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English Individualism and Continental Altruism? Servants, Remittances and Welfare in
Eighteenth-Century Rural Europe.

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Abstract

Life-cycle service is one of the characteristic aspects of the European Marriage Pattern. The majority of the children of labourers and peasants left the household of their parents during adolescence to acquire material resources and skills in preparation of marriage. Whilst in service, adolescents could save part of their wages. As most of them worked in close geographical proximity to their family, children in service were also a potential source of income for their parents. This paper studies the nature, frequency and value of remittances from farm servants to their parents in three countries during the eighteenth century. Important differences emerge from this comparative study. Farm servants in Belgium and France frequently supported their parents financially with their earnings. In England parents could in most cases not rely on structural assistance from their unmarried adolescent children. I argue that property rights explain these differences. The absence of land that could be passed on through inheritance operated as a check to intergenerational solidarity.

Introduction

In 1784, fourteen people appeared for the notary in the village of Cérans (north-western France) to discuss the pension of an elderly farmer named Louis Porteboeuf. This retired farmer had no savings and was too old to earn a living. Porteboeuf turned to his kin group to come up with a solution for his poverty. The family members of Porteboeuf decided that all of them, from his children to his nieces and nephews, would found an annuity of 96 *livres* per annum. The contract stipulated that each family member would contribute to the annual pension of Porteboeuf taking into account the '*proximité de parenté*' (kinship proximity). Thus, the six children provided the bulk of the pension with 60 *livres*. The other family members each contributed 3 to 4 *livres*. Four of the six children of Porteboeuf worked as servants when this contract was drawn up. (Fillon 1991, p. 41). All of the children agreed to remit part of their earnings, either as a farmer, gardener or servant, to their destitute father. This contract, by no means exceptional in this region, illustrates the importance of the family as a source of financial and material assistance in eighteenth-century rural France. The care of a parent however could seriously undermine the saving potential of a servant. Elizabeth Brooks for example worked 16 years as a servant when she left her London employer around 1770 to take care of her blind mother in rural Sussex. By 1772 the care of the mother had absorbed nearly all of the savings of Elizabeth Brooks and she contemplated applying to the parish for poor relief (Crawford 2010, p. 55 and 251). For children working as servants, financial assistance to parents was not a simple formality. In agreeing to this support, these servants not only accepted a lower income, but also delayed the process of resource accumulation that was expected from them in a neo-local pattern of household formation.

From the viewpoint of unmarried adolescents, balancing the expectations of family solidarity with pre-marital resource acquisition was neither easy nor straightforward.

In both these cases individual ambitions were sacrificed at the altar of filial assistance. These examples of servants in France and England indicate that part of the earnings from service were remitted to close kin. They also highlight the importance of the family as a source of welfare for the elderly. In both cases remittances of unmarried children were part of the solution for the poverty of the parents. Viewed from the perspective of the parents, unmarried children in service were clearly an asset in these two cases. The separation from the household did not necessarily result in severing all financial and material ties between them. Louis Porteboeuf and the mother of Elizabeth Brooks experienced the hardships individuals could encounter resulting from the specific pattern of household formation and organization that characterized much of Western Europe (Laslett 1988). In both cases it was the family, and not the collectivity that came to the aid. To what extent these two cases are exemplary for rural societies in eighteenth-century rural Europe is one of the main themes of this paper.

This focus of this paper lies with the wages and earnings of farm servants and their financial relationships with their family members, especially their parents. I have opted for servants as a case study because they were able, at least in theory, to financially assist their parents. As I have shown in other research servants could save up 30 to 40 per cent of their cash wages (Lambrecht, 2012a, p. 5-10). It has been argued that these savings were used to acquire the necessary financial and material resources to establish a new household. My research on eighteenth-century Flanders however also exposed another story. When the accounts and contracts of farm servants with their employers are analyzed in detail, a picture emerges of servants as apparently altruistic family members. Servants allocated part of their earnings directly and indirectly to their family members, especially their parents. The picture

that emerged from these accounts was vastly different from what English historians write about the importance of remittances from children in service. Richard Smith in particular has argued on different occasions that service was not an institution conducive to the transfer of resources from children to their parents or family members (Smith 1984, p. 72 and Smith 1981, p. 605-606). For John Hajnal too, service was a stage characterized by great financial independence from the parental household (Hajnal, 1982, p. 474). Not all historians have subscribed to this view with reference to England. Bridget Hill for example argued that remittances from servants to their parents were not that uncommon, although hard evidence was scarce (Hill 1996, p. 214-215). Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos argued that the life-cycle mobility of unmarried adolescents tended to strengthen rather weaken family ties, but that servants never became a regular source of assistance for the family (Krausman Ben-Amos 1994, p. 165-170 and Krausman Ben-Amos 2000, p. 297). To what extent servants remitted part of their earnings to their family members can also be framed in a wider debate concerning the role of kin members as sources of assistance. On this matter English historians have been divided. Some have argued that the collectivity, especially welfare provisioning under the Old Poor Law, was more important than the family. Other have stressed the importance of the family as the most generous and secure source of assistance (for a recent review see Tadmor 2010).

This article introduces some comparative data on these issues. In the first section the potential of servants to remit part of their wages to their family members is assessed. The next two sections present the empirical results of research on the importance and frequency of remittances in three countries: Belgium, France and England. This comparative exercise indicates that some differences can be observed between England and the two continental regions. In the last section I present a hypothesis about the origins of these different levels of kinship solidarity in eighteenth-century rural Europe.

