flexible work force (men and women can be used within the work force, they are willing to work from early in their teens and willing to migrate)

and a very flexible household structure (neolocality, freedom of partner choice; this of course encourages the flexibility in term of the work force). Both types of flexibility make Europe different from Asia, where the household was also the work group. Household and labour force functioned within relatively rigid structures. Women's work in regions where the joint household system was dominant, has often been underreported because the value of their work was pooled with that of the family. Although Chinese women did contribute to their household income, they were being limited in their possibilities by the restricted access to labour markets.⁵⁹

3/ Hajnal' s 'distinctive features' of the EMP

Now that we have analysed the causes behind the emergence of the EMP in more detail, and offered an interpretation that focuses on 1/ consensus of the spouses 2/ low parental authority, and 3/ neolocality as the key features of the marriage pattern, we can have a fresh look at its 'distinctive features', at high average age of marriage and high (female) celibacy, in order to see how they relate to these causes.

a) "Don't hurtle yourself into marriage far too soon": high average age at marriage (for women)

We have already explained that, because it is based on consensus, marriage under the EMP is the result of a search process that can only be undertaken by young men and women who are mature

⁵⁶ (Dyer 1989: 214); (Van Bavel 2005)

⁵⁷ (Cornell 1987: 146)

⁵⁸ (Maynes and Waltner 2001)

⁵⁹ (Gates 2001: 130).

enough to select their own partner; hence an average age of marriage of 18-20 years seems to be the lower limit (and that by contrast, systems of arranged marriages are characterized by much lower average ages, especially for girls). But within the EMP a lot of variation is possible, depending on the level of real wages and the general state of the economy. The few data that we have for late Medieval Holland and Zeeland, for example, point to a relatively low age of marriage. In the sources of 1505 from which we cited the story of Janne we find a number of married men 20 years of age, or a man of 22 years with a wife and four children, or another man, Adriaen Jansz., citizen of Middelburg, 21 years old, who married his wife Cornelie Adraen Vierloesdochter van Vijkenkercke three years before 'clandestine and in order to get absolution' (that is probably against the will of her parents, who seem to be of noble descent).⁶⁰ On the basis of this evidence it seems that in 1505 in Zeeland the age of marriage - even of men - was about or perhaps even somewhat lower than 20 years. For 1540/41 another rather fragmentary source makes it possible to estimate the average age of marriage of a group of men and women in the countryside around Leiden. It turns out that women probably married at the age of 20-21 (n=10), whereas men were one or two years older (21-22) (n=29); still a large share of men and women married before they reached the age of 20.⁶¹ These estimates are comparable to those 15th century England, which show an average of about 21 years (for women) (although a few studies suggest perhaps somewhat higher averages).⁶² In both countries the average age of marriage increased considerably during the 16th century,⁶³ to reach the levels that were thought to be characteristic for the EMP by Hajnal during the second half of the 16th century. In the 1580s and 1590s the mean age at first marriage of women in Amsterdam fluctuates (according to yet unpublished research by Hubert Nusteling) between 23.5 and 25 years, and it remains at this level until the 1660s, when it starts to rise even further. The mean age at marriage of men was about 1 to 1.5 year higher on average. Of the 8052 men who married in Amsterdam between 1578-1601, only 118 (1.5%) were younger than 20, and nobody was younger than 18 years, whereas almost half (47.5%) was older than 25 years.⁶⁴ Similarly, in the first decades of the 17th century the average age of (first) marriage in England had increased to more than 25 for women and about 27.5 for men.⁶⁵ So the very high marriage ages that we find in early modern Europe were to some extent the result of the deterioration of standards of living during the 16th century (about which more below), in accordance with the rules of a system based on consensus and neo-locality.

Much of the literature on the EMP has concentrated on its long-term effects on population growth. In a nutshell, the first generation of studies argued in the footsteps of Hajnal that the EMP used Malthusian preventive checks – basically the postponement of marriage until age 25-30, and the fact that a relatively large part of the (female) population remained unmarried – to stabilize population growth. When times were bad, marriages were postponed, and population growth slowed down. This was contrasted (following Malthus) with the Asian or Chinese patterns of marriage that were supposed to result in unrestricted population growth because these preventive checks were missing. The new interpretation of Chinese population development however, as argued by James Lee, Wang Feng and Cameron Campbell,⁶⁶ has shown that, within marriage, levels of fertility were much lower than in Europe, which is partially the result of the practicing of infanticide (of, in particular, female babies) and partially the effect of a lower level of fertility within marriage per se.⁶⁷ Again, it may perhaps be argued that these contrasting levels of marital fertility are to some extent the result of the underlying structures sketched already. When marriage is based on consensus – on mutual love – one expects a high 'propensity to have sex', even to have sex before the actual marriage ceremony has taken place (increasing the level of marital fertility) since once the decision to marry has been taken – once consensus has been reached - one is married 'before God'. The EMP therefore produces high levels of fertility immediately after marriage, and during marriage. Arranged marriages may have a lower 'propensity to have sex', or, as argued by Kok, Yang and Hsieh in a comparative study of fertility in

⁶⁰ On the other hand, the same sources reveal two men, 31 and 30 years old, who are still single and living with their mother (and in the first case, with three unmarried sisters).

