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In the Shadow of the Tree

Kinship, Property and Inheritance
among Farm Families

Henk de Haan

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van

Henk de Haan

Landbouwuniversiteit Wageningen

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1. Het feit dat er in Nederland zo weinig aandacht bestaat voor de sociaal-culturele achtergrond van het gezinsbedrijf, hangt voor een belangrijk deel samen met de ideologische verwerping en/of ontkenning van de ver menging van de privé-sfeer met marktproduktie.
2. Definiëring van het begrip 'gezinsbedrijf' op grond van uiterlijke kenmerken is zinloos. 'Gezinsbedrijf' verwijst naar een handelingscontext, waarin het handelen in meerdere of mindere mate wordt gestructureerd door opvattingen over gezin en verwantschap.
3. De veronderstelling – zoals geuit door o.m. Saal en Kooy – dat het 'traditionele' huwelijks- en gezinsleven gebaseerd waren op koele berekening en andere zakelijke overwegingen, is eenzijdig materialistisch en ziet over het hoofd dat affectieve bindingen een meeromvattende culturele inhoud hebben dan alleen maar romantische liefde en koesterung.
4. Welslagen in de agrarische sector vereist meer dan het goed beheersen van bedrijfstechnische en marktkundige processen. Een wezenlijk onderdeel van goed 'vakmanschap' is de sociale vaardigheid, nodig voor het in stand houden van het 'culturele kapitaal.'
5. De agrarische sector wordt over het algemeen voorgesteld als zijnde onderhevig aan een permanente revolutie. Ondanks intense overheidsregulering en technologische en economische modernisering vertoont de boerenbevolking echter toch een grote mate van culturele continuïteit.
6. Bij de analyse van regionale ontwikkelingspatronen in Europa moet meer aandacht besteed worden aan de sociaal-culturele eigenaardigheden van de agrarische bevolking.

7. De verscheidenheid van de rurale sociologie in Europa is een gevolg van de verstengeling met de politieke cultuur en de landbouw- en plattelandsproblematiek binnen uiteenlopende nationale contexten.
8. De na-oorlogse Nederlandse ‘nieuwbouw-wijk’ symboliseert een fundamentele tweeslachtigheid in het denken over stad en platteland en de daarmee verbonden identiteiten.
9. Ondanks de enorme explosie in de geautomatiseerde informatieverwerking en -verschaffing, is het peil van wetenschappelijke publikaties er qua lay-out en taalgebruik en in inhoudelijk opzicht niet op vooruit gegaan.
10. Wat in de tuin- en binnenhuisarchitectuur wel wordt aangeduid als de *country-style* is een van de vele tijdloze variaties op de rurale idylle.
11. Wanneer in Nederland wordt gesproken over culturele verschillen, wordt daarbij ten onrechte alleen gedacht aan etnische groeperingen. De verschillen tussen mensen van Nederlandse afkomst zijn echter minstens zo groot als die welke langs etnische lijnen lopen. De aspiraties om *deze* cultuurverschillen te overbruggen zijn vrijwel nihil.
12. Wat ooit begon als ‘new journalism,’ ‘history from below’ en ‘anthropology at home’ lijkt in de Nederlandse media en sociale wetenschappen tegenwoordig soms op het verzamelen van objecten voor een rariteitenkabinet.

In the Shadow of the Tree

Promotor: Dr. A.T.J. Nooij,
Hoogleraar in de methoden en technieken
van het sociale onderzoek

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In the Shadow of the Tree

Kinship, Property, and Inheritance
among Farm Families

Henk de Haan

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in de landbouw- en milieuwetenschappen
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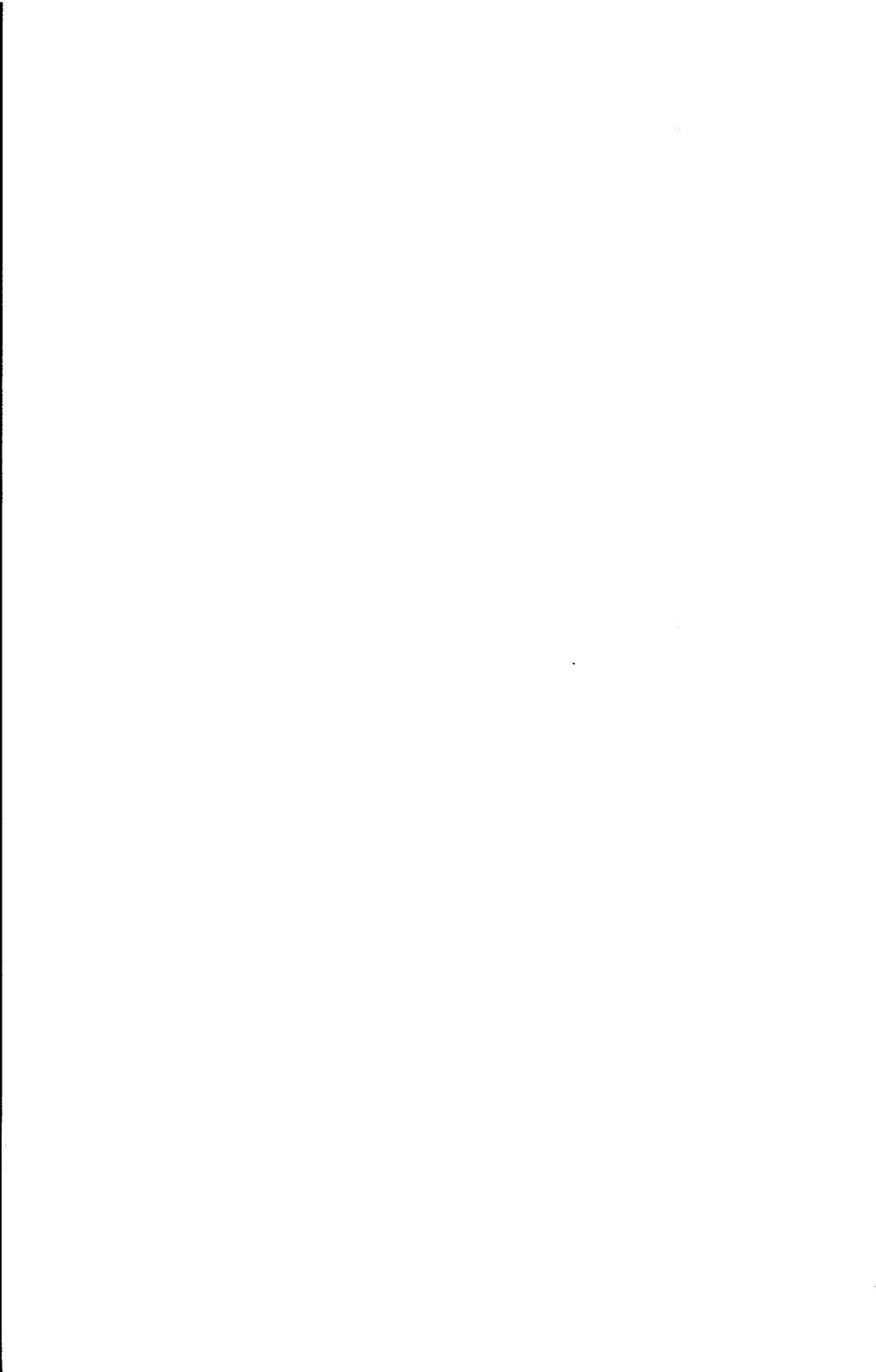
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Preface

FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD I have been intrigued by the mysteries of family and property. Stemming from large, ancient farm families—on both mother's and father's sides—I sensed the anxiety caused by death, inheritance, and property. Without being topics for conversation, the self-imposed disruptive effects of material interests on family relations were bitterly exposed during family reunions. This book originates partly in such personal experiences.

Equally important was my time as a student in anthropology at the University of Amsterdam, during the 1970s. Since I could not become a sailor, I needed another way to explore the unknown. In contrast to many anthropology students, who basically learn how to translate the exotic into a familiar scientific idiom, I became acquainted with the then nascent anthropology of Europe and the problem of how to make the familiar look exotic, and to use comparative theory in studying culture 'at home.' I was very much inspired by the work of such anthropologists as Eric Wolf, John Cole, Alan MacFarlane, John Davis and in particular by the historian Eugene Weber. Jojada Verrips, in a complicated way, initiated me into the fields of historical anthropology and folklore, while my years with Leo Noordgraaf in the Department of Social and Economic History at the University of Amsterdam opened my eyes to the crafts of doing historical research.

Anthropological fieldwork in France in the late 1970s gave me my first experience of observing everyday rural life in a small village. I was

lucky to meet Agnès Allin and the late Abbé Paul Boisson, who taught me the force of tradition. I will never forget the colorful life of the people of 'La Bonninière.' I developed a sympathy for rural studies, not because I was especially moved by political or economic problems, or because of any adherence to a rural myth—but only because of the great local characters who initiated me into their fascinating world.

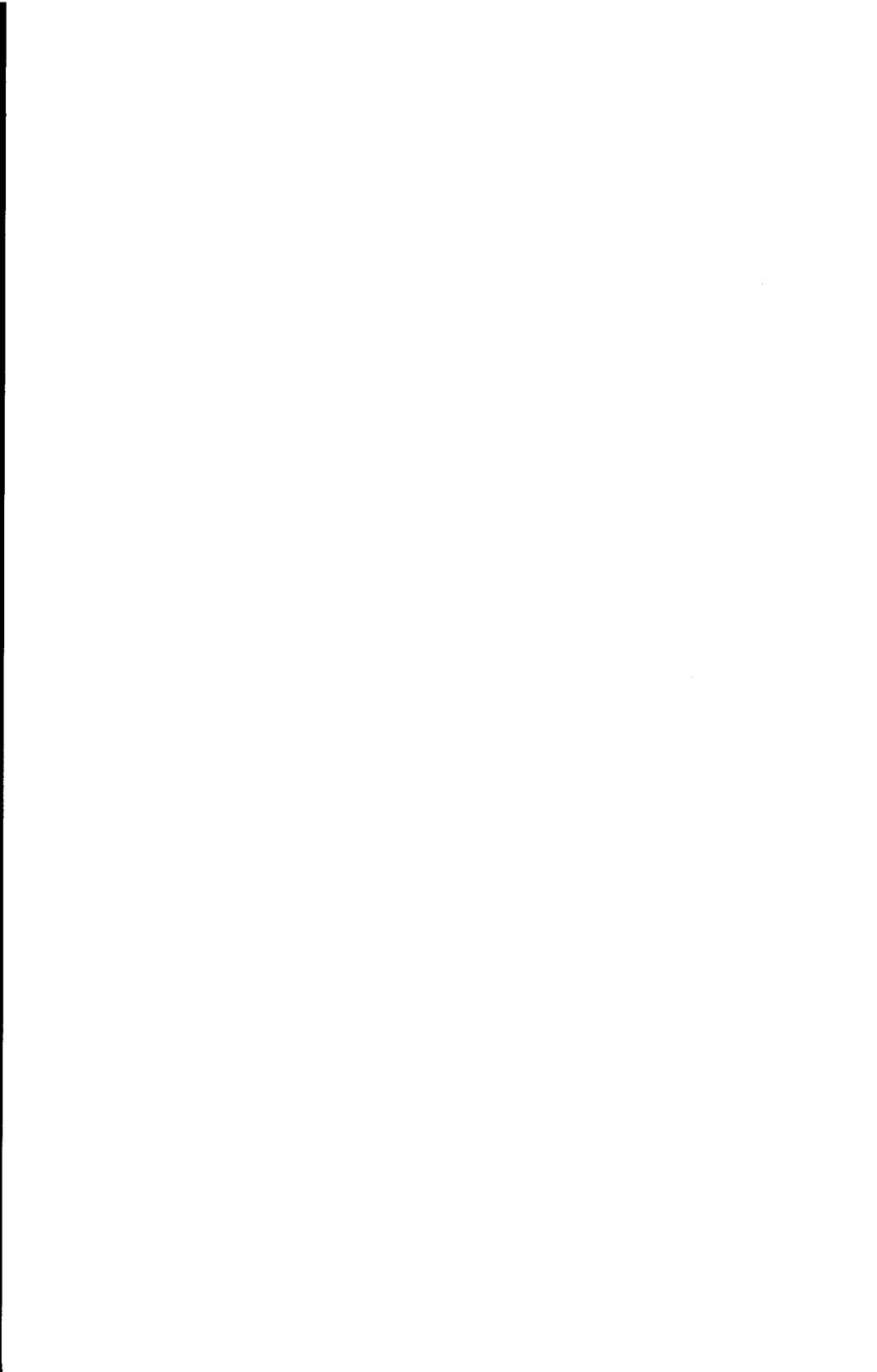
I am greatly indebted to the Department of Sociology at the University of Wageningen. I joined the Department as a junior lecturer in the early 1980s. As a complete outsider, I suddenly found myself next to the room of the retired—but still active—Professor Hofstee. Although he only sporadically spoke to me, I felt the presence of the history of rural sociology and became intuitively convinced that the history of scientific discourse should be part of theoretical and empirical research. The Department of Sociology gave me complete freedom in developing my own research interests. Although I sometimes felt conscience-stricken by so much academic freedom, I could not have worked in any other way, retrospectively. Professor Ad Nooij, in particular, has shown much patience with my slow progress. His confidence and tolerance, and sharp comments on earlier drafts, were of vital importance for finishing this book. At a later stage, Professor Jan Douwe van der Ploeg reassured me that it was worthwhile continuing. My colleagues of the Department of Sociology—although with other research interests—provided the necessary academic climate. Although I never plunged into the theoretical perspectives they promoted, discussions with them certainly led me to consider cultural repertoires and to adopt on an actor-oriented approach.

Most of my research took place in the Archives of the Land Register Records in Zwolle. I was allowed free access to all records, for which I gratefully acknowledge the Ministry of Housing, Planning and the Environment, and the staff at the archives. Many farmers from Geesteren were prepared to speak with me about their family histories. They will not find much of what they said in this book, but the interviews were indispensable to my reconstruction of cultural reality. Living people were always in my mind when writing the text.

This is not the book I intended to write initially. On the one hand, I would have liked to write a much more ethnographic account. Reading Michael Mayerfeld Bell's book *Childerley* (Chicago 1994), confronted me with a standard of writing that I would really like to achieve. On the other hand, I would have liked to give much more theoretical depth. I have only superficially linked my account to the vast domain of kinship and cultural studies—a task that still needs much more effort. Despite

these shortcomings, I hope I have been able to demonstrate the meaningfulness of a cultural account of family farming. My greatest debt is to Alice Barthez, whose work has inspired me throughout writing this book. Her encouragement in Dijon in 1992 was really important. Sonya Salammon and George Augustins have equally left their irrefutable marks on the character of my writing.

Closer to home, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Mary Bouquet. Although her own academic interests are far removed from mine, she has read and commented on the whole manuscript. She made me rethink almost every single line I had written. I followed many of her suggestions, but stubbornly ignored her advise just as often. Mary Bouquet also polished and corrected my use of English. She did much more than I expected, and made me realize how difficult it is for a non-native speaker to write reasonable English. She is not, of course, responsible for any errors, nor for the occasional 'Dunglish' phrase and construction that remains. This book bears the unmistakable marks of a Dutchman writing in English.



Introduction

WRITING ABOUT KINSHIP, property and inheritance among family farmers in Europe may seem trivial at a time when academic debates on agriculture and rural society are increasingly focused on the internationalization of the economy and regulatory policy making, and environmental problems dominate the political agenda. What is the relevance of a study that portrays farm families as culturally obsessed by land when the very existence of agriculture is threatened in some regions, and the concept of postagricultural society has gained general currency? Hasn't land been stripped of all meaning apart from its commodity value and as an item of public interest? Recent developments in eastern and central European rural societies have clearly shown that local traditions, identities and religious beliefs survived in an astonishing way, despite the long hegemony of socialist ideas and ideologies (see Hann 1993). Similarly, the reality of rural cultural diversity cannot be dismissed in modern capitalist society (Salamon 1992; Barlett 1993; Rogers 1991). It is true that new regulatory mechanisms are eroding property rights, and that ideas about how the character of land use should develop during the coming decades are increasingly politically concluded. Nevertheless, small networks of farm families still control access to farmland, and the viability of land-use policy programs therefore depends on the extent to which these conform with local cultural practices.

The predicaments of modern industrial agriculture and the countryside are not, however, of direct concern in this book. Family farm reproduc-

tion, people's attitudes to land and kinship, and how these correlate with general cultural beliefs and political-economic mechanisms, are central to my analysis. I do not examine this domestic domain of farming in order to provide a background to understand 'other' behavioral complexes, such as economic performance, household relations or farm structure. Instead, I will demonstrate that the system of beliefs and practices concerning inheritance and succession has important consequences for nearly every imaginable aspect of farm families' existence (Goody 1976b; Cole and Wolf 1974), although the weight of certain structural elements may vary, and economic constraints may impinge upon the domestic domain.

The importance of the issues studied can be summarized in two related points. First, property and property relations are very important in societies where independent small producers control access to land. The reproduction of property rights has important consequences for farm structure, the mobility of the rural population and the character of the rural economy in general. By focusing on some key empirical variables, a whole range of associated phenomena are disclosed, and can be meaningfully contextualized. This general assumption is valid—as I hope to show in this book—throughout past and present Europe. Whether the subject of study is pluriactivity, the position of women and young people, the commoditization process, or the transformation to ecologically friendly agriculture: the relation to land, in both social and cultural terms, is fundamental for understanding local and family dynamics. My aim is to explore the intricacies of what may be called a 'total social fact.'

Second, inheritance and succession used as a 'window' (see Salamon 1992) to look at farm families, bring issues of wider sociological relevance into focus. The empirical frame of reference—farm families—is used in this respect as a pretext for dealing with wider issues of social theory. Focusing on the micro dimensions of property, kinship and inheritance may raise some essential problems concerning the interaction between culture and economy, both at the local and general levels. Furthermore, confronting local people's discourse on cultural and economic change with academic, political and other discourses, allows the merits of different types of data to be assessed. My theoretical ambitions are, however, modest. Although the general theme potentially covers a broad range of social science perspectives, I will limit myself to concepts and theories developed within the empirical realm of family farming. Consequently, the insights I draw from an assessment of previous and my own research will only be projected and extended beyond this empirical domain to a limited extend.

Outline of the book

The structure of this book is complex, encompassing several related arguments and approaches. The central theme is the significance of cultural values pertaining to land and the family, and how these structure the (non)reproduction of family farming over time, within a changing cultural and economic environment. The main empirical questions are whether family and kinship values are gradually becoming marginally significant for farming and resource management; or whether farm families still mobilize a variety of family values to legitimate and structure their behavior. This theme is explored from a variety of overlapping angles, levels of abstraction and academic and/or public debates.

The unity of the book derives not only from the centrality of an empirical subject. The focus on theoretical issues and interpretation is equally important. If family values are losing ground, then how can this be explained? Is it—as is often argued—a logical counterpart of modernization and rationalization? If, on the other hand, the transfer of land, enterprise strategies, and so on are governed by family values, are these then based on ‘traditional’ values, new values, or externally imposed by the necessities of the wider political and economic context?

Obviously, the concept of ‘structuration’ is very important here. This concept focuses on the underlying principles that govern people’s behavior and give substance to their interpersonal relationships. The ‘actor’ concept is also important, directing attention to the (in)capacity of individuals and collectivities to structure their lives according to their own principles and goals. Actors are sometimes faced with contrasting structural principles, epitomized in conflicting interests and strategies. My focus is on actors with formal or culturally constructed links with farmland and the farm labor process. Hence, the micro level of the farm family is central. The meanings of land and farming are locally constructed and negotiated at this level. This happens within the wider context from which farming and farmland partly derive their economic, legal and financial significance. Families are, moreover, embedded in a local society and culture, and actively participate in a wider national, sometimes global culture. The general economic and political environment of farming apparently constrains people’s possibilities to realize their social and economic projects. On the other hand, cultural attitudes may have changed to such an extent that opportunities are sought beyond farming. The industrial welfare state has generated novel cultural cleavages, legitimating and creat-

ing new possibilities for individual achievement and strategies for conflict management.

Against the background of homogenizing and diversifying trends, it seems plausible to examine micro-level processes among farm families. It can be argued that farm families appear to be trapped between contradictory trends, which endanger the very continuity of family-based agricultural production. My theoretical contribution will exactly center on 'contrasting images.' Farm and family, economic constraints and cultural autonomy, political economy and moral economy, commodities and patrimonies will be recurrent concepts for both empirical and theoretical analysis of the predicament of contemporary farm families.

Although it is generally acknowledged that the family farm is the dominant form of agricultural production in developed market economies, views of its development and interpretations of its dynamics are more controversial. Some observers argue that the family farm appears, superficially, to be an independent property owning and controlling entity, using family labor and transferring its resources within the same family. On closer inspection, however, farm families' behavior is increasingly governed and subsumed by capitalist logic. Farmers are moreover heavily in debt and dependent on the regulative forces of industrial capital and the state. For some writers the logic of the family is imposed by such capitalist exigencies, while others argue that the cultural impact of the family has vanished altogether. Another set of authors agrees that relationships and decision making within the farm family have become increasingly depersonalized and objectified because of commoditization, but they argue that the family has also changed, and that new links between farm and family reflect general tendencies of individualization and emancipation. It is not simple to summarize the essence of current controversies about the character of family farming. Summary involves a form of categorization that does not do justice to the richness of empirical and theoretical contributions; it moreover forces certain positions into a conceptual scheme that may be far removed from their original scope and problem.

Kinship and the theory of family farming

In Chapter One, which is a theoretical treatise on the consequences of commoditization on family farming, I distinguish three different views on the interaction between the domestic domain (kinship, family, household) and farming. Each approach places different emphasis on the autonomy

of kinship and the determining effects of economic forces. I then go on to pinpoint the basic theoretical issues that require further elaboration. I will argue that the concept and the status of kinship need clarification in order to further our understanding of family farming. Theories of simple commodity production consider capital as the dominant factor conditioning the reproduction of family farming. The various treadmills of capitalist production relations force family farmers to adopt market-oriented logic to guarantee the continuity of the farm enterprise. They are simultaneously constrained to keep labor and capital outside commodity circuits as much as possible. Chapter One will try to show that this structuralist view denies the intermediary role of living actors who bring to bear various family and kinship constructs, which are neither imposed by nor contradictory to capital.

Discourse and practice of inheritance and succession in the Netherlands

Chapters Two, Three and Four focus upon a specific aspect of family farming: the intergenerational transfer of farm resources. Four related issues appear to be relevant in examining the factors influencing inheritance and succession: local cultural attitudes toward land and the family; local ecological and economic conditions; legal rules that exist at the national level; and the wider cultural, political and economic environment. The central question I will deal with, is how the relative weight of each of these factors developed over a longer historical period, with particular reference to regional diversity in the Netherlands. These three chapters have two main aims.

First, they present empirical material based on secondary sources, which provides the background for my case study of the eastern Netherlands presented at the end of the book. The empirical material on family farmers in the Netherlands provides the basis for drawing some preliminary conclusions about regional diversity, the impact of a uniform law of inheritance and changes in inheritance and succession practices under the influence of rationalization, modernization and individualization. Although these chapters essentially deal with the same issues, the character of the available literature imposes some difference in emphasis.

Chapter Two focuses on the legal context within which succession and inheritance practices evolved. It also raises some theoretical questions related to legal pluralism and contrasting normative universes. Chapter Three concentrates on the persistence and change of 'traditional values' with respect to household formation and inheritance in a context of com-

mercialization and family individualization. It refers in particular to farm households in the eastern Netherlands (Twente and Achterhoek regions). Chapter Four is particularly concerned with the development of a 'modern succession' pattern in the context of postwar agricultural and industrial restructuring.

The second purpose of these chapters could be described as 'discourse analysis.' Each chapter refers to a specific historical period, marked by distinctive concerns among academics, policy makers and public opinion makers, whose concerns did not invariably reflect the views of the farming population. Farmers only began to speak for themselves over the last four decades, and even then via the official representatives of their organizations. Discourse analysis implies reading texts, with particular attention to what is written, what is left out, why it is written, and to the paradigmatic, political or moral background of the texts.

Texts, often unintentionally, reflect upon the condition of society. They may be useful as factual accounts, but also represent the consciousness of a society, or of a particular group within that society. They reveal what is considered important, what worries people and how they envisage solutions to certain problems. Texts are, as such, artifacts, allowing us a glimpse of an aspect of society that is often more interesting than any detailed empirical description. Changes in the law of inheritance at the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, were not considered in terms of extensive knowledge of their concrete effects, but rather in terms of higher principles of justice and other moral considerations. Discourse analysis reveals basic value judgments, which are so important for understanding the principles of policy making.

Each of these three chapters refers to a particular discourse. Chapter Two, which encompasses the period around the turn of the nineteenth century, reveals the importance of moral issues in the debate on inheritance patterns in the Netherlands. Legal scientists and public opinion leaders were outspoken in their views on questions of personal freedom, equality and the role of property ownership for a 'healthy' rural society. Chapter Three, about the modernization of the family, examines a more academic kind of debate, mainly among family sociologists and their predecessors. Views on developments in the rural family were presented within a strict modernization paradigm, which had significant consequences for the empirical recognition of the role of the family in farming during later periods. Chapter Four describes postwar debates on the financial and economic aspects of succession. The problem of farm succession was phrased mainly in terms of farm efficiency and entrepreneurship then.

Interestingly enough, successful transferal of a farm was also linked to the moral condition of the family—reference to which young farmers themselves utterly opposed.

Cultural responses to constraints on resource management and transfer

Chapter Five presents an overview of the empirical and theoretical study of inheritance and succession. Elaborating on theoretical perspectives from Chapter One, I will argue that cultural responses to global economic constraints structure the transfer of resources. Drawing on a wide range of disciplines and comparative historical and contemporary material, I will examine in particular the rise of conflicting cultural notions regarding kinship and land, and the extent to which 'traditional' and 'modern' beliefs favor the reproduction of viable farms. I will elaborate on these themes by presenting different perspectives on the meaning of culture and its relation to the practice of inheritance and succession, and assess their usefulness in a modern economic context.

Theories of farm reproduction focus selectively on the relatively short cycle after succession and before retirement. Resource transfers between generations, and property relations are largely disregarded. I will try to show in this chapter that the family character of production essentially depends on successful long term direct control of resources. Constraints on labor and property may demand specific family values to reproduce farm production relations temporally—they become really fundamental in a long-term perspective. Although the pattern of family farm reproduction is highly uniform in industrialized countries, viable units are selected and constructed in various ways, structured by a diverse culturally specific negotiations. Since these negotiations are set in the context of exchange and reciprocity, theoretical attention will be drawn to different concepts of value, and how cultural and economic changes affect them.

An excursion into the theory and practice of farm succession and inheritance demonstrates how comparative empirical research, comprising a great variety of practices, may contribute to the development of a theoretical framework that provides both an interpretation of diversity, and an explanation of specific cases. Enlarging the empirical horizon forces us to realize that what may be taken for granted in one context can be highly controversial in another. My aim is to construct a theoretical model that translates known empirical variation into abstract, general concepts. The aim of such an heuristic model is not to provide a static determinist chain of causality, but rather to orient research and subsequent interpreta-

tion to relevant issues, possible relations, and, more specifically, to consider the multiple structuration of action.

The reproduction of 'houses' in the eastern Netherlands

Chapters Two, Three and Four provide a mixture of perspectives, which together make up the complex of realities associated with family farming in the Netherlands. By focussing on a central issue—the intergenerational transfer of land—basic ideologies, both at a general and a concrete level, are discerned. But the picture I draw is largely based on representations by outsiders, each with their own assumptions and interests. I will restore the balance in the last three chapters, with an account of long-term developments in inheritance and succession among a small group of families in an eastern Dutch community.

The case study picks up the various strands developed in the previous chapters. It elaborates on a specific historical pattern of inheritance, succession and household formation, described in the literature as imitable inheritance and single heir succession. According to early descriptions, this pattern characterized farm family reproduction in the eastern Netherlands until well after the Second World War. The choice of this regional pattern for a case study is not based on any claim of representativeness. Inheritance and succession were quite different in other parts of the country, where they have followed their own trajectories in recent decades. My aim is rather to raise issues of general importance, going far beyond the regional, or even the Dutch context. The empirical frame of reference only serves to illuminate the relevance of local cultural factors in the general process of modernization.

The choice of the eastern Netherlands is motivated by the fact that it is reasonably well-documented, which facilitates tracing developments over a longer period. Furthermore, inheritance patterns in the eastern Netherlands fit into the wider European model of what is called a 'house society.' Historians and anthropologists have studied this model extensively, but emphasis has virtually always been on descriptions of peasant societies, or at least on traditional agrarian societies. Fortified with comparative empirical and theoretical background information, the case of the eastern Netherlands offers an excellent opportunity to study the fate of traditional inheritance and succession patterns in a period of commercialization and agrarian restructuring.

A radically changing economic context, combined with the integration of rural society into an urban industrial environment, provides the setting

for studying changing meanings of land and kinship. How did farm families adapt to the changing requirements of markets and new technologies? Were their conventional ways of transmitting land revolutionized? Which forms of cultural capital became predominant, and to what extent did conflicts emanating from cultural differentiation touch the lives of farm families?

The living house

Although the type of domestic organization characterized by imitable succession and inheritance has long been a matter of common knowledge (Frédéric Le Play's *famille-souche* and Wilhelm Riehl's *das ganze Haus*), Lévi-Strauss was the first to introduce the notion of *maison* in anthropological theory. (Lévi-Strauss 1983, 1984; Lamaison 1987a). Several authors, who have used this fundamental concept in the title of books (*La maison du père* by Alain Collomp; *L'héritier de la maison* by Anne Zink, or *Revolution in the house* by Margaret Darrow), refer to the metaphorical qualities of *maison*. More than just a building, a dwelling place or a residential group, *maison* refers to a complex form of social organization, embodied and symbolized by a spatial and material entity. The 'house' personifies the link between the living and the dead, between past and future generations, and gives a family an identity in time and space. No wonder that this form of expressing the character of families is most often used among royal and aristocratic dynasties.

Societies based on this type of lineal primary social unit can be found throughout Europe and do not seem to be connected with specific ecological, political or ethnic boundaries. The 'classic' areas are large parts of western- and southern Germany, east- and central Europe, the eastern Netherlands, Ireland, central and southern France, northern Portugal and northern Spain and Scandinavia (Todd 1990). Although sometimes identified as "genuinely European" (Chiva 1987) similar forms of domestic organization are the *Ie* in Japan (Fukutake 1967; Moon 1989) and the *Bilek* in Borneo (Freeman 1958).

The title of the last chapter, The Living House, refers to this concept. It wants to evoke a chain of connections between the symbolic and the material world. While a house, or a farm may be a dead thing in itself, it provides the location for sociability, the formation of identities and a sense of belonging. The visible house with its belongings is invested with meanings that outlive existing generations, who keep it alive and transfer its spirit to those who follow them.

I

Commodities and Kinship

The incorporation of farming in
kin relationships

THE ORGANIZATION OF agriculture in advanced economies is extremely diverse. While large multinational and national companies dominate processing, trade, distribution and the provision of inputs, primary production units are relatively small, dispersed over a large territory, and managed and owned by self-employed families. Social relations at the level of the farm are patterned by a unique combination of cultural principles, derived from family ideology and capitalism. The wide variety of management goals and strategies among farm families reveals the differential integration of family projects and business planning, and the myriad of cultural beliefs.

These apparent inconsistencies in the food-producing sector have puzzled several generations of social scientists and politicians. Some authors regard the persistence of family farming as proof of its superiority over anonymous corporations in the utilization of natural resources (Reinhardt and Barlett 1989). Others emphasize the subordination of family farmers to capitalist requirements, denying them any autonomy (Davis 1980; Mollard 1978). One popular view is that the family farm is a survival from premodern times, doomed to disintegrate when subjected to the processes of rationalization and commercialization. The expectation that farming will eventually become detached from family relations is deeply rooted in general social theory and political ideology. Modernization theory insists on the incompatibility of rational economic behavior and family life. The industrial model, based on a separation between affective and

instrumental spheres, is a logical consequence of economic modernization. Neo-Marxist theory conceptualizes the marginalization of the family in economic life with the capitalist appropriation of value and the ultimate proletarianization of propertied laborers.

Modernization theory and Marxist analysis nurtured the idea that family and commercial production, and the unity of labor and ownership represent anachronistic pairs under capitalism. This assumption permeates scientific discourse to such an extent that it is very difficult to adopt a language that avoids such dichotomies. I do not deny that 'family' and 'market' represent contrasting structural principles, implying different conceptions of value, personal identities and social relations. Farm families' perception of these structural contradictions may, however, be far removed from the connotations imposed by social scientific categories. Farm families define themselves, their farm and their produce in consistent terms, which can only be understood with reference to a specific cultural universe. Similarly, a farm family may be internally divided over the meaning of land or labor if its members do not share the same cultural disposition.

It is necessary to design a theoretical framework that gives the cultural categories of family and market a central place in order to further our understanding of family farming. There is no point in defining the family farm in such classificatory terms as the character of the labor force, property, or any other empirical index. 'Family farm' refers rather to the *degree* that the relations of production are based on affinity and consanguinity, and the *degree* to which family and kinship ideology structure the activities of the farm family. More concretely, the concept 'family farm' draws attention to the interaction between family and farm. Focussing on the character of social relations and structural principles implies, moreover, that 'the family' is rarely the only social and cultural basis of productive relations. Market relations and market principles permeate the family farm in a variety of ways. Thus, 'family farming' suggests an examination of the relative weight of family *and* market as structural principles governing productive and reproductive strategies.

The status of the family in productive relations is a matter of considerable debate in the social sciences. The relative autonomy of the family *vis-à-vis* economic constraints is one crucial bone of contention. Are kin relationships constituted by autonomous kinship categories, or are they a reflection of economic necessities? This debate touches, in its widest terms, upon the problems of structural determinism and the role of actors in pat-

tering their own lives. This chapter critically examines some major contributions to these theoretical debates, setting them in a wider context of controversies about the character of kinship. This will lead to a further examination of the concept of kinship as a useful tool with which to explore the ideological basis of family farming.

Obstacles to the analysis of kinship and family in the theory of simple commodity production and modernization theory

The persistence of family-based agricultural production in capitalist society has recently attracted considerable attention within agrarian sociology (see reviews by Giura-Longo 1991; Marsden 1991; Mann 1990). Although 'peasants' and 'family farmers' have long been subjects for anthropologists (Wolf 1966) and rural sociologists (Mendras 1967), the 1970s brought new theoretical perspectives and fresh debates, initially encouraged by developments in the Third World. Here the survival and expansion of 'traditional' forms of production were hard to explain by current modernization theory. Marxist theory was to become the dominant source of inspiration for critical theoretical analysis of Third-World and, later, European and North-American agricultural development (MacEwen Scott 1986a).

Marxist approaches to the status of the family in simple commodity production

Classic Marxist studies from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were practically unanimous in their judgment that small-scale agricultural production would ultimately disappear under the disruptive forces of capitalist development (Mitrany 1951; Crow 1990). It is therefore quite amazing that exactly this perspective should have provided theoretical impetus for interpreting a phenomenon classically viewed as residual or transitional. Marxian agrarian studies have, since the 1970s, provided much insight on the unevenness of capitalist development, the articulation of modes of production, and the class location of simple commodity producers. It was, however, these roots in a particular discourse that inhibited the development of a theoretical link between micro and macro developments and, consequently, a satisfactory theory of the role of the family in domestic production. The focus on historical processes, future evolution and the theoretical status of simple commodity production within the formation of class structures, deflected attention from the logic and dynamics of intrahousehold relations and values.

The resistance of Marxist political economy to the micro-level approach derives from its explicit theoretical dismissal of the relevance of kinship and family or insistence that they are determined by external constraints. Part of the refusal to examine simple commodity production from the perspective of the family and the household stems from the ideological implications of the word 'family' that permeate capitalist societies (Friedmann 1986c, p. 47). Zaretsky asserts, along the same line, that "the historically contingent separation of social production and the family/household under western capitalism has been incorporated into the basic concepts of social theory" (paraphrased in Whatmore 1991, p. 28). This social-evolutionist assumption clearly relegates the family to residual status.

Much of the debate in political economy is, moreover, hampered by the desire to construct a unitary concept, ignoring and setting aside those aspects of commercial household production characterized by variability and particularistic relations. Bernstein (1986b), for instance, sees the double character of simple commodity production—being an enterprise and a family organization—as difficult to combine in a single model. He argues that only the contradictory unity of capital and labor within an enterprise is generic to simple commodity production: ". . . it seems unlikely that there can be a sufficiently determinate concept of 'the family' to serve as a constitutive element in a generic concept of SCP" (Bernstein 1986b, p. 15). The assumption is that commodity relations are universal in character, while noncommodity relations, based on kinship, are highly variable and cannot therefore be incorporated in a generic theoretical model.

Apart from specific assumptions about the role of kinship in capitalist societies and the aspiration for generic concepts, another reason for neglecting the family is the assumption that material forces structure 'surviving' family and kinship elements in production. This structuralist approach sacrifices not only kinship, but also other cultural categories that give substance to social life. The role of actors and their cultural beliefs in the design of livelihood strategies are therefore disregarded as a reflection of economic constraints. The 'world system approach,' for instance, contextualizes the household in the wider mode of production either through articulation or incorporation. But, as Davidson (1991, p. 16) expresses it, "locked within the structural rigidness imposed on the household, little leeway, if any, is accorded to individual agency." The dynamics of household production are primarily seen as results of capitalist development, which penetrates the household and imposes its requirements.

Such structural determinism is often coupled with a crude form of functionalism, which implies both that social and cultural aspects of a society are determined by material forces, and that this determination is necessary for the reproduction of society. Meillassoux (1973, p. 82) argues, for instance, that ". . . the social organization of the peasantry is built . . . around the relations of production as they grow from the economic constraints of agricultural activities." Kinship is above all an *expression* of the functional requirements of production and human reproduction. Where the domestic economy persists as an integral element of capitalist production, it may be a functional prerequisite during certain phases of capitalism. Likewise, Ennew, Hirst and Tribe (1977) explain the existence and reproduction of family-based agriculture by economic constraints: ". . . the units of production are formed and maintained through non-familial conditions . . . Kinship does not determine the formation of 'familial' units of production, it is economic conditions independent of these relations which determine whether the families so formed are units of production . . ." (p. 309). The social relations of production within which units of family production operate determine whether they can be formed and maintained at all.

Family, economic life and modernization theory

Marxism is not the only theoretical approach to the organization of economic activities imbued with an evolutionist legacy. Modernization theory similarly assumes the decreasing importance of family and kinship beyond the domain of reproduction and congeniality. Weber and Durkheim unequivocally predicted the rationalization and depersonalization of human relations in the public and economic spheres. Both claimed that technical developments, commercialization and specialization would undermine family-based agriculture (see Parsons et al. 1961). Comparative sociology considered kinship as 'important' in primitive and ancient societies, but doomed to disappear as an archaic survival in 'modern society' (Kuper 1988). The Parsonian insistence that kinship and economics represent distinct domains, each with coherent and opposed sets of social values, gained widespread credence in general sociology during the 1950s and 1960s (Harris 1990). Economic and kin relationships have become antagonistic cultures in 'modern sociology,' whose coexistence is only possible due to their separate organization as distinct domains (Parsons 1951, pp. 76–109; see also Barnard and Good 1984, pp. 33–34).

Similar prejudices have misdirected the study of family farming in rural sociology. The family was considered the most important variable for explaining farm development patterns before agricultural modernization. The size of the family, its cyclical development, family traditions, patterns of household formation and inheritance were seen as the parameters defining productive strategies (Chayanov 1986; Von Blanckenburg 1962). The influence of family indices is thought to become irrelevant through commercialization and orientation toward market forces. Farmers are then supposed to adjust increasingly to external factors, using their entrepreneurial capacities to gain a maximum income (see Marsden 1984). Harris' comment on the study of the family in industrial society is equally pertinent to rural sociology: "Traditionally sociologists have seen the family and industrial society as opposed . . . Kin relations and market relations are seen as two incompatible structural principles" (Harris 1977, p. 71).

Modernization theory has been particularly influential in Dutch agrarian sociology (de Haan 1993). While the *family farm* was an uncontested and self-evident component of Dutch agricultural policy and a 'natural unit' in the social sciences, the *farm family* was consistently obviated in the design for future agriculture. Several cultural myths (Strange 1988) were pressed into service in the early 1960s to establish and defend agricultural policy. Elements of the traditional family farm and industrial agriculture were cobbled together to construct an image of the future preferred. This vision played down the role of the family and elevated the person of the farm operator to the level of a rational entrepreneur. Thus arose the specter of an autonomous, self-employed farmer, detached from family influences and sentiments, motivated by profit maximization and an industrial lifestyle. This ideological construction of the model farmer became a powerful standard against which to measure progress away from the agrarian past. Invoking the family in public discourse, however, reassured farmers that nobody envisaged a purely industrial model.

Although such authors as Hofstee and Constandse considered the concept of independence (de Haan 1993), they never systematically investigated it. The concept only received critical attention in the mid-1970s, when Benvenuti, an Italian scholar working in the Netherlands, drew attention to the wider social system in which farmers' decision making is embedded. He criticized the atomistic view implicit in many theories of entrepreneurship that depict the farmer as an individual, freely reacting to market forces and choosing the optimum for income maximization

(Benvenuti 1975). According to Benvenuti, the wider system functions as a normative framework for farm operators' decision making. This results in growing pressure and a consequent decrease in farmers' autonomy. It also provokes a process of standardization, farm structure and layout being increasingly modeled by the same principles and scientific premises. The more important these chains of interdependency, the more farmers' action is guided by 'defining agencies,' so that they begin to fit the 'entrepreneurial model' promoted by the combined interests of agribusiness and the state.

Benvenuti's approach failed, however, to conceptualize the family farm as part of a broader theory of regulation. While farmers may not indeed be seen in isolation from a multitude of institutions, markets and industries, it is equally true that they cannot be reduced to externally and purely economically constrained actors. Benvenuti's overemphasis on external networks as a reaction to the atomistic view of entrepreneurship, isolated the farmer from his direct social and cultural context.

One of the important assumptions in Benvenuti's system theory is that there is an inevitable progression toward the homogenization of farm structure, an erosion of skills, and a standardization of the labor process. Van der Ploeg (1990), however, denies this tendency toward uniformity, asserting instead farmers' capacity to design their labor process in a variety of ways, resulting in new forms of diversity. Van der Ploeg leaves more actor's space for maneuver: a capacity to structure the labor process according to a specific 'calculus.' This calculus is, however, largely defined in terms of preferences concerning the labor process *vis-à-vis* technology and markets. Van der Ploeg (1990) explicitly disregards the interference of family factors when he says that "... the domain of family gives way to economic and institutional relations, which become the locus of the principles that direct the organization of the labor process" (p. 30). Benvenuti and van der Ploeg both claim to criticize modernization theory, and yet each assumes that incorporation into the treadmill of agribusiness marginalizes the role of family factors in business development.

Simple commodity production and the autonomy of the family

Theories focusing on the actuality of household production in a capitalist society are, however, more diverse. Beyond the perspectives described above, a number of authors have suggested a nonfunctionalist persistence thesis. The development of household production is seen as an expression of rationalities internal to the household, rather than primarily dependent

on the character of the wider mode of production. By way of clarification, I will focus on a version of the commoditization theory that, in contrast to the deterministic view, attributes a prominent place to the family. I have chosen Harriet Friedmann's early work as a combination of Chayanov's subjectivist approach with a political-economic contextualization of simple commodity production. Harriet Friedmann is a prominent theorist of household production. She has published several classical articles since 1978, where her argument develops from a rigorously deductive analytical framework to more concern for empirical variation and inductive generalizations. She has been criticized on several occasions for shortcomings such as drawing too strict boundaries between internal and external relations (Lem 1988; Hutson 1990); for not developing a theory of gender and kinship (Whatmore 1991; Bouquet and de Haan 1987); and for misinterpreting the logic of family farming (Goodman and Redclift 1985). These critiques were, however, mostly formulated with a view to extending Friedmann's analysis by overcoming certain limitations, thereby acknowledging her analytical strengths. Moreover, Friedmann later showed an unusual capacity for self-criticism by incorporating new elements and rejecting certain untenable assumptions.

The contrasting social relations of family farming

According to Friedmann, household production is not properly understood either as a subordinated or as an autonomous mode of production. It is a *form of production*, which is doubly specified by the internal characteristics of the farm enterprise and the external relations with the wider social formation. Family farms in advanced capitalist societies, she argues, differ from peasants operating under partially or incompletely developed markets. Peasants reproduce themselves outside commodity circuits since ties with the wider context are not commoditized. *Simple commodity production*, by contrast, exists in a context of fully developed markets, where all relations are commoditized (Friedmann 1980). The contrast she discerns between incorporation within capitalist society and the family organization of the farm constitutes a fundamental problem for sociological inquiry, namely the contradictory relationships between family and market.

Two dimensions distinguish family farms in capitalist societies: "the combination of property and labour . . . and the unity of the domestic group and the productive group in the labour process" (Friedmann 1987, p. 247). The combination of property and labor and the organization of

production through kinship are exceptional in a society where the direct producer is mostly separated from the ownership of capital, and where labor markets are essential. Such an atypical mixture of market relations and kin relationships finds its general conditions of reproduction in the larger society—through intersections with commodity circuits—while the specific conditions stem from the internal relations. Friedmann thus clearly draws a *boundary* between the internal sphere of noncommodity relations and the commoditized character of external relations: “The law of value stops at the boundaries of the simple commodity enterprise, whose internal relations are governed by other principles, generally variations of the gender division of labor, kinship obligations, and patriarchy” (1982, p. 12). The noncommoditized character of relations within the household implies that there is no structural requirement for profit and that wages are absent. There is only one class involved in production and the distribution of the product: “The net product belongs to a unified . . . group of laborers within the household . . . The division of the net product into personal consumption and investment for expansion is not structurally determined. The level of personal consumption is flexible” (1982, p. 14).

Friedmann considers that the noncommoditized character of internal relations allows family producers a great deal of autonomy. Although reproduction requires keeping costs within the limits of prices set by competition—which involves increasing productivity—farmers operate with subjective logic, based on kinship and a commitment to the survival of the enterprise (1978b, p. 559). According to Friedmann, the use of unpaid family labor and the option of foregoing profit put simple commodity producers in an advantageous position *vis-à-vis* enterprises that must produce a profit and pay wages.

Friedmann’s earlier publications (before 1986) do not question or analyze the character of internal relations. She assumes that kinship is unvarying in character, susceptible neither to spatial nor historical cultural diversity. The unproblematic characterization of kinship, and the supposition that simple commodity production is fully integrated into the market, allow Friedmann to theorize its reproductive logic deductively (1980, p. 167). Simple commodity producers thus confront a uniform economic context, to which they respond in a similar way by invoking specific family principles. Resistance to proletarianization lies in the family’s cultural capacity to dispose of land and labor within noncommoditized circuits.

Friedmann thus seems to suggest that the intrinsic character of the family, combined with particular historical developments in agricultural

production, have produced the modern commercial family farm. Capitalist farms simply cannot compete with the internal logic of family calculations. This logic is not forced upon family farmers, but emanates from an autonomous family culture. The existence of specific family attitudes and structures is not explained by saying that they are 'functional' for capitalism.

This approach to family and kinship is an important step toward theorizing the role of the family in household production. It suggests that family farms have a dual character, emanating from contrasting structural principles. On the one hand, economic and technical performance is largely structured by capitalist logic, but on the other, invariable family principles largely structure property, labor and distributive relations. These contradictory structural principles exert their influence on separate domains, each with its own logic and principles.

The diversity of 'family farming' and the wider context

Friedmann's view poses several problems. She posits a universal and timeless version of the family, without acknowledging that 'the family' is empirically fictive. Although the family is a near universal institution, characterized by high structural uniformity, sibling relations, affinal relations and the relations between generations exhibit an enormous cultural variety. The family is culturally diverse, in particular when family relations are perceived in practical ideological contexts of property, labor, caring and so on. In some cultures, for instance, parental authority and inequality among siblings are considered normal, while they may be rejected in others.

The family is, moreover, not a unitary concept. Common strategies and solidarity are negotiated and cannot be taken as 'natural' (Wolf 1991). It is dangerous to reify the family as a single 'actor,' with a rationale and a strategy. Those who are in some way or another associated with the farm and the land may pursue different, conflicting strategies. Differences in gender, generation and dividing lines between affinity and consanguinity are potential sources of controversy. In addition, as a unit of analysis the 'family' cannot be equated with the resident household. What are called 'internal relations' involves relatives living in other households, such as children who left the parental home, the farmer's brothers and sisters and so on. These people may have a direct, or indirect influence on how the farm is reproduced over the generations.

Besides the variable contents of kinship, differentiation within the kinship network and the dispersed unit of analysis, a final point of criticism concerns the 'autonomous' and static character of kinship constructs. If the kinship sphere is isolated from the wider influences of the market, this ignores the conditional character of the economic context. The economic context may certainly condition *which* elements of an existing kinship system are mobilized. Shifting 'demands' from commoditization may make it quite impossible for some families culturally to legitimate the reproduction of social relations, while others find unique possibilities to respond. A variety of family ideologies, moreover, implies a variety of reactions to commoditization, and therefore a variety of outcomes.

A related problem is that Friedmann not only ignores the differential interaction between commoditization and family processes, but also the impact of wider social and cultural developments on family production relations. 'Traditional' family systems are subject to national and global change, interfering with habitual ideas of personal and collective identity. Such influences may be particularly relevant for bringing about a differentiation of interests and creating conflicts of legitimacy in the kinship sphere. Even if Friedmann's actors are neither determined by, nor victims of capitalist logic, they are nonetheless isolated 'cultural dopes.' They always react collectively, using the same cultural repertoire and are invulnerable to changing circumstances.

Cultural mediation and the centrality of actors

The contrasting perspectives I have described so far ignore the role of agency in productive and reproductive strategies. Actors are either viewed as bearers of the mode of production, free entrepreneurs or cultural archetypes. Recent contributions to rural sociology have partly bridged the gap between structure and agency in the analysis of family-based agriculture. Empirical research, combined with new theoretical perspectives has also contributed to a more realistic stance toward agrarian development, more particularly bringing the family and actors back into rural sociological discourse. It is becoming increasingly clear that commercial farming does not rule out the mobilization of family values. Marsden (1991), for instance, has shown that simple commodity producers rely increasingly on familial and patriarchal relationships: "Gender and generation, through a process of production and reproduction may seem to contradict the goals of the capitalist market, but at base they tend to reinforce it" (Marsden 1991, p. 29).

The concept of commoditization has become rather flexible and sensitive, without any necessarily connotations of evolutionism, disintegration and subordination. Much more attention is given to the differential impact of commoditization, farmers' capacity to retain some degrees of autonomy, and the specific rationality associated with simple commodity producers. This shift toward an actor-oriented approach certainly has contributed to the increasing attention given to inter- and intrahousehold relations and their wider contexts, and farmer's abilities to negotiate their own futures.

Long's (1984a, 1986) theoretical discussions of 'nonwage forms' and 'traditional' patterns of family and household organization in capitalist economies are particularly interesting in this respect. Long underlines the importance of different local social structures and the cultural frameworks underpinning these organizational forms (1984a, p. 1). He criticizes the notion that noncapitalist relations are simply functional for capitalism. "Peasant households are thus not simply reproduced by the workings of the wider structure but also depend upon the way existing cultural rules and social relationships affect access to and utilization of essential resources. These internal reproductive processes also influence people's work ethics and generate different types of social consciousness" (1984a, p. 2). Long opposes the view that nonwage labor is inherently subordinate to capitalist valorization processes. Instead of explaining noncapitalist relations of production by reference to capitalist principles, "... household labor must also be seen in relation to existing cultural norms and values concerning the sexual division of labor, the obligation of marriage, and the expectations of family and kin. The social perceptions and symbolic meanings that actors attach to their social relations are just as valid a guide to the understanding of social process as are imposed analytical concepts . . ." (1984a, p. 12).

Unlike commoditization theory as it had developed until then, Long wanted to get away from the overemphasis on external determination, focussing instead on the extent to which farmers resist the inroads of commoditization (1988, p. 4). Switching attention from the capitalist side of the equation, he directs it toward the dynamics of commoditized and noncommoditized relationships. External forces cannot be interpreted in a straightforward way, but are always mediated by individuals and local social structures.

Long's plea for an actor-oriented approach represents a significant shift away from a determinist view of social relations. It creates room for analyzing forms of domestic production, without imposing concepts from

political economy and without assuming *a priori* regulation of these forms by external constraints. Such an approach clearly locates the analysis of household production and reproduction within the more general context of a theory of structuration, analyzing how actors, who are constantly faced with contrasting normative principles, actively shape their own lifeworld. It also encourages a reinterpretation of the family as a network of relations, comprising persons with differential attitudes and personal projects, not necessarily based on the same principles.

Strategies, culture and the differentiation of interests

While in the early literature farm level change was seen as largely structured by the needs of off-farm capitals, it is now increasingly recognized that "... farm families may have much greater opportunity to negotiate with capital than the standard political economy position assumes" (Ward and Munton 1992, p. 130). Constructs such as subsumption or appropriation and substitution should not be treated as determinants but as frameworks mediated by action (ibid., p. 132). Mediation and negotiation are two most apposite concepts for analyzing the outcome of the confrontation between external determinants and farm families' responses. According to Long, "All forms of external intervention necessarily enter the existing lifeworlds of individuals and social groups affected and thus, as it were, pass through certain social and cultural filters. In this way external factors are both mediated and transformed by internal structures" (1984b, p. 171). Davidson (1991, p. 12) argues similarly that the location of the labor process and property relations in the larger socioeconomic environment filters, on the one hand, the opportunities and constraints presented by the wider society, while on the other hand the effect of this specific context at the micro level must always be seen together with the needs, aspirations, and power of the people involved.

The concepts of mediation, strategy and negotiation are particularly well suited for analyzing how actors bring their own values, goals and preferences into play at the micro level with forces penetrating within the family farm. Van der Ploeg (1990) has shown the empirical and theoretical validity of the concept 'calculus,' a rational device that orients farmers to adopt a position *vis-à-vis* markets and technology. Although van der Ploeg's use of the concept is limited to the technicalities of the labor process and the various levels of farm integration within institutional networks and markets, the basic ideas lend themselves to analyzing other cultural constructs. If farmers use cognitive 'maps' to mediate the infiltration

tion of general economic developments into the labor process, they certainly also actively shape, question, restyle or defend the social basis of production. Gender and property relationships, caring arrangements, the status of children and general obligations and commitments of family members toward each other and the farm are culturally defined. In their dealings with markets and technology farmers negotiate the labor process pattern *and* the character of the social relations of production, that is, the form and contents of property and labor relations, and daily interaction during work. According to Pile (1992, p. 80), "Accumulation strategies involve a selective engagement and disengagement with capitalist relations; farmers have a partial reading of these relations, avoiding those which threaten, while embracing those relations which they feel will secure the family farm's survival." The selective way in which farmers embrace certain capitalist relations results not only in differential levels of commoditization and externalization; it is also responsible for the variety of ways in which the internal social relations are structured.

Farm family relationships are based on cultural principles that are constantly under threat of disruption. Although it is often thought that kinship form and content are imposed on family farmers, I believe that they are negotiated within farm families in dealing with external pressures. Material and financial constraints are mediated through specific kinship constructs, which establish, limit, or open up opportunities—allowing certain developments to take place and impeding others—according to these cultural parameters.

Ideological factors are mostly introduced into the analysis of farm development under such headings as 'independence,' 'autonomy,' 'continuity,' and other typical farming stereotypes. Hardly any attention has been given, however, to family and kinship ideologies *sensu strictu*. Family farming assumes specific modes of calculation with respect to the deployment and remuneration of labor and property. If the willingness to apply such specific cultural categories is not generalized among all actors involved, farming ideologies become senseless. Farmers are involved in external and internal relations of production that condition the course of action in the labor process and the division of the product. The internal and external relations are reproduced by active agents, who constantly negotiate and mediate the opportunities and constraints caused by economic, ecological and demographic factors by way of particular ideological constructs.

Actor-oriented approaches, however sympathetic, often tend to consider the farm household as a homogeneous unit with its own interests and

strategies. Mediation is conceptualized as the confrontation between two separate 'blocs,' each with its own interests and values (Folbre 1986). This perspective fails, however, to grasp that farm households are at the same moment in time confronted with many, often diverging interests: not only in terms of conflicting economic impulses, but also with respect to different cultural models and alternative social relationships. Furthermore the household is itself a differentiated unit with actors trying to realize their own, often contradictory projects (see Wolf 1991). I agree with Friedman (1984, p. 41) that family solidarity must be explained, rather than assumed. The concept of negotiation should not, therefore, be applied exclusively to a household – wider context confrontation, but also to negotiation among the members of a familial group. Their differential interests determine what is negotiated, with which outside influences, and, more importantly, how negotiation among actors evolves.

The same applies *grosso modo* for the concept of strategy (Crow 1989). Household economics and certain fields of agricultural sociology make frequent use of the concept 'household strategies.' While households may pursue certain goals, we should not forget that these goals are the outcome of internal negotiations and power relationships. Households do not strategize; people do. According to Wolf (1991, p. 39) this entails "moving back and forth between the individual level and the household level, considering the individual in relation to the household and to those with power in the household and how those in the household react to the individual." Conflicting strategies are as likely to exist as complementary ones. The unit of analysis should obviously include nonresident kin in as far as they have an interest in the farm and the household.

The theoretical status of kinship and other principles of social organization

I have so far identified three approaches to the process of commoditization in agriculture and its relationship to family and kinship. The first sees the organization of labor and property through kin and family relationships as an epiphenomenon of the market economy. It denies the existence of boundaries, marking off spheres with different organizational principles. All social relations are interpreted in terms of commoditization, and family form and substance are considered as expressions of material conditions and economic structures. The second approach, put forward by Friedmann, assumes that the social relationships internal to the family farm belong to a separate domain, structured by an invariant, auto-

nomous family ideology. Boundaries are drawn between the sphere of social relationships internal to the farm household and relationships with the market. The third approach emphasizes actors' capacities to structure their own social relationships, and conceptualizes the dynamics of family production as an interaction between the constraints and possibilities emanating from the wider socioeconomic context and the lifeworlds of concrete actors. This approach does not isolate the sphere of family and kinship from wider society. Practice is conceptualized as the outcome of actors' strategies to structure social relationships and behavior according to their own values. These values mediate the influence of constraints and opportunities from the wider socioeconomic system.

The interaction between the familial/domestic domain and wider society has, however, hardly been explored in terms of kinship theories within rural sociology. Theoretical notions about the role of the kinship universe thus remain largely implicit, taken-for-granted and superficial. In what follows I will argue the case for analyzing kinship as a cultural concept. Behavior toward kin and activities performed on the basis of kin relationships differ fundamentally from other interactions and types of social relationships. Only in these contexts actors may bring into play the unique symbols, meanings and models from their cultural repertoire of kinship and family ideologies. I will discuss some issues raised in kinship and family theories and try to show their relevance to the problems encountered by rural sociologists in studying the role of family and kinship in commercial farming. If external constraints upon farm families are mediated through cultural values associated with kinship, we need to explore the character of this cultural universe. Is it a static prescriptive normative sphere? Does it allow for negotiation between actors? How is it influenced by material conditions? Does it differentiate actors culturally? And to what extent are kin relationships different from other social relationships?

Kinship analysis rests on the observation that culturally recognized relationships of consanguinity and affinity are 'used' as principles for social organization. These social relationships provide the raw material for the categorization of persons, the formation of groups and the allocation and transmission of social positions. These categories and groups are mobilized for the organization of ritual, political regulation and material production. Classifying kin and distinguishing them from nonkin also implies a complex set of norms, usages and patterns of behavior between relatives. Kinship thus involves the cultural usage of relatedness for social,

economic, political and other purposes, and a normative system regulating interaction. As such kinship analysis is not only relevant for 'primitive societies' but also for contemporary western societies.

Kinship theories were originally developed in relation to 'primitive societies.' Moreover, as Bouquet (1993) has shown for British social anthropology, these theories were very much the product of English middle-class preoccupations. The idea that kinship is not an important principle in modern western society certainly originates from the specific contexts within which kinship theories were developed before World War II. It is not my intention to review the development of kinship theories from its original *raison d'être* to current postmodern critiques of nature, culture and intracultural translation (see Bouquet 1993; Strathern 1992). My main concern is to translate the theoretical and conceptual problems emerging from the debates on family farming into the language of kinship theories. From it I hope to be able to discover and clarify the issues that need to be explored in order to understand the role of kinship in agrarian production relations.

Different conceptualizations of kinship

In 1965 Tambiah wrote that "Anthropologists who study the phenomenon of kinship roughly divide into those who think of kinship as 'a thing in itself,' which can be 'explained' only by reference to other kinship phenomena, and those who think of kinship as a kind of epiphenomenon of the hard practical facts of land use and property allocations" (Tambiah 1965, p. 133). Although these are hardly coherent theoretical orientations, the basic division still concerns the relative autonomy of kinship *vis-à-vis* other domains of social life (see also Wolf 1982, pp. 90-91).

The view of kinship as a relatively *autonomous* domain, shaping fields of social activity and interaction according to specific cultural principles, attributes a characteristic irreducible content to kinship. The alternative view is that the real content of kin relationships is economic, social or political. Economic and other relationships are expressed and discussed in terms of kinship metaphors. Kin relationships and ideas are explained through the other relations it represents. Clearly the broader issue concerns the relative weight accorded to different structural principles. In the first view the social field of kin relationships is structured by values intrinsic to kinship, while the second emphasizes economic and political interests as guiding principles for the content and form of kin-based social relationships and activities. Translated into terms relevant for the family

farm, the controversy comes down to the question whether intrinsic kinship ideologies or, in contrast, politico-economic constraints structure property and labor relations. I believe both viewpoints contain useful elements and therefore deserve careful consideration.

Quite independent from the question of how they are constituted, kinship categories are cultural constructs, providing legitimization and meaning to social action within the kinship sphere. Which kin relationships are mobilized, under which circumstances and for what purposes, correlates with the cultural definition of kinship. Kinship thus involves symbolic constructs that place actors into specific social relations with one another. The basic dividing line between the "expressionists" and the "reductionists" (Craig 1979, p. 94) lies in their respective view of the process of kinship construction. Are these cultural constructs representations and legitimizations of more powerful structural elements, or can they be reduced to qualities typical of human relatedness?

The expressionist view: kinship as a dependent domain

The expressionist view is a reaction to structural functionalism in British social anthropology. Authors such as Leach, Beattie and Worsely rejected the assumption that people are socialized by law-like norms and rules, which are passively obeyed. They challenged the idea that people comply in a mechanical way to the kinship order. They instead argued in favor of a paradigm that assigned actors the capacity to manipulate norms to legitimate economic and political interests. "My protest," writes Leach, "is not directed against the study of kinship, . . . but against attempts to isolate kinship behaviours as a distinct category explainable by jural rules without reference to context or economic self-interest" (Leach 1961, p. 306). Kinship, according to Leach, is an expression of more fundamental aspects of social life. Kin relationships only exist as, for instance, concrete arrangements to organize property, land use and so on. The particular form and content of kin relationships are the products of economic forces and reflect differences in economic power. Although kinship might involve morality and obligation, the specific ways in which these are formed depend on material conditions.

Leach is of course right when he claims that kin relationships as such always involve practical arrangements. Family relationships, for instance, are only observable as concrete practices of caring, pooling, production, and so on. Access to property, the organization of production and reproduction, political and territorial organization: all sorts of social fields may

use the genealogical infrastructure to assign statuses, for group formation and the distribution of rights and duties. The recognition of kinship as practice, has important analytical consequences. If use of the genealogical principle derives from ecological and economic conditions, the question is *why* people should choose to organize activities around principles of relatedness. It furthermore raises questions concerning the significance of 'ideal kinship,' abstract notions and ideas about relatedness. If material forces determine practical arrangements, how can these practices be legitimated at the ideological level? Denying the cultural specificity of a set of kinship ideas and beliefs that can structure social organization makes one wonder why people invent such different organizational patterns under comparable ecological and economic conditions. Nevertheless, the observation that practical kinship always develops in certain fields of action and under very specific circumstances, urges an analysis of these circumstances and how they affect the application and formation of kinship constructs in patterning activities.

Beattie also argues that kin relationships can only be understood within their specific context. People use the categories of kinship culturally to define social relationships, and they think about their social relationships in the idiom of kinship. However, to say that a relationship is one of kinship, gives no information about its social or cultural content; it only suggests a presumed biological relationship. Kin relationships are therefore not specific: "rather the categories which kinship affords provide the context and the idiom for many different kinds of social relationships" (Beattie 1964, p. 95). Although the language used may refer to kinsfolk, the real content of that discourse lies elsewhere. It is the hard facts of economic life that underlie what anthropologists choose to call kinship and marriage. That people talk and think about certain kinds of political, jural, economic and other relations in terms of kinship should, according to Beattie, not mislead us into concluding that it might be a further category of social relations (Beattie 1964, p. 102).

For Beattie, then, kinship itself is a neutral category, without a specific content and without capacities to order social relationship. But the intriguing, unresolved question remains, of course, why categories of kinship should provide the idiom, or why economic and political relationships should be incorporated into *kinship*. The point that kinship categories should not be isolated from social, cultural, ecological and economic constraints is acceptable, but to deny the intrinsic qualities of kinship constructs any existence *sui generis* is exaggerated.

The interesting thing in Beattie's concept of kinship is that he focuses on the semantic categories people choose to frame discourse. This calls for an inquiry into how statements about kinship obligations, solidarity, and so on match with the real interests that this idiom disguises. In the context of family farming a farm operator may, for instance, legitimate the economic necessity of hard work and restricted consumption by invoking family sentiments. However, if we choose to analyze the meaning of discourse, Beattie's approach may lead to unexpected results: What happens if kin relationships are talked about in terms of economic categories? Does this reveal a hidden logic of kinship interests?

The problem of why actors should bother dressing up their activities in the guise of kinship, even recruiting political factions through kinship fictions, brings us to the fundamental problem of moral imperative. What is it that infuses kin relationships with sufficient force to make people do things, to motivate them, or to legitimate inequalities and subordination? It raises the question of what kinship as a cultural principle does, how it serves different ends or can be seen to do so, at the level of social organization. The problem is obviously whether kinship has any substance of its own. Some writers take the moral imperative as given; others deny it; others, most notably Fortes, have devoted considerable attention to it.

The reductionist view: the morality of kinship

There is a tendency in anthropological theory to ascribe a universal quality to kinship. According to Schneider, kinship is infused with the idea that it is "... a strong solidary bond that is largely innate, a quality of human nature" (1984, p. 166). One can more or less depend on these bonds, they are compelling and take priority over all others. These qualities are often taken for granted. Fortes' "general principle of kinship morality" is, however, certainly the most pronounced statement of kinship as a moral principle.

For Fortes kinship is an ordering principle, which implies a different emphasis than the notion of kinship as an idiom. As an ordering principle the implication is that there must be some specific kinship content in terms of which groups, categories or social units are constituted. The genealogical grid provides the form, while kinship constructs provide the features according to which kin relationships are patterned. For Fortes, the ideological level of kinship cannot be reduced to any other reality.

Fortes does admit that kinship arrangements are not things in themselves. Systems of production, consumption and exchange act as vehicles for the crystallization of kinship institutions, norms and relationships. Kinship, in other words, is deployed in real practical contexts. Economic constraints do not, according to Fortes, define how it is used, nor which concepts, ideas and priorities are emphasized. On the contrary, inherent kinship notions define the character of an economic relation. "No one has so far succeeded in showing that the system of kinship terminology, customary in any society, or the structure of kinship and descent relations operative in it, or indeed even the occurrence of some particular norm of kinship can be deduced from a knowledge of the economy or of any strictly economic process, practice or institution . . . identical systems occurring in technological, economic, and ecological contexts of the greatest diversity" (Fortes 1969, pp. 229-230).

Fortes (1969, p. 223) argues for the existence of "a general principle of kinship morality," which implies that familial and kinship norms are not reducible to economic, political or any other basis. Kinship is a specific, relatively autonomous domain of social life. The basic, axiomatically binding force of kinship, lies in the rule of "prescriptive altruism," underpinning amity, altruism and the ethic of generosity. "What the rule posits is that 'kinsfolk' have irresistible claims on one another's support and consideration in contradistinction to 'non-kinsmen,' simply by reason of the fact that they are kin. Kinsfolk must ideally share—hence the frequent invocation of brotherhood as the model of generalized kinship; and they must, ideally, do so without putting a price on what they give. Reciprocal giving between kinsfolk is supposed to be done freely and not in submission to coercive sanctions or in response to contractual obligations" (*ibid.*, p. 238).

Whether kin relationships have a specific content, characterized by 'amity,' 'altruism,' 'generosity,' and related concepts is debatable, however. Such concepts are characteristically reflexive, antithetical notions that originate from western philosophy and social sciences. In sociological theory, for instance, there is a long tradition of conceptualizing different, contrasting patterns of social relationships. Tönnies *Gemeinschaft* and *Ge-sellschaft*, and Durkheim's mechanical and organic forms of solidarity refer to different types of sociality, based on the idea that secondary, contractual relationships have replaced interpersonal, primary bonds.