Remittance potential and constraints

One of the main characteristics of service was the physical separation of children from the parental household. In general children entered service during their mid-teens when they were no longer net consumers. Employers would only house, feed and pay a cash wage to an adolescent if their productive capacities exceeded their human maintenance cost. This also implies that many children left the household just when they could become net contributors. Children that left for service were also migrants. Much of the population movement in pre-industrial was the result of servants moving between different employers. Servants can thus be viewed as migrants with the potential to remit part of their earnings to their parents. However, there were a number of obstacles that needed to be overcome before an eighteenth-century migrant could remit. Some of these practical problems were identified and addressed by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century. Like many others after 1750, Bentham identified intra-family transfers in general and wage remittances from children to parents in particular as a possible alternative to public welfare among the labouring poor. Unlike many others however, Bentham also realized that there were a number of practical obstacles to transferring small sums of money. As he wrote in 1796, *'The poor man's pittance is immovable. A dutiful child, who has quited his native cottage for employment, might send (one should think), a few shillings, as he could save and spare them, to assist an aged parent in his struggles against incidence [...]. No, it is not to be done.'* (Bentham 1796, p. 90). Bentham claimed that many children living and working at some distance from their parents could assist them, but in practice never did. Especially the high costs attached to sending small amounts of money across the country and the lack of geographical coverage by the postal services obstructed such transfers. To overcome these problems and reduce transport

costs, Bentham proposed to erect 'remittance offices' attached to his houses of industry (Bentham 1796, p. 90; Bentham 1798, p. 490-494). The absence of these types of financial institutions, that facilitated the exchange of small sums of money between kin-members who were geographically separated, resulted in higher levels of dependency on external support according to Bentham. Lack of opportunity rather than willingness or financial margins to assist kin-members explained the absence of these transfers. Bentham's observations on the difficulties to transfer small payments between distant parishes during the late eighteenth century are confirmed by recent research on the practical problems of the administration of out-relief under the Old Poor Law. Even until the early decades of the nineteenth century well-organised parishes and their overseers encountered substantial difficulties in transferring money to out-residents. The absence of a reliable infrastructure to transmit small payments between parishes has been identified by Steve King as one of the great logistical problems of outdoor relief to sojourners (King 2005, p. 167-173). In the Dutch Republic skippers of small canal boats transported small parcels of cash, but to what extent labourers used this transport service is unknown (de Vries 1981, p. 128-129).

Not all categories of labourers experienced these technical difficulties in transferring money to their family. Especially those involved in long-distance labour migration had access to advanced financial technology to remit part of their wages. For English naval seamen such opportunities already existed in the first half of the eighteenth century. If they appointed an attorney, they could allocate part of their earnings to people of their choice. However, costs and attorney fees were so high that very few very few seamen made use of this opportunity to assist their family members from their wages. The Navy Act of 1758 altered this system and ensured that sailors could send money almost free of charge (Gradish 1978, p. 46-67; Lin 1997, p. 31-91). Employees of the Dutch East India Company also had the opportunity at their disposal to remit part of their wages. Through a system of so-called *maandbrieven* sailors

could send part of their annual wages to any person of their choice (van der Heijden and van den Heuvel 2007, p. 299-301). In the Austrian Netherlands dependents of sailors employed by the Ostend Compagny could equally receive advance payments on the wages of their family members working overseas (Parmentier 2002, p. 35). Most of the labourers in pre-industrial Europe did not have these cheap advanced financial instruments at their disposal to transfer small sums of money over short distances. It is important to stress the lack of this type of institutions in many part of rural Europe before the nineteenth century as this could restrict migrants in their options and abilities to assist their family members. If offspring were working as servants at some distance from home, parents were less likely to receive any material assistance from them. This was already suggested by Laslett in his original formulation of the nuclear hardship hypothesis. Close geographical proximity to kin was identified as one of the pre-conditions of family welfare (Laslett 1988, p. 157-158). Also, sufficient money had to circulate to enable employers to make cash payments to their labourers (Muldrew 2007). In the eighteenth century the availability of cash gradually expanded, so in theory labourers could assist their family members from their surplus earnings with coin (Muldrew and King 2004, p. 159-160 and Lambrecht 2007, p. 93-97).

Remittances can only take place in the eighteenth century when a number of conditions are met. First, wage earners need to be working close to the residence of the potential beneficiaries of remittances to overcome the problem of costly transfers of cash or goods in kind. Secondly, wage earners should have a surplus income. If wages are so low that they will only maintain the labourer, there are no financial margins to assist family members. In pre-industrial Europe at least one occupational group meets these two requirements. Servants in husbandry were a highly mobile group. Farm servants moved frequently, but did so in most cases over relatively limited distances. The annual turnover of servants was high, most of them changed employers after one or two years of service, but geographical mobility

was restricted. Anne Kussmaul has defined the mobility of farm servants as ambiguous as they moved often but within narrow a geographical range (Kussmaul 1981a). Most of the servants thus stayed close to their parental home. In terms of remuneration servants enjoyed a particular status. They were housed and fed by their employer and received a cash wage on top of their wages in kind. It has been estimated that this cash wage represented some 20 to 40 per cent of the total wage (Whittle 2005, p. 95-96 and Lambrecht 2012a, p. 4-5). In theory a large part of this cash wage could be saved and in practice many servants did (Lambrecht 2012a, p. 9-10). Some of these savings contributed to a marriage fund that would enable the servant to start a new household. For parents, children in service were a potential source of additional income as most of them were working close to home and received a wage that was higher than their human maintenance cost.

Continental altruism

Farm servants have left very few written records from which we can infer their financial trajectories. Some information about the remittance behaviour of servants can be extracted from the account books of their employers. Many farmers in Flanders kept detailed notes about labour expenditure on their farm. Although few have survived, they are highly instructive about the relationship between the servant and their wider kin group. When labour contracts were drafted, parents of servants are frequently mentioned as beneficiaries of a range of goods and services. Kin members of servants also appear in deductions and advance payments on wages recorded by their employers.

The account books of farmers in Flanders indicate that the entry of a child into service was also an occasion for parents to secure income for themselves. In many account books, kin members, and parents in particular, appear in the labour contracts. Next to the cash wage and payments in kind to the servants, some contracts also specify payments for the parents. These

payments, as the account of a late eighteenth-century farmer indicates, consisted of various types of goods and services (see table below).

