

Demand and supply for live-in farm servants app. 1760-1920: the case of Groningen (The Netherlands)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Before the twentieth century, everywhere in northern and western Europe a considerable amount of the agricultural labour was done by live-in farm servants (Mitterauer 1992: 324-325; Mitterauer and Sieder 1979; Schlumbohm 1996; Kussmaul 1981; Devine ed. 1984; McIntosh 1984; Anderson 1992; Eriksson and Rogers 1978: 26-37, 57-74, 156-158), in Eastern and Mediterranean Europe this was only the case to a considerably lesser extent (Engel 1994; Da Molin 1990; Reher 1998; Dubert 2004). The use of live-in servants was a typical characteristic of the North-western European economic-demographic system (Hajnal 1983). Two different models of domestic service can be discerned (Lundh 1999: 66-68). In regions without a significant completely proletarianised labour force (for example the interior provinces of The Netherlands) the system was mainly used to even out shortages and surpluses between the family farms caused by (temporary) discrepancies between family-size and disposable land. Social differences between servants and masters were relatively small. Servants usually acquired a (small) farm of their own after marriage, just like their parents. In more capitalistic regions as the Dutch coastal provinces like Groningen with larger social differences within the agricultural population the situation was quite different. A part of the farms was too large to be driven by the farmer and its family alone, while within landless labourer families useful economic activities were lacking, stimulating the members of these families to work for the farmers, partly as live-in farm servants.

Becoming a live-in farm servant seems to have been a nearly inevitable stage in life for children of unskilled labourers and also for a lot of children of artisans and small shopkeepers living in the countryside in most of The Netherlands until the end of the 19th century. Dutch research until now concentrated mostly on girls doing live-in domestic work (Henkes and Oosterhof 1985; Poelstra 1996; Bras 1998; Bras 2002). Around 1900 the position of domestics became increasingly unpopular under young girls. Supply of domestics decreased, because it was felt as humiliating to serve and the work offered few prospects for the future (Poelstra 1996: 260-264). Girls preferred to work in a factory or in a shop, inasmuch as these positions offered more individual freedom (factory workers) or a higher social status (live-in shop servants). While demand for domestics did not fall, domestic work was increasingly done by nonresident women. After the first World War the resulting shortage of live-in domestics was partly solved by the influx of a large number of German maids (Henkes 1995). Although attracting less attraction in literature, the number of live-in farm servants was higher than of genuine domestics in most of the 19th century. Van Zanden (1985: 75) estimates the number of female live-in farm servants aged 16 and older in the Netherlands: 37,200 in 1810, 42,200 in 1850, 33,000 in 1880 and 28,500 in 1910.

In Groningen around 1900 the number of live-in farm servants fell dramatically, after a slow decrease since about 1860. This last decrease is discernible in the figures of Van Zanden (1985: 70) for nearly all Dutch provinces. However, the dramatic fall around 1900 is not, because his most important source are taxation-data which end in 1896. Van Zanden tries to explain the decrease in female live-in servants by the rise in the number of live-in domestics (mainly in the cities) from 58,100 in 1846 to 125,300 in 1896, suggesting those

positions were more attractive for country girls. However, the numbers of ordinary live-in domestics started to decrease after 1900, so this can not be the reason for the near disappearance of the system of live-in farm servants after 1900 in the Netherlands. In this paper I want to go into the determinants of the supply (by lower class families) of and the demand (of farmer families) for farm servants in the Groningen clay soil area, considering which of these two (supply or demand) was the prime mover of this process, resulting in children trying to find work without leaving the parental home.¹

The clay soil area of Groningen in the 19th century with its medium and large scale market-oriented farming, its mass of landless labourers and its large industry and service sector is very well suited to study this phenomenon. In this paper I will describe the development of the system of live-in farm servants from the end of the 18th century till its near end around 1920, using calculations of the development of the number of servants, the average household structure, the (real) average wages of live-in farm servants and of farm labourers living in their own household. Explicit difference will be made between male and female servants. It will be argued that the disappearance of most of the live-in farm servants was not so much caused by agricultural development, but that it was a result of strategic decisions taken within the labourer families.

2. THE GRONINGEN CLAY SOIL AREA

The province of Groningen comprises the city of Groningen and its agricultural surroundings, all together nearly 200,000 hectares. Clay soil can be found in about half the province (mainly the coastal parts) where 60,000 people lived in 1815 and 119,000 in 1900. In this period, its share in the total Dutch population fell from 2.8% to 2.3%, mainly after 1880. In this region already in the sixteenth century the economy was dominated by a market-oriented agriculture on medium and large scale farms, being generally between 10 and 60 hectares. Presumably, average farm size and the number of large farms was rising since the 16th-17th century, however, this development has only statistically be proven from 1755 onwards (Paping 1995: 71-72). The rest of the province had sandy and peat soils, with mainly small and medium-sized farmers and peasants which were especially in the sandy regions partly directed to self-provision (as in the neighbouring province of Drenthe and elsewhere in the interior of The Netherlands). Farm labourers had a far lower share of the population in these regions than in the clay soil area, and most of these farm labourers can also be better characterised as crofters, having some livestock and land at their disposal, working for wages mainly to supplement their “income” from these sources.

The economy of the Groningen clay soil area, although having its own peculiarities, resembles in a lot of ways the coastal parts of Friesland, the countryside of the coastal Dutch provinces of Holland and Zeeland, and the neighbouring German province of East-Friesland (Faber 1973; Priester 1998; Hoppenbrouwers and Van Zanden 2001; Aden 1964). In all these regions economic life in the countryside was dominated by medium and large scale farms on clay soils being oriented at production for the market. However, the products could differ: in some regions the production of grain (wheat) and other arable goods was the prime goal (especially Zeeland), in others regions mainly meat and dairy (butter, cheese) was produced (for example Holland).

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference: *Models of Domestic Service*, Munich, 11-14 September 2003. A few parts were published as Collenteur and Paping (1997) and Paping (2004a).

MAP OF THE DUTCH PROVINCES AROUND 1900



Although livestock production was very important in the 16th to 18th century, there are signs that already in this period the Groningen clay farmers did their utmost to strive to as much arable production as possible. Though still yielding a substantial amount of money, cows and sheep were of less importance in most villages. However, it was only from the end of the 18th century that in the Groningen clay soil area the move to a genuine arable region started. Increasingly livestock's main role was producing manure and providing food for the farmer's household. The rather diverse arable production (especially oats, barley, wheat and cole-seed, but also beans, peas, rye, mustard-seed, and flax and before the 1840s potatoes) was mostly brought to the market in the city of Groningen, and was sold for impressive sums of money. Improved drainage (water mills) and rising labour input made this development possible. Arable production could easier be intensified than livestock production with the help of the numerous labourers available (Priester 1991). At the end of the 19th century agricultural specialisation was reinforced by the widespread introduction of industrial fertilisers (mainly phosphates and ammoniac).

TABLE 1. ESTIMATED POPULATION AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD IN THE GRONINGEN CLAY SOIL AREA, 1770-1910.

	Farmers	Labourers	“Middle class”	Population
1770	32%	27%	41%	47,400
1810	24%	35%	41%	57,648
1850	17%	41%	42%	85,194
1870	18%	45%	37%	99,279
1890	15%	48%	37%	113,444
1910	13%	53%	34%	123,876

Source: Paping and Collenteur 1998: 39. “Middle class” includes self-employed outside agriculture and skilled wage-earning functions. Labourers (unskilled or semiskilled) were mainly active in agriculture. Heads of households without occupation (about 10%) were not taken into account.