The identification of types of relationships with specific human values can only take place in a context where there is an awareness of value differentiation. The fact that, in modern western society, kinship has strong

connotations with the private and the personal, that privacy and kinship are felt to be roughly coterminous and that kin are those with whom we adopt the special style of informal communication (see Leach 1982), may lead to an exaggeration of the 'positive' features of kinship in general, and more specifically in societies where such distinctions between spheres are much less pronounced.

Harris (1990) argues that anthropologists have mainly studied kinship in 'other' societies through concepts that derive from their own culture. They were either unconsciously preoccupied with typical western notions, or consciously focused on the otherness of 'primitive societies' as perceived through Western eyes (see also Bouquet 1993). Anthropologists have characterized the common content of kin relationships in striking contrast with *capitalist* economic relations. The contrast is based on the Weberian notion of the rational capitalist whose action is oriented toward profit maximization through rational calculation. "Relations of amity are therefore defined as the opposite of the relationships characteristic of the distinctively modern mode of production" (Harris 1990, p. 59). This implies that assumptions about the characteristic content of kinship are partly based on a projection of ideas about our own past onto other societies in an earlier phase of social evolution. I do not deny that kin relationships are different from other types of social relations, but the nature of these differences should not be based on such an *a priori* contrast between values. The differences revolve, I will argue below, around distinctive conceptions of the person.

The multiple structuration of practice

Anthropological theories of kinship are, of course, infinitely more diverse than I have evoked it above. I have briefly considered only those parts of the debates concerned with the relation between ideology and practice, between what people think and what they do. The fact that practical kinship arrangements and interaction between relatives never exist in isolation complicates the relation between the ideological level of kinship constructs, idioms and morals on the one hand, and the concrete level of social organization and practice on the other. Structural constraints, originating from material, ecological or political conditions may be in conflict with ideal norms, modifying or reducing their impact. Such determining factors, however, can explain neither practice, nor the ideological level. Family farming, for instance, can only exist and persist given the ideological and social infrastructure of the family, whatever the functional prereq-

uisites of cheap labor. Kinship imposes its structural principles on social relationships in interaction with specific contextual conditions. If it were the case that kinship had no substance of its own, how would one explain the huge variety of kin relationships and practices under similar ecological and economic circumstances? We therefore need to clarify the character of kinship as a cultural medium in order to explore the process of structuration.

The theoretical problem is thus no different from any other field of social inquiry. If we take actors' production and reproduction of social practice and interaction as a general principle, then kinship ideology becomes a fundamental aspect for analysis. In such an analysis kinship should not be seen as something that refers to a specific social or institutional field, but rather as a structural element which, together with other structural elements may shape all kinds of social relationships between relatives. Social relationships and activities based on kinship should not be viewed in terms of a single determining factor, but as formed by different sets of beliefs, values and concrete circumstances. Kinship is only one set of beliefs and has as such a capacity to impinge its impact, together with other structural principles, on social action. The basic questions in studying any field of social activity are how different structural elements are articulated, and the extent to which these give substance and form to social relationships and activities.

Kinship as an analytical category

Although kinship has a biological referent in most cultures, kinship and family ideologies and their implementations are social and cultural phenomena. The fact that kinship is universal and the observation that it revolves around themes common to most cultures should not seduce us into thinking of it as natural or innate. Although kinship ideas may be deeply rooted and seem almost to have become part of human nature, their enormous cultural variation constantly reminds us of their invented character. How and why people originally developed a cognitive system on the basis of biological substance is not relevant here. The reality is that people do have ideas about relatedness, and that these ideas are used in a meaningful way to structure or represent social relationships. This does not mean, of course, that folk theories about kinship are irrelevant. It is well known that people tend to favor 'their own,' and this may take the form of references to 'my own flesh and blood.' In certain culturally specific representations this can serve to legitimate claims upon and sup-

port given to kin. As Finch (1989, p. 222) points out: "The *idea* that certain actions are determined or required by nature is important because of the symbolic meaning this gives to kinship, not because it is literally true." Although ideas about kinship may be deeply rooted, they are not necessarily static or rigid. To assess this flexible aspect of kinship, a more refined distinction should be made between ideology and practice.

Kinship as practice and kinship as ideology

Kinship, as an ideological construct, contains several different degrees of abstraction. At the most abstract level it alludes to general ideas about the meaning of 'blood,' descent, collaterals and so on. It includes ideas about equality, authority and solidarity, and is often so ingrained in people's mind that it is almost felt to be 'natural.' At this abstract ideological level, significant variety may exist between cultures. Fortes 'general principle of kinship morality' seems to refer to this cultural level, although he emphasizes its universal character without exploring differences.

Such abstract notions about kinship are, however, very difficult to study empirically. If people refer to such principles as brotherhood, respect, deference or solidarity, they always do this with reference to concrete practices, experiences and social relationships. Kinship ideology thus only becomes more or less explicit when it is 'used' as a precept to orient concrete action. Therefore, it is important to distinguish a second, less abstract aspect of kinship, which I will call 'practical kinship ideology.' This concept refers to the way that specific aspects of the world are perceived through the idiom of kinship, and translated into models for behavior and social organization. Practical ideology provides a direct link between concrete aspects such as land, labor and domestic activities on the one hand, and abstract ideological conceptions of affinity and consanguinity on the other. The fields of activity actually incorporated into the language and culture of kinship may vary according to the character of a society. It could include production, politics, territorial organization, but could equally be restricted to rights and duties in the domestic sphere.

According to Strathern, these practical kinship conceptions are under constant reflection: "People's experiences exist in specific social environments . . . The social environment must be understood as *filtered* through individual perceptions and particularly people's negotiations between what they perceive as an 'ideal' and an 'actual' world" (Strathern 1988, p. 7). Practical kinship constructs are thus constituted by a process of decoding abstract concepts of the kinship idiom into practical models. These

practical models are in no way 'realistic' or neutral, however. They are based on perceptions, reflections and forms of knowledge that are biased by what is thought to be an ideal world. Kinship ideology is fundamental in this 'double translation' from concrete circumstances into experiences and perceptions and subsequently into practical kinship ideology. This is an ongoing process, denying any monocausal relationship between ideology and 'the real world.'

Social, cultural and economic change obviously incites people to rethink what is possible or desirable, and they may accommodate changing circumstances in their models for behavior. It is equally true—in particular in a period of rapid modernization—that competing practical models evolve among relatives involved in certain practical field of action. All this implies that the construction of practical ideology is flexible and that it provides people the necessary cultural arguments and legitimations to negotiate or impose their principles on other actors.

In short, practical kinship ideology consists of a set of ideas, combining ideal kinship, specific circumstances and specific fields of action. Since these fields of action include actors who are mutually related, reflection on the substance of kinship is unavoidable. Even if some actors argue that principles of economic rationality or legal rules apply, this statement nonetheless reveals the meaning of kinship. The fact that normative spheres other than those derived from ideal kinship interfere, is a logical outcome of the character of practical kinship ideology. Practical kinship ideology may be informed by ideal kinship, but at the practical level it is always involved in specific social fields, which are themselves enmeshed in a wider cultural world.

People's ideal models are not automatically realized in reality; social relationships, interaction and emotions may be quite different. Therefore, we must distinguish concrete kin relationships, emotions and action—or practical kinship—from the two ideological levels I have just mentioned.

People face demographic, economic, political and ecological constraints and opportunities, just as they are confronted with competing ideological models, power relationships—in short with the hard facts of real life. In practice, people mobilize a range of kinship values to achieve certain goals and derive the motivation to pursue action. Ideologies are brought into play in very complex and erratic ways, but always involve either negotiation and attempts to achieve compromise, or the use of power, backed up by a variety of sanctions.

The several levels of kinship are clearly discernible with respect to the transfer of land within farm families. Practical kinship ideology may favor an equal division of the land among all children, setting them up in independent households, and marrying them off into families of equal status. A bilateral conception of kinship, combined with sibling equality and a high regard for family autonomy may legitimate this practical model. In reality, however, land may pass to one son, who compensates his brothers and sisters for his favored position. Because economic conditions militate against the formation of small productive units, the unity of the farm imposes itself as an economic constraint. Practical arrangements can thus differ substantially from an ideal practical model, and result in long-term adjustments according to changing circumstances. Sibling equality then acquires another practical meaning, without, however, violating the principle. Ideology only becomes really contradictory with economic constraints if the principle of equality cannot be maintained without selling the farm. Obviously, as I will also argue in the next chapter, the devolution of land cannot be understood in terms of discrepancies between ideals and practice. What this example shows is that ideal constructs guide practice in conjunction with concrete circumstances.

Kinship: a unique social and cultural medium

However variable the fields in which practical kinship ideology is constructed, there is one constant element: kinship is only available as a medium and substance of reflection among relatives. Kin relationships are therefore unique, because this process of reflection arises out of personal relationships that differ fundamentally from other types of social relations.

The question of why people should dress up activities, interaction and behavior in a kinship idiom, posed earlier in this chapter, can thus be reformulated as follows: what makes actors use the kinship medium and idiom to achieve certain goals, perform activities and legitimize behavior? Why don't they define their relationships in other terms or bring other human qualities into ideological play? Why should they at all cooperate, organize activities and rely on kin? What does kinship offer that is unavailable from other types of social relationships and other types of cultural ideas?

It should be clear from what I have said above, that kinship does *not* have an invariant, or universal cultural content. What it does imply, however, is that it is something that is considered important and meaningful.

What is it, then, which makes kin relationships different? Why do people find the notion of kinship attractive for incorporating all kinds of social, cultural and economic activities? And why do they translate social experiences into kinship constructs? These questions are particularly interesting in modern western societies, where many alternative social arrangements are at hand and attitudes toward other persons can be based on many other ideological constructs. The rise of the welfare state, insurance systems, political democracy and industrial labor organization has opened up facilities for social security, employment, education and social control through specialized institutions. The contrast between these kinds of arrangements and the field of kin relationships is rather sharp. Everybody is aware of the contrasts, and choices between different types of arrangements are usually very limited.

It is rather speculative to theorize about why relations with kin are considered different, clearly segregated from nonrelatives. Finch (1989) argues that the lifelong nature of relationships with one's family of origin mark them as distinctive. The privileged position of kin arises, according to Finch, from ". . . the fact that your family of origin are people with whom you have interacted over your whole lifetime . . . (which) builds into these relationships a dynamic which can significantly reinforce the social definition of kin as people whom you treat differently" (ibid., p. 235).

Kinship as a relational concept means 'sameness,' identity and belonging. It can, as such, easily be identified with prescriptive, immovable norms, irrevocable principles and conformity and, in a sense, this contains an element of truth, especially at the most abstract level of kinship ideology. Kinship principles seem to have a peculiar ability to persist over time without fundamentally changing (see Todd 1983). However, the construction of practical ideologies, and even more so practical kinship shows much more flexibility. According to Finch (1989) and Harris (1990), both specifically referring to modern industrial societies, the medium of kinship provides actors with a unique means of contesting, arguing and negotiating about practical arrangements. Apparently identical principles may be differently perceived when translating them into action, and hence susceptible to different interpretations.

The kinship context allows for the negotiation of positions and demands, and the development of contrasting feelings and emotions: a potential that is hardly available within other types of social relations. The idea that kin relationships are negotiated clearly contradicts the theoretical position that people follow a fixed set of prescriptive rules. Kin rela-

tionships differ also due to the difficulty of breaking them. People may, of course, ignore certain relatives because something they have done, or hold themselves aloof from any further contact. But such extreme options are painful and only serve to underline the tenacity of the underlying relationship. Families seem to invest considerable time in conflict management to prevent a definitive cleavage. Kinship, more than any other type of social relation, provides a sense of belonging, durability and consequently a self-imposed tendency among actors to argue instead of escape. Although it is true that the negotiated character of kin relationships is much more visible in contemporary western society, this does not mean that 'traditional societies' were completely governed by patriarchal power. Several studies have shown that, although alternative options were limited, kin relationships were characterized by transactional arrangements and conflict (see, for instance, Claverie and Lamaison 1982; Sabean 1990)

Another aspect of kin relationships, which distinguish them from other types of social relations, is the perception and the status of the other person. According to Harris, kin relationships are "personal, diffuse, affective, ascribed and particularistic" (1990, p. 58). In 'personal' relationships the parties orient themselves toward the person rather than the status occupied or the activity performed. Relationships are not defined in terms of restricted status attributes, since the whole person, or an ascribed status (defined by birth) rather than the achieved status carries the significance. Kinship is oriented to the total person, rather than to one variable dimension—something that resembles social relationships in small communities. The affective, or moral character implicit in all levels of kinship refers to the fact that one must define attitudes *vis-à-vis* other persons, whether positive, negative or neutral. According to Harris, kinship sentiments are therefore not per definition positive: "Whatever the affect and mode of relationship, whether love and cooperation or hatred and competition, the fate of the parties to kin relationships is never a matter of indifference. Rather than being distinguished by amiability, kin relations provide a diffuse social solidarity on the basis of which relations of amiability or hostility can arise" (1990, p. 59).

These preliminary ideas obviously need elaboration in the context of family farming. I think that analytical concepts, useful for understanding the complicated interaction within farm families, can be developed by defining kinship ideologies as highly flexible structural principles arising from specific personal relationships; and by analyzing fields of social interaction and behavior involving kin as a domain of multiple structurat-

ion. The next section will briefly identify the system of social relations relevant to family farming. I will indicate from this how these social relations are formed and where the concepts of mediation and kinship are relevant for understanding the role of actors, cultural constructs and the wider political-economic context.

Identifying the social relations of family farming

Farms, like all enterprises, consist of an assemblage of materials for productive purposes. Without human labor, organizational and other skills, however, these materials would remain unproductive and meaningless. A farm is therefore always associated with intentional actors, who provide the necessary assets, plan, organize and perform the tasks to be done, and distribute the produce according to precise principles. A farm comprises a set of social relationships incorporating access to and control over resources, the labor process, and claims to the produce.

Although a farm is a physically circumscribed spatial unit in terms of its visible appearance, boundaries are less obvious when social relations are considered. Production relations put the farm into a wider socioeconomic context, including markets, political regulation, the kinship network and the community. Each of these social fields imposes its structural properties upon strategies of production and reproduction. In what follows I will try to give a concise description of the social relationships within which farming is incorporated. Depicting these social relationships means that the farm household cannot be considered as the all-embracing unit of analysis. Not only are the members of the household differentially related to property and the farm labor process; property and labor relations may also extend beyond the residential farm household.

The family labor process

The relationships at the level of the actual labor process concern people performing manual and intellectual labor directed toward making agricultural products. Men and women secure, either together or by themselves, the daily tasks of working the land, taking care of animals, repairing agricultural implements and so on. The labor process thus finds its concrete expression in a specific management style. Farm operators decide on the allocation of available resources according to a preconceived plan that they designed to realize certain objectives. The structuration of the labor process evolves within specific production relations, implying interaction

and negotiation between a variety of actors who sometimes have different interests. Family goals, like continuity, and family circumstances are important factors in the development of the production process; while markets, technology and government regulation equally condition the available options. The unit of production should therefore not be confused with the unit of decision making. Farm operators only *take* decisions, that is, they translate the sway of market forces, technology and social pressure into concrete choices. Decision making is a process that evolves within certain production relations, and only gains concrete momentum in the labor process.

Farmers' strategies consist in the mobilization of a variety of culturally, socially and economically defined resources to realize a combination of social, cultural and economic goals. The analysis of family farming ought to focus on the degree to which a farm family's available resources are tied up in family processes and the mobilization of family and kinship values. Examining how these resources are incorporated in concrete strategies, and how these relate to family goals and aspirations means giving full recognition to the fact that the farm labor process is a family labor process.

The internal division of labor and the partition of authority reflect how the labor process is integrated into specific production relations. These relationships are closely associated with the respective class positions of the persons involved in the daily process of production. Class differentiation at the level of the production unit arises when direct producers have distinct access to and control over the means of production. This separation draws a dividing line between owners, operators and dependent laborers and is intrinsic to the integration of the labor process in capitalist production relations. Where class differentiation is absent, the social relationships that link the direct producers may be based on kinship, domestic cooperation or other cooperative forms of farm organization.

Producers on family farms have direct access to the means of production—either as proprietors or tenants—and are mutually connected through kinship ties. The organizing principle for the division of labor and the partition of authority is strongly associated with family ideology and gender constructions. Again, the concept 'family farming' should orient research toward the question of the extent to which the recruitment of labor is based on kin relationships, and how far kinship ideology provides the legitimization for practical arrangements concerning labor, authority and remuneration, and the motivation for cooperation.

Internal and external social relations of production

The social relations of production are often arbitrarily associated with external and/or internal relationships, thereby introducing the irksome problem of boundaries. Making distinctions between types of social relationships is in itself very useful, since it allows empirical processes to be clarified. The fact that simple commodity producers are not subordinated to capital in a direct way via the separation of capital from labor, but indirectly via links with agro-industrial firms, is but one example of the differentiation within production relations. Relations of production *can* be distinguished as mutually interacting domains of structuration, rather than separate entities.

While the labor process is localized and involves people mutually connected through a field of shared activity, wider production relations guarantee continuous access to labor, land, capital and markets for buying inputs and selling the produce. Labor and property relations provide the basis for control over the means of production and the division of the produce. Market and institutional relations provide the external conditions for reproduction. When I refer to property and labor relations as *internal relations of production*, there is no suggestion that 'internal' refers to spatial boundaries or of purely internal determination. I will refer to the links between the farm enterprise and markets as *external relationships*.

When internal social relations are defined as governing access to and control over labor and property, this does not mean that property and labor relations necessarily correspond with the farm household, or that other structural principles are not important. If internal relationships were restricted to household relations, it would oblivate the partitioning of status with respect to property and labor in the household, and would ignore the distribution of property rights among a wider kin network. Although external relations tend to be seen as the connections between the labor process and markets and technology, their externality is only relative, since their logic penetrates the labor process itself, and also since they condition the range of possibilities for the reproduction of existing internal relations and the emergence of new ones.

The family farm labor process and capitalism

This subdivision between types of production relations corresponds to the different ways in which the farm labor process may be subsumed to industrial capitalism. Whatmore et al. (1987a,b), following Marx' theory of

subsumption, argue that a farm is brought under capitalist control either through formal (indirect) or real (direct) subsumption of the labor process. Under conditions of formal subsumption the workers are still able to undertake the labor process as independent producers, whilst retaining control of the means of production. But the labor process, and consequently the social relationships that it supports, has become dependent on technological inputs, ever stricter demands from the processing industry, and rising indebtedness, all of which are beyond the farmer's control. The penetration of commodities in the reproductive cycle has not only changed the logic of decision making, but also puts the internal relationships under constant stress.

Real subsumption involves "... the *direct* ownership and control of the means of production on the farm, the transformation of the agricultural labour process through the full commoditisation of labour relations, and strong influence over the development of the technical means of production by corporate capitals ..." (1987a, p. 27). Family farmers' control over the labor process and access to the produce are obviously very direct. They are, however, subject to external pressures, exerted over them by agro-industrial firms, which appropriates managerial skills, and extract surplus value through unequal exchange, while leaving real control of the labor process in the hands of the producers.

The internal relations of production refer to the ownership of capital and land, management control, and labor relations. According to Whatmore et al., "The degree to which the ownership and control of these elements are diffused away from a single family operator indicates the level of direct subsumption of the labour process" (1987a, p. 30). The two extreme cases are, on the one hand, the farm owned, managed and worked by members of a household; and on the other, a farm owned by a food manufacturing enterprise or institutional investor and run by a farm management company hiring contract labor.

Relations with external capitals refer to mechanisms of indirect control over the production process through technological dependence, credit relations, and marketing linkages. Dependence on inputs and the expert knowledge needed to apply them, finance capital and businesses in the food processing branch, all affect the style of internal management, income and the distribution of surplus value. The effect is twofold: farmers lose their relative independence in terms of professional orientation; and the social and cultural bases of farming are increasingly conditioned by commoditization.

Property and labor relations

The farm is closely associated with property relations. Land and farm equipment, including farm buildings and movable goods, belong to one or more proprietors. The farm owes its existence to farm operators with sufficiently secure rights to use these productive resources. Such use rights are, however, never unconditional. Property and access to property are embedded in a web of social relationships, linking persons to the material objects in different ways. Property relations involve a set of rights and obligations concerning alienation, use and compensation. Farmers experience the status of their productive resources in a variety of ways: the land may belong to the domestic group, be rented from an absent landowner or from relatives; its purchase may have been financed with bank or family capital. All these variations indicate that control over land is never absolute. Financial obligations that lay a claim on farm income, such as the payment of interest or rent, are obvious commitments. Property relations can also imply interference in the labor process by people not directly involved in running of farm. Farmers may furthermore have acquired property on condition that certain social obligations, such as caring for indigent parents, keeping the land in the family or providing a subsistence base for a household, are fulfilled. The notion that property guarantees independence and freedom is true only to a limited extent. Even a farmer with individual, unencumbered title to property has to respect government regulations and may exercise only restricted freedom in devolving his estate.

Property relations structure the control of productive resources, claims to the farm's produce and a range of social obligations, in a direct way. Reproducing these relationships is crucial for retaining the necessary material basis of production. Failure to pay rent or interest, neglecting obligations, or personal disagreements, may result in the collapse or transformation of property relations.

Property relations can be distinguished by the way in which they are actually translated into production relations. The two contrasting models are, on the one hand, the unity of property and labor and, on the other hand, the separation between property and labor. The proprietor applies his own labor to mobilize production in the former, while the proprietor or a delegate employs hired laborers in the latter. Property relations thus find their concrete expression in the partitioning of statuses in the labor process. The partitioning of status does not, however, consist only of the contrast between capitalist and noncapitalist production relations. Family

farms are often wrongly connected either with an undifferentiated unity of household and property or with the individual farm operator. Household production often involves, however, the deployment of matrimonial property, usufructuary rights and a variety of shared property titles, which may create divergent interests and imply that the reproduction of the farm evolves within specific social relationships. Property used on a family farm may belong to persons living in the residential farm household or to persons (kin or nonkin) located outside this household. Access to land and farm equipment may furthermore be based on contractual arrangements or informal kinship ties.

Labor relations are closely associated with property relationships. Having gained access to land and farm equipment the labor force may be recruited through a variety of social relationships. Labor may be recruited on the labor market or via informal channels such as kinship, friendship and neighborhood. Family farms are characterized not only by direct use of family-owned capital and land, but also by their use of family labor. Property and labor are thus largely incorporated into a single type of classless social relationship. However, family labor relations do not necessarily coincide with property rights. Some household members who hold a share in the property may be absent in the labor force, and status in the labor process does not always reflect rights to property. The personal and social fusion of property and labor does, however, have important implications for performance in the labor process. Family labor tends to be nonwage labor and a potential farm successor may, for instance, see labor as an investment in his or her own future. The principles of remuneration and commitment to working on the farm are therefore embedded in particularistic family and kin relationships, which sets them on a structurally distinct level from contractual relations.

The ideological underpinning of internal relations

The reproduction of internal relations depends on the degree to which actors can reproduce their structural properties. Thus, if internal relations are based on market principles, labor and property relations can only be maintained as long as remunerative claims are satisfied according to objective market principles. If, on the other hand, internal relations rest upon noncommodity principles, reproduction depends upon subjectively determined claims on the product that satisfy those providing labor and property.

The two options for mobilizing land, labor and capital, either recruited through the market, or through family and kin relationships, result in specific internal relations. Property and labor relations established via kinship presuppose not only kin and family availability and capability, but also the disposition to exchange and contribute labor, capital and land as 'use values.' This implies that productive relations formally based on kinship fall outside the concept of 'family farming' if labor and property are treated as commodities. One of the preconditions for the development of market relations is that there are sufficiently developed markets in labor, land and capital, and that product markets permit the profitable use of commoditized labor and land.

The structural properties of internal social relations—produced and reproduced by actors' behavior—are not arbitrary. External forces clearly *condition* the way in which land, labor and capital are put to work and, what is more important, the claims on the income derived from it. The limits set by these external constraints do not, however, *determine* in any way allocation and calculation principles. If market conditions, for instance, require the application of use value principles this does not automatically mean that farmers are willing or able to provide the necessary means of production according to such requirements. It presupposes direct access to land, the availability of nonwage labor and the ideological predisposition among family and kin toward establishing and perpetuating the social basis of the farm labor process. This ideological underpinning is not simply a short-term matter, but requires constant revitalization, particularly during the process of farm succession, when a member of the younger generation has to set up a new constellation of social relations without endangering the viability of the farm. Negotiations with brothers, sisters and parents are essential for the establishment of feasible social relations.

I have described in earlier sections of this chapter how many rural sociologists assume farm families' ideological inclination to adapt to external constraints, or alternatively portray them as victims of industrial capital, unable to perceive the mechanisms of exploitation. It is my contention, however, that the reproduction of production relations based on kinship is not exclusively a matter of ensuring continuity and independence. It is more important that all actors with an interest in the farm share such goals, and that they are sufficiently motivated to press family and kinship principles into service.

Current market conditions do not generally favor establishing farms that function according to capitalist principles. But this does not automati-

ically unlock social relations based on family and kin. There are, in theory, many other types of social relations that could adopt principles of use value and long-term exchange. A farmer might, for instance, pool resources with other people similarly endowed with land and labor. Agreements could be made about remuneration for capital and labor, and the only necessary limitation would be that claims on income should not endanger the viability of the farm. Such an arrangement could be based on common trust, long-term commitment, reciprocity, lack of self-interest and so on. Mutual arrangements concerning social security, equality based on prestations, a complex form of accountability and other formal agreements could be built into the relation to cope with possible conflicts. And yet, this sort of enterprise structure seems absolutely inconceivable. Farmers do cooperate, both on a friendly basis and in large cooperative organizations; they sometimes have machinery in common and invest in jointly used facilities. But these initiatives do not interfere with the tacitly defended autonomy of each farm family. Why is this? Why should specific structural principles only exist among close kin and affinal units?

The answer is a truism: kinship is the only medium available to incorporate production relations that require the mobilization of specific cultural principles. Only in this 'hidden' dimension of kinship do we find the ideological basis for unlocking sufficient trust, solidarity, deference, self-sacrifice and motivation. Such values are, however, also contested and negotiated within the same context. The familial dimension certainly engenders its own conflicts, self-interest, lack of motivation and tensions. This is especially so in a society where production is generally assigned to the sphere of formal relations, and ideas about labor, income, time and value are predominantly informed by the culture of capitalism. Values, therefore, require constant legitimization and revitalization. Power differences are brought to bear in imposing ideological principles within families; different practical contexts of family and kin relationships are played off against each other. The promise of an inheritance, access to the house or participation in family rituals and social life may strengthen and enforce commitment to the continuity of the farm.

The familial context is completely saturated by the general conditions of farming, labor markets, social conditions and wider cultural circumstances. The accommodation of these forces can only be understood as a specific outcome of negotiations and strategies in a social and cultural context uniquely endowed with the cultural repertoire to mediate such infiltration. The fact that family farms vanish and survive in a bewildering variety of forms clearly shows the limits imposed by family negotia-

tions as to what is acceptable and possible, so that the logic of some all-embracing socioeconomic system is only relevant in conjunction with these micro processes.

The logic of external relations

The internal relations of production concern the organization of access to and control over property and labor. The unity of property and labor, of family and farm, allows producers to exert direct control over the farm labor process and to dispose of the produce. The organization of the labor process and the principles that govern the division of farm income lie in the social relationships that incorporate property and labor. The fundamental difference between external and internal relations is that external relations *penetrate* the farm labor process, forcing themselves upon actors. The steering of farm families' behavior by external circumstances should be distinguished on analytical grounds from the effects of property and labor relations. Farms with high input levels and highly dependent on market outlets, have structured the farm labor process according to these external parameters so that the commodity effect has become part and parcel of the farm labor process. Market relations exert a durable influence on how farmers use their land, what they produce, their income level, and, in the last instance, the viability of the farm. Although levels of commoditization vary from farm to farm, market related calculating principles are omnipresent. External capitals thus exercise control over the use of resources in an indirect way. The indirectness of this control lies in the fact that it is not exerted via property relations, but via links with markets, and that both these links and their effects are mediated by the farm operators.

External relations are selective links with input and output markets, resulting from specific managerial strategies. Farmers establish market relations to sell their produce and to obtain inputs. The character of the labor process partly reflects price levels and opportunity costs. Thus, where land is scarce and expensive, a high input of fertilizers and pesticides is used to raise productivity, and industrial foodstuffs are used to increase cattle density. High capital investment that reduces the need for labor compensates for its scarcity. Farms thus differ in terms of commoditization. High-input agriculture is mostly very intensive, while extensive land use characterizes low-input agriculture. The market situation will furthermore play an important role in the choice of crops, animals, level of specialization and so on.

Such external conditions do not, however, fully explain the nature of the farm labor process. According to van der Ploeg (1985a), farm labor cannot be considered as the simple execution of external demands. Farmers consciously develop strategies oriented toward specific goals and based upon available means. Attitudes about the quality of the product, the value attached to artisanal skills and independence are all ideological factors contributing to the selective integration into markets. These ideas and preferences are not, however, conceived in an individual way. Resources available and the way they are distributed on the farm (land, labor, capital) are subject to family influences. A farmer's preference for an artisanal labor process, for instance, will very much depend on support from other members of the household for its realization. Examining the structuration of the labor process thus implies taking into account negotiation between the family and external forces *and* negotiation between family members.

The character of the labor process may have important consequences for the internal relations. Expanding a farm via high capital investments and indebtedness increases the proportion of the produce price claimed in market terms. It is, however, very important for a family farm to maintain an equilibrium between use value and exchange value principles. A recent study by Marsden, Munton and Ward (1992) systematically mapped the combination of internal and external relations at farm level in upland Britain. They correlated these findings with the likelihood that farm continuity was assured for the next generation. The results may seem contradictory at first sight: commitment to family continuity grows as farms become increasingly subsumed to external relations. The social basis of family continuity and the increasing tendency for external capitals to reduce the independence of farm families are clearly complementary. The more farms become engaged with technological, marketing and credit linkages, the more likely it is that the farm will survive into the next generation. It is too simple to explain continuity by reference to the fact that these farms are larger and have higher income potential than vanishing farms. It shows in addition that market mechanisms and family relations are mutually reinforcing. Family ownership and labor are prerequisites for the penetration of commodity relations. Deepening exchange relations with external agencies is associated with an increasing relevance of use value in the internal sphere. According to Marsden, Munton and Ward (1992), "... the social co-ordination of exchange and commoditised relations on the one hand, with the longer time horizons of family based

use values on the other, is an increasingly important activity for farm families to maintain continuity" (*ibid.*, p. 426).

Rural sociologists have tended to deny the significance of family factors because of the emphasis they put on external relations. They rightly argue that economic and technological determinants increasingly influence the allocation of resources and modes of calculation. It is also acknowledged that external influences are mediated by the farm operator. The farm operator is portrayed, however, as an individual economic agent. The supposed incompatibility between family sentiments and modern entrepreneurial skills theoretically support this argument. This line of reasoning completely ignores, however, the enduring importance of family- and kin-based internal relations and hence the continuing importance of mobilizing and revitalizing their cultural underpinning. It may seem a contradictory combination but, however advanced and modern the farm may be in terms of entrepreneurial performance, the actors involved must simultaneously carefully manage internal relations, which may often demand higher 'vocational' skills and tact than the ones required for technical, economic and financial matter.

Some recent reflections on the role of kinship and family in commercial farming

When analyzing processes in farm families there are two fundamental issues to bear in mind. First, kin and family relationships do *not* have an invariant, or universal cultural content. They *do* have a cultural content that people find important and meaningful, but which may vary from region to region and may change in time. Kinship and family ideology, in conjunction with concrete circumstances, structure behavior.

Secondly, commoditization is a contradictory process with far wider implications than the purely economic sphere. Farmers increasingly rely on modern technology, credit and intensive relations with input and output markets to maintain a viable farm and a reasonable income. They have to develop entrepreneurial skills and a professional attitude to farming. They must adopt calculation principles derived from the market and carefully allocate resources to maximize income. All these 'modern values' contrast sharply with the need to define internal relations in noncommodity terms, and increasing reliance on family commitment. An appeal to family solidarity and cooperation is unavoidable to achieve a strong market position and maintain a viable farm. Such 'traditional values' contrast both with the principles applied in production and marketing, and with

the values that arise in the wider sociocultural context of which commoditization is an integral part. Even farmers with alternative farming patterns and a low degree of integration in markets and technology face this effect of cultural modernization. Where commoditization takes place in a modernizing society, ascribed statuses, dependence on family solidarity, and subjection to patriarchal authority are increasingly being questioned. Emancipation and individualization are potentially undermining a system of social reproduction that is based on 'traditional' kinship constructs.

The contradictory character of modernization

While rural sociologists increasingly recognize the contradictory pressures on family farming, hardly any attention has yet been given to how actors cope with them. If the individualizing effect of modern society undermines family farming internally, then the question becomes why some farm families can accommodate these contradictory forces, while others fail to reproduce the family form of production.

Lem's (1988) empirical study of farmers in the South of France was one of the first to draw attention to the undermining effect of commoditization on social relations between farm family members. She argues that the continuity of the farm enterprise depends on the household's capacity to mobilize unpaid family labor and to bind children ensuring reproduction over the generations. This implies that specific cultural principles are necessary to maintain interpersonal relations. Members of farm families are increasingly aware of such normative principles, which not only make them skeptical about reciprocity, sharing and harmony, but also reveal aspects of the family such as deference, obedience and authority. While pooling labor and other resources gives the impression of a domestic domain free of commoditized social relations, this is nonetheless the outcome of negotiations, compromises and concessions to kin obligations.

The commoditization effect works as a sort of catalyst that elevates the cultural and social bases of the household from a largely implicit and taken-for-granted level to a conscious one: ". . . this engenders a series of conflicting interests between the individualizing effect of the process of commoditization and the imperatives of the reproduction of the enterprise . . ." The commitments "that are called forth in the name of the family and the flexing of the patriarchal muscle are made under the constraint of the high degree of labour mobility" (Lem 1988, p. 525). The unity of household and enterprise is protected from the fragmenting ten-

dencies of the market and the separation of interests between individual members through conscious reproductive strategies.

Lem suggests that family members' motivation to support the farm weakens in the context of modern industrial society, thereby undermining its basis. She also asserts that the older generation often manages to avert this tendency by appealing to family obligations. Such appeals can only be made, or at least are only acceptable, if they harmonize with existing family ideology. Paradoxically, it seems that the pressures of commoditization not only tend to weaken family commitment, but simultaneously produce a 'conservative' reaction.

Friedmann's (1986a,b,c, 1987, 1990) later work is also concerned with the fragility of family solidarity resulting from general trends such as emancipation and individualization. Individuals are inclined to challenge labor and property arrangements they regard as unacceptable. Women, for example, may endanger the reproduction of the farm by withholding their property or by asking for a divorce, and children by requesting full remuneration. How do farmers continue to muster family support in a context that bears all marks of declining familialism?

Friedmann sees individuals' behavior resulting from the interaction between "two contradictory relationships" contained by the family farm as being unusually indeterminate. These two contradictory relationships bear on the tension between 'value' and family on the one hand, and between property and labor on the other. Value relations become explicit when members of a family confront the possibilities of entering the labor market or become aware of the manner in which the costs of family production are calculated: "Value creates the basis for calculation, both of 'profit' for the enterprise and of 'wages' for individuals" (*ibid.*, 1986b, p. 53). Such a market-oriented frame of reference threatens the maintenance of family property. Real estate prices that are completely out of proportion with their potential as farmland can tempt children to claim equal shares in the inheritance at its market price, thus sacrificing family loyalties for immediate financial gain.

Family ties, the ideological appeal of independence, and social relations based on generosity and respect, counter the undermining influence of value relations. The family farm is in fact an ideological battlefield, where pressures from the wider society to exercise individual choice and claims to equality across gender and generation, confront familial obligations and continuity of the family farm. Friedmann considers indirect influences originating in the wider political and social environment as being more decisive in transforming the family farm than the direct effects of capital.

penetration. The transformative potential of the internal social relations of production is thus more an ideological than a material matter. The social values of individualism encourage variation in family members' interests and aspirations among family members, creating conflicts over property, labor and income.

Friedmann's conceptualization of the conflicts that may arise within the farm family due to diverging ideas about labor, property and consumption, sheds new light on the interaction between the domestic-familial sphere and the wider societal context. First, it escapes narrow economism, which marginalizes the family as secondary to the relation between the enterprise and the economy. Setting the family in the wider sociocultural context does justice to the importance of family dynamics in the reproduction and transformation of family farming. If, as Friedmann suggests, the survival of the family farm is indeed dependent on "the ability to invoke familial obligations," (1990, p. 208) "the degree of deference" (1987, p. 250), the acceptance of "patriarchal domination" (1990, p. 208), "emotional ties" (1990, p. 209), and "commitment to 'a way of life'" (1986a, p. 188), and if these are exactly the values that are increasingly sapped in modern society, then this produces an enormous contradiction. Modern, professional agriculture, the creation of markets, capitalist expansion, mass consumption and industrial society in general, 'demands' traditional values for its reproduction. But, at the same time, this society produces values that undermine solidarity and commitment to family farming. Which farmers, then, can cope with such contradictory demands: who can raise both the economic *and* cultural capital for farm reproduction? What concrete forms do farm families adopt to cope with being both involved in entrepreneurial activities and caretakers of a family patrimony? What can they do to protect the integrity of the farm against the possible disintegration of family resources? How far is the cultural value of equality upset by economic interests, and how are changing family attitudes dealt with in a family context that traditionally favored a single heir? Although there is a dearth of empirical research of sufficient comparative and theoretical depth, some examples may help to answer these questions.

The significance of family commitment as a resource for enterprise development and continuity

Hutson (1990) provides an interesting example of how farm families react to the need for maintaining family commitment. His focus is on the effect

of agricultural capitalization and commercialization on family and kin relationships in the Welsh countryside. Hutson locates the commoditization effect within the enterprise itself, in contrast to Lem, who focused mainly on the individualizing effect of the labor market. Once again, the problem of boundaries between the domestic domain and the market is central. Hutson's main thesis is that the modernization of farming has not rendered the role of family and kinship insignificant. Instead, "running a successful farm business has perhaps come to rely to a greater extent than ever before on the capacity of family members to organize work together for both family and business continuity" (*ibid.*, p. 121). But family form and the relationships between close kin are "clearly articulated with the forces of surrounding systems. They are not an irreducible resource structured by a separate system of values" (*ibid.*, p. 121).

Hutson rightly locates the problem at the level of structuring principles, thereby avoiding the temptation of reducing the character of social relations to a single determining force. He argues that market forces neither dominate nor pattern family and kin relationships. These relationships are economically *conditioned*, to such an extent that family forms and relationships are highly flexible and allow different strategies. The important point here is that kinship opens possibilities for cooperation and allows for a specific rationality, which would be unthinkable outside the kinship domain. People are prepared to accept a wide—but selective—range of normative principle to sustain practice in kin relationships.

Thus, economic conditions are certainly considered; they condition which elements of family organization and family ideology are mobilized. Family and kinship ideology is characterized by its flexibility and originality. What is possible under the rubric of family relations is not necessarily possible in social relations based on other structural principles. Family and kinship are intrinsically recipient for certain activities. Flexibility does not mean, however, that no holds are barred: family ideology sets specific limits on the form and content of social relations.

As already mentioned, Hutson believes that the capitalization of farming has increased the significance of family and kin relationships. 'Family' provides farmers with a *raison d'être* for carrying on in farming and extending the business; it also provides an effective concrete resource for exploiting changing opportunities. Hutson illustrates his argument with material on farm succession in Wales. Higher capital investments and a shortage of land have meant changes in succession patterns and household organization. Whereas sons used to set up their own farm with parental help, this practice of generational separation has now become impossible.

Instead, children are now incorporated into the existing unit, which facilitates expansion through the purchase of land. Farms created in this way become family managed units based on an extended household. Hutson's message is clear: farm modernizing requires high inputs in terms of family solidarity. Although changes in the wider political and economic sphere do influence family relations, market forces are not decisive: families ". . . impress something of their own structure of relationships and values on interaction" (*ibid.*, p. 138).

Marsden (1984) made an original study of the interaction between family and kinship, on the one hand, and the constraints of the capitalist market, on the other. He shows convincingly that family relations and ideology do not simply adapt to the pressure of market forces, but that farmers mobilize kinship and family resources in a selective and conscious way. He argues that the success of survival strategies depends to a large extent on cultural variables, that is, the ideological predisposition of farmers to organize farm management units based on a collective ethic.

Marsden studied the development of farming in North Humberside (England), where multiple farm management units have gradually replaced economic expansion of the single farm. Whereas sons set up on farms independently in the past, they now remain within the existing management unit to avoid the diffusion of skills and capital. Farm businesses may thus include several spatially separated but organizationally linked farm units. The gradual expansion of operations is associated with a desire for higher income and to optimal conditions for technological innovations and competitiveness. Such elementary factors as having willing sons and access to capital to buy additional farms thus determine the development of the enterprise.

The reality of the situation is more complicated. In the first place, one might wonder why farmers choose to expand the enterprise only with sons. This preference for collaboration with kin as opposed to any other category of persons is inexplicable without considering farmers' motivations for keeping a viable enterprise and expanding it. Marsden's view is that farm expansion is not primarily done for economic reasons, but rather to establish the sons in the family business. The desire to provide children with a future and to keep them nearby in a closely-knit kin network is, for many farm operators, the guiding motivation behind their expansive behavior.

The farmers Marsden studied are not particularly attached to the farm, land or even to agriculture; they do attach considerable value, however,

to the family. Their behavior is based on a 'collective ethic.' These farmers' main aim is to satisfy certain familial goals: the farm enterprise is, apart from a source of income and employment, also a social and cultural vehicle. Farmers without a kin network seem to lack all incentive to expand the scale of their operation: they gradually become marginalized and end up selling the farm.

Family ideology is, however, not undifferentiated. Marsden found quite a number of farmers who faced with tensions between the generations, or who expressed the desire for independent decision-making on a single household-controlled farm. According to Marsden, "the development of multiple structured farms with corporate business structures assumes the minimization of such intergenerational tensions and conflict . . . such inherent instabilities may be offset by establishing a strong collective ethic" (*ibid.*, p. 218).

Marsden's case study is interesting because it shows both how familial values structure the development of the farm business, and how they are a condition for successfully coping with market forces. There is no better illustration for the complex interplay between the constraints of the market and family relations and values. Market-imposed parameters not only differentiate farms in terms of capital endowment, but also in terms of social and cultural attributes. Those with economic opportunities are not forced haphazardly into multiple-organized farming. Only those with sufficient kin and the appropriate collective ethic can mobilize the necessary social and cultural resources. It could be argued that the availability of social and cultural capital is what distinguishes some farmers from those who are only endowed with economic resources. Economic conditions did thus not 'create' family goals and values, but imposed economic strategies that could only be generated by farm families with specific cultural characteristics.

II

The Predicament of Diversity

The law of inheritance and the fate of
regional customs

PRIVATE PROPERTY IN western societies is ideologically associated with independence, self-interest and personal identity. Nonetheless, most countries have developed legal systems that specify the division of a deceased's property among his or her heirs. This specific form of interference in the private domain is based on a notion of serving the public interest and protecting dependent individuals against destitution. As a powerful agent the state may use its authority to settle disputes and use legal forms to achieve political and ideological purposes.

Uniform national laws are, however, of relatively recent origin in Europe. Regional and local integration into a wider political system marginalized the legal status of customary law and imposed identical rules over national territories. Such was clearly the case with inheritance law in European countries. Although, even within the broad group of legal systems inspired by the French *Code Civil*, heirs are classified in different ways and testators have different degrees of freedom, there is everywhere a complex of rules and devices concerned with the *post mortem* division of estates. This chapter will present the most important aspects of Dutch inheritance law and, since I am particularly interested in the factors constituting farmers' conduct in cases of farm transmission, I will consider theoretical questions about the role of law in a field of human behavior that is intimately associated with privacy and personal interest.

From Dutch inheritance law I will go on with a general discussion of the relation between legal and other normative systems. State law was in-

troduced in a period when regional and local customary systems, often representing cultural frontiers, were still fully operative. Did state law offer room for maneuver and, if so, how did people work this out in practice? Which were the potential conflicts raised by inheritance, both at the level of personal relations and between the state and its citizens? These questions have inspired substantial recent contributions to the field of European ethnology (Augustins 1989), but have been so far neglected in the Netherlands. Curiously enough there *was* considerable debate in the Netherlands at the end of the nineteenth century about local customs defying the adoption of national inheritance law.

This debate will receive a good deal of attention in the present chapter. Regional differences between farmers' attitudes toward inheritance and succession were among the recurrent issues in this debate. Inheritance law, as laid down by the Civil Code, was absolutely irrelevant to local populations in certain regions, while corresponding to practice in others, with all the accompanying detriments that were supposed to follow in terms of dispersal of farmland. The problem that will concern me is which legal or other normative principles guided the behavior of farm families, and to what extent changing economic circumstances influenced that behavior. The answers to these questions will be speculative since information available is scanty and was mostly used for polemic purposes. It does, however, allow for an understanding—if only in piecemeal form—of some influential thinking on the centrality of law in farmers' behavior.

There are good reasons for singling out this episode at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the present chapter. First, such concepts as legal consciousness, partibility and imparibility were introduced and seriously discussed within the framework of existing legal devices and trends in agricultural development. Second, the discussion disappeared as abruptly as it had started, although the positions taken were extremely antagonistic. Later interest in these subjects was not so much inspired by the desire for legal reform, as by curiosity about farmers' traditions in the eastern Netherlands. The emphasis of debates after the second World War shifted from inheritance to succession, with the legal debate disappearing into the background.

The main principles of Dutch inheritance law

Dutch inheritance law is part of Book Three of the Civil Law (*Burgerlijk Wetboek*), which came into existence after a long process of codification

and unification in 1838. The French *Code Civil*, introduced during French occupation of the Batavian Republic in 1795, was the main inspiration for Dutch Civil Law. Arrival of the *Code Civil* marked the end of a long period of differentiation and regional autonomy in legislation, although the centralization of the state under general law was not a purely externally induced movement. Centralizing tendencies were already present in the former Dutch Republic. The law of inheritance has not been transformed in any substantial way since 1838, when Dutch Civil Law replaced the *Code Napoleon*. The only significant change worth mentioning is that of 1923, when the order of inheritance was changed. The remaining spouse, who had been until then last in the sequence of heirs, was placed on an equal footing with his or her children. The relative stability of inheritance legislation coincided with judicial tranquillity, epitomized by the limited number of cases decided in court. Eggens (1938) attributes quiescence in the field of inheritance law to the role of notaries, public officials who draw up or attest contracts, mainly in the sphere of property and property transfers. The notary was, until quite recently, more than his client's simple executor in Dutch society: he was the link between law and practice, advising his client on how to find a legal formula for practical solutions. Notaries were furthermore often intimately involved in family matters, to such an extent that they arranged their clients' affairs in an almost sovereign way.

The law of inheritance (*erfrecht*) comprises rules governing the legal aspects of transferring wealth (*nalatenschap* or *erfenis*) after death. Wealth can, of course, also be transferred during a person's lifetime: apart from sale, there is a whole range of possibilities for giving property to children, for instance as a dowry. These gifts are, however, frequently taken into consideration at the bestower's death. Dutch inheritance law can apply two different sets of rules, depending on whether the deceased (*erflater*) has made a will (*uiterste wil* or *testament*) or died intestate. If there is a will, the division of property will be executed according to testamentary law (*testamentaire erfopvolging*). If a person dies without leaving a will, the division of his property will take place according to intestacy law of inheritance (*erfopvolging bij versterf*) (Pitlo 1971; Meijer et al. 1988).

Inheritance through intestacy

The law of inheritance through intestacy is based on the principle of consanguinity (*bloedverwantschap*): only kin related by blood qualify as inheritors (*erfgenamen bij versterf*) in the eyes of the law, while affines are

excluded. The only exception is the husband or wife, who has the same rights as their children or, without children, becomes the sole heir. The law does not make any distinction based on sex or age: equality is the only criterion for division within the same category of blood relatives. The order of eligibility for a share in an inheritance among different categories of blood relatives is as follows. The first group consists of the surviving spouse and children. These children's descendants have the right to inherit by replacement (*erven bij plaatsvervulling*), that is, to inherit instead of deceased parents. The principle of replacement is applicable with respect to all rightful heirs' descendants. The second group, which appears if the deceased person was unmarried or widowed and childless, comprises parents, brothers and sisters. In the absence of any representative for this group of blood relatives, property is divided between other kin in the ascending line. The final group that might eventually inherit consists of collateral relatives to the sixth degree. If there are no relatives in this category, then the wealth is confiscated by the state.

The following case of a married couple with four children provides an illustration of intestacy law in practice. Generally speaking, couples marry without making specific provisions to settle their respective property rights. The usual practice upon marriage is that all the property of each partner will be commonly owned, whatever the origin of that property and irrespective of any future accumulation (*algehele gemeenschap van goederen*). If the husband dies, this means that the commonly owned estate becomes liable for division. This division is not, however, compulsory: the widow and her children may decide to maintain a state of indivision and to become joint owners of the total estate. If, however, one of the children or the mother requires the part to which he or she has a right (*wettig erfdeel*), the law supports this claim. The operative principle in the division is then strict equality, combined with the right to have the share *in natura*.

The division of property implies separating the estate into parts of equal and comparable value (*scheiden en delen*). The act of constituting equal parts, and their subsequent allocation, is a dramatic event in most families. There is a well-known verb in Dutch that refers to this: *kiezen of delen* (choose or divide). It refers to the situation when one or several heirs make the portions and the others have the first choice between them. This represents one solution to the problem, which is otherwise difficult to resolve, given that all heirs would in principle like to have everything. Another, more common, solution is that the portions are made by common agreement and subsequently divided by lot. In practice,

however, a pure division of property only occurs occasionally. The total value of the estate is usually estimated and then divided among the heirs according to the rules of intestacy inheritance. The heirs receiving part or the total of their share in goods must compensate coheirs if their part amounts to more than is their right.

According to the principle of division, the first step in this example would be to divide the commonly held marriage property in two halves: one half to be divided between the wife and children of the deceased, the other half, representing her part in the common property, for the widow. The first half is divided into five equal parts: a fifth for each child and a fifth for their mother. The surviving partner is thus doubly represented. First, she has a right to half the defunct joint conjugal fund and, second, she is an equal beneficiary with her children to the rest of the common possessions.

Testamentary inheritance: the legitimate portion

Intestacy law of inheritance is only fully applicable when the deceased (*erflater*) has not made an authentic will. If a will was made during his lifetime, then the division of property will take place according to testamentary law of inheritance. The testator is free to dispose of his property only to a limited degree (*testeervrijheid*). He may only divide the available or disposable portion (*beschikbaar gedeelte*) according to his own preferences. The legitimate heirs (*legitimarijsen* or *wettelijke erfgenamen*), even if unmentioned in the will, always have the right to a legitimate portion (*legitieme portie* or *wettelijk erfdeel*), attributed according to intestacy law of inheritance. These privileged heirs only include, however, those who are lineally related to the testator, and this excludes collaterals and the spouse, who have no right to the legitimate portion.

In principle a person has the liberty to divide all his property in a will. The legitimate heirs must, however, agree to his doing so by officially rejecting their legitimate portion (*verwerping*). If they do not agree, only the disposable part of the will is divided according to the wishes of the will maker. Legitimate heirs can therefore never be completely disinherited and can even choose to demand their portion *in natura*. The limited freedom of the testator is often criticized, for instance because a man has no right to pass all his property to his wife. What happens after his death depends entirely on the behavior and preferences of his children. The size of his children's legitimate portions determines over what the testator himself has a right to dispose.

A man with a wife and four children may, for example, decide to leave all his property to one son. His wife cannot protest, since she is virtually disinherited by this will, and has to depend on her part of the communally held marriage property. The other children can, however, demand their legitimate portions and, if they do so, the following rules apply. According to intestacy rules, children each have a right to one fifth of their father's property. Their legitimate portion is calculated by multiplying this share by $3/4$ (this multiplier is $1/2$ with one child, $2/3$ with two children, and $3/4$ with three or more children). The children can, on this basis, each demand $3/4 \times 1/5 = 3/20$ share of their father's property. The four children together could thus claim a total of $12/20$ of their father's estate. The father could dispose freely of only $8/20$ of his property in his will. If we imagine that this is now transmitted to his favored son, he will receive a total of $8/20 + 3/20 = 11/20$ of his father's estate. But it is in practice very often the case that the will is respected, and that the other children only ask for minor compensation.

This short review of some aspects of the law of inheritance is incomplete. A short note on gifts and favored transactions during lifetime should be added. The total value of property after the death of a person includes the value of gifts and the difference between real prices and sums paid in favored transactions (transactions with the purpose of benefitting another party). The total value of the estate susceptible for division might thus be considerably higher than the value disposed of by the deceased person. Gifts and favored transactions are then considered as an advance on the inheritance. If these are higher than the legitimate portion or the intestacy portion, the other heirs can claim compensation.

Dutch inheritance law emphasizes two important principles: equality among heirs and restrictions on the testator. One important final observation is that neither the law of inheritance, nor laws regarding property specify the *use* of property. This means that the transmission of use rights is left completely open. The law only prescribes how to proceed where the heirs choose to distinguish rights in property as between, for instance, usufructuary rights and derived ownership. Another important aspect of Dutch inheritance law is that the parties involved can claim their legal rights and are supported by legal sanction in so doing. But they can also agree to refrain from claiming these rights. Thus, equality may, by common agreement, be reversed, thereby avoiding the limited freedom of will making.

Legal and indigenous concepts: Differentiation of normative spheres

Before the introduction of Civil Law to the Netherlands, the country was divided into different jurisdictions, each with considerable judicial autonomy and each with its own legal system (Fockema Andreae 1906; de Smidt 1977; Hoppenbrouwers forthcoming). The different Provinces and judiciary units of the Dutch Republic already possessed a substantial corpus of criminal and civil law in the form of *landrechten* (Provincial law), while specific groups of the population were subject to *hofrechten* (feudal estate law). Legal unification on a national scale had to wait for the fall of the Republic and integration into the French Empire. According to the legal historian de Blécourt (1950), the Provincial legal systems exhibited original traits of customary law, combined with aspects of both Roman and Canonical law. "Very often . . . the so-called Provincial law was a mere recognition of the already existing customary law" (p. 17). The regional plurality of law was an expression of different principles of legitimacy, as they crystallized historically among various groups in the country.

The introduction of national law replaced this diversity with a uniform legal system based on the principle of equality and canceling all forms of particularism and favoritism. King Louis Napoleon of Holland was ordered by his brother Napoleon Bonaparte, in 1807, to introduce the French *Code Napoleon* by the first of January 1808. The King preferred an adapted version, however, and installed a commission to make a draft proposal. The commission proclaimed that inheritance laws should, as a matter of principle, be adapted in such a way as to coincide with the ideas, peculiarities and culture of the Dutch. A new codification was prepared after independence in 1813, eventually resulting in the *Burgerlijk Wetboek* of 1838. The idea that compatibility with basic Dutch principles ought to be sought was also expressed here. Sharp regional contrasts made such an objective difficult, however, and in the end it was the basic principles of the *Code Civil* that were introduced (see on the process of codification between 1798 and 1838 Greuter-Vreeburg 1987).

The philosophy of freedom and equality was clearly inspired by the ideology of the Enlightenment, not merely as a statement of principle but based on a conviction about the potential power of law in transforming a society. According to Mirabeau, legislator of the French Revolution's early years, equal inheritance would reform the family and thereby the individual and the state. The idea that a constitutional regime and popular sovereignty required a new sort of family was implicit. Thus, a change in inheritance law would inevitably result in social change (Darrow 1989).

The multiple structuration of practice and legal pluralism

The problem of the relationship between principles established by the law of inheritance, inheritance practices and indigenous concepts of legitimacy, deserves closer examination within the broader perspective of the introduction of national law and in the context of legal plurality. The law of inheritance as it was codified in Civil Law comprises a set of formalized normative rules, designed to structure people's action. Although the creators of this legal framework seriously attempted to allow for current ideas among the Dutch people, they had to decide on some fundamental principles, which obviously could only partly reflect the diversity of these ideas. Moreover, the meaning of inheritance goes much deeper than a simple transfer of property. Since property refers to a complex set of social relations concerning rights over persons and objects, structured by specific normative rules, inheritance is part of a wider process of redefining, transforming and reproducing social relations. According to Goody (1976a), transmission *mores causa* is linked to the structuration of interpersonal relations: "consequently a different quality of relationships, varying family structures and alternative social arrangements . . . will be linked to differing modes of transmission." (p. 1). Among farmers, for instance, the transfer of property is fundamental in the process of defining rights to the use of resources and relations of dependency in the sphere of consumption. The way farmers think about the transfer of property is closely connected with their ideas about the proper relation between kinship, household and production (see Augustins 1990). Access to land and the organization of productive resources are also intimately related to such conditions as population pressure, ecology, technology and the economy in general. The uniformity of law is in potential conflict with farmers' diverse family strategies, in the widest sense.

There are specific rules about the transfer of property and status in all societies. Some codify these rules in national or customary law, while they are only part of an unwritten habitus in others. People's attitude toward the transfer of property can, however, be quite different from what is stated in the law of inheritance. The relation between what people think about what should be done, what the law prescribes and what is done in practice is therefore an interesting theoretical problem. This relation is especially complicated in societies where, apart from national law, other legal systems persist (von Benda-Beckmann 1983). But even without clearly recognizable legal pluralism, a plurality of normative

structures (including law) can be envisaged for almost any social context. The complexity of such a situation would be reflected in discourse, and it encourages careful consideration of what constitutes the 'legal' or the 'law' in a society.

Law is mostly seen as an aspect of government and is commonly described as a rule of behavior established by a political authority and backed by state power. As such, law constitutes a codified, strongly sanctioned type of social rule, combined with formally prescribed gradations of retribution. But since law is concerned with behavioral rules and sanctions, it belongs equally to the wider domain of social control and normative behavior. There has been considerable debate in sociology and anthropology as to what actually distinguishes law from other normative spheres and mechanisms of social control (von Benda-Beckmann 1990; Griffith 1986). The importance of this debate should not be underestimated since numerous domains of human action, falling within the range of judicial control, are also structured by normative frameworks not belonging to formal law.

Von Benda-Beckmann (1990) discerns two main schools of thought with respect to the conceptualization of law. The first approach, mostly found among sociologists of law, restricts the concept of law to the normative system created, legitimized and applied by the state and its institutions. Empirical research focuses on the study of legal practice, that is, on the degree to which people conform to legal devices. This approach tends to emphasize the gap between social practice and legal rules, neglecting the significance of normative heterogeneity and how the law is invoked or even changed (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 1990). Law is furthermore associated with the sovereign state, and clearly set apart from other types of normative order or social control.

A quite different style of approaching law can be found among legal anthropologists. They assert that 'legal' practice is informed by a multitude of normative rules, including state law. This is a critique of a legal-centralist conception of law. Griffith (1986) describes legal centralism as an assumption that law is synonymous with state law, uniform for all persons, exclusive, and administered by special state institutions. Other, lesser normative orderings are hierarchically subordinate to the law and institutions of the state. The term 'legal pluralism' was introduced as a reaction to this conception of 'law' to conceptualize normative and institutional complexity, in which behavior is seen as structured by more than one legal order (Griffith 1986). This view sees no distinction between 'legal' and 'nonlegal' forms of social control.

As von Benda-Beckmann (1990) correctly insists, legal pluralism is often perceived from an anti-state law perspective. Emphasis is put on the significance of indigenous normative systems, resulting in a reformulation of the 'gap approach,' in terms of a disparity between normative subsystems. The tendency to assume conformity between local norms and behavior is, according to von Benda-Beckmann, confusing since there can be a plurality of conformities and conflicting normative devices even within folk systems.

A number of important conclusions can be drawn from this brief discussion. First, it may be rather futile to consider the outcome of an inheritance case *a priori* from the perspective of a single privileged system of rules and norms or laws. Several different, overlapping value systems, which are mobilized by actors or groups of actors, inform the process of inheritance and succession. Negotiation, compromise, power and sanctions result in forms of practice that may indeed more or less correspond with a specific normative system. But there is no absolute 'gap' between practice and norm, because of the plurality of structuring factors and the negotiated character of practice. Attention should not focus on inconsistencies between structural principles and practice, but on the multiple structuration of action.

This brings me to the second, related observation. If people do not act unequivocally according to some existing 'legal' or 'customary' device, but mobilize values and resources from a diversity of normative systems and play these out within specific social networks and under a variety of circumstances, the question remains whether normative systems, such as economic rationalism, state law and kinship ideology should be treated conceptually at an equal footing. Indigenous conceptions of property transfer are often called 'norms and values' and contrasted to law, which refers to what is written down and sanctioned by state authority. Associated with this idea is the prescriptive, authoritarian and nondiscriminatory character of law, while norms and values are particularistic, negotiable and more or less susceptible to interpretation. This view sees the 'competition' between law and normative ideas concerning the same field as decided in favor of law, since it is prescriptive and backed up by powerful state sanctions. People will adjust their action to the principles stated in the law. The underlying assumption is not only that law is different in character, but also more powerful.

It is, in my view, erroneous to start with *ab initio* assumptions about the character of law and other normative systems. Rather than assuming that norms and laws belong by definition to different categories, a more

general distinction between different *normative domains* should be made. Codified law pertains as much to norms and values as do other cultural ideas that are not written down in a legal form. Thus normative spheres may be distinguished by the extent of formalization and institutionalization. There may be one or more normative spheres relating to inheritance and succession, and these may or may not be part of codified law, depending on the kind of society. The relation between these normative spheres and practice is, however, dependent on the degree to which the respective normative devices are either prescriptive or susceptible to actors' interpretation. This involves a gradation of social control and sanctioning.

Different situations may theoretically exist. If competing normative spheres are not prescriptive, but allow degrees of freedom, then actual practice will be the outcome of the most powerful actors' cultural preferences, or the cultural ideas that most closely correspond with conditional factors such as ecology, demography and economic structure. When, however, codified law or other sets of norms do prescribe specific behavior, there will indeed be a hierarchy, which may result in a different kind of conflicting situation. Normative spheres may coexist but there may be differentiation within one type. It is easy to imagine a society with highly formalized, nonprescriptive codified law, where different groups within the population adhere to different sets of cultural norms. These groups will act in distinctive ways at the division of an inheritance. But even within the same group of people, actors may also have conflicting values, thus creating overt dissension over the question of legitimacy.

Normative spheres can be discerned according to the authoritative structure of which they are part. One needs to ask whether socially sanctioned authority is that of the state, local social networks, or of some much more diffuse kind. Sanctions are clearly more relevant in those cases where normative rules have a prescriptive character, whereas they simply do not exist or can be ignored in case of nonprescriptive rules.

One of the first and most important questions in analyzing inheritance practices concerns the identification of relevant normative spheres, and specification of their characteristics. It would be mistaken to assume that there are 'legal' principles versus 'other' kinds of principles. Indigenous concepts of property and kinship *are* legal principles, and the law of inheritance comprises cultural concepts about kinship and property. When people are practically involved in dividing an inheritance, they can theoretically invoke several resources to legitimate their choice, depending on the degree of differentiation and the character of these normative spheres.

In a culturally differentiated society this may result in conflicts between actors and the law, as well as between actors themselves.

Inheritance law and the persistence of regional patterns of inheritance

There are national laws regulating the transfer of property in all European countries, although these vary insofar as they are based on the French *Code Civil* or not and the presence of exceptional rules applying to agricultural land. Thus in England, which remained outside the sphere of French influence, Common law still prevails. English common law originated from a Medieval codification based on old Germanic law and developed through a current stream of jurisprudence. The English legal system is a case of complete freedom given to the will maker. Regional authorities in Germany, by contrast, have the power to define specific laws on the inheritance of agricultural property. Such exceptional rules pertaining to agricultural land can be found in several other European countries.

Inheritance laws were introduced, with few exceptions, quite suddenly into contexts of extreme regional legal variety. The introduction of inheritance law based on the *Code Civil* was based on the ideas of a small elite group of reformers, who clearly hoped to create equitable conditions and to encourage individual initiative. The inheritance of property was thus not seen as something restricted to the private sphere, but as a powerful mechanism for social reform. Central bureaucrats and local ruling classes have long been aware of the effects of certain patterns of inheritance on the development of society. Linton (cited in Goldschmidt and Kunkel 1971) recounts the probably apocryphal story of how, during the Han empire, Confucianism became the official philosophy in China. One of the Han emperors found his rule increasingly disturbed by the resurgent power of the old feudal nobility. Not knowing exactly how to break their power, he called in a Confucian scholar and asked him how this group could be rendered harmless. The scholar is said to have replied "Allow them to distribute their estates equally among their sons." The emperor was so much impressed by this advice that he established Confucianism as the official philosophy.

It would require a special study to review all the historical examples of how central and local bureaucrats have tried through legal interventions to mold the inheritance pattern of their subjects, according to their own interests or the interest of society in general. The long German debates about the *Anerbenrecht* are a case in point. The most impressive example of state-induced legal changes in inheritance is probably the

introduction of the Civil Code in French territories after the revolution. These changes very much reflected the ideology of individualism and equality. Political economists and philosophers have also long been preoccupied with the consequences of inheritance practices for society. De Tocqueville, in his book *De la démocratie en Amérique* (1840), shows himself a passionate advocate of equal inheritance rights. He saw the equal division of property as a weapon against the growth of an aristocratic elite. A single-heir system would, in his view, eventually concentrate power in the hands of the few. The diffusion of property, by contrast, would promote democracy because wealth would be distributed in more equal ways, thus preventing the rise of powerful families and fostering a sense of democracy.

Le Play, one of the founding fathers of French sociology, is still an influential voice in the debate on inheritance. In his *Les ouvriers Européens* (1855) he cast serious doubts on the reform of inheritance laws accomplished as part of the revolutionary transition in France. He saw the new inheritance laws as the immortal worm that secretly debilitated society. They took their toll on the family, on property, and on the health of the state, with several devastating consequences: an increase in the number of hired hands and the proletarianization of the countryside, the weakening of paternal authority, the destruction of the family as a moral and economic unit, and a reduction in the birth rate. All this rested on the assumption that the nation's happiness was based on the stem family (Assier-Andrieu 1984; Bodard-Silver 1982). Many of Le Play's contemporaries shared his view and saw the decline of fertility and the weakening paternal authority as signs of moral decline, with devastating consequences for the well-being of society. Although Le Play's views can scarcely be supported by empirical material, they are still repeated by conservative observers.

The foregoing discussion shows that inheritance was not considered a purely private matter. This concern over the wider implications of inheritance practices has weakened in modern times mainly because only a minority of the population now depends on direct access to property for their livelihood and because the link between property and political power has become much less evident. The processes of proletarianization and industrialization, and the more recent burgeoning of the service sector and the welfare state has, moreover, rendered most people dependent on wages or welfare payments for household formation and the acquisition of status, rather than on receiving property from their parents. One major exception to this rule is, however, the self-employed class in indus-

trial society. This group of producers has direct access to property and one or several of their children depend on its transmission for their future. This enables farmers, for instance, to use kinship as a principle to structure property relations and the attribution of status. Property is, moreover, part of complex strategies of exchange and reciprocity in many families, especially between the generations (see, for instance, Pradhan 1990; Salamon and Lockhart 1980; Finch 1989). It is hardly surprising that external interference in this private sphere has met with general resistance. The state and political ideologies may define inheritance with reference to public interests; families take a totally different outlook.

This discrepancy is predictable since the transmission of property is so closely connected with the structuration of social relations in general and, with household formation and dissolution, marriage and relations of production in particular. I will therefore now consider how the national laws of inheritance related to indigenous legal concepts in a number of European countries, and whether regional customs were more or less marginalized under the influence of a uniform legal system.

Standardization or heterogeneity of practice?

In a survey of legal rules relating to farm transmission in Europe, David (1987) concludes that: "inheritance law is mostly imperative to only a limited extent, in the sense that it suggests how to execute a division and only partially limits the autonomy of the parents to dispose over their property. It seems that Civil Law has never really been able to impose a behavioral norm . . . The legal frontiers do not coincide necessarily with ethnological frontiers" (David 1987, p. 11). David's observation is important in three respects. First, he posits that the law of inheritance is not imperative, or at least did not transform the intergenerational reproduction of farms. Second, he mentions 'ethnological frontiers,' referring to the regional heterogeneity of cultural ideas and, third, he alludes to the historical confrontation between Civil Law and the behavior of farmers.

These three assertions are well documented and confirmed by numerous historical-ethnological studies, especially in France (Barthelemy 1988), Spain (Devillard 1989) and the Mediterranean area in general (Peristiany 1989). One very good example of these points is the study of Basque inheritance patterns by Barcelo (1984). This study makes the strength of farmers' aversion to external legal intervention in such sensitive matters as the division of family property, abundantly clear. Basque farmers have always been in conflict with *Code Civil* principles and have successfully

avoided its application until now. The transmission of property is regarded as an exclusively family domain: ". . . the transmission of the ancestral estate is an expression of the cultural, social and productive practices of the farmers; it is the moment when the family's ideas about itself and its land are expressed in their purest form" (Barcelo 1984, p. 3)

One conclusion stands out clearly from French regional and local studies on inheritance practices: the revolutionary reforms had practically no effect on farmers' behavior. They carried on in the way they had done for centuries and, although there were changes in some regions, these were never a direct result of the law. A succession of exercises in mapping inheritance customs shows an astonishing continuity from before the eighteenth century to today. Yver's (1966) inventory of prerevolutionary customary systems, de Brandt's (1901) description of regional inheritance practices, based on data from the 1880s, and Lamaison's (1988) regional classification of contemporary practices clearly reveal the stability of ethnological frontiers, scarcely touched by almost two centuries of legal discipline and fifty years of modern commercial farming (see also Lamaison 1987b; Salitot 1988a).

