

Life Course Strategies, Social Networks, and Market Participation in Nineteenth-Century Rural Westphalia: An Interpretative Essay*

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In: Georg Fertig (ed.), *Social Networks, Political Institutions, and Rural Societies* (=Rural History in Europe 11). Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, forthcoming.

1. Introduction

Many parts of nineteenth-century Europe were characterised by rapid structural shifts away from agriculture and towards industry and services, as well as the development of markets for industrial goods and basic foodstuffs. In his study on the Great Transformation, Karl Polanyi argued that these developments, rather than constituting a spontaneous process, emanated from sweeping changes of social organization: The emergence of the market economy was based on the creation of a market society by the modern state, which in turn destroyed older modes of allocating economic resources, namely household production, reciprocal exchange and redistribution (Polanyi, 1944: 46-55, 82-83). A rival, but parallel argument has been advanced by new institutionalist economists (North & Thomas, 1970), who claim institutional changes that guaranteed individual property rights and lowered transaction costs were necessary before modern economic growth set in.

Polanyi's seminal work continues to be widely cited in the social sciences, but few studies have actually confronted his statements with historical data. This is particularly true for the rural segments of society. While the rural sector shrank in the course of structural change, growth of agricultural output and the development of markets for basic foodstuffs constituted important preconditions for the expansion of the non-agricultural sectors. Hence, the emergence of the market society among rural communities should constitute a major aspect of the Great Transformation.

An important empirical contribution to understanding the change of social institutions in rural communities during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is David Sabeau's in-depth study of Neckarhausen in Württemberg (Sabeau, 1990; 1998). It demonstrates that the development of land and credit markets from the late eighteenth century actually coincided with an increased share of transactions among relatives; market development aided the circulation of resources within kinship networks. At around the same time, ties among members of the same patrilineal group intensified, particularly among the wealthier segment of rural society. Thus, class formation did not occur through the development of formal markets but rather through an increasing density of networks among patrilineal kin. In her study of the neighbouring town of Esslingen

* Research funding by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* is gratefully acknowledged (research grants PF 351/1, PF 351/3, PF 351/4, PF 351/6).

Lipp has shown that the emergence of liberal politics from the second quarter of the nineteenth century was based on kinship networks among members of political associations (Lipp, 2006). Therefore, the market society, rather than emerging after the destruction of social institutions that had formerly embedded economic transactions, developed from a reorientation of kinship networks and evolved in close connection with this process.

Aside from these empirical findings, there are at least three theoretical grounds for suggesting that the Great Transformation was actually less fundamental and less state-centred than originally thought by Polanyi. First, it is a central position of the new economic sociology that the social embeddedness of markets did not disappear over time. Granovetter, in particular, has demonstrated that modern markets are also embedded in social networks of mutual claims, trust, information or competition (Granovetter, 1983; 1985). Weak ties among neighbours, peer groups, colleagues in the workplace and distant relatives can be instrumental for providing access to markets, such as the job market. Thus, from a historical perspective, weak ties constituted by extended kinship networks may be instrumental for market development in its early stage by lowering access barriers and limiting opportunistic behaviour with respect to contract fulfilment.

Second, market failures may occur frequently during early stages of market development. Thus, partial market integration frequently led to an aggravation of the consequences of harvest failures in low-income areas (e.g. Grantham, 1989: 187-89; Bass, 1991: 22-39). Likewise, the emergence of industrial leading sectors serving large market areas was associated with structural unemployment in handicraft industries, particularly in textiles. The reliance on pre-existing networks of support constituted a means for local communities to weather such crises and thus to avert an early abortion of market development.

Third, rather than being set exogenously by a Leviathan-like state, the institutional framework of market society may develop at least in part endogenously (e.g. Greif, 2006). As the modern state unfolded, the elaboration and amendment of legal norms became increasingly informed by the experience shaped by the implementation of earlier norms (with reference to the Prussian state, see Haas, 2005). Hence, the ways in which formal institutions governing markets and property rights evolved could be heavily influenced by the ways in which the population made use of these institutions. If Sabean's finding that an increased use of land and credit markets resulted from a growing need for cooperation among kin can be generalized, the emergence of a market society is at least in part endogenous to processes within the social organisation of economic relations.

Taken together, these empirical and theoretical arguments suggest that during its early stage of development market society was strongly interwoven with forms of social

organization that governed embedded economic relations, such as kinship ties. It goes without saying that the forces invoked must also have brought forward considerable regional variation with respect to the specific trajectory of the transformation towards market society. In order to provide a basis for general inferences about the interrelationships between social networks and the emergence of market society, this study summarises, interprets and (albeit exemplarily) presents new empirical findings on two rural communities in nineteenth-century Westphalia. It is based on the books by G. Fertig, C. Fertig, and Bracht (G. Fertig, 2007; C. Fertig, 2012; Bracht, 2013).¹

We focus on the strategies of individuals and families at critical junctures of the life course and the family cycle, and we use them as a heuristic strategy to identify the interplay between markets and social structure in shaping economic transactions (Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Hareven, 1996). Such turning points include baptism, marriage and household formation, and wealth transfer between generations. Life course analysis is chosen as a heuristic tool for this study because it reflects basic patterns of social organisation. It is well-known that European peasantries engaged in product markets as producers of food surpluses and manufactured goods since the Middle Ages. Yet, product market development apparently had limited impact on social organisation for centuries. Therefore, following Polanyi (Polanyi, 1944: ch. 6), our analysis of the transition to a market society focuses on factor rather than product markets -- that is, markets for land, credit and labour -- and investigates their interaction with kinship and other social networks in shaping life course transitions.

Some studies have questioned the usefulness of the concept of the family strategy as an analytical tool in historical analysis (Viazzo & Lynch, 2002; cf. the comments by Kok, 2002; Fontaine & Schlumbohm, 2000). Viazzo and Lynch argue that it is incorrect to imply strategic behaviour from patterned data -- that is, dispersion in behavioural variables -- since dispersion of behavioural outcomes need not arise solely or primarily from planned individual action. Therefore, the presence of strategic behaviour can be only identified by the documentation of explicit decision-making processes. Given the paucity of sources that document such decision-making processes in peasant communities of the past, Viazzo and Lynch conclude that family strategies are largely impossible to identify.

While accepting the argument that strategies of individuals and families cannot be inferred from patterns in univariate frequency distributions, we still consider it possible to identify strategies from behavioural data and do not consider it necessary to document explicit decision-making processes. Specifically, we consider strategic behaviour to be present if a correlation can be established on the level of individuals or households between variations in behavioural outcomes and variations in input

¹ Ulrich Pfister has written most of this chapter, based on the original research by the three co-authors. All errors are in the joint responsibility of all four authors.

variables that are considered to frame a particular field of action. In principle, this corresponds to a conventional, goal-instrumental type of social action. At the same time, however, our methodological approach leaves it open to debate whether or not strategic action results from explicit decision-making and intra-family negotiation, from behavioural repertoires that have proven successful in the past or from a socially sanctioned *habitus*.

In order to analyse multivariate relationships between behavioural inputs and outcomes and identify family strategies through them, we need data sets providing information on a multitude of variables at the individual or household levels. This can be achieved only within the format of in-depth case studies of local communities. We therefore reconstruct the life histories of individuals in two contrasting communities, tracing their links to other persons through descent, godparenthood and marriage, as well as through property transfers and transactions on financial and land markets. For this purpose, we combine the information contained in a variety of sources, such as parish registers, hypothec books, notarial records and the ledgers of a savings bank into a single relational database for each community. These databases constitute the basis for the analysis of the multivariate relationships between decisions regarding critical junctures of the life course and the variables framing each particular action set.

We implement this research strategy by an analysis of Borgeln and Löhne, two communities in the Prussian province of Westphalia, with a focus on the middle decades of the nineteenth century. In the framework of a policy of defensive modernisation that emerged after the defeat against France in 1806 the Prussian state undertook a number of institutional reforms that aimed at a modernisation of society and the economy. These ranged from the creation of an internal market through tariff and business law reforms to the individualisation of rural property rights (Wehler, 1987: vol. 1, part 2). Thus, both communities shared an identical institutional framework that fostered the transition to a market society from outside. At the same time, the two communities were affected by the development of product markets in completely different ways: Borgeln was situated in an area with rich silt (*Loess*) deposits, which made it suitable for agricultural surplus production. From the eighteenth century, commercial foodstuff production was stimulated by demand from the iron processing handicraft industries in the mountainous region to the south; from the second quarter of the nineteenth century exports were gradually reoriented toward the emerging Ruhr district. Löhne, by contrast, was situated in a hilly part of eastern Westphalia characterised by subsistence farming. Poor incomes from agriculture made inhabitants eager to engage in proto-industrial side-activities. Linen spinning in particular was widespread throughout this region. A third place we have studied and will occasionally refer to is Oberkirchen, in the mountainous south of Westphalia.