In the Groningen clay soil area the occupational structure was already in the 18th century highly diversified, thanks to a nearly complete specialisation of economic activities. In table 1 this is shown for the heads of families which are mainly married males, most of the wives and live-in children worked in the same sector as their husbands and fathers. However, wives of the non-agrarian middle class also had a garden to keep care of, while labourer wives sometimes earned money by spinning and knitting, although this kind of proto-industry had disappeared nearly completely by the 19th century. In the countryside approximately a little over 40% of the heads of households found their main living outside agriculture in handicrafts, industry and services for the local market. Most of these family heads had a business of their own (artisans, tradesmen), or occupied qualified functions as preachers, teachers or officials. During the 19th century this percentage of non-agricultural family heads rose even somewhat, however this was mainly due to a rising number of unskilled or semiskilled wage-earners active in industry and services, a group which almost completely worked in agriculture. previously. However, even at the end of the 19th century industrialisation in this part of the province was very limited, with brick-yards remaining by far the most important demander of labour. Changes in the occupational structure mainly took place within agriculture. As the number of farms remained more or less stable, the fast rise in population (by 1% annually) from the 1780s onwards meant a rise in share of labourers (Paping and Collenteur 2004). This proletarianisation process resulted in a doubling of the share of labourer families from about 27% in 1770 till 53% in 1910 (table 1).

In first instance the increasing number of labourers was mostly absorbed by agriculture. High agricultural prices stimulated intensification. This intensification process stagnated during the first agricultural crisis of the 19th century (1819-1835) causing heavy winter unemployment under nonresident farm labourers. However, because there were no alternative opportunities this crisis did not result in mass out-migration. The opposite was the case during the second agricultural crisis of the 19th century (1878-1895). Rising unemployment and limited future prospects brought lots of labourers and farm servants in the Groningen clay soil area to leave for America (Paping 2004a). The same development took for example place in nearby Friesland (Galema 1996). This heavy out-migration resulted in the considerable lower rural population growth after 1880 already mentioned.

3. THE SYSTEM OF UNMARRIED LIVE-IN FARM SERVANTS

In the 17th, 18th and 19th century a large demand for labour on the large farms existed in the capitalistic Groningen clay soil area; a demand which was impossible to meet by the farmer and his or her family. On the other hand there was an excess of labour in the families of the labourers and small farmers and some of the middle class families, mainly consisting of male and female juveniles who had finished primary school at the age of 12 or 13. Primary school attendance was very widespread in the 17th and 18th century and in practise nearly compulsory in the Groningen clay area in the 19th century. Secondary schools on the other hand were very rare and were only attended by children of the well-to-do. A very efficient way to use the labour surplus within the lower class families was to let their older children move into the households with a shortage of labour: the system of live-in servants.

Already since 1623, a tax of 5% on the wages of all the live-in servants to be paid by the employers existed in the province of Groningen, weighing mostly on the farmers. From 1806 onwards one had to pay a specific amount of money for each live-in servant working in agriculture, industry or commercial services; the tax to be paid for so-called luxury servants doing only domestic work was higher. Special ordinances on the hiring of live-in servants were issued in the Groningen countryside in 1702 and 1703 bringing those servants nearly completely under control of their employers. Especially measures were taken against servants leaving their employers without consent. They lost their wage, which normally only was paid at the end of the contract period, and also they had to pay the wage of an extra half a year to the poor-relief board if they did not have a good reason for departure. Farmers who dismissed their personnel only had to pay an extra six weeks of wage (from 1783 onwards twelve weeks if it happened in winter) to get rid of an unacceptable servant (Sleebe 1994: 337-346). In the 19th century with the coming of a new law-code the position of farmer and servant in case of a sudden ending of the labour contract became somewhat more equal, although the employer still had far more rights than the employee (Poelstra 1996: 30-37). Usually, both paid a fine to the other party of 6 weeks of wage if one dissolved a contract without mutual agreement. Quarrels, illness and incapability, but also marriage, pregnancy, military service and later on departure to North America could be reasons to split up.

In Groningen servants were hired for a whole year or sometimes for half a year, starting around 12 May, or in some villages around 11 November. Because all the contracts ended at the same date, it was easy to change employer or servant. Only a minority of the servants stayed longer than one year, which doesn't suggest a very paternalistic relationship between employer and employee. For example, only about one third of the male (13 of 41) and of the female (14 of 38) live-in servants of the farm Terborg in Loppersum during the period 1869-1889 was allowed to stay the next year.² Also, differences in religion between farmer and servant were not uncommon in Groningen, as is shown by the accounts of the farmer family Feddema in Kloosterburen belonging to the roman-catholic minority, who employed a considerable amount of protestant live-in staff during the period 1817-1900.³ However, they had a clear preference for personnel of the same denomination.

Searching for another employer was a good way to develop some kind of a career (Paping and Collenteur 2004). In the winter months December, January, and February new labour contracts were negotiated each year - partly by mediators - and confirmed with the payment of earnest-money. Most farmers seem to have had a good idea concerning the capacity and experience (age) of the servants they needed. Large farmers employed several male and female servants who performed specialised jobs related to their age, on the other hand small farmers needed only one or two servants at most to fill in labour gaps due to the actual family composition. For example, widows and widowers using relatively few hectares and without grown-up children hired respectively a farm-hand or maid to replace their deceased partner.

The advantages for the farmers of the servant system are that they were sure they could dispose of the labour every moment they wanted; long working days were possible because the workers did not have to travel to other households and were not daily involved in these other households; the control of labour was easier while live-in servants officially fell directly under the authority of the farmer; farm servants working normally for at least a year on a specific farm, obtained knowledge of the special aspects of this farm (for example knowledge of the specific animals). The advantages for the farm servant (and his parental household) are also clear: the cost-of-living of servants (children) was borne by the farmer; there was no risk of unemployment (especially in winter); a guaranteed annual income was earned; useful skills were learned concerning agriculture and housekeeping (maids). Of course the live-in servant system also had some disadvantages for both parties, which around 1900 stimulated the near destruction of the system.

² Groningen archives, archive Terborg 87.

³ NAHI Groningen: farm accounts Negenboerenpolder.

For a long time a lot of lower class families had to get rid of their children as soon as possible, children were expensive, and it was very difficult to make their labour productive. So, in Groningen in the 19th century it was usual that children of farm labourers became live-in servants directly after the primary school at the age of 12 to 15 year.⁴ The same is the case with many children of middle class families (see tables 7 and 8), especially of those families with small businesses, those with a lot of children, and those with less-paid skilled jobs, for example lower officials. Being a live-in servant was an ordinary stage in the lifecycle of people from the labouring and lower middle class. Usually this phase ended with a marriage. However, sometimes the live-in servants returned to the parental home for short periods, because of illness, discharge or problems at home. In theory the annual contracts ending all in May made it possible to stay away from the parental home forever, with as the only exception the holiday week in May.

The attractiveness of a position of live-in servant may also be illustrated by the popularity of what the Dutch call 'forced marriages'. Around 10% of the unskilled labourers in the Groningen clay soil area (born 1830, 1850 and 1870) already had children born (mostly shortly) before marriage and some 40%-50% gave birth to a child within six-and-a-half months after marriage (Paping 2004b). In this sense bourgeois ideas on family life did not yet had much impact. It was quite usual that the female partner became pregnant before a marriage was concluded. After marriage, couples suddenly had to start a household of their own. The solution was often found in a stay for a few months of the young mother with her parents, while the groom finished his labour contract as a live-in farm-hand. Of course these forced marriages created uncertainty; on the other hand in this way the live-in servant system was used most effectively. Young women could work as long as possible as an (unmarried) maid, which was financially attractive. Married female farm labourers could find work only during the summer harvest years, so their earning capacity was considerably lower than of an unmarried maid.

The popularity of the live-in servant system had a lot to do with the high costs of children and the difficulties to use their earning capacity effectively in a lot of families. However, it is not easy to make exact calculations of the (net) economic costs of children. Of course it is clear that the costs or benefits of children depend for a considerable amount on their age. Presumably the older they are, the more they cost, however also the more they can earn. A proxy of these costs and benefits for the 18th and 19th century can be made using data for the reformed poor-relief board of the small town of Appingedam. Each year, after an auction the orphans depending on poor-relief went to the families who wanted to raise those children next year for the smallest sum of money, or who were prepared to pay as much as possible to have such a child at their disposal as a live-in servant. A few examples are given in table 2. Only around the age of 16 a child could earn enough to pay for his or her own expenses.⁵ However, around the age of 12 to 14 the net costs of these children fell considerably, because of their increasing earning capacity. Most of the time it was around this age that the orphans moved to households of farmers, tradesmen or artisans where their earning capacity could be used more efficiently and were they in the meantime could learn specialised labour skills for their future career.