These examples clearly show that the attempt to standardize and prescribe behavior according to the norm of inheritance law was a complete failure. Farmers structured their property relations according to their own principles and needs and, under flexible legal conditions, it is hardly surprising to find such heterogeneity of practices. I will discuss the extent to which these ideas belong to an autonomous cultural domain, as some ethnologists maintain (Le Bras and Todd 1981; Todd 1983), derive from material conditions and patterns of social stratification and landholding (Derouet 1989), or ecological conditions (see Cole and Wolf 1974) in Chapter Five. What is certain is the persistence of particularistic ideas and an indifference to the normative sphere of law.

A lack of congruence between state law and practice was observed elsewhere, besides France. The German agronomist Frost became almost desperate in 1931 after reviewing the numerous studies made until the beginning of the twentieth century, along with the many failures of German regional governments to change farmers' practices by legal intervention. According to Frost (cited in Röhm 1957), the law is powerless to change inheritance customs that are so deeply rooted in ethnic consciousness and economic practices. The bewildering variety of inheritance practices, observed in studies by Röhm (1957) and Kölb (1978) in western Germany, and by Huppertz (1939) in the previous German Empire, can easily be generalized throughout the Central European territory. The

same oppositions and basic varieties existing in France and Germany are, finally, discernible at the level of the whole European continent (see Todd 1990).

What conclusions can be drawn from these characteristics of inheritance and succession practices? First, a society's inheritance laws do not necessarily constitute a set of prescriptive rules. What such laws mean in a given society, the extent to which court sentences create room for new practices, and the degree to which inheritance laws are merely regulatory in the sense of giving form instead of substance, need minute examination. These indications are decisive in determining people's attitudes toward inheritance laws: whether they treat them as an existing normative system and, if so, whether actors can in some way compel others to abide by their decisions based on this normative system. Another conclusion is that one must be very attentive to local and regional value systems related to kinship and property. Most studies of inheritance practices portray deeply-rooted customs rather than the law as determining the choices actors make. The character of inheritance and the identification of local customs thus deserve special attention. Against that background the relation between Dutch law and other cultural systems can be specified and the debates since the end of the nineteenth century understood.

The 'hidden' character of Dutch inheritance law and the mobilization of sanctions

Dutch inheritance law is clearly a normative system, in the sense that it contains specific ideas about the individual, the family and property. It is clear from the order of eligibility that the nuclear family has priority over the wider kin group. Within the family, however, no distinction is made according to age or sex: all children are considered equal. This principle of complete partibility hinders 'dynasty building,' favoring instead the dispersion of families. The testator's freedom is considerably limited in order to protect individual claims. Another important aspect of inheritance law is that objects of property are completely separated from their meaning and use. The law sees elements of a family economy, a house, furniture or other noncommodity objects indiscriminately as commodities, with a market price. This becomes particularly clear when coheirs demand compensation, or when the estate is valued for tax purposes. The potential force of these extremely individualist and materialist aspects of inheritance law to disrupt a largely traditional peasant world should not be underestimated.

Closer inspection, however, reveals a different face of inheritance law, which values the principle of common agreement between all legitimate heirs, thus allowing families to proceed as they wish so long as this is done in complete unanimity. This concept of *party autonomy* rests on entirely different assumptions than the previously mentioned individualism. A testator can dispose of all his property freely by will, only if all the heirs accept that will. The law is prescriptive in the sense that it does not allow any person to impose his or her choice on the other persons involved. If, however, all those involved persons can reach a common agreement, the law respects this, irrespective of how it is reached or whether it is in the interests of one single person. The division of an estate after the death of the owner can thus only be accomplished in absolute freedom if legal heirs accept their lot. Heirs have the right to reject the share to which they are legally entitled in both intestate and testamentary inheritance. But if one of them does not agree, he may make his claim in exactly the way the law prescribes and, if necessary, enforce it with legal sanctions. Inheritance law is thus only prescriptive in those cases where heirs disagree about the division, or when they have failed otherwise to agree on a common arrangement.

There is, depending on the situation, a clear hierarchy with respect to the force of sanctions. An heir can ignore all his fellow kinsmen's sanctions, because in the end it is the legal sanctions of the state that are decisive. Dutch inheritance law obviously does not conflict with farmers' interest in any fundamental way. If conflicts do arise over an inheritance, these are conflicts *within* a family, between family members. Although the state sides with antagonists whose claims correspond with inheritance law, these claims do not necessarily originate in state law.

Dutch inheritance law may be characterized as a body of sanctioned rules to which heirs can appeal, should they wish to insist upon legally recognized rights, which they see as having been violated by family decisions. The law also prescribes what must happen where the heirs do not bother to reach any special accord, everyone agreeing in principle to an egalitarian division. Inheritance law corresponds to the regulatory function attributed by Glastra van Loon and Vercruissse (1966) to Civil Law in general. They see the function of law as being to guarantee order and security in cases of dispute: ". . . the function of law, as a system of rules and procedures, is to decide what action is to be taken in cases where there is uncertainty and/or conflict regarding the precepts to be followed in a given situation . . . the law serves . . . to seek a solution when interaction cannot proceed . . ." (p. 20).

Some qualification of the above mentioned differences in sanctions, and the hierarchy of normative spheres to which conflicting parties in an inheritance dispute have resource is needed. The penalties of exclusion or the use of force at the disposal of a kin group may be powerful enough to inhibit appeal to legal authorities. Although the authority of the state is binding in cases of dispute, the threat of cultural sanctions may be sufficient to dissuade an actor from making a legal case. The potential power of state sanctions can thus be neutralized by the possible consequences of kinship action which, from an actor's point of view, outweigh any possible benefits of legal action.

Farmers may be faithful to the egalitarian principles of the law, or ignore these in favor of locally based cultural preferences—which may correspond with those from the law of inheritance—or economic and other constraints. Normative differentiation can also occur within the same family, resulting in conflictual situations. If some family members claim their legal portion, ignoring other family members' wish to keep the farm intact, this does not necessarily mean that the opposing son or daughter finds inspiration in the cultural principles of the law. It is more likely that individual interests arise from personal circumstances and preference nurtured by a different frame of reference.

There is a comparison to be made here with von Benda-Beckmann's (1983) concept of legal plurality in developing countries, although he emphasizes the conflict between state and customary law and disregards intrafamily disputes. There is not, in his view, a single prescriptive system: "In fact we are never dealing with a situation of one law, one system of rules, concepts and institutions. In reality there is a plurality of law: a multitude of rules and institutions in the same field of social and economic behavior. But with sometimes fundamental differences with respect to content, form and structure" (p. 36). In this multitude of rules, national law is only one of the factors that might influence the choice among several alternatives for action.

Von Benda-Beckmann's assertion was mainly directed at an influential school of legal thought, which firmly believes in the power of law. It assumes a mechanical relation between the law as a normative model and the people's conduct. The character of law, and the conflict between its values and those of local custom, are often overlooked in this deterministic model. The debate on inheritance in the Netherlands, which I will describe in the next sections, was marked by this legalistic approach. The following sections will try to give some empirical content to indigenous legal concepts and their relationship with inheritance law in the Nether-

lands. The objective is twofold. First, it aims to provide an overview of typical Dutch reflections on the relation between the law and farmers' practice. Second, I will use these reflections in later chapters to substantiate the analysis of my own case study material, collected among farmers in the eastern Netherlands.

Regional inheritance practices, peasant ideology and the law of inheritance in the Netherlands

Relations between inheritance law, farmers' practices and agrarian development gradually became a subject for debate in professional journals during the second half of the nineteenth century. The discovery of this field was certainly associated with the profound agricultural crisis affecting Dutch agriculture in the 1880s. Until then, Dutch agriculture had been rather prosperous and hardly a matter of concern for the liberal government. The idea of intervention in markets or agrarian structures scarcely existed. Farmers themselves were practically invisible in the agronomic literature, where all the emphasis was placed on the treatment of plants, soils and animals. The agricultural crisis provoked not only concern about the future but also a vigorous, ideologically-inspired debate about the family farm, proletarianization and capitalist development. Part of this concern focused on the law of inheritance and its consequences for future agricultural development.

Debates about inheritance were also motivated by a new consciousness among rural notaries, who were clearly trying to win greater respect from colleagues in the legal profession. They began taking their work more seriously, which effectively meant trying to rid their practice of its pronounced local bias. They tried to improve their esteem by executing the law instead of being involvement in all kinds of legal ruses on behalf of their rural clients. They also adopted a more critical stance on their own role in helping people to ratify contracts that were considered socially undesirable. Some notaries did not, of course, agree with this self-critical mood, nor with the functional redefinition of their profession, and a debate about 'deviant' practices among farmers began.

The law of inheritance and farmers' practices: The discovery of regional differences in the Netherlands

The Dutch scholar Moltzer, a man with a reputation in agrarian law, initiated the debate on inheritance in the Netherlands. He delivered a lec-

ture to the National Statistical Society in 1887 on 'The implications of the new German farmers' law of inheritance, and the social needs it is supposed to meet' (Moltzer 1887). Moltzer sharply criticized intestacy inheritance law as detrimental to the peasant class. He pressed a case for profound changes along the lines of the German *Anerbenrecht*. This particular law had been introduced in several German *Länder* to prevent farmers from practicing partible inheritance, thereby resolving the problem of unity and provision by legal action.

Intestacy law would, according to Moltzer, cause the eventual dissolution of peasant farming and transform the agrarian world into a two-class society of proletarians and capitalists. This scenario had to be prevented as a matter of urgency since a "powerful peasant class is the basis of a whole nation," and the only way to paralyze the "wave of social democracy." What concerned Moltzer was the relation he saw between the destruction of the peasantry and the law of inheritance. Property was divided among heirs at each generation because of intestacy law and limited freedom in making wills. The successor who remained on the farm had to compensate his brothers and sisters in equal, or almost equal, parts so that estates became deeply indebted. The successor either began farming as a sort of slave to his creditors or was obliged to sell his farm, sooner or later, to his mortgagor. Recurrent public sales of farms resulted in their falling gradually into the hands of urban capitalists, while at the same time a class of vulnerable landless tenants developed. The only solution to this problem of expropriation lay, according to Moltzer, in adapting inheritance law to the specific needs of agriculture.

There were other, still more important, reasons for altering the law of inheritance since the extent to which Dutch peasants actually accepted the ethics of equality was in serious doubt. Moltzer gave frank expression to the possibility that indigenous legal norms might differ substantially from those informing inheritance law. But he was forced to admit that scarcely anything was known about the degree to which "... there are regions in our countryside, where people are still attached to ancestral customs and manners and where it is perfectly normal, correct and acceptable that the farm is transmitted undivided, according to old rules, to one of the children, who bears the burden of a light compensation to his brothers and sisters." The only example he could provide of such indigenous legal consciousness were peasant practices in the eastern Netherlands. Even so, he did not hesitate to suggest that Dutch inheritance law was not 'national' at all, but that it was, in fact, non-Dutch. The law of inheritance was thus not only detrimental to agricultural development, it was also amoral. He

further obviously assumed that the law had disrupted such legal norms in many regions of the country.

Moltzer's statements provoked several quite different reactions in the Notary's Weekly (*Weekblad voor Privaatrecht, Notaris-ambt en Registratie*). One of the first rejoinders came from Landré (1887), who disagreed with Moltzer's assertions that the normative ideals for peasants were impartiality and the system of a single favored heir. Landré argued that peasants were essentially egalitarian with respect to children's rights. He invited readers to send descriptions of situations known to them and to voice an opinion on the desirability of changing the law of inheritance.

In a first reaction Tacx (1887) shared Landré's opinion that any change to the law of inheritance would not be in the farmers' interests and would contradict their ideas of legitimacy. Favoring one of the children would, inevitably, create intense conflicts in farm families, since most of the children would have worked on the parental farm during their youth in the expectation that, when they left the household, or sometimes later, they would be rewarded with a share of the inheritance. Should the fruits of their labors pass to a single brother, they would tend to leave the household as early as possible, thus swelling a class of underprivileged proletarians. Tacx viewed equality as a value entrenched in peasant mentality, or even in peasant nature. Opposition to this principle would be detrimental for society in general.

A totally different opinion was put forward by an anonymous notary from the eastern Province of Overijssel in 1887. What is especially interesting about his contribution is that it includes for the first time more detailed information on peasant inheritance strategies in the eastern Netherlands: "In this region, farmers wish to transfer the farm to one of their children and to satisfy their other children with a legacy far below their legal portion. Seldom are the other children discontented with this legacy. They have in general no other option, for if children dissatisfied with their legacy were given real estate, nobody would be prepared to buy it should they wish to sell" (anonymous 1887, p. 403). This description exemplifies both an ethic of inequality, and forms of social control and sanctions from the wider community to enforce it. This notary saw nothing wrong with this sort of family arrangement. Disinherited children seemed to conform to their parents' wishes, and the outcome was thus a logical consequence of legally sanctioned family autonomy. But he goes on to say that this conformity was not always voluntary. Children who wanted to push their demands could insist on a proper division, but the property acquired could not be transformed into the amount of money

desired and the land would probably be sold for a price equivalent to the size of the legacy.

In his second contribution, Tacx (1888) had to admit that inheritance practices in certain parts of the country might indeed maintain the unity of the farm without leaving the successor seriously indebted. He nonetheless continued to argue that this in itself did not constitute proof of inequality, since the successor took on the farm under what were only apparently favorable circumstances. It should not be forgotten that the favored son had to take care of his parents and younger brothers and sisters. This might be a very heavy burden if these brothers and sisters remained unmarried and if the parents became very old and dependent.

There were various reasons to condemn this sort of arrangement, according to Tacx (1888). His notarial practice led him to believe that farmers should be discouraged by all available means from concluding retirement contracts. The fate of elderly people was quite pitiful if, after some years, the agreement did not work out so well and the situation became unbearable for both parties. Tacx even knew of cases where physical violence and suicide had resulted from settlements based on blind faith. His experience is confirmed by an unspecified text from 1860, where the deplorable nature of retirement arrangements is transparent: "One has to be acquainted with the regions where so-called caring arrangements are common to be able to conceive of all the disgraceful consequences of agreements between parents and their children. Many an aged father or mother, who at some unfortunate time transferred property to a child on condition of lifelong care, adequate nursing in case of illness or infirmity, and a decent funeral, all at the child's expense, is in an unimaginably awful situation. It is embarrassing to think of how far these responsibilities have been disregarded or are carried out *taliter qualiter* with disdain and aversion, especially when the commitment persists over a much longer time than was initially expected" (cited in Tacx 1888, p. 18).

Apart from his fascinating commentary on the mentality and household arrangements of peasants in the eastern Netherlands, Tacx also made it clear that one cannot make generalizations about traditional customs in the Netherlands. One means of further illuminating the discussion would be through a systematic study of regional variety in provincial law before the French period, using written documents and archival sources. Assuming that customary laws reflect people's attitudes, they can be compared with contemporary practices and an inference drawn as to the antiquity of these practices. Although Tacx did not formulate his proposal in this way, he clearly argued for an objective approach without pre-

conceived ideas. His own archival research on the two southern provinces of Brabant and Limburg led him to conclude that children were not dealt with on an equal basis. This research made it clear that inheritance in the Netherlands was actually far from uniform. The idea of regional contrasts soon became a central tenet in exploring reality. The southern provinces gained a reputation as 'partibility areas,' while eastern parts of the Netherlands were, by contrast, known as areas where *impartibility* predominated.

Shortly after the publication of his first contribution to the debate, Landré (1888) submitted a second article to the Notary's Weekly. Inspired by Tacx's invitation to explore sources of customary law, he began a far from systematic and very incomplete survey of these documents. He concluded that equality between heirs was the basic principle of customary law everywhere in the Dutch Republic, except for Drente. This conclusion did not surprise Landré: "Contemporary notaries' practice fully confirms the main principles of the ancient law of inheritance, and it is also difficult to imagine how current law could have been so easily implemented, had it been inconsistent with old legal concepts" (Landré 1888, p. 43).

Landré's view of inheritance law was thus quite determinist. The fact that the peasant population did not vehemently protest does not automatically mean that they accepted the normative ideas of the law of inheritance. People may have hardly been aware of legal reforms since they were able to continue dividing and sharing as they always had done. Nor can Landré's appraisal of customary law be accepted. More recent studies, such as that by de Blécourt (1950), certainly reveal distinctions in the treatment of heirs.

Meanwhile, the Gelderland-Overijssel Agricultural Society had reached the conclusion that there was something distinctly the matter with inheritance customs among the farmers of this territory. Notaries were invited to answer the following question to gain a better idea of the situation: "What is the influence of national inheritance law on the landed property of owner-occupier peasants in our region?" The motivation for this request was the newly enacted agrarian law of inheritance in Germany, and the expectation that such a law would be welcomed by peasants in Overijssel and Gelderland. Introduction of a German-like *Anerbenrecht* would, according to the Society, mean no less than a "... legal recognition of the Germanic mentality, which has traditionally marked our rural population to a much stronger degree than the rest of the country and which has persisted against the force of law to the present day" (Geldersch-Overijs-

selsche Maatschappij van Landbouw 1888, pp. 137-138). The Society's council realized that the practices they had in mind were completely dependent on voluntary agreement among all the brothers and sisters of the successor. The urgency of changing the law of inheritance was therefore a matter of the frequency with which reluctant coheirs appeared. Hence another question was added concerning excluded children and their reaction. The results of this questionnaire were unfortunately never published, and it is not even known how many responses were received. This is a clear indication that critical reflection on the profession by rural notaries was fading. A single final emission concluded their contribution to the debate.

This contribution was published in a pamphlet by Dinger in 1888. His view was that concern about the demise of property-owning farmers was totally superfluous since it was socially and economically desirable to divide farms into ever smaller units. Big farmers were particularly inclined to indifferent care of their land, while small farmers worked their land in an intensive and rational way. Although small farmers had to endure hardship and toil by the sweat of their brow, they were satisfied with their lot: ". . . he has his house, farm and land; his property is his pride, his farm is his wealth . . . no compassionate sympathy, no evangelical preaching of dissatisfaction will disengage him from his happy spirit" (Dinger 1888, p. 15). The division of farms thus created a hardworking, happy class of free smallholders, prepared to get the maximum from their land. These peasants were astute enough, according to Dinger, to know how far they could go with the dispersion of land. It was their economic rationality that resolved the problem of succession and inheritance, not attachment to some traditional custom or law. The ideas governing behavior would never contradict the well-being of the family: ". . . peasants' legal consciousness stems from self-interest in the first instance, and is not the result of condemned and detestable laws" (*ibid.*, p. 22).

Dinger contradicts himself several times, however, and many of his contentions are unacceptable by present standards. After praising the practical consciousness of farmers, he vehemently argues that the equality of all children is the basis of their mentality: ". . . if you ask a farmer how he imagines the division of his patrimony, they all give the same answer: 'all children share-and-share-alike'" (*ibid.*, p. 31). It is unclear how this problem is resolved on small farms, on the verge of minimum acreage, and what the concept self-interest implies. Dinger did, nevertheless, contribute an important new element to the debate on inheritance and peasant mentality. He suggested that peasants' lives are not somehow pre-

determined by specific norms or laws, but that instead they chose practical solutions based on the welfare of the family. That these solutions are based on specific ideas of the family and specific models of household viability, are different points.

Inheritance law and farmers' rational economic behavior

The debate among notaries thus ended with the unsuccessful call by the Gelderland-Overijssel Agricultural Society, and with Dinger's reflections. They, and farmers' organizations, seemed to have become aware that the law of inheritance was not the decisive force, and that splitting farms up was not necessarily detrimental, if combined with a more intensive labor process. The debate made little impression further afield. Government authorities, with the exception of the ministry of agriculture, completely ignored pleas for changing civil law in favor of the farmers. Lamentations about the disappearance of small farmers were not taken seriously by the liberal-minded government, whose attitudes were clearly reflected in a report on the condition of agriculture published in 1890.

The *Staatscommissie van het onderzoek naar den toestand der landbouwers in Nederland* (State commission for research into farmers' conditions in the Netherlands) was established in 1886 with the aim of making a detailed description of Dutch agriculture and advising the government on suitable policy measures. Dutch agriculture, like agriculture in other European countries, was suffering from a general crisis. Difficult decisions had to be taken about protective measures, or rather measures to stimulate a transformation to cope with changing markets. The commission gathered its data by sending a long list of questions to local correspondents, whose task it was to write regional reports. One of the many questions was concerned with *de bijzondere gewoonten* (peculiar customs). The commission particularly wanted to know about any special customs regarding the division and inheritance of real property, and any specific deviations from the National law of inheritance (*Uitkomsten van het onderzoek naar den toestand van den landbouw in Nederland* 1890).

The answers from local correspondents clearly show that only a minority understood the essence of these questions, resulting in rather a heterogeneous set of answers, often consisting in 'no particular customs.' The main problem, however, was that the inheritance of land was not clearly distinguished from the right to use productive resources (succession). Most correspondents found it difficult to respond on how far principles of the law were applied. This is probably because of the enormous

variation in how it was perceived. It is nonetheless possible to discern some basic contours in the regional division of inheritance practices. The core areas of impartibility and the favored heir system were Twente (in the Province of Overijssel), and the Achterhoek (in the eastern part of Gelderland). Farmers in most areas in the provinces of Brabant and Limburg practiced partible inheritance, with division of real property and use-rights. Both extremes could be found in isolated localities elsewhere in the country, but in general there was a mixture of these models. Thus in the Rhine-Meuse Delta real property was divided among all the heirs, but not all of them used it: some was rented out on short-term leases instead. Real property was divided in the western dairy areas, but only one successor took over the farm, renting the land from his brothers and sisters.

The report also gave realistic attention to the problem of farm division, without passing any moral judgments. Splitting up farms was not, in the commission's view, in itself undesirable: it might indeed be encouraged where this led to better and more intensive cultivation. Only where farm division was a result of poverty and lack of alternatives was there reason for concern. There was no reference to changing inheritance law, the commission arguing instead for state intervention to improve production conditions by education, research and extension.

There was silence on the subject of inheritance and farmers from 1890 until 1905, the year in which Sanders' dissertation on the law of inheritance in Belgium and Germany was published. She devotes some comparative attention to the practice of impartibility in Overijssel in a single chapter, where she raises some old nineteenth-century issues again. Her findings corroborate the already firmly based conclusion that children were indeed treated differentially at the division of farms to conserve its integrity and ensure continuing family possession. This differentiation was associated with the heir's responsibility to care for his retired parents and coresident brothers and sisters. These kinds of arrangements were mostly settled on the successor's marriage, after consultation and with the consent of all family members. The distinctive aspect of property division in Overijssel was, according to Sanders, that conflicts resulting in court decisions rarely occurred. This stemmed from "... piety for the parents' decision, but also from the tradition of those *Anerbliche* arrangements itself" (Sanders 1905, p. 109). This was, for Sanders, an obvious expression of an indigenous legal mentality.

This practice was, however, eroding with excluded children wanting to become full beneficiaries ever more frequently, and asking for ever greater compensation for waiving their claims to the farm: "Slowly the principle of equality between children begins to penetrate here. It is no longer considered self-evident to discriminate against the majority for the sake of a single heir, whose lot is favored by birth" (ibid., p. 109). The loss of traditionally respected values, the loosening of family solidarity, and growing enmity were attributed to wider cultural change associated with rising prosperity and increasing integration into national culture. Sanders is the first among the authors considered so far to acknowledge the existence of a specific normative model guiding the behavior of the farmers, but she also mentions the rise of a competing model (the law of inheritance), which seems to be associated with a change in family relations and general cultural evolution. How these opposing principles are worked out at the level of the household is not clear from her rather indirect and fragmentary ethnographic observations.

Assessments of the stability or change of regional customs can be notoriously confusing and personally biased, as exemplified by the German agronomist Frost (1906) writing about the same time and region as Sanders in his famous book on Dutch agriculture, who observed that dissatisfaction among the successor's brothers and sisters rarely occurs.

The end of an unresolved debate

By the turn of the century, the ideological climate concerning the 'peasant question' had changed in several ways. Firstly, the agricultural crisis had proved the viability of the family farm, thus contradicting theories of proletarianization and the superiority of the large-scale agricultural enterprise. Although national agriculture was not protected by government, the need for supporting the family farm as a feasible form of production under the given circumstances was recognized. The foundation of Farmers' Unions, which differed in important respects from the existing Agricultural Societies, was an important milestone. These Unions clearly did not represent large capitalist farmers, but favored family farms and pleaded for government intervention to protect their interests. Another important characteristic was that they were based on Christian values. The family farm was not just a form of economic enterprise, but represented basic human values expressed in the phrase 'God, Family and Property.'

The self-consciousness of these Christian Farmers' Unions was especially promoted by the Catholic priest van den Elsen. This 'peasant apostle' was one of the founders of the family farm ideology, which underwrote the ideological claims of the Farmers' Unions until recent times. Van den Elsen was a very convincing writer and reached many homes in the southern provinces with his prolific pamphleteering. His moral lessons were collected in a three-volume work, published in 1911-1913, and entitled *De Boerenstand of Sociologie der Boeren* (The peasant class, or the sociology of peasants). I refer to his opinions on farm inheritance and the farm family in general at some length since his writings can be seen as yet another potential normative model: a frame of reference for farmers making decisions about inheritance. Although the teachings of the Catholic Church are not binding in a country where Church and state are totally separate, Church dogmas remain a very important source of normative judgment. One need only refer to the encyclical letters on contraception, and the general influence of the Church on marriage and divorce to appreciate this.

Van den Elsen presented himself as an advocate of the independent farm, based on property and the patriarchally organized family. Most of our earthly goods, he argued, should be owned as private property, and thus to alienate farmers from their property would be to pillage the fruits of their labor and against the general interest. The consequences of the law of inheritance were despicable in this respect since many farmers had already lost their land and degenerated to the status of tenant. He launched an impassioned attack on the pestiferous influence of the law of inheritance: "It is clear to everybody that the principle of equality in the division of land is an important source of destruction for the peasantry. A government that supports the persistence of a powerful peasant class is obliged to enable parents to pass on their farm to one of their children without excessive burdens . . . It is in the general interest that farms are preserved in their entirety. A horse cannot be cut into pieces and divided without losing its value; this is equally true of a farm" (van den Elsen 1911-1913, pp. 198-190).

Van den Elsen had reluctantly to admit that farmers in his beloved Brabant and Limburg did nevertheless frequently choose to divide their farm equally among all the children. Did this mean that they had not understood their Catholic vocation? According to van den Elsen, this was not so. Deep in their hearts they would do anything to hand the farm on undivided; that they behave differently can be explained by the influence of a law: ". . . that is no less than the application of the liberal principle

that all people have the same rights under all circumstances. The abolition of this law and rehabilitation of the habit to the custom of transmitting the farm as a whole to one of the heirs would ensure that it never occurred to the other children to ask for equal rights; they would be as happy as others who have nothing to inherit and try to find another means of existence" (ibid., p. 186).

Van den Elsen thus assumed a mentality among farmers that wanted to keep the farm intact, just as they were supposed to think and act like good Christians. It was as victims of legal pressure that they were forced to divide the farm against their better principles. Van den Elsen clearly sympathized with his farmers and did not want to condemn them for irresponsible behavior. Instead, he accused the state of coercive liberalism. His views about the relation between law, behavior and local customs cannot of course be taken seriously. Previous studies make it abundantly clear that the southern provinces practiced partibility to extreme degrees—not because the law prescribed this, but because of the bilateral character of kinship and the emphasis on the independent nuclear household. This did not automatically imply that farms lost their viability or that farmers became landless. It simply meant that marriage strategies became an important tactic for regrouping dispersed properties.

Substitution of the law of inheritance would, according to van den Elsen, have twofold repercussions. Firstly, it would make room for a renaissance of traditional values and, secondly, it could serve to restrain a recalcitrant son from rebellious behavior. Van den Elsen's attack on the law of inheritance is reminiscent of Le Play's lament for *la famille patriarchale* in France. Inspired by his and other moral writings, van den Elsen imagined a golden age of patriarchal families that had dwindled away under the influence of the liberal state.

In 1906 the government installed a new commission, the *Staatscommissie voor den landbouw*, to report on the state of Dutch agriculture (*Rapporten en voorstellen betreffende den oeconomische toestand der landbouwers in Nederland* 1912). The final report devoted a whole chapter to the law of inheritance, which the commission regarded a powerful instrument with which the state could influence the distribution of land among the farmers. Knowing that their land could be transferred to the next generation had important social implications for farmers: it would motivate them to work hard and be an incentive to thrift. It did, however, also involve the risk of fragmentation. The commission felt that this danger was not as yet imminent since there were social and economic forces to compensate for

the effect of the law of inheritance. The most important point was that farm families often choose to keep the farm intact voluntarily with, for example, compensation for the coheirs.

The commission was, however, disinclined to institutionalize this behavior in all its diversity. Common sense and attachment to family property were so strong that state intervention to correct excessive dispersion was unnecessary. The principles of intestacy law were so deeply ingrained among the farmers that any change would violate people's convictions. The only observation on the eastern Netherlands was that "there seems to be an old Saxon custom" that governed the rules of inheritance. After a short description of these customs, the commission concluded that: "Now the rural population has become more mobile and the children very often leave their village and acquire new notions, this custom is gradually declining" (*Rapporten en voorstellen* 1912, p. 58). The commission was very ambivalent, on the whole, in its appraisal of the law of inheritance. It had to admit that while the law's effect was potentially very dangerous, the farmers themselves shared the notion of equality. Yet, at the same time, the commission recognized that practical behavior deviated from partibility. The conclusion remained, however, consistently liberal: the principle of equality before the law should be left untouched and, as far as potentially negative effects on agrarian structures were concerned, it had every reason to believe that farmers were rational enough to avoid risk.

Discussion concerning the law of inheritance seemed, by the beginning of the twentieth century, to be going in two directions: cool, distant and sometimes indifferent appraisals on the one hand, and agitated moral concern on the other. The two tendencies were associated with defence and rejection of the law of inheritance respectively, and with two different ways of conceptualizing the relation between law, practice and tradition. Van den Elsen, for instance, represents the view that the law is so powerful and prescriptive that all alternative ideas and practices are by definition abolished. This view was clearly inspired by the discrepancy between his ideals and the practice of farmers in the South. The liberal intelligentsia defended the law of inheritance as a matter of conviction, but they could also see that farmers had such a wide spectrum of tactics to structure their farm that it never became an irrational operation. Developments in agriculture supported this realistic view.

The class of independent family farmers prospered as never before in the early twentieth century. Tenancy was everywhere on the decline so

that many landless laborers could become landowners, and the number of small farmers increased by the day. This development was stimulated by a long process of bringing wasteland under cultivation, and by the intensification of agriculture through new techniques and chemical fertilizers. The growth of productivity and the increasing demand from an industrializing country combined to create optimal conditions for an increase in the number of independent smallholders. Consternation about proletarianization and growing indebtedness seemed to belong to the past. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the debate about inheritance slowly lost its former immediacy.

III

The Contested House

Imparible inheritance and complex households
in the eastern Netherlands

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE necessity of changing inheritance law drew to a close with the report from the *Staatscommissie voor den landbouw*, published in 1912. Although some people still had their reservations, the potentially detrimental effects of inheritance laws on agriculture and rural society were no longer matters of great concern. Without the attraction of having immediate political consequences, analyses of farmers' inheritance practices seemed to have lost their point. Instead a more scholarly interest arose for farmers in the eastern Netherlands, and more particularly for the 'old customs' they were supposed to practice, which assumed, of course, that farmers' attitudes and behavior had changed elsewhere under the influence of commercialization and modernization. This chapter will discuss these studies in some detail. Together they give an impression of how farmers in this specific part of the Netherlands transmitted their farms over a long-term period. They also provide some interesting points of departure for analyzing possible correlations between cultural orientations and changing socioeconomic circumstances.

After the second World War, family sociologists were particularly interested in the transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' family life. Their interest, from the outset, in the complex, three-generation households of the eastern Netherlands was not accidental. These households and the inheritance patterns on which they were based were considered 'cultural survivals,' and thus particularly appropriate for studying family patterns supposed to belong to an evolutionary phase preceding the 'modern fami-

ly.' These assumptions had a great impact on the study of farm families, not only in family sociology, but also in rural sociology (de Haan 1993). This chapter analyses both the significance of family and kinship in domestic production as an empirical 'fact,' and investigation of how this subject was conceptualized in scientific discourse.

'A peculiar and very old custom': Inheritance and succession in Twente and the Achterhoek

The newly founded Society, *Het Nederlandsche Volk* (The Dutch People), took the initiative, in 1913, of making an inquiry into the material and mental conditions of the population in the provinces of Utrecht and Gelderland. The society was especially interested in the part of the population that practiced a 'peculiar and very old custom of inheriting real property.' The main aim was to document the cultural basis of what was considered a significant deviation from state laws of inheritance. This research was carried out by means of a questionnaire sent to rural notaries' offices in the two provinces. The response to the questionnaire was satisfactory and van Blom was able to write a very informative article in the *Economist* (van Blom 1915). Van Blom refers to the single heir/single successor system in the eastern Netherlands as *Saksisch erfrecht* (Saxon inheritance law), and *Anerbenrecht* (German law of impartibility). It is significant that he speaks of 'laws' and that he seemed to have no problem in putting these on an equal or even higher footing than state law.

One of the questions van Blom asked was concerned with the spatial distribution of this inheritance custom. The answers he received again confirmed that the custom of impartibility combined with a retirement contract was centered in the Achterhoek region of eastern Gelderland. Although there were some variations, the general picture was one of clearly demarcated frontiers between inheritance systems. Elsewhere in the two provinces there was either partibility, or the farm was kept together without impairing the legal rights of departing children.

There was considerable variation in response to the question of who was the favored heir, but a son seemed to be the preferred in most parts of the Achterhoek. This could in principle be any son, provided he had worked for his father during his youth and was prepared to bring his wife to the farm. Willingness and availability were of more practical consequence than birth order. If no son was available, then a daughter would take on the responsibility of succession. One notary remarked that there was a preference for a daughter in his area, even if there were sons. Here

the principle of keeping the farm in the family was conceptualized through the female line. Parents sometimes had more confidence in their own daughter taking care of them during old age than in a daughter-in-law, for whom it might be difficult to muster the required devotion. Parents' most important general aim was the continuity of the residential unit, whether through a male or a female line.

It appears from van Blom's inquiry on farm inheritance at the beginning of the twentieth century that the transfer of property was never an unconditional process. The favored heir had to take on heavy responsibilities in exchange for the farm. The ageing parents were, in principle, faced with two options for securing their own care. They could hold on to both property and authority until they died, obliging the future successor to live with them and work for farm and household against the promise of future inheritance. Another option was for the parents to settle the inheritance during their lifetime, transferring all their property and making binding agreements with all the children.

Both options, however, held risks for the parents as well as for the successor. Should the parents die without having made any provision for the successor, he or she was then dependent on the brothers and sisters to carry on with the farm. If these siblings ignored their parents' wishes and promises, then the successor could be left empty-handed. The second option was liberal with the security of the successor, but the parents had to give away their property and with it potential power over the household and their son. The inmarrying couple could, in theory, neglect the task of caring for the parents and make their lives very difficult.

No clear pattern for the frequency and distribution of these options emerges from the notaries' replies to van Blom concerning *post mortem* or lifetime transfers of property. There was a whole spectrum of practices, and the form of property transfer eventually chosen reflected personal choice and probably also the advice of the local notary.

This was certainly connected with the clarity of the result for both parents and successor: whatever arrangements and technical procedures evolved, the outcome was that the farm and headship over the household were transferred to one child, thereby excluding the others from inheriting any real property. The risks involved in each shift of generations did not seem to be very serious since, even after the death of the parents, when children were free to escape from paternal authority and able to claim their rights, the successor was still the only beneficiary and his brothers and sisters respected their subordinate position. This was a clear

indication, according to van Blom, of "a strong and lively consciousness that it should happen like this and no other way" (*ibid.*, p. 872).

It should however be said that the most common practice was the lifetime transfer of the farm with a corresponding shift of household roles and responsibilities. The parents secured their future either by a retirement contract or with usufructuary rights in the farm. "The parents sell their property to one of the children, in consideration of which the buyer assumes the obligation of providing for their subsistence while living, and funeral expenses after death, when he will also pay his brothers and sisters a sum of money. These children have the right to be housed and supported as long as they remain unmarried, on condition that they contribute to the work force of the farm (*voor huisbeste meerwerken*)" (*ibid.*, p. 869).

These descriptions, together with the discussions of inheritance and household arrangements in the previous chapter, permit more detailed reflection on the concept of property and property relations in the eastern Netherlands. Lifetime transfers of property often took the form of the son (or daughter) buying the parents' farm. This 'buying' had, however, nothing to do with a normal commodity transaction and the land market. Money was merely a way of symbolizing rights and duties and finding appropriate balances in what was in fact a series of exchanges, since there was no question of a real monetary transfer between the successor and his parents. Firstly the cost of providing for the parents was subtracted from the 'price' of the farm, then a sum was subtracted as a marriage gift and for past work on the farm, and the rest of the money was given as a life-long credit without interest. By the time the parents died, this money only existed on paper and went automatically to the successor, because his brothers and sisters had signed a notarial contract in which they declared themselves satisfied with what they had received at marriage or what had been promised on the death of the parents.

The fact that unmarried brothers and sisters had a right to stay in the parental household, providing they contributed to the farm, and that the parents also continued to live in that household, meant that apart from the arrival of a daughter-in-law there was no real change in its composition at the moment of property transfer. Yet there was an important shift in household roles, as the successor and his wife assumed formal headship. The devolution of property was thus associated with very specific rights and duties, which meant that the new owner could not freely dispose of it, but had rather to assume the obligations identified with the status of the heir. Property was not unconditionally owned since there were strict

obligations concerning its use and the distribution of its produce. The heir was in fact designated to administer a sort of collective property, belonging to what resembled a corporate, lineal kin group, not only limited to contemporary residents of a domestic group, but extending from the past into the future.

It is important to consider how the excluded children were compensated. Van Blom (1915) reports that a financial indemnization, mostly in the form of a dowry at marriage, was the usual practice. Children had, moreover, the right to stay in the household as long as they remained unmarried. Households with unmarried aunts and uncles were not uncommon. *Vrije ingang* (free entrance) and a *vaste stee bij de heerd* (a place by the fire) were common expressions referring brothers' and sisters' rights. Children leaving home also frequently received a *trousseau*, such as a cow, a cupboard or linen. Land was, however, never given in compensation for foregoing inheritance.

It is very difficult to give an objective estimation of equality and inequality in this context. I have indeed referred to exclusion, favoritism, inequality and so on, but this assumes that a farm had a certain material value and that the successor had a privileged right in its continuation. While this is, in one sense, undeniable, the question is how the actors involved perceived the value of a farm and how they estimated the balance between rights and duties. One hypothesis is that the devolution of property was in fact part of a long-term exchange process whereby not only material, but also social and cultural values were subject to transactions. If the farm was indeed perceived as a symbolic unit, representing certain ideals of kinship and property, the whole concept of value acquires another meaning. I will return to these problems in Chapters Five and Eight, when the concept of value is related to specific ideas about reciprocity and exchange.

It is revealing to examine how excluded children thought about this inheritance practice. There seems to have been consensus about its legitimacy, according to the answers van Blom received from the notaries, insofar as no one reported complaints among the disinherited. It was the "most natural thing in the world," or, "they have never heard of anything else and do not want to dispute" (*ibid.*, p. 878). These observations were based on notaries' experiences, which placed them clearly in a position to assess how far these customs were in decline, stable, or even growing in importance. The preceding chapter presented both Sanders and the commissions on Dutch agriculture as being rather insistent about excluded children's

increasing awareness of the real monetary value of the farm and their demand for a legal portion. The notaries responding to van Blom's questionnaire, by contrast, concluded that the custom was stable and, if anything, more firmly established in some places. Only a single notary qualified this view with the expectation that it would decline in the future.

In answer to van Blom's final question notaries had to give their personal views on inheritance customs known to them from their experience. Their judgments were rather different and reflected their social preferences and attitudes toward the law. One notary gave a devastating verdict: ". . . it is the most appalling custom, which ought to disappear as soon as possible, because it represents the ungrounded favoritism for one of the children and is injurious to the rest. This leads to enormous fights, resulting into family-breakdown" (*ibid.*, pp. 884-885). It should however be added that this was a somewhat speculative view since farmers in this notary's area practiced none of the repudiated customs. Another notary condemned the local inheritance custom, especially the household arrangements resulting from it: "Immense, enormous is the misery I have seen with those contracts. Without exception, I warned the parents who came to me for the deed of conveyance to think twice. Until the contract is signed, everything is hand in glove. But as soon as the dye is cast and the child becomes the master, the distress of the parents is measureless. They are treated like dogs, and it only gets worse when the poor souls have the misfortune to grow old. I do not know of a single positive case" (*ibid.*, p. 887).

The notaries with favorable judgments were of course also aware of potential conflicts in complex households, but they emphasized that the principle of imparability itself was uncontested and that the unity of the farm was of vital interest if farming was to continue under reasonable conditions. Retiring farmers seemed, moreover, to prize the possibility of staying on the ancestral farm very highly and to accept mutual difficulties in understanding.

Industrialization, commercialization and the stability of 'old customs'

Two years after van Blom's study another interesting contribution on inheritance patterns in the eastern Netherlands was published by van Anrooy (1917). The area covered by this publication was limited to Twente in the province of Overijssel, where farmers and other regional experts were the main source of information. Van Anrooy's study is exceptional because, contrary to her colleagues who were mostly 'armchair' scientists,

she talked to the farmers in what may be characterized as pre-ethnographic fieldwork. Van Anrooy's observations are thus particularly interesting in revealing the cultural dispositions of Twente peasants. Her field experience was, however, rather shocking. She had hoped that the peasants would talk to her spontaneously, but was very disappointed by their suspicion and reluctance. What they said did not make a lot of sense to her, and in the end she had to rely on what a few 'intelligent' men told her.

Van Anrooy's research was largely inspired by the confusion surrounding the stability or decline of 'old customs' in the eastern Netherlands. Her assumption was that the process of industrialization in regional towns and the modernization of agriculture would diminish the meaning of the farm as a kinship nucleus. She believed that family members would increasingly perceive the farm as mere capital with no further symbolic or social meaning. This rationality would probably be incompatible with the principle of what she called the *blijverszede* (lit. the custom of staying on the farm).

Agricultural development in Twente in the early twentieth century was indeed characterized by a process of land reclamation, intensification and commercialization. Extensive moorland was reclaimed and turned into useful agricultural land, with production ever more directed toward specialized dairy production. Van Anrooy was clearly impressed by the impact of this transformation on the farmers. Modernization, in her view, went hand in hand with "... the rationalization of the farmers' mind . . . and the 'capitalist spirit' has penetrated the house of the smallest and most isolated farmer" (van Anrooy 1917, p. 360).

Van Anrooy provided no new details on inheritance customs. She emphasized the importance of common agreement within the family and the connection between inheritance and retirement arrangements. Her impression was, however, that there was no question of these customs being eroded. Heirs were rarely unable to reach mutual agreement and, if there was any sign of selfishness, the party responsible was subject to the moral censure of public opinion. Van Anrooy was in fact more interested in the mentality and ideas behind the *blijversrecht* than in the form of inheritance itself. She was curious to know the extent to which these practices were indeed based on ancient customs and whether these were compatible with the 'capitalist spirit.' She claimed to have abundant evidence to conclude that: "... tradition and custom have long been of much more significance than all written law and still today account for behavior" (ibid., p. 474). This convinced her of the deep-rooted feeling of belonging

to the land and the paternal home. By way of illustration she paraphrases an 'intelligent' farmer: "It is not always easy. But it always ends in a satisfying agreement, as long as they (the excluded children) realize that if they grab everything, they will lose the parental home, and will no longer have free access to the homestead where they used to live with their parents" (*ibid.*, p. 475).

The desire to leave the paternal homestead intact thus seemed stronger than self-interest or, to put it differently, self-interest was not defined in terms of individual material gain but was part and parcel of the collective interest in keeping the *hoes* (farm, house plus land) in the family, as the symbol and basis of family solidarity. The alternative was isolation from the extended kin group and a loss of identity and status in the local community.

Van Anrooy was puzzled by the compatibility of such pronounced 'idealism' with the rationalization and commercialization of farming. Farmers had learned to work with market-oriented economic principles and developed entrepreneurial traits. Yet, van Anrooy argued, there was no question of anachronism or contradiction: within the parameters of market competition, the viability of the farm had become more important than ever before. The successor had to weigh up how the farm could be reproduced in a financially healthy way. The cultural and social meanings attributed to the homestead had to be underpinned by a viable material base: "They (the farmers) calculate what the household can afford, and discuss what this implies for compensating the other children. They recognize that the successor cannot sustain household headship if the other children receive their full portion. Hence all the children have to cooperate if an agreement is to be concluded" (*ibid.*, p. 479).

The discussion of farm transfer within the household *was* thus based on rational estimates of how much money excluded children could be given. This was not a matter of attacking the principle of unity and jeopardizing the future of the farm as a viable entity. The amounts of money attributed to brothers and sisters were, however, no longer only symbolic, but bore also relation to the economic performance of the farm. The principle of equity was enacted only to the extent that it also allowed the paternal homestead to remain intact.

This practice was however under heavy pressure, and van Anrooy was unsure how long farm families could resist the temptation of commoditizing the farm, completely losing interest in its social and cultural meaning. The pressure came principally from industrial capitalists attempting to buy up land as an investment for profits made in industry. Farms were

increasingly fetching fancy prices that bore no relation to the productive capacity of agricultural land. Farmers were thus confronted by the concept of land as a commodity whose value had nothing to do with the local land market. According to van Anrooy, farmers managed to resist even minor inroads being made by these capitalist investors. All her informants assured her ". . . that the spirit of solidarity is unimpaired by this pressure, indeed actually increases, and that problems between heirs are still a rarity . . . They ignore the market value for the sake of the parental home farm . . . and in this they are diametrically opposed to the basic rationalist principles of the modern enterprise" (*ibid.*, p. 486). Van Anrooy was convinced that if this 'spirit of solidarity' were to dwindle away, not a single successor would stand a chance of succeeding to his father's farm.

Van Anrooy's observation that the excluded children's portions were increasingly calculated on the basis of monetary principles, deserves closer examination. She suggests that there was no question of equal division, but that the financial position of the farm conditioned what the successor could afford to pay. This implies that there was a time when monetary evaluation did not enter into division. This change was probably due to the commercialization of farm production at the beginning of the twentieth century, which was far greater than it had been during the nineteenth century. Income from market production was probably too limited, during the nineteenth century, to cover extra expenses such as interest and mortgage. The report of the State commission for agriculture shows that farm income had increased substantially since the 1880s. The difference between expenses and income on a 12 hectare farm had increased from 82 guilders in 1880, to 215 guilders in 1910. Monetary income in 1880 was such that even a minor setback in production meant that there was scarcely any money to spend. By 1912, however, the local correspondent for the commission could write: "more money is available than in preceding periods. The purchase of agricultural implements, a marked increase in deposits made to local banks, land improvement and the growing number of bicycles among the farmers must be based on more income" (*Staatscommissie voor den landbouw* 1912, p. 387).

Van Blom's and van Anrooy's publications on the subject of inheritance and agriculture were the last until the Second World War. The subject disappeared from scientific and professional journals as suddenly as it had appeared in the 1880s. It is difficult to explain this loss of scientific and

general interest. The conditions of agriculture do not satisfactorily account for it. Agricultural income increased until the early 1920s when it went into a gradual decline, reaching its nadir in the 1930s, after which it began to improve again.

It is curious that absolutely no mention of inheritance and succession, and the dangers or advantages of breaking up farms, is made in either of the government reports published in 1933 and 1936 (Commissie van advies 1937; *Verslag* 1933). The retrospective attribution of inheritance patterns as one of the main causes of small farms seemed wide of the mark at a time of agricultural intensification and reclamation of new farmland. Policy measures encouraging small farmers to sell up and make way for larger farm enterprises were equally inept since they would only add to the numbers of unemployed on the labor market. These issues would only effect policy making after the Second World War.

The persistence of inheritance patterns in the eastern Netherlands

It was during the Second World War that inheritance among farmers appeared again as a topic in publications. One of the most interesting of these was by Best (1941), an employee from the land record office in Almelo (Overijssel). Best sympathized with the German invaders' fundamentalist ideas about the basis of a healthy, stable society, which they saw as comprising many small, owner-occupier peasants. He hoped to win support for changing the law of inheritance in the Dutch part of the German Empire by showing how far peasants of the eastern Netherlands were in tune with their German neighbors' mentality. The more interesting part of his study comprises, however, a survey of inheritance patterns known to Overijssel notaries. Since he asked the same questions as van Blom, and built on van Anrooy's conclusions, his research can be used to infer changes during the interwar period.

Best used the terms *Boerenerfrecht* (peasant inheritance law) or *erfzede* (inheritance custom) for practices that did not correspond with national inheritance law. These practices were, according to him, indigenous to the sandy soiled eastern part of the province of Overijssel. Like van Anrooy, Best emphasized that the purpose of the single heir system was less the unity of the farm as such, this being only a means to more important ends. Most important of these was the farm as an enduring resource for the livelihood of the family. The farm had, as Best put it, a task to fulfil, and the household head was a sort of steward, responsible for its maintenance and good working order. The farm, comprising both the house and

the land, was seen almost as a natural entity, with a personality and existence over and above the people living on it. It needed respect and good care, not only for the present but also for future generations.

There was, according to Best, no strict rule defining which child should succeed. It could even be a laborer providing he or she understood the heavy responsibilities involved. Best's descriptions of aspects of farm transmission such as timing and compensations, do not differ from the earlier accounts by van Blom and van Anrooy. The attitude of excluded children was also strikingly consistent. Despite the demise that had been predicted for these inheritance customs ever their discovery, coheirs were still not making any problems. Particular recognition was given to the heavy burden of parental care assumed by the successor. Children leaving the household frequently married into another household where they were, of course, faced with comparable circumstances. One notary simply noted 'solidarity' as the driving force, while another characterized the attitude of the excluded children as 'miraculously mild.'

Practically all notaries reported the custom as being stable, and all those with first-hand experience were very positive about it. There is, unfortunately no information about the relations between coresident dependent parents and the successor, nor about retirement arrangements. It is not clear how this silence should be interpreted in terms of intergenerational relations. Best did, however, mention improved living standards, which greatly alleviated the successor's burden, even permitting separate living quarters among the more affluent farmers. Best suggested that these retirement arrangements stemmed from pure necessity and would probably disappear as soon as elderly people received a state pension.

The stability of the basic principles of inheritance, succession and forms of household formation was also reported in studies published after the second World War. Cohen (1958), a notary in Enschede (Overijssel), wrote a book entitled *Het Blijversrecht* about the legal aspects of local customs, and later (1970) launched a survey to examine their continuity (Cohen 1970). Cohen's (1958) description of the *blijversrecht* is: "One of the children acquires the farm through inheritance or lifetime transfer without heavy dues, the other children obtaining less than they ought according to Dutch intestacy law" (p. 15).

Cohen was mainly interested in how this custom was legally accomplished: thus his dissertation concentrated upon the technical details of notarial deeds. He showed an almost infinite range of possibilities for

rendering farmers' wishes both legally and fiscally acceptable. He discussed no less than twenty-eight ways of achieving the same end, namely the complete transfer of property to one beneficiary to the exclusion of the other children. Much more interesting for my purposes are some introductory remarks on the development of inheritance customs in the eastern Netherlands, and the explanation provided. Cohen considered it essential to define precisely what was being discussed. His concern to distinguish inheritance customs in the eastern Netherlands in particular was due to the fact that keeping the farm intact as an economic unit had become general practice among farmers throughout the country. It would be an error to suppose, however, that eastern Netherlands' principles of inheritance and succession had become generalized, since the single successor and unity of the farm are only two features of a much more complicated system.

Unique succession, or the transfer of use rights in the means of production to only one person, leaves an important area of variability in transferring property or its monetary equivalent. The *blijversrecht* represented a specific combination of unique succession and imitable inheritance or lifetime transfer of land. But this would still be an inadequate depiction of the *blijversrecht*, since property and status were transferred to the same person in many other parts of the country. The peculiarity of the eastern Netherlands' inheritance practice was, according to Cohen, that the successor became the owner of the farm without having to compensate his coheirs in full for losing out. Like many writers before him, Cohen qualified the inequality of inheritance portions with reference to the burdens taken on by the successor/heir in caring for his retiring parents. These were all important ingredients of the complex *Blijversrecht*, but the essential component, Cohen argued, was the opportunity it offered the successor of taking over the farm without too many financial impediments. The principles of imitability and inequality were basically a strategy for financing the reproduction of a small enterprise.

Thus Cohen seems to concur with Best when he asserts that these principles were not aims in themselves, but means to reproduce an economic unit. Equality was possible as long as it did not violate the reproduction of that economic unit. The question is, however, why the economic unit was so important and why it had been established and defined in this specific way. Not surprisingly, Cohen had no answer to this question, nor did he see the problems of sustaining his explanation of inheritance practices in a comparative perspective. Any explanation based on the assertion that something is necessary for economic or financial rea-

sons, should be regarded with suspicion, since people find other solutions elsewhere under the same financial and economic constraints. The fact that agricultural enterprises are constituted and reproduced in regions of equality and partibility and that old, retired farmers do not seem to lack subsistence there, means that there are many solutions to the same problem, all of which are colored by specific cultural preferences.

Cohen's view of the stability of peasant inheritance customs at the end of the 1950s is interesting. Most authors, as we have seen, not only expressed their views on the present, but also on future developments: they almost invariably predicted the future demise of the system favoring one heir, given the increasing awareness of the farm's monetary value and the benefits they could derive from it. Cohen's experience as a solicitor and his research into the land record archives led him to conclude that the *Blijversrecht* had always predominated in the Twente area. The area was easily discerned in historical sources, from which it appeared that Twente has been "under the spell" of the *Blijversrecht* right up to the present day. Cohen's impression was that it was actually on the increase rather than decreasing.

Although Cohen seems to emphasize the economic basis of inheritance practices, he also had an eye for what he conceptualized as the 'psychological element.' Several authors cited by Cohen depict farmers in Twente as being very attached to the ancestral house. Family property was their pride and joy, and only under exceptional circumstances could they part with it. He mentions the case of a woman, who after selling part of her property felt so guilty about it that she asked the priest in consternation whether her sin could be forgiven.

Twelve years later, after making a survey among rural notary offices, Cohen (1970) concluded that the *blijversrecht* was still fully operational. Even the introduction of a state pension for retired farmers had done nothing to alter it. Similarly, the number of family conflicts seemed to be minimal: none of the lawyers whom he questioned about this were aware of any cases of dispute.

The development of family sociology in the Netherlands

The study of the family in the Netherlands was mainly introduced and developed within the field of sociology. Since sociology only became a distinct academic discipline during the second half of the twentieth century, knowledge of family life was still in its infancy as late as the early 1950s. Hofstee (1950b), for example, asserts that Dutch sociology did not

offer any significant information about the family as a social phenomenon in the early 1950s. Although Kruyt could write an article about the family in several parts of the country in 1938, he had to conclude that the material was not particularly rich.

Despite a rich tradition of folklore studies in the Netherlands, links with mainstream anthropological and sociological theories were never established. Folklorists mainly studied the family through family and life cycle rituals, focussing on birth, courtship, marriage and funerals. Dutch anthropologists have almost completely neglected research on family and kinship in their own society (see Boissevain and Verrips 1989 and, the only exception, Fischer 1947).

Family sociology only became institutionalized in Dutch universities in the 1950s (Jonker 1988; Mayer 1981; van Leeuwen 1976). The rural family enjoyed considerable attention during the early period, but this type of research became very marginal after the 1960s (Kooy 1981). The study of farm families was clearly inspired by an evolutionary assumption about family modernization. It comes as no surprise that various empirical studies were carried out in regions with traditional household and neighborhood groups. The process of disintegration could clearly be depicted by concentrating on these complex family forms.

Family sociology was, in its early period, very much involved in debating the crisis of the family in the 1950s. The crucial problems were defined as ". . . the waning of family authority; parent-children tensions; changing social status and changing role conceptions; a growing sense of personal loneliness; an apparent loss of the classical functions of the family . . . family disruption; secularization" (Ishwaran 1959, p. 2). The transformation of family life seen from a rural perspective, could be explored in the context of growing commercialization, industrialization and state formation. Although Dutch society was traditionally primarily an urbanized society, the assumption was that urban-industrial forces only began to penetrate the countryside after the Second World War. The transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' family life was believed to be in full swing among the agricultural population, providing sociologists with a firsthand understanding of the problems accompanying modernization.

From a theoretical viewpoint, the study of the family was very much influenced by American family sociology. Hofstee (1950b) and Bouman (1951), in particular, introduced such writers as Burgess, Lock, Zimmermann, Ogburn, Nimkoff, and others into Dutch sociology. The basic contours of family sociology's theoretical preoccupations in the Netherlands were, however, designed by Kruyt, Saal, Hofstee, and, later, Kooy.

Their approach to the transformation of the rural family has had a significant impact on both rural sociology and the historical study of the family.

The rest of this chapter will focus on the main theoretical developments in family sociology with particular reference to farm families. This means devoting special attention to how family and kinship ideologies and practices were studied in the context of production, the labor process and property.

Loss of function and family individualization: Early theoretical orientations

Two basic concepts were very important in early family sociology: 'loss of function' and 'family individualization.' These were introduced in 1938 by Kruyt in an article entitled 'Family life in different parts of our country.' Kruyt attributed regional differences in family life to variations in the importance of capitalist relations of production in the countryside. The family was mostly also a unit of production, characterized by patriarchal relations, in precapitalist society. Only the remnants of this family can still be found in isolated rural areas due to 'modernization.' Kruyt particularly refers to Barentsen's (1926, 1935) study of Kempenland in the province of Brabant as a description of this old, dissolute family type. Barentsen's study was long the only available source on 'traditional' family life, and has significantly colored the ideas of sociologists (see for a critique Meurkens 1985).

The transformation of the rural family was conceptualized as a process of 'loss of function' (*functieverlies*) and the rise of family individualism (*gezins-individualisme*). Loss of function refers to a transfer of tasks, previously done in the domestic sphere to extrafamilial agencies. Family individualism implied the replacement of community and neighborhood dependency by commercial and public services: "... the village community breaks down into sovereign families, cut off from the outside world" (Kruyt 1938, p. 340). The closed front door, doorbell, curtains, and fences are visible symbols expressing hostility to outside interference in family life. The family has increasingly become, according to Kruyt, a unit of consumption, leisure and socialization, connected to global society by formal and institutional links.

Kruyt's brief reflections on family change were explored by Hofstee, who not only gave more substance to the theoretical notions, but also indicated the moral dilemmas facing a scholar who must assess the nature

of these changes. Hofstee took the functions of the family as a starting point in an article entitled 'The family in a changing world,' published in 1950. He distinguished three functions: first, the sociobiological function: the family as a unit of human reproduction, caring and affection. Second, the social and cultural functions: socialization, enculturation and leisure; and finally, socioeconomic functions: consumption and, for family enterprises, production.

These functions underwent rapid change due to fundamental structural transformations in society, such as the growing division of labor, concentration of production in larger units, and the increasing importance of education. Most families lost their productive functions in the course of these changes; and many tasks had been taken over by specialized institutions and enterprises. Although the family was still a productive unit in agriculture, numerous production and consumption related tasks had been allocated to external agencies. The role of wider society became increasingly apparent with respect to leisure, education, and the acquisition of norms and values. The weight of the family, and concomitantly that of the parents was gradually reduced.

All these changes were, however, much less important in the countryside. The family enterprise still predominated there, while minimal contact with an urban lifestyle maintained the key social and cultural functions of the family. There was scarcely any difference between the public norms maintained by community, school and church, and family norms. Urban culture would, however, become increasingly influential on rural society. The older generation would be unable to prepare its children for this alien culture, resulting in a widening gap and a loss of authority.

This 'loss of family functions' had, according to Hofstee, profound consequences for family relations: the father had lost his traditional authority over the young generation and feels uncertain in an 'alienated world.' Furthermore, the relation between spouses was increasingly based on affection. But if the family was based only on affective ties (*koesterend*), the pressure to keep this group together would automatically dwindle away. Individual family members would no longer depend on their family for work and security, since the expanding labor market and welfare provisions had taken over these functions.

Kruyt's and Hofstee's global ideas about family development were expanded by Saal (1948, 1951). Saal located the variety of family forms in the context of rural social structure. He contrasted 'closed, traditional, collective societies,' and 'open, nontraditional, individualized societies.'

The family is completely integrated into community life in the first type of rural society. Children's socialization is accomplished both by parents and by the community, while the community's moral order governs individual behavior. Family autonomy is generally severely restricted by community interference. Saal called this an 'open family in a closed society.' Complete family individualism distinguishes the second type of society. The moral order of the community had disintegrated to such an extent that individuals and families had increasingly become free floating, out of range of its influence and sanctions.

Saal was basically interested in the family's position and function (*plaats* and *functie*) in its social environment, and in the relationships between family members. Long-term development of the family was characterized by a process of individualization or privatization, transforming it from an open to a closed institution. Internal family relations were distinguished by Saal according to two different ways of 'group integration': objective and subjective. Objective integration is achieved when external conditions maintain and strengthen internal family ties: marriage and parent-child relations are regulated by material considerations. Subjective integration is, however, based on the 'psycho-psychical mystery of love.'

Saal was consequently able to construct two ideal types of family life in the rural Netherlands: 'the open, objective integrated family' and the 'closed subjective integrated family.' Relations between parents and children and between spouses in the first category are typified by lack of emotion and indifference. This family type was gradually changing under the influence of urban culture. Marriages were increasingly based on romantic feelings and the family was becoming an isolated cell, giving intimacy and security in a world dominated by impersonal relations.

Saal's theory of family development is strikingly consistent with contemporary theories developed in family history. It evolves around such classical contrasts as *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and is firmly embedded in a theory of modernization. Two contrasting developments are described: one concerns the relation between family and community, the other deals with internal family relations. Internal relations in the 'traditional family' seemed to be characterized by calculation, contract and distance, and mainly structured by economic factors. Relations with the community were warm, friendly, informal, multistranded and based on altruism and reciprocity. Modernization meant that internal family relations increasingly became based on love and affection, the family assuming mainly cherishing and caring functions. Relations with the outside

world became, by contrast, formalized, institutionalized, and regulated by the market and social welfare policy.

As Ishwaran (1959) has correctly observed, family studies were very much inspired by concern about 'family disintegration' during the 1950s. As the family became increasingly independent from community control and gradually lost its basis as a productive unit, it was thought to evolve into an unstable, fragile unit. This concern (see for a pessimist view Oldendorff 1953) was mainly, but not exclusively, based on experience with working-class populations, where parental control and general norms were supposed to be fading. These 'problem families' (*probleem gezinnen*) became the subject of intense state and local government intervention programs, designed to correct their behavior and to transform them into respected citizens (van Dongen 1968). The styles and concerns of family sociology were certainly part of Dutch sociology's broader preoccupation with the 'disintegration' of social order. Jonker (1988) asserts that the theme of social cohesion was derived from a model of modernization and industrialization, which implied development from traditional integration to modern disintegration, and future reintegration of social order.

Reflections on the development of complex households and family individualization

The first book-length monograph on family life in the Netherlands was published by Kooy in 1957. Kooy was particularly inspired by Kruyt's concept of family individualization, to such an extent that he would devote much of his academic career to giving more theoretical and empirical substance to it. Kooy conceptualized changes in the position of the nuclear family (*gezin*) as a result of modifications in its relations with the wider kin group (*familie*), the neighborhood (*buurt*), the Church, and the state. The traditional nuclear family was embedded in authority structures (*gezags-instituten*), which claimed, or wished to claim control over family matters. Kooy defined individualization as the process whereby the family acquires more autonomy *vis-à-vis* such regulating agencies. This process accelerated around 1900, when "the moral, emotional, and cooperative attachment of the nuclear family to kin- and neighborhood groups declined" (Kooy 1957, p. 73). This development was most pronounced among such relatively traditional groups as farmers. It implied conformation to an individualistic bourgeois culture, resulting in the levelling out of lifestyles.

A very significant departure from Kruyt's original thesis was Kooy's combination of the family individualization concept with the composition of the domestic group or household. Kooy turned to household composition in his search for an empirical index for measuring the degree of nuclear family autonomy. The nuclear family household, comprising husband, wife and unmarried children, was taken to indicate a more or less completed process of nuclear family individualization. If this conjugal unit lived together with one of the spouses' parents and unmarried siblings in the same domestic space, this was thought to denote insubstantial nuclear family emancipation from external interference.

It is significant that Kooy reduced the analysis of the relationships between the nuclear family and the wider kin group to measuring the frequency of relatives living within the same domestic group. The focus on coresidence could be justified methodologically as an interesting way of operationalizing theoretical variables. However, complex household structure became part of an historical model of family evolution without further theoretical vindication. The history of the family and kinship was no longer framed in terms of changing relationships between different categories of kin, but as a progressive change from extended family households (*familiehuishouding*) to nuclear family households (*gezinshuishouding*).

Family and community in traditional society

Much of Kooy's energy was devoted to describing family and community life in traditional society. Although he had to admit that most of his descriptions were speculative (see Kooy 1975), he was never in any doubt as to the accuracy of his representations. Traditional society was temporally situated in the period before the mid-nineteenth century, when both urban and rural societies were small and isolated. People were mostly born in the locality where they died and spent most of their lives with people whom they knew personally. People were very much dependent on each other for support, both in the neighborhood and the wider kin group. The elementary family (*gezin*) was not an independent unit, but integrated into a larger kinship structure (*ibid.*, p. 217). Members of the *gezin* had to respect and obey the norms and decisions of the larger kin group. Kooy refers to this type of society as a genealogical-territorial one (Kooy and Hofstee 1956, p. 264).

The significance of the wider family and subordination of the nuclear family was based on "familial loyalty and personal material interest" (Kooy 1958, p. 187). These were two forces making people accept the

authority of the larger kin group. Individualistic desires were morally rejected. It was not the *gezin* as such that fulfilled economic and educational functions, but rather the extended household, where the older generation held most power. People were dependent on one another for social security throughout their lives, since there were neither private nor institutional welfare provisions in this undifferentiated society. The basis of social security was in the hands of an extensive kinship and community network, which also regulated access to resources. Every individual had a material interest in maintaining these social relations (*ibid.*, 1977, p. 21). Resources were, however, mainly in the hands of the older generation: "Almost every person in the community was economically dependent on his parents during the parents' lifetime. It was exceptional for a farmer to furnish his son or daughter with the means to start his own farm during the farmer's life. If the children did not work with another family, they worked at their parents' farm in exchange for board and lodging. Many people gained their complete independence only after the death of their parents" (*ibid.*, 1963, p. 51).

The subordination of the nuclear family, its lack of privacy and the interference of extended kin and neighbors were not considered detrimental to it: "On the contrary, the situation was normally considered beneficial. Moderate individual aspirations reinforced institutionalized relations. Subordination to or cooperation with others, as long as they accepted the traditional values of the community, were seldom resisted" (*ibid.*, 1963, p. 52). Marriage was not based on a voluntary agreement between two individuals, but primarily a labor contract to secure the reproduction of the traditional household. The terms of marriage and the choice of the partner were predominantly in the interests of the parents, with whom the young couple were to reside. The 'psychological climate' was consequently characterized by "interpersonal distance, and hiding of emotions in so far these are experienced" (*ibid.*, 1973, p. 8).

The transition from traditional to modern society is a cultural transformation, according to Kooy, that is set into motion by large-scale processes such as industrialization, secularization, urbanization and the rise of the welfare state. Cultural change consists of an increasing 'spirit of individualism' (Kooy and Hofstee 1956, p. 264). The spirit of individualism gives way to interpersonal relations based on individual choice and self-determination for the nuclear family. Cultural contact is the *sine qua non*, according to Kooy, for a shift in the frame of reference from traditional local society to a culture with different norms and ideals (Kooy 1957, p. 175).

The nuclear family has acquired a totally new meaning in this changing context: "nuclear family individualization develops when the nuclear family's traditional subordination to the objectives of other institutions is replaced by a morally acknowledged autonomy of the smallest kin group; that it creates its own closed world in order to live its own life" (ibid., 1970, p. 15). Interference from the wider kin group is no longer tolerated as normal, and relatives beyond the elementary family are considered 'outsiders' (ibid., 1961, p. 1). This development is typical for modern western society. The *gezin* became a *port of refuge* for the individualized and 'emotionally frustrated man' where relations are based on affection, understanding and emotion, while society is becoming increasingly depersonalized and chilly (ibid., 1958, p. 158).

Modern man has cast off relations of dependency with wider kin, the community and the Church, enclosing himself in a private, restricted family that depends on a world of contractual relations and the state for its basic needs. Contacts with the wider kin group are no longer based on economic necessity and hierarchy, but on choice. The change in kinship comes down to a total separation between affection and interest: kinship has predominantly become a matter of emotional links (ibid., 1975, pp. 232, 247). Kooy thus reached the rather remarkable conclusion that social differentiation has resulted in two contrasting forms of social relations: those based on affection and emotion, and internal to the nuclear family; and contractual, depersonalized relations characteristic of contacts with the outer world. This contrast seems to coincide with both psychological and economic, material needs on the other. It implies the total separation of kinship and the management of resources: kinship becomes deprived of any economic significance.