Taken together, the analysis of communities with contrasting structural characteristics has the potential, first, to identify different ways in which local populations made use of institutions related to market society and, second, to trace the impact that the development of different types of markets had on the specific trajectory of the Great Transformation.

The remainder of this study is organised as follows: Section II presents the two communities, the sources used, and the method applied in rendering them amenable to statistical analysis. Section III provides a short description of the land reforms, which constituted the major element of state-sponsored institutional reforms oriented towards the establishment of a market society in rural areas. Section IV discusses evidence showing that, despite changes in property rights, the two communities studied experienced at best a limited development of land and financial markets during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Section V analyses the ways in which peasants adjusted their practices of intra-familial property transmission to the institutional changes following from the land reforms. Finally, Section VI investigates the functions of marriage and godparenthood networks. Section VII concludes our argument.

II. Context, sources and method

Figure 5.1 shows the geographical situation of the two communities. Both of them were parts of the Brandenburg-Prussian state as early as the seventeenth century. Borgeln was located 7 km away from Soest, an old Hanseatic town that was the centre of the *Hellweg* region, a fertile lowland area. During the eighteenth century, agricultural surpluses were exported to the hilly region lying in the southern vicinity, the *Sauerland*, which experienced a rapid development of iron processing and suffered from a structural grain deficit. In the 1830s, when the rich coal deposits in the Ruhr valley and farther north were explored, food exports from the *Hellweg* region gradually shifted to the emerging *Ruhr* industrial district. For Borgeln, the nearby town of Soest served as a source of financial capital and marketing services. Favourable environmental conditions as well as the rising demand for foodstuffs in nearby proto-industrial and industrial centres contributed to a high level of agricultural output and rapid growth. In 1861/65, the area around Soest ranked among the top ten percent of all administrative units (*Kreise*) in Prussia with respect to value added in agriculture, and it experienced the fastest output growth of all regions in Westphalia between 1822/35 and 1878/82 (Kopsidis, 1996: 135, 199, 219-22; Kopsidis & Hockmann, 2010: 216).

Figure 5.1. Geographical setting of the study (borders from 1815)



Source: own figure.

Löhne, by contrast, was located in the hills of eastern Westphalia. Few parts of this region produced agrarian surpluses; rather, proto-industrial linen production was widespread, and the population depended mostly on imported foodstuffs (cf. Mooser, 1984: ch. 2). In the 1820s, land productivity was already about 15 to 20 percent below the level recorded for Borgeln, probably reflecting poorer soil conditions. During the next 40 years, almost no productivity growth occurred in Löhne. Stasis in agriculture was intimately connected to the demise of flax yarn hand-spinning, which was the dominant proto-industrial activity in and around Löhne. At the same time, the division of common land facilitated an increase of the number of small holdings, which contributed to rapid population growth. Against this backdrop, the region experienced both heavy emigration (Kamphoefner, 1987: 33-36) and re-agrarisation during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The great number of small holdings was conducive to an intense use of land in terms of cropping frequency. But since this intensification occurred alongside the addition of marginal soils to arable surface, there was no growth in agricultural productivity.

Beyond contrasting patterns of economic development, the social structures of the two communities differed in two major respects (cf. G. Fertig, 2007: 42-48, 55-66; Bracht, 2013: 21-27; C. Fertig, 2012: 75-87). First, the lower class related to land and labour

markets in very different ways. In both communities, many families did not own land. Their share was slightly higher in Borgeln than in Löhne. Above all, however, the market for servants was much more developed in Borgeln than in Löhne: In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, about 34 percent of the population of the former community consisted of servants, whereas this share amounted to only 3 percent in latter. By contrast, landless families in Löhne had access to small leases provided by farms: so-called *Heuerling* contracts. These combined the lease of living space and small plots with labour services and, partially, payment in cash. These highly asymmetrical *Heuerling* contracts introduced a paternalist element to the relationship between farmers and the landless (Mooser, 1984: ch. 7; Schlumbohm, 1994: ch. 7). Together with the high share of couples living on large farms providing full employment in agriculture and the great number of small holdings providing part-time employment in agriculture, the *Heuerling* institution contributed to a setting that made access to land largely universal, if highly unequal. In Borgeln, by contrast, access to land was much more restricted.

The second difference refers to marriage patterns, particularly those of males. In Borgeln most men married in their early thirties, in Löhne in their late twenties. In Löhne, only 5.9 percent of males over 45 remained unmarried, whereas the proportion of those remaining definitely unmarried was 16.2 percent in Borgeln. In both parishes, many couples married without ever receiving a farm (G. Fertig, 2003: 110; C. Fertig 2012: 196-97). When we look at the timing of marriages, we see that marriages of farm successors in Borgeln were strongly promoted by property transfers, whereas marriages in Löhne also frequently coincided with the purchase of land or with favourable terms of trade of linen, which eased the accumulation of a marriage fund. Begetting a child also led to marriage more rapidly in Löhne than in Borgeln, which corresponds to the relatively higher ratio of births out of wedlock in the latter community (9.3 percent in Borgeln, 3.2 percent in Löhne 1794-1875; Goslar, 2005: 47-49). In addition, more brides in Borgeln were already pregnant when they married (40 percent in Borgeln, 29 percent in Löhne, Goslar 2005: 51, implying that couples did not hurry into marriage in Borgeln as often as in Löhne). Marriage was thus quite universal in Löhne. Some of the reasons were that inheritance was based on ultimogeniture, land was more accessible and non-agricultural employment was more easily available, at least during the early nineteenth century. In addition, many inhabitants of Löhne adhered to Pietistic doctrines, and Pietism attached great value to the institution of marriage. In Borgeln, by contrast, the restricted access to land, together with an expanding demand for labour, contributed to a shift from life-cycle to lifelong servanthood, while the status of being single became an option for many young people (G. Fertig, 2003; C. Fertig, 2012: 153-64).

Our analysis of life course strategies in Borgeln and Löhne is based on five groups of sources (for details, see Bracht, 2013: 34-41; C. Fertig, 2012: 87-91). First, family reconstitutions based on parish registers are available for both parishes; this was a precondition for the decision to study these two places. The family reconstitutions have been supplemented with data on godparents from the original parish registers. The second main source (*Katasterbücher*) stems from the assessment of landed property by the Prussian administration for the purpose of levying taxes. Between 1822 and 1835, cadastres were established with exact information on the size and the taxation value of each parcel of land. These compilations were renewed between 1861 and 1865. Land title registers (*Hypothekenbücher*) constitute the third type of sources used. These registers were established in the 1810s and contain information on property rights, liens, manorial entitlements and other burdens. The fourth group of sources consists of contractual documents that are, most importantly family contracts regulating the transfer of the farm, arrangements for the care of the old peasants and inheritance compensations for the farm successor's siblings. Other contractual documents include inventories and the redemption contracts that ended feudal relations between peasants and their lords. Finally, we use the ledgers of the savings bank of Soest to trace its business transactions with clients in Borgeln.

The information from all these sources has been used to reconstruct individual life courses by means of relational databases and nominal, non-automatic record linkage. Through the creation of reports, information was extracted in the form of rectangular data matrices that are suitable for multivariate statistical analysis.

III. The transformation of property rights and the development of peasant wealth

As Brakensiek and Kopsidis have shown, the institutions governing pre-reform agriculture in Westphalia were not as archaic as one might suspect (Brakensiek, 1991: 9-11; Kopsidis, 2006: 209-27). To be sure, personal legal relations² existed between lords and peasants, legal property over the farms was with the lords³, and parts of the productive lands were used as commons. Feudal lords held control over the lower layers of the juridical system. But there was also a brighter side to the feudal system as it prevailed in early modern Westphalia. Peasants had secure use rights, access to legal institutions, and of course they owned and were able to sell what they produced.

An important aspect of the old order in rural Europe, including the south-west of Germany, were the 'open fields', collectively organized by village communities. An 'open field' system of this type was dominant only in a relatively small region in the south-east of Westphalia. In most of the province, dispersed settlement in isolated farms

² *Eigenbehörigkeit* as a variation of dominion over the person, in contrast to *Grundherrschaft* as dominion over the farm.