TABLE 2. NET COSTS OF SOME ORPHANS OF THE REFORMED POOR-RELIEF BOARD OF APPINGEDAM IN DUTCH GULDERS.

⁴ Collenteur and Paping 1997, estimate that live-in servants started on average between 13 and 15 year using census data. Bras 2002: 73-75 calculates for Zeeland maids a median age of leaving home of 18 to 20 year. The difference is partly due to a rise of the age at which girls start to become maids, but possibly also has something to do with the use of population-registers. Children were only registered as leaving home if they really left the municipality. At census data numerous children proved to be living outside the parental home, although this change wasn't previously registered in the Dutch population registers.

⁵ Data for the completely agricultural little villages near Hoogkerk at the end of the 18th century suggest that this was even possible at the age of 14 or 15: Collenteur and Paping 1993: 93-94..

	Hindrik Alberts, born Nov. 1801, Farm-hand	Nanne Huisman, born July 1820, Farm-hand	Jan v.d. Reert, born Sept. 1798, Shoemakers mate	Trijntje Dekker, born May 1838, Maid
Age 9-10				Costs 46*
Age 10-11	Costs 39	Costs 41*		Costs 36
Age 11-12	Costs 39	Costs 49*		Costs 36*
Age 12-13	Costs 39	Costs 49*		Costs 26
Age 13-14	Costs 31	Costs 39*	Costs 46~	Earns 0~
Age 14-15	Costs 23	Costs 31*	Costs 33~	Earns 0
Age 15-16	Costs 23	Costs 10*	Costs 7~	Earns 0
Age 16-17	Earns 10*	Costs 5*	Earns 3~	Earns 13^
Age 17-18	Earns 36*	Earns 8#	Earns 8~	Earns 10*
Age 18-19	Earns 60*	Earns 8#	Earns 8~	Resigned
Age 19-20	Resigned	Earns 15*	Earns 8~	
Age 20-21		Resigned	Earns 13~	
Age 21-22			Earns 15~	
Age 22-23			Resigned	

Source: Groninger Archieven, Archief NH gemeente Appingedam, nr. 41-46. NB: Costs/Earnings are net including cost of cloths are calculated at 10 guilders each year (*); cost of shoes 3 guilders (#), costs of cloths without shoes 7 guilders (~) cost of half of the cloths 5 guilders each year (^).

It is interesting to note that male orphans seem to have been able to earn a higher wage at a farm than when they were placed with artisans like tailors and shoemakers. This situation is also suggested by official statistics.⁶ For parents and also for the poor-relief board it was the choice whether or not to invest into the skills of the children. If you let boys become a live-in hand of an artisan, they could be a source of costs till a much older age. The example of Jan van der Reert can make this clear. Wages of shoemaker hands were so low that he was older than 21 before he could stand on his own feet. On the other hand the social position of small artisans was in general better than of unskilled labourers (Paping 1995: 151-152). So the choice of parents to let their son become the (low-paid) hand of an artisan and learn in this way the necessary skills to become an independent artisan after marriage himself, had definitely an investment character. This choice was sometimes even attractive for a poor-relief board, because it diminished the chance that the boy and his family would fall into poverty again in a later stage of life.

The example of Trijntje Dekker suggests that young girls of 12 to 14 were more useful than boys at the same age, which corresponds with the fact that girls of that age are more mature. A result could be that parents were inclined to send their daughters away at a younger age than their sons. However, data on the structure of labourer households for the period 1829-1862 do not show very significant differences between the number of sons and daughters of the age group 12 to 15 present. Data for 1889 and 1909 (table 5), however, do show some 10% to 20% less daughters than sons living with their own family in this age group, possibly this has to do with the phenomenon of the child maid: in the last decades of the 19th century a lot of richer families began to hire very young girls, mainly to keep an eye on the children.

Age (as an indicator of craft and skills) is able to explain to a large amount the differences in wages between farm servants. For 44 farm-hands and 44 maids hired by farmer Glas in Loppersum we know the age as well as the wage for the period 1880-1903. Boys aged 14 earned a wage which was 26% of the wage of adult farm-hands of 20 and older ($R^2=0,95$):

⁶ Paping 1995a: 320: if we subtract the value of board and lodging; average annual wages for live-in mates of tailors, shoemakers, bakers, cartwrights and coopers were around 1819 between 33 (shoemakers) and 63 (coopers) guilders, and around 1856 between 30 (tailors) and 63 (coopers) guilders. Average annual wages paid to live-in farm-hands around 1819 were 95-97 guilders, and 65-66 guilders around 1856.

37 guilders compared with 141 guilders yearly. For girls the differences were less, with 14-year olds earning 40% of the wage of a grown-up maid of 20 or older ($R^2=0,90$): 33 guilders compared with 84 guilders yearly. This figure again suggests that girls aged around 14 had already a relatively high earning capacity compared to boys of the same age.

4. THE NUMBER OF LIVE-IN FARM SERVANTS

Already well before the 18th century live-in farm servants were an ordinary phenomenon on the biggest Groningen farms. Some old notes of the Kruissteet in Usquert in the Groningen archives dating from 1702-1706 indicate that on this enormous farm of 70 hectare three farm-hands and three farm maids were employed (an “upper”, a “middle” and a “small” hand and maid). In inventories concerning the period 1750-1810 many debts to farm servants are mentioned. For example the widower Claas Isebrants in Godlinze using 29 hectares in 1772 had to pay the wage of a half year to one male and one female servant; widower Fokke Jacobs using 34 hectare in nearby Bierum, however, had to pay the wage of a year to two male and two female servants in 1778. It is very difficult to make a precise estimate of the number of farm servants in the 18th century, but the scanty evidence suggests that this figure must have been more than 5,000 (above 10% of the population).

TABLE 3. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF FARM SERVANTS IN THE GRONINGEN CLAY SOIL AREA, 1829-1909.

	1829	1849	1862	1869	1886/1889	1909
Farm maids	3,200	3,500	4,211	3,500	3,100	1,800
Farm-hands	4,300	4,300	5,134	4,000	3,800	1,000
Total personnel	7,500	7,800	9,345	7,500	6,900	2,800
Maids pro farm	1.1	1.2	1,3	1,0	0,8	0,5
Hands pro farm	1.5	1.5	1,6	1,1	1,0	0,3
Total pro farm	2.7	2.7	2,9	2,1	1,9	0,8
% of population	11%	9%	10%	8%	6%	2%

Source:Collenteur and Paping 1997: 101.

The estimates of table 3 are, except for 1862 based upon the analysis of the census data for 3 to 8 of the 36 municipalities in the Groningen clay soil area. It was around 1860 that the number of live-in male and female farm servants reached its peak, afterwards a slow but steady decrease started. Around 1900 this development accelerated, in two decades the number of farm maids nearly halved, while of the farm-hands only a little more than one quarter was left. An alternative method to study this development is an analysis of the farm accounts surviving for the Groningen clay soil area. For several dozens of large farms (mainly of 40 to 60 hectare) these give information on the number of servants hired for a long period, sometimes even for a whole century. On average the fall in farm-hands between 1890 and 1910 is far less on these farms than it is according to table 3. The number of farm-hands on large farms was halved, while the total number of farm-hands fell by three quarter in these twenty years. However, in the period 1910-1920 on the larger farms the farm-hands also nearly completely disappeared. After 1920 live-in male farm servants became a rarity in the Groningen clay soil area.