⁶¹ See (Zanden 1993: 28).

⁶² (Hartman 2004: 39-40, 49). See also (Hanawalt 1993: 205), who finds an average age of marriage of 19 for women in London during the (late) Middle Ages; see also (Smith 1979) for a discussion of some of the evidence.

⁶³ (Hartman 2004: 39)

⁶⁴ (Van Nierop 1934)

⁶⁵ (Wrigley 1997: 134)

⁶⁶ (Lee and Feng 1999)

⁶⁷ (Lee and Feng 1999: 8)

19th and early 20th century Taiwan and the Netherlands, 'in arranged marriages, a large age difference between husband and wife may have obstructed the process of familiarization'.⁶⁸ This seems especially true for 'minor marriages', which occur in (parts of) China, characterized by the fact that the young girl was taken into the household of the boy at a very early age, that they grew up together as brother and sister, and then were declared man and wife at a certain age. As Kok, Yang and Hsieh show convincingly, these marriages are characterized by a low level of fertility, possibly because the spouses find it difficult to develop new, sexual modes of behaviour (the literature suggests that at times they had to be forced to have sexual intercourse).⁶⁹ Living under the parental authority, may have restricted sexual development as well.⁷⁰ More practical reasons that have to do with the economic position of the women within the household offer a further explanation of the lower-than-expected fertility. As women's work was mostly domestic, mothers were able to breastfeed their children longer than in Europe, hereby not only extending the period between births but also enhancing the survival chances of their children.

The European behavioural patterns were based on a large degree of mutual trust: teenagers from age 10 or 12 (and sometimes even younger) were trusted to the households of other individuals, the search process for a future spouse was trusted to young adolescents, and women (and men) could actively engage in wage labour (and in the social interaction that accompanied it), often in places distant from their homes, without damaging their reputation. Perhaps the best example of these high levels of mutual trust are the practices of courting and of pre-marital sex that emerged. The EMP as it developed after 1500 – with its high age of marriage – did not mean that couples that had found each other at the marriage market but still postponed setting up a household, had to abstain from all sexual activity. Whereas in patriarchic societies the spheres of young, unmarried men and women are strictly separated – in order to protect the virginity of the girl – in western Europe practices of courting and pre-marital sex developed which however did not lead to high levels of illegitimacy. Hartman summarizes the literature on this as follows: 'couples hardly denied themselves all sexual activity. The important thing was to avoid having babies, and evidence on courting practices throughout northwestern Europe reveals that couples, especially those already betrothed, often engaged in socially sanctioned sessions of petting and fondling'.⁷¹ Jan Kok, in a similar analysis of these practices in the Netherlands, also pointed out that it was based on a remarkable degree of trust in the young ones, who were allowed to enjoy these 'games' – a degree of trust that in most cases was justified, as levels of illegitimacy were lower than elsewhere.⁷²

b) "Unyoked is best": high celibacy rates among women

The second 'distinctive feature' of the EMP is the relatively large part of the (female) population that remains unmarried. Again, to a large extent this follows from the fact that the search process for a suitable partner starts at a relatively high age (say at 18), and that it only ends when consensus with another partner is reached (in fact, in the more romantic version: when they fall in love with each other).⁷³ Hajnal remarked already that this individualized search process is a serious limitation of the EMP: 'the conviction that marriage should be decided upon only after the future spouses have got to know each other wellmay render the finding of a marriage partner very difficult since people often have opportunities to become acquainted only with a few young persons of the opposite sex. If, by contrast, it is possible to arrange a marriage between people who have never met, the circle of potential spouses is greatly widened'.⁷⁴ It is therefore only natural that for part of the population the search process does not result in the finding of a suitable partner (during the period at which men and women are supposed to be active on the marriage market), resulting in the fact that part of the population never marries at all. In systems of arranged marriages this is very unlikely;⁷⁵ there,

⁶⁸ (Kok 1990: 18)

⁶⁹ This is not to suggest, of course, that other factors suggested in the literature to explain the low marital fertility in China, did not play a role, such as malnutrition (Wolf) and/or the conscious planning of children (Lee and Feng).

⁷⁰ Maynes referring to (Lee and Feng 1999: 90-92)

⁷¹ (Hartman 2004:62)

⁷² (Kok 1990)

⁷³ Besides the high rate of spinsters among women, there was also the importance of convents that influenced the rate of celibacy among women.

⁷⁴ (Hajnal 1965: 126)

⁷⁵ Only 1 or 2 % of women in traditional China remained unmarried at age 30. In comparison: this was 15 to 25% in Western Europe. (Maynes and Waltner 2001).

universal marriage (of girls, as they are often characterized by a shortage of women) is simply the result of the fact that the costs of arranging a marriage are limited and the potential benefits large, and that village and family networks can be mobilized to find a suitable partner.