³ Surprisingly, divided property was newly introduced in 1825.

and small hamlets was intermixed with villages (Ditt, 1992: 114, 123-25, 162-64). In these areas, 'open fields' existed only on limited areas of high quality that had been cultivated since the beginning of settlement, the *Esche*. Moreover, a considerable part of the land, particularly in newer and more dispersed settlements, was typically worked in individual fenced holdings, the *Kämpe*. While the *Esche* were worked by peasant cooperatives called *Bauerschaften*, nothing is known about any conflicts or sanctions that arose over their use. In the places we studied, and similar to what is known of the entire province, no collective grazing rights or other servitudes indicating an 'open field' system were documented. (In fact, most of the few grazing rights we found in Borgeln accrued to citizens of the next town). We also found that around 1825, crop rotation patterns followed six to eight-year cycles. If three-field rotation, typical for 'open fields', was still in place, we would expect a three-year cycle. One can conclude that 'open fields' did not present a significant obstacle to peasant agriculture. It is therefore not surprising that, for most of the period studies here, no movement towards the dissolution of clustered village farming can be observed in Westphalia. Only from 1873 did the Prussian administration start to reduce the fragmentation of holdings by organising a spatial consolidation of all property in a given community (*Verkoppelung*; for overviews, see Dipper, 1980; Achilles, 1993: ch. 2; for Westphalia, see Teuteberg, 1981).

Similar to other parts of Germany, northwest German peasants and lords had quarrelled over their mutual rights during the late Middle Ages, often using violence rather than law. A process of juridification set in all over the Empire from about 1495 -- when the highest court of justice, the *Reichskammergericht*, was founded -- and it was reinforced after the peasants in the south and centre of Germany had lost the Peasant War in 1525. In Westphalia, *Eigentumsordnungen* regulated the legal relations of lords and peasants in the eighteenth century (Jürgens, 1990). Juridification was particularly supported by the reception of Roman Law. While the English property law system (common law) was notorious (Getzler, 1996: 643-45) for its clumsiness and for the obscurity of multiple titles -- hence the emphasis on transaction costs in English economic history -- Roman law (civil law) started out from the assumption that property was individual, a *dominium* of a person over a thing, and not a bundle of multilayered interests, as was appropriate in a more complex feudal system. Still, multiple claims to one piece of property needed public documentation particularly when that piece of property was used as collateral. In the Prussian parts of Westphalia (including Borgeln and Löhne), the formal documentation of landed property was reformed in 1783, when a standard format was introduced for the public documentation of hypothecs⁴, and, implicitly, landed property. However, the increased publicity of what were already rather formal property

⁴ Functionally, but not legally equivalent to the common law instrument of mortgages -- we will continue to use the term 'hypothecs' throughout.

rights hereby achieved did not matter much to peasants so long as formal property rights remained with the lords. This changed when, in the early 19th century, peasants actually acquired rights with which the books of hypothecs were consequently filled. The dissolution of personal bonds by the administration of Napoleonic *Rheinbund* states -- Berg (with Borgeln), the Kingdom of Westphalia (with Löhne), and Hesse-Darmstadt (with Oberkirchen) -- was a less important step in this process than the simultaneous transformation of peasant use rights into *dominium utile* or, in Darmstadt, full property. When Prussia took over the administration of Westphalia in 1815, the results of the Napoleonic reforms were accepted (for details, see G. Fertig, 2007: 88-111). One should not misunderstand the introduction of a modern property regime as ‘individualisation’; important elements of supra-individual property remained, such as joint ownership between husbands and wives. Together with the cadastres, the new land title registers allowed for a very precise and transparent documentation of increasingly complex arrangements of multiple property rights over the same parcel of land, involving family members, credit givers, neighbours and even manorial lords. Nevertheless, these changes constituted a protracted shift from a situation in which property was strongly embedded in local structures of power and community to a situation where property rights were governed by state law and became more family-oriented.

Three major institutional issues remained: the division of the commons, redemption of remaining manorial rights, and the practical use peasants made of the revised legal system. We will not discuss the division and enclosure of commons extensively, since it related only to marginal land and often had limited consequences (Brakensiek, 1991; cf. also G. Fertig, 2001; Küpker, 2008: 254-76).

The redemption of manorial dues started, with little impact, during the Napoleonic era. Prussian laws promulgated in 1825 and 1829 reconciled reforms undertaken in the eastern provinces with the Napoleonic heritage of the western regions. Manorial entitlements were capitalised with the factor of 25 times the yearly return, with average grain prices of the preceding twelve years serving as the main basis for calculating yearly returns. Redemption could be triggered by both lords and peasants, rendering actual implementation strongly conditional upon the preferences of local actors. Prices also mattered; the improvement of the terms of trade of grain prices in the course of the 1830s and 1840s reduced the real cost of the redemption of feudal dues and thus made it attractive for peasants. The law of 1850 reduced the capitalisation factor to eighteen and instituted state-sponsored mortgage banks (*Rentenbanken*) to facilitate the financing of the reform. Accordingly, the 1850s saw a general implementation of the land reforms (Bracht, 2006: 59-62; 2013: 263-86; G. Fertig, 2007: 88-111).

The practical use peasants made of their rights can be inferred from the pace at which the land registers were filled: in Borgeln, 80 percent of the land was registered in the ledgers of hypothec as early as 1834, and in Löhne, 1843. On average, it took 4.5 years

until a given contract was entered into the books of hypothecs (G. Fertig, 2007: 73-74). However, we should interpret this optimistically. The use of formal contracts (with the help of notaries or judges) for regulating *inter vivos* transfers of property was massive. Moreover, primarily the juridical system was used intensely to settle civil disputes, mostly regarding property: in some parts of Westphalia, up to 43 civil cases per 100 inhabitants were under treatment in the courts of justice. (In the Borgeln region, the figure was 9, and in Löhne 22, G. Fertig, 2007: 60).

Both the development of product markets and the property reforms of the first half of the nineteenth century implied the growth of physical and financial wealth at the level of individual peasant households. It is noteworthy that up to the 1810s, *inter vivos* transfers classified only a few elements of a farm as property that could be disposed of by peasant families. In particular, they did not include the farmhouse and the peasant land attached to the farm. During the subsequent decades, progressively larger parts of a farm were effectively considered as peasant property. A parallel growth of financial wealth is documented indirectly by a dramatic increase of inheritance portions attributed to those children who did not take over the farm between early decades and the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Bracht, 2013: 93-95, 101-102). The strong rise during the 1840s and 1850s of the aggregate balances that the inhabitants of Borgeln maintained with the savings bank of Soest gives additional evidence of the development of individual peasant wealth during the first two thirds of the nineteenth century (Bracht, 2013: 232-34).

That the development of individual physical and financial wealth of peasant households that was no longer embedded in property relations of the manor or the local community implied the development of a space of action that had to be filled and shaped by family strategies. We shall analyse their patterns and the underlying rationale in greater detail in Section V below. In the present context it is important to underline that explicit strategic decision-making was encouraged by the structural tension that existed between the inheritance patterns prescribed by manorial law and by civil law, both in the *ius commune* and in the Prussian *Allgemeines Landrecht* of 1794 that became effective for Westphalia as a whole in 1815. While in the overwhelming majority of regional regulations of manorial rule enacted during the eighteenth century stipulated the impartibility of farms, civil law followed the principle of equal rights of all heirs (Jürgens, 1976/77). Thus, the dissolution of the manorial economy in the wake of the land reforms held the potential for a change of inheritance patterns from impartible transmission to a division of farms among heirs.

Contemporary agrarian scientists, however, considered large farms as more productive than small farms, and political elites progressively refashioned the propertied peasant farmer, the former subject, into a major pillar of a conservative social project. The multiplication of small holdings through partible inheritance, in this view, reduced the

efficiency of the agrarian sector and bore the potential of pauperisation, moral decay and social unrest (Rouette, 2001). On this background, as the implementation of the land reforms gained momentum during the 1830s and 1840s, regional elites engaged in intense debate about instituting a distinct inheritance law for propertied farmers separate from civil law in order to maintain the impartibility of family farms. This resulted in the enactment of a peasant inheritance law for the Province of Westphalia in 1836. As a result of continuing criticism and debate, however, the law was suspended in 1841 and abrogated in 1848 (Jürgens, 1991: 78-80; Rouette, 2001: 113-29). The great majority of propertied peasant families in fact relied little on intestate provisions of the legal framework and made use of *inter vivos* contracts to effect property transfers between generations; contemporary experts were fully aware of this (see below, Section V; cf. also G. Fertig, 2007: 212-14). In summary, it is important to see that the land reforms implied a familialisation of property relations. As a consequence, family strategies relative to property gained in importance, and new discourses on the regulation of inheritance developed, the results of which constitute an integral part of the reorganisation of property rights occurring in rural areas during the nineteenth century. The main argument we have put forward in this section is that changes in property rights, as they were introduced during the agrarian reforms, did not fundamentally alter social or production relations in the countryside, but offered a gradual increase in wealth and options. Particularly, neither agrarian individualism nor secure use rights nor the transparency of property rights were fundamentally new. This contrasts strongly to the story that has often been written on the background of the English experience. Claims of ‘English Individualism’ notwithstanding, Westphalia (and western Germany in general) had for centuries been less archaic than England from an institutional perspective. We thus cannot write the agrarian history of Westphalia around the neo-institutionalist or Polanyian idea that the institutions that were a prerequisite of a growth-oriented modern market society had to be introduced, by the Prussian reformers, as late as 1800. Nevertheless, the reforms shifted rights from the lords to the peasants, thus giving them a larger scope for strategic action.