[insert Table 1 here]

Overall, one third of the contracts listed in this account book contain references to benefits in kind for parents. These payments to parents mostly consisted of cheap foodstuffs (rye and potatoes). Parents also secured land for themselves. In this particular context land refers to the right of the parents to cultivate potatoes (free of charge) on land that was exploited by the employer of their children. These plots of land were very small (ranging between 0.026 and 0.037 ha). Servants also secured coal and free transport services for their parents. Parents of servants thus gained access to the horse team of the employer of their children. Similar arrangements between servants, employers and parents also abound in other account books (for what follows see Lambrecht 2009, p. 638-643 and Lambrecht 2012a, p. 13-16). A maid on the farm of Gerard de Wulf in the village of Eke negotiated a wage of 3 £ Flemish per annum and 2 '*meukens*' (or 28 litres) of rye for her mother. On another farm, the father of a maid called Marianne De Mey secured 1 barrel of rye for himself when he hired out his daughter. The parents of Joannes Neerinck received some pieces of clothing and a dish of pork meat. When Pieter D'Hont hired himself as a servant in 1774 he managed to secure the free use of a team of horses for one day for his mother. Some arrangements between parents and children in the context of employment were not explicitly mentioned in the labour contract. A government decree from 1740 reports that servants also tried to secure gleaning rights - most likely for their parents - on the fields of their employer when they hired themselves (Placcaertboeck van Vlaenderen 1763: p. 829-830). Labour contracts recorded in

farm account books thus probably underestimate the range of goods and services servants obtained for their parents.

These benefits in kind probably had repercussions on the wage servants received from their employer. From the viewpoint of the employer, benefits in kind were part of the wage of the servant and would thus affect other remuneration components. Most probably, these benefits in kind for parents resulted in a lower cash wage for the servant. Indirectly the servant thus remitted part of his wage to his parents. The monetary value of these benefits for parents is usually not recorded in the accounts books. A comparison between the market value of some of these benefits and the cash wage of the servant indicates that these were not insignificant. For one servant, receiving a cash wage of 720 *stuiver* per annum, the value of the 18 rods of potato land secured for his parents amounted to 82 *stuiver* or 11 per cent of his cash wage. For another servant the market value of the potato land was worth more than one-fourth of his cash wage. From other account books we know that farmers charged the equivalent of 13 daily wages of an adult labourer for the use of horse and cart during one day (Lambrecht 2012a, p. 14). Servants would most likely have received a lower cash wage if they secured benefits for their parents and consequently, this would have influenced their earning and saving potential.

Some farmers not only recorded the labour contracts, but also kept detailed notes about the expenditure patterns of their workforce. Most employers allowed their servants advance payments on their wages. To avoid conflicts these payments were recorded and settled against the annual wage at the end of the service term. From these entries in account books it is possible to reconstruct the spending patterns of servants. Interestingly, parents of servants frequently appear in these expenses. Servants sent cash, food and clothing to their parents and also paid different services from their wages. The value of all these goods and services were deducted from the wages of the servants. In 1720 a maid spent 72 per cent of

her cash wage on transfers to her parents. These remittances represented between 35 and 40 daily wages of a male labourer. Especially with younger servants (cow herds) these transfers to parents appear frequently. In some cases recipients of goods in kind were not specified, but most likely these items were destined for family members. Farmers fed their servants, so in theory servants did not have to purchase any food. The numerous references to basic foodstuffs (rye, potatoes and pork) in the accounts of servants suggest that these were allocated to family members. Servants also indirectly financed the proto-industrial activities of their parents. Daniel Spinsemaille for example purchased flax seed from his employer destined to be grown on the fields of his parents. The accounts of servants also indicate that yarn and processed flax were transferred to the parents. Although the vast majority of these transfers were vertical, from children to their parents, some examples can be found where money was transferred to other kin members. Jan Soubrie for example transferred approximately one third of his cash wage to his uncle in 1722. In 1751 a maid named Petronella Vereecke spent one fourth of her cash wage to pay for the burial and funeral expenses of her deceased sister (Lambrecht 2012a, p. 14-15). As was the case with benefits in kind, servants partly financed the household of their parents with the wages earned in service.

Farm servants in France display similar remittance behaviour. Here too, references to payments from servants to their families can be frequently encountered in farm account books. Parents appear as recipients of benefits in kind given to farm servants. A farm servant in Saint-Eutrope (Agenais) for example received a cash wage of 15 *livres* per year and some pieces of clothing in 1737, but also 228 litres of grain and a sack of vegetables (Tholin 1880, p. 384). In the same region a servant received two *sacs* or 218 litres of grain on top of his cash wages in 1756 (Charbonneau 1970, p. 169). Although no explicit references are made to the fact that this food was destined for the parents, it is highly unlikely that the servants themselves would have consumed this grain. In northern France it was not uncommon for

farm servants to receive flax seed on top of their wages. In some cases the parents of the servants are explicitly recorded as beneficiaries of this flax seed.¹ Parents receiving benefits in kind from the employers of their children in service seems an almost universal practice in the Alsace region. As in Flanders parents received a variety of foodstuffs (wine and grain), but could also access to the working capital of the employers of their children free of charge. Thus, in the 1780's and 1790's parents could use the horses, ploughs and carts of large farmers where they had placed their offspring in service. For the French historian Jean-Michel Boehler these frequent indirect remittances testify to the strong family ties in this region (Boehler 1994, p. 1048-1053). Parents also used the wages of their children as a kind of cash deposit on which they could draw from time to time. In the region of Boulogne parents used the wages of their children in service to purchase grain and textiles from their employers (Hamy 1906, p. 354). The mother of a servant in Droyes used the wages of her son in service to obtain an unspecified amount of merchandises from his employer (Arnouet 1962, p. 169). In northern France too the cash wages of farm servants were sometimes almost completely absorbed by goods and services delivered to the parents of servants (de Calonne 1920, p. 270). On the farm of the Chartier family (north of Paris), male servants who were hired locally received some 13 per cent of their cash wage in kind (especially foodstuffs) between 1737 and 1746 (Moriceau and Postel-Vinay 1992: p. 252). This strongly suggests that adolescents working on this farms assisted their family members living nearby. In some cases parents could rely on periodical cash transfers from their children. The wages of François Dupuy for example were paid in three-monthly instalments to his father in 1767 and used to pay taxes. In most cases parents were the main beneficiaries of these remittances, but also brothers and sisters are sometimes recorded (Gutton 1981, p. 112-114). In some regions tradition allegedly prescribed that the wages of children placed in service flowed back to the

¹ See the multiple references in the account book of Pierre Antoine Le Blond (1759-1784), held at the Archives Départementales Pas-de-Calais, Serie E, depot 585 II 8.

parental household. Thus a 1765 memoir on the economic situation of rural households in the Gévaudan reported: 'When children reach a certain age, the father places them as servants and receives almost all of their wages' (translated from Claverie and Lamaison 1982, p. 85).