In short, we consider the two 'distinctive features' of Hajnal's EMP to be the result of the patterns analysed, and not of the causal underlying mechanisms one has to focus on.⁷⁶ An additional feature that can be mentioned is that the differences in age between men and women are relatively small in the 'classic' EMP - again the result of the fact that it is the result of consensus between (near) 'equals' - whereas the age differences in southern Europe were in general much larger.⁷⁷ In fact, as the poem by Anna Bijns implies, one can argue that the relative bargaining position of women before (and probably also after) marriage was positively affected by a high age of marriage and by a small age difference between men and women.

4/ Implications of the EMP for long-term economic development

a/ Labour market participation and human capital formation

The EMP as it arose in the late Middle Ages was characterized by a fundamental adaptation of household structures and marriage patterns to market opportunities - in particular the opportunities of the labour market, but also, as wage labourers are obviously unable to produce their own subsistence, to the markets for goods and services. In that sense it was probably unique: we do not know of comparable - earlier - examples in history in which households became on such a vast scale dependent on the market. That wage labourers were prepared to develop and carry out such a strategy is significant: it shows that they had sufficient trust in markets to become completely dependent on their functioning, not only for their income, but also for their consumption. This can be seen as an index of the efficiency of the market economy in late medieval period in this region: it appears that it generated the necessary trust to make such a transformation possible.

Part of the life cycle that came into existence in the later Middle Ages, and which would not change fundamentally before the 19th (and perhaps even the 20th) century was an extended period of 'on-the-job' training and schooling. The EMP was in this way interwoven with the system of apprenticeship that had emerged in the guilds (and sometimes also outside guilds) in Medieval Europe, and with patterns of 'circulating' servants and maids and of circulating journeyman. This all greatly increasing the part of the life cycle during which one is undergoing training and schooling.

One of the links with broader socio-economic changes is via the supply and the demand for domestic services. Gottlieb for example mentions that the distinctive western European servant phenomenon is not found in parts of the world where early marriages are common. When it became possible for people to earn money without having to go through a stage as servants, they tended to marry a bit younger.⁷⁸ Reher confirms this: on the basis of Hajnal's 1965 article (in particular tables 2 and 3) it becomes clear that southern Europe did not fully fit the European marriage pattern of late and low levels of nuptiality although it was also fairly removed from patterns of Eastern Europe. In Mediterranean Europe where there were far less servants than in central or northern Europe, women married earlier too.⁷⁹ However they did not marry that much earlier. This led to the phenomenon that is still so typical for Mediterranean countries: children ended up leaving home far later in Spain or Italy than they did in the North Sea area.⁸⁰ In most of the Mediterranean, leaving the parent's house happened at marriage and not before that.⁸¹ And among those married, many coupled their household to that of their parents, thus creating multi-generational households.⁸² There are also indications of a more psychological nature that indicate that the availability of earning money via wage labour might

⁷⁶ This also distinguishes our approach from that worked out by Hartman 2004.

⁷⁷ (Laslett 1977)

⁷⁸ (Gottlieb 1993: 60). He does however not give any references where he got these conclusions

⁷⁹ (Reher 1998: 207).

⁸⁰ (Reher 1998: 207)

⁸¹ This is still the case today. See (Reher 1998: 208); there is possibly also a link with the dowry system which was so prominent in southern Europe.

⁸² Laslett claims that the proportion of multigenerational households was high in the South of Europe and very high in the east contrary to the North and West where this proportion was very low. (Wall 1983: 526)

have belated marriage, in particular for women: in recent research, MacDonald, an American psychologist, found proof that although from an evolutionary perspective humans have been selected to respond to perceptions of environmental adversity by delaying or lowering reproduction and to respond to perceptions of environmental optimism and prosperity in the opposite manner, the fertility behaviour of people is also driven by motivations to increase or maintain one's social status. As this may conflict with the desire to have large numbers of children. These motivations may influence fertility decisions. MacDonald's explanation confirms our explanation of women's choices in the high Middle Ages in NW-Europe: women could receive higher wages -in particular after the Black Death- and were also welcomed on the labour market. This meant that they could save for "a better living". Their desire for children was thus postponed due to a conflict with their desire to achieve a higher social status.⁸³

In the following paragraphs, we would like to explore the connection with the level of human capital formation more deeply. During the same period in which the EMP becomes dominant in the North Sea region, investment in human capital seems to be increasing rapidly: levels of literacy go up strongly, both in the Low Countries and in England. The rise of literacy in the Low Countries in the two centuries after the Black Death is relatively well documented; the spread of new religious movements (Modern Devotion during the 15th century and the Reformation after 1517) is clearly linked to this trend.⁸⁴ In the 16th century probably a majority of the male population of Holland could read and write, and these skills were available in towns and at the countryside (as the famous Italian traveler Guicciardini from the 1560s testified). In 1585 about 55% of the bridegrooms and 32% of the brides could sign their name in the marriage registers of Amsterdam, the differences between immigrants and native Amsterdammers being insignificant.⁸⁵ In England, a similar growth of schooling occurred between 1340 and 1548, as has been well documented by Hoepfner Moran for York.⁸⁶ In London levels of literacy may already in the 1470s been as high as those in Amsterdam, although this estimate is less certain.⁸⁷ In the same region bordering the North Sea, the premium for skilled labour declined rapidly after 1348 and stayed at an extremely low level during the 16th-19th centuries, which points to high levels of investment in this form of human capital as well.⁸⁸ Both types of human capital formation were also closely linked: guilds in the Low Countries and in England required their apprentices to be literate, or included training in reading and calculating abilities in their apprenticeships.⁸⁹ In Amsterdam, the poor relief also saw to it that orphans attended schools in order to be allowed access to apprenticeship.⁹⁰