IV. The selective development of factor markets

We have seen how institutional change dissolved the embeddedness of property in manorial and community relations and provided for a gradual formalisation of property rearrangements between individuals. Moreover, there was a considerable development of product markets. Still, we find but a selective development of a market society. In this section, we demonstrate this by reviewing the evolution of factor markets, that is, of markets for labour, land and capital (in the form of financial products) in the two communities.

First, as mentioned before, there was of course a strong development of labour markets; i.e., of markets for agricultural day labourers and servants. In the wake of the first phase of agricultural modernisation, which was mostly labour intensive, these markets probably expanded, at least in the regions specialising in agricultural surplus production (G. Fertig, 2007: 62). With the growth of coal mining and iron processing in the Ruhr basin from the 1830s, an industrial labour market emerged as well (Crew, 1979: 59-60). Changes in the determinants of marriage formation are a good indicator of long-term trends: In a sample of 34 parishes of rural Westphalia, which is heavily biased against emerging industrial locations, the marriage rate depended positively on the price of rye during the second half of the eighteenth century. This suggests that, for the majority of the population, the sale of agrarian surpluses eased the accumulation of a marriage fund; the timing of marriage followed the logic of agricultural producers rather than of labourers. By contrast, from the early nineteenth century on, the relationship between the price of rye and the marriage rate turned negative in the same parishes. The price of rye, which constituted the most important item in the contemporary consumer basket, inversely affected real wages; hence, the emergence of a negative relationship between the price of rye and the marriage rate suggests that, even outside the new industrial districts, the logic of a society of wage earners now prevailed over marriage formation (G. Fertig, 1999: 256, 263; K pker, 2008: 356-64).

The growth of labour markets can be observed indirectly by evaluating the rate of landownership; we will see that it had consequences in the life course of the rural population. In his classical account, Mooser (1984: 197-245) stresses the point that proletarianisation occurred in the sense of a separation of land from labour among the lower classes. The first comprehensive records of land ownership in the districts of M nster and Arnsberg in 1849 show that almost half of all rural households owned less than 1.4 hectares of land (45.8 percent; Kopsidis, 1996: 142). Even outside the regions where agricultural surpluses were produced, we find communities where virtually no adolescents or young adults above the age of 14 were living in lower class households, with the exception of the household heads. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of persons aged 15 to 24 rarely lived in the households of well-to-do peasants (Schlumbohm, 1992: 194; 1994: 198-99, 213, 226-27; L nnemann, 1999: 74-78). Lower class families obviously had largely lost the capacity to engage in household production and mainly provided labour for nearby farms. As mentioned earlier, the *Heuerling* institution provided access to small parcels of land in some parts of eastern Westphalia and thus had the potential to mitigate the proletarianisation of the rural lower classes. However, contract conditions worsened with the demise of domestic linen production and seasonal migration to Holland, as well as with population growth, particularly during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Expressions of deprivation and isolated acts of protest by *Heuerlinge* in the wake of the revolution of

1848 suggest that the paternalist ties that held together the different strata of rural society progressively broke up as the nineteenth century wore on (Mooser, 1984: 266-80; Schlumbohm, 1994: 606-14).

The case of Westphalia supports a conventional account that considers rural proletarianisation as a major precondition for the emergence of a supply of industrial labour. During the first phase of the development of the Ruhr industrial district until about 1870, the bulk of additional labour was supplied by migrants from marginal areas of Westphalia (Crew, 1979: 59-60). As in the English case, the Prussian state promoted the spatial relocation of labour through new Poor and Residence laws in 1842/43 that made poor relief less contingent upon place of origin (Wehler, 1987: vol. 2, 293-95).

The development of rural labour markets promoted the development of life course patterns characterised by permanent single status. After the demise of household production among the lower classes, it became economically less attractive to form new households devoid of land. As mentioned in Section II, marriage was less universal in Borgeln, where agricultural labour markets were well-developed. We cannot explain this observation by arguing that couples were too poor to marry in this prosperous parish. The largest proportion never married was not simply a consequence of the limited access to land; rather, this option was strategically shaped by young adults, particularly women, and their families. In many contracts regulating *inter vivos* transfers of property, siblings of the new owner of a farm were granted their own room and the use of certain resources of the farm for as long as they remained unmarried. These provisions for both future marriage and for remaining single suggest that the two life course patterns had become realistic alternatives in this community. Similar provisions lack in the *inter vivos* contracts surviving for Löhne (C. Fertig, 2012: 153-64).

We would be mistaken, however, to make conclusions about the development of a market society only on the basis of evidence for labour markets and their consequences for life courses. Apart from a largely landless lower class, there existed groups of land-owning households that in the middle of the nineteenth century still accounted for roughly half of the population. In theory, the individualisation and formalisation of property relations described in the previous section should have favoured the development of land and credit markets because entitlements became specified more explicitly, which reduced transaction costs. In practice, however, while the wealthier strata of rural Westphalia were strongly exposed to product markets and relied heavily on labour markets to work their family farms they made only selective use of other factor markets: namely, markets for land, financial assets and credit.

To be sure, detailed studies of the land markets in Borgeln and Löhne show that land that was free from manorial obligations was traded more frequently than land subject to feudal encumbrances, which at first sight supports the argument that more individualised property rights lowered transaction costs and, hence, contributed to

liquidity. At least in Borgeln, however, we found that the largest differences in land mobility were not directly connected to feudal encumbrances. There was a tradition of treating some parts of the land as the core of the farm; this practice persisted even when feudal rights on these lands were dissolved. Other smaller parts of the land were often given to non-succeeding children or sold; these were subject to lesser feudal rights, and called *Erbeland* (inheritable land, similar to what is known as *walzende Gründe*, mobile lands, in southern Germany). While there was a clear correlation between (the absence of) feudal rights and *Erbeland*, *Erbeland* lands remained more likely to be sold than core lands, even when the legal difference between the two types of land had vanished (G. Fertig, 2007: 112-16).

The liquidity of the land market varied considerably between Borgeln and Löhne: In the former parish, about 0.8 percent of all land changed hand by way of sales contracts in an average year in the middle decades of the nineteenth century; in Löhne the annual turnover ratio was 2.5 percent. If only transactions outside the nuclear family are considered, the ratios amount to 0.6 and 1.5 percent, respectively. Typical values for other historical communities in Europe, which mostly include transactions among close relatives, are in the order of magnitude of one to two percent (G. Fertig, 2007: 148). The high turnover rate in Löhne seems mostly due to the relative large size of the former commons in this community. The plots resulting from the division, which were peripheral to the existing farms, changed hands relatively frequently. This helped to increase the size of newly created small farms of lower class households. This way, the land market in Löhne modified the consequences that the dissolution of the commons had on the access to land.⁵

What matters most for our argument is that there was little relationship between transactions in land markets and the life course. Purchase of land facilitated marriage in both communities, but the cases involved were few, and market transactions of land outside the nuclear family showed no life-cyclical pattern. At best, purchases related indirectly to the life course in that successful farmers bought land to provide for children who would not inherit the farm. Sales, by contrast, seem to have been caused mainly by indebtedness and failure to successfully manage a farm (G. Fertig, 2003: 113-16; 2007: 166-68; cf. also Brakensiek, 1991: 162, 164; Bracht, 2013: 415-21).

⁵ G. FERTIG (2001: 406-07); BRACHT (2013: 134-139). This statement holds for other parts of Westphalia as well. Data for seventeen communities situated in the district (*Kreis*) of Tecklenburg suggest that between 1830 and 1865 the change of the size of commons was negatively correlated with the change of the share of households owning land (Pearson $r=-0.26$; KÜPKER (2008: 258, 270-71). Thus, although the procedures followed in the division of commons usually favoured propertied households, the long term outcome was a weak increase of ownership rates. This implies an important intervening role of the land market.

Finally, local financial markets in Borgeln and Löhne were well developed in comparison to other parts of Prussia in that the manorial rights could be redeemed with relative ease in the wake of the land reforms. Both the two communities and Westphalia as a whole relied little on the state-sponsored mortgage banks (*Rentenbanken*) created in 1850 to facilitate the transition of full property of land to peasants. The *Rentenbanken* managed an instalment payment scheme with two options regarding the amortisation period, namely 41 or 56 years. The fixed annuity created a stable income flow for the former landlords but was inflexible from the perspective of a peasant household, which accrued a very fluctuating income. This probably explains why the services of the *Rentenbanken* were demanded less in the western than in the central and eastern provinces of Prussia. At the same time, our results imply that financial systems in at least some parts of the western regions were sufficiently developed to provide a credit supply capable to absorb such an institutional shock (Bracht, 2006; 2013: ch. 6.4).