The number of female farm servants decreased less than the males after 1890. If we look to our sample of large farms only, we see that their number nearly didn't fell before 1905 when most of these farms were still employing two to three maids. However, fifteen years later on most of the large farms only one maid was left. Until the Second World War such a live-in maid doing mainly domestic work, remained a quite usual phenomenon on the richer farms. As was the case with male servants, the live-in female farm servants in the last four decades of the 19th century first seemed to have disappeared from the medium-sized farms. Only after 1900 the large farms began to dismiss their live-in personnel.

5. DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF LIVE-IN FARM LABOUR

Demand and supply of live-in farm labour was the result of strategic decisions taken within farmer families and farm labourer and other lower class families. I want to define strategy as the conscious use of means to reach one or more goals. Unfortunately, we aren't well informed about the goals of people in the past, which most of the times have to be inferred in an indirect way from the available data. Besides, the use of the term strategy in relation with a family opens up questions about the power relations within the family. There is not much evidence on how choices were made within the context of the family. In the farm accounts of Glas, previously mentioned, it is clear that the contracts of the youngest servants were negotiated by their parents. The wage was also handed over to them. Only if the servant had a written note of his or her parents, he or she was allowed to receive the money. After about the age of 18 the children acted independently, receiving and spending their wage themselves, although legally they still fell under the supervision of the parents till well into their twenties, unless they married.

It is clear that people in the past made choices, and that family circumstances and family pressure played an important role in these choices. Sometimes it is claimed that actions of people in the past mostly can be explained by pointing at cultural factors, especially traditions, suggesting there wasn't much to choose and there wasn't much room for rational strategies. The different actions of people when placed in nearly the same situation already make clear, however, that it was indeed possible to pursue individual goals. A clear example is the choice to let labourer children become live-in farm servants. Most of the children indeed left home that way in the first three quarters of the 19th century; however this was not done by all of them.⁷ Definitely labourer families could make different choices concerning the work and the place to live for their children. Of course economic pressure heavily influenced these choices, that is why the term survival strategies frequently is used.

Farmers mostly used live-in servants to fill in part of the labour gaps within the farmer household (Breen 1983: 87-88; Lundh 1995: 43-51). Farm-hands performed partly the same work of the farmer and his sons. Farm maids did in general the same work as the farmer's wife and daughters. The different agricultural activities were quite strictly divided between the sexes. If some adult sons were present on the farm, fewer farm-hands were hired, and the same was the case with daughters and maids.⁸ However, in the second half of the 19th century the members of the (richer) farmer families increasingly stopped doing physical work on the land, which was left to hired personnel. Mostly the farm servants did work that had to be done the whole year through. Farm-hands mainly worked with horses, especially ploughing and gathering the crops in summer. They threshed in winter, fed the cattle and did all kind of other things. Farm maids did domestic work like cleaning and cooking, milked, churned, took care of the vegetable garden, fed the pigs and the calves, activities mainly undertaken under the supervision of the farmer's wives; in harvest-time they also helped bringing the yields to the farm. If the churn was driven by a horse this work was done by males. On large farms there was a rather clear-cut division between male and female work. Logically, most of the servant's activities had a lot to do with the animals on the farm: the servants were used to them and knew them and they were nearly always present on the farm (day and night) in case of emergencies, this in contrast with the nonresident male and female labourers, who mainly threshed, weeded, reaped and tied corn, mowed grass and cleaned the ditches.

⁷ A fact overseen by Engelen 2002: 459-460, who suggests that to send out children as servants doesn't necessarily have to be a rational and conscious choice, but also could be a tradition.

⁸ However, according to Breen 1983 in Ireland the relation between the number of farm-hands and male family members wasn't strong.

As table 4 again shows us, the number of live-in servants on the farms decreased after 1862 causing also a fall in the average household-size of farmers. This decrease can have something to do with the demand for servants, or more specific with developments in the agricultural practice. However, the number of animals on the farms nearly did not diminish before 1910, and also fertilisers improving the yields and new agricultural machinery directed at row cultivation like sewing machines and hoe ploughs (Priester 1991: 266-269) both mainly improved the harvest yields; they did not cause enormous savings on the labour of live-in servants. Only mechanical threshing and the disappearance of butter-making from the farm lessened the amount of work to be done respectively by farm-hands and maids. Also the further shift to arable farming - work mainly done by nonresident labourers in late spring, summer and early autumn - during the second half of the 19th century indeed could have caused a small decrease in the demand for farm servants. However these technological developments aren't enough to explain the enormous and sudden changes in the number of live-in servants in the Groningen clay soil area around 1900.

As already mentioned farmer's sons and daughters could in theory easily replace the farm servants. However, table 4 does not suggest that such a development took actually place in the Groningen clay soil area. There was indeed some rise of older sons and especially daughters staying at home during the second agricultural crisis of 1878-1895, possibly they will have taken over some of the work of the servants; but this development ended around 1900. Sons and daughters were leaving the farm earlier and in greater amounts, right at the moment the number of farm servants fell so much. Possibly, after the crisis farmers were again able to invest in the future of their children outside the farm, as was the case in rural Ireland (Guinnane 1992: 664-665). It is clear that a movement from a wage-economy to a family-economy (Knotter 1994: 28-33, 43-45) can not be the explanation for the disappearance of the system of live-in farm servants.

TABLE 4. AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION OF FARMERS, 1829-1909.

	1829	1862	1889	1909
Number of farmers	2,800	3,200	3,700	3,600
Male head of household	0.86	0.88	0.91	0.96
Female head of household	0.14	0.12	0.09	0.04
Married women	0.71	0.76	0.75	0.84
Sons till 11 year	0.68	0.64	0.51	0.60
Sons 12-15 year	0.27	0.21	0.25	0.17
Sons 16-20 year	0.19	0.22	0.25	0.11
Sons 21 year and older	0.33	0.36	0.40	0.37
Daughters till 11 year	0.69	0.64	0.52	0.58
Daughters 12-15 year	0.22	0.21	0.23	0.22
Daughters 16-20 year	0.16	0.20	0.23	0.18
Daughters 21 year and older	0.19	0.26	0.36	0.24
Farm-hands till 11 year	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Farm-hands 12-15 year	0.14	0.24	0.07	0.07
Farm-hands 16-20 year	0.37	0.45	0.25	0.08
Farm-hands 21 year and older	0.53	0.88	0.17	0.05
Maids till 11 year	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
Maids 12-15 year	0.14	0.24	0.07	0.07
Maids 16-20 year	0.28	0.44	0.26	0.14
Maids 21 year and older	0.51	0.58	0.26	0.08
Average household size	6.42	7.37	5.71	4.77
Number of cases studied (N)	409	3,187	281	186

Source: Calculated from census-data of several municipalities; 1862: *Bijdragen* 1870.

A last possible supply-side explanation I want to propose is social-cultural and not economical. With what in The Netherlands is called “the Bourgeois Civilisation Offensive”, the idea of the private family household found rising popularity. Live-in farm servants can be seen as a hindrance for private family life of the farmers (Devine 1984: 2). As we have seen, it where the small and medium farmers who discharged their live-in personnel firstly. Following this reasoning, on these small and medium farms they employed only one to three servants who were most of the time an integral part of the family, for example they ate together with the farmer family at the same dish.

For large farms the situation was quite different. The three to seven farm servants were strictly separated from the farmer family in Groningen, having a special room where they could eat and stay in the evening. On these large farms the servants were less a hindrance to privacy than on the smaller farms. Also large farmers could not easily do completely without live-in personnel, they were necessary, not only for domestic work in the big farm-houses, but also to take care of the animals. It seems that it was only after 1900, and especially after 1914 that they managed to organise their farms in such a way that they could do without live-in farm-hands and some of the maids. The richest ones kept one or sometimes two maids only for domestic work to help the farmer's wife and daughters to keep the house clean and to take care of the children. These farm maids had turned into real domestics, who disliked to milk cows or do other farm work.