How to explain this strong increase in human capital formation in the two centuries after the Black Death? The link between the EMP and human capital formation is clearly a paradoxical one. It can be argued that the EMP is bad for investment in human capital because the extra income that is generated as a result of such an investment does not become available to the household itself – in particular to the parents who have made the investment – but to the household that is set up by the new generation after marriage. In short, neo-locality might be bad for investment in human capital, whereas patri-locality, when the boy stays within the household of his parents and they therefore profit directly from the extra income he generates, may create better incentives. What is also striking is that gender differences are rather small: the parents in Western Europe invest in both their boys' and their girls' education and training. Although men continue to have a lead in for example literacy over women, this lead is relatively small – again, compared with what we know from other parts of the world, such as China and India.⁹¹ In short, as we have shown elsewhere, one of the distinguishing features of the North Sea region is the high level of human capital formation in this period, which in a way prepares the region for the rapid growth of its economy in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

⁸³ MacDonald, Kevin, "An evolutionary perspective on Human Fertility", Working paper; see <http://www.csulb.edu/kmacd/paper-fertility.html>

⁸⁴ See also (Derville 1984)

⁸⁵ (van Zanden 2004); (Kuijpers 1997: 490-523).

⁸⁶ (Moran 1985)

⁸⁷ (Moran 1985: 20), citing an estimate by Sylvia Thrupp; also (Hanawalt 1993: 82).

⁸⁸ (van Zanden 2004)

⁸⁹ (Hanawalt 1993: 82)

⁹⁰ Kuijpers 1997

⁹¹ Van Zanden 2004

So why did western European parents invest in their children? One of the explanations for this is that they may have had more means to do so. In a way, the Chinese and Indian household structures were focused on providing an income for parents during old age, on performing the rites and ceremonies necessary for the well-being of the deceased, and on the continuation of the lineage so that these rites would be performed forever. Parental authority was aimed at guaranteeing that these income transfers occurred; during the best years of their lives, children took care of their parents and devoted much of their time and energy to their well-being. The fundamental change that occurred with the rise of the EMP is that children stopped taking care of their parents in this way. This created a problem: who was going to take care of the elderly under the new system? And it created opportunities: it freed resources that apparently were spent on the schooling and training of children. The increased investment in human capital should also be seen in the light of the almost complete commercialization of the environment of the household that occurred simultaneously. The measure of success in this new environment was no longer to succeed the father in the management of the family farm (and the continuation of the lineage), but became linked to success in the market economy, through maximizing the income that could be earned by wage labour. In such an environment investing in the education of children became critical. Moreover, an increasingly large part of the contracts that regulated the new market economy were written down and had to be signed by the parties involved; for that reason, guilds required their apprentices to be literate.

b) Institutions and trust

The small, nuclear families that resulted from the EMP, were more vulnerable than large, extended families for the loss of individual members – in particular the father or the mother – especially when they were largely dependent on wage labour and did not own much resources. The alternative, strong family ties – the best ‘traditional’ support network –, was not a real option however. The EMP was quite individualistic: youngsters left home at an early age, did not take care of their parents, often remained celibate, and set up their own household (often outside the place of residence of the parents), all these suggestions that the European Marriage Pattern was one with rather loose family ties. The EMP therefore necessitated the establishment of alternative social support networks – based on solidarity within the community, the city, perhaps even the state, and on the forging of networks of mutual help which were not primarily rooted in bonds of blood.

The elderly were the obvious victims of the decline of parental authority and the trend towards neo-locality. Of course, when their children prospered, parents would most likely profit from their prosperity as well, as family ties between parents and children continued to be important. But the transactions which were in a way ‘enforced’ by parental authority under patriarchic systems, were in the western European system more or less voluntary transfers for money and goods– dependent also on the proximity of parents and on their willingness to contribute to their income. This also might have given parents an incentive to invest emotionally in the relationship with their children (although this may be considered too opportunistic a thought). More importantly, it gave them clear incentives to start saving for their own old age during their life cycle. Here the developing capital market began to play a role: saving for the future became increasingly important in the new system (because simply having children did guarantee anymore than one was taken care of during old age). During their teens and early twenties men and women were supposed to save substantial sums for setting up their own household at marriage, and during marriage they had to save certain amounts to be assured of an income during their old age. So to some extent transfers between generations that in patriarchic systems regulated the problem of old age and took care of the setting up of new households, were replaced by inter-temporal income transfers carried out by the same generation. The EMP was therefore not only dependent on a vibrant labour market, but could probably also not function properly when capital markets were extremely unreliable and inefficient. Fortunately, however, this changed during the same period: there is strong evidence that the efficiency of capital market improved a lot in the century or so after the Black Death.⁹² Among the most popular innovations were rents, life annuities on which a relatively high interest was paid out during the lifetime of the man or women on which the annuity was established. This was, of course, an ideal instrument for saving for one’s old age.