Admittedly, in Löhne the redemption of manorial rights, most of which occurred already in the 1840s, dried up the local credit supply, and a major share of the funding required was simply provided by converting the capitalised manorial obligations into hypothecs. Landlords were thus transformed into creditors of their former subjects. However, this way of financing the land reform at least implied that the former landlords, who had actually triggered the reform in this community, considered the peasants to be sufficiently creditworthy in order to make this option attractive.

In Borgeln, by contrast, the shock was absorbed very quickly by drawing on credit from town burghers and running down the balances of savings accounts. In 1853, three years after the implementation of the reform, farmers of this community resumed building up their accounts with the savings bank of Soest. This supports the familiar idea that the development of product markets contributes to financial development, which in turn renders it easier to absorb external shocks.

Yet, despite this story of relative success, peasants made only limited use of financial markets to meet the challenges connected to critical junctures of the family cycle and of the life course of individual family members. Interlinking the transactions of the savings bank in Soest with individual life course events elucidates to what degree savings were used in specific life course transitions and situations of short term stress. From the statistical analyses reported by Bracht (2013, ch. 8), it transpires that the money accountholders had saved was neither used for old age nor for their own marriages, nor for times when the accountholders had small children, and not even when the harvest had failed. There was only one type of situations that made the withdrawal of savings consistently more likely: Savers withdrew cash when they needed money to purchase land (Bracht, 2013: 406). A complementary analysis of the determinants of making a new deposit even shows frequent saving in the age between 30 and 39 (Bracht, 2013:

403). Another analysis also shows that *inter vivos* transfers went together with the frequent contraction of debt (Bracht, 2013: 408).

In some sense, then, financial development aided the family related wealth strategies of peasants. At the same time, however, the savings account did not fulfil the function that modern theory posits relative to the function of the financial system with respect to the life course: namely, the transfer of income portions from phases with a high capacity for work and little time for consumption to phases with a low capacity for work and a need for additional resources to sustain consumption (see, e.g., Modigliani, 1980). In fact, the average duration of a savings account was too short to transfer income portions across different stages of the life course; after five years less than a quarter of newly opened savings accounts were still active (Bracht, 2013: 252). Obviously, peasants used financial markets only to store liquidity in the short or middle run; that is, to wait for the opportunity to buy land or to have cash at hand for their own or their children's marriage. Only at the end of the nineteenth century did a few accountholders start to retain savings even after handing over the farm and stipulating a retirement benefit. Since maintenance was typically ensured through *inter vivos* contracts, these savings were probably used as complementary pocket-money (Bracht, 2013: 382-85).

V. Strong ties: the nuclear family, inheritance and the family farm

In both Westphalian communities we studied, property transactions occurred mostly within a small group of individuals bound together by strong ties of descent or close affinal relations. In Borgeln, where 9 percent of the total area changed hands per year on average between 1830 and 1866, 31 percent of the transaction volume related to inheritance after the death of one or both parents (with or without testaments), 41 percent to *inter vivos* contracts and only 8 percent related to sales. In Löhne, the rate of annual property changes was lower (7 percent of total area per year). Here, 30 percent of all changes related to testate or intestate inheritances *post mortem*, only 19 percent resulted from contracts *inter vivos*, and no less than 36 percent were sales (G. Fertig, 2007: 79; cf. also G. Fertig, 2003: 107). The differences between the two communities with respect to the relative shares of *inter vivos* contracts and sales ensued mainly from the fact that 40 percent of all sales in Löhne actually were property transfers between parents and children (see below).

Consequently, a comparatively strong land-family bond can be observed: Over the period from 1750 to 1870, between 51 and 60 percent of all farm transfers in Borgeln and Löhne went to direct descendants of the original owners, 27 and 19 percent went to widowed persons and their new spouses, and only 7 to 10 percent of all farms came into the hands of non-relatives. In Oberkirchen, a third parish in the mountainous southern part of Westphalia, 73 percent of all farm transfers favoured children and grandchildren.

This rather high rate is grounded in a different marriage law: Unlike in Borgeln and Löhne, spouses maintained separate property rights after marriage. Therefore, children often inherited farms directly from the parent who brought the farm into the family, and farms rarely (that is, only in 4 percent of all farm transfers) passed to remarriage partners (C. Fertig & G. Fertig, 2006: 173). The striving of families to keep farms and land within the family was much stronger in all three Westphalian parishes than in two Dutch regions. In both Eastern Marne (Groningen) and Oosterhesselen (Drenthe), only a third of all farm transfers went to direct descendants and other close relatives in the same period, whereas 54 and 61 percent were sold or rented out to non-related people (Paping & Karel, 2011: 55).

The transmission of farms to a single heir was not just the result of the blind operation of traditional inheritance customs, but was actively sought after by families. The rate of intergenerational transfers conforming to the local custom -- as formalised by the property laws of the eighteenth century -- increased between the early eighteenth and the third quarter of the nineteenth century both in Belm (near Osnabrück, which is part of historical Westphalia) and Löhne (Schlumbohm, 1994: 388-91; C. Fertig, 2003: 73-74). In any case, while not inventing a tradition, the rural population actively continued regional inheritance customs beyond the dissolution of manorial institutions by deliberate choice.

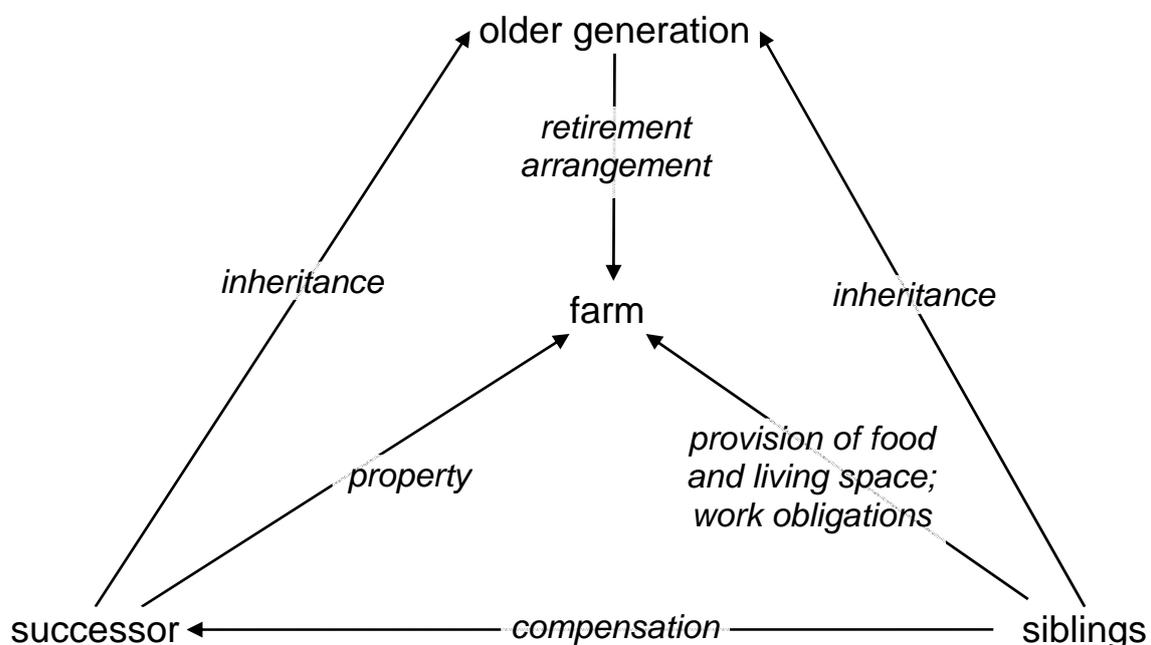
Whereas *inter vivos* contracts were the single most important formal element of property transactions among close relatives, sales contracts and hypothecary credit also contributed to the repertoire that was used to rearrange property relations among family members. We already noted in passing that in Borgeln about a quarter of all land sales was contracted by members of the same nuclear family; in Löhne this proportion amounted to 40 percent. Prices stipulated in these contracts were lower and more variable than in the contracts concluded between other transaction partners (G. Fertig, 2007: 148, 196-99). Thus, to some extent the land market was used as a formal instrument to implement inheritance strategies (cf. Zeitlhofer, 2002 for the analysis of a similar situation in a Bohemian community). Our findings contrast with Neckarhausen, where the land market facilitated the increasing cooperation among horizontal kin (Sabeau, 1990: ch. 16). A considerable amount of hypothecary credit, between 12 and 37 percent of the entire credit volume in the period from 1830 to 1866, resulted from the entitlements of family members -- mostly offspring of the previous owner -- who did not inherit a farm (Bracht, 2013: 165). Formalising these entitlements as a hypothecary credit increased their security and possibly liberated intra-familial relations from struggles over resources.