The study of complex households in the eastern Netherlands

Kooy has used the concept of family individualization for his study of complex households in the eastern Netherlands. One could "still discover vestiges of the genealogical-territorial pattern" (Kooy and Hofstee 1956, p. 265) on a large scale in rural regions along the German border at the end of the 1950s. Although these areas had been integrated in agricultural markets since the second half of the nineteenth century and had experience of urban culture, the relation between the nuclear family, the wider kin group and the neighborhood had not significantly changed (Kooy 1959, p. 4). The Achterhoek (the region where Kooy did his research) revealed two sharply contrasting faces: a modern technical one and a tradi-

tional social one (Kooy 1958, p. 188). Kooy saw this as a 'cultural lag,' implying that certain aspects of culture lag behind the rest, causing stress among its bearers (*ibid.*, 1959, p. 4). Kooy mainly focused on the persistence of 'three-generation households,' which stemmed from an 'earlier phase of culture,' when a familialistic spirit determined the fate of individuals.

Kooy's research on household composition in parts of the Province of Gelderland was based on data collected among 10,024 farm households in 1956. Exact information on religion, farm size and household composition was collected, but nothing (was at least presented) on age structure or the developmental phase of the household. The data were supplemented by conversations with groups of farmers, and a postal survey among 'local specialists': local people who were not members of the farming population, but were in a position to comment on their way of living. These people mostly had an urban frame of reference, tending to glorify the intimacy of the nuclear family. They were in any case in a perfect position to make the 'familiar strange.' Kooy presented a fascinating *tableau* of a rural society in transition. His work also represents an authoritative dialogue between the sociologist and his data.

The *familiehuishouding* (extended family household) was increasingly perceived as a 'social problem,' according to Kooy, being criticized by farmers' organizations, social workers, the clergy, and other local notables. An increasing number of publications referred to social tension and stress, caused by the collision of old norms and new individualism, among members of these extended households. The supposedly devastating effects on their residents' psychological health made Kooy curious to know whether this was a typical outsider's view, or reflected the feelings of the farm families themselves. Extended households also provided an excellent opportunity to observe the dissolution of traditional family ties, something that was supposed to have already occurred in modern parts of the country.

The proportion of *familiehuishoudingen* (extended households) in the twenty-three research localities was an average of 46.5 percent of total farm households, ranging from 61.9 percent as the highest value to 26.5 percent as the lowest. These averages concerned household composition unrelated to the domestic cycle, and it is obvious that practically all households comprised a nuclear family with a lineal or collateral extension at some moment of their developmental cycle (see Berkner 1972). Kooy was unaware of the effect of the developmental cycle on household composition. He assumed that the absence of resident kin reflected a

conscious choice for spatial separation. While this may have been true for some households, the number of 'real' nuclear family households cannot have been very significant, given the high incidence of extended households irrespective of their phase in the development cycle.

These *familiehuishoudingen* consisted of a married couple with their children, parents, and sometimes their unmarried brothers and sisters. Two-thirds of these households were based on patrilocal residence after marriage. Domestic arrangements usually involved a total sharing of house space, with no provision for the nuclear couple to withdraw into private rooms or to perform independent domestic activities. Only a small portion (10 percent) had some degree of family privacy, made possible by separating the house in two different householding entities. Despite this partial segregation, the young couple was nonetheless responsible for the old couple's well-being. The presence of collateral kin (siblings, uncles and aunts) was very limited.

The formation and development of the complex household in the Achterhoek were very much tied up with inheritance and succession practices, and contractual caring relationships: one son (or daughter in his absence) was designated as the successor/heir. The other children had to look beyond the farm for a future. The heir moved into his parents' house with his spouse. Since the farm ought, ideally, to remain intact (*ongeschonden*), the other heirs received only minor parts. Kooy emphasizes the role and acceptance of parental authority as a pivotal aspect of this settlement: "As long as the children accept their parents' wishes, the successor's favored position is not a source of conflict. But if parental authority becomes a source of doubt, there is likely to be reason for open or hidden conflict between the different parties. The peaceful maintenance of these old principles . . . is only possible if nobody appeals to formal law. It is thus not surprising that the favored position of the eldest son is nowadays frequently a source of conflict . . ." (ibid., 1959, p. 35). Kooy did not, unfortunately, devote any attention to the process of farm transmission, let alone the incidence of conflicts between heirs. He was mainly interested in relationships, conflicts and tensions within the household, when decisions about inheritance had already been settled.

Kooy's survey among 'local specialists' and conversations with groups of farmers, allowed him to develop an accurate picture of how living in a three-generation household was perceived and experienced. The structural sources of tension lay in the education of the children, the daughter-in-law's subordination, the generally inferior position of the younger generation, and the young couple's thwarted aspirations to privacy and intimacy.

cy. The aversion to extended households came down to young couples' increasing desire to develop their own, autonomous family life, without interference from the parents. Conflicting aspirations caused much tension within the *familiehuishouding*, according to Kooy, and resulted in much sorrow and hidden resentment.

The position of the daughter-in-law was the most problematic of all. The mother-in-law often did not want to give up her dominant position in the household. She stayed in charge of the kitchen, took over the children, and treated her daughter-in-law like a servant, an intruding stranger (*vreemde*), not of the same blood (*eigen bloed*). Relations between a father and his son-in-law were considered easier, as they did not have to share the same, small domestic space permanently.

However, there were also positive points to living in a three-generation household. There was no investment to be made in setting up an independent household, and parents did not have to worry about becoming isolated in old age. But, as Kooy convincingly argues, it would be wrong to think that household formation was primarily economically motivated. Given the desire among young couples to settle away from their parents, one would expect a high rate of segregated households among the richer farmers. This was, however, not so. The incidence of three-generation household was even higher among large farmers than among the smaller.

Kooy's appraisal of the persistence of these complex households is interesting, in so far as it raises some fundamental questions about the continuity of an old social form in a changing economic and cultural context. Why was it that frustration among young couples, especially the daughters-in-law, was not sufficient to separate households? According to Kooy, ". . . the preservation of many *familiehuishoudingen* is essentially the result of a familial sense of belonging and only a secondary result of material conditions. Most living arrangements are the result of the attachment (*verknochtheid*) of the older generation to their farm, and a weak sense of individualism among the younger generation" (ibid., 1959, p. 48). Elsewhere, Kooy (1958) refers to "an old locally or regionally rooted cultural view," and "family loyalty of the region's population."

This remarkable conclusion rules out economic necessity and attributes continued importance to traditional cultural factors, which are stronger than younger people's new ideals. The younger generation was very reluctant to challenge old people's authority. They were in a dilemma: too embarrassed to propose that their parents should live elsewhere, and ashamed for their personal pretensions (ibid., 1959, p. 140). Young peop-

le's respect for and attachment to this regional style of household formation made it impossible to break completely with the paternal home. Even though there was a real, very serious problem for those who lived in the traditional household, the individualistic outlook on life (*individualistische levensbeschouwing*) was not sufficiently developed to outweigh common interests (ibid., p. 171).

Household formation, marriage and demographic regulation

While Kooy was mainly interested in how people satisfy their material and emotional needs through a variety of family and economic relations, Hofstee's attention was concerned with how people manage to achieve a satisfactory balance between population and resources.

Hofstee had a longstanding interest in differences in regional birth rates in the Netherlands. Regional contrasts in birth rates were particularly confusing in the nineteenth century: birth rates were relatively low in the 'traditional' southern and eastern areas of the country, while they were much higher in the 'modern' western provinces. In North Brabant and Overijssel, for instance, birth rates were generally below 25 per thousand, while these were generally well above 37 per thousand in the western provinces by 1855. The birth rate began to decline in the coastal provinces after 1880, but birth rates increased on the sandy soils in the Dutch inland provinces, where significantly lower birth rates only appeared after the 1930s. Hofstee worked out an explanation for these and other demographic patterns in a theory of reproduction and marriage, which linked developments in agriculture with specific marriage- and household formation strategies (Hofstee 1954, 1961, 1972, 1974, 1978, 1981).

Hofstee (1950a, p. 1025) argued that possibilities for expanding agriculture on the sandy soils were very limited during most of the nineteenth century. Consequently, population growth had to be kept in balance with the means of subsistence. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the use of chemical fertilizers and better crop rotation stimulated the process of intensification and expansion of agricultural land. Reclamation of wasteland, increasing productivity, and favorable market conditions facilitated the creation of new farms and, subsequently, population growth.

Hofstee's central argument (1954, pp. 64-77, 1961, p. 27) was that population and resources were balanced by the self-regulating mechanisms of age at marriage and celibacy. Variations in natality rather than in mor-

tality (Malthus' negative checks) or migration kept population within acceptable bounds. Variations in birth rates (under conditions of natural fertility) reflected people's abilities to set up independent households, and hence the age at marriage and the possibility of marrying at all. Late age at marriage and a high rate of celibacy significantly reduced women's child-bearing period, and the number of child-bearing women. Although marital fertility nearly reached the level of natural fertility, the crude birth rate was relatively low for most of the nineteenth century. The problem of explaining regional differentiation in natality could, according to Hofstee, be resolved by explaining differences in nuptiality, the obvious assumption being that marital fertility was not controlled artificially by contraceptives or abstinence.

Farmers in the eastern and southern provinces displayed a pattern of marriage and reproduction during the nineteenth century, which "... enabled these people to adapt the number of offspring to the available means of subsistence in a remarkable way, without limiting the number of births within marriage. The cornerstone of this complex was the rule that marriage was only feasible with the prospect of a secure livelihood at hand. Failing such security, marriage plans were abandoned and one continued to live unmarried within the parental household" (Hofstee 1954, p. 78). Marriage and family formation were often possible for only one son per family, since the farm could not be divided among several heirs. This marriage would result in complex household arrangements, the new couple living with the parents(-in law) and unmarried brothers and sisters(-in law). Only those children who were lucky enough to marry an heir or heiress from another household could set up their own family as well. Marriages at a young age were, moreover, considered detrimental to the well-being of the family.

Hofstee used the term 'classical artisanal-agrarian pattern of reproduction' (*klassiek ambachtelijk-agrarisch voortplantingspatroon*) to characterize this system. This is mostly described as the 'European marriage pattern' in historical demography, first explored by Hajnal (1965). It is also known as the Malthusian system of 'preventive checks of moral restraint' in several parts of Europe (see also Dupâquier 1972 and Mackenroth 1953). Hofstee consciously preferred to use the term agrarian-artisanal pattern, since it points to a background in an economic system based on small-scale enterprises in agriculture, handicraft and commerce.

Such a restricted system of procreation can, however, only persist under specific economic, sociocultural and psychological conditions. It requires patriarchal family organization: "... in which individual desires

and emotions are subject to family interests, and the collective aspiration to maintain an undivided family property and to secure the family's means of subsistence" (Hofstee 1954, p. 80). Increasing agricultural production and wasteland reclamation significantly enlarged the number of marriages, and hence the proportion of married women. Restrictions on family formation weakened to the extent that new balances between population and resources were found without, however, noticeably rising living standards. The new technical and economic possibilities were not seen as an opportunity to obtain better conditions for the few, but to create prospects for more people (*ibid.*, 1948, p. 36).

The extended family in past times: myth or reality?

Kooy and Hofstee were both very influential in the development of Dutch historical demography, family history, family sociology and rural sociology. Although they are severely criticized, a whole generation of researchers has been positively inspired by their challenging hypotheses. Van der Woude, referring to Hofstee's theory, admits, for instance, that "historical research on the family would have been totally different or even nonexistent in the Netherlands without this theory" (van der Woude 1970, p. 239). Even today, no historical study on family or demography appears without a discussion of Hofstee's thesis of reproductive patterns or Kooy's concept of family individualization (van der Woude 1985; van Engelen and Hillebrand 1990; Verduin 1985; Schuurman 1991).

I will not discuss the debate on demographic developments in the Netherlands (see, for this discussion, van Heek 1954; Buijsink 1970; van Engelen and Hillebrand 1986; Boonstra and van der Woude 1984), but focus on how Kooy's and Hofstee's theories of family development were received. Criticism mainly focused on the empirical validity of their assumption that three or more generations characterized household structure in the past. In this respect, the Netherlands experienced the same confrontation between family sociology and nascent family history as occurred in several other European countries (see Laslett and Wall 1972).

Until the early 1970s, it was generally accepted that the nuclear family household was the product of an historical development, accelerated by the industrial revolution, and originating from the previously dominant extended family. The first Dutch historian to challenge this idea was van der Woude (1970, 1980), followed by Ettema and Neuteboom (1971). Van der Woude, surveying a variety of Dutch regions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, observed that extended families were only found

with any great frequency in the eastern Netherlands. Single person- and nuclear family households were overwhelmingly dominant elsewhere in the country. He concluded that neither Hofstee's thesis of the general occurrence of the agrarian-artisanal reproductive pattern, nor Kooy's theory of family individualization are supported by empirical evidence.

The assumption that 'individualized' nuclear families are by definition autonomous from wider consanguineal and affinal relations was equally questioned. Van Doorn-Jansen (1971) argued, for instance, that household arrangements are not adequate indices for drawing conclusions about the content of the relations between nuclear families and their relatives. She found that urban families kept very close and frequent contact with relatives, both for utilitarian and affective reasons.

Historical research on household structure and family life before the nineteenth century is, however, too limited in scope and theoretical depth to infer the dynamics of family formation and the character of kin relationships in past times. The reconstruction of household structure is such a painstaking task that historians tend to consider it an end in itself, rather than the starting point for studying the structuring principles governing its formation and dynamics. Thus, the linkage between the transmission of resources, property relations and household dynamics is never mentioned as a possible target for further research (a recent exception is Hoppenbrouwers 1992, on a medieval society). There is no discussion as to what households are, how people use them to satisfy their material and social needs, and the extent to which they reflect attitudes concerning kinship, property and caring relations.

Historical research has shown that there is no uniform development in household structures. This implies that empirical generalizations based on sociological theories of family individualization and reproductive patterns must be rejected. However, theoretical approaches are not necessarily useless even if they are based on false historical evidence. Kooy and Hofstee both based their theories on empirical observations in specific periods. Kooy was mainly preoccupied with changes in farm families in the 1950s and 1960s, while Hofstee studied demographic change in the nineteenth century. Their broad empirical generalizations were typical of a time when sociologists had no hesitations about projecting their empirical findings on modernization onto the past. In terms of abstract theory, Kooy and Hofstee have provided invaluable concepts and tools to study the transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' family life. Historians' fixation on demonstrating the 'modern' character of the Dutch family in the

past (see, for instance, Haks 1982) systematically directed research questions away from kinship, property and inheritance among farmers. They implicitly projected Kooy's 'modern' family into the past.

Historical household studies on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are more abundant and often more sophisticated. Empirical material on households is more frequently used with theoretical notions about household strategies and choices. Yet, the general question of why households should differ so much from one region to another remains unexplored. Most perplexing, however, is the complete neglect of cultural factors, in as far as they might affect the structure and functioning of the household. I propose to explore the role of cultural factors with a preliminary excursion into the differences between farmers in the southern and the eastern Netherlands. I will try to show that Hofstee's general theoretical ideas contain in fact the necessary ingredients for such a comparison.

Hofstee's later publications (for instance 1978), assert that the agrarian-artisanal marriage and procreation pattern should be understood as a cultural predisposition. Responding to his critics, he warns against drawing quick conclusions from superficial empirical 'facts.' The cultural impact of the named pattern cannot always be deduced by observing nuptiality, natality and household structure. If, for instance, mortality is extremely high, the number of children reaching nubile age will be low, and the older generation will die early. Consequently, although people might be willing to restrict family formation, there would be no shortage of opportunity for setting up independent households in each generation. The *agrarisch-ambachtelijk patroon* only becomes operational as a cultural device under conditions of low mortality and limited resources; only then it is reflected in marriage and household structure. Hofstee also believed that delayed marriage and celibacy were not consciously practiced to limit the number of offspring. The effects on birth rates were an unintended consequence of behavior, which was predominantly motivated by the lack of opportunities to set up new households and motivated by maintaining family status: ". . . the agrarian-artisanal complex was primarily a strategy to limit the number of households; the restricted number of offspring per generation was a secondary consequence" (ibid., 1981, p. 15).

Hofstee briefly discussed the problems of partible and impartible inheritance for the first time in 1981, but he did not try to resolve the apparent inconsistencies in his theory of marriage and family formation. In earlier, unpublished lecturing notes, Hofstee described the differences between the eastern and southern provinces in some detail (ibid., 1966,

1976). Population and resources were carefully balanced in both regions, but this was done in substantially different ways. In the eastern provinces the farm unity was preserved and handed over to a single successor, who also assumed the responsibility of caring for his parents and unmarried brothers and sisters. This practice was still operative when Hofstee was writing, although the successor's brothers and sisters found it easier to create their own families because of growing employment outside agriculture. Those brothers and sisters did not, however, claim their legal share of the farm, thereby preventing its dispersal.

Family formation in the southern provinces was also restricted, but due to different operational principles. Patri- or matrilocal residence after marriage did not exist. Instead, marriage always led to the formation of an independent household, based on neolocal residence. Parents, moreover, never decided about the division or transfer of the farm during their own lifetime. If a son or a daughter wanted to marry while their parents were still alive, they could do so only by buying land or marrying someone who had inherited some land. This encouraged both a land market and nubile men and women with some inherited land. Hofstee (1966, p. 45) described this pattern of marriage and family formation under conditions of scarce agricultural and other resources as follows. Sons and daughters who managed to set up a farm would leave the parental household to marry. The remaining children would stay with their parents and continue to live together even after their parents' death. Hence, many households consisted of unmarried brothers and sisters, farming their deceased parents' land, which they consolidated in a state of common property. Although Hofstee does not mention it, married children usually seemed to withdraw their inherited portions from the parental farm, joining it to their own farm. Unmarried children had no way of surviving except by farming together, unless they were lucky enough to find a partner with sufficient land to set up an independent farm. The original household would gradually disappear with the death or departure of the remaining children, with the land eventually divided among the surviving heirs.

As already suggested in previous chapters, this pattern of family formation is completely different from the one found in the eastern Netherlands. Parents secured their old age either by transferring the farm to one child, who married and resided in the same household, taking care of them in exchange; or, as in Brabant, by binding unmarried children to the household through the retention of property. The important difference is, however, that there was no unity of farmland and household in the

southern provinces. Households were not reproduced according to the principle of lineality, but gradually disintegrated as members married or died. New households were constantly created and land continually dispersed through equal inheritance. Though the number of households could remain stable, these had no social continuity, while the distribution of land among these households was constantly changing.

It is unfortunately that Hofstee was never really interested in exploring the central role of inheritance. Inheritance was only discussed in a cursory way in unpublished manuscripts, meant for undergraduates. And even in that context it was only to demonstrate the effect on the fragmentation of farmland and not against the background of his wider theoretical notions.

My suggestion, however, is that Hofstee's theory on the relation between population and resources is not inconsistent with the differentiation of inheritance patterns. The problem is Hofstee's insistence on the creation of three-generation households, on the principle of indivisible farms, and the significance of social and cultural control. If these qualifications were set aside, it would be quite possible to argue that family formation is restricted by marriage postponement and celibacy under conditions of limited resources, whether through resource dispersion (equal inheritance), or resource consolidation (unequal inheritance). Balancing resources and population is clearly not restricted to one type of inheritance or household strategy. The idea that different inheritance and family strategies can be used in solving the same economic problem will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five. Here I limit myself to a few brief reflections to conclude the discussion of Hofstee's theories.

Farmers in the southern provinces were certainly conscious of the fact that a certain amount of land was needed to sustain a family. Given that family formation was ideally conceived as setting up an independent household, however, every possible opportunity was seized to escape from the paternal home. The younger generation could, in principle, withdraw land from their parents' farm when one or both parents died. If there was enough land, or if a partner with inherited land could be found, then it was possible to settle down according to the ideal. In contrast to the eastern Netherlands, where the number of heirs was restricted, the southern Netherlands was characterized by numerous men and women with the prospect of a future inheritance. The marriage market was thus a very important mechanism for amalgamating previously dispersed land.

Social mechanisms controlling the growth in number of households were totally different in the eastern Netherlands. The ideal was that the paternal farm should be handed on from one generation to the next, with different generations living together under the same roof. Conserving the 'house' also meant reproducing the status of the successive family lines, implying that exactly those large farms that could survive division in economic terms, were those that remained intact. Keeping the land together was a way of guaranteeing the persistence of a line of descent, reflecting its reputation, influence and prosperity. Resources were consciously withheld from all except one of the children, the designated heir. I disagree with Hofstee when he asserts that farms in the eastern Netherlands were kept together because division would have been unfeasible. The example of the southern provinces shows that farm division, and even the complete dissolution of the farm, could still result in a fairly stable number of households. There are only very weak impulses to separate farms under a system of unequal inheritance. The maintenance of farm unity was not based on self-control versus self-interest, but on social and cultural mechanisms and family interest.

Household structure, we may conclude from the foregoing, is affected by demographic factors, the availability of resources and the culture of regulating access to and transfer of resources. It would be an error to assume that only the presence of extended families indicates resource and status management. Resources and population can be balanced in a variety of ways, each resulting in different farm- and household structures. The underlying dispositions governing these strategies are part of wider cultural notions about kinship and property; only by analyzing these can the dynamics and meaning of household structure be understood. It is very difficult to verify the foregoing reflections from current Dutch historical studies. Although there are several detailed studies on household structure for both Overijssel (de Vries 1988; Remmers-Leunk 1982) and Brabant (van den Brink 1989; Janssens 1989; Lindner 1989; van der Heijden 1989), there have been no analyses of property relations and inheritance strategies.

Conclusion

It is easy to demonstrate the assumption that kinship and family are in decline as structuring principles, from Dutch family sociology. Status achievement, social mobility, social security and income strategies are no

longer seen as belonging to a sphere of intimate personal, idiosyncratic relations, but to the formal sphere of institutions, the market, class, and the educational system. The processes of family individualization and loss of family functions have caused a complete separation between the public sphere of production and the market and the private sphere of the family.

This theoretical orientation is so influential that the study of the rural family has been almost completely abandoned since the early 1960s and, more significantly, the role of kinship is *a priori* neglected by historians and social scientists. Criticisms of early family sociology were mainly based on new empirical evidence, eradicating Hofstee's and Kooy's generalizing assumption that the extended family was the predominant household form of the past. Instead of advancing new theoretical approaches, or new perspectives on the role of kinship, theory was abolished altogether. Kooy's emphasis on changing and conflicting kinship ideologies and Hofstee's focus on regulatory mechanisms for access to resources and status reproduction, have been completely ignored. Hence, such concepts as inheritance, kinship and property are completely absent in Dutch social and historical sciences. Ironically enough, this is a result of Kooy's main and seemingly generally accepted thesis, that kinship has become devoid of any practical or symbolic significance. The refutation of unilinear development from extended to nuclear families seems to have given the green light for the disappearance of kinship, as a regulatory principle in social and economic life, from research agendas. The separation that was assumed between the sphere of production and consumption, between the material and the symbolic, was so influential that farm families were no longer considered worth studying.

IV

A Family Affair?

Family factors influencing the transfer of the family farm

PREVIOUS CHAPTERS HAVE described how preoccupation with the problem of farm inheritance evolved from a general political and legal focus at the turn of the century, to a scholarly interest in farmers' customs in the eastern Netherlands. Concern with the intergenerational reproduction of farms did not, however, disappear after the second World War. Indeed, issues comparable with those raised at the turn of the century received, to some extent, renewed attention. The outlook on agricultural development and the socioeconomic context in general had, however, changed drastically. Agricultural policy aimed at reconstructing Dutch farming into an efficient and competitive economic sector and, small farms had become identified as a problem of backwardness. Whereas the concern before 1945 was stabilizing a 'healthy' and numerous agricultural population, the issue now became how to encourage farm expansion and reduce the number of farms (de Haan 1993). Economic growth and rising living standards obliged farmers to modernize, from the 1950s onwards, in order to maintain a reasonable level of income. The problem for young farmers was no longer one of financing succession to an existing farm, but rather that of financing succession to an expanding farm, and mobilizing the necessary means of enlarged reproduction. The number of small farms had grown in an unprecedented way between the two World Wars, and this process now became the subject of real political concern. This chapter will explore how this new context influenced discussions on inheritance and succession issues. Was the family seen as a

possible danger to keeping a viable farm intact or, conversely, as a virtual guarantor for accomplishing modern farm goals? Could farming practices develop into a businesslike enterprise completely eliminating the role of family relations? The family character of the farm enterprise was regarded as an obstacle to modern entrepreneurial standards by political and scientific analyses during much of the 1950s and 1960s (de Haan 1993). Although the idiom of family continued to pervade terminology, there was outspoken skepticism about the mutual interference of family and farm. Practical proposals to eliminate family influence by legal means, and theoretical reflections on farmers' strategies, provide insight on the perception of inheritance and succession at that time.

This chapter draws upon a variety of sources to give an account of the main issues and debates: firstly, a mixture of books, articles and pamphlets, written by policy makers, farmers' representatives, and a variety of academic authors; and secondly, the published versions of Dutch parliamentary debates and government publications, in as far as issues concerning farm succession and inheritance were discussed.

Agricultural policy was clearly a critical determinant for structural developments in agriculture. The state has played a prodigious role through intervention in markets, technological research, extension, education, subsidies, and land allotment schemes (van den Brink 1990). Although there have always been discussions about a market-oriented, free agriculture *vis-à-vis* some form of protection and state regulation, state intervention steadily intensified in the postwar period. The most recent regulations are limitations on production and strict environmental rules. The parameters set by the state were crucial to young farmers' chances of entering farming through succession, as were fiscal and legal policies. There was, indeed, scarcely any aspect of state policy that did not influence farm succession directly or indirectly. Farmers' decisions and opportunities were not only determined by conditions in agriculture: industrial development, welfare policy, and so on, set a future in farming in comparative perspective, turning the process of choice into a careful balancing of available options. In examining farm succession and inheritance as concrete issues for debate and intervention, I shall focus, however, upon agricultural policy and inheritance law *per se* rather than analyzing how the state created general social and economic conditions.

There are several ways of approaching this problem. One might be through a systematic inventory of all legislation and relevant measures. This sort of analysis would, however, be rather tedious since it reveals

nothing about the preceding arguments and debates. It would, furthermore, neglect a whole range of draft proposals that never materialized. Since concrete measures and legislation were in fact rather few, most clues to how farm inheritance and succession were perceived can be obtained by examining the range of ideas and alternatives put forward in such proposals.

Inheritance practices contra agricultural policy: the problem of family autonomy

Agricultural policy was largely the work of the social democratic minister of agriculture Mansholt, in the years following the second World War. Many of the later Mansholt Plan ideas germinated between 1945 and 1957, when he occupied this position (Vermeulen 1989). The most important challenge facing agricultural policy immediately after 1945 was to recuperate the sector's national and international position. Mansholt thought that the state should support farmers in every possible way. Support should not be aimed at alleviating individual problems indiscriminately, but be part of a wider structural plan to change agriculture. The number of small farms soon became an important issue in this agricultural reform. One of the most important agricultural policy goals was the mobility of the work force to the industrial sector and low production costs, especially after 1958, when industrial development reached maturity and export possibilities began to improve. Mansholt's successor, the social democrat Vondeling, elaborated this 'structural policy.'

The problem of small farms has to be understood within the context of an industrializing society, where the success of industrial policy depended largely on cheap food (hence, low wages) and a plentiful labor force. Mobility from agriculture to industry and the service sector, combined with growing efficiency in agricultural production, were seen as unavoidable to meet the demands from industry and to improve farmers' income position. As long as too many workers were attached to 'sub-marginal' farms, both industrial and agricultural progress would be circumscribed. Under these circumstances such processes as farm enlargement and a reduction in the rate of succession were considered vital.

The 'dangers' of farm fragmentation

Farm succession and inheritance were virtually completely absent from government publications and parliamentary debates during the 1950s,

when they do not seem to have been as important for agricultural policy. There was, however, recognition in academic circles that farm fragmentation—resulting from population pressure and the division of land at inheritance—might easily undermine agricultural policy. Baert (1949), for instance, became alarmed by the relentless increase of small farms in the Netherlands, as early as 1949. He circulated a questionnaire to all rural notaries concerning the link between inheritance patterns and the increasing numbers of small farms. He wrote a rather thin article based on the 318 answers received.

This research was the first to be carried out on a national scale but, since it only aimed at measuring the effects of inheritance on splitting up farms, no attention was paid to the exact distribution of property among heirs. Thus, whenever the farm was preserved as an economic unit, no indications were given as to possible coheir compensations, or to the division of real property among nonfarming heirs. The failure to distinguish between the transmission of land use rights and the real devolution of wealth seriously inhibits an appraisal of inheritance patterns.

The results nonetheless confirmed earlier descriptions of regional variety. The typical areas of farm division were North Brabant and Limburg, Zeeland, Drente and the southern part of Gelderland. Elsewhere in the country, the economic unit was mostly transferred to a single successor. Baert was in no doubt that inheritance patterns contributed substantially to the increasing numbers of small farms, especially in the province of North Brabant. He expected that this would continue until reaching the limits of what farmers themselves considered economically possible.

The law of inheritance and other forms of legal intervention

Discussions about inheritance and agriculture were not only motivated by economic reasons. When the government launched serious plans to revise Civil Law, including the parts on inheritance in the 1950s, agrarian law specialists were asked to consider the need for such change and to propose possible changes. The prospect of change in the law fermented controversy about the right of heirs to demand their portion in real property, and the lack of legal protection for properties constituting an economic unit. One writer, C.H. Polak (1952), argued that inheritance law should not be changed on these points. Instead, he greatly preferred court decisions in cases of dispute. If several potential successors claimed their part of a farm, the judge ought to decide in favor of the most capable candidate to take on and preserve the unity of the enterprise. The other children

would have to be content with monetary compensation. The amount of this financial compensation should also be decided by the court, according to C.H. Polak, since coheirs might threaten the survival of the farm by demanding exorbitant prices, thereby plunging it into debt. Polak proposed the value of the farm should to be determined in such a way as to guarantee the successor a reasonable income.

C.H. Polak introduced two important new elements to the debate on succession and inheritance, which had so far been much neglected. Court decisions should be used as a means of enforcing the successor's demands, even if his competing siblings' claims were legitimate. Such conflicts should be decided on the principle of 'general interest' and should literally ignore the law. The advantage of court decisions, according to C.H. Polak, was that they offered a reasonable solution in cases of dispute, unlike the generalized breach in family autonomy that a change in the law implied: "The state should only intervene in family relations when it is strictly necessary. The equality of all children is a deeply rooted principle in Dutch legal consciousness" (C.H. Polak 1952, pp. 620-621). C.H. Polak's other proposal, to introduce a realistic criterion of estimating the value of land in family transactions, mirrored the idea that current market prices did not always bear a relation to the real economic value of the land.

The idea as such was not new, since the government had already submitted a special law on the alienation of land (*Wet op de Vervreemding van Landbouwgronden*), which meant that all market transactions of land had to be approved by the Land Council (*Grondkamer*). This *Wet op de Vervreemding van Landbouwgronden* was submitted in 1951 and became law in 1953. The regulation was meant to keep land prices under control and to place requirements on buyers. The law had been very controversial ever since it came into being, and was finally abolished in 1963 (see Heisterkamp 1983). The *grondkamer* had to approve both the price and the use of land before any transaction could be effected. This meant in practice that the price of land was determined at a maximum level, related to the profitability of agriculture. There was, however, one important exception: family transactions did not have to be approved by the Land Council, making it theoretically possible for a successor to have to pay his parents or siblings much more than he would have done on the market. C.H. Polak argued for family transactions to be subjected to the scrutiny of the Land Council as well.

The political feasibility of breaking farmers' autonomy

The question of inheritance was first raised in Parliament in 1957, when the negative consequences for farm structure were emphasized in a letter to the members of Parliament. The minister of agriculture put the problem as follows: "... agrarian population pressure, combined with our national law of inheritance have resulted in a growth in the number of small farms, and a pronounced fragmentation of land in many parts of the country" (*Memorie van Antwoord* 1957). The government was considering extensive intervention, such as a change in the law of inheritance, incentives to stimulate older farmers to retire, and requirements for persons wishing to enter farming. This last point meant that *vestigingseisen* (settlement requirements), were to be installed both with respect to the person (qualifications) and the farm (size, viability) to prevent the creation of new and the continuation of existing small farms. Proposals to regulate access to farming were not new.

Vondeling, who later became minister of agriculture, sketched a radical future scenario for agriculture as early as 1948 : "With greater state involvement in the individual quest for welfare, and the growing conviction that all irrational production is immoral, the farmer should give up his personal ambitions and comply with the demands imposed by society. If he does not manage to do this, either because he does not want to or is unable to improve his economic performance above a certain standard, then it will be necessary to remove him from his farm" (Vondeling 1948, p. 6). When Vondeling became minister of agriculture, he still proposed combatting the problem of small farms by withholding permission for setting up farms below a certain minimum size (*Ministerie van Landbouw* 1958).

Policy recommendations for prohibiting the succession to farms considered too small according to government standards, combined with legal changes to prevent further splitting up of farmland, were unprecedented, although far from realization. Nooij (1969), looking back on this period at the end of the 1960s, observed: "... the condition of agriculture was analyzed without scruple, and strongly worded recommendations that might deeply affect farmers' future put forward ..." (p. 20).

The conclusions and recommendations of the Hofstee commission (*Commissie Hofstee*) were along much the same lines. This commission was inaugurated in 1954 to advise the government about colonizing the new polder land (*Rapport van de commissie van advies inzake aspecten van het kolonisatiebeleid* 1959). The acquisition of new land and its settlement

was clearly related to problems on the 'old land.' The expansion of farming to new agricultural land was seen as an opportunity for alleviating population pressure, and compensating land losses to urban and industrial developments. The new polders were surrounded with idealistic plans to create a new society, disentangled from the constraints of traditional land forms and the existing agrarian structures of rural society.

One of the commission's tasks was to analyze the growing structural difficulties of agriculture, mainly with reference to the problem of small farms. The commission's final report clearly condemned the law of inheritance as leading to 'irresponsible farm fragmentation.' It was particularly opposed to the division of family estates according to the wishes of those involved, while fixed prices and conditions regulated market transactions: "It is small wonder that the division of large farms upon inheritance is still one of the main reasons for the increasing numbers of small farms" (*ibid.*, p. 86). The commission proposed cancelling the right to claim an inheritance portion in the form of real property. A testator should have the right to endow one son with the farm as a whole, coheirs being entitled to monetary portions only. The successor's financial problems should, moreover, be alleviated by allowing him to spread compensatory payments to his brothers and sisters over a long period. The value of the farm would ultimately have to be determined by the Land Council. Apart from these regulations on family transactions, the commission also proposed that farm succession should be examined by an independent board, with the possibility of demanding specific qualifications of farmers and denying transfer if a farm did not conform to stipulated norms. Existing farms would be subject to regular inspection and, if they did not correspond to the standard, then the farmer would be informed that the farm could not be transmitted to a son.

This advice reflected the unmistakable view that agricultural modernization and the mobility of farmland and farm workers should not be left to farmers alone. Farmers who were prepared to accept a moderate income on a traditional farm were seen as irksome hindrances on the path to modernity. If they did not want to leave agriculture voluntarily, they would have to be forced out. It is also clear that an implicit model of the ideal farmer and farm was being created. The ideal farmer was highly qualified and willing to raise his living standards by increasing the efficiency of his farm.

Although the proposed state regulations that have been discussed were not implemented, structural and price policies together with extension practices contributed to an ideological campaign in favor of the model

farmer, while perpetrating a negative image of others as lagging behind. This negative image, combined with the consequences of farm policy was probably as conducive to decreasing farm numbers and failed successions, as compulsory action would have been. Not surprisingly, the state refused to give any special help to young successors. Difficulties in farm succession as such were completely overlooked and neglected, as it was assumed that these were problems of farmers who were trying to do the impossible: take over a nonviable farm. The only problems recognized as relevant were those created by coheirs in claiming an unreasonable portion of family property. Proposals to alleviate these financial burdens sought to restrict these demands by legal changes or court decisions.

Family solidarity or conflict? The rise of new models for inheritance and succession

Concern about the effects of inheritance on farm structure had been very much based on conjecture. There had been no research on inheritance practices and their effects on farm viability, apart from Baert's 1948 study. People were nonetheless convinced that inheritance law was the main culprit for divided farms. There was no reference to farmers' economic rationality, to local customs apart from the principle of law or, to a possible shift in farmers' appeals from local normative spheres to national law.

Several studies had partially filled this lacuna by the end of the 1950s; these took a different view of law and presented more relevant empirical data. The law was no longer seen as the only relevant factor. It was also recognized that the effect of land division could only be judged, positively or negatively, in relation to the intensity of farming. Farmers were, moreover, attributed rationality that prevented them from endangering their own position. In other words, attention was removed from the theory of law to the practice of agriculture.

J.M. Polak (1959) was one of those to express this more relaxed view, although he still proposed a statute to regulate the price of farmland subject to division by inheritance, since he anticipated future difficulties. He argued that the law of inheritance could not be equated with farmers' practice, since the reality of inheritance was constituted either by court decisions in cases of dispute or, more harmoniously, as a private family settlement in the notary's office. These procedures resulted in wide differences between inheritance law and daily practice, to such an extent that: "... the principle of equality in the division of estates and the rigidity of the legitimate portion in real property are very often not achieved" (Po-

lak 1959, p. 334). Family settlements arrived at by common agreement had already been noticed long ago, but J.M. Polak's assertion that court verdicts had become another standard way of settling conflicts—mostly in favor of a single successor—was a novelty. He described a case from 1954 to illustrate judges' arguments for deviating from the letter of the law. In that year, twelve heirs disputed the division of medium-sized farm. The court decided that: "... a farm of that size (14 hectares) cannot be divided. It (the court) is supported in this view by agricultural legislation, which makes it clear that it is not responsible to divide such a farm" (ibid., p. 336).

J.M. Polak thought that judicial decisions would become a very important mechanism for preventing farm fragmentation. Either he did not fully realize, or did not want to elaborate on the importance of this observation, however. The suggestion that successors went to litigation more frequently shows that traditional models governing the division of an inheritance were apparently becoming defunct, or anyway under attack as a result of conflicting family claims. The kind of court decisions J.M. Polak described as becoming more frequent can be considered as a 'new,' legally sanctioned source of authority that farmers could draw upon in cases of conflict. Court decisions suggest that farm succession should be viewed primarily in economic terms, taking current conceptions of minimally required farm sizes as the main frame of reference. These decisions opposed the principle of equality between heirs as having priority in the hierarchy of values, and contested individual claims so central to inheritance law.

By the end of the 1950s there were several different normative systems regulating the transfer of resources and management of a farm. These existed side-by-side and each was based on a different sort of legitimacy and form of appeal. Local kinship models operated in cases whereby the family or wider kin group defined its own terms, without appealing to some external source of authority. Family members either reached common accord without disputing their respective rights, or an agreement was imposed by family sanctions. Decisions were reached by accepting or imposing ideas about the relation between kinship, property and farming. Farm transmission could also be informed by foregrounding external economic conditions, thus marginalizing former kinship models. In these cases common agreement was also possible, but in cases of dispute the successor might successfully go to litigation, and impose his claims. Finally the transfer of resources could be effected without any evocation of kinship

or farm viability. In these cases the market value of the farm served as a point of reference for dividing it into equal monetary portions. This last option was also observed by Polak, and was considered to be an alarming result of modernization.

Inheritance law, at least the parts concerning equal rights to land, seemed to lose out in cases of unresolved disputes, when court decisions defended the interests of agriculture and of the successor. Inheritance law nonetheless retained a prominent position since these court decisions only protected the unity of the farm, without recanting the principle of equal monetary shares. Court decisions did not protect the successor from what J.M. Polak (1958) designated the 'commercialization of inheritance': "Inheritance becomes an increasingly businesslike transaction. There is much less tolerance than in earlier times, people claim their legal rights . . . This change in the agricultural world can, without any doubt, be attributed to the influence of the big city in rural areas. The countryside has broken out of its isolation and this commercialization is one of the results" (p. 337). Polak believed that with the erosion of traditional ties and constraints, the successor could no longer rely on family solidarity and had to find court support for the new ideology of economic efficiency. The successors' rights to make such legal appeals should, however, be extended beyond simply maintaining the economic unit, to the price he had to pay for buying the land from his parents or the compensations to be given to his brothers and sisters.

Polak did not specify whether this 'commercialization' was taking place in the Netherlands as a whole, in certain regions, or only among certain farmers. The speculative nature of such remarks on changing mentalities is demonstrated in a short pamphlet issued by the Cooperative Raiffeisen Bank. The anonymous author of this pamphlet assumed that the principle of equality between the children was surely operative. However, since the division of a farm was not always desirable and the financial burdens were heavy, attempts were made to reach a reasonable agreement. The writer of this pamphlet, unlike J.M. Polak, had the impression that these agreements were not based on rigid monetary values: "Fortunately, this problem is not very serious in agriculture . . . That is because of the enormous solidarity that one finds in agrarian circles" (Coöperatieve Centrale Raiffeisen-Bank 1960, p. 4). Here it is thus assumed that changing economic circumstances had altered the model by which families reached common accord. Whereas an ethic of sibling equality had been expressed in past land transfers, land should now be kept together and sibling equality sacrificed for sibling solidarity to maintain the farm in-

tact. The family was not the malevolent factor emphasized by J.M. Polak, but a positive component in the intergenerational reproduction of the farm. This shift in thinking on farm succession expressed here by an anonymous writer, became more explicit in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mapping diversity of inheritance practices

Farmers' organizations showed scarcely any interest in the consequences of inheritance practices on the development of agriculture until the 1960s, when the combined Union of Agricultural Interest Groups (*Landbouw-schap*) commissioned a report on the proposed means of changing the law of inheritance. The final report, published in 1960, voiced reassurance about the supposed menaces from existing legislation, and also presented the results of a nationwide survey on inheritance practices (*Landbouw-schap* 1960). Several reasons for studying inheritance were mentioned in the introduction. Firstly, there were the impending government revisions to the law of inheritance. A new Civil Law had already been drafted and, though it was impossible to predict when these changes would be implemented by Parliament, it was worth giving the views of the agricultural world. Secondly, agricultural development in the forms of land allotment schemes and the policy of modernization, should not be jeopardized by the opposing tendencies of inheritance toward the division of farms.

One fundamental question for the research commission was whether, indeed, farms were divided upon inheritance and, if so, what the consequences were for their viability. This part of the report is certainly the most interesting since the commission decided to send questionnaires to all rural notaries, with questions comparable to the ones asked by Baert in 1949. The response, however, was rather disappointing: only 172 replies were received, whereas Baert had received 318 completed forms. The fact that the commission decided upon a survey proves that it was interested in farmers' practice, rather than assuming a causal relationship between it and the law of inheritance.

The survey results were presented in an inconsistent way. Many data were, for instance, given in an aggregate form, which makes it difficult to determine the exact regional distribution of inheritance patterns. The commission did, however, make the correct distinction between legal property and land use rights. This facilitates a more accurate approach to the principle of equality and inequality. The main conclusions were scarcely novel; they confirmed the already well-known regional divisions in inheritance practices. The areas of partibility were still located in Brabant,

Limburg, Drente and the western and southern parts of Gelderland, with so-called *splitsingseilanden* (isles of partibility) distributed over the whole country. Elsewhere the farm was not divided; real property was either transmitted to all heirs, or the heirs were fully or partially compensated. These findings are surprisingly consistent with the patterns described at the end of the nineteenth century, demonstrating once again the continuity in local customs even in a rapidly changing economic environment.

The division of farms was not, according to the report's authors, by definition detrimental to agricultural performance: it could even allow some inheritors to expand their farms if they obtained land divided in this way. Farmers with only a small amount of land were moreover motivated to invest in very intensive land use, resulting in farms with a very high productive capacity. The commission mentioned the growing phenomenon of intensive livestock farming (pigs, poultry, calves) and horticulture (for instance, in glass houses). While it is nowhere explicit, the authors obviously felt that any regulation debarring a farmer's son from a career in farming on farm size criteria risked sacrificing much entrepreneurial spirit.

The report was not in favor of modifying the law of inheritance in favor of agricultural property. It was thought that enough could be done to avoid harmful developments via partnerships and court decisions, protecting the successor's interests. The only necessary change in agricultural legislation would be to include family transactions under the Land Council. The survey made it clear that the price paid to parents or siblings for land was often far above the maximum set by this Council. A price limit would not, the authors argued, violate the principle of equality, as long as the value reflected profitability in agriculture. They asserted that the agricultural population's "conviction that all children should be treated equally" would not be affronted by such price regulation.

Though the division of farms into smaller units and the principle of equality were not necessarily detrimental to agriculture, the commission nonetheless advised handling them with caution. Even when a farm was transmitted in its entirety to one successor, the financial burdens of paying off siblings could be such that there was hardly any room for new investments. This might dampen the enthusiasm of potential successors, especially in the southern Netherlands, where equality was deeply rooted in the minds of its population. The *blijver* (successor) in the eastern Netherlands, by contrast, was in a much better position since the estimation of farm value bore no relation to any externally determined standard.

Ideas about what was reasonable for the successor, rather than the land market, determined the size of compensations there.

One important new perspective developed by the commission was that the division of farms in itself was no longer considered the most important issue, since this would be limited by economic constraints and possibilities. The problem that came increasingly to the fore was how to maintain a farm when the brothers and sisters demanded excessively high portions of a present or future inheritance.

Liberal policy and the importance of the family

It had become a commonplace by the early 1960s that the number of farms would have to be drastically reduced to achieve the objective of a modern farming industry. Scientific research, education and extension became the indispensable handmaidens of policy interventions. The political climate did, however, become much more relaxed with the Christian democratic ministry of agriculture; a milder tone of cooperation and welfare policy replaced the idiom of confrontation and compulsion. Minister Marijnen abandoned the idea of the politically contested settlement criteria in his memorandum on agricultural policy from 1963. Instead he proposed an active government role in the land market, and premiums on early retirement (*Nota inzake het landbouwbeleid* 1963). The abolishment of land price control, thus ending discussion about whether this system should also be applied to family transactions, shows an apparent reduction of the state's role.

The predominant philosophy was, however, that the technological and scientific revolution ought to be given maximum encouragement and priority. Farmers would have to adapt themselves, but the government acknowledged a supervisory obligation to alleviate serious social problems and to try to maintain reasonable farm incomes. The liberal undertone of political practice was clearly emphasized with respect to farm succession: "Every farm family must think very carefully about succession possibilities and be prepared to make a choice from among several feasible alternatives" (*ibid.*). It was obviously not for the state to make this choice by setting limits to farm size. The government could not be held responsible for insufficient farm income resulting from taking over small farms or from splitting farms up.

The minister of agriculture described the situation as follows in 1963: "There are signs that several branches of agriculture are involved in developments that severely jeopardize their survival. The agricultural sector,

supported by appropriate state policy, must find an adequate answer, as it did in the 1880s. The financial requirements per farm and per agricultural worker are growing to such an extent that it is becoming ever more difficult for a person who is simultaneously owner, provider of capital, labor power and manager, to accumulate sufficient assets during his productive life to finance an economically viable farm" (*ibid.*). The problem of financing the farm was, according to the minister, related to the fact that those getting out of agriculture had to be paid for the land they released for those who stayed in farming. Such losses of capital to other sectors were a normal feature of a shrinking agricultural population.

The ministry of agriculture introduced the *Ontwikkelings- en Saneringsfonds voor de Landbouw* (Agricultural development and restructuring fund) in 1963, to try to alleviate the problem. The aims of the fund were to create more financial space for expanding farms via subsidies on loans, and by encouraging small, inefficient farms to give up farming through retirement schemes and other financial stimuli. Financial support was deliberately not directed at all farms, but only those complying with the model of the modernizing, viable farm, as defined by ministerial criteria. This differentiation became an official policy guideline for years to come marking the definitive breakthrough of vanguard farms (*koploperbedrijven*) (van der Ploeg 1985b) and further marginalization of small farms.

Though the minister recognized that the long term survival of a farm depended partly on specific family circumstances related to succession and inheritance, no support in terms of special subsidies was made available (*Memorie van antwoord* 1966). Such an attitude was quite logical and consistent with structural policy. Some farms might indeed be considered economically viable, but if they could not be reproduced within the prevailing context of family relations they would prove invalid in the long run, since only economically viable farms can survive powerfully exerted family demands.

A parliamentary debate on farm succession and related problems may serve as a single illustration of the dominant ideological climate at the ministry of agriculture in the 1960s. A socialist deputy mooted the problem of private land ownership as one of the most inhibiting factors of farm succession in 1967. He urged the minister to comment on the notion of a more pronounced role for the state in the organization of property relations, since young farmers in particular faced such enormous problems in financing the purchase of land. This member of Parliament confronted the minister with a proposal, formulated by the junior section of the minister's own Christian Democratic party, to consider nationalizing

land. He asked for a statement of principle from the minister, even though he himself was not particularly in favor of nationalization, being much more of an advocate of subsidies for farmers who were starting up.

Minister Biesheuvel acknowledged in his reply that there were serious problems in financing farm succession. But he denied that it was for the government to produce a solution. As a proponent of free enterprise, moreover, the minister rejected any form of nationalizing the means of production, including land. A solution for the agricultural sector was a matter for agricultural organizations and private initiatives. Once these solutions had been found they would be supported, if realistic, by the ministry. This discussion demonstrates that the problem of farm succession was considered a private one, and any intervention was regarded contrary to the broad structural aims of modernizing the agricultural sector.

It is interesting in this context to see how the role of family relations was brought into this debate at the end of the 1960s. Family relations had been seen as a potential threat since claims on inheritance portions could jeopardize the reproduction of viable farms. By the end of the 1960s, however, the negative consequences of family factors had been transformed into a positive attribute. The family suddenly appeared to be an anchor to which farmers could attach themselves: a positive feature of family farm continuity. Possible conflicts between heirs and generations were assumed to have disappeared.

The 1969 issue of ministry of agriculture's annual publication on agricultural policy (*Memorie van toelichting op begroting van Landbouw en Visserij 1969*) illustrated the role of the family as the mainstay of farming by showing the proportion of land leased from the parents on a national scale. Two-thirds of all rented land was rented from parents. Furthermore, money for financing farm succession was frequently borrowed on very favorable terms from immediate kin. In 1967, 40 percent of total borrowed capital on Dutch farms consisted of money borrowed from parents, brothers, sisters and other family members. These, according to the minister, were among the features of family farming that allowed farmers a certain independence from and protection against the land and capital markets, and that, in combination with a healthy entrepreneurial spirit and craftsmanship, offered plenty of possibilities for successful farming. This emphasis on the potentially positive role of family relations for solving financial problems, and as the pillar of family farming in general, contrasted sharply with the analytical and political notions of the family

farm (see de Haan 1993). I will come back to this apparent inconsistency later in this chapter.

Toward a marginalization of the family: The rise of contractual family farming and the recognition of family transactions

This positive appraisal of the family as a supportive network was accompanied by a shift in the definition of problems by the end of the 1960s. From concern about how to keep the original farm intact and how to cope with financial claims from coheirs, the issue became sharply focused on how an *individual* successor could solve the problems of financing an expanding farm, and ever more removed from the context of family relations. This appraisal can easily give the impression that the dangers of splitting farms and compensating coheirs were either accepted as integral to farm succession, or had been reduced to acceptable proportions through favorable family arrangements or by a better legal position of the successor. In the following I will consider each of these alternative suggestions.

The character of farm succession entered a new phase, due to economic and legal developments, by the late 1960s. Changing the law of inheritance was no longer conceived as something that could be achieved in the short term. The issue completely disappeared from the political agenda and no deadline was set to open the debate. There were sensible reasons for no longer trying to reform inheritance law from the perspective of agriculture. Progress was made in two important ways to improve the successor's legal status. One was the advance of corporate or contractual family farming, the other was the finance minister's authorization to attribute nonmarket prices to father-son transactions.

The father-son partnership

The rise of corporate farming cannot be attributed to specific legal changes. Civil Law (Article 1655) had always offered the possibility for two or more persons to arrange their economic cooperation in a formal legal way (*Maatschapscontract*). The exact text is as follows: "*Maatschap* is an agreement, uniting two or more persons bringing something to a common fund, and intending to share the resulting profits." It is therefore difficult to explain why this legal form became an increasingly popular way for farmers to arrange farm succession in the 1960s (see Bogaarts 1978; Tjallema 1967; Helmich 1964). It all too easy to assume that this was primarily

for reasons of taxation purposes, and in order for the successor to accumulate some capital before definitively taking over the farm. Farmers might put forward the same reasons, but I believe corporate farming was primarily a symbolic expression of the successor's individuality *vis-à-vis* his father and other members of the family, and expressed fundamental changes in family attitudes.

This assertion needs some further explanation. Before the generalization of contractual forms of cooperation between farther and son, the successor's position was dependent on confidence and dependence. The son would work for years with his father, without any proper remuneration and only on the promise that he would eventually receive the farm as a reward for his substantial labor input. Several risks were involved in this arrangement. If one or both parents died before handing over the farm the son would have a difficult time arguing for a higher inheritance portion if his siblings wanted to press their cases. Moreover, the son might at any time be confronted by a brother or a sister claiming parts of the farm for their own use.

Even if the farm was transmitted during the parent's lifetime, the son had to endure a long period of dependence and submission. Having invested so much time and energy in his future, the son would avoid quarrelling with his father at any price, since this might end in an overt conflict where the son was always the loser side for lack of power. The time between beginning to work on the parental farm and taking it over on the father's retirement or death could, with lengthening life expectancy, easily amount to fifteen or twenty years. Years of uncertainty, denial of independence and even marriage could gradually frustrate the successor, who was denied status, income and control over the farm and, not indeed sure about taking over at all. Agricultural social services were already concerned about this situation in the 1960s, and advised farmers to take all possible measures to prevent frustration and failing succession (Groot and Verheij 1964).

The *maatschap* was a construction *par excellence* to solve a range of problems by a simple contractual arrangement. It allowed the son a proper status, guaranteed remuneration for his labor input, and security to take over the farm in its entirely. The *maatschap* contract settled the distribution of farm income on the basis of each associate's contribution of capital and labor (which resulted in substantial tax gains) but, what is more important, this formal contract broke with the singularity of the above mentioned family relations. Labor relations were no longer based on the hierarchical model of the generations, but on a general partnership

with equal rights. This does not mean that daily interaction between father and son could simply be transformed into a different labor process; it did mean, however, that the son's self-esteem and respect from others were considerably upgraded. He was greatly attached to this formal status attribution for symbolic and public reasons.

Apart from this formal transformation of labor relations, the *maatschap* extinguished important principles of inheritance law (van der Velde 1990). On its creation, all property belonging to the farm was conveyed to the legal ownership of the *maatschap* and acquired the status of indivisibility, which means that no part of it could be withdrawn or alienated without the consent of the *maatschap* partners. This common fund was, however, not undifferentiated. From the outset, that part of the fund contributed by the parents was clearly identified as theirs. The son gradually built up his own fund as the profits of the farm were partially assigned to him. There are obviously many more financial and fiscal technicalities involved. The point I want to make, however, is that the son was entitled to fundamental judicial rights, protecting him from the risk of losing control over the farm. The successor's rights were basically protected against the division of property and contesting successors.

If the father died, or retired, the son was entitled to receive all his *maatschap* property. The son did, however, have to pay his mother and siblings compensation, on his father's death, for their legal right to an inheritance portion—unless that claim had been officially renounced. The law of inheritance could thus be legally ignored to the extent that coheirs were not entitled to receive portions *in natura*. If the father's ownership in the *maatschap* was transferred during his lifetime, the son would have to pay a price in just the same way, but without his brothers and sisters being able to lay claim to their portions. The price assigned to the farm in these transfers was obviously very important and I will return to it later.

In summary, the *maatschap* facilitated gradual transference of the farm to a successor, guaranteeing him a share in the profits, professional status and security to take over the entire farm. The specificity of this arrangement was that it assigned a high degree of autonomy to father and son, thus transforming the process of succession and inheritance from an affair in which all family members could have a voice, to one in which the other children were partially marginalized. This practice would seem to constitute an important breach with normative models based on family negotiations. The son who came to such an agreement with his father was no longer beholden to acquiescent brothers and sisters. Yet it is unlikely

that this legal possibility altered the internal family process. As I pointed out earlier, partnerships significantly enhanced the status of the son, and facilitated an otherwise complex financial and legal process. Although the partnerships protected sons against unfavorable family disputes, it is unlikely that they were set up for that reason since court decisions already protected the unity of the farm.

Recognition of family prices as opposed to the market value of land

The exclusion of the successor's brothers and sisters from the process of farm succession and inheritance must be qualified, however, in one important respect. Siblings did, in fact, only lose their right to inherit real property and hence the possibility of sharing succession to the father's status or setting up their own farm. They did not, however, lose their legal position as heirs to their parents' wealth; on the death of one parent they could force the successor to compensate them for his favored position as inheritor of all property. These compensations could still jeopardize the whole project, since the successor's financial commitments were increasing.

This became especially clear after 1963, when state control of land prices ended. Land transactions were regulated by the Agricultural Land Transfer Act between 1953 and 1963, as mentioned earlier, implying the maintenance of land prices at modest levels. These regulations had always been much disputed, and land eventually became free of every form of control. The result was an unprecedented increase in prices, especially during the 1970s, when the market price of land shot up from £9,830 per hectare in 1970/71, to £56,900 in 1977/78 (Veerman 1983). Although output per hectare increased substantially during the same period, farmers could only maintain a reasonable income by considerable scale enlargement and intensification. This was achieved by reducing the size of the labor force, increasing the size of the farm and intensifying the use of industrial inputs. Farmers were increasingly obliged by these circumstances to rely solely on family labor and as much as possible on credit-free land and machinery. Many farmers were effectively deprived of a successor by these conditions, since their farms were too small to be able to realize the necessary adjustments.

The reestablishment of a free land market and the subsequent rise in farmland prices did not affect family transactions directly, since they were not subject to regulation. There was, however, an indirect effect. What happened was that the price of land settled within a family could now be

compared with its 'real' market value, thus bringing the advantages accorded to the successor into sharp relief. The discussion about limiting prices in family transactions soon intensified as the discrepancy between the market value of land and its income-generating potentialities grew. Farmers' children obtaining land from their parents upon inheritance, or as a lifetime transfer for a negotiated 'family price,' were taxed according to its estimated market value. This market price was furthermore used to calculate how much the successor had been favored with regard to the other heirs; this resulted in substantial compensatory payments.

This changed in 1965, when the minister of finance ceded farmers the important privilege of continuing to fix their own prices in family transactions, taking the 'agrarian value' or 'use value' as a point of reference for taxation and for determining the amount of compensatory payments. The 1965 proclamation by the minister of finance introduced two, by now firmly embedded, concepts of value: the agrarian value (*agrarische waarde*) and free market value (*vrije marktwaarde*). The following justification was given for making this distinction: ". . . the price children pay their parents for the transfer of land is strongly influenced by the consideration that the successor can only continue the farm if he is able to obtain a reasonable income from it" (*Circulaire van de staatssecretaris van financiën*, 25th August 1965).

Official government recognition that the market price of land did not reflect its profitability, has been of enormous moral and practical support to farmers in resisting insurmountable claims from their nonsuccessor children, and in protecting the successor from guilty feelings toward his siblings. This announcement, together with court decisions to settle claims to an undivided farm and *maatschap* arrangements, strengthened the successor's legal position and, along with it, his moral, social and economic status. New sources of legitimization were mobilized, which appealed not only to family solidarity, but also referred to external principles and goals, thereby underlining the successor's singular position as an economic entrepreneur. Claims to family solidarity were increasingly legitimated by economic necessity. This source of legitimization was, as I will demonstrate later, very fragile and could not be sustained without the support of kinship values.

The economics of succession and the negation of the family

There was important progress, at the end of the 1960s, toward legally protecting the successor from siblings' attempts to challenge his position

as a single successor. Succession was increasingly defined as a business transaction between two equal partners. Since these partners (father and son) happened to belong to the same family, family relations were logically viewed as having been rationalized. The family was, in fact, tacitly limited to the successor and his parents, excluding other children and in-laws. Succession seen as a phase in the development of an enterprise was especially popular among farmers' representatives, and reflected political and public self-images rather than the reality with which farmers had to cope.

The state-induced marginalization of coheirs did not mean, however, that the successor was freed from heavy financial burdens. Although the price of a farm could be fixed according to the farm's potential income capacities, the shift of generations still implied important losses of capital. The successor was only able to face the future without too many worries if families agreed on substantially lower prices and compensations. This loss of capital came to be taken for granted in political discussions after 1970, and was subsequently completely ignored. The problem of succession was expressed as a 'financial problem' *tout court*. This 'financial problem' was mainly attributed to the fact that farms needed to expand and invest in more land and machinery in order to guarantee sufficient income. Policy proposals were mainly directed at creating conditions favorable for farm expansion and for alleviating the financial burden of succession.

Land policy was, for instance, at the center of 1970s discussions of farmers' problems when setting up in business. Several plans were proposed and discussed to alleviate the financing of farm succession and expansion. One of these was the creation of a government body to buy land from retiring farmers, with the aim of redistributing it on long-term leases to young and expanding farmers. The government would thereby dispose of a powerful means of intervention in the mobility of farmland, as well as a policy instrument with which to realize structural objectives. The minister of agriculture commissioned a survey in 1971, to investigate the feasibility and urgency of establishing such an institution (*Rapport van de commissie van overleg inzake het grondbeleid* 1971). The committee report confirmed farmers' difficulties in financing the acquisition of land and recommended the creation of a 'landbank' (*Grondbank*), to be directed by the Foundation for the Management of Agricultural Land (*Stichting Beheer Landbouwgronden*).

In 1972, the minister decided to experiment with the *Grondbank* as suggested by his advisory commission. A general program of interest sub-

sides, following from the EEC modernization guidelines, was installed alongside this. It must be emphasized, however, that neither policy decision was primarily designed to facilitate farm succession. All farmers with 'developmental potential' could profit from these government measures. Evaluation of the *Grondbank* experiment in 1974 showed such positive results that it was decided to institutionalize it (Directie Beheer Landbouwgronden 1984). It was, however, admitted that farmers were very reluctant to sell their land to the state (in the case of retiring farmers with a successor), or to become a state tenant, despite having first option to buy it and favorable tenancy conditions. This reluctance, according to the minister of agriculture addressing Parliament in 1975, reflected typical farmers' attitudes to property: "Many farmers regard land not only as a means of production but also as an investment. Though this investment is not very profitable it is, in the long term, secure . . . An important aspect of farm succession is that the family concerned often has great difficulty in relinquishing ownership." This last point seemed to account for the fact that farmers used the landbank mainly to enlarge their farms and that it only played a minor role in farm succession.

A good illustration of the general attitude toward farm succession is exemplified in a report, published in 1975, by the combined Dutch agricultural interest groups the *Landbouwschap* (Landbouwschap 1976). Young farmers' problems were defined in financial-economic terms, the origins of which were explained by strictly extraneous circumstances. There was no allusion to generational problems, loss of capital following inheritance and retirement, nor to the role of the family more generally as a supportive or a restrictive network. Young farmers' problems paralleled general problems in the agrarian sector, according to the authors of this report. Young farmers were, however, particularly vulnerable to high costs and interest rates, because of their need to expand the farm and their limited capital reserves. The lack of capital and need to finance an expanding farm were stated as given facts, without reference to the origins of the situation. Neither legal measures nor appeals to 'the family' were proposed as ways of improving the position of young farmers. The successor was portrayed as an individual entrepreneur, confronted by difficult market conditions, in need of financial support from public and private organizations.

Recommendations included tax exemption, favorable loan conditions, subsidized interest rates and an extension of the activities of the *Grondbank*. Thus, completely in line with the analysis of the problem as an

external one, solutions were sought in external political resources rather than in reforming internal relations within the farm family. This approach to the situation of young farmers is illuminating, since it reveals attitudes then current among leading segments in the farming world. It clearly represented the 'modern farmer' as striving for independence from family ties and calling on the state to support his position. The inherent contradictions in this ideology will be explored later in this chapter.

The minister of agriculture's reaction to the *Landbouwschap* report was in striking contrast to this approach. He drew attention to the character of modern self-employed business in agriculture by emphasizing that it is a family enterprise. The minister therefore argued (Vaste Kamerkommissie voor Landbouw en Visserij 1976) that the gravity of the problem should not be exaggerated: "Most young farmers succeed in taking over the farm with the help of family." He rejected most of the new policy proposals, demonstrating that the government did not want to waste resources on maintaining farms, apparently incapable of withstanding the highly selective workings of the market. The minister's viewpoint was obviously full of contradictory elements as well. He argued against governmental support for young farmers because they had to bear normal entrepreneurial risks, but simultaneously located their strength in family support.

The financial problems of farm succession seem to have become so commonplace by the early 1980s that they scarcely received special attention from policy makers and farmers' organizations. Growing employment prospects outside farming during the 1970s, combined with the restructuring of agriculture, meant that financially difficult circumstances did not give cause for concern to those responsible. Farmers' children could easily be incorporated into other, expanding sectors of the economy, although it might not always have been their first choice.

This situation began to change dramatically in the period that followed. Economic depression and mass unemployment threatened the existing model of agricultural modernization, as the alternatives to farm succession became much more restricted. Many farmers' sons, who would have preferred to leave under different conditions, stayed on to run the farm with their father, very often without making the necessary investments to guarantee a reasonable income. Economic stagnation thus slowed the process of labor reduction and delayed the decline in the number of farms.

During this period, young farmers entered the political arena with a powerful, nationally organized movement (NAJK), which was very criti-

cal of agricultural policy. One of its first manifestos, published in 1983, entitled *Boer Blijven* (Staying a farmer), advanced a forceful argument against pursuing the current one-sided policy of differentiation favoring large farms at the expense of small ones, proposing instead that medium-sized farms ought to be made the target of policy support. An equal distribution of means of production would maintain a sizeable group of farmers in agriculture, instead of condemning them to (hidden) unemployment. This emphasis on medium-sized farms and maximum employment could be realized by special relief schemes for small, but nonetheless viable farms, and through higher agricultural prices.

The NAJK made several financial recommendations with respect to young farmers: subsidies on interest and loans, investment premiums, and the implementation of wider criteria to benefit from the *Grondbank* and tax reduction. Most of these recommendations were not new. The only difference with previous claims for financial support was that these young farmers had specific political ideas, framed in terms such as justice and equal opportunities (Titulaer 1983),

These ideas were, however, matched by an ideology of farming that either neglected or rejected all interference with family relations. Farmers were represented as independent entrepreneurs, striving for income parity with other sectors of the economy, but also demanding stalwart government support and intervention to attain these goals. Claims by coheirs were deplored, within this frame of reference, and the principles of labor and capital remuneration (based on family income instead of market criteria) were rejected as unjustified and unreasonable.

The reinvention of tradition and agricultural policy toward succession

A NAJK meeting in 1985 was attended by 3,000 young farmers who rallied to the slogan 'Young farmers want a future'. The minister of agriculture and fisheries (Braks) was unable to make any promises in his address to this infuriated audience. Although he admitted that young farmers had many problems, which had been aggravated by the limits set on the growth of total dairy production (milk quota) and intensive farming, he dismissed the uniqueness of the situation: "Farm succession has always been difficult and will always remain difficult." The minister was asked from the floor to react to the seemingly incongruous government standpoint that farm succession should be considered a rational business-like procedure, while at the same time acknowledging that returns on investment were relatively low and support from relatives indispensable.

The minister answered unequivocally: "There are certain risks in agricultural production. In a densely populated country like the Netherlands, land prices are relatively high and incomes are consequently lower. Those risks can only be brought in hand by a reasonable proportion of owner-occupier resources, and this is only possible with support from the family." The minister regarded proposals to grant successors a starters' premium (*installatiepremie*) as dangerous, since it would provoke the successor's siblings into demanding higher compensation.

An important milestone in the political debate on farm succession was reached somewhat later in 1985, when the ministry of agriculture published a report with recommendations to alleviate farm succession (Ministerie van Landbouw en Visserij 1985). This report did not contain any major new political recommendations. The minister's analysis of farm succession summarized, however, the predominant ways of thinking among leading farm policy makers.

The minister's views on the position of young farmers were summed up in two fundamental general principles. Firstly, potential successors are essentially free to become an independent farmer or to opt for the life of a wage laborer. These two ways of making a living are fundamentally different from one another in terms of risks and security. Farmers' sons are personally responsible for the choice they make. Secondly, the minister argued, it should be remembered that although the process of farm succession is very difficult, solutions are mostly found within the family circle. All settlements are ultimately based on possible and actual help from the family (*familiehulp*). The state can do no more than create conditions, to guide the process, through education, extension and fiscal facilities.

These two propositions clearly reflected a mixture of Liberal and Christian Democratic party ideologies. Farm succession was thought to belong to the private sphere in which the state should not interfere. People should not look to the state but should rely on informal channels such as the family. Emphasizing entrepreneurial freedom of choice and risk was another way of arguing for minimal intervention. This combination of family- and independent market producer ideologies was sufficiently convincing to rally wide political support. Such reference to the role of the family did not exist in isolation. The 1980s witnessed a general shift in attitude away from the all-embracing role of the state as the body responsible for assistance and support. Family, neighborhood and community were promoted as alternatives to reliance on the welfare state, which faced huge budgetary problems. The new ideology was promoted in

Christian Democratic circles as an ethical revival (*etisch reveil*). Parts of it fitted well into liberal ideas concerning personal responsibility and freedom of choice. The role of the state ought to be reduced to creating optimal conditions for personal initiatives, but should not support demands that can easily be met in the sphere of personal relationships.