⁹² (Clark 1988: 265-294); (Epstein S. R. 2000: 18-25, 60-61)

At the same time poor relief institutions developed, first under the impulse of the Church, but increasingly (and in particular after the Reformation) stimulated and/or regulated by city governments and (in England) the state. During the 16th century in both countries a system of poor relief was established – in England established by the state through the Poor Law of 1536, in the Netherlands the result of initiatives at the city level – which was considered to be quite generous by the standards of the time.⁹³ De Vries and Van der Woude estimated for example that poor relief in the Netherlands may have redistributed as much as 3 to 4% of national income, and link this to ‘the modest scope of informal, family-based income redistribution practices’⁹⁴ Seen in this perspective, the ‘relatively generous’ poor relief of the North Sea area can be considered a by-product of the demographic system that arose there in the late Middle Ages.

Another vulnerable group was located at the other side of the age spectrum. There were fundamental differences between the way in which Chinese and European families dealt with ‘unwanted’ children. In China and India infanticide, in particular of female babies, was quite normal. This was also linked to another important difference between the two patterns, the relative appreciation of the two sexes. The Chinese pattern was in essence patri-local: after marriage the couple moved in with the parents of the boy, and it was their task to take care of the parents in the years to come. Boys were, therefore, a real asset: a continuation of the lineage and a guarantee that one was being taken care of in old age. Girls were a liability: they were costly to raise, needed a dowry in order to get married, and then disappeared to another household to take care of the parents living there. Such a stark contrast between girls and boys was absent from the EMP. There are indications that although infanticide happened in the West, child abandonment was a more regular practice than infanticide to get rid of unwanted children and that there was generally a more or less equal sex-ratio in the abandonments. In the late medieval period we see at least the gradual disappearance of (female) infanticide from Western Europe.⁹⁵ It can be argued that raising a foundling should not be considered as very different from raising your own children since these were also being raised to be workers.⁹⁶ The taking in of foundlings was also encouraged through the Christian church: it introduced during the 6th and 7th centuries the principle of oblation, or the donation of children to the service of God through ecclesiastical institutions. Boswell considers this as a rationalisation and institutionalisation of abandonment. Around the middle of the 13th century new specialized urban institutions for the care of abandoned children began to be established, which spread through most of Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries.⁹⁷ The ‘supply’ of foundlings was also closely related to the EMP: not only poverty was the reason for single and married mothers to abandon their child; in Paris, for example, two-thirds of the unwed abandoning mothers worked as domestics, and were exposed to promiscuous situations as servants, and far away from parental supervision.⁹⁸ More than 80% of them had been born outside the city, thus left without a support network.⁹⁹

Strong and weak family ties, and correspondingly weak and strong institutions, are fundamental in the explanation Reher gives for differences in family systems between northern and southern Europe. He also argues that the two-generation household, in particular if solely dependent on wage work, was much more fragile than the often much larger three-generation household characteristic of a patriarchal society, which usually also had some access to land or other resources. In Southern Europe the incidence of vulnerability was always slightly higher than in northern Europe because of the higher levels of adult mortality and thus the higher numbers of lone-parent households. In Southern societies the help given to vulnerable members of that society came from the family or from individual charity, while in northern societies this was largely accomplished through public and private institutions.¹⁰⁰ There were several ways of dealing with the needy in Mediterranean Europe: by means of co-residence, by circulating the elderly among the households of their offspring, or by the spatial proximity between the homes of the elderly and those of their children. Reher contrasts this with

⁹³ (Lindert 1998)

⁹⁴ (De Vries and Woude 1997: 657-60)

⁹⁵ (Hartman 2004: 43-44)

⁹⁶ (Tilly 1992)

⁹⁷ (Boswell 1988: 173, 401, 405-408)

⁹⁸ (Ransel 1988:173)

⁹⁹ Fuchs (in article Tilly, Fuchs, journal of family history, refers to Ransel)

¹⁰⁰ (Reher 1998: 209)

England: a smaller proportion of the elderly there was living with their children.¹⁰¹ The responsibility of the community for the well being of the elderly that speaks from this was also epitomized in the Poor Laws.¹⁰² Perhaps it stretches the argument too far to argue that it is no coincidence that the development of strong civil society – of strong community institutions which helped to spread risks when times were bad – occurred in the same part of Europe, as is claimed by Reher: "The sense of individual responsibility for collective norms and needs, so essential for the concept of democracy and civil society in the West, is often conspicuously absent from southern European societies... In sum, the countries of northern Europe and North America have well-developed civil societies that thrive on individual initiatives, but with a dark side shown by their lack of social cohesion and by the desperation and anguish so prevalent in them."¹⁰³