All this evidence suggests that peasants did not use the new formal institutions to implement a market concept to organize their life course. Rather, *inter vivos* contracts, complemented by sales contracts and mortgage credit all referred to the concept of the

family farm as a medium to coordinate property relations within the nuclear family across the life course of its individual members. The importance of the farm as the principal frame of reference for family strategies is supported by naming practices: Patrilineal descent was less important for naming a family than the farm it occupied, and families often assumed the latter's name when they moved from one farm to another (Borck, 1971; Schlumbohm, 1994: 506; Linde, 2001).

Contracts *inter vivos*, complemented sometimes with land sales and mortgage credit, coordinated critical junctures of the life course of family members by a re-specification of property relations relative to a farm (cf. Figure 5.2; C. Fertig et al., 2005; C. Fertig & G. Fertig, 2006; Lünemann, 2005; 2006). First, there was a moderately strong relationship between the transfer of a farm to an heir and the latter's marriage. In Löhne, 35 percent of all marriages of farm heirs concluded during the first eight decades of the nineteenth century took place during the time span of three months before and after the establishment of a transfer contract; in Borgeln the share was less than a fifth (18 percent). Moreover, the prospect of marriage was frequently mentioned as a motive for transmitting a farm to an unmarried heir in Löhne; marriage obviously motivated intergenerational resource transfers. In Borgeln, however, peasants made reference to marriage in handing over contracts infrequently; these two life course transitions – farm transmission and marriage -- were only loosely connected in this community (C. Fertig, 2003: 83-85).

Figure 5.2. Actors and entitlements regulated in property transfer contracts



Source: adapted from C. FERTIG (2003: 77).

Note: Terms in standard type designate actors involved in property transfer contracts, arrows and terms in italics refer to entitlements.

Second, transmission contracts *inter vivos* specified the entitlements of the older generation relative to the family farm. In one variant, the person or the couple who ceded ownership to a child reserved life-time usufruct of the farm and demanded the obedience of the young couple in all aspects of organising work on the farm. The transfer secured the property rights of the farm successor in these cases, and in addition, it clarified the child's position on the marriage market.

But even when parents relinquished everyday management to the successor, they retained the right to live on the premises of the farm. Most parents declared that they wanted to stay in the farm successors' households, maintaining a domestic community: They demanded to sit at the table and sometimes to have free access to the pantry, but they also promised to work for the household's best. In the case of conflict, they reserved the right to live in an independent household. In this case, they moved into a separate room or a small house and often used some plots for their maintenance (so-called *Leibzucht*). The occupier of the farm was obliged to provide services for the cultivation of this land, such as ploughing, and provide for the parents in case of sickness. While contracts implicitly presupposed that the two generations would get on well together, some of them stipulated alternatives to the *Leibzucht* in case of serious conflict. This usually consisted of an allowance in cash, which could enable the members of the older generation to move away from the farm. In general, peasant families relied on their ability to get along with each other and to live under the same roof. Nevertheless, they took precautions to dissociate if necessary, even though the establishment of separate households markedly increased costs of living.

The timing and nature of transfer varied with respect to the family constellation. Old couples were more inclined to maintain the usufruct of the farm they transferred to the successor, than were widowed persons. Widows were reluctant to relinquish management of the family farm, and if they felt forced to do so, they were particularly careful to stipulate their future entitlements in detail and to specify alternatives in case of conflict. This documents the weak position of women even if they were superior with respect to age. Finally, widowers were particularly likely to hand their farms over to a daughter, which points to the complementary work roles of women and men in rural households: having a closely related female in the household would guarantee dedicated care in the case of sickness (C. Fertig et al., 2005: 321-23).

Third, transmission contracts *inter vivos* also included provisions for children who did not take over the farm. An important conceptual element of Figure 5.2 is that it distinguishes between inheritance and the transmission of the family farm. All children were entitled to inherit some of their parents' wealth. The prospect of inheriting the family farm was only one type of resource flow between the family farm and the family members of both generations. The (prospective) transfer of the parents' immovable wealth to the successor on the family farm was at least in part compensated by marriage

portions given to the other heirs in the form of movable wealth. Contracts regulating the transfer of farms sometimes referred to marriage portions paid out earlier, and stipulated future obligations of the farm and its proprietor. Since it was unusual to establish inventories at the time of property transmissions, it is difficult to assess the wealth shares given to different types of heirs. A rough estimate places compensations to non-succeeding heirs at about 70 percent of an equal share in inheritance (C. Fertig & G. Fertig, 2006: 180). It appears that this share did not increase as farms grew more productive in the course of the nineteenth century and total wealth increased, suggesting that the ratio mentioned was considered adequate given the risks and obligations assumed by the heir succeeding to the family farm.

Compensations took the form of marriage portions (so-called *Brautschätze*). They consisted of money, cattle and, particularly for brides, household items such as linen and furniture. Originally, the material part of them was elaborately decorated on wagons and carried to the groom's home on the day of marriage. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, these *Brautschätze* seem to have become largely monetised (cf. Sauer mann, 1971/72). Marriage portions were usually of equal size for both daughters and sons leaving the family farm.

Finally, transmission contracts *inter vivos* also included stipulations for unmarried offspring. These referred to the period of celibacy of children who might marry in the future, to children who might finally opt for remaining permanently unmarried (see above), and to disabled children. Contracts regulated the work obligations of children temporarily remaining on the farm, their entitlements to living space and food, as well as provisions of support for disabled children, for unmarried family members falling sick and for children who had left the family farm but became needy.

Thus, the life course of individuals -- that is, entitlements related to marriage and provisions for old age and sickness -- was in a large part shaped not by market transactions but through re-arrangements of property relations relative to a farm. In particular, families used *inter vivos* contracts not only to re-specify inter-generational relationships given the faltering working capacity of the old generation and the beginning marriages of the young, but also to balance the undivided transmission of the farm with a fair treatment of all children relative to inter-generational wealth transfers. This allowed both to continue the traditional inheritance regime and to minimize intra-familial resource inequality.

VI. Weak ties, reciprocity and support networks

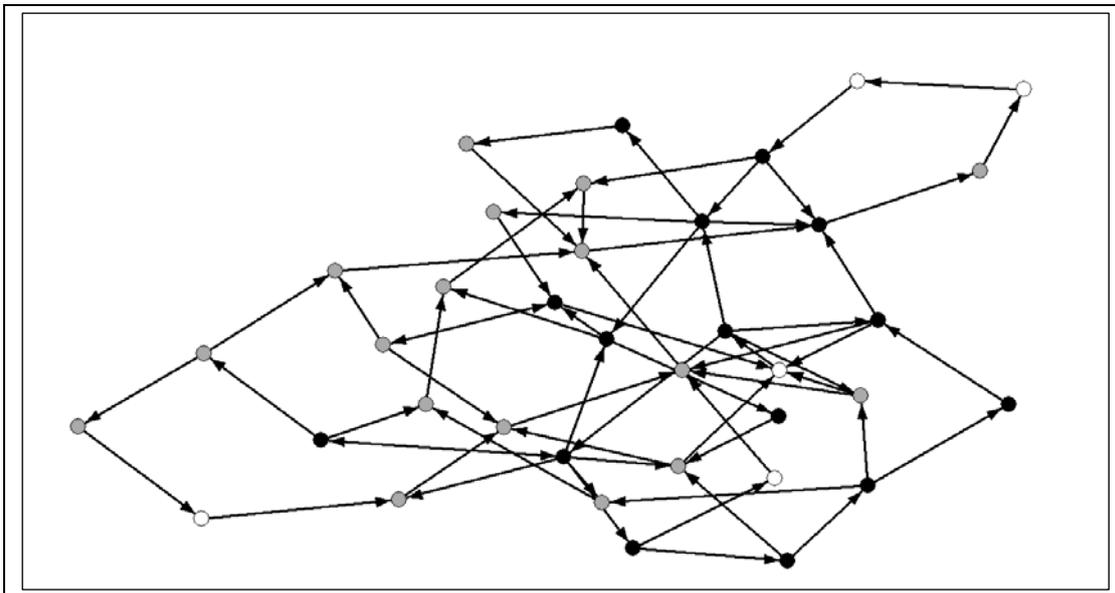
Jointly, the state and the nuclear family had a strong role defining frames of action and the resulting patterns of social organisation. This includes both the legal framework and practices of economic redistribution through inheritance and succession, and also the

formal institutions underlying market transactions, such as land title registers. Typically, we see the state creating and maintaining institutions, which were used by families. But at least on the local level there existed an additional sphere of wider and weaker networks that served both to disseminate information relevant for market access and to orient family strategies. In this section, therefore, we look at networks created essentially through kinship and godparenthood and assess their role in shaping local social organisation. In addition, we investigate their role for status as well as for assessing land and credit markets.