The most detailed evidence testifying to the importance of these remittances can be gleaned from the account book of the family Flahaut in Labourse (northern France). This family exploited a large farm (exact size unknown, but in 1811 three plough servants were employed) and kept a detailed record of payments to their workforce. The detailed notes about the wages of servants reveal that remittances to parents were almost a general rule. Between 1812 and 1830 servants allocated on average one fifth of their cash wages to their parents. The intensity of these remittances varied from one year to another. In some years no cash transfers from servants to parents were recorded. In years of high food prices, the intensity of these remittances could rise spectacularly. In 1816 for example female servants on this farm remitted 26 per cent of their wages to their parents. The following year, when the price of rye had risen by some 42 per cent, the volume of remittances rose to 53 per cent of their cash wages. The maximum share of the cash wages flowing back to the parents was 44 and 53 per cent respectively for male and female servants. Also, male servants frequently purchased peat and coal from their employer. These purchases should probably also be added to the volume of remittances (Hubscher 1969, p. 391-396; see also Heywood 1988, p. 37). The detailed accounts of this farm clearly illustrate that remitting money was very common for farm servants. This suggests that children working as farm servants were in most cases still strongly integrated into the household economy of their parents.

The importance of servants for their parents' material wellbeing can be illustrated directly from the wage books of farms employing servants. However, there is also indirect evidence that testifies to the important role of unmarried offspring for the household economies of the peasantries of France. The significance of remittances from unmarried

children is illustrated by the specific measures adopted concerning the welfare of soldiers families at the end of the eighteenth century. Hundreds of thousands of young unmarried men were separated from their families during the early years of the French Revolution. In 1792 a set of measures was introduced to compensate households for the loss of income they sustained following the enlistment of their children. This measure was intended to reduce resistance to military enrolment. The system of family allowances operated between 1792 and 1796. It has been estimated that the French military effort resulted in the recruitment of some 800000 to 900000 men in 1794. This large-scale conscription resulted in labour shortages (and rising wages) in the countryside (see the numerous references in Festy 1947). The effects however stretched further. Many households were deprived of their productive and income-generating capacities. As conscription targeted young male adolescents in particular, households were stripped of part of their labour power and income. A report of the French Minister of Interior estimated that, on average, one unmarried adolescent cared for the material needs of two family members. It was calculated that circa 1.6 million individuals would need to be compensated throughout France (Thuillier 1988, p. 488). The French state thus acknowledged that the enlistment of young men had a profound impact on the households of the French rural labouring classes. To neutralize the effects of the conscription on unmarried young men, the French state decided to compensate poor families for their material losses (see table below).

[insert Table 2 here]

In 1792, compensation was restricted to those who had enrolled voluntarily into the army. One year later, compensations were extended to all soldiers. From 1793 orphaned brothers and sisters from also received benefits. Parents could also claim benefits if they were

younger than 60 and prove that they were poor or incapable to work. The value of these pensions rose between 1792 and 1794 to compensate for the galloping inflation. What is most striking however, is that the compensation for service in the army extended far beyond the traditional categories of wives, and children and widows. For example, the father and mother of a farm servant enlisted in the army would receive a joint annual pension of 200 *livres* in 1793 and 1794. If they had two sons in the army, the pension could be doubled. French welfare schemes for soldiers clearly reflect the importance of unmarried children for their parents. This also becomes apparent when the distribution of these pensions is analyzed in detail. In the village of Bassens (near Bordeaux) 75 enlisted soldiers entitled 91 family members to relief or compensation. The vast majority of the assistance received from family members came from unmarried sons: 68 out of 91 received assistance because they had a son or grandson in the army (Valette 1989, p. 323). The state compensated households for the hardship brought upon them as a result from military conscription. In doing so, the state thus officially recognized that unmarried adolescents (such as farm servants) were an indispensable part of the household economies and a secure source of income.

These transfers to the parents, either as benefits in kind or subtracted from the cash wages, may not all appear that substantial individually. We should however take into account that the transfers that can be traced through account books of employers probably underestimate the true extent and value of cash, goods and services that flowed back to the parental household. Servants also frequently received unspecified cash advances on their wages. In these cases it is not possible to determine what servants did with these cash advances. It is possible these were also remitted to the parents. More importantly however, parents would have more than one child working as a servant. If the transfers of multiple children in service could be cumulated, their importance for the parental household economy could be more substantial. The most important argument pleading for the importance of these

transfers for the household economy of the parents can be simply derived from the very existence of these transfers. If parents were able to support themselves without the aid of their offspring in service, we would simply not encounter these remittances in the account books of the employers of farm servants. This strongly suggests that part of the earnings of the servants, either indirectly or directly, constituted a welcome addition to the household income of parents. As such servants in rural France and Belgium were economic assets for their parents. Although they were physically separated from their parents, intense and frequent flows of material resources can be reconstructed.

Some insight into the relative value of these remittances can be obtained through comparison with other types of assistance. In Belgium each parish was equipped with an institution that administered poor relief to the local inhabitants. These poor boards collected and administered charitable donations and distributed them to needy parish members (see Vanhaute and Lambrecht 2011). A comparison between the material assistance dispensed by these welfare institutions with the cash wages of servants can be highly instructive. Indirectly this comparison informs us about the potential and relative importance of family and institutional welfare. For a group of Flemish villages called ‘The Eight Parishes’ welfare resources and wages of servants working in these parishes can be reconstructed in great detail. Reliable information is available for each of these parishes on the number of servants, their wages and poor relief expenditure around 1700. Data about the resources of poor relief boards relate to their annual income. In other words, the annual income represents the maximum these institutions could distribute among the parishioners (see table below).