As already stated, most of the farm servants were originating from labourer families. In the first half of the 19th century this seems less the case, than in the second half of the 19th century. Data on people born in the Groningen clay soil area collected within the Integral History Project Groningen of P. Kooij show that of the farm-hands born in 1830 (and active in that job approximately between 1845 and 1860), 58% of the parents were labourers, while in 1850 this percentage was 77% and in 1870 it was 79%. Especially sons of parents with non-agricultural jobs disappeared from the agricultural labour market: their share fell from 32% of the farm-hands in 1830 to 12% in 1870 (the rest being farmer's sons). For the girls it isn't possible to make a division between farm maids and other live-in maids (in the sources nearly all the maids are called “maids at service” or “domestic”). However, for these live-in maids the share of labourer's daughters rose from 54% in 1829 [?] to 66% in 1869, while the share of daughters from non-agricultural origin fell from 38% to 28%.

Although the above-mentioned data could suggest that relatively more sons and daughters of labourers became live-in servant, this absolutely wasn't the case. Of the labourer's sons born in 1830 68% became farm-hand, however, for those born in 1850 and 1870 this share was only 57% and 61%, respectively (only data on children reaching maturity). Of the labourer's daughters the share which became live-in maid (inside and outside agriculture) at least for a few years was for those born in 1830 72%, in 1850 82%, and in 1870 79%. It has to be remarked in this respect that in the last decades of the 19th century live-in servants possibly more frequently returned home for certain periods. As table 5 shows us a rising number of labourer's sons and daughters remained at home at least some years of their adolescence around the end of the 19th century.

TABLE 5. AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION OF LABOURERS, 1829-1909.

	1829	1862	1889	1909
Male head of household	0.82	0.85	0.92	0.94
Female head of household	0.18	0.15	0.08	0.06
Married women	0.73	0.75	0.84	0.85
Sons till 11 year	0.72	0.72	0.74	0.58
Sons 12-15 year	0.14	0.17	0.22	0.28
Sons 16-20 year	0.03	0.05	0.10	0.19
Sons 21 year and older	0.17	0.06	0.10	0.16
Daughters till 11 year	0.71	0.72	0.72	0.56
Daughters 12-15 year	0.14	0.17	0.17	0.25
Daughters 16-20 year	0.05	0.05	0.11	0.13

Daughters 21 year and older	0.10	0.07	0.10	0.11
Servants	0,00	0,03	0,05	0,01
Average household size	3.69	3.79	4.15	4,12
Number of cases studied (N)	640	7,647	585	360

Source: see table 4.

Calculations make clear that the potential supply of male farm servants by labourer families was quantitatively quite stable between 1850 and 1910, fluctuating between 3,600 and 4,600 with a fall between 1870 and 1890, although the number of labourer families was rising much faster from 5,200 to 9,500 (which means 41% and 53% respectively of the total number of family heads with an occupation). The potential supply of servants by labouring families fell from 0.7 pro family in 1850 to less than 0.5 pro family in 1910. The relatively slow rise of the potential supply was especially due to a rise in youth migration to elsewhere and a fall in the average age at marriage by two years. Interestingly, between 1870 and 1890 the potential supply of labourer sons was falling by such an amount that it wasn't enough to fill in all the actual places of farm-hands in 1890. In 1909 this situation completely reversed, although there were 4,600 labourer's sons available in the Groningen clay soil area, only 1,000 live-in farm-hands were employed. So in general it can be concluded that although around 1890 the supply of potential farm-hands by labourer families was rather low, this can not be said of the period around 1910, exactly when the number of farm servants fell so dramatically. There is also no reason to think that the potential supply of daughters of labourers diminished drastically around 1900.

So, if we want to explain the disappearance of the system of live-in farm servants by supply factors, we have to ask ourselves why potential farm servants did not become farm-hands or farm maids in reality. The only possible explanation left can be a fall in the attractiveness of the position of farm servants. Labourer and other lower class families started to keep their children at home. We come back to this point in the last section which considers the end of the system of live-in farm servants.

6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WAGES

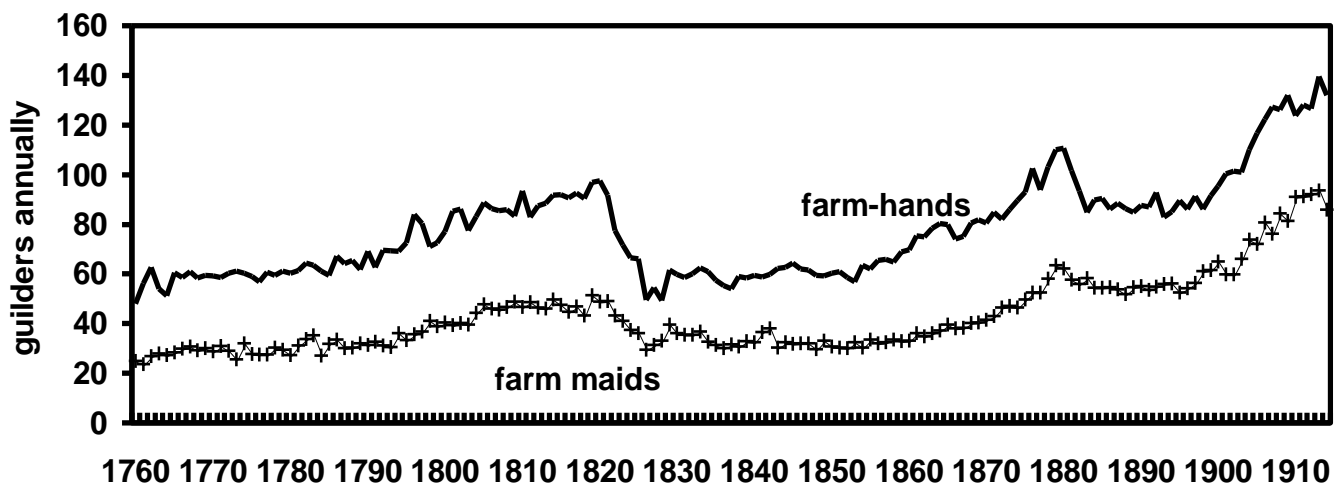
In graph 1 the average nominal annual wages of farm-hands and farm maids is pictured, the figures being based on several dozens of farm accounts. For most of the years some 20 to 45 wages are known for each group. Farm-hands earned in the 18th century more than double the wage of the maids. With the rising prices in the last decades of the 18th century and also during the French period, the wages of farm servants increased significantly. However, the first agricultural depression of the 19th century (1819-1835) resulted in wages returning to their 18th century level. After 1800 the wages of maids developed relatively favourable, rising till about 60% of the wage of farm-hands. This last figure reflects the normal wage difference between male and female nonresident labourers. Most of the years, however, maids earned relatively less than nonresident female labourers compared to farm-hands and nonresident male labourers, because they had free board and lodging⁹ and a job the whole year through, while nonresident female labourers probably could only find paid work for less than half of the days of a year, as opposed to male labourers who could easily find work for eight months or more. The rise in wages had probably something to do with falling ages at marriages causing a fall in supply and a rising demand for domestic help because of the increasing wealth of farmers till 1820.

⁹ Two farm accounts of 1794-1829 and 1854 (Paping 1995, p. 405-406) state both that farmers valued board and lodging at 100 guilders a year for a farm servant, which makes clear that food and a shelter made up the largest part of the income of farm servants, especially of the maids whose money wage was considerably lower.

Between 1830 and 1865 the wage of maids fell again till 45% of the wage of farm-hands. Around 1850 wages of first the farm-hands and some years later also the wages of farm maids began to rise again, first slowly, and in the middle of the sixties even quite fast, to reach a peak in the years 1878-1880. While the wages of farm servants were concluded nearly half a year in advance, they reacted with some delay on the crisis. As was the case in the period 1819-1821, farmers had to pay high wages, while being confronted with low agricultural prices. In contrast with the first crisis, however, the wages of farm servants did not decrease a lot during the second agricultural crisis. Especially the wages of maids remained at a much higher level than in the prosperous period before 1875. The wage differential with the farm-hands diminished between 1865 and 1915, maids ending up owing on average 70% of a males wage.