Let us first turn to networks created by marriage. Our purpose is twofold: First, we intend to identify marriage systems in the sense of restricted and generalised exchange, as discussed by Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). Second, we explore the degree to which marriage in the two communities was endogamous, relative both to status and to patrilineal descent. This serves to test Sabeau's thesis that in the course of the nineteenth century classes emerged through increased intermarriage among elite members of common descent (Sabeau, 1998: ch. 22).

Figure 5.3 presents the results of a strong component analysis of the marriage networks in Borgeln and Löhne. In a strongly connected component, each vertex (in our case: large farms, small holdings or land-poor houses) is both sender and receiver, and from each vertex, there starts a path that leads back. The best known ethnographic example for a strongly connected component is Malinowski's (Malinowski, 1953) *Kula* ring, defining a field of reciprocity (De Nooy et al., 2005: 66-70; Scott, 2000: 103). In our example, senders are the houses or farms of origin of marriage partners, and receivers are the farms and houses these marriage partners move to. In a strictly patrilocal system of household formation, the analysis would show the circulation of women and their dowries in a local society; in nineteenth-century Westphalia, however, a significant part of the marriage partners who moved to another than the parental farm or house were male. The unit of analysis are farms and houses; that is, only the propertied segment of the two local societies is considered.

Figure 5.3: Strong components of marriage networks in Löhne, marriages 1750-1874



Source: Adapted from C. FERTIG (2012: 187).

Note: Filled circles: large farms with a tax value of over 83 *Thaler*; shaded circles: small holdings between 18 and 83 *Thaler*; empty circles: land-poor houses (below 18 *Thaler*).

The results for the two communities show a striking contrast. In Borgeln, strong components were not found (and hence not shown in Figure 5.3). Only very small marriage circles between few holdings could be identified. There are no signs of a reciprocal marriage system involving large parts of the local community, although we can observe a few direct marriage exchanges between farms that can be associated with a pattern of limited exchange. Overall, local exogamy dominated -- although Borgeln was not smaller than Löhne -- and endogamy was restricted to a few small cliques.

In Löhne, by contrast, there existed a strong component integrating a quarter of all farms and houses (24.3 percent). Given the size of this strong component, which spans over a number of groups that practiced bi-directional and thus restricted exchange, we can draw conclusions about the existence of a system of generalised exchange of marriage partners and marriage portions in Löhne. This is similar to results found for a community of Haut-Gévaudan, also an area characterised by impartible transmission of farms (Claverie & Lamaison, 1982: ch. 14, esp. p. 283; cf. Sabeau, 1998: 407-16). To be sure, even though the marriage system of generalised exchange found for Löhne implied a circulation of resources within a significantly large segment of local society, it was far from egalitarian: Whereas it integrated almost half of the large farms (48.4 percent) and of the small holdings (43.6 percent), only 6.1 percent of land-poor houses belonged to it (C. Fertig, 2012: 188).

The system of reciprocity, which was based on a generalised exchange of marriage partners and marriage portions that bound together a substantial part of the land-owning population in Löhne, in turn rested on a high level of kinship endogamy. Applying the PGraph method developed by Douglas R. White (White & Jorion, 1992) to the genealogies of both communities, we identified network cores where kinship relations were denser than in the network periphery. Since the unit of analysis is constituted by the individual couple, this approach covers a much larger share of the population than the search for a strong component in the interactions between farms and houses. We find that 42.5 percent of the marriages concluded in Löhne from 1750 to 1874 belonged to the central network core. The differences between social groups were relatively modest; while every second propertied couple (including proprietors of houses only) was part of the core, the membership share still amounted to about a third among couples without property. In Borgeln, by contrast, the network core included a smaller share of all couples (34.7 percent), and social differences with respect to membership in this network was much more pronounced (C. Fertig, 2012: 192-98). Thus, in Löhne a socially inclusive kinship network provided a weak tie on the basis of which a pattern of generalised exchange of marriage partners and corresponding resource flows could develop among the land-holding segment of local society.

It is important to stress that the relatively high density of kinship relations in Löhne was the result of historical choices made before the period of observation; that is, before the second half of the eighteenth century, rather than by a strategy discernible in our material. This is demonstrated by the fact that, while the absolute level of marriages among persons related by kinship was high in absolute terms (71.4 percent from 1770 to 1870), the choice of marriage partners was largely kinship-blind, if actual behaviour is assessed on the background of the high density of pre-existing kinship ties.⁶ In Borgeln, the absolute level of intermarriage among kin was lower, but relative to pre-existing kinship density there was a statistically significant preference for kin. At the same time, this behaviour was largely limited to the land-holding segment of the population, who strongly preferred relatively close kin as marriage partners. This suggests that Borgeln moved towards a class society in Sabean's terms, since the propertied groups increasingly married kin and thus limited the circulation of resources through the local community (C. Fertig, 2012: 199-206; Sabean, 1998: ch. 22).

Kinship inherited through descent and established laterally through marriage could be complemented by ritual kinship in the form of godparenthood. By the first half of the nineteenth century, the overwhelming share of godparents were chosen among relatives in our two villages; godparenthood thus served to strengthen pre-existing ascriptive ties.

⁶ Kinship ties range from 1-step relationships (like M: mother) up to 7-step relationships (e.g. FFFBSSD: father's father's father's brother's son's son's daughter, 3rd cousin).

Nevertheless, a substantial number was also chosen beyond the group of relatives, so that godparenthood constitutes a network variable of its own right. This is true particularly with respect to the lower-class couples in both communities; in the middle of the nineteenth century, a third of the godparents they chose were not kin, which suggests that they used godparenthood to broaden network relations in order to develop possible resources of support (C. Fertig, 2009b; 2012: 122-28).

In Borgeln, networks of godparenthood were centralised around relatively few individuals who were asked to act as godparent with particular frequency. They also reinforced stratification according to age and social status in that godparents were considerably older than parents and consisted overwhelmingly of farmers. Relationships between godparents and parents were thus often characterised by strong inequality. In Löhne, by contrast, godparenthood was less centralised around popular actors; it was more of an affair between people of equal age, and status differences between godparents and parents were moderate. Even farmers chose a landless godparent for about one fifth (21.6 percent) of their baptisms. All this corroborates the impression gained from the analysis of kinship patterns: namely, that social networks in Löhne were more inclusive than in Borgeln.

What were the consequences of networks constituted by common descent, marriage and godparenthood in terms of social status and market access? First, it is striking to see that intergenerational upward social mobility, expressed as the move from a small to a larger farm, was considerably larger in Löhne than in Borgeln (C. Fertig, 2012: 171-73). The availability of common land for creating new farms for landless households in Löhne certainly accounts for some of this difference, but the marriage system of generalised exchange that implied a reciprocal circulation of resources among the groups possessing land also contributed to the relative openness of stratification in this community. By contrast, the tendency of farmers in Borgeln to prefer close relatives as marriage partners restricted intergenerational social mobility. It is less likely that godparenting practices had an impact on social stratification. Status attributes of godparents had no effect on status attainment in Borgeln; only the frequency with which parents were chosen as godparents had a positive effect on the status attainment of offspring, and this variable probably measures a relational aspect of social prestige (C. Fertig, 2009b).

As for the relevance of networks relative to access to factor markets, we tested the frequency of land purchases across types of kinship by comparing the actual outcome with the pattern expected if transaction partner choice had been kinship blind (G. Fertig, 2007: 151). Purchases were much more frequent among the closest relatives, including members of the same nuclear family and first cousins. Obviously, these land purchases were largely connected to the rearrangement of property through inheritance or other forms of familial redistribution, rather than to the market sphere. There was a small but elevated number of cases where transaction partners were linked through same-

generation affinal relations (e.g. groups of intermarrying siblings or siblings in law). This was particularly true in Borgeln and Oberkirchen (another place with an illiquid land market studied in G. Fertig, 2007), not in Löhne, where the land market was more liquid. The result contrasts with Sabean's (1990: ch. 16) finding that in Neckarhausen the land market was used by agnatic relatives to realign land property threatened by fragmentation in the wake of rapid population growth. Rather, our results for Borgeln and Oberkirchen supports the relevance of intermarried peer groups; that is, ego-centred networks of essentially horizontal orientation who shared common experiences and probably 'bounded solidarity' (Portes, 1998) rather than specific information. Analogous findings have been made by Segalen who studied the circulation of leases in Brittany (cf. Sabean, 1998: 417-19). The most striking result however is that there was no tendency at all to discriminate against non-kin in comparison to remote kin. Taken together, our findings on access to land through the land market and its distribution across various categories of kin relations does not seem to support Granovetter's (1983) thesis concerning the role of social networks in market access. Networks did not open an access to scarce information that, in the absence of a kinship link, were not available. (See the non-discrimination against non-kin). What helped was a sense of belonging, either to the closest group of nuclear kin and first cousins, or to the peer groups of the same generation that had married one another's sisters and brothers.