[insert Table 3 here]

The results of these calculations indicate that the cash wages earned by servants in these parishes vastly exceeded the income of poor relief institutions. Important variations can be observed between the parishes. Relative to the wages of servants, the poor board of Woesten was not very richly endowed. The combined wages of servants were almost 50 times higher than the income of the poor board. In Elverdinge the poor board disposed of more income, but this still only represented some 10 per cent of the wages of servants. In general the assistance these relief institutions could offer was dwarfed by the value of the cash wages of servants. This clearly indicates that, viewed from the perspective of parents, children in service were a potentially more generous source of assistance than local poor relief boards. The data in this table also indicate that poor relief expenditure was low compared to the earning capacity of unmarried adolescents working as servants. If each individual servant in these villages remitted 8 per cent of their cash wage to their parents, this sum equalled the annual poor relief expenditure in these communities. It should be stressed that these calculations are based on the cash wages of servants. The cash wage only represented between 30 and 40 per cent of total remuneration. When the value of board is taken into account, the relative value of poor relief expenditure drops to less than 5 per cent. In the late eighteenth century, similar ratios between servants wages and poor relief expenditure prevailed in this region. The value of poor relief expenditure relative to servants' wages was 8 per cent in 1795 (Lambrecht 2012a, p. 19). These calculations strongly suggest that the family, and in particular unmarried children in service, could offer more generous assistance than local collective welfare institutions. Such a discrepancy between the wages of servants and public welfare provisions probably also occurred in eighteenth-century rural France. Whilst in Belgium all parishes had a poor relief agency, many French rural parishes did not even have any funds available for welfare purposes (Hufton 1974, p. 131-176; Chapalain-Nougaret 1989, p. 358-364). The lack of structural welfare support in rural France (combined with the

paucity of their resources) suggests that the wages of servants were probably more important for rural households than in Belgium.

English Individualism

As noted earlier, historians working on the institution of service in England have stressed the relative financial independence of farm servants from their family members. A number of historians of the institution of farm service in eighteenth-century England have addressed the issue of remittances directly. The work of Ann Kussmaul has revealed that these transfers were certainly not inexistent. Evidence of remittances from children in service to their parents can be found in eighteenth-century farm account books. However, as Kussmaul notes, these references pertain almost exclusively to the youngest segment of the servant population. Especially young servants such as cowherds remitted part of their wages to their parents (Kussmaul 1981b, p. 76). Keith Snell also unearthed evidence of remittances from children working as servants. However, as he notes, these arrangements were limited in time. Parents of servants could only expect a year's wage at best during the start of the servant career of the child. Examples of such arrangements that lasted longer are scarce (Snell 1985, p. 347-348). For English labouring households, the importance of remittances can also be reconstructed using the budgets of labouring household collected by David Davies and Frederic Eden in the late eighteenth century (Sokoll 1991). Most of the household budgets collected by Davis and Eden refer to households with many young children. Although no research has been undertaken to verify if the composition of the households in these budgets are representative of the household situation of agricultural labourers, the impression arises that most of the household in these budgets are young households with a high number of non-productive members. Households of labourers that had children working away from home as

servants or apprentices are scarce in these collections of budgets. In the budget collection of Eden three households are listed that had children working outside the parental household. In none of these household budgets remittances from children working as servants were recorded as a source of income. The household headed by 39-year old carter had a daughter of 15 working as a servant girl in Manchester, but there are no traces of remittances from this daughter in the calculation of the total earnings. A boy of 16 working as a servant in Monmouth (Wales) also did not assist his parents from his wages. Even when a household had multiple children working as servants, no income was derived from their activities. A labourer in Streatly (Berkshire) had three children working as servants, but these do not appear in the detailed list of earnings of this household. In this household annual expenditure exceeded income by some 18 £ . They managed to make end meets by child allowances and rent subsidies from the parish and charitable donations in kind. The household deficit could have been greatly reduced if these children in service, who jointly would have earned somewhere between 15 and 20 £ per annum, had remitted part of their wages to their parents. But, as the budget informs us, they choose not to do so (Eden 1797, II, p. 15-16, 359, 448). Davies addressed this lack of family assistance by servants explicitly in his comments on the household economy of the labouring poor. In his analysis of the causes of increasing reliance on parish assistance in the late eighteenth century Davies pointed the finger to servants. Like many others, he blamed unmarried adolescents for not being frugal whilst in service. As a result, their financial means were rapidly exhausted after marriage. He also added that few servants used their wages '*for the relief of infirm parents or poor relations*' (Davies 1795, p. 58). Davies confirms the findings of historical research of Kussmaul and Snell on farm servants and remittances. On the basis of the evidence collected by Davies and Eden other historians have also argued that remittances from children working away from home were atypical of eighteenth-century England (Williamson 1990, p. 72). The absence of remittances

to parents and family members has also been noted for unmarried immigrant women working in northern English urban industries during the nineteenth century (Gordon 2005, p. 57-59).

The relative lack of references to remittances in English sources is confirmed by data that enable us to measure the scale and intensity of remittances of other occupational groups in with more accuracy. As noted above, English naval seamen could remit part of their wages to their family members. In 1758 legal formalities and costs were reduced to stimulate sailors to assist their relatives. The effects of this new legislation were not impressive as few sailors made use of this opportunity to remit wages and the sums were quite low. On 72 Navy ships in 1759 only 3 per cent of the sailors made remittances. Pay books indicate that the value of these transfers only amounted to a meagre 5.6 per cent of their net pay (Rodger 1986, p. 134 and 366).