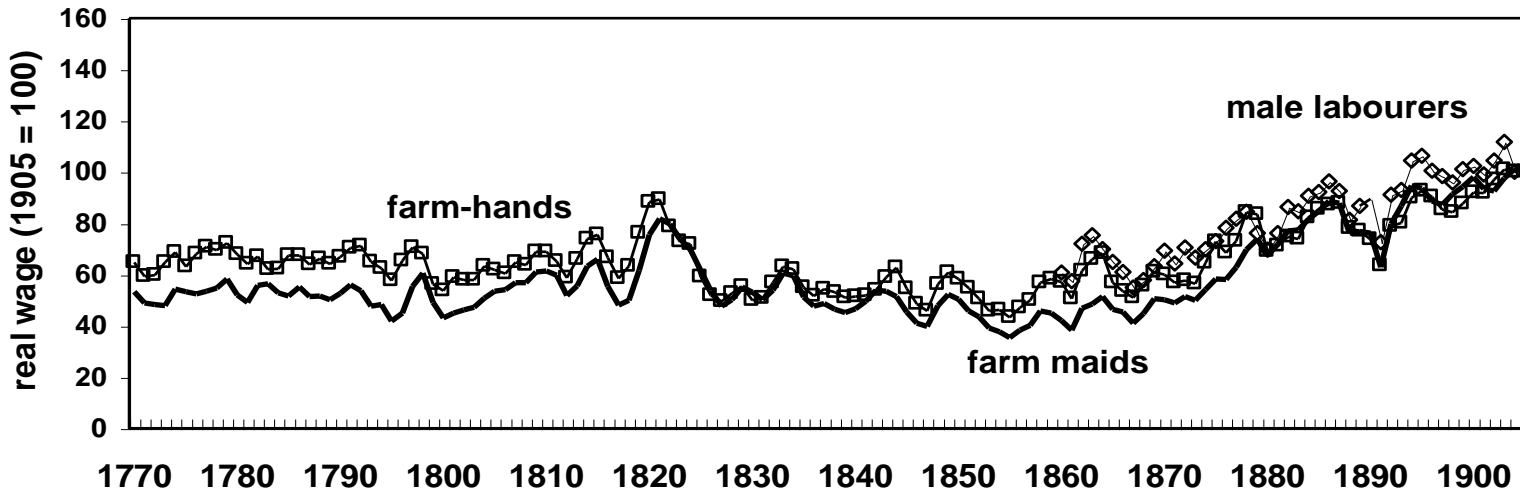
Around 1895 when agricultural prices again began to rise and partly also because of

Graph 1: Average nominal wages of farm servants in the Groningen clay area, 1760-1914.



rising productivity thanks to increasing row cultivation, new machinery (steam threshing machines) and widespread use of better fertilisers improving the yields per hectare, agriculture in Groningen started to flourish once more. Bread grains like wheat and rye, but also sugar-beets became more important in these last decades of the 19th century at the expense of potential fodder like oats, barley and cole-seed (Priester 1991: 302). Wages of male and female live-in farm servants nearly immediately reacted on the price rise with a fast rise, which continued well into World War I. After the end of World War I wages of farm-hands began to decrease (not in graph 1), while the wages of maids began to rise quickly. The nominal wage series shows indisputably that wages reacted on economic forces, and one can not say that a traditional wage level for farm servants existed. On the contrary, wages of farm servants were quite volatile. However, if we want to know what these wages meant for the people who earned them, it is better to take a look at real wages (graph 2).

Graph 2: Real wages of farms servants and male adult labourers, 1770-1915.



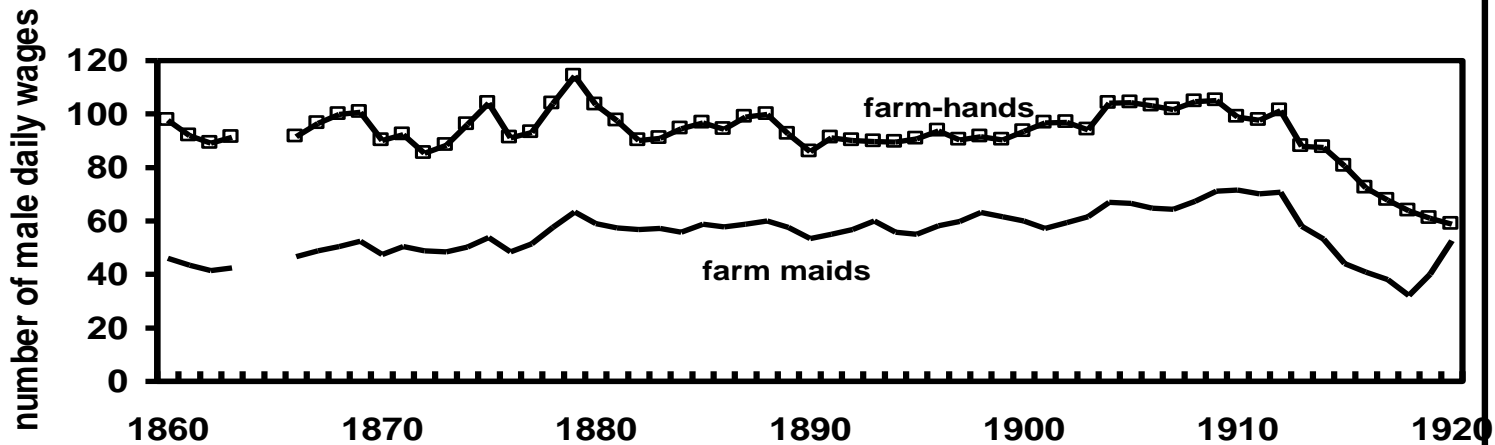
Because the nominal wages of farm servants reacted quite heavily on agricultural prices, one could suggest there was some kind of automatic price-correction. If we take a long term view at the development of real wages as is done in graph 2, it becomes clear that real wages, although relatively stable, showed a slow downward tendency in the period 1770-1860.¹⁰ After 1860 the purchasing power of farm servants increased continuously. In the second half of the 19th century it nearly doubled. From 1860 on we also have data on the average daily wage of adult farm labourers working regularly or semi-regularly on farms. These wages show in general the same tendency as the wages of the servants, although the rise was a little bit less. Clearly the economic welfare of the class of farm labourers improved considerably during this period. Farm labourers and their families were no longer living on the edge of subsistence (if they ever had been) and new possibilities opened up for them.

7. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SYSTEM OF LIVE-IN FARM SERVANTS

If we look at the development of nominal and real wages of farm servants we see that both rose after 1860. On the other hand the number of farm servants was falling. Using a simple demand-supply market model, it can be concluded that what was taking place was a fall in supply causing a rise in prices. We have already seen that a fall in the potential supply of sons and daughters of labourer and other lower class families is possibly the reason for the slow decrease in farm servants between 1870 and 1890; however this can not explain the dramatic fall after 1890. Something different was taking place in this period when the number of potential farm servants was rising again. Becoming farm servant increasingly became very unattractive. Farmers began to have difficulties to hire farm-hands and farm maids and this scarcity resulted in a considerable upward pressure on the wages of live-in farm personnel.

¹⁰ For the deflator see: Collenteur and Paping 1997: 119. The weights in this deflator, however, reflect more the consumption of families than the expenditures of young adults, who had board and lodging for free.

Graph 3: Yearly wages of Groningen farm servants expressed in the number of adult male daily wages, 1860-1920.



Graph 3, shows that not only the real wages of farm servants were rising considerably from 1860 onwards (graph 2), but they also increased a little more than the wages of adult nonresident male labourers, who constituted the largest part of the agricultural labour force in the second half of the 19th century. This was especially the case for farm maids, which number increased far less than of the farm-hands in this period. Firstly, we can conclude from graph 3 that to work as a nonresident labourer did not become more attractive if one looks to wages. Secondly, we can conclude that the rise in wages of farm servants will have stimulated the owners of small and medium farms to discharge their live-in personnel: they became relatively expensive. It isn't strange that especially the large farmers were still prepared to pay the high wages: they could also afford it.