5/The return of patriarchy

From the 16th century things however began to change for working women on the Western European labour market. The changes show clearly how closely intertwined the demand for labour (real wages as indicator) and the relative bargaining position of women within marriage was – the more so since the latter became increasingly undermined by Church and State. The 16th century saw sharply declining real wages that made it increasingly difficult for women and men to survive on wage labour alone. Wages of women probably fell more than those of men – as the labour scarcity of the late Middle Ages turned into labour surplus again, a situation that depressed the wages of unskilled workers probably more than those of skilled labourer. Clark for example estimated that in England relative wages of women after 1599 were substantially lower than before 1599 (the difference with wages on unskilled men was 31% before and 58% after that date).¹⁰⁴ In Sweden, the wages of women in construction were as high or almost as high as those of unskilled labourers until 1624; after that date the two series diverge, and at the end of the 17th century women earned only half that level, and sometimes even less.¹⁰⁵ In Zealand the same happened: before 1700 women were paid the same daily wage for weeding as men, but in the course of the 18th century the nominal wages of men increased whereas those of women stayed constant.¹⁰⁶ As we have seen, the average age of marriage went up strongly – to the levels which were considered typical for the system by Hajnal; from our, slightly different perspective, one can perhaps argue that the golden days of the EMP in 15th century North Sea region – of self empowerment of men and women as a result of a booming labour market - were over by then.

The general assumption is that the role of women in work and business declined from the 16th century onwards.¹⁰⁷ There are however different ways of explaining this process. Among the most recent and prominent defenders of this assumption are Nathalie Zemon Davis and Martha Howell.¹⁰⁸ Howell compares the position of women on the labour market in terms of their autonomous disposal of resources and control over the production, distribution and consumption of the products. The greater this control, the higher her status. Until the end of the Middle Ages, women frequently possessed such a "high labour status" ; thereafter their autonomy and control declined and by the 18th century, women could hardly attain high status jobs. This does not necessarily mean that women participated less to

¹⁰¹ (Reher 1998: 209). See also his footnote 24 for more references on caretaking of the elderly in Spain.

¹⁰² See also (Smith 1981)

¹⁰³ (Reher 1998: 217) this is difficult to reconcile with the classic study by Putnam of differences in social capital between northern and southern Italy, in which the North figures as the example a strong civil society, see (Putnam 1993)

¹⁰⁴ (Clark 2004)

¹⁰⁵ (Hoppenbrouwers 1985:74-77")

¹⁰⁶ (Priester 1998: 643)

¹⁰⁷ This idea was first launched in the work of Alice Clark's "Working life of women in the seventeenth century" in 1919. She claimed that women in England had important economic roles during the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century but that they lost this position during the 17th century. She claimed that before the rise of capitalism women took care of the clothing of the family. If married to a craftsman, they helped in the business, and even took over the business if the husband died. This was possible as long as becoming a master in a craft was a feasible option. Clark claims that from the rise of capitalism it became less and less feasible for apprentices to become masters. Many were doomed to work for a boss for the rest of their lives. Their wives stayed at home; in case their husbands earned enough, they could limit their activities to the household; if not, women also became wage labourers. The lack of organisation of female wage labourers made it difficult for the women to take advantage of their nevertheless advantageous position: the demand for thread was always higher than the supply.

¹⁰⁸ See especially the contributions of Davis and Howell in part V of (Hanawalt 1986b) entitled "Is there a decline in Women's economic position in the sixteenth century?"

the labour market but that it became increasingly difficult for women to achieve a high position in that labour market. That particular type of work had a different history from the lower-skilled or less specialized work in the less formal market economy.

In our view, it is no coincidence that also in the ideological arena there was a tendency to stress parental authority again – both by Protestants, following Luther, and by Catholics, following the contra-reformation. Until the 16th century the line separating the married from the single remained quite vague: there were many situations whereby a man and a woman lived the life of a married couple without being married. From the 16th century, both Protestant and Catholic authorities and secular governments did efforts to make that line clearer. Besides criticising celibacy,¹⁰⁹ Protestants were attacking the Catholic understanding that consent of the two parties was the only necessary element in a marriage, pointing to irregular “marriages”...Protestants put great emphasis on parental consent, a public ceremony, and the presence of a pastor for a valid marriage. Luther wrote that “...children ought not to get engaged without their parent's permission” but also that “parents should not and cannot properly either compel or hinder their children in accordance with their own wishes. Therefore, the son should not bring a daughter to his parents without their consent. But the father should not force a woman upon his son”.¹¹⁰ In Calvinist Protestantism it was emphasized that marriage was not a sacramental institution of the Church, but a covenantal association of the entire community. Hereby a variety of parties played a part in the formation of the marriage covenant. The marital couple themselves swore their betrothals and espousals before each other and God—rendering all marriages tripartite agreements with God as party, witness, and judge. The couple’s parents, as God’s bishops for children, gave their consent to the union.

Reforming Catholics answered with the decree of Tametsi at the council of Trent, which required the presence of witnesses, including a parish priest, for an exchange of vows to be considered a valid marriage. The wedding ceremony thus was homogenised and made uniform throughout the area of the Roman's church jurisdiction.¹¹¹ By the later sixteenth century both sides of the religious struggle saw setting clear boundaries between married and single, and other aspects of marital reform, as key parts of their drives toward confessionalization and social discipline. Both Protestants and Catholics strengthened clerical, paternal, and state control of marriage.¹¹² The Reformation had thus induced a new view on marriage and had pressured the Catholic Church towards change, although change was also induced by internal criticism on the many difficulties that the arrangement of marriage caused.