The minister clearly stated his own political convictions, and also expressed several assumptions about farmers' goals. These were thought to consist in the maximization of profits to cover family expenses, and the maintenance of property—especially land. Profit maximization was directly linked to family income and not to some objective criterion such as ground rent or profit rate. The preservation of landholding was seen by the minister as an indication of the nonspeculative nature of possession: farmers are not inclined to consider alternative means of investing capital. These goals had, according to the minister, important implications. High land prices made the rate of return on invested capital quite low. This did not affect owner occupiers directly, but became a serious disadvantage if successors had to pay a high price for taking over the farm and were faced with reimbursement and interest payments. The only solutions to this problem were to be found in special loans arranged with family members, and a strategy of keeping the portion of owner-occupier capital as high as possible.

The minister introduced the following criterion to determine the difficulty of farm transfer: ". . . the degree to which the farm is able, in the long term, to raise sufficient income to cover family expenses and production costs after paying for interest and reimbursement on capital extracted by the retiring farmer" (*ibid.*, p. 4). The extent to which young farmers could achieve long-term viability depended on the amount of capital needed to refinance what had been withdrawn by the retiring generation. The minister was thus convinced that farm succession was basically a *financial problem*, and that solutions should primarily be sought in preventing those financial difficulties. This could be achieved by limiting capital withdrawal and moderating parents' and siblings' claims, searching for access to cheap credit, and increasing capital formation before and during the transmission process.

Although the minister referred to problems of farm succession as 'financial,' he also alluded to family members' reluctance to sacrifice themselves for the successor. He thought that they should be more considerate about creating conditions for the survival of the farm. The minister made no reference to the old theme of changing the law of inheritance or land price regulation in his first two 'solutions.' Instead he repeated his asser-

tion that: "Considering the differences in individual circumstances and the role of parental responsibility, the state has no direct regulatory task" (*ibid.*, p. 7). The same principle applied with respect to generous loans. The minister did not, however, comment, on data showing the steady decline of family-funded credit and the growing importance of formal credit institutions in providing loans to young farmers.

The minister of agriculture's statements on farm succession and his description of the specific ways in which its problems reflected the character of the family farm represented a sound piece of realistic observation. He had no reservations about spelling out the dilemmas of family farming: profitability was low, but farmers were still capable of earning reasonable incomes; farmers accepted modest returns on investments because they saw their land not as an investment but for reproducing their independent status. Financial problems were a logical result of private ownership, handed on to the next generation. The burdens a successor had to bear depended on the extent to which parents were prepared to forego their own interests in their son's favor.

These issues were all highly controversial since the dependence on family goodwill originated, in the last instance, from relatively low returns on investments. Full dependence on market rates of interest were in fact an impossible option. The minister had no hesitation in characterizing the family farm in terms of an unavoidable consequence of inelastic demands for food and scarcity of land. Critical farmers' groups did not, however, accept this vision: they favored a total separation of the family from running a business and pleaded for higher prices and a redistributive system of land and production rights. The result was that the undeniably family character of agriculture became a tabooed subject.

Young farmers' attitudes toward the family farm were, for instance, clearly voiced in a pamphlet published in 1982 (*Gezinsbedrijf* 1982/83). The family farm was defined as: "Those farms on which labor, land and capital are predominantly furnished by the family. It means that most of the work is done by family members and that farms are mainly transmitted within the same family" (*ibid.*, p. 3). Although it admitted that family income was reasonable, attention was drawn to the fact that this was realized through very long working hours and without fair remuneration for labor. At the same time, however, the pamphlet argued for a halt in the development of so-called mammoth farms. The main political slogan of young farmers was formulated as follows: "We are not contended with a plea for a better remuneration of labor, land and capital. Legal measures

ought to be introduced to stop mammoth farms and to protect the ordinary family farm" (*ibid.*, p. 14).

The ideal of the 'ordinary' family farm represented in fact so many contradictions that it was not taken seriously by the broad spectrum of farmers' organizations, nor by policy makers. It assumed a price policy, enabling farmers to receive normal rates of profit on capital and land and a standard wage for labor. Legislation would be necessary to regulate land mobility and the creation of new enterprises as higher returns on investment would make agriculture into an attractive field for institutional investors and immediately boost land prices. The free market outside agriculture thus served as a frame of reference for agriculture, but agricultural markets would have to be subjected to state regulation. These contradictions are in themselves not surprising. Family farming does contain contradictory elements that are very difficult to combine in a seamless ideological representation. Farmers' intermediate class situation will always be reflected in a presumably odd mixture of capitalist, proletarian and corporate political and ideological positions: self-employed producers cannot be easily fitted into any known classical ideology.

Farm succession had virtually disappeared from the political agenda by the end of the 1980s. Environmental issues completely came to dominate the political debate and agricultural policy focused exclusively on how to stabilize and improve agriculture's leading export role, while reducing the use of fertilizers and pesticides. The role of agriculture in society has been subject to such critical reappraisal that the problems of farm succession have faded into the background—as has the social organization of agriculture in general. Although the family farm is still referred to as the ideal form of production, nowhere in the prodigious official reports is the form of production discussed. This conclusion is unaltered by the fact that the young farmers' organization published a study on farm succession regulations, in 1989 (Vogelzang 1989). They were obliged to pronounce on the matter from time to time, in order to keep it alive both for their own members and *vis-à-vis* the 'Green Front.' The general tone and style of the young farmers' approach to farm succession has not changed since the early 1980s. The emphasis is still on financial support, equal possibilities for all farmers, with a general neglect of the family farm as the all embracing but, in some respects, disturbing reality.

The government's appeal to family solidarity on the one hand, and free enterprise on the other, was in fact a brilliant political strategy. The

largely traditional and Christian farming community could never contest it on coherent ideological grounds. It perfectly matched their ideas about family values, the hallowed nature of family privacy, and their ideas of free enterprise. The government could use such an ideological position by emphasizing the farmers' own responsibility and refusing financial support for farm succession. The state saw its role as creating favorable conditions for modernizing farms, while farm families were held responsible for succession. If succession was impossible, even with maximum support from the family, the state could do nothing. If financial problems were caused by high claims from children who did not succeed, farm families would have to sort them out themselves. Retrospectively, the state's refusal to invest money in supporting individual farms cannot be attributed to a lack of financial resources. Large sums were made available in the form of farm subsidies and tax reductions to expanding farms. The guiding principle, which was never disguised, was that the future of Dutch agriculture lay in scale enlargement and intensification.

The government's productionist political orientation to agriculture colored its attitude toward farmers' problems in an important way. As long as legal changes or financial relief programs did not fit into this frame of reference, farmers could expect nothing from the state. Although sanctions against small farmers and changes in the law of inheritance were considered, the overwhelming tendency in the Netherlands has been to expose farmers to controlled market forces and leave them to their own devices. Noninterference in family matters, whether in terms of financial support or concrete sanctions could, furthermore be defended by framing policy options in the idiom of the family.

The significance of social relations and cultural models in the reproduction of farms

Succession and inheritance are extraordinarily important events for the members of a farm family. Together they constitute a process decisive for the economic and social continuity of the farm household. Farm succession can be seen as the central component in an enduring process of selection between viable and nonviable farms. This viability is affected by such general conditions of farming as market prices, government policy, technology and other external parameters governing the chances of economic survival. The number of farms declined substantially after the second World War because of numerous failures of farm reproduction. Farmers had to enlarge their productive capacity through investments in

land and other productive resources to sustain a reasonable standard of living. Many small farmers, fully or almost fully dependent on a farm income, could not transform their farm to the extent that continuity could be assured.

This does not mean that farm continuity is wholly determined by the objective interplay between the characteristics of the farm and the wider political-economic system. The subjective evaluation of desired income and general living conditions by a future successor is equally important. The decision of a farmer's son to succeed to his father's farm is the result of a complex appraisal of the opportunities in agriculture and in other sectors of the economy. The general level of income in the immediate region and beyond could be taken as one means of assessing this. The comparison of different lifestyles might be another, since cultural aspirations are as important as objective market conditions in such a decision.

Statistics on farm succession show that among similar farms (size, production) some have a successor, while others do not. This is surely not always a matter of specific family histories, like childlessness or celibacy. The cultural dispositions of a potential successor are also implicated. This subjective evaluation of opportunities by farmers' children and their parents takes place from the perspective of the home farm within a specific economic and social context. This context is 'given' in the sense that it cannot be transformed through individual intervention or personal circumstances. Internal family decisions can, however, exert an enormous influence over the nature of the farm and the extent to which it can support them.

One important aspect of family farming is that the farmer and his family own the land on which they live. Even if the farm is partially rented, a substantial portion of the means of production is the farmer's property. In this respect the family farm differs substantially from the form of enterprise preeminent in the industrial sector, where capital is often in the hands of a corporate group of stockholders and the roles of management, manual work and ownership are divided among different classes.

The continuity of the family farm is assured by transferring property and use rights to the next generation. There are several theoretical possibilities. Property could be divided among all the children, or it might be transferred to just one of them, as indeed could the actual right to farm the property (this refers to the difference between inheritance and succession). What is at stake with every shift of generations is that property and use rights are distributed among the children and that this has far-reaching consequences for the original farm.

Under the present conditions, a dispersal of the economic unit among several successors would render it unviable. The division of use rights would create several small farms, for each of which it would be extremely difficult to generate a reasonable income. Ideal farm succession consists in a transfer of property and status to a single son, or occasionally a daughter. This pattern is nowadays almost uncontested and implies that the other children know, from early in their childhood, that they will neither inherit land nor farm their father's farm. What is not beyond discussion, however, is that this transfer of capital should imply a denial of brothers' and sisters' rights to a share in the value of farm capital. This is the heart of a problem that has to be solved in every farm family with more children than the potential successor.

The redefinition of property rights involves a long process of negotiation between parents, successor and the other children, in which sometimes contrary principles and interests have to be resolved. Although parents may emphasize the importance of farm continuity, they may simultaneously feel an obligation to treat all children equally. While favoritism is in the interests of the successor, his brothers and sisters may be more interested in the market value of the agricultural estate, and want to obtain cash benefits from it in the future. The negotiations can result in overt conflict and the use of legal pressure. Resolution of the problem may, however, also mirror specific family solidarity, in which legal and other general frames of reference play a minor role.

Whatever the outcome, the shift of generations on a family farm clearly confronts the successor with the risk of having to pay his brothers and sisters considerable amounts of money in compensation for their rights in property. Such an extraction of capital from the agricultural enterprise may be substantial enough to jeopardize the farm's future. This process illustrates how important the interplay between internal family negotiations and external constraints is for the viability of a farm. An economically viable farm may run so deeply into debt after succession that the income available for investments and consumption is reduced to the point where the potential successor is obliged to give up the idea of becoming a farmer, and sell the farm. The concept of economic viability is thus heavily influenced by concepts of internal family relations, which determine whether the social basis can be reproduced.

How family members define their rights and duties in relation to property and its transmission depends to some extent on attitudes and values that are part of wider cultural notions of kinship and property. But apart from these particularistic cultural notions, quite different concepts

might play a role. One important way in which positions are established draws upon inheritance law, which can be called upon in cases of dispute. Another way of legitimizing demands is by an appeal to economic necessity and the conditions of farming. It is from those different sources that attitudes toward the economic value of family property, and ideas about the family are worked out. The next chapter will focus on the significance of cultural notions in a farming context that is increasingly modeled by ideas about economic efficiency and rationalization.

V

The Culture of Inheritance

The mediation of constraints on the transfer
of property and status

AWARENESS OF PAST generations is given expression in the phrase 'the deaths are among the living.' The reminiscence of past generations is keenly felt among relatives of the deceased, who remain present in memory, in the things they left, in stories, photographs and letters. Close kin and friends feel their presence as a moral force and often try to act according to the principles of a respected person. Widowed men and women feel an obligation to continue to do things in the way the deceased spouse would have liked it. Inheritance is part of this way of referring to the present in terms of the past. The generic term inheritance has a variety of meanings. It refers to all material and immaterial things that a society has acquired or derived from past generations, including its cultural and social legacy. It is material, social and cultural evidence of the presence of the past. Everything created in the past, which has survived into the present, belongs to our heritage or, as the French would say, to the *patrimoine*. This heritage is both cultural and material and often defined, recognized, invented and reinvented on political, artistic and ideological grounds, for instance in nationalist movements, art and science. In a more restricted and private sense, inheritance or 'to inherit' refers to the property or the position transmitted from a person to his inheritors. It is the process of coming into possession of material goods and status from an ancestor or collateral at his or her death.

"The weeping of an heir is laughter behind a mask": this old Latin phrase—*Heredis fletus sub persona risus est*—expresses the inherent ambiva-

lence in the attitude to death. Grief at losing a person may be tempered by contentment at reaching a desired status, or at gaining independence or wealth. Acquisition of means of existence and an independent livelihood were often closely linked to the death of a person, particularly in traditional society. The significance of taking over the status and property of a deceased person has lost much of its significance for acquiring a position in modern industrial societies. Most people do, of course, inherit some property or money from their parents—but being the son or daughter of a specific person does not automatically imply succession to his position or status. Since most people depend on a position on the labor market, the inheritance of economic assets is not a prerequisite for making a living. Functions, roles and positions are mainly based on individual capacities; not through nepotic favoritism, although exception should be made for the industrial bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy.

More important for the destiny of new generations are the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of family and class. The cultural capital acquired by growing up in an environment with a specific lifestyle significantly predispose children to develop their capacities and taste in specific ways (Willis 1977). Inheritance may involve important amounts of money and property in modern western society—but the chances of reaching certain positions are much more influenced by socialization and the transmission of cultural capital.

Inheritance and property in the social sciences

The study of inheritance in modern sociology is mainly subsumed under such headings as socialization, social mobility, education and social reproduction, and focuses on the influence of parental milieu, class and education on the life trajectories of children. Parents' symbolic and material capital and social networks are considered very important for the chances and choices of their children in society (Langbein 1991). Transfers of wealth in the form of gifts and legacies, or material relations between the generations in general, receive little attention, although these may be very helpful for setting up a household or relieving financial worries (see Pitrou 1977; Segalen 1981a; Finch 1989). Even if the wealth for division in most families cannot be compared with aristocratic and bourgeois estates, its material, social and cultural importance is irrefutable (McNamee and Miller 1989). Families may be torn apart by quarrels about such simple things as an old piece of furniture, family albums or, more seriously, by

presumed favoritism or neglect. Attachment to symbolic value and principles of equity may clash with commodity terms and claims to favoritism.

Sociology's general neglect (but see Gotman 1988, 1990; Gotman and Laferrèrre 1991; de Regt 1991, 1993; Cheal 1988a) of intrafamilial transfers of wealth, is closely related to the general paucity of studies on the role of property. A quick review of sociological handbooks reveals that these subjects are entirely absent (see, for instance, the introductions by Giddens 1989, and de Jager and Mok 1989). Wilterdink (1984, p. 21) explains this indifference to the analysis of property as a consequence of the way sociology has developed into a noneconomic and nonlegal science, and its rejection of the Marxist legacy that property is the basis of social inequality.

Goudsblom (1974), a leading sociologist in the Netherlands, does refer to property as one of the most important concepts for analyzing social relations. He cannot, however, substantiate this assertion. Property, he argues, is not only a very complicated subject, but also a very sensitive one. Its political and psychological connotations, in both capitalist and socialist societies, render it full of ambivalence. Goudsblom (*ibid.*, pp. 126-127) observes that sociologists are little inclined to become involved in such a complex and delicate field. Gotman (1988, p. 2) attributes sociologists' hesitation in studying the inheritance of property to an ideological rejection of its reality. How can it be possible for individuals to acquire wealth and status by pure accident of birth, requiring no effort or achievement, in democratic society?

Another factor contributing to the lack of interest in inheritance issues may be that it touches upon people's private lives. It is interesting that this consideration does not seem to inhibit sociologists from studying sexual behavior and intimacy. The specificity of inheritance is, however, that it concerns intimacy, emotions *and* material interests. As Segalen (1985) has put it: "the ethnologist touches upon a burning subject, painful for the people researched and dangerous for the researcher. Questioning people about the transfer of property, unearthing old quarrels, one enters the heart of family passions and penetrates in the most intimate domain of identity" (p. 108). The subject is so emotionally charged, she asserts, that it is in fact taboo. It is small wonder that researchers are mostly only able to study inheritance from a distance: either through archival documents and other secondary sources, or by directly studying other cultures. Anthropologists and historians have, in consequence, shown much more interest in the inheritance of property than sociologists.

Inheritance and succession

This chapter will focus on the significance of property and property transfers among family farmers. As I described in Chapter One, farming is incorporated into complex social relationships involving property, labor, markets and technology. These social relationships are connected with social roles and statuses and attached to specific persons, with particular consequences for the internal relations of family farming. Since human beings age, retire, die or choose to withdraw for other reasons, these social relations are subject to a continuous process of renewal. People may change roles within the same relationship, or new people may be incorporated.

Succession refers to the transmission of rights, duties and responsibilities associated with a certain position, from one person to the other. How a person obtains a specific position depends on the type of social relationship. Kin relationships, for instance, are based on ascribed statuses: ideas about descent, affinity, age, and so on govern status attribution. Statuses in contractual and other voluntary relationships, on the other hand, are rather associated with individual choice and achievement, and influenced by class, social background and life style.

Concentrating on social trajectories and familial continuity among farm families restricts the concept of succession to renewal and replacement through kinship processes. Succession thus only refers to a son replacing his father as a farm operator, for example, or children inheriting equally or unequally from their deceased parents. Limiting the concept of succession to the kinship sphere therefore implies that social continuity refers to the reproduction of property relations within the same familial group, while economic reproduction refers to maintaining a working farm, managed by members of this group. Social and economic continuity thus closely relate to the transfer of property rights on the one hand, and the transfer of use rights on the other. These two processes are commonly distinguished as inheritance and succession, where inheritance is associated with land, farm equipment etc., and succession with the status of farm operator.

The diversity of approaches

The transmission of property and status has been approached from a variety perspectives, ranging from narrow economism to complex social analysis. The transfer of property and status has been reduced to the issue of

financing new capital and arranging the proper legal and fiscal construction to permit the continuity of a viable farm in contemporary applied farm economics. Other approaches consider inheritance practices as an element of social and cultural reproduction. The devolution of property is associated with strategies to safeguard political power, social status and other identities, in short with a much broader field than the economics of farming.

In rural societies, it seems, people have deeply rooted ideas about the transmission of patrimonies and maintenance of individual and collective statuses. These ideas appear to exist quite independently of practice for some authors, while others have emphasized the fundamental role played by kinship ideology. The analysis of inheritance and succession involves empirical and theoretical questions concerning the relation between *practice* (what people do), *conditions* (the material and socio-political contexts) and *ideology* (what people consider the ideal course of action). Attention should obviously be given to conflicting interests and ideologies, as well as the contradictory nature of the wider environment in which individual actors and networks of people define their strategies.

This chapter will try to bring the contributions to the study of inheritance and succession among farmers to order. I will try to summarize the range of theoretical answers to the enigmatic conceptual relation between practice and ideology. Rather than attempting an exhaustive survey of all empirical and theoretical work, my focus is on specific authors who represent the current variety of approaches. Two further important limitations are that I refer only to authors who concentrate on inheritance and succession in an agrarian context, and that my examples are limited to rural Europe.

Rural sociology has completely neglected the reproduction of farm family relationships. The prestigious *Sociological Abstracts* lists only forty-nine publications (over the period 1974–1991) under the heading of *Inheritance and Succession*. Almost all these publications are about American urban families. Of a total of more than 174 thousand indexed publications, only a handful of papers deal with the subject that concerns me. *Sociologia Ruralis*, the European journal for rural sociology, published only two papers on farm succession over a period of thirty years! Anthropologists and historians are the most prominent of those studying inheritance among European peasants. Of these French ethnology produces most of the publications (see Zelem 1988).

Anthropologists and historians are, however, mostly interested in traditional peasant societies, only occasionally extending their long-term

perspective into the period after the second World War, when agricultural modernization radically altered the context of patrimonial strategies. Studies of traditional societies are, moreover, very much interested in established family ideologies, or what may be called the traditional world views of the peasantry. My aim is to connect these cultural studies of the peasantry with approaches to the contemporary modernization process. As I suggested in Chapter One, this modernization process confronts farm families with contradictory developments, emanating from the process of commoditization and cultural change. The critical theoretical question is how farm families cope with the conflicting cultural values of familialism and individualism. I hope to demonstrate the importance of cultural variables in modern farming by combining two different theoretical discourses.

The cultural ecology approach to resource management

The transmission of property and status among European farmers has only recently attracted social scientists' attention. Early authors, such as Le Play (1871, 1982), de Brandt (1901) and Huppertz (1939) emphasized the diversity and complexity of customary patterns among European peasants. The first serious exploration of the subject within the social sciences, after Arensberg and Kimball's (1940) monograph on Irish peasants, and Pitt-Rivers' (1954) study of an Andalusian community was Habakkuk's paper on family structure and economic change in nineteenth-century Europe, published in 1955.

Nineteenth and early-twentieth-century authors were certainly aware of the multifarious connections between inheritance patterns and other social phenomena. They were more interested in moral, political and legal questions, however, than in systematically theorizing peasant behavior. Habakkuk, although neglected by modern authors, forged a bridge between these classic authors and their later followers, such as Bourdieu and Goody, by giving the devolution of property a central place in social and economic development and studying it consequently as a 'total social fact.'

Habakkuk (1955) depicted European inheritance systems as oscillating between the two extremes of equal division and transfer to a single heir. These different patterns fundamentally influenced family structure, population growth and industrial and agricultural development. Where division of property occurred, farms were divided and there was high frequency nuclear family household formation. Here, agricultural populations' at-

tachment to land had an immobilizing effect, resulting in high population pressure, diversification of income sources (domestic industries and temporary migration) and intensification. Single heir systems—through the exclusion of nonsuccessors—resulted in a stable number of farms and a migration-prone population surplus. At the local level, households reproduced along single lines, characterized by the prototype stem family. Habakkuk mainly concentrated on the *effects* of inheritance patterns on local economic and demographic developments. He did not explore the logic of the assumed causal links: why should farmers in some regions divide land, while they tacitly consolidated it in other regions? Was this the result of legal differences, ecological conditions or did it reflect fundamental varieties in kinship ideology?

Ecological and cultural determinants

According to Wolf (1966), and Goldschmidt and Kunkel (1971), the causes underlying patterns of partible and impartible inheritance lay in ecological conditions and the hierarchical social context. Partibility is associated with a phase in agricultural development in which the relation between technology and the environment allows for intensification and expansion to frontier land. It is, moreover, typical for an agro-ecological system where fragmentation of land does not threaten resource variability. Partibility may also result from those in power exerting pressure to maximize, for instance, the number of taxpaying units, or to prevent the buildup of large landed monopolies. Impartible inheritance is, according to Wolf, associated with manor-dominated areas in Europe. Lords favored single heir inheritance to maintain economically viable rent-paying units. Ecological factors may also encourage the single heir system, which prevents the dispersal of scarce resources into unviable farms.

The emphasis on ecological determinants focuses on the reproduction of economic units, more particularly the maintenance of a viable farm, either from the farmers' or the elite's viewpoint. Inheritance practices are not static, according to this view, but constitute adaptive strategies according to the availability of land and technological possibilities. The notion that inheritance systems might have their own dynamics emanating from cultural predispositions is not explored. What if inheritance practices *caused* land scarcity and induced people to modify the agro-ecological system, inducing technological change to put these ideological predilections into practice?

The cultural ecology approach correlates between environmental factors, subsistence patterns and forms of social organization. Particular attention is paid to the homeostatic regulation of the balance between resources and population. People adopt strategies to restrict population growth and to minimize the depletion of resources according to the limited carrying capacity of the environment. A central place is assigned to the transfer and access of resources to the next generation. Migration, household formation, nuptiality and fertility and a range of other social phenomena directly depend on this strategic weapon. The relations between cultural and environmental factors have received particular attention from anthropologists working in Alpine regions of Europe.

It is indicative that Wolf (1962), in an early contribution to the debate on inheritance, originally made a plea for cultural determinism. Wolf conducted fieldwork in two adjacent villages in the eastern Italian Alps, with identical ecological conditions. The villages were, however, separated by a cultural boundary: one village had a German-speaking population, the other was oriented toward Italian culture. Thus, close physical proximity was combined with different cultural worlds. This setup provided an excellent opportunity to assess the respective significance of ecological conditions and cultural values. Despite homogeneous environmental constraints, the two villages exhibited quite different forms of household structure and property transmission. While imparibility went together with stem family households in the German-speaking village, land was divided equally among heirs in the Italian-speaking community. Wolf argued that this case study demonstrates the primacy of culture over environmental constraints, evincing loyalty to a deeply-rooted cultural heritage (*ibid.*, p. 8).

These conclusions were fundamentally modified in later publications (Cole 1973; Cole and Wolf 1974). Detailed research on the fragmentation of holdings revealed that farmers in both villages kept farm size at approximately the same optimal level. This led Wolf and Cole to conclude that the ideology and the reality of inheritance contradicted each other, at least with respect to strategies aimed at balancing the size of holdings with ecological requirements. On closer inspection, the impact of cultural differences was nonetheless very important, especially in the political sphere.

In the Italian community, *property* was usually divided among all heirs, but managerial control over the farm was accorded to one successor only. This separation of management and ownership certainly reflected the villagers' egalitarian, while at the same time revealing the constraints im-

posed by the economic viability of the holding. The process of inheritance and succession in the German-speaking village resulted in a single owner operator, eliminating all legal claims by coheirs. Thus, while the outcome in terms of maintaining optimum-sized holdings was conditioned by economic and ecological constraints, inheritance ideology structured the process of eliminating successors and the distribution of power and property within familial groups: "while the inheritance ideology provides a cognitive framework within which the *de facto* process must operate, both the mechanics of the process and its results are in the last instance determined by the forces of environment and market, and in spite of ideologies" (Cole and Wolf 1974, p. 203).

Cole and Wolf's findings are theoretically interesting because they show that farmers are not blind to economic and ecological constraints. Thus, farmers respected practical solutions as far as regulating access to resources for productive purposes was concerned. But when it came to rights in property and the distribution of power, convictions symbolizing the relations between siblings and generations were brought into play. Ideology and practice were not causally connected, with cultural values determining the outcome of the inheritance process; cultural values rather filtered economic requirements emanating from economic requirements, thereby leaving their imprint on practice.

Contradictory results and criticism

The cultural-ecological approaches to Alpine ecosystems have yielded contradictory results. Although there is agreement that peasants' survival in a mountainous environment requires social regulation of both communal and domestic use rights, there is no evidence that Alpine communities necessarily develop the same kind of social practice. Netting (1981, p. 57) has argued that all high altitude dwellers have to cope with similar problems, but that the environment and technology do not provide answers to questions of power, property and social regulation. Viazzo (1989), in his impressive study of the Alps, also concludes with the observation that Alpine communities have managed to maintain an ecological balance over a long historical period, but that they have done so through a wide range of inheritance patterns, forms of social organization and cultural values. Viazzo (1989, p. 222) criticizes, the proponents of ecological determinism for overstating the importance of environmental constraints and for treating social structure as a dependent variable, impervious to cultural influence. The variety of solutions people have found to cope with the same

environmental conditions, certainly suggests the importance of cultural factors.

Inheritance strategies are central for maintaining the balance between population and resources. They are, in themselves the unintended general result of numerous micro-strategies, however. Each family tries to reproduce a sustainable household by denying access to resources, prevent resource dispersal, or by concluding sustainable marriages. These strategies are not, however, the result of a grand collective design: "At no point did this web of individual decisions and actions depend on knowledge of their latent functions or on knowledge of how the local ecosystem worked. Rather, their intentions were built on perfectly understandable desires to acquire property, produce food, find a mate, raise children, and keep the respect and cooperation of their neighbors" (Netting 1981, p. 226).

Communities may consist of households with collective interests, but there is an hierarchical social structure with differential interests as well. The peasant elite, especially in communal villages, placed obstacles in the way of small farmer and landless laborer settlement. Settled farmers' defence of their own interests marginalized other parts of the population. Thus 'ecological balances' were not just the side effect of individual family survival strategies, but were integrated into maintaining class and status maintenance. Balancing population and resources is not simply an objective strategy to regulate the numbers of people; it involves the defence of a certain life style and maintaining subjectively-defined levels of subsistence. Access to resources is not only mediated by cultural dispositions, but also by specific class interests, denying any absolute or standard relation between ecology and resource management.

The reproduction of status and equal inheritance

This brings me to another approach to the problem of inheritance, which puts the distribution of resources from one generation to the other in a wider social context, without narrowly focussing on economic and ecological components. This approach sees families as developing strategies to maintain their own status and thereby indirectly reproducing the social order. Both the objectives and the means used to maintain family status are part of the wider social system, which means that inheritance is neither an individual nor a single family concern. That the reproduction of the social order results in keeping a balance between resources and population was no more than a latent function of these social strategies.

Bourdieu and Goody, albeit from different theoretical positions, see property transfers as tactics for maintaining status and power and reproducing symbolic capital, in short, in the context of symbolic estate and status management. In their emphasis on marriage and inheritance, as strategies to ensure status, both authors place the reproduction of domestic groups emphatically in the local social context.

The reproduction of inequality

Goody sees inheritance practices as essential for reproducing the social system and structuring interpersonal relationships. The reproduction of the social system refers to the persistence of certain social relations over time, not only within kin groups, but also at the level of the community. Goody's *Production and reproduction* (1976), puts inheritance at the center of analysis of the domestic domain. He compared African and Eurasian societies, using data from the Human Relations Area File, to establish a developmental sequence in aspects of social organization. Goody's approach to inheritance still represents an analytical model that brings together all aspects of the domestic domain in a systematic way. Although the approach is sympathetic, the data he used for his analysis of European societies were extremely limited. European kinship and inheritance were far more complex and diverse than Goody's categorizations suggested. The European pattern is far better known today as a result of the many anthropological and historical studies carried out over the last two decades.

One of Goody's starting points was the difference between inheritance patterns in African and Eurasian societies. Inheritance was mainly bilateral, vertical and diverging (both sexes inherit equally in a descending line) in Eurasian societies, while lineality was the predominant principle in Africa. This opposition between types of inheritance had far-reaching consequences for marriage and kinship and was, according to Goody, associated with levels of technological development and social differentiation. Diverging devolution was associated with social differentiation based mainly on the unequal division of property and material wealth. Class differences—between landowners and landless people, and between small and large farmers—were deeply entrenched in people's consciousness and carefully reproduced through a complex system of social and cultural regulation.

This social stratification was under constant threat from the instability of the material base. If land fell into the hands of lower classes, this was

obviously at the expense of the peasant elite. Moreover, if descendants of well-to-do peasants sank into the ranks of small farmers or landless laborers, this was regarded as a violation of family honor. Both domestic and social strategies were directed at keeping the land within a homogeneous stratum of the population. Land could circulate within the same stratum, but preferably not beyond.

Diverging devolution and homogamic marriage

In societies where private property is the basis of social differentiation, the reproduction of the social system is assured, according to Goody, by diverging devolution and homogamic marriages. Diverging devolution implies that property is not kept in the hands of a unilineal kin group but dispersed along different lines of descent. Diverging devolution occurs when parents are concerned about their children's status *vis-à-vis* other members of the community. Daughters endowed with property on marriage become attractive partners for men with resources. Families maintain their status in this way. Since both men and women inherit, marriage becomes an important way of compensating for the fragmentation of property and maintaining status. The choice of a partner is regulated accordingly by relatives and results in preferential rules, very often for consanguineous marriages. Homogamic marriages, within the same social stratum, are desired to prevent family property from falling into the hands of lower classes. This preoccupation is inherent to a society with pronounced social differentiation in status and wealth, and a desire to reproduce social structure along lines of internal differentiation.

Besides these often arranged marriages, women's sexuality is vigorously regulated. Premarital sexual intercourse and other "rebellious passion running contrary to reason, good sense and filial obedience" (Goody 1976b, p. 14) are utterly condemned. Homogamy often gave rise to conflicts with Church rulings, especially concerning the often proposed marriage between cousins and other endogamous marriages, which were practically unavoidable in small isolated peasant communities. Although European marriage is not identified as a cultural area of prescribed, preferential marriages, marriages with select kin were the unconscious result of homogamy. Diverging devolution was thus in practice counterbalanced by marriage strategies to keep property in the group.

One important question, for which Goody has no answer, is why people should favor the kindred, instead of another principle of group identity.

Goody neglects this question mainly because he fails to acknowledge that diverging devolution is certainly not the only pattern of inheritance in Europe. Hence, his assertion that bilateral, equal inheritance, the importance of the kindred and homogamic, endogamous marriage are typically associated with advanced agricultural systems and social differentiation cannot be maintained. Although productive resources are rather scarce in these societies, and there is a great tendency to retain them in well-defined groups, there certainly are other systems of social reproduction in Europe. Bourdieu has demonstrated that maintaining familial status may well result in scarifying all other lines of descent for a unilineal principle, thereby linking the same socioeconomic system to a totally different idea about the role of kinship in the reproduction of social groups. Goody only pays scant attention to the ideological underpinning of devolution. Bourdieu, by contrast, is not only interested in the reproduction of the social order as such, but also in the principles that legitimate behavior.

Rules, strategies, habitus and the reproduction of the 'house'

Bourdieu's (1962, 1972) analysis is based on research in a Pyrenean mountain community. Peasant families in the Béarn region—and elsewhere in the French and Spanish Pyrenees—kept their status in the local social hierarchy in a way fundamentally different from Goody's description of land fragmentation and strategic marriages to consolidate property. Property and the constituent economic unit in the Béarn were not dispersed among the children, but transferred to a single heir/successor. Each 'house' comprised a unity of a dwelling, farm buildings, land, rights to communal resources and power and a perpetual family line (*lignage* or *ligne*). The position of the 'house' in the social hierarchy was a direct function of its material and symbolic capital (measured by the social respect it commands).

Marriage arrangements and the dowry played an important role in sustaining the position of the 'house' in the social hierarchy. The dowry was donated to the nonheirs at marriage and the amount critically reflected the value of the property. The scarcity of money meant that the dowry was often paid in yearly installments or, alternatively, in kind. Children who left the house were mostly not compensated in land, although they could demand the sale of land if the successor was unable to fulfil his obligations.

The 'traffic' of women was an important feature of the overall strategy to safeguard the integrity of the house. Two fundamental principles gov-

erned the character of arranged marriages: the birth position and the size of the family of origin of each of the spouses; and the position of the spouses' families in the social hierarchy. The eldest son had undisputed priority in the order of succession. His marriage was an absolute prerequisite for the continuity of the patrimonial line, but it was also essential for maintaining the integrity of the patrimony. The dowry brought into the house by the successor's spouse was needed for outmarrying the nonheirs. This was one reason for selecting a girl from a house of equal position in the social hierarchy.

Another reason for matching houses of equal, or almost equal, rank was the principle of 'honor.' Marriage contracted with a woman from an inferior house undermined the reputation of the heir's house, and was considered an infraction of the social order. Marrying a daughter from a house of higher rank was considered equally dishonorable. Although she might bring in a substantial dowry, she would threaten the authority of the mother-in-law and simultaneously endanger the patriarchal order.

Regulated and regular behavior without explicit rules

Bourdieu emphasizes that the logic of marriage exchanges depended on the economic basis of society. The distribution of wealth governed the politics of alliances. On the other hand, however, the high profile given to the honor of the house and the virtues of masculinity cannot be explained by material considerations. Marriages were part of a wider economic strategy intended to reach culturally defined goals. The centrality of honor, combined with compensation for nonheirs imposed an economic logic on matrimonial strategies: "Economic imperatives were simultaneously essentially social and a question of honor" (Bourdieu 1962, p. 70). Ultimately, the house and its master preserved their reputation in the social order by calculated marriages, but their motivation and legitimization derived from cultural principles. Bourdieu has given considerable attention to how far people's behavior was mechanically governed by traditional rules, or whether they manipulated rules in a conscious way to reach clearly defined goals.

Bourdieu, writing in the early 1960s, considered that peasants reproduced their family lines according to a model that was strictly defined by tradition (1962, p. 56), but never functioned in a mechanical way (*ibid.*, p. 47). Individuals played their roles within the limits of the 'rules of the game,' although these limits were as circumscribed as the range of possible marriages. Bourdieu's indeterminacy between the force of tradition and

actor's room for maneuver, inherent in his *Célibat et condition paysan*, became decisive in later publications, with such notions as habitus, practical sense and strategy, which he introduced to try to escape from structuralist objectivism without reverting into subjectivism (Bourdieu 1985, p. 94).

For Bourdieu, actors are neither rational in their choice nor subject to collective normative constraints; the 'socialized agent' and 'practical sense' (ibid., p. 94) are fundamental. What people do is the product of practical sense—a feel for a particular, historically defined 'game' acquired in childhood. This sense of the game, or 'habitus,' is a sort of second nature: society written into the body. Strategies are characterized not by obedience to explicit rules, but by a permanent capacity for invention and improvisation to adapt to never completely identical situations. Behavior is generated by the habitus (ibid., pp. 95–6), and results in regular conduct.

Bourdieu (1972) asserts with respect to the transmission of the patrimony among Béarn peasants that "the generating and unifying principle of practice is the system of dispositions inculcated by material conditions and family upbringing (that is, habitus)." (p. 1072). Actors reinvent or imitate already proven strategies because they are self-evident, convenient or simply the easiest. Practice seems to be inscribed in the nature of things, without being informed by explicit rules. The basic cultural principles according to which strategies unfold into regular practice remain mostly unspoken, simply because individual dispositions conformed to the objective structures. The habitus works as a sort of instinct, spontaneously producing patterns of behavior. Bourdieu has rigorously defended the nondeterministic nature of the habitus. Agents enact a system of dispositions acquired through experience, which permits an infinite number of 'moves' in an infinite number of possible situations that no rule can foresee (Bourdieu 1990, p. 9). Action is neither guided by reason, nor purely subjective, although it appears to be based on rational choices. The conditions of rational calculation are seldom given, and yet agents do 'the only thing to do,' following the intuitions of a 'logic of practice,' which is "the product of a lasting exposure to conditions similar to those in which they are placed" (ibid., p. 11).

From habitus to the codification of rules

Bourdieu's emphasis on shared experiences, and the self-evidence and intuitive character of behavior, suggests that the habitus belongs to an

uncontested field of action. This means that the habitus becomes impractical when people start questioning this self-evidence, and especially when established practices no longer correspond with expectations. Habitus, Bourdieu asserts, is characterized by vagueness and indeterminacy (*ibid.*, p. 73). Everything goes without saying for people belonging to the same group, equipped with the same habitus. But when different systems of dispositions are involved in the same field of action, there can be an accident, a collision or a conflict (*ibid.*, p. 80). People are only guided by implicit practical models up to a certain point.

Societies in which the essential things are left to a 'feel for the game' and improvisation, may have "tremendous charm" (*ibid.*, p. 80), but uncontested domains are becoming rare, particularly in modern western society, and people increasingly confront one another with contradictory rather than coinciding ideas. People tend to formalize or codify behavior and to introduce principles of objectification in such situations. Behavior has become increasingly subject to explicit normativeness. Such codification minimizes ambiguity and vagueness in particular interactions and is obviously indispensable in situations where interaction is blocked by an incongruity of habitual principles. Bourdieu (1962), in his earlier work, preambled this notion of incompatibility when describing the collapse of the marriage and inheritance system in the Béarn under the influence of modern urban values, but he never admitted the congruity between habitus and uncontested domains of practice.

Bourdieu's habitus concept seems particularly useful, therefore, for explaining the stability of inheritance customs in traditional, homogeneous cultural contexts. As long as habitual dispositions are almost similar, action can unfold according to primarily implicit normative principles. But habitual principles may meet resistance when traditional culture is invaded by opposing cultural principles, as, for instance when agriculture becomes integrating into commercial and competitive circuits. Confrontation and conflict inevitably force actors to make their options explicit, and to specify norms and goals that would otherwise remain implicit, vague and taken-for-granted.

The primordial structures of kinship

While Bourdieu's habitus is certainly not a conscious set of rules, he opposes the idea that actors are subject to unconscious models that pattern their behavior. Strategies unfold in a specific way because agents feel the need to do the done thing under conditions they know very well. Ha-

bitus is the product of experience, and habitual practice reproduces its conditions. For Emmanuel Todd, a French-British anthropologist, people's cultural dispositions exist quite independently of ecological, economic or other external conditions. These elementary mental constructions are largely unconscious, and based upon involuntary duplication and imitation. Being unconscious and invisible, they are never questioned and constitute an eternal mental infrastructure (Todd 1983). In contrast to the habitus, which is primarily a practical model, Todd's concept of cultural infrastructure exists quite independent from practical situations.

These fundamental or primordial structures center upon relationships between family members and extend themselves from there into the wider social and political context. The relationship between mental structures and real behavior is not necessarily congruous: "The main difficulty is that the realization of a family ideal, its visible incarnation in domestic groups . . . not only depends on family values but also on material circumstances and necessities (Todd 1983, pp. 53-54). The compatibility between immaterial mental structures and social organization depends upon the extent to which family ideology can be transmuted into a practical form.

What, according to Todd, are the constituent principles of family ideologies? The two basic principles are liberality and equality, and their antitheses authoritarianism and inequality. Various combinations of these principles result in four ideal type family systems: the liberal and egalitarian family, the liberal and inegalitarian family, the authoritarian and egalitarian family, and the authoritarian and inegalitarian family (Todd 1983, p. 14). The equality-inequality dichotomy refers to the relation between brothers, especially concerning inheritance equity: equal division of property or transmission to a single son. The authority-liberty opposition refers to the relationship between father and son, mainly expressed in the rate of independent household formation.

These ideal types correspond in empirical reality with Europe's classical mosaic of household types (Todd 1990, p. 29 and 1983, pp. 17-18), two of which I will explore in more detail. Todd's first type matches the nuclear family household, which rests upon the idea that children dissociate themselves from parental control through neolocal settlement after marriage and equal endowment with property on the death of the parents. This family ideology embodies a sense of disinterest in the continuity of the domestic group and its patrimony. The spirit of individualism, supported by parental tolerance and property, gives each member of the new generation equal opportunities to break away from parental control

and immediate propinquity, and become both socially and economically independent, though at the expense of fractioning farmland.

The second family type, the polar opposite of the nuclear family system, is the 'stem family,' which results from anti-individualist and discriminating collectivist ideological predispositions. Only one child is elected to take the responsibility for the family patrimony, excluding others. The emphasis on the selective continuity of the vertical link between generations is based on the uncontested authority of the patriarch and inequality between children. Todd's emphasis on the primacy of cultural variables is vindicated by the stability of European household forms between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries (Todd 1990, pp. 61-67). Even if the fundamental ideological principles are not directly observable in household formation and the division of property, they are still apparent in private and political attitudes.

Le Play's early work on family types was the main inspiration for Todd's theoretical propositions. Instead of rejecting Le Play's moral prophecies on the importance of family values for the wider political climate, he took them seriously, if even to the extreme. While Le Play foresaw the unavoidable decline of traditional family ideologies and interpreted liberalism and equality as recent outcomes of rejectable state policies, Todd has tried to demonstrate that each family ideology has its own—though indeterminable—historical antecedence and continuity.

The reproduction of domestic groups and the kinship system

Along much the same empirical, although different theoretical lines, George Augustins has given an impressive account of inheritance systems in Europe. He puts ideology in the wider context of kinship systems and he also tries to show that inheritance and household formation are embedded in a wider strategy of social reproduction. Unlike Goody, who focussed on the dispersal of family lines, and Bourdieu, who chose lineality, Augustins shows that *both* systems actually aim at reproducing forms of social organization. I will discuss Augustins' work at some length in the following sections, since I consider his approach by far the most outstanding contribution to the current debate. It should be said beforehand, however, that Augustins mainly presents descriptive categories and concepts, and excels in presenting empirical illustrations. His work certainly does not offer a social theory to solve the many empirical and conceptual contradictions.

Contrasting forms of social reproduction, and principles of legitimacy

Augustins has developed his ideas on the transmission of property and status from one generation to another in a book (Augustins 1989), and in numerous articles (see bibliography). Although his own empirical research was limited to France (1981a,b, 1982b, 1985), his most important achievement lies in the analysis and description of European systems from a comparative viewpoint. Augustins' comparative project was certainly inspired by his first research experiences in two contrasting settings—the Baronnies in the Pyrenees and a rural community in the Breton Morbihan.

All children in the Breton village were entitled to receive an equal part of the parental inheritance. Nothing inhibited them from claiming their portion of land and withdrawing it from the original farm (Augustins 1981b, p. 325). This resulted in the inevitable fragmentation of property and farms. To compensate for this fragmentation, spouse selection was principally based on proximity and property, uniting inheritors—often cousins—from the same or neighboring hamlets. Each marriage entailed setting up a new household and a new farm. Hamlets were frequently composed of groups (*parentèles*) of closely related propertied households, occupying land that oscillated unceasingly within this group. The significance of these cognatic kin groups is not their formal limitation by some principle of filiation. It concerns, rather, a number of families that have practiced alliance over several generations, and thereby acquired a certain permanence and identity (Augustins 1982b, p. 175).

Inheritance and household formation in the Baronnies were based on entirely different principles. One child, the principal inheritor, succeeded the father's position as head of the *maison* and inherits all the land (Augustins 1977, 1981a). Reproduction of the domestic group and the associated pattern of matrimonial strategies in the Baronnies was identical with the situation described for the Béarn region by Bourdieu. In contrast to Brittany, where land was constantly redistributed within an extended kin group, residential continuity characterized the Pyrenean peasants' model.

Most European inheritance systems were somewhere between these two contrasting models. Inheritance and succession varied according to the emphasis given to one or the other of the two antagonistic principles: that of giving priority to residence or that of according preference to kinship. Each system is an expression of a specific mode of thought.

Augustins asserts that inheritance is all too often studied from an individual point of view. The legal tradition, in particular, has focused on the question of 'who inherits what?' without situating individuals in the

context of social reproduction and relevant social groupings (Augustins 1982a, p. 40 and 1990, p. 154). This implies not focusing exclusively on individuals or residential family groups, but also on how these are connected through time and space (Augustins 1989, p. 113). The process of social reproduction cannot be understood only in terms of the significance of intergenerational devolution. Matrimonial strategies are equally important for the pooling of property, creating bonds of solidarity and upholding the integrity of social groupings (*ibid.*, pp. 136–139).

Breton rural society was not composed of isolated, decomposing households. Instead, extended larger kin groups preserved a certain stability by circulating property, and by endogamous local marriages. Inheritance and marriage assured the reproduction the group and its identity. In a 'house society,' by contrast, each household has its own identity, which is not so much based on the temporary occupants of the house, as on the enduring link between a single line of descent and the patrimony. To sustain such a 'pillar,' the exchange of women between houses is indispensable. While the reproduction of the social group in the *parentèle* system is based on horizontal integration between households, the primary social unit is based on vertical integration in the 'house society.'

A number of "principles of legitimacy" underlie the range of practices. The decisive importance of the house, on the one hand, or strict equality between the children, on the other, are but two examples of operative principles. The first subordinates all other precepts to the perpetuation of a symbolic and material corpus, attaching only one member of each successive generation to the land. A 'house society' consists of several residential units with fixed assets that accommodate passing generations in unbroken lines of descent. The people derive their status and identity from the house such that, to use an expression derived from Marx, they do not inherit the land, but the land inherits them. In a society based on *parentèles*, the residential principle has, by contrast, no significance. Land and accommodation are constantly distributed and redistributed within a network of related people, thereby repudiating the continuity of domestic groups in favor of a bilateral kinship network.

Traditional inheritance systems and the transformation of agriculture

Augustins' comparative models—as with the other approaches I have mentioned—are based on peasant societies, situated in the past. Most people in these peasant communities were directly dependent on the land for their subsistence and status in the local community. The principles of

social organization and stratification were closely connected with access to land, either communal or private. The transfer of resources and statuses to the next generation cannot—as I have shown—simply be reduced to ecological, political, economic or legal parameters. Empirical evidence from European peasant societies contradicts any such direct causal link. This does not mean that farmers were not conscious of such constraints. A viable farm was the absolute prerequisite guaranteeing a domestic group's subsistence. However, the regulation of access to farmland not only expressed economic considerations. Transferring land and status was intimately connected with ideas about property, kinship and residence. Many empirical studies show that inheritance and succession cannot be isolated from other practices. Marriage strategies, fertility, migration and celibacy were directly connected, so that the balance between resources and population was not dramatically disturbed, both at the local and the household level. This explains why, under similar circumstances, such diverging inheritance practices resulted in units of production that were reasonably well adapted to economic, demographic and ecological conditions.

Peasant societies in Europe have drastically changed during the twentieth century, however. Technological innovations, commercialization, industrialization and rising living standards have resulted in a massive exodus from agriculture and growing diversification of the rural population. The importance of land in the system of social stratification has given way to other status symbols, while land has increasingly become a financial and economic asset for market production. A decreasing number of farmers competes for land to maintain a viable farm and a reasonable source of income. Those no longer interested in using farmland are quite prepared to sell or lease it as a commodity at the maximum rate of profit.

This shift in the meaning of land, from the basis of reproducing a more or less stable social and cultural system to a commoditized object, clearly has far-reaching implications for patterns of inheritance, succession and marriage. How useful are cultural principles and inveterate practices when they become apparently bereft of an appropriate material and social infrastructure? According to Symes (1990), studying the situation in the United Kingdom, traditional values are being undermined by more material considerations. Changing practices, more adapted to the expansionist production policy, are replacing those based on the traditional meaning of land in the kinship structure and local social life. Symes alludes to persisting traditional systems as “out of phase” with the demands of the agricultural economy (*ibid.*, p. 290).

This raises the question of whether traditional inheritance ethics are indeed undermined, or whether they persist in an adapted form. If new ideologies have replaced the old ones, one may wonder whether this involves a radical cultural change, or whether it only means a change in practical form, evincing the flexibility of rather stable cultural norms. Do Augustins' principles of legitimacy concerning the priority of kinship or the residential unit, for instance, still represent operative concepts? If Todd is correct about 'primordial relations' being essentially based on invariable values, then ideas about equality and authority should become elements of practice in one way or another. Goody's and Bourdieu's emphasis on status could draw our attention to the use of inheritance and succession strategies in the transmission of new forms of cultural capital and status attributes among farmers. Bourdieu's traditional *habitus*, on the other hand, seems to lose significance since practice based on its inherent dispositions is becoming nonsensical in a context of economic and social change. And finally, if inheritance and succession are increasingly governed by such parameters as economic efficiency, how did they replace long established kinship models and patrimonial strategies?

It is surprising to find how limited attempts to answer such questions have been. Studies on modern farm succession mostly emphasize only one value: a viable farm for the next generation. It is unclear how this concept of viability is constructed and whether it is contested. The underlying assumption seems to be that all actors share and support the same concept of economic viability, and that if farm succession fails it is because viability could not be realized in objective terms. Agrarian studies of farm succession focus mainly on the economic, technical and financial aspects of the farm and tend to ignore social and cultural variables.

The gap between historical-anthropological studies and findings from recent agrarian sociology also seems unbridgeable. While it is acknowledged that family farm reproduction has become a contested domain with antagonistic actors and divers interests at stake, there have been few attempts to analyze these conflicts against the historical cultural background of farm families. Identification and explanation of the cultural categories, whether derived from kinship or economic values, which inform the intergenerational transmission of family farms are seldom contemplated. There are, however, some notable exceptions: Rogers (1991), Salamon (1992) and Abrahams (1991) have compared the essential components of present-day farm reproduction with historical data and shown remarkable continuity in underlying principles. Modern farmers throughout Europe probably still arrange inheritance and succession according to the same

principles as in the past (Lamaison 1988). It is, however, unclear how these traditional conceptions are sustained and legitimized. How is it possible that old concepts still provide guidance in a thoroughly commoditized economy, and how do people deal with the contradictory pressures of a differentiated family and the market?

The social heredity of farming and the importance of continuity

No other socioeconomic group displays such pronounced occupational heredity as farmers (see Blanc and Perrier-Cornet 1993 on the European Community). The family character of production, combined with lean profitability on investment, makes it practically impossible to enter primary production by way of the market. New farmers mostly settle on their parents' land, combined with bits of land bought or leased on the land market. In France, for instance, 90 percent of the farmers installed since 1970 are either a son or son-in-law of a farmer (Perrier-Cornet 1986, p. 29). Perrier-Cornet could find no indication that agriculture is opening up as a profession to youngsters originating from other socioprofessional categories. Nor is there any evidence of broadening in the social strata from which farmers in England and Wales are recruited. Over 80 percent of English and Welsh farmers are sons of farmers (Gasson et al. 1988, p. 21). Although a young farmer does not always follow the parents on the same farm, it is exceptional for a farmer not to have received some form of family backing.

Family continuity in farm occupancy cannot only be explained by elevated land prices and the monopoly of family farmers occupying the land. The desire to transfer the farm to the next generation is a primary goal among farmers. Research on family farming in Britain (Gasson et al. 1988) and elsewhere (Strange 1988; Bonanno 1987) reveals that family farmers' main ambition is to maintain family control and to transmit a viable business to the next generation. This striving for continuity must be understood in the context of the time span within which it is defined. Farmers are mindful of occupational and farm continuity long before their retirement. Many farmers make decisions concerning farm development with a view to creating favorable prospects for the next generation. Continuity is thus defined beyond securing a single generation's conditions of existence, but also beyond its own passing existence. Retirement without passing on the farm and the family carrying on in farming is a painful experience.

The modernization of agriculture and the accompanying constraints on farm size and efficiency have profoundly changed the idea of continuity. Many farmers are left without successors and, if succession is viable, only one child can become a farmer. Many farmers have internalized the difficulties associated with transferring the farm to the next generation to such an extent that, while they wish to carry on farming until retirement, they have no desire to see the farm continue in the family. Skepticism about the virtues of farming, nurtured by deeper knowledge of other professions, has resulted in many farmers discouraging their children from remaining in farming, encouraging them to opt for another career.

Agriculture is facing a real identity crisis in many countries, resulting in a straightforward rejection of farming as a profession (Champagne and Maresca 1986, 1987; Champagne 1986a,b, 1987). Agriculture is considered the last possible choice, especially in 'marginal' areas—where, indeed, the 'crisis of succession' has left unmistakable marks on the landscape (Jansen and Jansen 1992, p. 116). Champagne (1986a) reports that many farms are falling in decay not because they could not provide a livelihood, but because the associated lifestyle is openly rejected by the younger generation. Opting out of agriculture, often with a view to emigration, is considered as a form of upward mobility, and urging children to a vocational training outside agriculture as a way of promoting family status.

The successor effect

Continuity of the farm after retirement or death of the farm operator has become a major political issue. A review of the age of farm operators and their chances of having a successor, reveals European agriculture as facing a profound decline in the number of farms in the future. In the UK, some 27 percent of farmers are aged over fifty-five. In Italy, 25 percent of farmers are over sixty-five. Of the European Community's 6.3 million farmers, 1.8 million are preretirees (aged between 55 and 65), and 1.3 million are designated 'elderly' (Potter and Lobley 1992). More than half the farm operators in the Netherlands were aged over fifty in 1987; of these, only 46 percent was likely to have a successor (Giessen and Spierings 1990, p. 202). Although the situation may change for some farmers, it is predicted that thirty thousand farms will have disappeared by the year 2000 in the Netherlands due to lack of a successor. The prospect of losing the farm, the land, an occupation and a livelihood—in short, facing discontinuity—typifies many farmers' situation during the postwar period.

The (non)reproduction of family farms derives from a double process of selection. On the one hand, economic and financial parameters emanating from the politico-economic sphere define which farms are potentially viable for reproduction. On the other hand, farmers and their children decide for themselves whether it is worth carrying on, or whether it would be better to get out of farming altogether. The dynamics of internal and external forces makes it quite difficult to predict which farms will continue and which ones will disappear. Of course, there may be differences of opinion within farm families, but once the decision to challenge or not intergenerational continuity has been taken, then the consequences are enormous.

The presence or lack of a potential successor has important implications for farm management. The main motivation for farmers to continue improving the farm and keeping up with changing conditions through new investments is, according to Hutson (1990) and Marsden (1984), the prospect of handing it on to a son. Decision making for a farm operator with a successor is based not only on planning retirement, but also on preparing the farm for the next generation. Retirement arrangements go hand-in-hand with creating possibilities for succession and long-term planning for farm continuity. In contrast to farmers who will simply sell or lease their farm after retirement, those with a successor must carefully plan the transfer of management and resources. During the period preceding retirement, they gradually hand over control of the farm (Hastings 1983; Errington and Tranter 1991), settle the financial terms of land and farm equipment transfer, and arrange their own financial security.

The process of intergenerational change generally gives rise to mixed feelings. Various strategies are required for avoiding conflict between generations or siblings, and for restructuring the farm in the face of financial pressure (Russel et al. 1985). Salamon et al. (1986) stress the importance of orchestrating a sibling group to cooperate on business decisions and to avoid intrafamily conflicts: "continuity of a family owned and operated business is typically enhanced where familialism assures that group goals take priority over those of individual siblings" (p. 25). Continuity is therefore the combined effect of farm families' ability to ensure succession within the family, and the level of commitment that families have to that goal (Marsden, Munton and Ward 1992).

Retiring is a very different experience for a farmer without successor (Potter and Lobley 1992). Such farmers have little incentive for expansion, and it is not in their interest to plan ahead. "Elderly farmers without successors may thus proceed to run down their businesses and begin con-

suming material assets and tenant's capital in old age, if only to reduce the workload and hours worked" (ibid., p. 319). Potter and Lobley cite various studies showing that farmers without successors tend to release funds for consumption and have lower levels of capital investment in the later stages of their life cycle. These farmers mostly retire in very old age, keeping their land under very extensive cultivation, and splitting up the farm piecemeal and ad-hoc, before eventually leasing it out or selling it completely.

Marsden et al. (1989) argue that the continuity requires intergenerational planning that forces the family into a range of compromises. Many farmers have to intensify external relations with markets and technology through credit relations, higher technology dependence and increased off-farm sales to secure a viable farm in the context of a constant agricultural treadmill. This process of externalization affects farmers' autonomy and control over the labor process. Conceding control over the labor process may, however, greatly enhance long-term chances of maintaining direct control over land in family hands, as well as guaranteeing the next generation a profitable farm. But maintaining direct control of a farm's resources across the generations exerts further requirements than meeting the demands of capital. There has to be a common commitment to keeping the farm in the family among all family members. It is not, therefore, only a father and son who need to be in basic agreement about the principle and conditions of continuity; the farmer's wife, and the children who leave the farm must also be prepared to accept the consequences of succession. The enormous amounts of money involved in farming may easily create tension within families. It is difficult to combine leaving the farm intact with providing equally for all the children, and seems indeed only to be feasible if the nonsuccessor children voluntarily accept violation of the principle of equity.

Family commitment and the decline of familialism

Marsden et al. (1992), in a study of the social trajectories of farm businesses, assess the level of family commitment in terms of the historical link between the family and the farm, and prospects of maintaining that link. They distinguish between established (succession is planned or likely) and uncommitted families (succession has been ruled out). It appeared that the established families, those with the highest commitment to family continuity, belong with the most subsumed farms. This suggests that family based reproduction increases if farms develop according to the logic of

external capitals. "The likelihood of the survival of farm families into the next generation appears to increase as farms become more engaged with technological, marketing and credit links, and, generally, as they experience a higher level of subsumption of production relations through more complex labor and farm business structures" (Marsden et al. 1992). This shows that stability and commitment in family relations are social prerequisites for the penetration of commodity relations *and* that they together reproduce the family basis of agriculture. Family commitment is thus not opposed to the capitalization of agriculture; on the contrary: kinship and family ideologies offer the social basis for extended reproduction (see also Hutson 1990).

Commitment to the family is a highly relevant cultural factor in explaining the successful transmission of the farm to the next generation. Many authors have observed, however, a decline in familism and a rejection of the traditional lifemode (Barthez 1982, 1986; Champagne 1986a,b, 1987). The objectification (defining them away from family influences) of social relations, emanating from a desire to separate instrumental and affective relations between children and spouses, is difficult to reconcile with the goal of keeping the farm in the family (Bennet 1982, Ch. 4). Continuity in family occupancy, which requires adherence to specific social relations and intrinsic goals and values, is difficult to combine with a farm defined in purely instrumental terms. Continuity can only be achieved if farm resources are *not* conceptualized in market-related economic terms.

The current situation in agriculture confronts farmers with two contradictions (Blanc and Perrier-Cornet 1988). While they are increasingly aware of the underremuneration of labor, profitability has a tendency to decline due to stagnating income and rising land prices. Access to a farm depends, moreover, on parents' and siblings' willingness, and on cooperation, whereas individual aspirations are transforming family relations in society at large (see also Groupe Patrimoine/Capital 1986, pp. 18-21). Thus there is a clear discrepancy between the objectification of farm production relations and the need to reconstruct and revitalize the family character of social relations in order to reproduce a viable farm across the generations.

The contradiction between the sphere of markets, money and commodities and that of family relations is typical for advanced market economies, where the family has largely lost its productive functions. However, it can only be concretely felt as a contradiction when production and access to resources are intertwined with family relations *and* reproduction

requires principles considered inappropriate for market-oriented production. Thus, pooling and cooperation, reciprocity and gifts, invariably define the family in industrial societies. But these principles are kept clearly separate from professional life: the sphere of commodity production and wage labor, pertaining rather to domestic labor, consumption and reciprocal support. There would be no contradiction in present-day agricultural structure if families could transform noncommodity principles into commodity relations at will, or adopt instrumental concepts to structure the field of economic and property relations. The paradox would furthermore be only abstract if members of farm families did not perceive its anachronism.

Commodities, gifts, and the nature of exchange

Several authors have contextualized the intergenerational transfer of property in terms of a 'gift economy.' The transfer of wealth via inheritance is distinguished from transactions that involve buyers, sellers and a commodity market. Gifts and donations are characterized by gratuity and situated in a more personalized social context than market transactions. Contrary to the exchange of commodities, gratis donations are structured by moral considerations and evolve from and reproduce specific personal relations. Gregory (1982, p. 24) has argued that gifts and commodities differ insofar as commodities are alienable and suppose reciprocal independence, while gifts suppose reciprocal dependence and inalienability. A gift creates a debt that has to be repaid: "What a gift transactor desires is the personal relationship that the exchange of gifts creates, and not the things themselves" (Gregory 1982, p. 19). Thus, while the exchange of commodities (mostly money for goods or services) is centered on market values, gifts and donations center on personal expectations, obligations and commitments. Although the things exchanged may be important for the recipients, more important is the social relation which one creates or reproduces (see also Weiner 1992 on the paradox of keeping-while-giving).

Even a simple Christmas or birthday gift, however redundant, obliges the recipient to be thankful, to display or use it in the appropriate way, to praise it and to make a return. The motivation behind donations and rendering of service is mostly not the transfer of things in themselves. The gratuitous character creates a relation of 'debt,' either in terms of commitment to a certain cause, promise of future prestations, giving respect etc. The exchange comes down to the fact that the donor invests in counterprestations, which bear no similarity to the character of the

original object exchanged. For instance, a farmer may donate his land to a son in full property. There is no question of unconditional property rights, however, if the son must promise to take care of the farm, not to sell it, to take care of the parents, and if the son is charged with the responsibility of transmitting the farm to the next generation. Thus donations between generations are certainly invested with moral obligations, with the donor keeping a hand on the property. While the spirit of the donor or benefactor is ever present in the gift, this personal imprint is absent from commodities acquired through the market. Paying a normal market rate is thus a means of buying off any symbolic or personal claims by the previous owner on the recipient of the object—it precludes any moral obligation. It is no wonder that receiving gifts and support is often embedded in relations of patronage and deference, and that acts of philanthropy camouflage supremacy and subordination.

The poisonous gift

The etymology of the word 'gift' derives from the German *Gift*, which means poison. The ambiguity of the gift is further illustrated by the English phrase 'to be overwhelmed with gifts' (Bailey 1971). It should, however, be remembered that the 'poisonous' character of a gift very much depends on the cultural context in which the gift is given. Thus, in a cultural setting where inequality between the members of the same generation is culturally accepted and legitimate, the recipient of a farm is unlikely to consider the status of single heir as a form of favoritism. In exchange for what he receives, a range of obligations associated with taking over his father's responsibilities have to be fulfilled, often after a prolonged period of parental subordination and suppression of personal feelings. The 'poisonous' character of the gift is thus complete *vis-à-vis* the parents while the siblings also feel a right to exert moral pressure of their brother. In a cultural context of sibling equality, gifts nearly assume the character of commodities. Since nobody is favored in particular and the gift is practically unconditional in a direct personal sense—the alienation of property is almost absolute.

Cultural models obviously have significant effects on the perception and practice of gift giving. If, for instance, cultural consensus on sibling inequality becomes perceived as an exceptional act of generosity by the heir's brothers and sisters, consciously produced against the option of extravagant financial claims, the gift has to be negotiated and alters its character. Equally, where siblings abandon their legitimate claims to seize

portions of the farm to enable a single successor to climb the farming ladder, altruism and commitment are expected to be returned in an appropriate way. Likewise, the transformation of succession from obligation to choice—from the successor's point of view—is likely effect drastic changes the power relations involved in the transaction. The parents may be maneuvered into a weak position because the son is doing them a favor by staying on the farm. He is thereby in a position to set the terms of succession (see Lisón-Tolosana 1976, p. 315). To accept the 'gift' of the farm far outweighs the gift itself.

The dowry given to children in lineal inheritance systems is another example of a conditional gift. Accepting the dowry, or other forms of compensation, implies forgoing all claims on the ancestral property and access to the parental household. Promises, responsibilities, concrete prestations: it is from this perspective that inheritance transactions can fruitfully be studied as a chain of exchange relations that are partly concrete (material), and partly rest upon the acquisition of rights and the acceptance of obligations. This exchange relation involves a much wider social network than the recipient and the donor, and does not stop at the death of one actor, but transcends the generations and can be transmitted to living persons. Thus, transactions among relatives in a gift context concern objects, prestations and services, which are invested with moral obligations.

Such a "moral economy" is only possible, according to Cheal (1988b), where the social significance of individuals is defined by their obligations to others with whom they maintain relationships. These are moral relationships, that is, they are governed by rules that define them as socially desirable. Within a moral economy, Cheal argues, relationships between persons get priority over the relationship between persons and things (ibid., p. 41). If intergenerational transfers are placed in the context of gifts and exchange then attention focusses on the conditional character of these transfers, and on the relationships that they create and reproduce.

Empirical research on farm succession and inheritance make it abundantly clear that becoming a successor is closely associated with deference and respect *vis-à-vis* the parents. One is bestowed not only with a gift, but also with obligations to safeguard an enterprise built up by the previous generation. Unlike farmers who enter the agricultural profession by buying a farm from a nonrelative at a market price, family succession evolves in a moral economy. If farm assets are received at a reduced price or as a partial gift, this can also be considered as a favor, creating obligations toward the farm and the original bestower. It also creates obligations

toward siblings. If they facilitate keeping the farm in the family, the main heir is likely to experience this over a long period.

Intergenerational transfers cannot be understood without considering the specific cultural context in which they take place. Exchange relations outside the sphere of markets and commodities are governed by specific cultural values that may vary in time and place and among different social groups. I have already mentioned the significance of inheritance ethics stressing equality between siblings or alternatively the preference for one heir. Such notions about property devolution are deeply rooted in more general ideas about kinship, the family and the domestic group. It is little wonder that most studies of inheritance and succession practices in traditional Europe pay attention to this cultural background of resource transfers. However, the culturally-defined, kin-informed character of intrafamily transactions is never the only guiding principle for practice. Concrete economic, ecological, political and legal conditions may seriously obstruct certain practices and facilitate others. Similarly, the principles emanating from indigenous kin categories may conflict with new attitudes or ideologies from a totally different sphere, for instance, the culture of capitalism.

If gifts are simultaneously market commodities of considerable economic utility, it is difficult to imagine how people conceptually separate the flow of the same goods or services in commoditized and noncommoditized circuits. Pradhan (1990) argues that the intergenerational transfer of the farm and internal family relations are not necessarily opposed to market considerations. Since people are aware of the multiple character of property and labor, they may attribute shifting meanings or consider them simultaneously as commodities and gifts.

Thus, in inheritance transactions and gift relations people may be aware of the 'price' of the elements transacted. A gift of land to one son becomes in fact a 'commodity' if it is legitimized by reference to the costs of giving other children an education. Likewise, a farm may be given to a son in exchange for providing lodging and care to the retiring parents. Here again the concept of establishing the 'exchange rate' may be based on a translation of goods and services into market prices. In these cases the social context of exchange is not commoditized, but the terms of exchange derive from market considerations. The fact that parents cannot hand over the farm without having secured their own old age pension means that the price, or the conditions of the transaction bear an obvious relation to the estimated income the parents need to enjoy a desired lifestyle. Parents certainly face a dilemma here. Balancing their own financial needs with the wish to transfer a viable farm, and with the desire to pro-

vide the other children, now or in the future, with some wealth may easily result in giving up one or the other aspiration.

