

## Recensies

J. Hanus, *Affluence and Inequality in the Low Countries: the City of 's-Hertogenbosch in the Long Sixteenth Century, 1500-1650*. (Leuven: Peeters, 2014) 356 p. ISBN 978-90-429-3146-6.

With *Affluence and inequality in the Low Countries: the city of 's-Hertogenbosch in the long sixteenth century, 1500-1650*, Jord Hanus has provided us with a thorough and detailed reconstruction of the economic development of a trading hub in the early modern period. It is a rich study, making extensive use of the city's archives and considering the city's economic history from many angles.

The research is framed in a number of debates. A number of these revolve around growth, inequality and structural change in early modern Europe and the Low Countries in particular. This is a rich field of research where the detailed study of development of a city in the long run has a lot to teach us. The book also makes use of the debate about welfare and its measurement, in particular the idea that measuring wellbeing requires us to consider more than just income. From this perspective, however, I thought it was somewhat disappointing that *Affluence and inequality* in the end only considered income measures. While there is ample attention for the distribution of income, and data on other indicators is of course scarce, it did not quite live up to the discussion in the introduction.

The book is based on very diverse source material. A number of new datasets were developed, including nominal wage series from the city accounts and data on sectoral developments based on burgher records (*poorterboeken*) and the registers on new guild masters. At the same time, Hanus demonstrates the value of linking these new datasets as well as pre-existing datasets such as the fiscal database created by Anton Schuttelaars and the CPI indices from Antwerp and Holland/Amsterdam. It is the combination of these sources, notably the linking of the fiscal records with real wages, that underlies many of Hanus' conclusions.

The first research chapter attempts to reconstruct the gross urban income of 's-Hertogenbosch. After constructing a real wage series, this data is linked with fiscal records to arrive at an estimate of the city's total income. This exercise reveals a relatively high-income economy. After a period of growth in the first half of the sixteenth century, 's-Hertogenbosch was hit by wars and unrest, but it also experienced a robust recovery after being conquered and incorporated in Dutch Republic.

Hanus next topic is income inequality. He finds inequality to have been high in 's-Hertogenbosch, as is to be expected for an early modern city. Inequality was also stable throughout the sixteenth century and may have declined in the first half of the seventeenth, though as this observation is based on house rent taxes, housing

market conditions could be influencing these results. Finally, poverty, measured by mean real incomes at the lower deciles of the income distribution, declined markedly over the period. However, Hanus correctly notes that the composition of households probably skews the estimates of per capita incomes, which means these results should be treated carefully.

The next two chapters are used to sketch the functional and sectoral distribution of income. This reveals that labour's share of income had declined sharply by the middle of the sixteenth century. Profit's share of income, calculated as a residual, showed an inverse path. The trends in the sectoral distribution of income track the economy and its earners as 's-Hertogenbosch transformed from an international exporter to a local service centre. Economic mobility is the subject of the final research chapter. Though Hanus is somewhat hesitant to draw conclusions here, he finds that periods of economic growth were associated with higher economic mobility. More generally, mobility was low: one's relative economic position in one fiscal record was highly predictive of one's position in the next.

Overall, *Affluence and inequality* shows the value of combining various kinds of source material. It is a careful, yet rich story about economic growth and its distributional consequences. It is often methodologically consistent with other recent research on early modern growth and well embedded in the literature, allowing the reader to place 's-Hertogenbosch's development in a wider perspective.

I thought it was striking that two schools of economic history are largely missing from the book: institutionalism and cliometrics. This is not to say that they are a necessary ingredient for economic history, but I do believe that some of their key ideas would have benefitted the book. For one, making more use of economic theory and statistical models could have squeezed more information from the material. For example, I think statistical methods could have strengthened the conclusions in the chapter on economic mobility, where a regression framework would have been a flexible, standard methodology. Regarding institutionalism, it has shifted our focus from the proximate to the ultimate causes of economic development. These do not have a large role in this book. When causes of development are sought, these causes tend to be wars or general economic downturns, which could have affected large parts of the Low Countries. I would have been interested to know how 's-Hertogenbosch was able to deal with such adversities relative to other cities and suspect that its institutions were a large part of that story. However, this would probably have required a systematic comparison which would have been very ambitious for a PhD-research project aiming to be as thorough as this one. Hopefully, similar research to that in *Affluence and inequality* will allow for this next step in the comparative history of the economic development of pre-industrial cities.

Auke Rijpma, Utrecht University and International Institute of Social History