Only after 1910 the situation completely changed. Wages of both farm-hands and maids fell considerably compared to nonresident farm wages. It was in this period that the larger farmers also did not want to hire live-in servants anymore. Although they were living separately in a different part of the house, both the burden and the responsibility for these juveniles of a lower social class increasingly did not agree with the concept of family life as the large farmers began to have around the First World War. The tasks of the farm-hands were taken over by young labourers living still at the parental home, a change made easier by the spread of bikes. Also demand for maids went down, however, after the First World War this demand again resumed, because of the need of domestic personnel by the well-to-do farmers. The final blow to the system of live-in farm servants was in this way given by the large farmers whom around World War I nearly completely changed from resident to nonresident workers. The first blow to the system, however, was already given in the last decades of the 19th century by the labourer families who seemed to have preferred to keep their older children at home, to work as nonresident farm labourers.

As already stated it wasn't economically attractive for labourer families, but also for families with only small businesses in industry and services to keep their children at home. There was not much economic work for these children in the parental household, and it was difficult to get steady jobs for these adolescents. With the help of a few very detailed farm accounts from Nieuw-Scheemda the last point can be illustrated (table 6). Except for Hindrik Snitjer not one of the children aged 14 to 16 was able to find paid work on a farm for more

than half a year. Under the age of 14 these possibilities were even smaller. Adolescent daughters could earn wages only 50 to 90 days a year, which made it very attractive for parents to send their daughters away to work as a live-in domestic. In total, daughters living at home were not able to earn as much as a maid in money, and a maid also received board and lodging extra.¹¹ The conclusion seems to be clear: keeping children at home was a very expensive strategy even in the last decades of the 19th century when more labour opportunities for adolescent children living with their parents came about.

TABLE 6. ANNUAL WORK DAYS FOR WAGE OF LABOURER'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS LIVING WITH THEIR PARENTS, NIEUW-SCHEEMDA 1870-1900.

SONS	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Hindrik Snitjer.	?	?	?	?	?	?	282	293	294
Koert Snitjer	?	?	?	?	23	31	Farm-hand at 14		
Harm Snitjer	0	0	3	20	?	?	Farm-hand later on		
Koert Greven	0	0	10	110	88	Farm-hand at 13			
Harm Greven	3	1	0	44	29	52	144	36	*
Thomas Prak	9	8	15	5	57	89	149	143	110**
Stinus Bos	?	?	?	0	0	49	61	118	102
DAUGHTERS									
Trientje Apoteker	0	1	0	0	51	Maid at 13			
Engeltje Apoteker	0	0	3	0	57	Maid at 13			
Aaltje Snitjer	?	?	?	?	?	39	86	Maid at 16	
Maria Prak	0	0	0	9	29	36	50	59	64

Source: Paping (2004b). NB: Harm Greven farm-hand at 16, Thomas Prak farm-hand at 17.

If keeping their adolescent children at home is such a precious strategy, why did labourer families started to do this more and more in the last decades of the 19th century? A possible explanation could be that the parents were able to get hold of the earnings of their older children when they remained at home. In 1906 it is stated in a governmental report that “Families are delaying the moment at which the children leave the parental home. Girls, too, often engage in casual labour and pay board and lodging or contribute their entire wages. This may be explained by a growing desire for freedom” (Paping 2004a). The working hours if servants were extremely long, they even had to work part of the Sunday, and in the house they fell completely under the supervision of the master, so their freedom was indeed very low, even compared to children remaining with their parents.

Live-in servants of 18 and older mostly had been quite independent of their parental family and kept their wage for their own use to spend on cloths, drinks and other expenses at festivities, jewels, and partly also savings,¹² so the parents did not profit a lot from them. Although the parents were legally entitled to their children wages until about the age of 21, they in practise let them keep the money if children were still younger. On the other hand, most of the older children who stayed at home, had problems finding enough wage work to even pay themselves for their own food, which made their stay at home less advantageous for the family. In the Groningen clay soil area outside the agricultural sector there were only very few job opportunities for these young people. However, with the higher real wages at the end of the 19th century it was easier to earn enough with irregular agricultural work to make staying at home possible and attractive for the parents.

¹¹ Schellekens 1993: 207-210, also concludes that daughters contrary to sons, remaining at home after the age of 15 were likely to be a burden for their parents.

¹² Savings were less important in the 19th century than before because of the diminished possibilities for upward social mobility of labourers, due to the enormous rise in the price of farms: Paping 2004b. Careful servants marrying late could easily save enough money to buy a (mortgaged) house.

The most convincing explanation for the growing reluctance of children of labourers to become live-in farm personnel has to be sought in an absolute preference for staying at the parental home. It is possible that this preference developed in the slipstream of the so-called “Bourgeois Civilisation Offensive” attaching great value to family life, which was of course completely distorted when children from 13 and older were sent away to live and work elsewhere. Also a tendency to greater freedom can be discerned under the juveniles themselves. In the year 1908 the 18 year old maid Janke Westra did not want to work for farmer Glas anymore, because she didn't want to ask him beforehand each time she wanted to come home after 10 o'clock. This seems especially to have been a problem for the older servants, who wanted more freedom than they got under the supervision of the farmer. The average age of farm-hands fell from 22.4 year in 1869, to 20.4 year in 1889 and 18.7 year in 1909.¹³ For farm maids the fall was less from 20.5 year in 1869, to 20.1 year in 1889 and 18.6 year in 1909.¹⁴ In 1906 it is stated that “One is living for a longer period with their parents, and also the girls are going to work as irregular labourers and are paying board or they hand over their wage completely. A desire for freedom is the reason” (*Algemeen* 1908: 64).

It is also possible that labourer families always had preferred to keep their children at home. However, before the last decades of the 19th century they were not able to afford it. In that period the substantial rise in real wages and so in purchasing power made it economically possible for more lower class parents to keep their children at home. Only the poorest families still had to send their children away as live-in farm servants. A possible economic reason for the preference to keep children at home despite the (relatively) rising wages of live-in servants can be that the future prospects of children who stayed at home were far better than of those children who became live-in servant. May be, for children staying at home it was easier to receive a broader job experience than for live-in servants with their rather one-sided activities.

TABLE 7. PERCENTAGE OF FORMER LIVE-IN SERVANTS IN THE INTERGENERATIONAL SOCIAL MOBILITY TABLE, SONS BORN IN 1830, 1850 AND 1870.

Sons->	Labourers		Farmers		Self-employed		Other occupations		Total		N
	Servants	Not as servant	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	
Labourers	88%	12%	67%	33%	79%	21%	44%	56%	83%	17%	212
Farmers	75%	25%	5%	95%	60%	40%	9%	91%	17%	83%	119
Self-employed	71%	29%	70%	30%	29%	71%	40%	60%	38%	62%	244
Other occupations	88%	12%	25%	75%	57%	43%	12%	88%	46%	54%	85
Total	85%	15%	10%	90%	43%	57%	28%	72%	50%	50%	
N	220		96		246		89				651

Source: Cohort analyses Integral History Project Groningen. Live-in servants in agriculture, services and handicrafts. NB: The occupation of the parents at the son's age of 15 has been compared with the occupation of a son after marriage; only sons staying in the province of Groningen.

In table 7 and 8 (Paping 2004a) all live-in servants are taken together whether working in agriculture or in services or industry. The social mobility chances of these live-in servants are compared with those who did not become live-in servants: a group which for the

¹³ Collenteur and Paping 1997: 127.