It is not possible to radically oppose 'gift economies' and 'commodity economies' (Valeri 1994). In practice they cannot be separated, especially in economic contexts where the objects of gift are at the same time commodities, and actors have the possibility to 'calculate' exchange values in a moral economy with reference to commodity prices.

The enduring impact of indigenous cultural values

Patterns of inheritance and succession generally oscillate, according to Augustins, between the principle of the broader kin group and that of the residential group: "The specific ethic expressed in every system of devolution is related to a certain conception of kinship (rights and duties deriving from the fact of being kin, male or female, etc.), as well as to a preoccupation with continuing a social unit. The logic of transmissions is thus the result of a certain tension between a residential principle, which tends to reduce the group with legal rights in inheritance to the residential group alone, and a kinship principle that gives priority to the legitimate rights of as many relatives as possible, in other words, the legitimacy of the kin group" (1989, p. 63).

Augustins sees these underlying ethical principles as prior to political, economic and ecological factors. Although the observed empirical facts may suggest the effects of, for instance, economic constraints, these are always mediated by cultural factors (Augustins 1989, pp. 109–119). This may mean that in practice the ideal of balancing equality among siblings with the priority of the residential unit may be compromised: ". . . systems of transmission between generations . . . are not eternal, but always fragile compromises between contradictory tendencies" (Augustins 1989, p. 143). The guiding principles for the rules of inheritance and succession "are deeply rooted in cultural traditions" (ibid., pp. 161–162). These ethical principles are highly durable, but their practical implementation depends on fiscal, demographic, technical and other factors. Thus, ideal rules are only modified and adapted in their practical application, not in their principle.

Brettell (1991a) argues along the same line that the analysis of property transmission should not begin with the identification of observable patterns, but with cultural values: ". . . underlying the process by which material wealth flows . . . are fundamental notions about kinship and

gender . . . cultural values are embedded in and expressed through this process" (p. 460). These are not lawlike rules but guidelines to interpreting and responding to changing conditions, and parameters within which the rights and obligations between people are negotiated. That some principles are occasionally pushed to the extreme and lead to conflicts over a superfluous agricultural implement, the general poverty for all (Tentori 1976), or discontented celibates (Comas d'Argemir 1987) only shows how seriously they are taken.

Salamon (see bibliography) has convincingly argued that the cultural characteristics of United States farmers still play an important role. These cultural attributes show a high degree of permanency, and have an important impact on economic matters. She refers in particular to the ethnic imprints on the rural landscape of Illinois, where immigrant communities of farmers largely preserved—more than a century after settlement—their 'ethnic values.' The different ways in which land is transferred between generations is, for instance, positively linked with the original European background of farmers. Salamon (1985a, pp. 123-124) asserts that cultural traditions concerning areas privy to the family, involving beliefs about kinship—intimate culture—have surprising endurance, even in the presence of radical social change. The family acts as a conservative force through the socialization of its members during early childhood.

The cultural beliefs thus transmitted are particularly apparent when land transfers are negotiated and implemented: "family sentiments regarding who receives how much land and in what manner are matters about which families are surprisingly conservative" (Salamon 1985a, p. 126). Rogers and Salamon (1983) argue that family farmers everywhere share several core concerns, such as the ordering of the relationship between farm and family, and the transfer of resources and skills. Responses to these concerns are worked out on the basis of "strictly cultural considerations, ecological pressures and socioeconomic factors" (p. 535). The most obvious responses are those coded in inheritance ideologies, although conditions are not always the most favorable and actual practice involves compromise between ideal rules and real possibilities.

Comparative research among German-American and Irish-American farming communities revealed marked differences in ethnically-defined values governing inheritance (Salamon 1980a). Immigrants to the rural Midwest had to abandon their original farming system quite rapidly, but family organization and inheritance practices were hardly affected by the totally different circumstances. The Germans remain fervently attached to portable inheritance, while the Irish define their estate as imitable.

These differences in inheritance patterns have lasting consequences for family cycles (Salamon and O'Reilly 1979), the position of women (Salamon and Keim 1979) and the elderly (Salamon 1980b), the structure of agriculture and land ownership (Salamon 1984, 1985b, 1986), and the relationship between relatives (Salamon 1982).

The tension between persistent ideal models and practical conditions is most elegantly described by Rogers in her book on the *Ostal* system in the French Aveyron (Rogers 1991). She writes that the community of Ste Foy has experienced every possible form of modernization: agriculture is enmeshed in international markets, uses modern technology, and people enjoy living standards comparable with the rest of France. These changes were accompanied by a dramatic restructuring of agriculture and rural demography. But, as Rogers argues, this does not mean that the people have become more 'French' than they were at any other period in the past. Here, as probably elsewhere, modernization was not homogeneous in its effects. People have largely maintained their cultural specificities and ways of ordering and understanding the universe. Modernization has taken a particular form, shaped and reshaped by these cultural specificities (Rogers 1991, pp. 72-73).

The key structure around which life is organized is the *ostal*, a system of household and family organization characterized by imitable inheritance and a stem-family composition. It persists as a model and has acquired increasing relevance in coping with economic conditions.

Ste Foyans define appropriate family organization as a timeless and unchanging structure. They regard the rules as absolute, standing above shifting circumstances: "In the abstract, *ostal* rules are remarkably coherent and clear, forming an elegant and internally logical system. Although . . . there is ample room for conflict over interpretations of these rules in practice, there exists consensus about what they are in principle, and about their legitimacy as a standard of behavior" (p. 75). Rogers sees these principles as powerful filters through which people perceive and order their universe.

Although the ideal pattern of *ostal* development is not always implemented, people nonetheless assume that their rules are morally superior. Siblings almost never demand their legal due, although well aware of the deviation from the French Civil Code. The arrangements made in the name of the *ostal* system could easily be contested in court, but: ". . . very few have judged the economic gain forthcoming from a disputed inheritance to be worth the social costs likely to be levied by family and com-

munity for transgressing the commonly held sense of the morally appropriate" (p. 96). Rules based on different premises are systematically ignored or neutralized. People certainly do not live in an enclosed world where their own ways of thinking and doing things are taken to be universal or natural. They constantly manage differences, are aware of their rules, and know that these may be constructed differently elsewhere. The sense of superiority is only strengthened by this awareness of difference.

The *ostal* system is, according to Rogers, ". . . a potent filter shaping expectations, providing standards against which to judge and interpret behavior, and bringing order to local life" (p. 99). These notions are therefore certainly consequential, but what ought to be done often diverges from real behavior. This discrepancy between behavioral models and practice can only be accounted for if one accepts that models orient, rather than determine, behavior. The *ostal* model was and remains often unworkable and ill-suited to certain circumstances. Its unimpaired potency and vigor are therefore quite remarkable, and can only occur when people are prepared to reconcile their sense of the appropriate with their experience of the possible. The 'mismatch' between the ideal model and behavior is accentuated by the rules' many ambiguities, which may foster conflict and give room for maneuver. Different options may be legitimized by reference to the same ideal rules.

The apparent contradiction in the development in this Aveyronnais community is that it has followed a conventional modernization trajectories, but that this has been shaped by 'timeless' cultural values. People went on trying to organize their *ostals* in the most appropriate way, and it happened just so that conditions rendered the appropriate increasingly possible. Rogers most important conclusion is that ". . . the power of formal structures as a guide to behavior and its likelihood of being reproduced over time do not necessarily derive directly from its feasibility in practice. The *ostal* system appears as alive today as ever, resilient to a wide range of practical adversity" (p. 204).

Conclusion

Normative concepts relevant for family and farm reproduction exist at two different levels, although they may be assembled into a single practical model. The first concerns the family and kinship domain; the second, the sphere of production and commodities. 'Economic circumstances,' as they are often called, are in fact more than simply external markets, prices and technologies. These 'modernizing forces' constitute, at an

abstract level, a normative model for organizing farm labor, allocating resources and, more generally, for the perception of land and labor. This 'capitalist' culture may be largely negated by or partitioned from family and kinship related concepts, but it also provides a forceful cultural alternative for conceptualizing the relationship between family and economy, especially in the sphere of exchange.

The two normative spheres are not necessarily in conflict, but they do create potential sources of conflict when it comes to assessing the value of land for continuing a patrimonial line on the one hand, and the individual interests of nonsuccessor siblings on the other. I have argued that 'capitalist' penetration or commoditization are contradictory processes. It feeds farmers with capitalist notions of value, but simultaneously denies farm families the opportunity of putting these into practice in the social relations of production.

Alternative models for the construction of farm family relationships may also emanate from a noneconomic context. Many local people construct their own family life according to different principles than their parents due to widening employment opportunities, increased personal experience of new ideas about family and kinship, and estrangement from the farming community. The hierarchical vision based on seniority, sex and birth order, and the monodimensional preoccupation with patrimonial identity and place, may become irrelevant to many of them. Whether such new models are used to challenge existing ones is a different matter, but the seeds of conflict and partitioning of interests are potentially there. The next chapters return to the problem of inheritance on modern family farms in the eastern Netherlands, where I shall try to apply some of the insights gained from the comparative theoretical discussions.

VI

Region and Locality

Demographic and agricultural developments in Twente

T WENTE IS A small region in the eastern part of the province of Overijssel, bordering on the German regions of Münsterland and Emsland. Remote peat bogs, reclaimed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, once demarcated the western border of Twente. Unlike many other regional entities in Europe, Twente's cultural and political-administrative identity is one of unusual historical continuity (Zuidam 1989, p. 191). The County of Twente from the ninth century was approximately identical to the region called Twente nowadays.

The very name, 'Twente,' conjures up 'the good old days' of peasant traditions and folklore in the Netherlands. Despite a pronounced urban-industrial element, the region is still thought of in rural terms, simultaneously evoking positive and negative stereotypes. Twente's construction as an attraction for tourists and investors dwells upon the rural image (landscape and farm buildings) and the typicalities of the Saxon tradition.

This rural image is, however, only part of reality. Twente was one of the first industrial centers of the Netherlands, and of its present 570,000 inhabitants only a quarter lives in rural areas. Almelo, Enschede and Hengelo were small towns with a total of less than 20,000 inhabitants, in 1850. The populations of these towns expanded to more than 200,000 in 1950 and almost 300,000 nowadays. The urban-industrial character of Twente stems from the nineteenth century, when textile (cotton) production moved from small workshops and domestic production to the factory (Fischer 1983; Blonk 1929; Boot 1935). Between 1861 and 1931, the

number of factory workers in the textile industry grew from 2,688 to 26,368, reaching its peak in the early 1950s with 44,000 laborers (30 percent of the active population in Twente).

Severe crises, resulting in almost complete collapse, hit the textile industry from the early 1960s onwards. New industries and the service sector only partly compensated the loss of employment (Zuidam 1989, p. 200). Twente's socioeconomic situation thus became rather problematic and, despite many local initiatives and subsidies from national government, unemployment is still a burdensome aspect of reality.

Agriculture is by no means the most important economic sector, even though a quarter of Twente's population lives in rural areas. Although spatially prominent, agriculture accounts for less than 10 percent of the total value of production. Many rural inhabitants commute every day to work and, since most in fact reside on densely populated housing estates, the landscape beyond retains a thoroughly agricultural character.

This Chapter will first present a broad outline of agricultural and demographic developments in Twente. These general trends will then be specified for a single village, thus providing the background for the local study of land transfers and inheritance ideologies described in Chapters Seven and Eight. The practice of transferring land to the next generation cannot be dissociated from local demographic and economic conditions, as I have stressed throughout this book. Land is not a static resource; its potential for employment and subsistence is constantly changing under the influence of technological and wider economic developments. A region's subsistence base is furthermore greatly influenced by population pressure. The intricacies of population development, agriculture and patterns of household formation, fission and consolidation are all closely related with inheritance and succession patterns.

My research locality provides an excellent opportunity to elaborate upon some theoretical issues concerning the relationship between inheritance practices and ideologies, ecological conditions, agricultural and demographic change. It is part of the 'classic' region of imitable inheritance and complex household structures. By identifying the changing conditions and possibilities of land use and the related prospects for farming, I will depict the economic importance of land as a resource of employment and subsistence. Chapters Seven and Eight analyze the constraints emanating from ecological, economic and demographic conditions in conjunction with the other meanings of land, particularly as part of a culturally defined family patrimony.

Agricultural change in nineteenth-century Twente

A mixture of small enclosed fields, stretches of woodland and open fields is characteristic of the lightly undulating rural landscape of Twente. Farms are grouped in small hamlets or scattered in isolated homesteads. This *coulisses* landscape clearly bears the imprint of successive periods of agricultural colonization and change. It mainly consisted of swampy peat fields, endless moorlands and woodland until well into the twentieth century. These areas have been converted into agricultural land and 'natural areas' reduced to small zones that are nowadays conserved and protected as relicts of the past.

The ecological limits of agriculture

Twente had, in the early seventeenth century, only 7,268 hectares of arable land and 2,287 hectares of pastures and hay meadows (Slicher van Bath 1957, pp. 487-8). Small settlements of farmers occupied a mere 8 percent of all land in this very thinly populated territory. The total area of agricultural land had grown to 56,000 hectares by 1833, occupying almost 40 percent of the total territory. The population grew from approximately 10,000 to 65,000 inhabitants during this period of just over two hundred years (*ibid.*, p. 55).

The expansion of agriculture and the concomitant population growth until the early nineteenth century suggest that this rural society was far from static. Farmers incessantly tried to create more space for agriculture and human settlement by bringing new land under cultivation. The difficulties associated with moving the frontiers of wastelands were, however, enormous. Without artificial fertilizers, the ceiling to agricultural expansion was defined by local ecological conditions. The agricultural system of Twente was meticulously adapted to the variety of existing ecological zones. The best soils, which were in particular used as ploughland, were on the relatively dry higher slopes of river valleys. The lower, wetter parts were mainly used as pastures and hay meadows. Extended peatfields, moorlands and woods surrounded these ecological zones. Settlements were located around the central *es*, the privately owned open fields of arable land.

Agriculture was mixed livestock and crop cultivation with extensive use of communally owned wastelands (Demoed 1986; Slicher van Bath 1957). The fundamental challenge was to maintain a balance between the number of cattle and the area of arable land, pastures and wastelands. The

basic problem farmers faced was to maintain soil fertility, without over-exploiting natural pastures and the common wastelands. Arable land received a constant flow of organic material consisting of cows' dung, mixed with heath and grass sods. The area of land brought under cultivation depended on the number of cows that could be kept, and how far moors and grassland could be dug to obtain the necessary sods. Since good pastures and hay meadows were scarce—restricting the number of cattle—and the use of wasteland limited to prevent degradation, expansion of the cultivated area was difficult. The agricultural system could only be altered if ecological balances were changed. Heather fields needed a long time to recover and the amount required for maintaining one hectare of arable land was consequently very important. Limitless exploitation or even reclamation of wasteland would have inevitably adverse effects on productivity.

Landholders' organizations (*Markegenootschappen*) regulated the precarious balance between ecological zones and the number of cattle at the communal level. Each community had a body of farmers who owned and regulated access to the common grounds. Only farmers who owned strips of farmland in the community had access to communal grazing fields and rights to collect material from peatfields, moorlands and woods. The rise of such communal organizations is generally attributed to population growth in the Middle Ages (Slicher van Bath 1944).

Agriculture in early nineteenth-century Twente was mainly oriented to the production of rye and some buckwheat. Although cattle were important for the production of milk and butter, their principal function was to provide manure and traction power. The agronomist Staring (1864) singled out the agricultural system of Twente as *Twentse roggebouw* (rye-growing area of Twente), while von Bönninghausen (1820) called it *Roggewirtschaft* (rye economy). Rye was either produced year-in-year-out without a fallow period, or with an intervening year of buckwheat. Cereals required the most intensive manuring and highest labor input; grassland received little care, and leguminous plants for cattle feed were hardly grown (Bieleman 1988). Early nineteenth-century farmers mainly produced for their own household necessities, and only to a limited extent for local markets.

Social structure was not particularly polarized, compared with rural society in the coastal parts of the Netherlands. Practically all rural households had access to some land and livestock in Twente. According to van Zanden (1985, pp. 317, 340), 90 percent of these possessed some cattle in 1807. The majority (almost 61 percent) had one or two head of cattle, 26

percent had between three and five, and 11 percent possessed more than five head of cattle. Although there was no real rural proletariat, an estimated 40 to 50 percent of the agrarian population was partly dependent on wage labor on the larger farms. Van Zanden (ibid., p. 323) classifies rural households into three groups: agricultural laborers with some land (53 percent), small farmers (44 percent) and large farmers (3 percent). Although most households owned some land, many farmers rented additional land or complete farms from large landowners. There were usually several large landowning families of aristocratic or bourgeois origin in each community. These families only occasionally farmed the land themselves; it was in general let to tenants.

Factors determining agricultural change in the nineteenth century

The agricultural economy changed drastically during the nineteenth century. From a closed peasant economy, farming became more market oriented and specialized. Van Zanden (1985), attributes these changes to the disintegration of communal landownership, better infrastructure, rising demand for agricultural products, and technological improvements in crop cultivation and cattle rearing. The area of land under cultivation constantly expanded, and productivity substantially increased during the nineteenth century. A significant growth in the number of small farmers was the clearest result of this 'open frontier' agriculture. The agricultural system proved to be sufficiently dynamic to shift barriers even before the agricultural revolution caused by the introduction of artificial fertilizers.

Table 1: *Indices of number of animals and agricultural land in Overijssel 1812-1939 (1812 = 100)*

Cattle	348
Horses	201
Pigs	945
Sheep	27
Hayland and pastures	322
Arable land	269

Source: Slicher van Bath (1970), p. 197

One of the most noticeable developments in the agricultural landscape was certainly the expansion of the area of cultivated land. While at the beginning of the nineteenth century approximately 75 percent of the land was still not under cultivation, an intensive bout of land reclamation re-

duced the area of uncultivated land to about 20 percent in 1930 (numbers for Overijssel as a whole from Slicher van Bath 1957, p. 493 and Demoed 1986, p. 77). The extension of cultivated land is clearly reflected in the growth of other agricultural indicators (see Table 1). The clearance of uncultivated land in the Overijssel Mark area did not proceed in a regular way. Between 1833 and 1856 a yearly average of 602 hectares was reclaimed, between 1856 and 1885 1,025 hectares, 275 hectares between 1885 and 1910 and 1,392 between 1910 and 1930. The expansion of agricultural land thus clearly slowed during the years of agricultural crisis (Demoed 1986, p. 78).

The driving forces that provoked this agricultural change were multifarious. One important impetus was demographic pressure, although it is difficult to disentangle causal relations between population growth and agricultural progress. The population of Twente increased from 60,000 to 150,000 inhabitants between 1800 and 1900. While population growth had been largely absorbed through increasing employment opportunities in the textile industry between 1795 and 1830, agricultural resources were increasingly developed after 1830, when barriers of trade, communal land ownership, and other constraints were abolished.

The improvement of infrastructure was a major factor in the expansion of agriculture, especially in terms of market outlets. In the province of Overijssel, 673 km of metaled roads were built during the period between 1820 and 1859 (van Zanden 1985, p. 149). Better transport facilities brought farmers relatively closer to regional market centers and enhanced possibilities of selling farm products at competitive prices.

The growing demand for agricultural products was also important. The industrialization of textile production served as a commercial catalyst at regional level. Many people worked in factories that produced for international markets, and their wages, which were largely spent on primary necessities, stimulated market production in agriculture. Farmers were thus integrated into the market economy and could increase expenditures on improving agricultural production. Industrial employment also greatly increased the chances of landless laborers saving enough money to buy some land and set up a farm (van Zanden 1985, p. 150). Agricultural development thus became firmly integrated into local industrial development and local markets. The growth of national and international market outlets also became significant, especially for dairy products.

The disintegration of the *Mark* and subsequent enclosure of the common fields was an important factor in agricultural change. Nineteenth-century agronomists and liberal politicians saw the commons as the main

obstacle to agricultural progress. They argued that private property would encourage farmers to rationalize production and take more initiatives. Enclosures were sanctioned by Royal Decree in 1837, and most Mark communities were successively abolished between 1840 and 1860.

Table 2: *Prices of some agricultural products in the Netherlands (mean 1845–1854 and 1875–1884 = 100)*

	1805/14	1845/54	1875/84	1905/14
Wheat	102	106	94	75
Rye	101	106	94	78
Beef	61	70	130	152
Pork	59	70	130	109
Butter	65	76	124	115
Cheese	59	75	125	111

Source: van Zanden (1985, p. 110)

Commodity prices began to be relevant to farmers' decision making as agriculture became increasingly integrated into markets. It is therefore worthwhile sketching the development in price levels of the most important market products (see Table 2) and the level of wages and rents (Table 3). Price developments show a clear trend toward more favorable conditions for livestock holding. Wheat and rye prices were sustained at a relatively reasonable level during the first half of the nineteenth century, but animal production became far more profitable during the second part of the century.

Table 3: *Wages for agricultural labor and prices for rented land, province of Overijssel, 1810–1910 (1810 = 100)*

	1810	1850	1880	1910
Wage	100	100	150	262
Rent	100	123	190	252

Source: van Zanden (1985, pp. 117, 122)

Agricultural wages were stable during the first part of the century, but increased after 1850. Farmers obviously sought to minimize the role of wage labor, tending to rely increasingly on unpaid family labor under such conditions. The value of land was reflected in substantially growing rents, which initially followed commodity prices, but continued to grow after the 1880s despite decreasing price levels.

Agricultural intensification

The number of people actively engaged in agriculture grew throughout the entire nineteenth century. Numbers for the province of Overijssel as a whole show an increase of 75 percent. The number of farms with at least one horse more than doubled between 1810 and 1910 (van Zanden 1985, p. 131). Rye production per hectare rose initially from 12 hl in 1812, to 18 hl in 1851–1861, and remained constant during the rest of the century. The total number of cattle almost doubled between 1810 and 1910, while the number of pigs and chickens was four times higher in 1910. Milk yield per cow increased from 1,000 in 1810, to 2,390 l/annum in 1910. The emphasis in farm production gradually shifted from arable farming to animal production during the course of the period. Van Zanden (*ibid.*, p. 111) has computed the development in gross agricultural production (total production in market prices), indicating the combined effect of prices, productivity and area under cultivation. He estimates a quadruple in total value for Overijssel, only 39 percent of which was in arable production.

The pattern of agricultural development becomes clear when the rise in labor productivity is computed as the combined effect of intensity and scale. The rise in labor productivity may result either from increasing the number of hectares per unit of labor (scale-enlargement), or from increasing the output per hectare of land. Labor productivity in Overijssel more than doubled between 1810 and 1910, the yield per hectare almost tripling, while the land/man ratio declined until the 1880s, and then became stable. The increase in productivity was entirely the result of higher yields per hectare, which rose sufficiently to compensate the effect of scale reduction. More labor input, better crop rotations and treatment of soils and, especially after 1880, by increasingly purchased fertilizers and cattle fodder, resulted in higher yields (van Zanden 1985, p. 133).

The transformation of agriculture on the sandy soils of the eastern Netherlands clearly rested on a process of intensification, without significantly replacing labor by labor-saving technologies. The extension of potato-growing and postharvest fodder crops, such as tuberous plants and spurry, were the important ingredients in the intensification of land use. The production of rye increased through better weed control, soil preparation and manuring. Cow dung remained the most important source of fertilizer, although the purchase of artificial fertilizer had made soil fertility more independent of local numbers of cattle, by the end of the nineteenth century.

Like arable farming, the management of grassland greatly improved. More cows could be kept and they were better fed on, among other things, purchased rape seed and linseed cake. Farmers gradually shifted from predominantly arable farming to cattle rearing. Although rye was still produced for home consumption, the produce of the land was increasingly destined for animal consumption. The amount of rye produced for the market decreased drastically, especially after 1860. While 75,000 hl of rye per year had been marketed in Overijssel during the 1850s, this quantity had fallen to 8,600 hl by 1880. Dairy products, especially butter, became the most important source of income.

Technical developments only acquired significance after 1850, when better equipment for plowing, mowing and threshing became available. The impact of labor-saving equipment was, however, minimal. The growth of productivity throughout the nineteenth century was due to intensified land use and specialization in well-priced dairy products. The agrarian crisis of the 1880s did not significantly alter the direction of change. Existing trends, such as specialization, were in fact strengthened and accelerated (van Zanden 1985, p. 246). Relative price levels further stimulated cattle rearing, while the growth of industrial employment boosted agricultural wages, forcing farmers to rely even more on unpaid family labor.

Two important innovations that affected agricultural development after the 1880s should, however, be mentioned. First, the use of artificial fertilizers, such as nitrogen, phosphor and calcium. Farmers accepted the principle of buying chemical products to improving soil fertility over a relatively short period. In 1895, farmers in the eastern Netherlands used 40 kg of artificial fertilizers per hectare. The price of these fertilizers declined substantially in relation to output prices between 1880 and 1914. This development, combined with the positive results on yields, would certainly have encouraged farmers to use this new farm input. The second significant change was the introduction of dairy factories, which became responsible for processing and marketing farm products. This development freed small farmers from having to invest in small-scale home production, also leaving more time for primary production.

Social structure

The development of agriculture during the nineteenth century had a number of consequences for the social structure of the farming population. I have already mentioned the substantial increase in both farms and people

working in agriculture. The expansion of cultivated land, combination with intensification, broadened the resource base of rural society, while average farm size could reduce significantly. Smaller farms could support larger families with a reasonable source of income.

Commercialization of agriculture did not increase differentiation between large and small farms. The character of change was such that scale advantages were practically insignificant. Capital investment—the factor that in theory divides small- and large-scale producers—played a minor role in farm modernization. If large producers had some scale advantages, these were compensated on small farms by relying solely on unpaid family labor. Increasing wage labor costs, especially after 1900, forced farmers to reduce the scale of their enterprise to a level more attuned to available family labor. Large farmers sold land that was eagerly snapped up by landless or almost landless laborers. In sum, the degree of inequality between different strata in the agricultural population was reduced. The character of agricultural modernization—intensification instead of mechanization—strengthened the position of small farmers and set limits to the expansion of larger farmers beyond the size of the household.

Agriculture in twentieth-century Twente

Agricultural development during the first half of the twentieth century basically followed trends established at the end of the nineteenth century. Agriculture only began to change developmental course fundamentally from the 1950–60s onwards. A number of these tendencies illustrate this continuity until just after World War II. Land reclamation in the sandy part of Overijssel reached its peak in the 1950s. The area under cultivation increased from 72,000 to 111,000 hectares between 1910 and 1950, when it began a gradual decrease (Landbouwcommissie 1985). The number of farms and farmers also continued to rise until shortly after the second World War. The total number of farms was over 11,000 in 1910, and over 14,000 in 1947 (*ibid.*). Average farm size remained approximately the same during this period.

Small farms dominated the agricultural landscape. In 1910, 57.6 percent of the farms was smaller than 5 hectares, and 24.3 percent had between 5 and 10 hectares. The total number of farms under 10 hectares was 73 percent in 1947, indicating a small increase in average farm size from 6.2 to 7.8 hectares (Maris et al. 1951, pp. 214–215). The diminutive size of farms, and their inefficiency in agronomic and economic terms, does not mean that agriculture was static. I have already mentioned the

enormous effort that went into land reclamation. Farmers also continued to transform the traditional system of arable subsistence farming. New land was mainly turned into grassland, enhancing the potential for raising cattle. While 43 percent of land under cultivation was still devoted to cropping in 1910, this had been reduced only 27 percent by 1947 (Maris et al. 1951, p. 228). The number of cows (75 percent), pigs (49 percent), and chicken (102 percent) increased considerably during the same period. The growth of employment in agriculture until well into the 1950s (30 percent since 1910) indicates that agricultural mechanization made little progress. The average number of hectares worked by one labor unit was 4.86 in 1950 (*Landbouwrapport* 1985, p. 34), only just 0.5 hectare more than in 1910.

The period between 1910 and 1945 was not one of stagnation. On the contrary, agricultural production expanded and intensified, thus providing more employment and a basis for population growth. However, economic circumstances did not allow a significant rise in living standards. After a period of prosperity, that lasted until the 1920s, depressed prices and a high man/land ratio adversely affected income (van den Noort 1965; Maltha 1944). Many small farmers survived simply by high levels of self-sufficiency and 'self-exploitation.'

Agriculture on the sandy soils, including Twente, was one of the central concerns in Dutch agricultural policy and for regional development organizations, after World War II. Many reports described and analyzed the lamentable conditions in rural areas as the outcome of small farms with numerous persons dependent on them for a living. The authors of a report published in 1950 write in terms of diagnosing a disease and proposing remedies (Maris et al. 1951, p. 189). This report held that it was impossible for smallholders to earn a reasonable living in the long term. It proposed discouraging young people from staying in farming, and reducing the number of smallholders.

The modernization of agriculture only began to become visible in Twente during the 1960s. It was then that mechanization and rising productivity began to shape developments significantly (see on agriculture in Overijssel and Twente: Provinciale Raad 1987, 1981, 1976, 1970; Stuurgroep 1990). The number of farms declined and those that remained became bigger and more specialized. Twente specialization went in two different directions. Most farmers specialized in dairy farming, but a substantial amount of farmers went into intensive 'bio-industrial' production, of pigs and chickens in particular. The emphasis on raising cattle resulted in important shifts in land use. Cereal production was almost completely

abandoned and grassland was increasingly turned into ploughland. The main crop produced on arable land is now corn, which is used for winter fodder. Grassland is intensively used for grazing, silage and hay making. Most farmers have modernized their farm buildings, adapting them to the large size of herds and mechanized milking and feeding.

Despite this recent trend of agricultural modernization, agriculture in Twente is still characterized by its relatively small scale. The average size of farms was only 16.4 hectares for full-time farmers and 6.8 hectares for part-time farmers in 1990.

Tubbergen, a village in Twente

Tubbergen is a large village in the eastern part of Twente, with about 18,000 inhabitants living in an area of 15,000 hectares, of which 10,000 hectares are used for agriculture. It is a typical rural community for the region, with a Catholic population that was traditionally engaged in a purely agricultural economy. The landscape is thoroughly agrarian, dominated by fields and farms and embellished by dispersed rural centers. Tubbergen is a large administrative unit, which includes the small town of Tubbergen itself and eleven villages, each with its own church, schools, shops and other local facilities. Most of these centers originated in old agricultural settlements during the Middle Ages, when communities of peasants (*Markegenootschap*) controlled a well-defined portion of land.

Settlements were originally grouped around a central open field, surrounded by pastures and vast areas of wasteland. Gradually, with expanding agricultural occupation, the population dispersed over a wider area creating scattered groups of farms and isolated homesteads. Large areas of Tubbergen were only reclaimed in an organized way during the 1930s, resulting in a geometrically apportioned landscape, quite different from the spontaneously created irregular field system in older parts of the countryside.

Tubbergen is an archetypal agricultural community. Unlike many other villages in the near surroundings it did not develop into an industrial center. At the end of the nineteenth century, 75 percent of the active population was directly involved in agriculture. This was still 67 percent in the 1930s, and almost 60 percent directly after World War II. Apart from local trades, most of the nonagricultural population used to be employed in a range of domestic services (mainly women). Employment became more diverse after the second World War, with large numbers of people employed in the building and textile industries. But local employ-

ment possibilities did not change fundamentally. Many people worked outside Tubbergen: more than 16 percent (931 persons) of the active people commuted on a daily basis to work in nearby industrial centers in 1947. Agriculture accounted for 70 percent of local employment.

This pattern was still visible in the 1960s, when 23 percent of the active population worked outside Tubbergen. Although agriculture employed only 50 percent of local residents, it still accounted for 64 percent of local employment. The present situation is quite different. The number of people working in agriculture has declined steadily since the mid-1960s, and agriculture now employs approximately 10 percent of the population. The relationship between place of residence and place of work has been completely severed with improved transport facilities, and more specially through the ownership of private cars.

Agriculture has clearly lost its prominent socioeconomic position in the remarkably short period of approximately twenty years, during which it lost half its work force and became a minority activity. After a long period of expansion and ever-increasing impact on the landscape, agriculture has become a sector under pressure of modernization, criticized for its industrial activity and harmful effects on the environment.

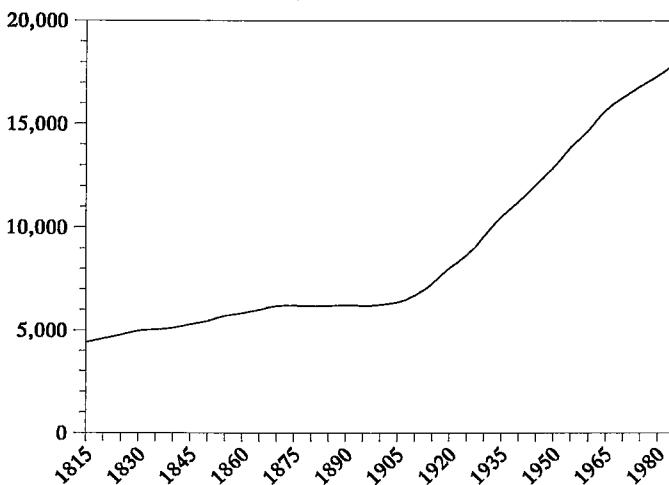
I will now describe some of the main trends in demographic and agricultural development in Tubbergen since the early nineteenth century. The data used to reconstruct these developments are drawn from published agricultural and population censuses. Unless otherwise stated, the following sources have been used: demographic documentation from the Department of Sociology in Wageningen (Hofstee files); LEI agrarian documentation (1910-1955); Agricultural census material (LEI-CBS 1947-1987); Occupational and population censuses (CBS 1859-1987).

Demographic development in Tubbergen

The population in Tubbergen (see Figure 1) increased from a total of 4,402 in 1815 to almost 18,000 in 1985. Although many people moved away, the village did not experience the dramatic exodus that afflicted so many European rural areas. Population growth continued even with the decline in agricultural employment after the 1950s. This pattern of population development indicates that during the nineteenth and a large part of the twentieth centuries, when most of the people depended on agriculture, the expansion and productivity of agricultural resources allowed the population to multiply. Likewise, the availability and proximity of industrial employment allowed people to settle or stay in the village without

directly depending on local resources. Population growth was, however, not constant. Nineteenth-century growth rates were much more modest than those of the twentieth century. Population growth during the last century was at its highest in the period before 1870, when annual growth rates averaged 6.2 per thousand. The number of inhabitants stagnated be-

Figure 1: *Population development in Tubbergen, 1815–1985*



tween 1870 and 1900; but after 1900, the population rocketed with annual growth rates peaking at over 20 per thousand in the 1920s. Growth rates only began to fall in the 1950s, but were still sufficiently high to produce substantial population growth (see Figure 3)

Birth, death and migration

A further analysis of the components of population growth (see Figure 2) shows that birth rates remained extremely high until well into the 1960s. Since the decline of mortality started much earlier, natural increase was exceptionally high, especially in the twentieth century. Mortality and natality only stabilized at 6.8 and 13 per thousand respectively, in the 1970s, bringing natural rates of increase to constant low levels. The birth rate declined slowly at the beginning of the nineteenth century (from 30 to 23 per thousand between 1820 and 1850), but increased in the following period to a peak of 34 per thousand in the 1920s. A short revival after World War II initiated a definitive fall to a level under 15 per thousand in the 1970s. The death rate almost equaled the birth rate at the begin-

ning of the nineteenth century, but then began to fall irregularly to values oscillating around 20 per thousand. There was a definitive fall in the death rate after 1870. The difference between natality and mortality was positive during the whole period. This surplus of births began to increase in the 1840s and culminated in the 1960s (see Figure 3), but was not the

Figure 2: *Birth and death rates, Tubbergen 1810–1885 (rates per 1,000)*

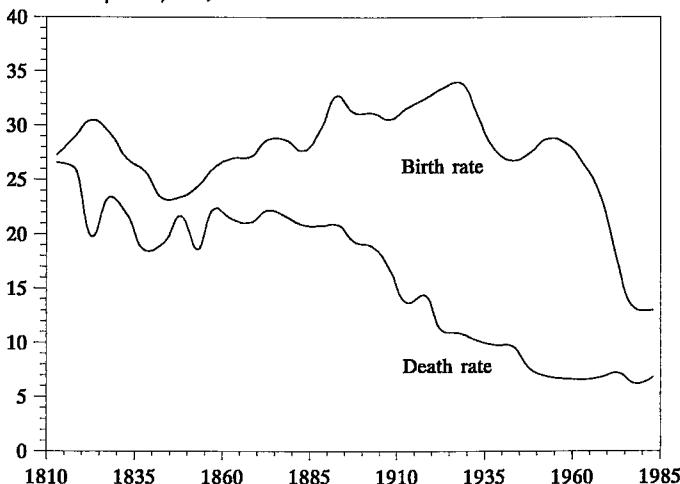
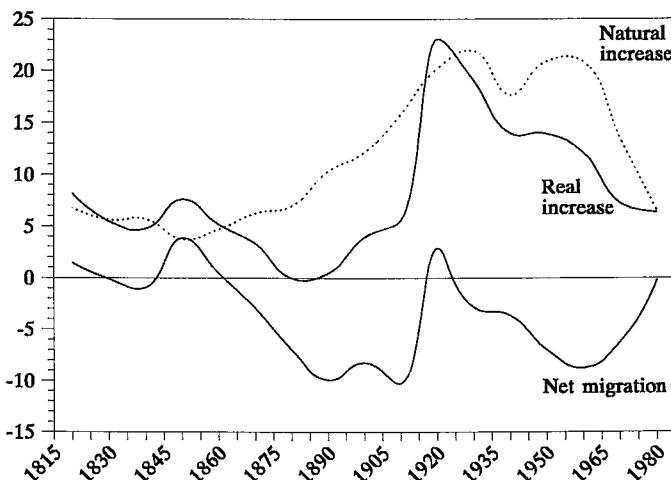


Figure 3: *The components of population growth, Tubbergen 1815–1985 (rates per 1,000)*



only factor determining population growth. People came to settle in Tubbergen, while others left the village. The net result of these migratory movements was negative during most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In- and outmigration were important mechanisms for regulating local population pressure. Migration reflected people's immediate appraisal of local economic resources. If it was impossible to establish a family in the locality, then migration was one alternative option. Migration was in that respect essential for balancing available resources against the pressure of high birth rates. Population growth can be illustrated further by an increase in the number of dwellings. There were 1,040 houses in Tubbergen in 1859; this number grew to over 1,200 in 1879, and then remained stable until 1909. The number of dwellings increased during the twentieth century from around 1,600 in the 1930s, to circa 2,500 in 1960.

Marriage, fertility and household formation

The number of births in a locality depends on the number of women in the fertile age groups (15–45), and the extent to which these women use their reproductive capacity. Since childbearing was exclusively a matter of married women in Tubbergen, this obviously means that the age of marriage and the rate of celibacy significantly determined participation in the reproductive process. Within marriage, the number of deliveries depends on the use of contraception to control natural fertility. According to the 1879 census results, the number of married women in the 15–45 age group was only 41 percent. Only 37 percent of women in the highest natural fertility age groups (20–35) were married. Many women married in later life or not at all. Thus more than 24 percent of women aged between 50 and 65 never married. This combination of late marriage and a high rate of definitive celibacy kept the number of births, of course, far below the reproductive potential of fertile women. Only 34 percent of theoretically possible fertility was realized around 1879. This extremely low performance was mainly due to the fact that most fertile women did

Table 4: Coale indices: total fertility, nuptiality, marital fertility*

	Total fertility (I_f)	Nuptiality (I_m)	marital fertility (I_g)
1879	34	39	87
1899	41	46	89
1981	15	63	24

*Coale indices are measurements, comparing a real population with a standard population (see Coale 1969)

not participate in the reproductive process. Taking differential rates of natural fertility into account, it can be computed that only 39 percent of available reproductive capacity was actually involved in the procreative process. Fertility was, however, very high within marriage, almost reaching levels of natural fertility. Married women's fertility was only 13 percent below the highest levels ever recorded among human populations, in the period around 1879.

Table 4 shows the indices of total fertility, nuptiality and marital fertility in three different periods. The period around 1879 (when data first came available) shows a population with a very restricted marriage pattern and very high rates of marital fertility. The fact that the birth rate was so high, was entirely due to the complete lack of birth control. Late marriage and a high celibacy rate are evidence of restricted local family formation, which was tied to the availability of resources, technological developments in agriculture, and mortality. In the next chapter I will show that family formation was not determined by the availability of natural resources in an objective sense, but was significantly regulated by cultural factors.

Demographic indices show that this reproductive pattern was still fully operative at the turn of the century. Although slightly more women married, most young women did not participate in procreation. Total fertility grew since marital fertility increased to even higher levels. It is very likely that this was characteristic for most of the nineteenth century, and lasted until the early 1930s. It largely corresponds with both the 'West European marriage pattern' and the 'agrarian artisanal pattern of marriage and reproduction' (see Chapter Three). Although the chances of local family formation increased during the whole period, the total effect was certainly not a revolution in marriage and fertility patterns.

While the number of households grew regularly, there was no question of unlimited growth. Between 1859 and 1910, the number of households grew by an average of four per year. It is hardly likely that local people had the feeling of living in a period of new opportunities. Only a small number of people could set up an independent farm and escape from celibacy, migration or succeeding to the parental house. As I will discuss later, access to land and hence to a basis for family formation was in principle only available to a limited number of children per family: the successor and the ones who married into another farm household. Beyond that, access to land depended on splitting existing farms among heirs, or buying land. In the next chapter these processes will be examined in more detail.

The formation of new households, largely due to reclamation of waste-lands, only receive a real boost after 1910 and until the 1940s. The number of households increased by an average of sixteen per year between 1910 and 1950. Most of the new households, approximately 60 percent, were farm households. It is no wonder that, for instance, in the period between 1925 and 1935 the (absolute) number of births was 400 higher than in the preceding ten-year period. Higher marriage rates and the introduction of birth control within marriage, evidenced by a declining birth rate after the 1930s, gradually altered the traditional demographic pattern. Only after the 1960s, however, did a new model fully emerge.

Agricultural developments in Tubbergen

Agricultural development in Tubbergen was characterized by almost continuous waves of land reclamation, intensification of land use and the creation of small farms during most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This section will sketch out the main phases in this development. I will, more specifically, provide a background for the analysis of local regulation of access to land in Chapters Seven and Eight. Data are derived from official agricultural and population census results. The quality of these data is satisfactory, but problematic in that results are not always comparable between censuses. This is especially the case with the enumeration and classification of farms, and with counting the number of people working in agriculture. Although I frequently refer to 'exact' figures, the identification of trends is more significant. Despite the shortcomings of statistical material, I think it is possible to reconstruct such long-term trends and to draw conclusions about the timing and character of changes.

Land reclamation and employment in agriculture

Increase in the area of land under cultivation is an important indication of the dynamics of agricultural development. Large parts of the Tubbergen territory consisted of heath and moorland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The nucleated villages were still largely surrounded by virgin land, used extensively for digging sods and grazing sheep. Vast, untouched fields stretched as far as the eye could see, particularly on the western and eastern outskirts of the territory. As I have shown above, population growth partly depended on the creation of new agricultural land, permitting new farms to be established, and offering more people the material basis for setting up a family.

The clearance of wasteland in Tubbergen probably followed the same pattern as in the larger sandy soiled Mark area of Overijssel. The most active periods were between 1810 and 1880, and from 1900 to 1940. At the time of the introduction of the Land Registration Record (1832), local surveyors counted almost 10,000 hectares of heath and peat soils, accounting for 68 percent of the total area (Verslag 1875). The amount of wasteland was reduced to 56 percent between 1832 and 1910, which meant that a total of 1,672 hectares of land was reclaimed during this period. The onslaught on the virgin lands was launched in the 1920s and 1930s, in a partly organized way. With capital from the provincial authorities a reclamation company started to buy or expropriate land from farmers and transform it into agricultural land on a massive scale. The labor was largely provided by unemployed workers (see Blink 1929). Economic conditions also provoked a lot of private initiative: depressed labor markets made a future in agriculture far more attractive than in other sectors of the economy. By the end of the 1930s, 4,000 hectares of land had been reclaimed, bringing the area of cultivated land to 75 percent (see Figure 4). The new land was partly used for settling new farms, especially in remote parts of the villages Geesteren and Langeveen. New farms were also created near the old settlements, although existing farms there enlarged their agricultural area as well.

The expansion of agricultural land ended after World War II. The area of cultivated land stayed constant until the 1970s, when housing and industrial estates began to take their toll (about 500 ha). It is unlikely that there will be any further periods of agricultural expansion in the future. The present policy of protecting nature and reducing agricultural intensity is very likely to cause further reduction in the land under cultivation. Regional planning authorities have, for instances, decided that only 29 percent of the Twente area is destined exclusively for agricultural development. Elsewhere, agriculture will either be banned, or integrated with nature and landscape conservation (Provinciale Raad 1987).

The agricultural labor force

The increase in agricultural land and intensification of the labor process provided growing employment in agriculture. Although data on agricultural employment have only been available since 1889, the main trends earlier in the century can easily be inferred, since the development of the active farm population roughly corresponded with the rate of population growth (van Zanden 1985, pp. 63-81). The composition of that popula-

tion did not change significantly during the nineteenth century. With the proportion of people working in agriculture stable for most of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries (moving from 80 to 70 percent), it is safe to assume that rising employment in agriculture in Tubbergen was the main basis for population growth or, alternatively, that local population pressure stimulated the creation of agricultural opportunities.

The number of people employed in agriculture in Tubbergen was 2,041 in 1889 and remained approximately the same until the turn of the century. The active farm population had reached its maximum with over 4,000 workers by the 1930s, after which it began to decline—slowly at first, but accelerating in the 1960s. Almost 1,800 people now work in farming, including women, children and part-time farmers. Employment in agriculture is typically based on family labor. Members of the farm operator's family constituted a steady 97 percent of the agricultural labor force during the period between 1953 and 1987, for which there are fairly accurate figures.

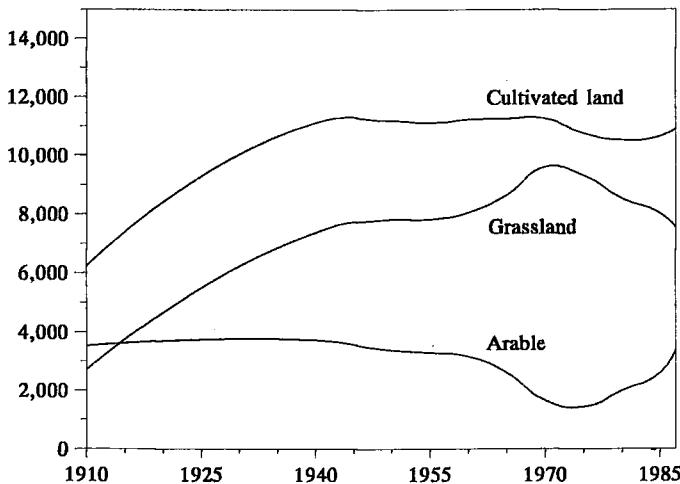
It is difficult to assess the composition of the agricultural labor force before 1940, and more especially during the nineteenth century. Most wage work was done by small farmers, who also toiled in their own fields, while the number of landless laborers was limited. The number of small farmers multiplied and landless laborers became even scarcer during the first half of the twentieth century. Agricultural modernization before 1950 did not result in polarization between a landless proletariat and large farmer; because expansion of farm size beyond the limits of family labor was a difficult option, and small farms offered a reasonable basis for existence, differentiation became less pronounced. That land reclamation averted massive proletarianization and exodus to industrial centers before 1950, becomes clear from data published in 1954 (*Verslag 1954*). It appeared that practically all farmers with less than 4 hectares of land (30 percent of all farmers) were either retiring or earning most of their income outside farming. These farmers, most of them of recent origin, were the first to set into motion a shift away from agriculture when more land was required to acquire a reasonable income.

Changes in land use and production

The increase in agricultural land corresponded with fundamental changes in land use. The shift from predominantly cereal-oriented arable farming to keeping livestock implied that cows and oxen were no longer used

primarily for manure and energy, but were increasingly kept for beef and milk production. Dairy products gradually replaced cereals as the main market product and, by the early twentieth century, rye was almost entirely used as cattle feed (Staatscommissie 1912, p. 376). Where possible, arable land was turned into grassland and the reclamation of new land was in particular directed toward gaining good pastures and hay meadows. These developments led to the ratio between arable and grassland—which was 3:1 under the traditional agricultural system—becoming more balanced during the nineteenth century. By 1910, 44 percent of cultivated land was already used for grazing and hay meadows. The proportion of grassland came to a total of almost 70 percent in 1940 and, subsequently 87 percent in 1975 with successive gains of new land and further specialization on dairy products (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: *Developments in land use, Tubbergen 1910–1987 (ha)*



Arable land was mainly used to grow rye, oats, potatoes and fodder beets until the early 1970s, although potato-growing was declining rapidly. Major changes in the area and use of arable land were already foreshadowed by the agricultural census of 1965, when the growing of corn (for green fodder) was first recorded. While 86 hectares were recorded as being sown with corn in 1966, this had increased to 1,000 hectares within only ten years. First the actual plowland was converted, quickly followed by plowing grassland. The true significance of this revolution in land use is

evinced by the present area of more than 3,000 hectares of corn. Nowadays it is difficult even to distinguish between arable land and grassland, since practically all fields have been plowed. Today, nearly all farmland is used for producing cattle fodder: an average two-thirds is covered with grass and the rest with corn.

The increase in fodder production, combined with purchased food-stuffs, have obviously facilitated expanding the number of cattle. While most farmers only kept a couple of cows at the turn of the century, herds of up to one hundred are nowadays unexceptional. The total number of cattle in 1895 was a good 5,000; it increased to almost 10,000 in 1930, and to 14,000 in 1939. Since then the number of cattle has increased without precedent, reaching its peak in the mid-1980s, when milk quotas forced farmers to reduce their herds. Between 1965 and 1985, for instance, the number of milk-producing cows doubled.

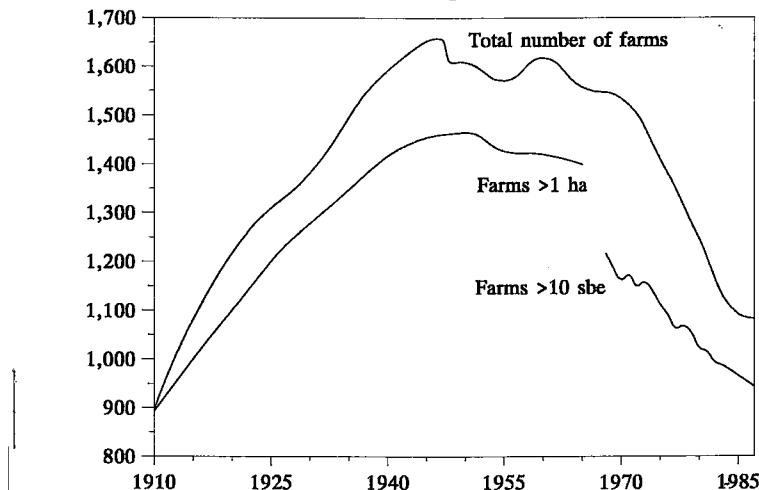
Dairy farming has become by far the most important activity for the majority of farmers. Almost 70 percent of all farmers were producing milk by 1987 and, for 87 percent of these milk production was their sole activity, or very nearly so. This high rate of specialization was also discernible among other producers, especially in the intensive breeding and fattening of calves, pigs and chickens. Extensive beef production is practically nonexistent. Many farmers do, however, combine two branches such as for example milk production with intensive animal production. Farmers engaged in the 'industrial' production of calves, pigs, chickens or eggs are almost totally dependent on purchased inputs and only use locally produced fodder to a minimal degree. While pigs and chickens were still mainly farmyard animals in the 1950s, their numbers boosted in the 1970s, mainly among small farmers lacking the land to expand into the much more extensive milk production.

Number of farms and farm size

Farm size was expressed, well into the twentieth century, in terms of the number of hectares cultivated, rather than the total amount of land belonging to the farm. Every farm in the mid-nineteenth century had the potential to more than double its size through land reclamation. Even in the early twentieth century, most small farms with 2-4 hectares of arable and grassland also had 1-4 hectares of waste- and woodland. The general practice for all size categories was that about half of the total land belonging to the farm consisted of uncultivated terrain (Staatscommissie 1912, p. 385). It is clear from the development in the number of farms, howev-

er, that after reclamation, this land was only partly used to enlarge existing farms. Many farmers seemed to consider wasteland excessive and disposed of it, either through splitting parts of the farm in favor of the next generation, or by gradually selling it off to pioneers who were prepared to take the long road of turning the land into a profitable undertaking. It is scarcely any wonder, therefore, that there was an enduring contrast between 'settled farmers' and 'pioneers.' Existing farms seemed to devote most of their energy to intensifying their 'old' cultivated land, while new farms were created on transformed wasteland. I will give a more detailed description in Chapter Seven of how farmers disposed of superfluous terrain, either by settling their own children on it, or by selling it.

Figure 5: *Number of farms, Tubbergen 1910–1987*



There is no information about the number of farms in the nineteenth century. It is, however possible to discern some basic trends from the development in the number of households. Assuming that before 1880 about 80 percent of the households were farm households (Roosenschoon 1958, p. 8), the number of farms increased by about 15 percent between 1830 and 1855. Between 1855 and 1880 there was a growth of about 16 percent, after which the number of farms remained the same until the early twentieth century. The first official census results available in 1910, enumerated 895 farms. The number of households indicate that agricultural expansion and the creation of new farms were ongoing processes,

which only stagnated in the period between 1880 and 1900, when population development was stationary, agricultural employment languished, and land reclamation came to a temporary standstill.

There was an increase in the number of farms after 1910 from 895 to around 1,600 on the eve of the second World War (see Figure 5). At the same time that this proliferation of farms took place, the area of cultivated land reached its upper limits. There were no significant changes in the number of farms until the early 1960, which demonstrates how long the effects of modernization took to touch farm structure. Once this process was set in motion, however, the number of farms began to drop steadily. Although many small farms survive even today, census takers no longer bother to register them, which makes it impossible to follow the development of the total numbers of farms over the past twenty years. The records for registered farms show that about 10 percent of the farms disappeared in the period between 1973 and 1987. It is striking that the number of farms engaging at least one full-time worker has remained almost stable since the early 1970s.

The biggest selection among farms with future prospects and those without was made between 1960 and 1970, leaving a hard core of farmers with considerable survival capacities, and a group of farmers who do not seriously think of their land in terms of a farm. The most important factor explaining farm cessation is the lack of a successor. Although these farms do not release much land, it has allowed other farmers to enlarge their enterprise.

Enlarging the farm by acquiring more land is not the only way of increasing production. Since only the smallest farms were sold, only small parcels of land become available on the market. More than half the farms in 1987 had less than 10 hectares, while those with more than 25 hectares constituted only 5 percent of the total. Given this general problem of land scarcity, which boosted prices to unrealistic levels, farmers mainly opt for intensification through high capital investments and substantial inputs of industrial products. The total productive capacity (standard enterprise units) increased by about 50 percent between 1971 to 1985, which was a period when the area of land under cultivation did not increase.

Farms with less than 10 hectares decreased most noticeable after the 1950s. These farms together held about 6,000 hectares of land (50 percent of total cultivated land) in 1955. By 1987 this group occupied 2,700 hectares (25 percent). The gradual disappearance of small farms meant that land was released for the enlargement of surviving farms. In contrast to

the prewar period, when newly available land was mainly used to set up small farms, land made available after the War came from small farms. This did not, however, precipitate impressive scale-enlargement. Average farm size in the 1950s was only 3 hectares smaller than in 1987. The number of farms with more than 20 hectares increased from 78 in 1950 to 128 in 1987. Although some farmers expanded their acreage enormously, the majority did so in a very modest way. Either they had sufficient land, or else they survived through intensification.

Farm structure, ownership and tenancy

The number of hectares available for farming was a very important measure of its income potentialities in the period before the second World War, when capital investment was still insignificant. Table 5 shows that historically small farms dominated agriculture in Tubbergen. In 1910, 83 percent was smaller than 10 hectares; in 1921, 90 percent; and in 1950, farms with less than 10 hectares still represented 80 percent of the total. It was certainly possible for a family to survive, although not in affluence, on a farm of 2-4 hectares, if the children did not stay dependent for too long. Farms over 5 hectares provided full-time employment and afforded a reasonable living. Large farms were exceptional because the very high demands in terms of labor input—before mechanization—could hardly be met, even by the largest households. The relatively high level of wages made employing wage laborers unattractive option, especially after the 1880s and throughout the twentieth century. Farmers with more than 20 hectares used their land more extensively than small farmers, although they occasionally employed the latter to supplement household labor. Only when mechanization began to revolutionize the labor process could the number of hectares per labor unit rise significantly. Local people remember the period before World War II as a time when large farmers were clearly distinguished as a small elite group, dominating local politics and treasuring their status as descendants of those who had dominated the old collective village community. They were not conspicuous for being industrious or enterprising, but rather as a class relying on its huge reservoirs of wasteland. During the modernization process after the second World War, these 'settled' farmers still owned the largest farms, and were not renowned for their innovative spirit.

Large and small farms had different dynamics and, to a large extent, different origins. While large and also medium farms (with at least 10 hectares of land) had either been ancient settlements or were created in

the early nineteenth century, small farms were much more recent creations through land reclamation. Table 5 shows that the number of very small farms (smaller than 5 ha) rose dramatically from 488 to 840, between 1910 and 1921. Land reclamation was basically a matter of creating new farms, as is confirmed by the stable number of farms above 5 hectares. The effect of land reclamation on farm structure was different after 1920. After a sharp decline, the number of very small farms became stable. Land reclamation became directed towards creating larger farms or enlarging the area of small farms. Apart from land reclamation new farms also came into being by splitting up existing farms through multiple succession, or by selling part of the land. This trend is clearly visible between 1910 and 1921, when the number of farms over 20 hectares decreased from 47 to 22. This dispersion of large farms also contributed to growing numbers of small ones. The number of farms larger than 20 hectares increased to 53 in 1930, and 78 in 1950. Thus, many farmers managed to increase farm size either by reclaiming their own wasteland or by buying land.

The foundations for the structure of agriculture in the second half of the twentieth century were laid during the period between 1910 and 1950. During this period, the remaining wasteland was gradually cultivated and used to set up new farms and to enlarge existing ones. The legacy of this effort was, however, that many farms were far too small to face the challenge of agricultural modernization. Thus, after 1950, land that had been initially absorbed by small farms was gradually incorporated into larger farms.

How farmers managed to gain access to land, and how different forms of farm occupancy developed over time are essential to understanding the changes in farm numbers and sizes that have been presented so far. In the mid-nineteenth century, the common land was divided among existing land users. They had access to vast stretches of heath and peatland, which they could sell, rent or reclaim on their own initiative. Although there are no data about forms of occupancy for the nineteenth century, it is clear from the Land Registration Records which list all plots of land owned by a specific proprietor, that most large landowners rented land to tenants. Most of these landholders were themselves farmers, but some were tradesmen, merchants or the descendants of aristocratic families, who were not active farmers. There were several of these landholders who, after the division of the common lands, owned more than one hundred hectares. These mostly absentee landlords tended to rent their

Table 5: Number of farms and farm size, Tubbergen 1910–1987

Farm size (ha)	1910		1921		1930		N	%	area
	N	%	N	%	%	area			
< 5	488	55	840	68	37	657	48	19	
5 – 10	247	28	272	22	30	495	36	38	
10 – 20	107	12	107	8	24	177	13	27	
20 – 30	48	5	21	2	9	46	3	13	
30 – 50	1	0	1	0	0	6	0	3	
>50	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Total	893	100	1241	100	100	1382	100	100	

Table 5: *continued*

	1950			1987			N	%	area
	N	%	%	N	%	%			
			area			area			
< 5	657	42	15	242	25	6			
5 – 10	618	38	39	282	29	19			
10 – 20	235	15	29	313	33	41			
20 – 30	64	4	17	78	8	17			
30 – 50	13	1		44	5	17			
>50	1	0	0	6					
Total	1609	100	100	965	100	100			

Source: Agricultural censuses (various years)

land out in large farms, while landholding farmers were more inclined to make smaller parcels available to small farmers, retaining the bulk of it for their own use. Apart from these two types of (relatively) large land-owners, there were numerous owner occupiers who used all their own land.

This pattern was clearly visible at the beginning of the twentieth century. Eighty percent of the farmers were then classified as owners of their land. The proportion of owner-occupiers was highest among farmers with more than 10 hectares of land. Among the smallest farmers, 73 percent belonged to the owner occupiers. These numbers indicate that the advent of so many new farmers during the nineteenth century came about overwhelmingly by direct access to land. Farm structure became increasingly dominated by owner occupiers during the twentieth century. Their number increased from 80 percent in 1910, to 87 percent in the 1950s. Remarkably, it was small farmers who were increasingly likely to own their land. The predominance of owner occupiers became even more significant after the second World War. While 88 percent of the land was in the hands of owner occupiers in 1955, this had become 90 percent by 1970, and 89 percent by 1987. Full tenant farmers are today exceptional. Only 2 percent of all farmers rented all their land in 1987.

Before the second World War it was possible to create new farms and to enlarge existing ones by adding newly reclaimed land. There was an open frontier situation, with high mobility of land resources, which allowed farmers access to farmland without setting in motion a process of farmland concentration and differentiation. After the second World War further resource augmentation was not possible. Farmers who wanted to begin or expand a farm could only do so with existing farmland and, at the expense of other farmers. With economic survival partly dependent on expanding farm size, access to resources became highly competitive, especially from the 1960s onwards, resulting in a sharp decline of small farmers. Thus, two totally different contexts of land transactions can be discerned. Small farmers enjoyed increasing opportunities and open resources during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, while the need to enlarge farms in order to remain viable under conditions of land scarcity typifies the second part of the twentieth century. The next chapter will examine the character of land transactions in these two different periods.

VII

The Land of Generations

The transmission of property and estate management

THE NUMBER OF farmers in the village of Tubbergen gradually increased until the 1950s. These farmers not only managed to set up a farm and create a basis for subsistence, they were also owner occupiers. Acquiring a farm and becoming its proprietor were the two most important ambitions among the rural population in Tubbergen. Many people did not, of course, manage to realize these ideals. Even in a period when the possibilities for establishing a new farm were particularly favorable, as between 1920 and 1940, outmigration meant a loss of 755 men and women.

The intriguing problem posed by these observations is how this class of mainly smallholders managed to get hold of land. What about the notorious refusal of landholders in the eastern Netherlands to alienate their patrimony or divide it among offspring? In Chapters Two, Three and Four, I explained in detail how land belonged to primary social units, and that it formed an integral part of strategies to reproduce 'houses.' Ideally, land could not be detached or dispersed from this important symbol of family line continuity. The 'sacred' unity of an ancestral line and inherited land was opposed to any idea of alienation or division.

Growth in the number of farms may, theoretically, result from various different processes. A landholder (whether private or communal) may sell land, lease it to a tenant or, in the case of private ownership, divide it among several successors. These forms of parceling out land may all contribute to the creation of new farms. In a context of open resources, when not all land is brought under cultivation, dispersion of land does

not necessarily result in a size reduction of original farms. Landholders may, for instance, only dispose of wasteland and leave original farms intact. This kind of transaction, which clearly distinguishes a specific category of land, is of an altogether different nature from transactions that concern land belonging to a farm: that is, land that is effectively cultivated, not marginal and bearing an ancestral identity.

If such 'old,' patrimonial land had, indeed, been alienated or divided there would have been a discrepancy with the image of the eastern farmers that I presented in earlier chapters. It is therefore interesting to analyze the nature of property transactions in some detail to establish how far landholders disposed of or divided land, and the sort of land this was. This analysis is highly pertinent to the question of how cultural attitudes relate to land, kinship and household formation, how they structure property transactions and the formation of new farms and, consequently, contribute to population growth and the enlargement of a society's resource base.

The conditions created by agricultural intensification, and the existence of huge stretches of uncultivated land, undoubtedly facilitated the dispersal of agricultural resources. There would have been no technical, economic or manpower obstacles to dividing farms into units of 5 hectares, or even less, by the end of the 1940s. Since many owner-occupied farms were maintained at a much larger size, there seemed to have been social and cultural impediments to altering farm size to what was possible from a purely techno-economic viewpoint.

This chapter will focus on the social and cultural regulation of access to and management of agro-ecological resources in the context of fundamentally changing land resource capacities. While setting up a farm required a diminishing amount of increasingly available resources for most of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, an increasing amount of scarce resources were needed to maintain a viable farm after the second World War.

Analyzing the transmission of property: the incidence of family and residential continuity

Landed property can, in principle, be transferred in two ways. It may either be alienated from a family (a market transaction), or remain within the same family (through inheritance or gifts). The question of alienation deserves further attention. Since my basic problem is to what extent property remained in the hands of the same family over the generations, *alien-*

ation is defined as the transfer of property through sale to a nonrelative (as a commodity). *Family continuity* is then defined as the perpetuity of property holding in the hands of the same family. This is the case when land is transmitted along kinship lines.

The transfer of land by inheritance may result in the dispersion of property along several lines of descent (*multiple inheritance*), or in its consolidation in the hands of only one family line (*single inheritance*). If family continuity is achieved via single inheritance this mostly coincides with *residential continuity*, all property remaining attached to the same 'house.' Multiple inheritance may lead to the dissolution of a residential group, but it may also be associated with the partial continuity of the residential group by one of the successors. Partial residential continuity of property may also take place when some property is sold and some transferred via inheritance. Residential continuity thus occurs when at least one heir also takes on succession to the headship of the bestower's household, thereby perpetuating the link between land, residence and a line of descent.

This chapter will try to answer how far generations of farmers have either alienated their land and/or kept it in the family, and to what extent several forms of family continuity were combined with residential continuity. Did the increase in the number of farms during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries result from multiple inheritance, or the alienation of land? This analysis may furthermore contribute to a better understanding of land and inheritance strategies, and stimulate considering the connection between changing demographic and agricultural conditions, observed behavior and the underlying practical and ideological predispositions.

Sources and methodology

My analysis is based on empirical material from the Land Register Office (*Kadaster*). This registration of property was initiated in Tubbergen in 1832, with a description of all buildings and pieces of land, their size, qualification and owner(s). All changes in quality (for instance the division of a field or its reclamation) and ownership of land were conscientiously recorded. This makes it possible to identify the size of individual properties at any given moment in time, to trace from whom and how (inheritance or purchase) it was acquired and how estates were dissolved or maintained over time. The information from this source is in principle easy to handle. However, the practical difficulties should not be underesti-

mated. Since every single piece of land was mentioned and land was extremely fragmented, the number of entries per owner, even a small one, is hardly manageable. The identity numbers of fields and their owners were, moreover, constantly changing, so that it is easy to lose track quite rapidly after beginning.

The *Kadaster* has been rarely used to study property transactions diachronically in the Netherlands. It has occasionally been used to obtain a synchronic cross-section of the division of property, mostly immediately after a revision of registration. I am aware of only one study (Ubbink 1955) that has used the *Kadaster*, but with the aim of studying changes in farm size, rather than reconstructing the logic of transactions. There were thus no precedents and I have had to develop my own methodology. In

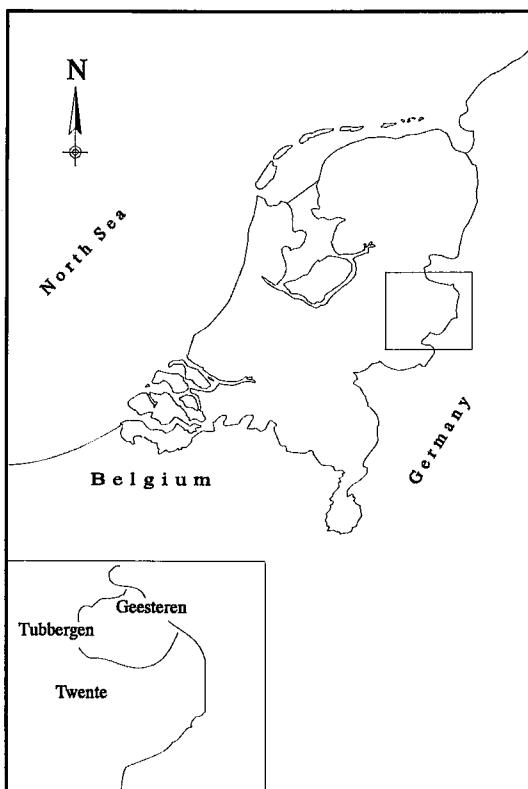


Figure 1: Map of the Netherlands, showing the location of Tubbergen and Geesteren

order to limit the amount of information—without losing the essential—for analysis, I neglected landowners with less than one hectare of land. I furthermore ignored land transactions below one hectare, which already made handling the information less burdensome. Secondly, I decided to limit myself to a limited number of administrative subdivisions of the territory (*secties*). I focused on landholders living in the hamlet of Geesteren, or at least with the bulk of their land in the sections corresponding with the area of Geesteren (see map). Thirdly, I selected just over fifty landholders from the earliest Land Registration Record of 1832 and followed their properties through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their property was tracked as far as possible until 1985. This allowed me to answer several fundamental questions concerning alienation, family continuity and residential continuity. Since there was a tendency for property to disperse, the number of cases to be followed multiplied, and I reconstructed the development of 130 properties, in total.