The absence of remittances as a source of family welfare was a theme that was also explicitly addressed by eighteenth-century poor relief reformers. One of the most interesting proposals to remedy this situation was conceived by Thomas Haweis. Haweis, rector of a small parish in Northamptonshire, was one the few who addressed the problem of intergenerational transfers and the role children in service could play in alleviating the poverty of their parents (Haweis 1788). His pamphlet is one of the many hundreds of publications that addressed the causes and consequences of inflating relief expenditure during the last decades of the eighteenth century. His publication stands out from other poor law pamphlets as his calculations were based on actual data about poor relief expenditure and earnings by various categories of labourers in his parish. Also, Haweis acknowledged that there was an objective need for public relief and he did not attempt to cut relief expenditure. The main project of Haweis dealt with an alternative method of raising financial means to aid the poor. Like many others, Haweis suggested a compulsory contribution scheme as a partial replacement for the parish rates. Both the large tenant farmers and the active labouring population ('industrious

classes') should co-finance a parish fund from which the poor and elderly could be aided. In his own words, the best method to relief the poor was '*to engage them, whilst in health and strength, to assist in raising a fund for the supply of their own necessities in the hour of calamity*' (Haweis 1788, p. 4). In many ways his proposal fits into a more general movement towards self-help schemes such as friendly societies and popular saving banks. Haweis suggested that different categories of labourers could contribute between 2.7 and 8.3 per cent of their wages and that farmers contributed the equivalents of 5 per cent of the annual rental value of their holdings. His calculations, taking into account the actual social structure and relief expenditure in his parish in the 1780's, showed that this project could raise sufficient means to finance all welfare needs. This alternative method of raising welfare resources basically extended the burden of raising welfare resources down the social scale and implied a lowering of the contribution of the traditional rate-payers. In this new scheme the labouring population would raise between one-fourth and one-third of all welfare resources. With reference to the contributions of the labouring population, Haweis stressed the potential of unmarried labourers who were boarded with their employers (such as farm servants) to pay these compulsory taxes. Farm servants were taxed at the highest rates of 5.6 to 8.3 per cent as they incurred no large expenses for rent or raising a family. As such, the tax rate for servants proposed by Haweis illustrates the high saving potential of this group of labourers in this particular stage of their life-cycle. It was only when farm servants could prove that they were already remitting part of their earnings to their aged or poor relatives that they were charged the lower rate. This project, although probably never executed and not that widely dispersed, does indirectly reveal some issues about the nature of the relations between adolescents in farm service and their parents. In his view, remittances of servants to their parents and parish assistance were operating like communicating vessels. If servants did not financially assist their parents at a time when their saving potential was the highest, it was likely that the latter

were forced to turn to public welfare to make ends meet. His project can also be read as an attempt to introduce the type of family solidarity that was characteristic of many rural societies in France and Belgium.

Haweis' book also fits into a wider discourse about the lack of filial solidarity and assistance in eighteenth-century Poor Law pamphlet literature. Many critics of the Old Poor Law frequently referred to the failure of the English labouring family to assist their needy members. They argued that provisions under the Old Poor Law had replaced and weakened the traditional and natural ties between generations. In their view, English individualism among the labouring classes was strongly connected to generous relief under the Old Poor Law. According to Henry Kames the relaxation of '*mutual affection between parent and child*' was one of the negative effects of the Old Poor Law. He deplored that filial assistance had to be enforced by law (Kames 1775, p. 39-41). Hanway equally regretted that '*there is not more pride among the sons and daughters of the poor, to prevent the aged parent from being a burthen to the parish*' (Hanway 1774, p. 104). Around the middle of the eighteenth century Alcock argued that poor relief expenditure could be lowered if the law of 1601 concerning filial assistance was more strictly enforced (Alcock 1752, p. 63). The allegedly cold and harsh attitude of children towards their parents is exemplified in the work of William Keir: '*The common language of children in these parts of the country now is: What occasion have we to deprive ourselves of any indulgencies, for the purpose of supporting our aged parents ? The parish is bound to provide for them*' (Keir 1807: p. 155). Some authors contrasted the English experience of individualism with the other regions. Jonas Hanway, who had travelled extensively across Europe, praised Portuguese and Russian urban labourers for assisting their elderly parents. He claimed that in England, contrary to other European regions, '*old people are thrown on the parochial charity, whose children might provide for them, but do not*' (Hanway 1774, p. 154-156). Differences in the balance between family and

institutional welfare were also illustrated by direct references to the remittances of servants. In a description of the welfare institutions of the Scottish county of Galloway, the author stressed the importance of the family as a source of assistance: *'It is no unusual occurrence to find even servant girls, struggling with difficulties, and oeconomically sparing a part of their wages to keep their parents from the dishonour they attach to receiving aid from the poor box'*. He meaningfully added: *'How different is the case in England !'* (Smith 1810, p. 338-339). Another author stated that under the Old Poor Law farm servants did not assist their family members from their wages (Z.A. 1838, p. 136).

Although such contemporary characterisations about the lack of intergenerational solidarity among the English labouring poor should be treated with reservations, it is important to stress that these claims mirror the lack of remittances we can observe in other sources. Both the discourse about filial responsibility and especially the actual data from farm account books and household budgets suggest that remittances from servants and other migrants to their parents were uncommon in eighteenth-century rural England. Especially when compared with the available evidence for France and Belgium, English farm servants do not emerge as an important source of material support for their parents. When English servants remitted money to their parents it was for a short period only during their first years in service. In Belgium and France on the other hand, such relationships extended over longer periods and persisted until the servants were in the late twenties.

Determinants of remittances

Variations in the scale and frequency of remittances between European country populations have been documented in the previous sections of this paper. These differences suggest that the relationship between parents and their unmarried adolescent children was quite different.