By the 16th century two Christian models of marriage had thus been defined. This also explains Macfarlane’s conviction that there is something peculiar about the English marriage system. He refers to Montesquieu who pointed out that English daughters frequently married according to their own fancy without consulting their parents, because they were allowed to do so by law, whereas in France there was a law which ordains that they shall wait for the consent of their fathers.¹¹³ Engels noted a century later that in those countries with French law the children were bound to secure the consent of their parents for marrying. In countries with English law, the consent of the parents was by no means a legal qualification of marriage.¹¹⁴

Macfarlane claims that the reassertion of Roman law in much of continental Europe muffled the force of the doctrine of romantic love marriage that was established by canon law by at least the 12th century. Roman law, which particularly gained in status and force on the Continent from the 16th

¹⁰⁹ Wiesner: “To the Protestant belief, celibacy was not superior to marriage since it was assumed that persons were to be tempted by sinful passion to forgo God’s remedy of marriage. It was assumed that celibacy led to often to homosexuality and concubinage and that it impeded the access to clerical service. Therefore celibacy was not set as a prerequisite for clerical service. Marriage was thus the right and proper thing for all (or most) individuals to do. Wiesner claims that although this emphasis has traditionally been attributed to the Protestant Reformation, there are indications that in the decades before the Reformation, there were already Christian humanists that praised marriage, and that city authorities view marital household as the key political and economic unit. However, it is definitely true that the Protestants were fierce promoters of marriage and attackers of single people, “arguing that those who did not marry went against God’s command in the Garden of Eden and their divinely created and irresistible sexual desire” (Wiesner 1999: 196).

¹¹⁰ Luther in a letter of 1539; cited from (Karant-Nunn and Wiesner 2003: 214)

¹¹¹ (Gottlieb 1993: 69-70)

¹¹² (Wiesner 1999: 196)

¹¹³ (Macfarlane Alan 1986: 124-125) refers to Montesquieu, Spirit, II: 6

¹¹⁴ (Engels 1972: 88)

century onwards, gave greater power to the father and hence made the canon law of little effect. In only one part of Europe –England– did Roman law never reassert itself. English common law emphasised that marriage was only a contract between the two parties involved. To be valid, like all contracts, it needed the parties' consent. Macfarlane: "from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries marriage for men from 14, for girls from 12, was valid against all pressures from the outside world...it was Hardwick's marriage act of 1753 which inched English law for the first time towards the continental laws...the marriage of those under 21, not being widows or widowers, was made illegal without the consent of parents or guardians". The Hardwick marriage act was however relatively short lasting (repealed in 1823). In England marriage was a private contract; elsewhere in Europe the parents and/or the state were involved.¹¹⁵ To make the latter point he quotes Mitterauer: "In all classes in pre-modern Europe the choice of marriage partners was very much controlled and influenced by the immediate family, by relatives and by neighbours because the marriage partner could be of overriding importance to the family labour unit in the domestic economy."¹¹⁶

The process of state formation also played a role in this 'return of patriarchy' during and after the 16th century. Mitterauer also stresses the interference of the state in marriages: since land was limited, some of the population had to be denied the prospect of founding a family. Those without means to acquire a farm or a cottage in the foreseeable future were often forbidden to marry. In Central Europe this applied above all to servants and day labourers in rural areas and to journeymen in towns (see also Wiesner on journeymen). Mitterauer writes that from the 16th century onwards the marriage of servants and day labourers was increasingly restricted. The local judiciary or the local authorities intervened by promulgating policies that restricted their freedom to marry. During Joseph II's reign these restrictions had become a bit looser but in the first half of the 19th century legislation preventing marriage was again enforced in the Austrian empire, in particular for those who received poor relief or who were beggars.¹¹⁷ Probably the influence of landlords on their tenant's marriage was particularly in areas of serfdom strong.

6/Conclusion

The late Middle Ages have been coined the 'golden age of the craftsmen', but perhaps it was even more a 'golden age' for women wishing to be active on the labour market.¹¹⁸ In the North Sea region, relative earnings were high, and access to the labour market was easy, although they still had serious handicaps compared with male members of the labour force. Similarly, during the 20th century the same trends – increased relative pay and increased female participation in the labour force – were driving forces behind the process of emancipation of women, which accelerated in times of labour scarcity (during the two World Wars and during the period of rapid economic growth after 1950). If we continue this line of thought one might even mention the idea that demographers assume that increased relative earnings of women will lead to lower levels of fertility because of the opportunity costs of rearing children are higher. Perhaps such a link between female labour participation and fertility may help to explain the low levels of fertility that can be hypothesized for post-1348 England, which resulted in the stagnation of the population at the low level that resulted from the Plague (it is still a bit of a mystery why the population of England did not rebound after the sudden decline following the Black Death).