Landholding in Geesteren before the division of the communal lands

The organization regulating use and access to communal land (the *Marke*) to which the hamlet of Geesteren belonged, was established before 1498 (Alberts and Haartsen 1979). Its name was *Drieschigtige Marke*, and it also included the hamlets of Mander and Vasse. There was a distinction in the Mark organization between *gewaarden* and *keuters* (shareholders and cotters). The shareholders were the actual owners of the common land, and their use of wastelands and decision-making power was defined by the number of shares they held individually. One *waar* (share) mostly corresponded in practice with one farm, but farmers occupying such farms and using the rights assigned to them were not necessarily owners of the land and legal shareholders in the Mark.

Slicher van Bath (1957) asserts that owner occupiers were an insignificant social category, at least in the seventeenth century. *De jure* ownership of land and shares in the commons were divided among four groups: farmers, the nobility, the Church and the state. Around 1600, the shareholders' farms (*erven*) in the area of Tubbergen were divided as follows: 5.8 percent owner occupied, 25.4 percent owned by the nobility, 41.8 percent in the hands of the Church and 7.9 percent state property (Slicher van Bath 1957, p. 629). Ownership of land was thus concentrated in the hands of a few landholders (see also van Zanden 1984, p. 107).

The small number of owner occupiers is curious given that farmers owned 70 percent of the farms by the second half of the nineteenth cen-

tury. A major change in ownership structure must have taken place, and this van Zanden (1984) situates in the period between 1750 and 1830. This was when large estates were divided and farmers managed to buy most of the land. The Catholic Church had by then already lost most of its land after forced appropriation by the state in the seventeenth century. The selling off of large properties was partly a result of the alienation of state land under French occupation, but also resulted from financial problems among landholders. Thus, by 1830 a class of well-off freeholders had come to dominate local social and economic life, replacing the former landholders in local political functions, and constituting a real 'peasant nobility.' The first listing from the Mark archives of Geesteren lists twenty *gewaarden* in 1552. This number was the same in 1811, indicating a great continuity in the number of shareholders.

The total number of farmers in the area of Geesteren was, however, much higher; having risen slowly throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were 137 farmers in 1811 (Alberts and Haartsen 1979, p. 94). Although the Mark organization was a closed community, it did allow new settlers (*keuters*) on its territory. These settlers either bought or rented a piece of land and had rights to use the commons, but they held no property or decision-making rights. The number of these 'cottage farms' increased in Geesteren in particular during the eighteenth century, going from approximately forty-four in 1720 to 125 in 1795 (RA Overijssel, Statenarchief 2500, 5357). The cotters were more frequently owner occupiers (54 percent around 1600) than were the settled *erven*. With the rise to ownership of the *gewaarden* farmers, these cotters were no longer dependent on an absent elite, but on local residents.

Landownership in 1832

The first detailed inventory of the division of property in Geesteren was made in the Land Registration Record of 1832. The largest landowner was the Mark organization, which owned approximately 70 percent of the land (nearly 2.5 thousand hectares). The private land was divided among a large number of owners, 123 of whom owned one or more hectares. Of a total of 123 owners, 65 percent had 1-5 hectares, almost 25 percent held 5-20 hectares and 10 percent owned more than 20 hectares. The distribution of land reflected two fundamental aspects: practically all households in the hamlet (total of about 150 farm households) had access to land; but access was very unequally distributed. Ten percent of the owners owned 46 percent of the land, and it is very likely that these owners were pre-

dominant among the shareholders who held the Mark grounds (see Table). Who were these relatively large landowners? Were they farmers, aristocrats, or members of the industrial and merchant class? The high proportion of resident farmers in the group of large landowners in Geesteren was visible proof of the transformation of property structure. The Church, the state and the nobility had no role. Absentee landlords (having about 20 percent of the land) comprised industrial entrepreneurs and merchants, living in the small industrial centers of Twente. These latter properties were rather modest, not exceeding 45 hectares in the territory of Geesteren, which demonstrates the limited impact of absentee landowners.

Table 1: *Distribution of private landownership in Geesteren, 1832*

Size (ha)	Number of owners	% of total owners	Number of ha	% of total ha
1 – 5	80	65.0	206	22.9
5 – 10	18	14.6	123	13.7
10 – 20	12	9.8	151	16.8
>20	13	10.6	418	46.6
Total	123	100.0	898	100.0

The large, established farms, grouped around the ancient arable open fields in the center of the hamlet, were mainly held by the farmers themselves. This small group of large farmers also had the greatest share in the common lands. Many of the numerous smallholders managed to settle on Mark grounds and indeed to buy it from the Mark in the eighteenth century. There was, moreover, a group of farmers, not listed as landowners, who rented land from local farmers or absentee landholders.

The management of property before the division of the commons (1832–1855)

The organization of property at the beginning of the nineteenth century clearly reflected attitudes that were prevalent before the introduction of civil law. The space on the land registration form for the name of the owner rarely contained a single entry. The holders of property were mostly collectively designated as *erven* (inheritors), which means that a formal division of land had never taken place and that land was held under conditions of a so-called *onverdeelde boedel* (undivided estate). This condition of indivisibility often went on for years, which did not, of

course, mean that individual rights had not been legally clarified and defined.

This legal concept of property did not, however, seem very relevant. Property, for the people in Geesteren, belonged to a residential unit, which was composed of extended family members, sharing specific rights and duties in work and caring. It is remarkable how closely the style of registration by Land Registration officers coincided with farmers' attitudes. While there was no mention of individual legal shares in the Land Register, the notarial deeds (on which the registration was based) meticulously specified the exact status of property. It should, however, be said that with growing state control and the marshalling of civil servants, the actual legal division of property among the members of the household was mentioned more frequently after 1850. Another peculiarity of the Land register is that family members were frequently referred to by a name (mostly also the name of the farm), which was often not that of the resident family. Where a daughter succeeded, the name of the family line changed into the name of the inmarrying son-in-law, but the family remained identified with the name of the original founding family of the house.

These two preliminary observations, based on a reading of the land registration documents, indicate the pronounced residential character of social structure, as identified in Chapter Five. Property seems to have been tied to a house and residential continuity associated with single, either matri- or patrilineal succession. This observation is of course heavily colored by my previous reading of ethnographic and historical texts, and needs further empirical underpinning.

Forty of the 123 estates identified in 1832 were selected for further analysis. Starting with the first available data, the long-term stability or mobility of property belonging to the original family was examined, together with the frequency of residential and family continuity. The dynamics of landholdings will first be analyzed by looking at the fate of the property-owning families in the period between 1832 and 1855. The year 1855 is crucial since it was then that the results of dividing the commons, some four years earlier, became visible. The division of common land had profound implications for landowners. In contrast to the previous period, when a board of landowners regulated access to common land, farmers suddenly gained direct access to additional land that they could use as they wished. Most landowners saw their acreage doubled, tripled or even quadrupled, and even farmers who had had restricted use rights also benefitted from the division.

Residential and family community in a frozen land market

The forty estates I examined together held 445 hectares in 1832. I deliberately overrepresented 'large' owners in order to obtain a good picture of all size categories. Following each of these estates through the years yielded some interesting conclusions about property transmission and the land market. The most striking result of this analysis is that land was an extremely immobile asset during the period before the division of the commons. Although there was a land market, the general situation was one of frozen distribution of land ownership. Land not only remained in the hands of the same families; it was also diligently kept under the stewardship of a single residential line of succession, excluding any dispersal to lateral kin. Land was not sold or split off in any other way and nobody purchased any land. There were only three cases where a small amount of land was sold to new owners without, however, substantially affecting the original properties. The only remarkable transaction was the sale of one estate belonging an absentee landowner to his tenant. Thus, the farmer residing on 'Booyink' managed to buy all the land he farmed in 1849 (44 ha), in line with the trend for farmers settled around the *es* (central Mark fields), to become large landowners.

This pattern of land consolidation corresponded with the traditionally unimpeachable nature of a *waar*, the shareholding privilege of access to common land, which was derived from private ownership. There was, in principle, nothing to stop a property-holding farmer from dividing or selling property, thereby creating new farms for his children or other aspirant farmers. An important wave of land reclamation between 1830 and 1855 gave many new farmers access to the common fields, mostly rented from the Mark organization. The creation of these small farms showed that farming could clearly be practiced on a significantly smaller scale than the large farmers in fact did.

However, economic conditions and technical possibilities seem to have been irrelevant in this context, where the culturally defined identity of the undivided patrimony simply ruled out even contemplating the dispersal of land. The fact that smaller properties were also painstakingly maintained was certainly associated with the concept of a viable farm, but the lack of any correlation between the size of property and the pattern of property consolidation suggests the existence of identical cultural disposition among the smaller farmers.

Most estates underwent transfer to the next generation during the period under consideration, without any lateral dispersion or newly creat-

ed households. Property was mostly transmitted to a son, and only in the event of there being no sons was it transferred to a daughter. This is significantly different from the situation in the eighteenth century. A household enumeration from 1748 (*Lijst van Ingezeten en. Statenarchief 2193-2196*) reveals that almost half the households in their extended phase (three generations living together) were headed by a son-in-law. I will propose an interpretation of this growing preference for a son as the single heir-successor in Chapter Eight.

One consequence of this closed property market and single succession/inheritance system was that the only possibilities for new entrants to farming were by renting land from a large landowner—who, apart from a core farm also owned smallholdings—or to be allowed to clear some wasteland from the Mark. This latter option had been the common practice during the eighteenth century, when many small cotters penetrated the Mark without, however, obtaining shares in the common land. Many of these peasants managed to buy this land from the Mark during the eighteenth century, but there is no indication of any such transition to the class of small proprietors in the period between 1832 and 1855. It may be that Mark policy had changed with rising political dominance of resident farmer-shareholders, who may have been less inclined to sell off parts of the commons. Instead, they were presumably more inclined to allow settlement based on a heritable lease agreement, which explains the slow increase in the number of farms until the 1850s.

The division of the commons

The division of common lands proceeded in a variety of ways throughout the Mark area in Overijssel (see Demoed 1987). In some communities, the commons were divided among shareholders only, while others took land- and house ownership as the criteria for allocation, disregarding the *de jure* ownership of commons. The amount of land allotted could moreover vary according to its quality. The distribution of the commons in Geesteren was based on land tax. Since this tax reflected both the amount and the quality of land, those whose land was concentrated in the ancient settlement zones (the *gewaarden*) obviously had the advantage. But it also meant that cotters, who only had derived use rights in the commons, were assigned land. The allocation was thus rather generous to the class of small farmers who either did not originally own land privately, or owned it without having a share in the commons. The decision not to

exclude them and to prevent their ultimate marginalization certainly reflected some degree of village solidarity.

The Mark had thus disappeared as a political-administrative board by 1855. All land was now in private hands and could be enclosed, reclaimed, sold or leased without prior public deliberation. The division of the commons resulted in a considerable increase in private landownership. Before the division the forty owners in my sample had 428 hectares, after it they together held 1,238 hectares. Some quite extensive estates were created: nine farmers and one absentee industrial, for example, each now had more than 50 hectares of land. One farmer, Albertus Masselink of 'Meijer,' increased his original property from 56 to 109 hectares. Another farmer, Anna Maria Elberinck of 'Elberinck,' increased her property from 39 to 93 hectares.

The added property could not, however, be compared with the arable and pasture lands that were traditionally privately owned. It was natural wasteland, consisting of heath, marshes, peat bogs and woods. This wasteland represented a complementary asset in a system of mixed farming—thus mainly for digging organic materials which, when mixed with manure, could be used as fertilizer. These wastelands could not simply be transformed into pastures and arable land, since this would have endangered the precarious ecological balance. This ecological balance was, however, not static and, especially from the 1850s onwards the amount of wasteland needed to maintain soil fertility gradually decreased due to better methods of cultivation. Farmers became less dependent on wasteland, although it remained an essential asset. They faced the choice of either leaving wasteland as it was, incorporating it into their farms as cultivated land, or distributing it to 'pioneer' farmers.

Dispersion and consolidation of landed property between 1855 and 1880

What sort of policy did private landholders develop toward land given the fundamentally altered character of landownership? Landed property was clearly regarded as a fixed resource, not susceptible for division, sale or enlargement, before the enclosures of the commons. How did landholders react when their resources were suddenly redefined? Was newly acquired property integrated into the existing system of property transmission and management, or did a differentiated set of strategies develop?

The rural dwellers of Geesteren certainly faced enormous changes in communal organization, but these were not accompanied by any momen-

tous changes in agriculture and demography. Contemporary agronomists assumed that communal landownership was one of the main obstacles to exploiting the potential wealth of uncultivated land. But, as I made clear in Chapter Six, there had been significant population growth and intensification of agriculture before the discussion of the Mark organization had even begun.

The period after 1855 hardly inaugurated any serious change in the pace of agricultural and demographic development. Existing trends were only strengthened, not least by forces emanating from the wider society. Better infrastructure, larger and more demanding markets and favorable prices for animal products provoked further intensification of production and a further move into frontier land. The number of farms increased substantially from the 1850s to the 1880s, mainly through bringing new land under cultivation. How did these new farmers get access to land? Were they endowed with land upon inheritance, did they buy land, or did they become tenants? To answer these and other questions I will continue with my analysis of individual property trajectories. I will do this by separately considering large properties and smaller ones, since they represent two different social groups.

The large owners basically belonged to the elite of former *erven*, whose local presence had a long history. The criterion for inclusion in this group was having more than 20 hectares of land after the division of the commons. Owners with less than 20 hectares mainly belonged to the former cotters, whose settlement was more recent. They did not belong to the village elite but certainly improved their status through the allocation of common land from. They did have the potential to become an important group of medium-sized farmers, especially since numbers at the lower end of the continuum tended to increase. A property of 20 hectares may seem, at first sight, rather generous for classification as small. It should, however, be remembered that a farmer with a property of 20 hectares in 1860 had in fact a farm of less than 8 hectares.

The number of landowners considered after 1855 is fifty-one, forty stemming from the original sample and eleven who acquired land after the division of the commons. Thirty-four of them had less than 20 hectares and seventeen over 20 hectares of land. The large landowners together had 1,008 hectares (60 hectares on average), while the small owners held 447 hectares (13 hectares on average). I will follow the fortunes of these owners until 1880. Population had increased, albeit at a low rate, and there had been a certain degree of agricultural prosperity until 1880. After 1880, however, available indices evince a more depressed situation..

Large landowners

The way in which the large owners dealt with their property resembled their behavior in the previous period. But there were substantial differences as well, particularly with respect to the large amounts of land they sold! There was in general a more active land market between 1855 and 1880. Of the 1,008 hectares these large owners held in 1855, more than 300 hectares had been alienated by 1880. This was done gradually, mostly in rather small portions, and practically always concerned uncultivated land. Most of this land was sold between 1870 and 1880, which shows that these owners needed to adapt to the idea that they controlled valuable, attractive assets that could be disposed of without really touching the integrity of their estate. By 1880, all owners in the sample were farmers since the last farmland still in the hands of an absentee landlord had been sold to the two remaining tenants in 1862.

This policy of splitting wasteland was not in itself surprising, since this had become increasingly dispensable to the running of a farm. There were, moreover, plenty of eager buyers who were prepared to invest substantial time and energy in clearing a piece of land. It is curious, however, that these owners did not give their own children the opportunity of setting up a farm. The basic pattern was that of firmly maintained single succession, single inheritance and residential continuity. The children, with a single exception, were simply excluded from inheritance, while their parents gradually enriched themselves by selling off land to eager bidders. There were only two cases where part of the home farm was split from the original property for the benefit of a child other than the main successor. Not only was land kept within the family, but dispersion into a wider family group was tacitly prevented by defining a single line of succession that was spatially bound to the farmhouse, thus resulting in a solid combination of residential *and* family continuity of property holding.

The singularity of property management among large landowners is the ease with which they sold the land they acquired after the division of the commons. It seems that this was not considered to be a violation of the principle of patrimonial integrity. Property was considered important insofar it corresponded with the land that was traditionally attached to the house and used to uphold the status of its residents. Distant wastelands and odd pieces of land rented out to tenants were useful as a financial reserves; selling excessive land to 'strangers' was part of a tactic to preserve the main core of the patrimony and maintain the status of the

family. The fact that these large owners were not very eager to help their own children colonize this 'superfluous' land may reveal a certain disdain for settlers on former wastelands and for 'marginal' farmers in general. These came from landless families or had been marginalized by their original family. Identification with this agricultural stratum seems to have been regarded as an infringement of status and honor. Parents' first option was to marry off their disinherited children to an heir or heiress of identical or nearly equal standing. If this were not possible, the second choice was to attach the doomed celibate to the house, where he or she was urgently needed to work for the farm and the household. A career in the Church, teaching or as a civil servant was also acceptable.

The large owners' entries in the land registers make it clear that men and women circulated among a small number of rich families. Homogeneous marriages confirmed and reproduced status and respect within the community. The fact that well-to-do landowners only very occasionally granted their own children some land for setting up a farm can thus be explained as a strategy to maintain the status of the family. It is very likely that settlement on a small pioneer farm was considered a form of social degradation and that children were generally not encouraged to begin a farm of their own. The money raised by selling land could be used to compensate nonsuccessor children generously, or to enable them to qualify for a career outside agriculture. Many children from these large landowning families had a good vocational training, some even in higher education.

Small landowners

How did the smaller landowning families manage their property? Did they also alienate the newly acquired fields or, on the contrary, did they gradually integrate wasteland into their farm enterprise? The singularity of their behavior is illustrated by the fact that practically all their land was kept in the same families. Land was neither sold, nor dispersed among family lines. Only one family gave parts of the land to a daughter and a son-in-law. On balance, this was a strikingly homogeneous group of owner occupiers. They certainly did not consider their newly obtained land as superfluous, as the large landowners did. Instead of disposing of it, they gradually enlarged their farms by adding pieces of reclaimed land. In contrast to the large landowners, who maintained a fairly constant farm size, these farmers worked their way up by incorporating their resources into a steadily changing farming system that became increasingly

independent of huge stretches of wasteland for maintaining its fertility. While the large landowners defined their patrimony as consisting of the 'old' core farmland, the owners of more modest means incorporated new land and thus constituted a stronger patrimonial identity.

Most of these small owners stemmed from humble settlers whose position in the former Mark had been marginal. The new economic and technological possibilities, combined with their fortunate position in having benefitted from the division of the commons, allowed them to develop viable farms and to bridge the differences between themselves and the large owners. Their aspirations were made quite explicit in their fierce policy of consolidating property within a single residential line of succession. On the other hand, and understandable, they did not want to run any risks. Retrospectively they were probably right because when the agricultural recession took its toll in the 1880s, many of their farms would have been in a vulnerable position, had they speculated on long-term, uninterrupted favorable conditions. They did not, of course, act on the basis of unforeseeable future events. What these farm families did was to keep resources together and use the benefits for developing a stable house, which was simply a cultural construction. They were obviously determined to achieve the same status attributes as the large farmers. This status depended not only on a solid 'house,' but also on a set of normative principles underpinning it. Equally important for these farmers was that they did not wish to be identified with the growing number of new settlers. By submitting themselves to a specific cultural code and gradually building up substantial material and symbolic capital, they proved and showed distinction. Gradually, the descendants of these small owners achieved the status of 'settled' farmers, with historic roots in the community.

My conclusion, based on analyzing property trajectories, is that the growing number of farms during the 1850s through the 1870s did not emanate from a dispersal of property through multiple succession and inheritance. On the contrary, landowning families preferred transmitting the land to a single successor-heir. The land that became available to new settlers was mainly alienated from large landowners, who sold wasteland that was no longer needed for maintaining soil fertility on the old cultivated land. Both large and small landholders were preoccupied with status considerations. The large farmers meticulously protected themselves from status degradation, while the small farmers strove successfully for upward mobility by reinforcing their patrimonial basis.

The clearance of wasteland was thus largely a matter for newcomers in farming, in addition to small owners who enlarged their existing farms bit-by-bit. Since the large landowners mostly sold their property in tiny portions, new farms were probably not much bigger than 5 hectares, and often less than that. This land was not acquired at once, but gradually accumulated. Where larger quantities were sold, these were often to a tenant who previously rented a cottage farm. Later in this Chapter I will consider how these new settlers handled their property. It will then become clear that this was a rather heterogeneous group, comprising landless laborers who had saved money in the textile industry and who had not been endowed with property by their parents.

The period between 1855 and 1880 was characterized by an active land market on the one hand, and a rather static form of property maintenance along lineal family lines on the other. Being the son or daughter of a property owning farmer was no guarantee for easy access to land, unless one was chosen as the heir-successor, or married into another house

The maintenance of landed property during years of crisis (1880–1900)

The period between approximately 1880 and 1900 is generally considered as having been a difficult time for farmers. Prices were depressed and it was not a favorable period for investing time, energy and money in clearing land and setting up a new farm. Population statistics and enumerations of the number of households and the number of people working in agriculture show, for Tubbergen at least, that this was a period of stagnation. Although the birth rate continued to be high and mortality declined, population growth stagnated mainly through a pronounced level of outmigration. Land reclamation and intensification had made considerable progress in the previous period, but now this trend was interrupted. How was this situation reflected on the land market and in the behavior of property-owning families?

The property of the large landowners showed remarkable stability. Land was still being sold in the early 1880s, but there seemed to be no demand by the 1890s and new transactions had practically come to a standstill. Only one landowning family disappeared, and this was because it comprised two elderly spinsters who did not farm themselves in any case. Property was otherwise firmly kept in the hands of single family lines. The small landowners were no different in their behavior, with only two families eliminated due to celibacy and childlessness.

It is clear, then, that the period of agricultural crisis did not provoke the dispersal or alienation of property. Although large farmers in particular did indeed suffer from lower prices and higher wages, there were no fundamental changes in the management of their farms. They may have reduced the number of hired workers, and allowed some extensification of land use. They also certainly benefitted from being able to spend their financial reserves on labor-saving machinery, however limited this possibility may have been. Finally, it should be recollected that most large farmers had several auxiliary cottage farms. The tenants of these farms probably had difficulties in paying the yearly rent, and it is likely that they would have cleared their debts by working for the large farmers.

The integrity of the patrimony under threat? The transmission of land and the land market, 1900–1950

Around the turn of the century agricultural and demographic development entered a new dynamic phase. Rates of population growth were unprecedented, the number of farms multiplied and became predominantly owner occupied. The introduction of chemical fertilizers and the organized attack on peat and heatherland dealt a the final blow to the age-old interdependence between cultivated land and wasteland. For farmers, farmland and the farm became identical with property. The intensification of land use, resulting in rising yields and increasing head of cattle per hectare, in combination with a low investment threshold and an abundant, cheap family labor force, opened the possibility of sustaining a family on a minuscule acreage of land. High fertility, combined with declining mortality and the ultimate desire to become an independent farmer prompted many young couples to venture into the property market to seize the long-awaited land.

Never before had there been such opportunities for setting up a farm and building up an independent livelihood. It is interesting, therefore, to see whether patterns of intergenerational transfers reflected these opportunities. Did the cultural edifice, which had protected the family patrimony against dissolution until then, collapse? Or was it sufficiently flexible to keep the basic principles intact, while allowing some practical changes?

Many newly created farms between 1900 and 1920 were smaller than 5 hectares, while the total number of large farms decreased. The pattern changed however from 1920 through 1950: a decline in the number of farms under 5 hectares shows that, although new farms in this size category were created, existing smallest farmers bought additional land in their

efforts to establish a broader economic basis. The same pattern was discernible among the large farms, whose number decreased substantially until 1920, but thereafter grew. It seems therefore that the trend toward farm enlargement, so characteristic after the 1950s, actually began in the 1920s.

Large landowners under pressure of family dispersal

The large landholders lost about 300 hectares of land between 1900 and 1950; most of it before 1920. As I have already indicated, practically all large landholding families present in 1832 were still on the same holdings in 1900. Although some properties had been dispersed over two family lines, all reproduced a core residential unit according to the principle of family continuity. These families had been whittling away parts of their property not considered part of the home farm since the 1850s, and they continued doing so for the first decades of the twentieth century. The intensification of land already under cultivation clearly absorbed all the available labor force, which made it impossible to take on the clearance of new land, let alone incorporating it into an already substantial farm.

All these families managed to secure the reproduction of a residential family unit between 1900 and 1950, thereby demonstrating remarkable continuity. Many of them did not, however, achieve residential continuity by transmitting *all* their land to a single successor. Succession along multiple family lines occurred more frequently than it had done in preceding periods. The principle that residential continuity should coincide with continuity along a single family line clearly could not be upheld. In about a quarter of the cases property was divided upon inheritance, mostly between two, sometimes three children, of whom one child stayed at the home farm and received most of the land. This is, of course, quite a modest incidence, and it is remarkable that division did not occur on a larger scale.

In those cases where property was dispersed among multiple family lines, there was no question of an equal division. The core units remained largely intact by keeping most of the land attached to the primary residential unit. The parts that were split off were much smaller, only giving rise to minor secondary units. The effect of dispersing land within the family was that the number of farms larger than 20 hectares diminished until 1920. The number of large farms increased again, however, from the 1920s onwards. This clearly shows that large landholders then started to bring their own wasteland into cultivation, joining this land to their

farms, rather than selling it to other farmers. It would seem that whereas prior to the 1920s farmers had difficulties in keeping up large farms, this later became easier.

The problem for large farmers during the first decades of the twentieth century clearly was not whether they had enough land to sustain an extended family. The intensification of production permitted them to reach ever higher output levels. They had no need to annex wasteland to the farm in order to maintain their position in local society. The real worry for the large farmers was not a lack of land but labor or, rather, whether the household was sufficient to sustain a large farm. They could only get the necessary work done by hiring domestic workers and wage laborers. But such labor was becoming ever more difficult to find, since former landless or near landless laborers were either setting up their own farms, or moving to nearby industrial centers, attracted by better wages.

Limits and contradictions of ideology

The question is not, therefore, why many large owners reduced their property further by disposing of wasteland—which they had done ever since the division of the commons—nor why they diminished farm size via multiple inheritance. Economic conditions simply made it possible and sometimes necessary. What needs to be explained is how severing parts of the original home farm related to the ideology of imitable inheritance and the integrity of the ‘house.’ Did some farmers take their leave to the principles that no patrimonial land should be dissociated from the house and that only one child secured family continuity?

There seems to have been some pressure on large farmers to curtail farm size. But this admission contradicted the cultural principles that strongly favored the integrity of the patrimony. The fact that some farms were indeed divided upon inheritance did not, however, mean that this cultural ideal became any less salient. It did reflect a certain flexibility, and represented perhaps a strategy for combining cultural ideals with the desire to make progress in farming. Preserving the original farm in the hands of a single family line without neglecting the land, reached its own ideological limits. Farming more or less in accordance with current standards either required a tightening up of patriarchal values or, the adoption of a different family model.

Intensification of land use required substantially more labor power per hectare than was available at the household level. One way of ensuring

an adequate labor force was for the large farmers to enrol the labor of resident children as far as possible. Parents had then to convince their children not to leave home, on the grounds that their departure would endanger the proper cultivation of the land. A strong appeal to family loyalty would be necessary to keep these children attached to the house. The quintessence of the cultural system of the 'house' was indeed that children had the *right* to stay in the household as long as they needed and that they could be forced to do so by withholding them opportunities that would damage the honor of the family. Using patriarchal authority to force them to stay and to block them building up their own future, was certainly part of this cultural system. Earlier in this chapter, I observed that parents denied their own children some land to set up a smallholding. In principle, however, all children were expected to leave, in the long run, with reasonable, though mostly symbolic, financial compensation. Tightening patriarchal control as a means of keeping children attached to the household did not seem the first option for a part of the large farmers. Relaxation of the patriarchal muscle was the 'price' one was prepared to pay in order to secure harmonious family relations, and at the same time the essential core of the 'house'.

The second possibility, namely allowing more than one child to marry into the parental home was ill-attuned to the preferred family model. Two siblings, sharing property rights and jointly working the farm, would certainly have helped to keep all property attached to the house, but it did not correspond with the idea that residential continuity should be achieved by favoring only a single line of descent.

My contention is therefore that some large landowning families saw only one possibility for upholding the quintessence of their cultural ideals in the long term. They simply adapted farm size by splitting part of the land for one or two of the children, enabling the principal heir to remain on the farm, with his parents, without any substantial problems of labor provision. Such a process of fission thus did not violate the cultural code. It was instead a rational decision to relax the strictness of this code, in order to further its continuing enactment in the original desired form. It does, however, show that ideas about kinship, property and residence may, under certain circumstances, result in overt contradictions. Thus, rigidly applying the principle of keeping all the land attached to the house would have resulted either in compromising the residential model, or strengthening patriarchal power to bind unmarried children to the house.

Excising land from the ancestral home was nonetheless a hard decision for many farmers. The belief that the core ideas of the 'house' system could be continued, even if important concessions had to be made, was of course very important for the local population. This conceptual juggling allowed farmers to benefit from new technological resources, whilst preserving the gist of domestic and familial ideals. It is perhaps useful to recall the essential elements of this 'Saxon' tradition in order to understand why most large farm families preferred to reproduce the 'house model' in its ideal form, rejecting the possibility of more intensive land use.

The elements of this cultural complex comprise a more or less integrated whole, which cannot be singled out and looked at separately. It can best be characterized as an ideological construction combining images of kinship, the domestic group, the person, history, society and material assets. Society was basically viewed as a hierarchical collection of family groups, each belonging to a specific estate, and linked with the past and the future through the perennial bond between the land, a residence and a single line of descent (together the 'house'). The identity and status of a person were derived from the rank of the house, this being conceptualized in terms of material assets and historically accumulated symbolic capital.

The view of society as being composed of a hierarchy of units was accompanied by a partitioning of status within the family. Reproducing a house meant singling out one person in every generation to assume the internal and public responsibilities in accordance with the status of the house. This person was endowed with all the land, authority, rights and burdens of the house, while the other members of the family were expected to acquiesce to marginal, subordinated positions. Kin relationships and kinship ideologies thus provided the basic material for reproducing domestic organization and property holding. It is my contention that status was not only measured by the economic capital of a family. Equally important was the capacity, past and present, of consolidating land in a specific domestic setting *through* specific kinship strategies, thereby guaranteeing a link with past and future generations. It is therefore understandable that deviation from this model was considered utterly scandalous and certainly at the expense of esteem and honor. The largest failure imaginable would be if none of the children wished to cooperate. If every child claimed land or substantial financial compensation, this would simply be the final stroke to residential continuity. Less serious, but nonetheless damaging for reputations, were family conflicts over coresidence,

compensations or the level of commitment to the house's integrity. Even if the economic rank of the house was unimpaired, the ideal family strategy was supposed to symbolize the unity of the house as a social and cultural entity.

It is small wonder, therefore, that most large farmers tried to prevent the dispersion of land along several family lines. These farmers opted for relatively extensive forms of land use, thus balancing the labor needed with that available, rather than allowing dispersal of land conceptualized as belonging to a specific house. Even today stories circulate the village about the disgraceful state of the large farms. While small farmers were exhausting every inch of their land to obtain a decent income, large land-owners were using great stretches of fertile land to produce the leanest of yields. Large farmers were certainly in a dilemma. Whittling away land would breach the principle of consolidating it, although there were, as I have suggested, justifications for doing so. But being dubbed as a bad farmer by a large part of the population was also not very rewarding. Standards of technological and economic performance undoubtedly began to play a role in the early twentieth century. This tendency became even more pronounced after World War II, when the introduction of new technologies and markets introduced a real differentiation between the entrepreneurial type of farmers and the traditional 'peasant elite.'

It is in any case clear that economic and technological circumstances and, in particular, the availability of labor, revolutionized traditional concepts of farm size. The fact that many families did not simply adapt to such forces, but carefully considered ideals other than profitability or optimizing scale, underlines the importance of examining farmers' cultural lifeworld, its historical antecedents, and its mediation of influences emanating from wider society.

The behavior of the smaller landowners from my original sample was not much different from that in preceding periods. Without exception they transmitted land to a single successor and they continued to live in the same house. They were clearly duplicating the reproductive model of the large landowners and trying to build up status within the community of lesser families. Only occasionally did they divide the farm among several successors. It is remarkable that these farmers did not develop an active policy of enlarging their landownership. They seem to have been rather content with what they had, and did not accumulate land: on the contrary, many of them sold some wasteland.

It is clear that, by the twentieth century, these property owners had become a relatively comfortable group with medium-sized farms. In the 1850s they had still belonged to the marginal farmers, with no historical rights in the community and minuscule farms. The division of the commons endowed them with a resource for upward mobility, from which they drew full benefit. All their energy was focused on gradually incorporating wasteland into the farm and, by the 1940s, most of them had farms of more than 10 hectares. Numerous new farmers settled on much smaller farms during this period, thereby constituting a new class of deprived smallholders. The rather complacent attitude of the medium-sized land-owners can be attributed to the fact that they had improved their situation simply by using their own resources. While the large landowners maintained their status, the medium-sized farmers were relatively upwardly mobile.

The management of wasteland changed significantly after the 1920s. As I have already mentioned, the large owners increasingly used this land to expand their farms, and the smaller owners were equally eager to build up a stronger farm. One last wave of reclamation still allowed many new farmers to settle in the locality, but the creation of minuscule farms ended. The fact that larger farms could now be sustained was certainly associated with improved availability of cheap hired labor. The crisis in agriculture caused great difficulties among small farmers, and increased social differentiation. Large farmers benefitted from the limited escape routes to industrial centers, and from small farmers' need for some extra income to survive. It was this ability to dispose of cheap labor that enabled them to keep patrimonial land within a single line of succession. The labor situation was also much improved because declining age at marriage and high birth rates had augmented the available family farm labor force considerably.

Property transmission between 1950 and 1985

The period after 1950 differed substantially from the previous ones. The possibilities to enlarging farm size, or of creating new farms by bringing wasteland under cultivation were exhausted. With land becoming scarce, changing economic and technological conditions increasingly pressed farmers into reconsidering new concepts of farm viability. Rising living standards outside agriculture and growing opportunities for earning a decent living in other sectors prompted many potential successors to

move away from the farm. Those who remained in farming could make an acceptable income by considerably raising output. Farmers with a few hectares of land were at an obvious disadvantage. The viability of the farm could only be guaranteed by buying more land, or by investing heavily in intensive livestock rearing. Lack of capital often excluded these farmers from either of those options. Farmers with more land were in a better position. They were able to increase the number of cows by using chemical fertilizers, pesticides and other industrial inputs, by introducing high-yielding grass and corn, and investments in better equipment. Labor input could simultaneously be reduced by mechanizing most of the work.

This process was, however, far from self-evident. Statistics on the number of farms and the number of people working in agriculture reveal that the effects of agricultural modernization only started to become visible in Tubbergen in the 1960s. Many small farmers were evidently reluctant to give up their source of livelihood. Since most of them had no successor, there was no incentive for realizing any significant investment. These small farmers simply carried on and were only really motivated to retire when the state introduced a general old-age pension in 1958. The reintroduction of a free land market in 1963 (see Chapter Four), which boosted land prices, must also have encouraged ageing farmers to sell their land. Although it took about a decade before the repercussions of modernization became apparent in the structure of agriculture, the foundations of agricultural restructuring were laid much earlier.

How did farmers, large and small, react to the new situation of relative land scarcity, the unavoidable competition that resulted, and differential survival chances? Did large owners continue to alienate land, and was there a further tendency for family dispersal? The high price of land and the estrangement of the younger generation from the agrarian milieu could have resulted in complete breakdown of landowning families in all categories. I will examine the fate of landowners from 1950 until 1985, starting with the largest, considering these questions and suggestions.

Reproducing status in a changing rural society

Almost all the landowning families that were identified in my 1832 sample, together with those who appeared in 1855 were still present, although some had dispersed their property over two or more lines of descent. The majority of families were characterized by a long, uninterrupted, single line of succession. All families had maintained the core of the property linked to the original residential unit. The seventeen large landowners

from 1855 had dispersed into twenty-five, which also included some smaller properties resulting from family dispersal. The average size of all these properties was 18 hectares in 1950, which is considerably less than the average of 60 hectares in 1855. The offspring of the large landowners had become a more heterogeneous group. The secondary units, originating from household fission, were very modest properties, endowed with nothing like the status attributes enjoyed by the residents of the primary units. By 1950, property had become synonymous with farm size and ownership with the farm occupier.

Perhaps the most important finding to emerge from my analysis of the period 1950–1985, is that there were only two cases of failed family continuity of property holding, resulting in the sale of all property. Significantly, these two cases concerned farmers on secondary units, who had only recently acquired property through multiple inheritance. There was no failure to reproduce any of the old primary residential units, although one had been divided by the family. One secondary residential unit had also been split up. In contrast to previous periods, land was not alienated. I recorded only three instances of farmers selling small portions of land. All the others either stabilized their property or increased it slightly. There was absolutely no question of actively accumulating land. If property was to be enlarged, it was by 6 hectares at the most.

Residential continuity combined with single inheritance/succession was the dominant model for reproduction, without any threat of family land being dispersed. Seen in historical perspective, this last period is typified by the emergence of a distinctive group in rural society, which managed to keep a firm grip on the land. Most of these families were already present in the early nineteenth century, and probably indeed much earlier. Although land was occasionally divided among several successors, the nucleus of the patrimony remained attached to a single family line that continued to live in the same parental house.

It is quite extraordinary that one specific social group among the farming population has managed to reproduce itself according to a set of essentially unchanging principles to the present day. 'Objective' conditions in past periods have never inhibited the fragmentation of land over an extended kin group, and there were no legal sanctions inhibiting heirs from demanding their share of the property. When, after the second World War, agriculture was incorporated into all kinds of commodity circuits, families were able to avoid the commoditization of land in one way or another. Successors clearly managed to retain all land without falling in

excessive debt. How this was accomplished is the subject of the next chapter.

The small landowners had achieved the respectable status of middle-sized farmers by the 1950s through careful consolidation of property in a single family line. They acted in the same way as the large owners, except for the fact that they incorporated wasteland in the farm instead of alienating it. Some of these originally small property-owning families disappeared quite 'naturally,' not because of family friction or economic disaster. Two of the thirty-four landholding families from 1855 were eliminated, and five derived ones emerged through multiple inheritance. By the 1950s, then, thirty-seven farmers were left. These farmers had, on average, much less land than the large owners. They had held an average of 13 hectares in 1855, they still had an average of almost 10 hectares by 1950. Such a property was, in principle, a good basis for developing a viable farm into the 1980s, but it was also a vulnerable asset in a context where land reached fancy market prices.

The development of these landowners after 1950 is the image of stability. Three properties were dissolved and the land sold by the families, and two farms were divided among two children respectively. The other farmers cautiously transmitted all land within a single family line and were, moreover, far from active on the land market. None of them, with one exception, significantly enlarged or reduced farm size. This picture is not so much distinctive because land was consolidated in the same families and only occasionally dispersed, but rather because of farmers' disinclination to accumulate land. Whether they had 5 or 16 hectares of land made no difference: they all seemed to be contented with what they had, and were certainly far from being the prototype of entrepreneurs with an active interest in accumulating land.

Preserving the patrimony and accumulating commodities

Both groups of landowners that I have distinguished so far were characterized by a remarkably high incidence of family and residential continuity in property holding. They outlived the wave of fragmentation before World War II, but they also survived the battlefield of agrarian modernization after it. They simply restructured their farms technically and economically after the 1950s, but always without significantly expanding property and farm size. Land, for these farmers, has never been an object of speculation or accumulation.

The fact that these farmers hardly bought any land in the period after the 1950s was partly associated with the limited availability of land on the market. Land really had to be sought if it were to be obtained. A simple calculation may illustrate this. There were 264 farmers aged over fifty without successor in Tubbergen in 1968. Assuming that their land was released on the market over the following twenty years, an average of some 120 hectares per year became available for other farmers to enlarge their farms. Even if only half the farmers with continuity prospects had cared to benefit from the land market, there would have been only 0.4 hectare for each per year. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that any serious strategy of land accumulation was doomed to failure in the face of land scarcity. Only those farmers who were able and prepared to pay huge sums of money could enlarge their farms. Such farmers were certainly not among the established owners I have analyzed so far.

Was this because those farmers' attitude to land was fundamentally nonspeculative? Did they consider land primarily as a resource invested with tradition and symbolic meanings that ought not to be subjected to financial adventuring or exploited to maximize profit? The fact that their land was diligently secluded from the sphere of commodity transactions (do not sell!) and that they did not buy additional land suggests, I believe, a conception of land as a family asset, to be protected and safeguarded. Such a primarily patrimonial view of land seems to contradict accumulation strategies directed at maximizing land as an economic and financial resource. It is almost as if the character of a patrimony accumulated through purchase was conceived as 'contaminated.'

There may be additional reasons for the rather relaxed style of enterprise development among these 'ancient' families. The postwar generation began their career on these farms under relatively easy conditions. Having been in a position to take over a farm without the burden of enormous bank loans, they did not have to face any real break in farm development, nor any requirement to boost income capacity in order to pay debts. Generational change was itself hardly disruptive: the son simply acquired a different status and brought his wife in the household. But his father, mother and some brothers and sisters were very likely to continue living with or close to him. Work on the farm did not really change and the available labor force was abundant. This type of cyclical change and development certainly imposed a sense of continuity and stability.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that the large farmers traditionally derived their status from the amount of land they had inherited, and the reputation of the family. Having a substantial amount of land provided

the basis for a rather comfortable lifestyle. Hard work, toiling every inch of land and dependence on bank loans, were certainly seen as the fate of smaller farmers. Such a sociocultural background makes the lack of a strong entrepreneurial spirit among these landowners unsurprising. Even the postwar generation carried on in terms of good stewardship, without launching themselves in risky financial transactions and entrepreneurial projects. Although this patrimonial style of managing the land resulted in a considerable loss of status *vis-à-vis* farmers who defined their land primarily as a resource of profit, many descendants of the established farmers still invoke traditional status attributes.

They may indeed have lost local esteem with the rise of new images of entrepreneurship, but they are increasingly the subject of a quite different status scheme, one that extends beyond the local level and the world of farmers. I refer to new conceptions of rurality, especially the respect for unspoiled country buildings, landscapes and regional folklore. Many of these old families inhabit age-old, characteristic farms, which have not been ruined or transmogrified by 'boomtown' housing for pigs, chickens or cows. An occasional visitor, a photograph in a regional newspaper, or listing in a tourist folder not only gives these farmers a new identity, it also strengthens an existing sense of being part of the past and being endowed with specific, timeless responsibilities.

This description of the 'settled' family farmers is, of course, necessarily simplistic. Even though they did not buy land, they certainly intensified the enterprise and mostly made the investments necessary for modernizing the farm. But even here their efforts were moderate: since they had a substantial amount of land, they limited themselves to quite traditional forms of dairy farming. They did not, however, exploit all the technical possibilities for intensification. This was not because they were bad farmers, but mainly because they were both managers of a farm and administrators of a family domain. Although the two are not incompatible, the motivations governing farm management were strongly conditioned by cultural principles residing in the character of the family patrimony.

The situation may, in this respect, be compared with conditions before the second World War. The prospects for intensification then would have enabled them to divide farms several times to give their children a future in farming. They did not do this for reasons I have already explained. My argument is that their passive behavior on the land market, and the refusal to transform the farm gradually into a highly intensive industry were inspired by the same principles. Why exploit the potential of the land to

the maximum if there is no real incentive? These farmers have no intention whatsoever of setting up as many children as possible in farming. The main goal is to transmit all the land to a single successor. Farm development and maintaining viability, that is, economic strategies, were reflections of patrimonial goals. Although farm viability was, of course, necessary to sustain a household, large farmers were not obliged to develop an 'entrepreneurial' strategy to achieve the continuity of the house as a cultural entity.

The smaller owner occupiers among the group I have identified as the 'ancient settlers' basically followed the same pattern of consolidation. But the fact that they had less land, meant that patrimonial goals needed to be underpinned by a stronger entrepreneurial strategy. They had intensified land use since the early nineteenth century as a matter of necessity, and this had proven highly successful. Each next generation could thus comply with changing living standards.

Their position was, however, more vulnerable after the second World War. Safeguarding continuity meant that they had to follow unflinchingly the path of intensification. It is indeed remarkable that most of them succeeded in transforming the farm to such an extent that they could survive into the 1980s. Maintaining an undivided farm across the generations was certainly an important cultural ideal, but it had become an economic necessity as well. Splitting up the farm would greatly endanger economic viability and thus residential and family continuity as well. The fact that these farmers only occasionally bought land and made themselves more dependent on industrial inputs reveals the desire to maintain a sound economic basis. Like the large farmers, they were entrenched in the locality and had gradually achieved the respected status of a real, albeit moderate, house. Reproducing the house in accordance with the 'traditional' model was not only a cultural ideal, but had also become an economic necessity.

My analysis of reproductive models has so far focused on families that were already established in 1832, and those who acquired land with the division of the commons in 1855. I examined the consolidation and dispersal of land among these families, but paid no attention to farmers who acquired their land since the mid-nineteenth century. These farmers mainly bought the wasteland alienated by the large landowners. Ignoring the fate of these property-owning families, and concentrating exclusively on what I have called the established families may have significantly distorted

the picture I have drawn of reproductive patterns. Reviewing the names of farmers present in the hamlet of Geesteren in 1985, shows, however, that the majority do indeed belong to those established families, a less significant number stems from families of a more recent origin in farming. Although it is not possible to quantify these observations for the reasons I mentioned, it is, nonetheless, clear that continuity among the established farmers is much higher than among the more recent settlers.

Farmers who bought wasteland in the course of the twentieth century created a very vulnerable basis to survive during the period of modernization. Most newly created farms were set up between 1900 and 1930, when the amount of land necessary for sustaining a family was extremely low. Numerous tiny farms were created; there was no question of farmers accumulating huge amounts of wasteland to set up farms of significant size. Many of those farms were eliminated in the period between 1950 and 1980, being unable to cope with economic constraints. There was no question of continuity of any sort for them. As I have shown in the preceding chapter, the peasantization of the prewar period was followed by rapid proletarianization in the period of agricultural modernization. The number of farms in 1985 was almost the same as in the early twentieth century, before the great wave of reclamation. In the early 1950s, 34 percent of the farmers in Tubbergen had less than 4 hectares of land. A small minority of these depended on agriculture only. A survey from 1954 showed that none of these small farmers had a son planning to build up a future in agriculture. All their children were working outside agriculture (Verslag 1954).

But not all recent settlers lost their land. Some were better equipped to face the postwar process of modernization if, for instance, they had already successfully accumulated land in the prewar period. Some even developed into the most entrepreneurial farmers of the community. These farmers initially bought small amounts of land and settled on virgin land, mostly dispersed on the outskirts of the village. Since they did not dispose of a reservoir of wasteland, as did the established farmers, their only way to guarantee continuity was by being very active on the land market. Having bought the land, they started without any patrimonial history. Their land was not invested with symbolic meaning, nor was it the outcome of meticulously designed inheritance strategies. In these respects, they clearly stood out as a distinctive group.

The picture emerging from the development of these 'recent' farmers is much less homogeneous and more erratic than the one I sketched for the other groups. Firstly, their property was susceptible to more varia-

tion. Land was frequently bought and sold, farm size waxed and waned without any apparent pattern. Land was, moreover, much more frequently divided upon inheritance, although many farmers faithfully transferred it to a single successor-heir. Where property was divided, each family line soon restored the situation by buying new land. It would appear as if these farmers were not handling their property as a fixed asset, with a specific ancestral identity. Their farms had been acquired and built up in the course of living memory, and was not apparently endowed with any highly regulated social and cultural significance. For the new settlers, land was primarily a resource for making an independent livelihood: an economic asset to be used to employ and feed a family. Successive generations had clearly not been brought up in a family tradition that elevated the patrimony to an unassailable status. At the same time, a significant number of these farmers certainly developed into classic 'dynasty builders,' carefully preserving their property and status.

This erratic picture becomes even clearer after the 1950s and especially in the 1980s, when this group displayed three totally different patterns. One portion simply dissolved sooner or later, without there being any obvious relation to farm size. Another faction consolidated its farmland in a remarkably consistent way. The third category, however, developed into real accumulators of land, increasing farm size from between 5 to 10 hectares to well over 20 and sometimes 30 hectares. There is a clear entrepreneurial spirit among these farmers, exemplified by substantial land transactions and investments in farm development. Some of these farmers now rank among the most technologically advanced entrepreneurs.

My conclusion, although based on a limited number of observations, is that the land market, both in terms of what is for sale and what is sought, is dominated by recent landowners. These are either landowners with insufficient land or a weakly developed commitment to farming and family land (those who alienate their land); or those with a primarily economic attitude to land and a commitment to farming. It is difficult to hypothesize the future of this last category of farmers. They do have sons who would like to take over the farm, but whether this will incur excessive claims from their siblings, and whether the resulting indebtedness will result in yet another round of investments is an open question.

VIII

The 'Living House'

Farm succession and inheritance after 1950

CHAPTER SEVEN DESCRIBED how a group of farmers, whom I initially identified in the first half of the nineteenth century, was remarkably successful in keeping the land in family hands over five generations. This they did by transferring the farm to a single heir-successor who also assumed headship of the parental house. Although landowners alienated land, and land was sometimes dispersed among members of the same generation, such practices were never an infraction of the 'house.'

This chapter explores the cultural universe of inheritance and succession in more detail. I will concentrate on the period between 1950 and 1985. Agricultural development posed an enormous challenge to farmers during this period. A whole generation faced the question of whether farming would still be a feasible future. Whatever the outlook, the consequences were enormous. It was not only a problem of enterprise viability and income possibilities; an ancient system of patrimonial management was also at stake. Farmland was not just an economic asset, although it had always been fundamental to sustaining a household. Land belonged to specific family lines and residential units, whose reproduction was inserted into a local status and kinship system. To what extent did farmers find the motivation for maintaining a viable farm in this cultural system? And to what extent did nonsuccessor children adhere to the same values? Was land becoming a commodity, purely used for providing an income to an isolated household, or was it still invested with symbolic meaning?

Such questions require an examination of how farms were actually transferred from one generation to the other. It will then become clear whether the successor acquired unconditional, individual property rights, based on a commodity transaction; or whether the transmission of resources was integrated into a 'moral economy' of gifts and exchanges. The first possibility would require an analysis of why 'traditional' values associated with the patrimony collapsed. The second needs an analysis of the persistence of cultural codes, sources of motivation and legitimization.

In considering these questions, it is possible to shed some light on the interface between a variety of normative orders and subsequent constraints. Global tendencies of commoditization and cultural homogenization have a potentially disruptive effect on localized patrimonial strategies. Such global influences never plunge into a vacuum, however. Existing cultural preoccupations and social networks mediate the confrontation between different normative systems, resulting in accommodation, rejection or adoption of new values, whether or not in conflictive social relations. The cultural complex encompassing the domestic domain, land and kinship do not determine practice alone. People are confronted with changing conditions and a variety of personal circumstances, which can make it more or less possible to pattern their lives in accordance with specific cultural principles.

This chapter is based on a variety of sources. First, I analyzed official records of land transfers, which are kept in the Land Registration Office and made up by local solicitors. Each document provides details about the identity of the actors (*comparanten*), the property that is subject to a change in rights, the present status of property rights, the reason for redefinition, and how the new property relations are defined. These papers serve as a basis for making changes in the Land Registration Record and may be used for proving or enforcing legally sanctioned property rights. I examined a total of eighty documents concerning farm transfers implemented between 1950 and 1985. These records were identified by linking the reference numbers of transfer deeds from the land registration records with the matching numbers in the registration archives. Consequently, the eighty cases I examined correspond with the landowning families I examined in the previous chapter. This allowed me to obtain an impression of the modes in which land was transferred and the legal forms in which they were framed.

Secondly, I carried out a small survey among fifty farmers, randomly selected from a list of all farmers in Geesteren, basically to gain quick

access to some data concerning the timing of farm transfer, the age of succession and marriage, the development of the farm, the family and the household. This survey was not intended to gather information about attitudes and opinions. It will later become clear that discourse on farm inheritance is so multifarious, that no single question can be answered in a straightforward way.

Lastly, I interviewed fifteen farm families with whom I tried discussing issues related to farm inheritance and succession as openly as possible. These families included 'settled' farmers from the old elite, small farmers from farms set up during the wave of reclamation before 1940, and expanding new farms. These interviews were semistructured and were not primarily intended to provide details of specific cases, but were rather to collect material for analyzing farmers' discourse on property, family, kinship and farming. Although the interviews provided rich material on personal experiences, I found general comments on what happens in the farmers' local environment more interesting. Previous experience had convinced me that farmers are not very willing to talk about themselves, their parents, brothers and sisters. By starting from such generalities as "What do you think of . . ?" and "How are things done in this region?" it was often easier to make the connection with personal experiences, although farmers still tended to depersonalize and generalize their experiences in a remarkable way.

The timing of succession

It is clear from the material I collected that the transfer of property rights always coincided with farm succession. Although the son or son-in-law had worked on the farm in the years preceding succession, it was considered normal for the successor to become owner of the farm at the moment of taking over its management. Only in recent years has succession become less abrupt and the transmission of land and capital more gradual. Nowadays most successors enter a partnership with their parents, sharing ownership and management of the farm. But when such partnership is dissolved, all land and capital is transferred to the successor.

Succession, retirement and death

Farm management and resources were transferred when a son (very occasionally a son-in-law) was considered old and capable enough for taking on responsibilities, and when the farm operator considered the time ripe

for retirement. The father was still alive when succession took place in 60 percent of the farm transfers recorded between 1950 and 1985. He retired either voluntarily or for reasons of ill-health. This common practice may be designated as a pattern of more or less planned retirement, and mostly took place when the father was between 65 and 75 years old. The second important moment for arranging succession and transfer of the farm was on the death of the father if this occurred before his retirement. This happened in 33 percent of the cases and may be considered unplanned or precipitate succession.

The age of retirement, although not excessively high, could obviously be a problem for the successor. He would have to wait a considerable time before actually taking full control over the farm unless his father died before retirement. Retirement at the age of 65-75 meant that the eldest son was approaching the age of forty by the time he took over the farm. Since not all first or even second-born children were sons, this problem did not always arise. A rather flexible attitude toward designating the successor also helped to avert the problem. Although there was a certain preference for the eldest son, the process of selection was allowed to take its own course. The postwar generation of farmers was from large families in which there was always at least one son who felt attracted to farming, got on well with his father and, at a certain moment, was simply the only eligible successor. When the firstborn children began thinking about their futures and setting up families, there was often no question of taking over the farm. With most of the children still living at home, there was no place for a young fertile couple in the farm household.

The age of succession has hardly changed since 1950. The mean age of succession was 29.6 years between 1975 and 1987, which was the same as in the period between 1950 and 1975. During the whole period, 75 percent of farm transfers took place when the successor was aged between 25 and 35. Succession beyond these age limits was precipitated either by pre-retirement death of the father, or delayed excessively by a farmer who refused to hand over control. This latter situation often coincided with the successor's celibacy.

Succession, marriage and family formation

Impending marriage of the designated successor was an important impetus for arranging succession. Successors with no intention of marrying in the near future had to wait much longer to succeed than those who married

around the time of succession. Marriage before the transfer of the farm was exceptional until recent times. The transfer of the farm was mostly timed immediately (days) before or after marriage. Successors only married occasionally before reaching this stage of independence. Seventy percent of the successors' marriages almost coincided with farm transfer. The successors who married much later were either too young for marriage when they took over the farm, or were simply not engaged at the time of succession. Nowadays this correlation between marriage and succession is still relevant, although succession is now much more conceived in terms of beginning a partnership with the father.

The wish to get married could speed up succession, while imminent succession was an impetus to get married. This rigorous coupling of marriage and farm transfer was related to the developmental cycle of the successor's household. If the father wanted to retire and the son was old enough, another important condition still had to be fulfilled for the successor to be able to get married. The pattern of family formation and the large size of families made marriage in an early phase of the domestic cycle undesirable. Without exception, the successor settled in his parents' house after marriage. Until quite recently the newly married couple would just merge with the members of the existing household, with the parents and their residing children. Lack of space and income could easily hamper the integration of such a new, instantaneously procreating unit in an intermediate phase of the domestic cycle. This was one reason for the potential successor to postpone marriage until sufficient brothers and sisters had left the house. Such circumstances also explain why one of the younger sons was a more appropriate candidate for taking over the farm than one of the firstborn children.

Contemporary farmers in Geesteren were all born before the decline of the birth rate (1960s), when child and infant mortality were already at a low level. Forty-three percent had more than eight brothers and sisters, and the average family consisted of more than six children. These people lived in households with more than eight and, for most of them, more than ten persons at the height of their cycle. When the farm was transferred, most of the successors' brothers and sisters had already left the household, and literally cleared a place for a new couple in the house. There was, in fact, often room available before all the children had left the house: in more than 40 percent of the cases, one or more siblings were still living with the parents when succession was arranged.

This pattern of family formation, has changed considerably since the mid-1960s. The young couple still moved into the parental house, but the

parents and their children were partially separated from the newly married couple. All sorts of practical solutions, such as converting an old shed, or building some adjoining rooms, have made this domestic separation possible. Before 1965, 80 percent of the successors shared the same domestic space with the parents after marriage. After 1965, family formation became more independent. Although living in the same house was still the normal pattern, it was no longer necessarily the case that one shared the same space. In fact, half of the couples who married into the parental house arranged such a domestic division. Nowadays all young farmers set up their own household, but they always do this in the parental house. These changes in practical arrangements, however important for the people involved, have often been taken as an indication of 'family individualization' (see Chapter Three). As I will show later, spatial rearrangements do not always reflect fundamental changes in social arrangements, in particular with respect to property and caring.

This transformation of domestic arrangements certainly reflected the underlying tension in intrahousehold relations, however, and both the young and the retiring generation welcomed it. It resolved the problems of space but, more particularly, the desire for intimacy and privacy among the younger generation. It did not, however, imply that restrictions on the age of succession and marriage were completely alleviated. A new couple still implied that more mouths had to be fed from the same income and, in addition, that an important investment in the conversion of the house had to be made. Earlier marriage was only feasible by generating higher income, and this is exactly what happened in combination with partnerships. Many successors are now setting up a family well before actually taking over the farm. The partnership contract gives them an independent income and the means for setting up a family. The desire to marry is no longer a potential force to precipitate farm transfer, on the contrary, partnerships often persist a long time and tend to delay rather than accelerate the definitive transfer.

The fact that the vast majority of farmers insisted on concluding succession and the transfer of the farm during their lifetime is significant. The transmission of property had not been arranged when the last surviving parent died in only just over 7 percent of the cases I examined. Nineteenth-century literature made frequent reference to the dangers of transferring property and farm management during lifetime. Sons were said to be neglecting and failing to fulfil the obligation of providing the parents with a secure old age. The situation was, however, ambivalent. Not ar-

ranging succession and the transfer of land before death could be interpreted as an open invitation for the children to start a dispute. In practice, as we have seen, none of these unfortunate consequences were usual. The reality that parents preferred arranging the transfer of land before dying was, in my view, motivated by a desire to experience long-term continuity actually secured. It was not a conscious fear that things would happen differently in their absence, but rather the simple desire to witness the event that encouraged parents to opt for transfer during their lifetime.

There were, however, additional reasons for handing over all property and management of the estate to a son on retirement. If a father went on controlling the farm for a long time, the son's desire for an appropriate status compatible with his long-term obligations, his actual responsibilities and with the local cultural construction of being a farmer could be frustrated. Postponement could easily lead to a loss of motivation and commitment. Acquiring property contributed to the son's commitment and sense of responsibility in handling farmland as a precious object, given to him to keep and to transfer to the next generation. The moral weight of receiving land, and the parents' demonstration of confidence associated with it, should not be underestimated: it was a much better weapon for binding a son to the patrimony than withholding land that was promised to him in the future. Parents did, of course, run the risk of being neglected but, as I will describe later, they never transferred property unconditionally. They kept real and moral claims on the successor's loyalty.

Rising life expectancy over the past century has significantly influenced the process of succession and farm transfer. People live longer and retirement has become a reality for almost all farmers. More frequently than in the past, they actually live to see a son take on the farm. Parents in the nineteenth century were much more inclined to make detailed arrangements about what should happen after their death. It can be deducted from mortality tables that parents had only a limited chance of living beyond the age of sixty in the mid-nineteenth century. Planned retirement and predeath transfer of property were, for obvious reasons, the privilege of only a few. It was, moreover, less urgent to cement the son's commitment to the farm under conditions of high mortality, since death soon removed the frustration of anticipated succession.

Gender and succession

Farmers greatly preferred a son as their successor in Geesteren. As the child of his parents—in particular as the son of his father, sharing the

same blood and ancestry—he was supposed to embody the patriline, to defend it, identify with it, and to be endowed with 'natural' authority and commitment. Although the continuity of the patrimony within a single line of succession was sometimes achieved by transmitting property to a daughter, the inmarrying son-in-law would take on the role of family head in those cases. Management of the farm and administering patrimonial continuity were typically associated with male qualities and blood relationships.

In-laws, both men and women, generally remained 'strangers' in the house into which they had married. Several women with whom I talked confessed that they still thought of their real home as being the house where they had been born. They also remembered elderly women, who after living in their husband's house for more than fifty years, still hankered to go back to their father's house. Even though they had no formal rights in the parental house, women never lost their attachment to this symbol of family and belonging. The inmarrying husband's situation was different. He was faced with a spouse who had originally inherited the property, and also with the problem of adopting a new identity. He was supposed to assume the responsibilities of a status he had acquired through marriage, and to give up loyalties to his own parental house. He was obviously not the first choice as administrator of his wife's family patrimony. Although his children would legally take his name, the family would remain locally associated with his father-in-law's patronymic, which could go back to the original foundation of the house.

The designation of a successor was full of ambivalence. In terms of entrusting domestic responsibilities, it was very important that the parents could completely rely on good care and sympathy after retirement, particularly in the event of ill-health. Parents greatly preferred their own daughters to look after them. However, they looked to a son as the most trustworthy person to take care of the farm and safeguard patrimonial continuity. The fact that sons were the preferred successor—at least during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—means that management of the patrimony was put higher on the scale of preference than continued domestic relations with a daughter. It frequently happened, therefore, that unmarried daughters stayed with their parents, or that married daughters were asked to come and help the parents in times of need. Obviously such arrangements caused much tension because of the implied critique of the daughter-in-law's devotion.

The position of the daughter-in-law in complex households is a typical case of dissension in household relations, and has been widely described

in academic and popular literature. There is no doubt that women were the driving force behind the movement to segregate domestic space along nuclear family lines. Parents often did not feel very much at ease with a daughter-in-law. The mother in particular, was said to treat the daughter-in-law as a slave, constantly bossing her about and even appropriating her role as mother of the young children. Although women today are not very eager to talk about their experience of living with their husband's parents, they cannot suppress their relief at when they were finally on their own. It is still more remarkable that they never utter so much as a criticism about their mother-in-law. It was the situation that they deplored, not particular persons. There seemed to be far fewer problems of this sort between parents and their own daughters. Tranquillity in old age, however, seems to have been better guaranteed in the knowledge that a son was taking care of the patrimony. This ideal was so strong that people knowingly risked good household relations and good care.

Significantly, marriage patterns were much more frequently matrilocal in the mid-eighteenth century, when most farmers did not own their land formally. Since farmers had hereditary tenure, family line continuity in the biological sense was essential for reproducing the house. Property had a stability of its own, and did not need to be sustained by matrimonial strategies. It was not really relevant to assign matrimonial trusteeship to a son under such circumstances; it was more important to produce a successor. The reproductive role was assigned, under conditions of high mortality, to a maximally motivated mother: their own daughter. Matrimonial strategies first started to reproduce the link between a single line of descent and property when farmers gradually became owner occupiers. Sons gradually became the preferred successor when concern over offspring was replaced by concern over property. Preference for one's own son was further strengthened after the second World War, when economic management of the farm became increasingly critical to sustain patrimonial goals. The attitude that production is a male responsibility was firmly entrenched among farmers.

The legal construction of property transfers

The farmers of Geesteren transferred property to a single member of the next generation in a variety of ways after the Second World War. As I have explained earlier, the transfer was usually concluded during lifetime of one or both of the parents. Although, technically, the law of inheritance only becomes effective on the death of a person, most parents ar-

ranged and implemented the division of property before it. Such lifetime transfers usually meant that all the property went to one child, excluding the other children from any share in the land. There were four principal ways of concluding this sort of arrangement: some were definitive, others were intended to keep the patrimony together temporarily. Firstly, the property could be maintained in a state of temporary indivisibility; secondly, a partnership contract could be concluded; thirdly, there could be lifetime division of the parental property; and finally, transfer by purchase deed. I will briefly describe each of these arrangements, without entering into the legal technicalities.

First, the practice of leaving an estate untouched after the death of one parent. The death of one of the parents had theoretic consequences for property rights in the estate, because practically all spouses shared the ownership of the farm. This commonly-owned marriage fund was, however, liable to division and separation when one of the partners died. The surviving spouse was entitled to half of the common property, while the other half must be equally divided among that same parent and the children. In practice, however, most families never immediately implemented a formal allocation of shares; they simply continued to live with an undivided estate (*onverdeelde boedel*). Although, there was a fundamental change in property rights on paper, the heirs could ignore these as long as they wished.

One reason for maintaining this situation was the presence of one or more minor children. If the heirs eventually intended to leave the estate in the hands of one among them, they were not entitled to take this decision before all children were of an age to contract. Whatever they wished to do with their own share, those of minor children had to remain available until their coming of age. Apart from the presence of minor children, however, every child was legally entitled to claim his or her legal portion immediately, in either money or possessions. Even if only one of the children should claim a piece of land or a sum of money from his parent's legacy, formal division and allotment had to take place without delay. No such cases were ever recorded in the documents I examined. My general impression is that asking for a division of property would be considered an outrageous act of selfishness, and show a scandalous lack of respect for the deceased as well as the mourning parent.

Although thoughtfulness and piety may have prevented children from seizing their opportunity, the very notion of staking one's personal claim in an existing estate was simply so extraordinary that most people did not even think of it. The formal division of the estate was not settled immedi-

ately even when all children were of age. The decisive moment only came when the potential successor was considered old enough to bear the responsibilities of controlling the property. Nonsuccessor children, who had been awaiting for their chance to appropriate their legal share, could still theoretically seize it. But from the preceding chapter we know that property was practically always transferred to only one child. Whether non-successor children received compensation and how this related to the value of the property, will be examined later in this chapter.

The second possibility of temporarily redefining property rights before a final transfer to the successor was the *maatschap* (partnership). The first partnerships in Geesteren were established at the end of the 1960s, but they only became really important in the 1980s. Now, half of the farms transmitted to a son had been previously owned and managed in partnership. A partnership is an important shield against the risks of a successor losing his place. As a partner, he is assured of access to the whole farm, which protects him from the legal claims of siblings to appropriate land as part of an inheritance. This legal function was certainly not the reason for establishing a partnership in Geesteren. It was rather perceived as the best practical solution currently available for reaching goals defined by family members themselves. Whereas local solicitors used to be the only advisers in the past, bookkeepers, agricultural advisers and social workers became the new mediators between the legal and fiscal system and farmers' strategies to attain their goals. Farmers' sons were mostly unable to explain why they entered a partnership in other than the most rudimentary terms, such as that they were just following advice to maximize on favorable tax provisions, and to a lesser extent, on the potential for better status and financial independence.

A partnership was initiated when a father and a son were almost certain that the farm would be continued. A contract was then drawn up, specifying the capital, each partner's share in it, their respective responsibilities and remuneration, and the conditions under which the partnership would be dissolved. The father, with the consent of his wife, usually brought in the farm and all its appurtenances. Both father and son brought in their labor and agreed to run the farm cooperatively. At the end of the partnership, the son could have quite substantial capital. Depending on the allocation of profits agreed at the start of the partnership, he could simply withdraw part of the accumulated value of the farm in order to become owner of the entire farm. He had formally to purchase his father's final share in the property.

The son's right to be sole successor to the farm, and his privilege in acquiring all the property, could in principle be established by the parents without consulting the other children. Parents had the right to do as they wished with their property during their lifetime. Opting for continuity of the farm meant that it would not be alienated and would never reach the land market circuit. The partnership contracts I examined clearly precluded any possibility of future intrafamily transactions at market values. The value of what the father brings in was estimated at the level of the *agrarische waarde*, a value far below free market prices. The agreements also specified that the son will eventually take over his father's share at this same low price level. Here again, father and son were backed by law, which had allowed parents to transfer farm assets at a low price since 1965, without being taxed for the much higher market value and without the obligation to consider as a gift the difference between the family price and the market price. Under value prices did not have to be negotiated with nonsuccessor children, although they certainly had far-reaching consequences for them and could lead to later resentment.

The father-son partnership is a transitory phase in the process of completing the definitive transfer of the farm to one son. While the earlier mentioned perpetuation of an undivided estate depends completely on the goodwill of all children, a partnership singles out the father-son relationship, virtually excluding the nonsuccessor children. More important, however, is that an undivided estate results from the death of one of the parents, while partnership is a carefully planned strategy. Furthermore, while a partnership excludes the nonsuccessor children in legal terms, it does not preclude conflict. Two sons may want to become the successor or other children may disagree one child acquiring all the benefits from the parental estate, or with the prospect of small financial compensation at its final division. All these potential disputes are, however, handled in the private sphere and at the discretion of the parents, who must balance the benefits of farm continuity and viability against harmonious family relations.

The third form of transferring the farm is definitive and irreversible. This is the *onderlijke boedelverdeling*, the division and allotment of the parental estate during lifetime. This legal form of transmitting property very much depends on all the children cooperating. It is used to terminate the transitory phases of a partnership and the undivided estate, and also for immediate and total property transfer from the parents to a child. This settlement was performed in two successive stages: firstly, a formal division

was made in accordance with inheritance law, assigning each child an equal portion of the estate; then all property was transferred to one son, and the other heirs' deprivation calculated.