In France and Belgium children in service could be coerced into forms of filial solidarity. In England on the other hand, parents could apparently not command that influence over their children's earnings. Research on present-day migrants and remittances can be inspiring to identify the causes of these contrasts. In the literature on the economics of (inter)national migration, much attention has been devoted to the motives of migrants who send part of their earnings to their countries of origin (for a recent review see Carling 2008). The research by Lucas and Stark on the determinants of remittances has been particularly influential in this field (Lucas and Stark 1985). Migrants will remit earnings to their parents for a variety of reasons. When an arrangement between the two parties is considered mutually beneficial, remittances can become a regular source of income for the parents. Research on remittances in Botswana in late 1970's has shown that migrants will support their parents when they sustain a drop in household income as a result from adverse climatic conditions such as drought. Rural households can expect help from their migrant children working in an urban setting. Children are committed to helping their parents as this ensures that they will inherit during a later stage in the life-course (Stark and Lucas 1988, p. 474-478). Other studies too have confirmed that land was an important inducement for migrants to remit money to their parents (Hoddinott 1994, p. 469-473). Parents and children are thus able to strike a bargain that is mutually beneficial as both parties derive utility from this arrangement. It is important to know what both parties will ultimately derive from such a contract. Historically, the benefits for parents are fairly straightforward. Additional income flows to the parental household as a result from the remittances of the children. These remittances, either in kind or cash, enable parents to balance household income and expenditure. As the examples of servants in early nineteenth-century northern France illustrate, remittances from children of service could be used to smooth consumption in the households of their parents when prices were high. Also, when servants secure access to the capital goods of their employer (horse

and plough teams) they give their parents the opportunity to transport goods at a small cost or organize their agricultural production more efficiently (Lambrecht 2003, p. 254-256). Remittances from servants in the form of seeds and raw materials allowed households to engage in proto-industrial activities without reliance on commercial credit or loans from flax merchants. For the children the benefits are at first sight less straightforward. Assisting their parents will result in a lower cash wage or less savings. It is highly unlikely that unmarried adolescents will sacrifice their wages on the altar of filial assistance without any sort of compensation. Unlike present-day studies concerning migrants, the data collected for this paper cannot be cross-referenced with other data on the economic characteristics of the households that received remittances. However, if we assume that landownership of parents could have been an important influence on remittances, we should find significant differences in these regions in terms of access to property rights. In this scenario, migrants would remit part of their wages to maintain their future inheritance rights.

Such a model requires that parents own land at the time when their children work as servants. This seems to have been the case in most regions in Belgium and France. In some regions in Flanders up to 80-90 per cent of the holdings smaller than 5 hectares were partly owned by the peasants. Especially in the regions at some distance from large urban centres (for example Alost) peasantries were able to maintain their property rights. In the immediate surroundings of cities, most of the peasants with a holding smaller than 5 hectares were primarily leaseholders. Nearby Ghent for example, only 20 tot 40 per cent of the peasants owned part of their holding (Lambrecht 2012b, p. 19-20 and Vanhaute 1993, p. 193-196). In France too peasants still enjoyed property rights. The traditional picture of the gradual expropriation of the French peasantries has been adjusted in recent years. Although important regional differences can be observed, the eighteenth century did not witness the massive expropriation of the small peasant. Small occupier-owned farms were still important during

the course of the eighteenth century in many regions (Jollet 1998, p. 99-122; Béaur 2000, p. 31-33). Moreover, when evaluating the level of peasant ownership of land we should take into account that land could be distributed unevenly across age groups. For many peasants landlessness was a temporary stage (Béaur 1991 and 1998). Whilst overall levels of ownership could be relatively low, there could be important differences according to the stage of the life cycle. In Lezennes (northern France) 63 out of 133 households or 47 per cent did not possess any land in 1770. This is a relatively high ratio at first sight. A somewhat different picture emerges when ownership is linked to the age of the head of the household. In this village 60 per cent of the heads of households between the age of 20 and 49 years did not own any land. The age group 50 to 79 recorded only 33 per cent landless households. The lowest level of land ownership (10 per cent) was recorded among young households (20-29 year). The largest concentration of landowners was found in the age group 50 to 59 years as c. 75 per cent owned land (calculated from Vigneron 2007, p. 203). This example illustrates that although levels of peasant ownership might be low throughout society, some age groups could be important owners of land. In this particular case we find that three quarters of the households that would have had children working as servants owned land and could use these property rights as a bargaining tool.

In terms of peasant landownership eighteenth-century England stands in stark contrast to most of continental Europe. Engaging in a comparative study of landownership among the lower social groups in rural Europe is seriously hampered by the many different and complex legal property regimes. It is nearly impossible to collect and organize the data in such a manner that cross-country comparisons can be made. However, it is evident from the literature on peasant ownership England that the vast majority of the parents of servants in rural England did not enjoy such extensive property rights compared to their Belgian and French counterparts. In the budgets collected by Eden for example nearly all the households

list expenditure for house or cottage rent (Eden 1797, III). In the cases where rent was not recorded it is highly likely that the parish supported this charge. Research on eighteenth-century south-east England shows that the vast majority of the labourers were not taxed as owners of their cottage (Shaw-Taylor 2004, p. 267-270). Low numbers of owner-occupied cottages have also been found in northern England (Hudson 1991, p. 279-280). In many parts of eighteenth-century England small owner-occupiers lost their property rights (Allen 1992, p. 95-101). Few English labouring families were able to acquire property in the course of their life-cycle during this period. This absence of property rights and expectation to inherit would have greatly influenced the relationship between parents and their children. Parents thus held a weak position if they wanted to claim assistance from their children. There was simply no guarantee that assistance would be reciprocated or compensated at a later stage in life. English servants were not willing to offer assistance and parents could not coerce their children in service into filial solidarity. The lack of a mutually beneficial arrangement probably explains why intergenerational solidarity was at low ebb (Lis and Vantemsche 1995, p. 31-33; Lis and Soly 2009, p. 73; Smith 1996, p. 44). In Belgium and France on the other hand much more peasants owned land. Landownership and inheritance rights almost automatically created the mutual advantages both parties were looking for to strike a bargain.² Some contemporary Irish observers claimed that there was a causal connection between property and family assistance. Account books of eighteenth-century Irish farmers also frequently record transfers from servants to their parents. As in Belgium and France, servants purchased goods and services for their parents from their cash wages (Pollock 1995, p. 29-31). Witnesses presenting evidence before the parliamentary committee on poverty in Ireland (1834) confirmed this picture of the family as an important source of assistance. One witness stated: ‘*Children, but*

² It should be stressed that differences in inheritance practices could affect remittances. If all children enjoyed equal inheritance rights, parents could command assistance from all their children. If not all children could inherit, those who will be discriminated based on birth rank or sex will have no incentive to assist their parents from their wages earned in service. However, parents did have a powerful tool at their disposal to strike a bargain with their children that did not inherit land. The dowry system enabled parents to assist children upon marriage and repay or compensate the assistance they had provided for them whilst in service.

more particularly those who are unmarried, evince a strong desire to support their parents, and many do so with the wages they earn by service (Selection 1835, p. 159-160). Another witness added: *‘The children support their parents, who, on their parts, feel they have a right to that support, especially when the farm is held under an old lease, and at a low rent’* (Selection 1835, p. 158).