Credit markets present a rather different picture. As mentioned above in Section IV, peasants in Borgeln were able to mobilize credit from outside the community and did not need to rely on local networks. Only 2.5 percent of all mortgage credits recorded in this community from 1830 to 1866 came from local lenders. Together with our earlier findings, this suggests that farmers in Borgeln avoided transactions leading to resource flows between neighbours as much as possible. By contrast, eighteen percent of all credits in Löhne were owed to creditors from the same community, and three quarters of those transactions were carried out among kin (Bracht, 2013: 186-93; C. Fertig, 2009a: 192). However, since about three quarters of all marriage partners were related to each other by kin, and this is exactly the amount of marriages with relatives one could expect if people would have acted entirely kinship-blind (see above), relatives do not appear to have been more prominent as credit partners than non-relatives. The relative high development of financial markets in the two communities seems to have made kinship networks irrelevant with respect to the access to credit.

VII. Conclusion

This in-depth study of two Westphalian communities from the late eighteenth to the third quarter of the nineteenth century is one of the first historical investigations into Polanyi's (1944) Great Transformation thesis, which implicitly argues for a close

interplay between institutional reforms carried out by the state and the evolution of social organisation towards a market society during the first half of the nineteenth century. We started with the observation that the land reforms of the first half of the nineteenth century contributed to a considerable increase, connected with a rather gradual individualisation and formalisation, of peasant property rights. Simultaneously, markets for agricultural and proto-industrial products developed. Both the land reforms and the product markets created a larger space for wealth management strategies and made it necessary to develop strategies to rearrange property relations across the life course. This held in particular with respect to critical junctures such as marriage and the transition to old age.

We find despite the existence of an institutional framework that favoured the transition to a market society, peasants in both communities made no systematic use of factor markets to meet the challenges arising from the progression of individual life courses and associated family cycles. They did not use existing financial markets to shift income portions to phases of the life course characterised by low working capacity (Modigliani, 1980), and they made little effort to adjust the size of farm to the familial labour force with the help of the land market (Béaur, 1991). Other institutions, both through the labour market and family, were available to make these adjustments possible. Peasants could hence continue the manorial custom of impartibility of farms by developing it into a traditional norm that guided family strategies with respect to inheritance and provision for old age. The farm as a concept opposing the market constituted the medium that members of a nuclear family used in order to rearrange their entitlements as their individual life courses progressed. The central instrument to this purpose constituted *inter vivos* contracts among members of a nuclear family that transferred farm property to offspring but at the same time regulated the future income of the older generation, the full payment of the inheritance portions of the children who would not inherit the farm, and welfare provisions in case the latter would live and work on the farm or fall sick. In this way, impartible transfer of farms, which was required to safeguard the future entitlements of the family members apart from the owner(s), was reconciled with intestate civil law, which prescribed the equal treatment of all heirs. Alternatively, sales contracts could fulfil similar functions, and entitlements of individual family members could be secured using a mortgage claim filed in the land register. Thus, significant shares of contracts that appear as market transactions at first sight were in fact contractual elements of family strategies; institutions that could underlie a market society were effectively used as instruments for family strategies.

With respect to the Great Transformation thesis, this implies that the effects of institutional change on social organisation were mediated by the ways in which actors made use of the new institutional framework. In this case, institutions that were conducive to a market society were effectively used by peasants to adjust redistributive

mechanisms within the framework of the nuclear family. The most proximate explanation for this behaviour is that institutional change took mostly the form of an external shock; the lack of experience in using the new institutions for organising individual life courses made engagement on land and credit markets for this purpose highly risky. By contrast, experience with property management under the manorial system, particularly with impartible transmission of farms across generations, made the continuation of received inheritance practices in the form of a family strategy appear as a way to adapt to institutional change that was less risky and easier to handle. Path dependence thus greatly limited the effective impact of institutional changes addressed by the Great Transformation thesis (cf. North, 1990: 95-96; Kok, 2002: 468).

Our results also have implications for the understanding of peasant conservatism, a concept that looms large in contemporary assessments of peasant behaviour during the nineteenth century (for an early statement, see Schwerz, 1836: 9-12 et passim). In our material the continuation of older modes of social organisation does not appear as the reflection of an innate conservative peasant ideology; rather the observed pattern of behaviour appears as one of deliberate choice: Peasants opted for property arrangements that looked conservative because their welfare outcomes were at least satisfactory, not because of any ideology (cf. Trossbach, 1998: 112).

Apart from this main finding, four other results deserve special mention. First, despite a similar institutional context and a geographical distance of only some 80 km, the two communities differed widely with respect to social organisation beyond a highly familial mode of wealth management. Development of product markets and land reforms had obviously achieved little in homogenising the Westphalian countryside as late as the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Borgeln, the community specialising in agricultural surplus production and displaying a strong development of an agricultural labour market, was particularly characterised by a highly individualistic society: Farmers interacted little with each other on land and credit markets, and kinship networks were loose. At best, there was a tendency among farmers -- but not among the lower class -- to intermarry among close relatives, which contributed to the strong resource concentration and inequality in this parish. The inhabitants of Löhne, who combined subsistence agriculture with flax spinning, lived in a more integrative social structure: Social mobility was larger than in Borgeln and there existed an encompassing kinship network on the basis of which a marriage system of generalised exchange produced a situation of generalised reciprocity with respect to the circulation of marriage portions across large segments of the landholding population. The lower class had some access to land through *Heuerling* contracts, and there was a moderate level of kinship and godparenthood ties between different social groups. This result casts serious doubts on the contention that proto-industrialisation was an important element in the Great Transformation process (Kriedte et al., 1981; Mooser, 1984). If anything,

elements of a class society were more developed in Borgeln, the community specialising in commercial agriculture, than in Löhne. In the latter community, the availability of non-agricultural income opportunities may have stabilised an inclusive social structure in which exchange through social networks played an important role.

In sum, we have found a strongly familistic mode to cope with critical junctures of the individual life course and the family cycle. We have also found a strong local variation of other aspects of social structure. To the extent that we can generalise about these findings, they explain a great deal about a defining element of German history after the formation of the Second Empire in 1871: namely, the limited integration of the rural population into and its conflictive relationship with national party and interest group politics. As market use remained selective and was subject to strong local variation, it was difficult to form common interests and develop political alliances. To a considerable extent, protective tariff policy from the 1880s contributed to a continuation of this situation. It explains why peasant unrest remained based on local and regional potentials and was difficult to channel into national political action (See, among others, Gessner, 1976; Moeller, 1986; Münkler, 1991; Pyta, 1996).

The second and third points relate to the role of social networks in the form of kinship. In general, we find that access to land was not facilitated through kinship links -- especially if they were weaker -- but only in spheres of rather close belonging: either among people who were heirs or heirs' heirs to the same farm, or, where land was particularly scarce, among people who were part of a same-generation circle of intermarriage. This supports Portes's (1998) argument that not all network-mediated benefits have their source in instrumental, 'under-socialised' motivations, more than Granovetter's (1983, 1985) view that 'weak ties' make information available and thus, as one might conclude, reduce transaction costs.

Third, we stress the local variability of kinship networks and their multiple social functions. Our analysis is original in that all other in-depth studies of local kinship networks concern contexts farther in the south. (For an overview, see Sabeau, 1998: ch. 20.) Although kinship networks were denser in Löhne than in Borgeln, they did not produce a kinship-hot society; there is no equivalent of the Swabian *Vetternwirtschaft* (cronyism of agnatic relatives) in the German northwest. Still, we can demonstrate the existence of a marriage system of generalised exchange in Löhne, which set the basis for a pattern of generalised reciprocity with respect to the circulation of marriage portions among land-owning groups. For Borgeln, by contrast, we find traces of limited exchange of marriage partners among some families, which provides moderate support for Sabeau's argument that class formation occurred through marriage alliance among the propertied elite (Sabeau, 1998: ch. 22). In other situations, however, there are few indications of a particular kinship system at work.

Fourth, and in a methodological perspective, our work strongly reasserts the important role of the family strategy as a heuristic tool in historical analysis (cf. Viazzo & Lynch, 2002). By drawing together information from different sources in one single nominative database on the community level, we find it possible to observe multivariate data patterns, which in turn allow for the identification of strategic behaviour of the goal-instrumental type of social action. We also have combined event related data with contracts, particularly *inter vivos* transfers of property that testify to explicit decision making processes within families. Such a rich methodology obviates most concerns that have been raised in connection with the family strategy concept. In essence, we conclude by stressing the modernity of family strategies; far from their being a relic from *ancien régime* Europe, the institutional changes that affected the rural areas during the nineteenth century created new room for family strategies, which often provided safer solutions for rearranging property relations across the life course than reliance on emerging markets.

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