¹⁴ Of course this had also to do with the falling ages at marriages. However, these two developments were in some way interrelated: the longing for independence from masters and parents can have promoted younger marriages .

largest part stayed at home till after the age of 20. Table 7 makes clear that 83% of the sons of labourers became a live-in servant, though only 17% of the farmer's sons. Sons of the other social groups took in a middle position with nearly half of them becoming a live-in servant. Table 7 also shows the share of former live-in servants in different social groups. The shares are about equal: 85% of the labourers, but only 10% of the farmers had been servant. Interestingly, only 28% of the group "other occupations" comprising mainly skilled and semiskilled wage work had a history as a live-in servant, while the sons of this relatively modern group became in 46% of the cases live-in servants.

For sons of labourers becoming a live-in servant increased the chance to become an unskilled labourer after marriage. Former servants made up 88% of the labourer's sons becoming labourer themselves again, while only 67% of the labourer's sons who became farmer had been a live-in servant (table 7). Former live-in servants were with 44% even a minority under the group of labourer's sons which found a semiskilled or skilled job in the group "other occupations". So under the labourer's sons who stayed at home relatively more children were able to find a skilled job or even to become a farmer. Staying at home increased the chances on upward social mobility for sons of labourers. For the other social groups we also find that sons who stayed at home were better off in the end. Farmer's sons and sons of employers and self-employed in services and industry who stayed at home also had the greatest chance to have a farm or business of their own.¹⁵ However, if they became live-in servants, this enlarged the chance to end up as unskilled labourers. Of the sons of farmers who worked as labourers after marriage 75% had been a live-in servant, while only 5% of the farmer's sons stepping in the footsteps of their fathers were former servants. For the sons of employers and self-employed in industry and services staying at home was the easiest way to owning an independent trade after marriage: only 29% of these had left the parental home as a servant. Of the middle class boys which became labourer 71% had been live-in servant. However as an exception, working as a servant also gave members of this group the possibility to become a farmer (the richest social group in the Groningen clay soil area) which is shown by the high percentage of 70% of former live-in servants under the boys who experienced such upward mobility.

TABLE 8. PERCENTAGE OF FORMER LIVE-IN SERVANTS IN THE INTERGENERATIONAL SOCIAL MOBILITY TABLE, HUSBANDS OF THE DAUGHTERS BORN IN 1830, 1850 AND 1870.

Daughters-> Parents	Labourers		Farmers		Self-employed		Other occupations		Total		N
	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	
Labourers	84%	16%	50%	50%	74%	26%	77%	23%	80%	20%	300
Farmers	43%	57%	8%	92%	28%	72%	17%	83%	17%	83%	144
Self-employed	67%	33%	24%	76%	35%	65%	43%	57%	42%	58%	238
Other occupations	71%	29%	0%	100%	38%	62%	46%	54%	48%	52%	85
Total	78%	22%	14%	86%	45%	55%	44%	56%	53%	47%	
N	276		111		237		143				767

Source: see table 7. NB: The occupation of the parents at the daughter's age of 15 has been compared with the occupation of the daughter's husband after marriage; only daughters staying in the province of Groningen.

¹⁵ Lundh 1999: 75-77, finds the same results for 19th century sons and daughters of Swedish "peasants". However, contrary to the Groningen clay soil area, becoming a servant seemed to have increased the chances on upward social mobility for other (landless) social groups.

Considering the girls born in the Groningen clay soil area the conclusion can be in general the same as for the boys. For daughters of labourers becoming a maid diminished their chances on upward social mobility, or better to marry a farmer, a shopkeeper or an artisan, or a skilled or semiskilled wage-owner after marriage. These differences in chances on upward social mobility can hardly be attributed to the higher wealth of labourer families not sending their daughters out, inasmuch as the social differences within the group of labourer families were quite small in the Groningen clay area. For the daughters of farmers, artisans and tradesmen the step to become a maid was quite often the first in the direction of downward social mobility. Of the farmer's daughters marrying a day labourer 43% had been a maid, while only 17% of all the farmer daughters worked as a domestic. The share of girls staying at home under the farmer's daughters marrying a farmer again was even 92% against 8% maids (table 8). While 67% of the daughters of employers and self-employed in industry and services who married a labourer had a career as a maid, only 35% of those who married a husband of the same social group as their father left home to work elsewhere.

Although it isn't completely clear if the bad prospects of live-in servants were known beforehand inside the families, the great enthusiasm for keeping the children at home when this became economically feasible points at that direction. This suggests that the shift from live-in servant to searching work while remaining in the parental home was an investment strategy of lower class families directed at a better future of their children.

Fortunately, Bras (2002) had recently published data considering the countryside and urban girls in the Dutch province Zeeland, which make it possible to compare the Groningen data on social mobility. Patterns are, however, less clear for the Zeeland maids. Social differences are far less distinctive. Relatively more daughters of farmers became live-in servants, while on the other hand a position of maid can not be called a usual stage in the life cycle of girls from labourer families. Possibly, these differences can be partly attributed to the fact that a lot of the Zeeland girls under investigation were born later than 1870, when the system of live-in farm servants started to disappear, as is indicated by the low percentage of 40% of the daughters born between 1835 and 1927 which became a maid in Zeeland. This figure can be compared with the 53% of girls born in the Groningen clay soil area in 1830, 1850 and 1870 becoming live-in domestics (table 9).

TABLE 9: PERCENTAGE OF FORMER LIVE-IN SERVANTS IN THE INTERGENERATION-AL SOCIAL MOBILITY TABLE, DAUGHTERS BORN 1835-1927 IN ZEELAND.

Daughters->	Labourers		Farmers		Self-employed		Other occupations		Total		N
	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	Servants	Not as servants	
Labourers	43%	57%	43%	57%	36%	64%	68%	32%	47%	53%	292
Farmers	28%	72%	12%	88%	29%	71%	40%	60%	25%	75%	83
Self-employed	41%	59%	17%	83%	18%	82%	35%	65%	31%	69%	71
Other occupations	45%	55%	13%	87%	20%	80%	38%	62%	38%	62%	87
Total	41%	59%	20%	80%	26%	74%	51%	49%	40%	60%	
N	235		61		68		169				533

NB: Self-employed include "higher class". The occupation of the parents at birth is compared with the occupation of the daughter's husband after marriage. Only daughters which stayed in The Netherlands. Source: Calculations based on Bras 2002: 136.

Becoming a maid in Zeeland was not very disastrous for the girls' prospects. The chance to marry an unskilled labourer was only slightly higher for maids, and for girls from labourer families it was even lower than to marry someone of a different social group. Only 41% of all the girls marrying a labourer had been a maid, compared to 40% of all the girls who had been a maid. The 43% of maids under the labourer's daughters marrying labourers

has to be compared with a general 47% of maids under all the labourer's daughters. A lot of these maids were able to marry skilled labourers, partly due to the fact that a lot of live-in maids born in Zeeland went to the nearby large cities in Holland with its numerous factories and large firms employing these skilled labourers. For the Groningen girls America was a more usual destination, however we don't have information on the further life of these migrants. For Zeeland maids having parents with a farm or an independent business in industry or services, the chances to get hold of such a firm after marriage was indeed lower than for girls remaining at home, however, the differences are only small. At least for the Zeeland girls it can not be positively stated that keeping children at home was improving their future prospects enough to suggest that this behaviour was part of an investment strategy, as was presumably the case in the Groningen clay soil area.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The system of live-in farm servants deteriorated in the period 1860-1910 because the farm labourer families and also other lower class families were no longer inclined to send almost all their adolescent children to other houses for work. Presumably, this strategy which was made possible by rising real wages was motivated by a rising preference for family life and for more freedom for the children. While children who remained at home were in the long run mostly better off than the ones who became a live-in servant, this change can perhaps also be seen as an investment strategy in the children. The high wages of the live-in servants stimulated the smaller farmers to stop hiring live-in personnel. Around 1910 it were nearly only large farms who employed live-in personnel. However, around the First World War they also threw out their farm-hands and most of their maids, keeping only a maid for domestic and not for farm work. The last development is possibly connected by a greater desire for privacy of the large farmers. So the first and heaviest blow to the system was given by supply factors (the labourer families), however, the system was nearly completely swept away a few decades later by demand factors (the farmer families).

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