Conclusion

Reconstructing patterns of family assistance and solidarity in the past is a task fraught with many difficulties. Admittedly, the data and results presented in this article are drawn from a wide variety of sources. The lack of uniform data seriously obstructs a systematic comparative study of remittances during the pre-industrial period. On the other hand, the evidence presented in this article strongly suggests that some significant differences can be observed in various European regions. In all these regions unmarried adolescents left the parental household during their mid-teens to work as servants in husbandry. The specific nature of their remuneration did give them the opportunity to remit part of their earnings to their parents. In Belgium and France, some parents could indeed rely on frequent remittances from their children in service. Although these servants were physically separated from the parental household, they nevertheless maintained intense financial and material contacts with their family members. Although the institution of life-cycle service looks quite identical in all three regions, the role of service could be very different. This is also a reminder that household structures could be more or less similar in composition and size, but that internal dynamics and power relations between members of these households could vary significantly (Humphries 2010, p. 48).

In this analysis of remittances property rights and the expectation of an inheritance emerge as the most likely explanation for the differences England and Belgium and France. This article has contrasted Belgium and France with England. Naturally, regional differences within countries will have existed. It should be stressed that not all servants in France and Belgium remitted to their parents. In regions where property rights of the peasantries were strong it is highly likely the family would have emerged as an important source of welfare, also in England. To some extent, the national viewpoint adopted in this article obscures regional similarities in these three countries.

Land emerged out of this research as the proverbial common ground between generations and acted as a security for all parties. In the absence of land and inheritance, intergenerational solidarity was much more difficult to organize (Sabeau 1990, p. 35). These differences in the level and frequency of remittances are confirmed by research on family welfare during other stages in the life-cycle. Most of the elderly in England were unable to negotiate care from their relatives and were relieved by collective welfare institutions. Numerous studies have illustrated that the vast majority of elderly labourers depended mainly on parish support for their survival (see Thomson 1984; Smith 1998; Ottaway 1998). In many Belgian and French regions on the other hand, care during old age was provided by the family. In old age, peasant-owners in France and Belgium exchanged their property rights for structural assistance in the form of food, housing or a pension (for Belgium see Wilssens 1992, p. 121-133; for France see Poitrineau 1981 and Desaive 2005 among the numerous studies). These differences in family care during old age can also be explained by differences in property rights. Owning land was the most powerful instrument peasants had to coerce their children into filial solidarity. It appears that households with property rights could command assistance from their heirs at different stages in their life as both before and after marriage children assisted their parents. Servants and adolescents in rural England were not

individualist nor were their Belgian and French counterparts altruistic. The relationship with their parents was in both cases based on rational calculation and careful balancing of their different interests. Material interests, much more than emotions, determined the extent and level of solidarity between generations.

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Table 1: Benefits in kind for servants and their parents: Lembeke, 1786-1800 (per 10 contracts)

	male servants (n = 34)	female servants (n = 9)
<i>benefits for servants</i>		
Linen	9.5	10
Clothing*	2.6	8.9
Footwear	1.2	7.8
Socks	0.6	5.6
Schooling	0.6	0
<i>benefits for parents</i>		
Food	1.5	2.2
Land	1.2	1.1
Fuel (coal)	0.3	1.1
Transport	0.6	0

* shirts for men and aprons for women. Source: State Archives Ghent, *Old Archives Lembeke*, nr. 292.

Table 2: Annual compensation for family members of French soldiers, 1792-1794 (livres/year).

	1792	1793	1794
Father (60 +)	40	100	100
Father (70 +)	60	100	100
Mother (60 +)	40	100	100
Mother (70 +)	60	100	100
Orphaned brother/ sister (- 12)	/	50	100

Source: Gross 2000, p. 376-384 and Bertaud 1990, p. 251-274.

Table 3: Servants wages and poor relief in Belgium: the ‘Eight Parishes’ c. 1700.

	population ^a (n)	male servants ^a (n)	female servants ^a (n)	Total wages servants (£ p.) ^b	income poor tables (£ p.) ^c	relief/wages (%)
Elverdinge	800	74	60	9494	1000	10.53
Noordschote	500	57	59	7901	732.3	9.27
Vlamertinge	846	65	63	8813	729.8	8.28
Zuidschote	311	42	29	5156	392.6	7.61
Reningelst	1072	86	77	11368	848.7	7.47
Watou	1487	98	93	13196	928.5	7.04
Loker	485	34	25	4244	262.4	6.18
Woesten	324	22	18	2830	61	2.16
Total		478	424	63002	4955.3	
Weighed average						7.87

Sources: ^a data from 1697 in Dalle 1953-1954, p. 34; ^b see Appendix 1; ^c State Archives

Bruges, *Acht Parochies*, nr. 258.

Appendix 1: Annual wages of servants in the rural district of Furnes, 1701 (£. parisis.).

Wage	Male		Female	
	n	%	N	%
0-14	5	0.8	14	3
15-29	22	3.32	67	14.8
30-44	52	7.85	137	30.3
45-59	67	10.12	103	22.8
60-74	108	16.31	113	25
75-89	62	9.37	14	3.1
90-104	94	14.2	4	0.9
105-119	38	5.7	0	0
120-134	132	19.9	0	0
135-164	65	9.8	0	0
> 165	17	2.6	0	0
Total	662	100	452	100
Mean	91		46	
Median	96		48	
Maximum	256		96	
Female/male wage rate		50.55 %		

Sources: City Archives Furnes, *Oud Archief*, nr. 914.