More to the point, we have argued that a rather odd combination of forces – the preaching of the Catholic Church, the inheritance system, the expansion of the labour market and the Black Death – lay behind the genesis of the EMP in the late Medieval Period. It was characterized by relatively low levels of authority and power – of parents over their children, and of men over women – which fits into the more general stream of 'democratic' – bottom-up – institutions that is to some extent characteristic for the (late) Middle Ages. Power was subject to negotiations, to changes in the balance of societal forces, the roots of which was perhaps the root the fragmented nature of power under 'feudalism'

¹¹⁵ (Macfarlane Alan 1986: 127-128)

¹¹⁶ (Mitterauer and Sieder 1981: 122)

¹¹⁷ (Mitterauer and Sieder 1981: 122-123)

¹¹⁸ It is perhaps significant that historians of feminism have identified the late Medieval period as the 'first wave' of feminism, see for example (Stuurman and Akkerman 1998); according to Joan Kelly early feminism begins with Christine de Pisan's 'The Book of the City of Ladies' of 1406 (Kelly 1984).

(Perry Anderson). Black death locked into place a self-perpetuating system of wage-labor and family constitution whereas the EMP before 1348 was just one of the possibilities in a variety of alternative modes of family constitution. The Black Death produced an extraordinary set of circumstances that made EMP the preferred option for large numbers of people.¹¹⁹

The EMP was well adapted to the new commercialized environment that arose during the same period. Wage labour became an integral part of the life cycle of members of the small conjugal household, and other market transactions (such as the use of credit or the accumulation of savings) became part of their survival strategy. This co-evolution of the demographic regime and the emerging market economy helps to explain the radical commercialization of society and economy that occurred in this period, when one-third to perhaps as much as two third of the population became (partially) dependent on wage labour, and working for wages was part of the normal life cycle of almost all. The 'deep' penetration of markets in late medieval and early modern Europe – in particular in the region around the North Sea – should in our view be seen in this light.

The long-term consequences were immense. We have argued that income transfers between generations changed dramatically as a result. First of all, the young profited from increased investment in human capital. To some extent the EMP (in which the number of children is limited as a result of the high age of marriage) can be considered a reproductive strategy aimed at increasing the quality of the offspring – instead of their quantity. Investment in human capital – in schooling and on the job training – became a normal part of the life cycle of young men and women, which must also have delayed them becoming available on the marriage market. In short, instead of being backward-looking (i.e. taking care of the lineage and the parents) the household became forward-looking (i.e. investing in its offspring).

The elderly were the main victims of the new regime; their authority was undermined, and they did not receive the income transfers that were due to parents in patriarchal marriage systems. Saving for old age was one of the options open to them, and we speculate that there are connections between the emergence of the EMP and the strong development of capital markets in Western Europe in the late Medieval period. Moreover, because households became smaller, the chances that they might 'fail', for example disintegrate due to the death of one of the parents, were larger. We argue that in response new institutions emerged that formed safety networks for the old, the very young and the infirm – but this often happened with a time-lag; building of a new institutional framework continued during the 16th and 17th centuries when the need for support for the poor was on the rise.

Perhaps the point can also be made that the 'industrious revolution', the changes in the orientation of households during the early modern period towards market opportunities, resulting in an increased labour supply, which, according to Jan de Vries preceded the industrial revolution of the 18th century, may be interpreted as a continuation of the (perhaps even more fundamental) changes that occurred during the late medieval period. As De Vries has argued, the labour by women and teenagers played an important role in the economic transformation that occurred in the North sea region, resulting in the Dutch Golden Age of the 17th century and,¹²⁰ even more importantly, the British Industrial Revolution of the 18th century.¹²¹ In a recent paper by Voigtländer and Voth in which they addressed the question why the Industrial Revolution occurred in England, they distinguish two underlying causes: the European Marriage Pattern and the generosity of the Poor Relief. Both were, as we have tried to demonstrate, interrelated and rooted in the changes in reproductive strategies and labour market orientation of the late medieval period.¹²² There are clearly a number of links between the emergence of the EMP and the success of the North Sea region in the post 1600 period. Of course, we do not claim that the EMP explains it all; but yet we hope to have shown that the stubborn behaviour of Janne Heyndericx did make a difference.¹²³

¹¹⁹ We would like to thank Maarten Prak for his thorough comments on this particular issue and on the paper as a whole.

¹²⁰ See also the project "Women's Work in the Northern Netherlands in the Early Modern Period (c. 1500-1815)" at <http://www.iisg.nl/research/womenswork.html>

¹²¹ (Vries 1994)

¹²² (Voigtländer and Voth 2005)

¹²³ The comparison with China may be instructive once more; Goldstone 1996 argues that it is the fact that there existed a stage in the life of European women (between puberty in their early teens and marriage in their mid-twenties or later) during which they were available for the wage labour market that has made the difference with China concerning the Industrial revolution. Chinese women did not have a stage like that in their lives and were thus not available for the wage labour market, although –as is commonly known- China did have the technical skills available. Factories could not compete with the household labourers that worked for less than nothing. Goldstone claims that the development of cotton-spinning was slow in China because of the restrictions on the deployment of female labor outside the home, as a consequence of Confucian ethics. Because of this

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