A process of formal bargaining followed with promises, stipulations and portions relinquished. The parents always demanded the right to stay in their house and to be taken care of. The same provisions were made for the children still living with them. Parts were deducted from the legal portions of children who had left the house already, for what they received in the past. The result was that the nonsuccessor children were mostly left with small gifts, after renouncing their legal portions. Mention was sometimes made of children who demanded their full share, refusing to cooperate if their wish was disregarded.

The last procedure for transferring the farm was by deed of purchase, often combined with a future settlement of inheritance and promises to comply with these. The deed of purchase is one of the simplest ways of transmitting property. Parents had the right, as owners of the farm, to sell it to whoever they chose and, in this case that is the son. The problem of how to keep the financial burdens of the successor as low as possible was critical. This was done, for instance, by taking the time and work the successor had already invested in the farm into consideration, obliging him to take care of the parents, partially transferring the farm as a gift, and by assigning him the task of paying compensation to his siblings. The final price of the farm was mostly reduced to an insignificant sum, which did not have to be paid immediately.

The deed of purchase very much depended on the cooperation of all children. If they maintained considerable legal claims on the future inheritance and contested the favorite son, the financial burdens could be too high for a successor. Brothers and sisters who occasionally dissented were not, as I shall argue later, condemned primarily in financial terms, but rather for disrupting family solidarity. Keeping all the assets of the farm in the hands of a single successor, and accomplishing this in perfect harmony were parts of the same ideal. The farm unscathed was the symbolic expression of familial unity, which was much more important than the continuity of the farm as a mere economic unit.

The meaning of legally sanctioned family agreements

Civil law provided the means of sanctioning decisions reached in a family context, and legal sources could be helpful in realizing these. This incor-

poration of resources from the legal system into the cultural domain of the family is remarkable. It shows that people were not dogmatically and introvertedly self-contained within a single value system. Maximizing the principles of an indigenous value system—here perpetuation of the patri-mony—led to seeking protection against the possible breakdown of family solidarity from an exogenous normative sphere. It is, of course ironic, that family members who did not share indigenous notions of property, stewardship and solidarity could make equally good appeal to his legal system. The difference was that formalizing and codifying customary property relations was mainly for preventive reasons, while insisting on the legal portion was a concrete form of sabotaging customary arrangements.

Appeal to all kinds of formal legal arrangements to rectify decisions taken in a familial context is much older, however, than the existence of civil law. People in the eastern Netherlands drew up all kinds of contracts in earlier centuries, particularly concerning marriage and caring arrangements. The duties of the heir were spelled out in great detail, including possible sanctions in cases of noncompliance. Parents were eager to put intrafamily arrangements on paper even when customary law did not differ significantly from indigenous inheritance customs. Such legal underpinning of practice was less intended as a protective shield against the potential threat of legal action by children, as an insurance against possible family breakdown and conflict.

Much of what is written in the legal documents from which my information is drawn reflected what had been agreed in a family context. Family arrangements were not, of course, couched in the right language and had to be translated and rectified in legal terms. The portrayal of arrangements in legal documents, certainly reflected desired practice. But it should not be forgotten that the procedures described in those documents only partially reveal the experience of the people involved. A legal document was designed to comply with legal norms. It defined actors as having the same rights, imaginatively and accurately calculating all sorts of prestations, using a variety of value referents. Only the result counted for the actors involved, however. I became aware of this from the fact that my informants never mentioned legal documents and procedures. When asked how some technicalities worked out in practice, they simply did not know what I was talking about. Most informants had to admit that they never looked at the texts made up by the solicitor; they could not even say where the pieces of paper were.

The paper documents did not reflect a lived reality for the farmers in question. The papers rather reflected a peculiar mixture of two separate worlds, meeting each other by way of an interlocutor. Farmers needed the documents for legal purposes and to implement their desires. A solicitor was seen as the person who 'makes' the transfer. People in Geesteren refer to the arrangement of farm transfer as *de making*, literally fabricating, and they emphasize to the skills and ingenuity needed.

Farmers did not think in terms of legal concepts, that is, in the idiom or with the reasoning found in inheritance law and documents drawn up by solicitors. The law was in fact perceived as an external, state-sanctioned normative universe that could be quite useful, but which could also have disruptive effects in conflictive situations. This was certainly true for the complicated legal constructions aimed at transferring farm property. The fact that inheritance law, for instance, prescribes a formalization of land transfers and unavoidably poses the question of equality, does not mean that farmers followed the same logic. Most farmers were clueless about even the basic concepts of inheritance and succession law, let alone the technicalities. I had the impression that this has never particularly worried them. They did, however, know that you could mostly achieve what you wanted, if you knew exactly what it was. People were generally much impressed by solicitors' capacities and the possibilities offered by law. Farmers wanted to keep their land together, transfer it to a son with minimal financial burdens, and secure their own old-age and the future of dependent children. They knew from experience that this could be realized, if these wishes were translated into the right legal language and remained within the limits of the law.

Farmers realized—also from past experience—that there was only one problem that could not be solved by ingenious technical-legal conceptions. There came a moment that the solicitor had to ask the retiring parents what they wished to do for their nonsuccessor children, and to invite the children to make their claims. I heard many stories from farmers that the children were in fact ignorant of their possibilities until the day they were invited to the solicitor's office to sign a piece of paper in which they actually abandoned all claims on the inheritance. The gathering at the solicitors' office could end in temporary delay of signing the documents. That mostly happened, according to my informants, when a son-in-law turned up claiming that his wife should have a larger share of the property and spoiling the planned festivities. The solicitor's office was, in reality, rarely the scene of such tragedy; conflicts came to the surface more frequently during specially arranged family gatherings, or in

daily interaction. The following section will examine the fate of the non-successor children in more detail: how they were excluded from inheriting land, whether this was conceived in terms of inequality, and to what extent they contested the position of the main heir.

The fate of the retiring parents and nonsuccessor children

Having sketched the important legal forms for transferring the farm to a single heir/successor, I will now concentrate on the retiring parents and those brothers and sisters who are excluded from staying on the farm and sharing in its property. I have made frequent allusion to solidarity and cooperation, but also to potential sources of conflict and dispute. How far were children compensated, and to what extent did they make an appeal to legal principles of equality? The position of the surviving parents was also crucial in this respect. Handing over management and control of property during their lifetime, means that they became dependent on a son and his wife. I have already observed that they did not seem to have any hesitation, and it is therefore interesting to consider how they could be so confident.

The replacement of a father by a son

The position of the parents *vis-à-vis* the heir was subject to precise legal agreements, with abundant reference to market-related monetary values. The legal form defining the position of the parents was part of a technical construction, designed to present the judicial authorities and fiscal officials with a completely lawful arrangement. It also served to reduce the payments the successor had to make in compensating the coheirs. Despite this formal procedure, handing over the patrimony and farm management was in fact a matter of moral obligations, rights and conditional stipulations, typical of exchanges in a family context.

The relationship between the parents and the successor-heir after farm transfer was invariably one of mutual dependence and trust. The parents, although formally deprived of property after the transaction, did not experience their abdication as an absolute turning point or an alienation from property. On the contrary, they saw it as the result of a natural process of reassigning roles during the domestic cycle. The essential feature was that property was retained within the same social context, and that there was only a shift in responsibilities and positions. The parents became less insistent about decision making and the exercise of authority.

The son became the head of the household and the farm, and gradually acquired some degree of autonomy. This reversal of roles also meant the parents becoming dependent on the son for daily nourishment, shelter and care. In exchange, the parents were supposed to work for the well-being of the house as much as they could. The successor was also responsible for the well-being of his brothers and sisters. Although he became formal owner of the farm, his parents, as I shall describe later, kept a firm hand in his future financial situation.

This is of course a sketch of the ideal situation. The reality was often less luminous. Even after the arrangement of succession, the father often continued to act as household head, and the mother to retain charge of the housekeeping. Even if all members of a family subscribed to the same notion of a common timeless ancestral property, living with this on a daily basis made high demands on personal resilience, particularly in the household. No doubt, the success of formal partnerships and the increase in the number of couples living in partitioned quarters, evince important relaxations in the concrete social realization of an ideological system.

People were fully aware that compromises in practical spheres allowing most flexibility had to be made. Forms of differentiation and social partitioning that relate to a frame of reference opposed to traditional concepts of property, gender, patriarchy and generation were introduced by granting the younger generation more autonomy in farm management and family life, and by allowing new principles of remuneration. This partial incorporation of values from a different frame of reference posed no threat to the integrity of kinship and inheritance ideology. On the contrary, parents who refused to acknowledge the successor a stronger individual status *vis-à-vis* the farm and the household, faced the possibility of ending up without successor at all, or with a son unable to find a partner. This could result in a collapse of the patrimony and discontinuation of the ultimate symbol of harmonious family relations. It was necessary, in other words, to distinguish between trivial social form and pivotal structural design to maintain the basic elements of the house system.

When the parents sold the farm to a son—the most frequently chosen legal form of farm transfer—an independent valuer had to estimate the price. Farmers had several possibilities for reducing this price without formally favoring the successor. Firstly, a sum could be calculated for the successor's labor on the farm over the preceding years. Secondly, a price was calculated for the right of the parents to stay in the house, to be nourished, taken care of and buried. It could also be agreed that this fixed

total was not paid at once, but as yearly allowances. The third possibility for reducing the purchase price was by presenting the son with a substantial gift. The rest of the purchase price had to be paid, but it was usually immediately agreed that the son could borrow this money from the parents, interest-free and with no specification about repaying the debt. The parents continued to give yearly sums of money as far as they were allowed to do so without the recipient incurring tax, for the rest of their lives.

This construction was apparently designed to secure a minimal debt at the parents' death, because this sum was formally the amount of money the successor had to forward to the inheritance susceptible for division. An additional agreement was, however, that the successor took on the responsibility of paying his brothers and sisters an amount of money ahead of their inheritance. His siblings were in their turn prepared to sign a document promising never to make any future claim on the parental estate. The successor thus bought the farm from his parents without having to pay any money, and in the knowledge that future financial claims were ruled out. The purchase deed was thus mainly designed to evade tax duties and legally to justify the elimination of future claims by brothers and sisters. The underlying family goal—preserving the patrimony—was mainly achieved by an appeal to family solidarity, but it was formally realized by legal and financial strategies that were acceptable to legal and fiscal authorities.

Significantly enough, parents could transfer all their property to one child while retaining an interest in it. They were both entitled to stay in the house and to receive care; and the fact that the son was financially totally dependent on his parents' goodwill (because of his financial debt) guaranteed their moral presence. The conditional character of the son's property rights is further illustrated by the promise he had to make not to alienate the farm or any part of it during his parents' lifetime (and often after), without their consent. This nonspeculation stipulation meant that the successor was in fact condemned to the farm. More important than these legally established claims, however, was the fact that the son's access to property was completely dependent on his parents' loyalty. It is obvious that the real feelings of indebtedness and the resulting sense of obligation did not reside in the legal construction but in the moral contents of the property relations.

It is interesting that legal constructions enabling farmers to transfer the farm according to their wishes, contained numerous references to forms of calculation that were in fact strikingly opposed to the moral character

of the family transaction itself. Thus the legal document securing a transaction via 'closed purse' (*gesloten beurs*) publicly assigned market values to farm labor (for the son) and board and lodging (for the parents). One was forced to impose this sort of 'alien' concept to compensate for the fact that nonfamily derived values were assigned to the farm for tax purposes, and in order to calculate the exact financial position of all parties. It would be erroneous to assume that intrafamily transactions were based on commodity principles and that these values were used to calculate rates of exchange between the parents and the successor. Intrafamily exchange was in fact based much more on agreement in terms of moral obligations and rights, on culturally determined values, which could impossible be expressed in monetary terms. Land was not exchanged for labor or the financial burden of care-taking. Although social security and financial viability certainly played a role, responsibility for the patrimony and the family was only shifted to the next generation and, in the eyes of the actors involved, this was not a favor in material terms to be met with material counterprestations. It was a privilege and a duty to receive the farm; certainly not a unilateral material acquisition.

The lifetime division and allotment of the estate, another way of transferring the farm, was not couched in the form of a deed of purchase, but designed according to the same principles. The legal documents assigned a monetary value to the estate and heritable portions were calculated according to standard legal principles. The portion for the designated successor was usually substantial higher than those of his siblings, because of retrospective and prospective contributions to his parents. The legal text was conceived in the same way as for the deed of purchase, intended to determine the value of allotted portions for tax purposes, and to verify the correctness of the procedures followed. When all the children had received their legal portions, they immediately sold them to one brother, or decided that he should have all the land. The difference with the deed of purchase is therefore that the result was not that the son owed the value of the estate to his parents, but (apart from his own legal portion) to his brothers and sisters, who were legally entitled to receive their shares as compensatory payments.

Since the parents completely relinquished the property and lost their financial claims on the successor, the procedure was only feasible if they had complete faith in him. As I have already explained, the legal form and monetary idiom had no significance in the father-son relationship. Moral obligations were conceptualized in the kinship context, irrespective of formal agreements. The successor's financial position was evidently

dependent on his siblings' attitude toward the formal arrangements. If they interpreted their rights as defined by law, the successor would face huge financial burdens. This only happened very occasionally, as I will describe later; the usual practice was for the successor's siblings to reject their legal share, ask for insignificant compensation or, simply agree to credit terms without interest or repayment.

The position of the retiring parents has not changed significantly over the past four decades. They did not, in principle, withdraw capital from the farm for their own consumption. They could, depending on the financial viability of the farm, ask for some payment of interest on the sum they lent to the son, or receive some payment for the usufruct of the land. The introduction of old-age pensions greatly helped the younger generation to acquire more independence, as did the surcease of sharing the same domestic space with the parents. Parents had the means of running their own household and did not need to rely completely on their children's care and support. But even if the parents became weak and needed intensive care, they only occasionally moved into an elderly or nursing home. The daughter-in-law was supposed to help them through old age as much as she can, often helped by the parents' own daughters. This was not a particularly attractive prospect for many young people. Although transactions based on market terms, abolishing all references to gifts and obligations, are unlikely to become widespread in the future, some compromise to alleviate the younger generation from the moral obligation and hardship of caring for disabled and debilitated parents can be anticipated.

Another possible reason for changing future property transfers from complete trust and mutual dependence to allowing parents more financial leeway, are the more exacting consumption patterns and lifestyles among currently retiring farmers. Elderly people had been satisfied with a very simple, although dignified lifestyle. Being able to stay in the parental house, seeing the next generation continuing the farm and the other children coming home in harmony, are the fruits of a lifetime's effort. There is, however, a new generation of elderly people on its way. They want a higher standard of home comfort, without being excessive, a car, the possibility of going on holiday and money to spend on enjoying themselves. Such patterns of behavior may provoke a 'paternalist' attitude among the generation building up the farm, and it is therefore likely that the parents will keep hold of some farm property or capital to retain maximum financial independence.

The position of nonsuccessor children

When parents transferred their estate to a son, they stipulated conditions both with respect to their own position, and to that of their children. Responsibility for the estate put the successor in the position of head of the family. The duties normally assumed by the parents, like providing free board and lodging to children and giving them some money when leaving home, were assigned to the successor. The children who still lived at home when the farm was transferred to their brother, became financially and otherwise totally dependent on him.

Successors setting up their own family did not experience the family life cycle phases typical for nuclear family households. On marriage they became immediately responsible for a large household accommodating parents and siblings. They had their own children by the time all siblings had left the household and the parents were dead. In spite of these dynamic processes, household size thus remained rather stable during its developmental cycle. As I have mentioned before, the incorporation of a newly married couple into the household could not take place too early. The transfer of the farm only took place when all children had left the household in about half of the cases I examined, for the period after 1950. It is obvious that variations in consumption demands and the availability of labor hardly affected many farm households.

The successor's financial responsibilities to the parents and the children who still lived with them dwindled since they had separate domestic spaces. His siblings no longer worked on the farm, as was the case until the 1960s, but mostly earned their own income or were otherwise financially supported by their parents. In the locality I studied, the parents mostly generously endowed children with a gift upon leaving the house. These gifts were largely of a symbolic nature, and did not bear any relation to what the successor would later get. Daughters could count on payment of all costs made at their marriage, some furniture and, until recently, occasionally a cow. Sons were also endowed with some money at marriage. Accepting these gifts was clearly a promise to abandon any future claims on money or goods. Although there was a chance to get more at the definitive transfer of the farm, they were morally obliged to sign a document stating that they were completely satisfied with what they had already received, rejecting a future inheritance and agreeing upon the division so far concluded.

Sixty-four (80 percent) of the eighty transfer deeds I analyzed, referred to such former gifts and contained a declaration by the nonsuccessor

children rejecting their legal inheritance portion in favor of their brother. All these cases specified that the children still living at home had the right to stay there as long as they wanted and that, upon leaving home, they would receive a specified sum to be paid by the successor. The successor could then take over the farm without having to borrow large sums of money to compensate his brothers and sisters. But what happened in the remaining 20 percent of the cases? Did brothers and sisters refuse to cooperate and, if so, was this a recent trend?

Compensatory payments: an infringement of the house?

When nonsuccessor children received more than symbolic portions of the estate, this was mostly done on an equal footing so that each child got the same, although much less than the successor. I recorded only two cases where one of the children refused to cooperate. Demands for full compensation might be expected as normal from a legal point of view. But the documents refer to these cases with the phrase "requires direct payment in accordance with legal rights and refuses to accept the proposed settlement to reject the inheritance." The fact that I only met two cases of 'deviancy' clearly reflects that these were, and still are, very unusual.

Inheritance settlements granting children considerable compensation were never based on the principle of equity. The successor always received the bulk of the inheritance. Most of the cases in which the successors' siblings received considerable compensation occurred after 1965. High monetary compensation was paid in 16 percent of cases before 1965, and in 23 percent of the cases after 1965. The settlement of monetary compensations also changed. Before 1965 children did not withdraw their allowance from the estate, but agreed to lend it to their brother, without specification if and when it should be paid back. After 1965 compensations were increasingly paid immediately, in cash. The sum of money the successor had to pay sometimes amounted to half the value of the farm. Despite these considerable financial claims, the continuity of the farms in question was not endangered. To what extent, then, do these claims reflect a change in mentality, or a lack of commitment to the ancestral patrimony? Did they result from fierce conflict, or were they based on unchanging principles that allowed greater practical flexibility?

Although this sort of arrangement only concerned a minority of farm transfer cases, I think it shows much greater indulgence by some parents. Since the compensations for the children were far from complete, they reveal a clear element of willingness by nonsuccessor children to take the

continuity of the farm and the integrity of the patrimony into account. Compensations were not based on conflicting views of the patrimony but on a more generous treatment by the parents, without threatening the unity of the farm and solidarity with the patrimonial line. It did, however, mean that the successor had to accept higher financial burdens than most of his peers on other farms. Better access to credit and possibilities to expand farm income certainly underlay the fact that common agreement and shared principles could be translated into more generous treatment of the nonsuccessor children.

Possibilities for increasing farm income and for gaining access to credit after 1965 were such that the viability of the farm was not necessarily endangered by even a significant withdrawal of capital. Higher compensation reflected the dynamics of the agricultural sector, and the growing importance of the successor's role as an entrepreneur. He simply had to become a more active innovator and investor and to raise farm income to counterbalance the withdrawal of capital from the farm. These families were certainly attached to the parental farm and preserving it had the highest priority. But they were also aware of its economic potentialities. The family estate was not viewed exclusively as a static artifact and a symbolic unit only, but also as something that could be developed economically. This small group of entrepreneurial farmers also did not view the total exclusion of nonsuccessor children as an immutable principle. Commitment to the patrimony was defined as being satisfied with what could reasonably be withdrawn from a dynamic farm. Compensation for nonsuccessor children was thus based on a rather rigid principle that nonetheless allowed for flexibility in a dynamic agricultural sector.

The fact that the rather favorable prospects for farming after the 1960s moved so few families to more practical flexibility, shows that most 'settled' farmers lacked this more economic orientation toward the farm. This did not, of course, mean that they were totally passive. As I have shown in Chapter Seven, all farms were drastically modernized, but change was modest and, given unchanging inheritance practices, only aimed at maintaining comfortable living standards and local status position. It was difficult for many farmers to acquiesce to the idea that the parental estate was not just a secure subsistence base and a status symbol, but that it also had considerable economic potentialities.

My assessment is that inheritance patterns—not only, but especially in times of a potential dynamic enterprise development—have far-reaching consequences for individual economic trajectories. A rigid application of complete sibling exclusion allows a successor to continue his farm with-

out planning substantial expansion of productive capacity. If, however, portions of farm capital are distributed to siblings, he is more or less driven along the path of expansion. Farm succession with high financial sacrifices may indeed have been the motor of much of recent farm dynamics in the Netherlands. It is clear, that the loss of capital may theoretically also be such that development prospects are limited. On the other hand, it may sometimes be very helpful and even necessary to minimize the loss of capital at the shift of generations in order to realize farm development plans.

My analysis shows that siblings usually subscribed to the idea that the parental estate should be maintained. The attitude of the successors' brothers and sisters was crucial and not at all self-evident. In contrast to the parents, whose abdication was more apparent than real, these children were building up a future away from the farm. From what informants have told me and what I have understood from documents describing the allotment of estates, the parents never appeared as a potential threat to the integrity of the estate. That comes as no surprise since the parents were the strongest partisans of property and kinship related ideologies of patrimonial continuity. As I will describe later, the willingness among nonsuccessor children cannot be understood in terms of 'modern' concepts of value. The 'rewards' for respecting patrimonial integrity were culturally constructed within a social network that went far beyond the family of origin.

The moral economy of family transactions and the wider kinship context

The retiring parents gave up property, and nonsuccessor children left the responsibility of the house in the hands of a brother. I have already indicated that the question of whether they retained formal, legal property rights in material assets is not of immediate interest here. More to the point is how the family patrimony was defined in a specific social and cultural context. My contention is that property rights cannot generally be understood only in terms of private, individual rights in material objects.

Among landowning families in Geesteren, the patrimony was not seen as having been appropriated by an individual: responsibilities for it were rather assigned to a chosen member of the living generation. The person singled out from a family group for the responsibility of administering

the estate had therefore twofold status. He became the master with great privileges, prestige and power; but also a person with heavy responsibilities toward previous, his own and future generations, who had and will cooperatively put themselves aside in the name of the 'house.' Such stewardship contrasts with the definition of property in civil law, where property is a thing, isolated from its symbolic and practical meaning, and ownership is defined in terms of absolute or unconditional rights with respect to its alienation and use. Concepts of equality and inequality appeared in an original form in the context of family transactions, while the conditional character of succession to the house created enduring relationships with relatives who originally belonged to the it.

Equality and inequality of inheritance

The perception of a system of customary inheritance usages is heavily colored by the frame of reference through which it is experienced or observed. If, for instance, one assumes liberal concepts of the individual and private property, inheritance may easily be defined in terms of inequality and an infraction of personal integrity. An 'infraction' of rights changes its meaning, however, in a context where a person's identity is related to collective identities. Equality, understood in terms of comparing quantified 'objective' values, becomes a nonsensical concept if applied to the achievement of a collective status symbol. My observations clearly indicate that only the 'rights' of the house, as a sort of moral person, could be infracted, and that inequality was only perceived if one among equals (the children) demanded an exclusive position.

Safeguarding a historic patrimony was not, in the eyes of the farmers, regarded as an infraction of their children's rights, nor was it for that reason unjust. On the contrary, keeping the patrimony intact by delegating responsibility into the hands of one successor-heir was seen ideally as the ultimate accomplishment and in the interest of secondary lines of descent as well. Collaboration in achieving continuity was not considered a sacrifice: it was a privilege to help the perpetuation of an institution that was the ultimate expression of kinship solidarity. The exclusion of nonsuccessor children was, from this perspective, not a negative act demonstrating their redundancy, but a way of including them in the rewards of sustaining a symbolic estate.

The current classification of inheritance systems in terms of equality and inequality is in itself useful, but it should be remembered that these are scientific constructs that translate a complex reality into simple issues

of access to material rewards by each heir. Inequality may certainly be used to measure the quantities bestowed, but the people involved do not necessarily perceive such transactions in this way. The idea that material assets are beyond individual appropriation is central in the inheritance ideology of farmers in the eastern Netherlands. Responsibility and authority over a patrimony are bestowed by common agreement upon one person. In this respect people may perceive inequality of status but, since that status is accorded to the successor by his parents, brothers and sisters, it does not imply absolute authority. Being entrusted and sanctioned by a wider kinship network, the successor is in fact made subservient to their moral demands: authority is not a license to freedom for autonomous action, but a mandate for performing strict obligations.

The wider kinship network

What did it mean for the successor's siblings to cooperate in a smooth transfer of the farm? Could one dissident brother or sister really spoil everything? Although few families had any experience with a dissonant member, the very idea of having to pay a substantial sum to a child refusing to abandon legal claims was viewed with aversion. This had less to do with the financial burdens for the successor, than the fact that the disloyal brother or sister had to be 'banned' from further contact with the rest of the family. The subject itself was painful: if it came up during family discussions the silence was broken and conventional behavior, even if fully endorsed, exposed to the harsh light of the day. The successor is made abruptly aware of his fragile position and may feel very uncomfortable *vis-à-vis* his brothers and sisters. The loyal brothers and sisters may, in their turn, begin to think that they are doing something peculiar. In short, it is by discussing unusual circumstances that conventional behavior is seriously exposed. Weighing up the pros and cons of deviancy may, however, have the effect of renewing the cooperative children's motivation. This apparent contradiction becomes intelligible if the importance of the house, the tangible and symbolic core of a local kinship universe, is born in mind. Although children who left the parental house (*forttrouw'en*) were partly marginalized from the kinship core, they retained a strong lineal concept of kin recognition and maintained close relations with the resident family. Only men who married into the house of an heiress were expected to profess complete loyalty to their new house. They 'lost' their former identity and were entirely absorbed by the responsibilities of being the head of a new family.

The *ollerhoes* (parental house) remained invested with personal loyalties for women in general and for most men. It was the center of family reunions and family rituals. Although siblings kept in touch, they saw each one another most frequently at the parents' house. If the brother died, they stayed in touch with their nephew-successor and were still invited for all kinds of gatherings. With the passing of generations, however, contacts with distant relatives became blurred, but there were always members of new generations who identified with a specific ancestral family line.

Under these circumstances the successor clearly accepted a role that was kept under close scrutiny by a large number of relatives who originated from the same house and had contributed directly or indirectly to its maintenance. It is not only the successor who felt this compulsion from the wider kinship network. Nonsuccessor children felt equally pressurized by aunts and uncles and their children not to do anything to 'destroy' the ancestral house. This was not only a matter of other people's concerns; the nonsuccessor children themselves were well aware of the importance they attached to their access to the house.

The idea of leaving a family patrimony intact was thus not limited to a small family group or narrow private interests. The family patrimony represented a point of reference and bore the imprint of many people from different generations. The traditional rural community was basically structured by vertically constituted pillars of kinship organization and recognition. These were upheld not simply through sentimental feelings of attachment and identity, but also grounded in maintaining the existing hierarchy of houses, the basis of the community's social and cultural system. Rejecting loyalty to a personal patrimonial line was condemned as an infringement of kinship loyalty, but also as a violation of the existing social order. Although the local context has lost much of its significance, the farming community still respects many traditional concepts of status. A son or daughter would have to be very recalcitrant and single-minded to disregard personal, family and community pressure and withdraw a piece of such a symbolically loaded property. Such flagrant disregard would necessitate access to a secure place far from the locality. It is remarkable—possibilities for geographical mobility and employment beyond the community have greatly increased—that farmers' children's first choice still lays in staying close to where they were born. Those who went away, for whatever reason, did so without community pressure, and left the parental estate intact.

Siblings who left their father's house with a small inheritance did not feel particularly motivated to support their brother and his farm. They wanted rather to prevent the ties connecting them with the house and the people they identified with from being cut. Not claiming parental property symbolizes attachment to highly valued personal relations and the concrete artifacts that embody them.

Failures of reproduction and local perceptions of succession

Although there was a high level of continuity among the established farming families, a significant number of them was faced with the problem that there was no successor, in the mid-1980s. There were various reasons for this situation. Firstly, there were farmers without children. Childlessness was always involuntary and therefore deeply regretted. Childless couples regarded their situation as a tragedy and, although they had learned to live with it, they were daily confronted by the inescapable collapse of the family estate. These farmers scarcely enjoyed their work and were quite unmotivated to do more than the minimum to keep the farm in good order. Childless couples made me realize that work satisfaction and economic incentives are largely determined by anticipating the future and reflecting on the past. Farmers' links with previous generations kept them going, but the prospect of being the last generation seriously disheartened them.

Another reason for lacking a successor was when a bachelor, or unmarried siblings owned the farm. Approximately 7 percent of farmers over fifty years were unmarried in 1987. One reason for celibacy, frequently mentioned by my informants, was the extremely closed character of a particular house. The parents could have refused to let their son get married several times because he came with the 'wrong' candidate. If the son in question persisted, he had no choice other than leaving the house. The sons who did stay with their parents obviously felt a commitment to their parents. Recent celibacy among aging farm operators is partly related to the difficulties they had in finding a spouse who was prepared to move into his parents' house in the 1950s and 1960s. The spatial separation of married couples in the farmhouse was becoming an important issue for women in those days. If the parents refused to partition the house, the proposed wedding was likely to be called off. Although it is difficult to assess how frequently this happened, my informants certainly mentioned it repeatedly.

Celibacy and childlessness obviously endangered the continuity of the family line. This undesirable prospect was avoided, until the recent past, by transmitting the house to a close relative, commonly a nephew or a cousin. The boy was not formally adopted but often went to live in his uncle's house at a very young age, mostly before leaving school. Such 'adoption' of a successor was not just a practical solution to guarantee the aging childless couple a secure old age; it was also regarded a legitimate way of keeping the estate in the 'same blood.' It was a solution that was mostly limited to childless couples. In the case of a bachelor, it was more usual for a married sibling with children to move back into the natal house, thereby providing the house with a successor.

The incorporation of a successor from a secondary line of descent has become very unusual during the past decades. This is not because continuity has become unimportant or because recruitment from beyond the resident family improper. Early 'adoption' was excluded because children were supposed to stay with their own parents. Furthermore, young men did not seem particularly motivated to enter a partnership or work under some other arrangement with an uncle, ultimately becoming his heir. Although the kinship distance is small, the element of gratuity is so strong as to make it unacceptable without showing extreme deference. The uncle's standpoint is that having to depend on somebody who is not a child could undermine his authority. The difficulty of finding an appropriate balance, framed in terms of a moral economy, between a nephew and his uncle demonstrates the cultural uniqueness of the father-son relation in continuing a family enterprise. While the wider kinship network is still present as a moral sanction, it lost relevance as a structuring principle for concrete arrangements.

A successor could also be a problem when a couple had only daughters. Having only daughters was in itself no reason to worry about succession. There are no cultural objections—although men are preferred—to having a daughter as the sole heiress of a farm. Yet, farm continuity is ensured through a daughter in increasingly few cases during the last decades. I have already given some reasons for this earlier in this chapter. It should also be remembered that the position of girls *vis-à-vis* the farm has become rather different from boys. A boy grows up on his parents' farm and, if he is interested in farming and shows sufficient commitment to the family estate, he may eventually take it over. Potential successors increasingly prepare themselves for running a farm with a training in agriculture. They may be employed temporarily in another job before coming to the farm, but they are not qualified for anything else but farming.

Girls, on the other hand, do not qualify themselves for running a farm. Although some girls may enter schools for an agricultural training, farm management is considered a man's role. Even if parents realize that they will never have sons, they do not encourage a daughter to take over responsibility for the farm. This means that their only chance is for the girl to marry a boy who is prepared to become a farmer. This may sometimes happen, but frequently girls find a partner with a nonfarming background.

Childlessness, celibacy and the absence of boys occur randomly on large and small farms. The fact that such farms were and will not be continued through a family line of succession is, however, only partly attributable to the whim of nature. Succession by daughters is seriously hampered by the cultural belief that farm headship ought to be in the hands of a man. The fact that unmarried farmers and those without children would rather let the farm slip away than transmit it to nearby kin, reveals how much the transfer of an estate is supposed to be between quite specific family members. The fact that past generations seemed to be much more inclined to incorporate a successor from the wider kinship universe, may be an indication that the parent-child bond has, over the past decades, become the only relationship capable of providing the moral infrastructure for succession and farm transfer.

Since the late 1960s, farmers over fifty-five have been asked at four yearly intervals whether they have a successor or not. The results of these national surveys provide interesting information about the expected replacement rate. The most recent statistics (1988), for instance, revealed that farmers in eastern Overijssel had almost the highest rate of succession in the Netherlands (57 percent). The only place where there were more successors was on the new IJsselmeer polders, home to the most 'rational' forms of Dutch agriculture (van den Hoek and Spierings 1992). These statistics suggest that succession is best guaranteed on the large farms (over 75 percent had a successor), while most of the small farmers lacked a successor. It is further revealed that highest succession rates occur on specialized cattle farms, while it was below 25 percent on traditional mixed farms. Unfortunately, farmers were not asked why they have no successor. In fact, farmers without children and those with only daughters can scarcely be compared with those who have sons and a prosperous farm, if we are to understand the logic of intergenerational replacement.

National statistics about developments in the number of farms and the expected rate of future replacement are invariably used to present a

gloomy picture of agricultural crisis and family tragedy. Yet, no such image surfaced in conversations with farmers in Geesteren in the late 1980s. Although I assumed that here, as elsewhere, many farmers faced a future without continuity, I was surprised to find that this idea was not shared by local people. How can there be such a discrepancy between the image presented by statistics and the local perception of the situation?

My suggestion is that perception of the situation is largely determined by the differential meanings attached to the word 'succession.' Succession is a term only used by the younger generation, and it is part of the discourse of farm viability introduced by agricultural advisers and the agricultural press. Local perceptions are, however, part of a local discourse of the 'house,' one which goes beyond *economic* viability. The traditional name—still used by the older generations—for the person who takes over the farm and the land is *de blijver*, which literally means 'the one who stays in the house.' The term *blijver* refers to the person who takes over responsibility for a family estate bestowed upon him by his parents and ideally all his brothers and sisters. Such a concept of succession only applies to the solidly established medium and large property-owning families, and bears moral judgments about how continuity is achieved. 'Non-succession' is only perceived if one of these families fails to produce a *blijver* for reasons of disloyalty and lack of commitment among the children. Nonsuccession has negative connotations, precipitates moral condemnation, and only applies to specific groups and specific circumstances.

Families that fail to 'produce' a *blijver* through childlessness, having only daughters, or because the farm is too small are therefore neither condemned nor classified as cases of nonsuccession. The same is true of families who reach the unanimous decision that none of the children will stay in the house. Family reputation is unimpaired by children with a gift for learning, or by those who choose highly qualified or skilled jobs. Local people thus define nonsuccession as *unplanned* and *involuntary* failure to generate sufficient family commitment. The local, traditional idea of succession is thus applied selectively to the planned and harmonious reproduction of the house system, while nonsuccession refers to family conflicts. The concept does not, therefore, apply to part-time farmers, 'hobby farmers' and other groups considered marginal to the agricultural community. This explains why, despite a significant decline in the number of farms, farmers insist that 'succession' does not pose any problem.

Perceptions of change and continuity

The local perception of succession and the consequent idea of continuity confirm the results of my research in the Land Registration Records. The continuity in farming, residence and property holding is indeed remarkable. While the number of farms under 5 hectares has diminished and a new group of big farms has emerged since the 1960s, medium-sized and large farms (in terms of land) remain remarkably stable, both in numbers and social background. This perception of continuity undoubtedly colors perception of the far-reaching social and economic changes. Local discourse on agricultural and farm development is embodied in two totally different rhetorics, which are not mutually exclusive, but verbalize the feeling that there is no real breach between the past and the present. Nearly everybody can present two entirely distinctive commentaries on developments over the past decades. Depending on how a judgment is summoned and, in a way, depending on what one wishes to hear, a researcher may easily be inclined to follow and record only one side of the discourse. My awareness of this erratic situation led me to the conclusion that it would be possible to present my research either in terms of a 'modernization' thesis or as a 'persistence' thesis. My perspective is however different. It is possible to distinguish change and continuity at different levels: at the level of structuring principles and at the level of observable practice and social forms.

The compatibility of 'modern' economic behavior and 'traditional' patrimonial preoccupations

It is easy to identify tremendous changes that have taken place in agriculture, housing, consumption patterns, households, the relationship between the generations and even the modalities of farm transfer. But shifting focus to the fundamental cultural categories that mediate people's perception of reality and provide the moral standards for judging and orienting behavior, one is struck by continuity. People were not overwhelmed by the major upheavals in agriculture and rural society. On the contrary, they played an active role in bringing about a modern agrarian structure. Contrary to what is often thought in modernization theory, people do not need to throw off their traditional cultural values to develop and adopt 'rational' technologies, farming practices and consumption patterns. The incentive to 'modernize' the farm may in fact stem from 'traditional' notions about maintaining status and the reproduction of family symbols.

'Modern' economic practices are often associated, in academic discourse, with the capitalist rationality of a world consisting of objectified relations, necessarily leading to the collapse of traditional local culture. Modern practices with a traditional outlook on life are consequently understood as a culturally lagging.

Enduring notions about family, farm and land are intimately related to the development of modern agriculture and the reproduction of the house system. Rational economic practices and patrimonial strategies may apparently belong to different worlds, but they are mutually compatible under particular conditions. Emphasizing the importance of the patrimonial line is an important incentive and indeed a condition for farm continuity and development, especially in a period when farmers are losing their identity, and farm viability puts high demands on access to owner-occupied capital. Keeping the farm economically and financially viable is, in its turn, an indispensable condition for realizing kinship goals. The incorporation of economic strategies in the realization of cultural goals and *vice versa*, is not particularly 'modern' or 'traditional.' A landed estate, whatever its symbolic value, is also a material assemblage for providing income and subsistence. The mingling of subsistence and income strategies with family goals and strategies obviously depends on the character of the economy and the state of technology.

Farms are nowadays subject to a variety of external constraints that oblige farmers to take a position *vis-à-vis* markets and technology. The increasing importance of economic parameters has certainly affected patrimonial policy, although there is some variety in farmers' interpretation of the relation between patrimony and farm. It is, however, no longer adequate for any farmer to mobilize family loyalty simply to keep the land and the family together. Farmers have increasingly become economic agents, combining patrimonial and economic management. It is therefore rather predictable that both fathers and sons tend to defend the integrity of the estate in terms of economic necessity: family loyalty is necessary to maintain a financially healthy farm. Such an economicistic idiom, which one often finds reproduced in scientific discourse, lacks however any logical foundation in kinship ideology. This is not to say that farmers present a false image of themselves. They probably can mobilize family commitment successfully with economic arguments. That this 'works' in practice can only be explained by the fact that 'economic necessity' is a late-twentieth-century way of expressing the material aspect of the patrimony. The idiom used to legitimate practice reflect the economic conditions that nowadays frame family loyalty.

The patrimony has always had an important economic function for the resident household. Family patrimony is more than just a symbol and an artifact: it must be well equipped to provide the resident household with a level of consumption appropriate to its status. In this respect, the family estate has not changed any of its characteristic features. What has changed, however, is that the physical and material reproduction of the house has become a prominent preoccupation. Before the great transformation of agriculture, the only real material constraint on the house was access to sufficient labor. High investment costs and constant adaptation of the farm were unnecessary. Economic survival has increasingly become a matter of capital management and other entrepreneurial qualities, with the massive introduction of new technologies and the concomitant relative decline in prices. So much, indeed, that farmers themselves emphasize this aspect of the estate to the detriment of social and cultural goals.

I believe therefore that the financial and economic idiom is essentially another way of talking about family and kinship. It is a way of saying that one wishes to preserve the house, but that this now largely depends on preserving a sound economic base. Foregoing claims on the farm's assets has, more than ever, a double significance. While it is primarily an expression of preserving a patrimonial line, it also helps to sustain the economic continuity of the household, which itself guarantees proper patrimonial management, and serves as a focal point in the kinship network.

If family commitment were to be mobilized purely in order to provide a successor with a sound income and employment prospects, without any other more significant meaning, it is unlikely that sufficient support would be forthcoming. If all the children were to take the economic argument literally, they could legitimately use it in their own financial interests. The fact that they only occasionally conceive of their own position in the same economic idiom, means that they are willing and able to translate a narrow rhetoric into the much broader cultural universe of the house.

Shifting discourses on social and economic change

My argument has shifted from one aspect of discourse to other, contrasting aspects. I have referred to the discursive way in which farmers defend their arguments, and I have also referred to family reunions where nothing is questioned. Actors talk about farm transfer in terms of possible alternatives, from which one is chosen. This choice is, in its turn, defend-

ed either as an economic necessity or, more positively, with reference to local family traditions. This discourse does not necessarily disclose uncertainty about the process of farm transfers. On the contrary, by revealing awareness of different options and subsequently embracing one that is then legitimized with in terms of both current practical and timeless idealistic notions, the outsider receives a moral lesson on inveterate maneuvering.

There is objective evidence of change in many aspects of local society, and people are clearly conscious of it. Change is most noticeable in farm management. Older people experienced the post-World War II period as a great metamorphosis, while the younger generation of farmers has grown up with the idea that farming means continuous adjustment to new technology, policy measures and market forces. The collapse of agrarian society probably constitutes the greatest change ever experienced by the farming population. Immediately after World War II, 75 percent of the total population was still dependent on agriculture, and almost 90 percent was born in their place of residence. Farmers gradually lost their leading position and became just an important minority. This transformation has been accompanied by a drastic change in the built environment. While farms dominated the hamlets in the 1950s and 1960s, they are now sentinels of the past in the midst of endless housing estates.

It is unnecessary to compile an exhaustive catalogue of the changes that have affected people's lives. More to the point is how farmers have managed to keep their bearings, retain their identity and maintain control over their lives, in the midst of all this. The answer lies in the fact that people have not basically changed their ideas about property, family and kinship and, what is more important, that these ideas are still fully operative in managing the family patrimony. These cultural traditions are not simply survivals from another era, carried around like relics by elderly people. They are, on the contrary, basically shared by younger generations. Although the organization of domestic space has been adapted and the farm has become more central in estate continuity, seemingly timeless cultural notions have retained their vitality in orienting people in the stream of changing circumstances.

Enduring commitment to the family patrimony has not only proved an effective weapon against the disintegrating forces of agricultural restructuring, it also guaranteed an enduring link between the farming and the nonfarming community. All those people who grew up in a farmhouse, and left to set up a nonagrarian household, still identify with their parental house. Their role in sanctioning the reproduction of this house

should not be underestimated. The sense of continuity among the farming population is fostered by the fact that they did not really experience a cultural shock: people's conventional ways of doing and thinking did not suddenly become obsolete, nor were they obliged radically to revise their ideas or lose control over their own life. Although aware of the contradictions, with some rejecting the culture of familialism altogether, people are capable of structuring their lives to such an extent that changing circumstances are a challenge rather than a threat.

Ever since the inheritance customs of the eastern Netherlands were discovered in the nineteenth century, all kinds of authors thought that they were witnessing the last phase. They were sensitive to the inherent tensions and conflicts and singled these out to prove their predictions. Listening to people's accounts, I also heard stories of deviancy and threats. But careful analysis of this discourse led me to perceive that the strength of their cultural preoccupations lay exactly in the awareness that such discrepancies are part of reality, reinforcing the conviction that they are doing the right thing. Exposing discrepancies to the light of day gives expression to ideas of moral depravity and anxiety, rather than accurately describing empirical fact. As I have shown, the number of cases in which children refuse to cooperate was insignificant.

My argument is furthermore that commitment to the family patrimony is becoming increasingly important. While residential fission did not necessarily endanger the symbolic and material reproduction of the patrimony, and appeals to family commitment could sometimes be relaxed in the past, the recent centrality of the farm puts pressure on people to be very rigorous about preventing the dispersal of capital. This does not mean that external circumstances in any way determine cultural values. The cultural repertoire is available and external circumstances only condition which elements can be relaxed and how emphases are put. Current practice is thus not directly structured by economic circumstances, but only indirectly after being filtered through people's cultural constitution. The level of flexibility and the character of this mediating cultural filter circumscribe its adaptability to changing circumstances.

The ease with which residential organization could be changed in accordance with the wishes of the younger generation demonstrates, for instance, that concrete living arrangements were not a core element of patrimonial ideology. It is rather the quality of social relations that is central. Another sign of flexibility is that if none of the children is really dedicated to farming, the farm is given up, albeit with regret. The increasing emphasis on farming as a profession means that opting out would not

necessarily imply renouncing loyalty to the family. The fact that this only very occasionally happens, shows that professionalization has made very little impact, with the farm still considered the most tangible expression of family loyalty, and being a farmer a role associated with patrimonial management.

It is my contention that the essential element of patrimonial ideology lies in socially and culturally sanctioned volition. Persuasion is more important than force: if persuasion does not work, a reluctant person is scarcely receptive for the symbolic meanings attached to the family estate. Since the integrity of the family patrimony is both the reflection and the result of family commitment, it cannot in principle be reproduced on the basis of resentment and enmity.

Cultural reflection and reflexive culture

The transfer of property within a family context is bound to be structured by moral ingredients. Where property is not only an economic asset but also a family patrimony, transfers of land and monetary compensations reflect kinship identities, dependencies and public statuses. Traditional inheritance systems express the variable importance people attach to either the kindred or lineally organized residential units. It is therefore important to abstract from the material assets and concentrate upon property relations. It is actually not so interesting to ask who inherits what. The concept of inheritance is to a certain extent opposed to the isolated, individualized person. Property may, from a purely legal and economicistic point of view, be identified with an individual. However, the person may, depending on the cultural meaning of property and the kind of context in which it is embedded, be endowed with rights and obligations that are invisible if material assets are the sole focus of interest.

An indigenous custom of transferring land does not, however, exist in isolation. Land is a vital resource of household livelihood, and economic and technological developments impose conditions on how it is best allocated as a productive resource. The extent to which a local population has to rely on the land is, moreover, dependent on the availability of other means of existence. Wider political, economic and demographic parameters thus clearly condition the economic meaning of land, that is, how much land is needed to sustain a family and how many people are competing for it. As I have tried to argue earlier, these 'external' conditions are not simply imposed on a local population. They are mediated by cultural dispositions through which 'objective' circumstances are trans-

lated into concrete behavior. Practice is thus, in theory, always a compromise between patrimonial and economic strategies.

I have shown that most of the property owners in Geesteren managed to pattern farm succession and inheritance according to prevailing attitudes toward the role of the family patrimony in maintaining residential and family continuity. This cultural ideal prevented the dissolution of estates under conditions of population pressure, agricultural intensification and commercialization.

The incidence of contrasting cultural principles

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century observers were astonished by the behavior of nonsuccessor children. They could understand inheritance customs from the point of view of the successor and his parents, but the fact that the excluded children did not contest their unfavorable position surprised them. Time and again it was predicted that these children would eventually realize the real value of the land that they had renounced. These observers were in fact reflecting upon a theme that would become even more important after the second World War. The underlying idea was that indigenous value systems are not only exposed to changing agricultural conditions, but also to general social and cultural developments in society at large.

It is certainly true that, during the last decades in particular, farm families have been confronted by seemingly contradictory economic and cultural forces. Commoditization—the increasing incorporation of farming in market circuits—has induced farmers to conceptualize farm resources in terms of a capital investment, subject to rational calculation and market oriented strategies. The knowledge and information system on which farmers depend has contributed to this commoditized concept of the enterprise. This idea is not just an ideological construct, however: maintaining a viable farm, investment decisions, technological innovations, credit relations, product renewal, and so on, should indeed be based on rational bookkeeping and price/cost calculations.

The first contradiction in this commoditization process is that farmers increasingly work with dual calculation principles. Owner-occupied capital and labor, both provided by the family, are not subject to the same appreciation as borrowed capital, hired labor and purchased market input. High indebtedness and relatively low off-farm prices can, in fact, only be compensated by accepting a below market level remuneration for labor and owner-occupied capital. The survival of family farms under present

economic conditions depends, indeed, on the reproduction of dual calculation principles, implying that internal social relations can only be commoditized to a limited extent.

The second contradiction is of more relevance for the subject that concerns me here. Current demands of modern agriculture on scale and capital intensity make it practically impossible to break the unity of the farm, or to withdraw substantial amounts of capital from it without seriously undermining its viability. This means that multiple succession at the transition of generations, and equality upon inheritance have become practically inconceivable. As a consequence, farm succession and inheritance—in a thoroughly commoditized economy—increasingly depend on the mobilization of family support. The successor thus finds himself in the paradoxical position of relying on family values in achieving the position of a 'modern entrepreneur.'

The reality is, however, more complex. While reliance on family commitment is becoming more important, cultural developments in society tend to ascribe individuals more independence *vis-à-vis* family bonds and commitments. Processes of emancipation and individualization undermine subjection to the gender- and generation biased patriarchal family. Individual interests and achievements have priority over subjection to family projects and assigned statuses. A high free market price of land and the knowledge that the state supports claims for equality in inheritance are conditions that, in combination with these new family orientations, may easily result in nonsuccessor children refusing to cooperate in the transfer of the farm.

Family systems that traditionally endow the children equally with property or money face entirely different problems than those with an ideology of inequality. The former have no cultural tradition to legitimate the unequal treatment of children or to counter individualizing tendencies from society. The latter, however, has a the cultural repertoire with possibilities for mobilizing the necessary support for maintaining farm viability and countering changed in values. Whereas systems of equality are under economic pressure, wider social and cultural developments support them. Social and cultural developments, together with the huge sums involved in farm transfers, threaten systems with a favored heir.

In the foregoing I have elaborated upon general trends in society, agriculture and the family in terms of contradictions. The perception of a contradiction obviously depends on the chosen perspective. What may seem to be a contradiction from one viewpoint may be entirely accepted and unquestioned from another. A purely legal standpoint makes numer-

ous disparities between practice and the law may be made visible. Adopting the approach of the modernization theory, the combination of 'modern' and 'traditional' cultural practices represents a temporary cultural lag, and also reveals contradictions. The meaning attributed to concepts such as equality and inequality, or family and economy may be completely different from an actor's perspective.

It may be that a society is so self-contained and homogeneous that deviations from conventional forms of behavior are beyond the imagination. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* seems to refer to such a situation. My argument is, however, that social and cultural differentiation and change emanating from wider economic and social changes incite people to define their cultural identity. People confront the reality of cultural and practical plurality through their awareness of alternative lifestyles and a variety of possible forms of behavior. This may result in the development of new personal identities; it may also result in conformity due to lack of power or possibilities of complying with deviancy. It does not mean, however, that people necessarily change their ideas about what is important and how things should be done; they do however put their own preoccupations into perspective and enrich their ideology with new, defensive and offensive, arguments. Attitudes to alternative ideas and practices may be respectful, indifferent, intolerant or rejecting, but their reality cannot be denied and it is this which becomes firmly entrenched in any ideology.

It is my contention that farmers in the eastern Netherlands have long been aware of alternative ways of practically dealing with property. They knew that it was technically and economically possible to divide farms into much smaller units. The creation of numerous smallholders, especially during the first half of the twentieth century, was the manifest evidence. Population pressure, exemplified by a large rural population eager to set up independent farms, constantly challenged the idea of maintaining the integrity of the patrimony. However, the creation of small farms was not the result of changing patrimonial attitudes. The new settlers did not represent a cultural alternative. It is, therefore, doubtful whether farmers effectively conceptualized the defence of the patrimony in terms of consciously rejecting 'equality.' I am inclined to think that patrimonial strategies were so deeply entrenched in local culture that any deviant behavior based on contrasting ideological principles was out of the question. Unlike the recent past, farmers were probably unable to discuss behavior in terms of choice and rejection; they simply reproduced a pattern that belonged to an uncontested cultural domain. If farmers divided

their patrimony they did this for practical reasons, not because they were challenged by children who claimed 'fair' treatment. That the inheritance custom was far from discursive reflection is, for instance, demonstrated by Anrooy (1917), who hoped to discuss it with farmers, but failed to get any 'sensible' reply. She would almost certainly have been confronted by farmers who did not really understand what she was getting at. Farmers were conscious of alternative practices, but they did not perceive these as representing alternative ways of thinking about patrimonial strategies.

The exodus from agriculture, the partial collapse of a status system based on land and the huge discrepancy between family inspired ideas of land and its market value constituted a real threat in terms of patrimonial dispersal after the second World War. Never before had farmers been confronted by such an explicit contrast between family transactions and transactions on the land market. Rural society was, furthermore radically transformed. Farming had become a minority activity and wage labor was a reality for the majority of the population. At the same time, the practical possibilities of setting up more than one son in farming, or dividing the patrimony equally, were seriously inhibited by agricultural conditions. Thus, just as people were becoming conscious of the patrimony as a commodity and of family models deprived of a symbolic estate, economic constraints on farm viability demanded a traditional patrimonial outlook on succession and inheritance. While alternatives for use of farm assets became limited by new concepts of economic viability, cultural alternatives became visible and part of people's consciousness. While adaption agricultural structure to new technological and economic possibilities was restricted by uncontested cultural values in the past, economic constraints made a more differentiated cultural attitude among farmers toward the family patrimony impossible during the postwar period. This is not to say—as I have shown throughout this chapter—that economic constraints determined patrimonial attitudes.

The relationship between patrimonial strategies and maintaining a viable farm thus changed radically after World War II. It had become clear that dividing up a patrimony, whether in kind or by applying monetary values, would certainly result in destroying the material basis of farming. That in turn would provoke the collapse of a kinship system based on attachment to a visible and symbolic estate, representing a core line of descent. Such consequences were not deplored by families with diminishing commitment to farming and growing attachment to a family system based on the narrowly defined kindred. Employment outside agriculture has been widely available during the postwar period, and being

endowed with some capital to set up a livelihood was greatly welcomed. In that respect, alternative family ideologies are not necessarily impeded by developments in agriculture. More problematic are situations where family values are either conflictive or changing in a way that prevents father and son from realizing their ultimate aim of continuing a viable farm. The reproduction of a viable farm and a family system based on residential continuity were obviously best guaranteed when commitment to farming was combined with a high level of loyalty to patrimonial stability and family solidarity.

Conclusion

ARM FAMILIES EXPRESS cultural ideas in the intergenerational transfer of farm resources. Specific cultural meanings ascribed to the relation between land, farming and the family color farm families' goals and strategies concerned with reproducing property relations and continuing the farm enterprise. These meanings form an integral part of ideas about kinship and indirectly reflect changing social, cultural and economic circumstances. I have defended these observations theoretically and empirically by exposing them to several types of discourse.

Farm families' interests in land go far beyond the material object itself. Land is connected with status, power, material interests and emotions. Land is not in itself the main objective in the constitution of property relations. People are interested in land because it allows them to pursue a large variety of purposes; it is the material framework for establishing social relations and expressing identities. Land can therefore not be disconnected from the meaning people attach to it. The meanings with which people imbue land are not purely a matter of individual judgment. If, for instance, land becomes primarily an object of speculation and profit making, it may easily lose its role as a vehicle for expressing kinship bonds. Similarly, land may be replaced by other resources embodying distinction and political power. Economic and social circumstances undermine the symbolic value of land in both cases, consequently depriving it of its significance for achieving specific goals. If land is treated as symbolic capital and used strategically to attain specific goals embedded

in the wider economic, social, cultural and legal context, this may therefore lead to contrasting images within farm families and between farm families' and other value systems.

Land is, of course, essential for employing family labor and guaranteeing an income. No farmer would deny that land and farm capital are economically indispensable. Farmers are mainly occupied, in their daily lives, with maintaining a viable economic unit to secure a family income. A viable farm is thus a precondition for the livelihood of a farmer. Why farmers should strive for enterprise viability, preserving the link with the land and occupational continuity, cannot be fully explained by reference to purely economic motives, however. Income and employment strategies are aimed at establishing the preconditions for realizing what Gasson (1973) calls expressive, social or intrinsic goals (see also Højrup 1983). Goals farmers wish to accomplish are not neutral; they are influenced by value orientations, which also determine to a large extent the choice of strategies and the mobilization of available resources.

A central issue in sociological studies of farmers' goals and value orientations is understanding decision making as a series of rational actions to achieve specific goals. Gasson (1973) describes this approach as follows: "Since value orientations determine desired ends of behaviour and prescribe norms of socially acceptable means of attaining them, it follows that appreciation of value systems is necessary in order to predict behaviour" (p. 525). Rural sociology has a long tradition in studying the impact of different value systems on farmers' goals and decision making. They have long rejected the Weberian model of the profit-oriented farmer, emphasizing simultaneous and different value orientations from Zimmerman's (1946) typology of dominant value traits, to Newby's (1979) types of market orientation, Mooney's (1988) forms of rationality, and Barlett's (1993) management styles. Despite numerous tracts emphasizing the persistence of heterogeneity, many studies still seem to nurse an implicit belief in the ultimate triumph of one type of rational economic behavior.

This book has tried to escape from the idea that 'global' or dominant cultural principles gradually infiltrate 'traditional' value systems. Such a dichotomizing approach tacitly characterizes 'tradition' as static and disintegrating, while the 'modern' is dynamic and unfolding. Analyzing family farming in developed economies provides an excellent opportunity for revealing how the local and the specific interact in a complex way with the global and the universal. Farmers who are skilled entrepreneurs and fully integrated in commodity circuits, partly rely on resources that can only

be mobilized through an appeal to family solidarity. Such fluid integration of apparently different value systems only makes sense if operating a farm business is conceived as a means of supporting highly valued cultural goals. The compatibility of 'different' value systems is proven by the fact that the family survives as a source of motivation and legitimization in capitalist production.

Chapter One puts this phenomenon in the context of political economy and modernization discourses on family and economy. The assumption that the logic of family farming is either imposed by capitalist constraints, or becoming irrelevant, was there shown to be unfounded by empirical evidence, and theoretically inadequate. I have argued that farm families tacitly exploit capitalist relations to be able to realize and express vital human values. The family is a resource and an objective, providing an unusual capacity for modern farming. The family may, however, also be the source of rejecting commodity relations, or even of enterprise collapse (see Verdon 1987). If we accept that farm families have different ideas about the connection between family farm and land, then it is obvious that the impact of the family on farming is not universally the same. My argument is therefore that it is too simple to attribute the decimation in the number of farms since World War II to purely economic reasons. The collapse or absence of family systems able to provide the necessary cultural capital for integration into the modern capitalist world are equally important.

My discussion of family farming led me to argue that kinship should be seen neither as determined by other cultural spheres, nor as an autonomous category. Kinship culture derives its originality not from universal cultural principles, but from the fact that it reflects upon practical arrangements between kin under specific cultural and historic circumstances. No other type of bonding is capable of embodying the same feelings of involvement. People's reflection upon practical kin relationships combines the uniqueness of kin relationships and the fields of activity that they encompass. These fields of activity reside in the reproduction of the labor process for farm families. Kin relationships are mobilized for the provision of labor, property, and the distribution of income. Reproducing kin relationships is as essential as strategies involving relations with markets and technology since they provide the cultural and social resources for operating the farm, and this implies considerable ingenuity with cultural meanings and contradictions.

Compatibility between the instrumental use of kinship and the goals farm families wish to achieve is an important precondition for the use of

kinship as a resource in material production. The reproduction of kin relationships thus appears in a double sense: as a precondition for material production, and as a goal in itself. If farm families do not find sufficient motivation in maintaining the link with the land as an expression of family continuity and solidarity, they consequently lack the incentive to mobilize the means for making this possible.

Practical kinship constructs are constituted by a process of translating abstract concepts into practical, working models. They are based on perceptions, reflections and forms of knowledge biased by what is thought to be an ideal world and what is thought to be the real world. The structuration of practice thus involves different levels of ideology and reality. The mediation of the real world through abstract kinship constructs, and the confrontation between practical kinship constructs and concrete circumstances are simultaneous processes, characterized by negotiation, conflict, the use of authority and threat of sanctions. Kinship imposes its principles on property or labor relations not as a set autonomous ideas, but as a result of personal and social struggles about values and facts. I have argued that kinship ideology provides flexible principles of social organization. It is also connected with rigidness when it comes to compromising over certain principles. This is the reason why domination and force create a very fragile basis for the reproduction of kin relationships.

This book has provided a general theoretical background for analyzing the role of kinship in family farming, which I have used to examine the intergenerational transfer of farm resources, a critical process affecting all farm families. The endurance of inheritance ideologies, which are an elementary aspect of kinship for farm families, is a problem of central theoretical importance. The modalities of transferring material resources and associated statuses in family and public life have vital implications for farm structure and social structure. It is therefore understandable that agrarian scientists, politicians and other concerned people are interested, albeit from different perspectives, in the complex interrelations between economic, cultural and legal conditions that shape farmers' behavior. To what extent do farmers follow traditional precepts, legal rules or rational economic arguments when deciding about what to do with landed property? If the consequences are harmful for the common interest, should legal or other authoritative action be taken to correct or prevent their behavior?

My analysis of several kinds of discourse on inheritance and succession in the Netherlands shows that observers have been puzzled by the conti-

nuity of inheritance patterns since the late nineteenth century. Despite legal changes and rapidly transforming social and economic circumstances, farmers remained attached to the same principles, although these allowed some practical flexibility. The people writing about farm inheritance were, however, either committed to a liberal notion of equity, or inspired by specific political or ideological ideas on family and farming. The bewilderment among several generations of investigators confronted by the customs of inheritance in the eastern Netherlands arose not so much from what they saw, as from what they did not see. They expected to find a society disintegrating under the impact of individualization and commercialization. They could imagine the idea that a backward, subsistence oriented, illiterate and subordinate peasantry upheld some old ancestral, 'tribal' customs. But it was astonishing that these peasants ignored the liberating impact of civil law and seemed to be untouched by the individualizing effect of markets and commodities. Research was less directed at understanding inheritance customs in their own right, than fitting them into a modernization perspective, and indeed the researcher's own cultural background.

Recent contributions to the study of inheritance of landed property among European peasants are hardly concerned with land as a means of production. Although land was a vital resource for surviving in the peasant society, anthropologists and historians implicitly assume that strategies of constituting viable farms followed rather than determined the devolution of land. Authors such as Goody, Bourdieu and Augustins emphasize the significance of property relations for the reproduction of social status and the kinship system. Access to land was channelled by class and kinship concepts such as equality, inequality, honor, gender and hierarchy. The struggle for land was based on defending social identities.

Inheritance patterns were fundamental to the reproduction of the social order. In areas with equal division of resources and homogamous marriages, diffuse kinship networks constituted the basic social unit. In areas of imitable inheritance 'houses' were reproduced via a single heir-successor. Among European peasants, the allocation of land supported the reproduction of localized kinship systems. Property relations and access to material resources were manifestations of kinship structures, which in their turn were based on kinship ideology.

Describing these systems as social-cultural complexes is not to assert that they were isolated from economic, technological and ecological circumstances. Dividing up property at each generation obviously posed

problems if population growth and agricultural expansion were unbalanced. Migration, intensification of land use and off-farm employment could alleviate population pressure temporarily, but a high incidence of rural exodus and changing concepts of viable farm size have certainly eroded the social and material basis of the wider kinship system, the cornerstone of which was partible inheritance. Similarly, the system of impartible inheritance depends on the exclusion of nonheirs, and therefore on the availability of local or regional employment possibilities. Lineally organized descent groups are, moreover, threatened by dispersion in times of agricultural intensification.

Apart from these economic challenges, inheritance systems also face internal contradictions and tensions, which intensify when traditional concepts of land and kinship confront other value systems. The modernization of agriculture after the second World War presented farmers with a new challenge. Maintaining a viable farm obliged them to adopt an entrepreneurial management style, which was much more dependent on mobilizing capital and knowledge from external sources than in the past. Concepts such as profitability, efficiency and competitiveness filtered through into farming to such an extent that it seems that the new constraints of farm reproduction completely dominate farmers' goals and strategies.

The modernization process is, however, characterized by contradictory effects. On the one hand, it incites market-oriented strategies and associated models of calculation; on the other hand, farmers largely rely on family labor and family-owned capital. Farm reproduction thus requires a combined strategy of finding sufficient family support for gaining access to material resources that can be profitably exploited in commercial production. This implies that farm succession depends on successfully mobilizing internal concepts of family and value, constituting the farm family's cultural capital. I have shown that although this is necessary to be able to comply with standards of economic efficiency, farmers are unable to release these resources by appealing to economic values alone. Preserving the unity of the farm and keeping farm capital outside the sphere of commodity transactions cannot logically be legitimated by reference to the sphere of commodities.

This contradiction between economic rationality and family logic is not necessarily felt as such by farm families. If family goals and motivations are shared by their members, the benefits and sacrifices of intergenerational transactions are perceived from a moral point of view. Notions of value are colored by particularistic ideas and embedded in specific re-

lationships. Conflicts over the intergenerational reproduction of the farm therefore occur when members of a farm family have different ideas about the virtues of preserving the farm and keeping the land in the family. Such differences may have a variety of reasons. Limiting myself to cases where a potential successor is available, two sources of conflict may inhibit his chances of taking over the farm. One source of conflict is difference of opinion about the viability of the farm, the other is diverging ideas about the role of the family in supporting the successor. The essential issue in both types of conflict is whether the successor and the retiring parents are capable of mobilizing sufficient family support. The cultural basis of such support is uncontested in the first case; the only doubts nonsuccessor children may have is whether it is worthwhile investing solidarity in safeguarding an enterprise that they consider too weak to survive. The cultural basis for cooperation among family members is itself weakened in the second sort of conflict. Nonsuccessor children may refuse support because they do not identify with the family and enterprise projects set up by their brother and parents.

Conflicts over the character of family transactions may be associated with a second set of contradictions in the modernization process. Whereas economic constraints urge farmers to rely on family commitment, the cultural basis of family commitment opposes such general cultural trends as individualization and emancipation. Self-interest, individual achievement and disengagement from discipline by family and kinship networks may impel individual family members to disregard the symbolic meaning of land and farming. They do not rely on locally defined cultural identities and social networks and, consequently, lose all motivation to sacrifice themselves for something they do not value.

The dissociation between the system of land, family and farming, and the associated collapse of traditional inheritance ethics does not necessarily result from internal family conflicts. Many families severed their link with the land and farming long ago, and they have consequently lost the capacity to structure family ties through the regulation of access to resources. Most of these families were deprived of land because they were unable to continue farming for purely economic reasons. The collapse of a landed patrimony-based family system and identity was, in these cases, not the cause of economic failure, but its consequence. Many families left farming for neither economic reasons, nor internal disagreements. Farming lost its attraction, and land its symbolic meaning, without creating tension among family members.

My theoretical reflections about the contradictory effects of modernization are particularly pertinent to farm families whose cultural capital is essential for farm reproduction. The empirical research I conducted in the eastern Netherlands focused on farm families owning farms with economic potential, providing that the commoditization of intergenerational transactions is avoided. I discovered the basic reproductive patterns through detailed study of the fates of land and farm at generational transition, which I then placed in the context of kinship culture and the changing economic, demographic and regional conditions. This research clearly shows that cultural attitudes toward the relation between land, family and farming have not changed significantly during successive phases of agricultural development. Preserving the unity between the farm, the land and the descent line was the essential principle guiding the transmission of land and farm management.

My analysis of the interface between cultural factors and economic conditions draws attention to a broad field of still unexplored questions. By way of illustrating this capacity to generate problems for future research, I will briefly discuss some aspects of current forms of farm reproduction in the European Community. I draw upon the results of a study by Philippe Perrier-Cornet, published in 1991 (see also Blanc and Perrier-Cornet 1992, 1993). The main conclusion of this publication is that inheritance and succession reveal both the extreme degree of social heredity of farming, and an almost complete dependence on the noncommoditized sphere of family relations for access to resources. The authors furthermore discovered a direct link between capital intensive, entrepreneurial farming on the one hand and dependence on family solidarity on the other.

Academic responses to these research findings have been limited to date. This is astonishing insofar as the evidence splinters the image of the independent entrepreneur, rendering him instead beholden to relatives for constituting a farm. The evidence is furthermore at odds with the idea that modern agriculture is based on rational, market-oriented calculation and that it has freed itself from family influences. More remarkable than these empirical results is the interpretation given by the authors of the report. I will discuss these in some detail to illustrate the complexity of the subject matter that constitutes the core of this book.

In their *Rapport de Synthèse* Perrier-Cornet et al. (1991) summarize the importance of the family in the transmission of farms in European countries. Farm families control access to land, either as owner occupiers or

as hereditary tenants, and they transmit their land through inheritance or via endowments, thus reproducing a semiclosed agricultural status system. Furthermore, the authors assert that there is an increasing tendency among farmers to transfer the farm integrally to the next generation.

This homogeneity in the social relations encompassing the replacement of generations is, according to these authors, more apparent than real. Although the intergenerational transfer of resources results everywhere in the reproduction of the family form of production, underlying family processes and practices differ substantially. This variance is related to several factors. At the national level, farmers are confronted with a diversity of legal, fiscal and other state-induced constraints and possibilities. Nor is the significance of farming the same everywhere. In some regions agricultural employment is vital for the rural population, while in others it only constitutes a minor portion of total employment. The level of modernization and professionalization varies equally from region to region. In addition, farmers are embedded in local cultures where normative principles related to kinship, residence and family formation guide the transfer of land.

Table 1: Classification of types of farm reproduction by inheritance and succession

Inheritance or endowment (transfer of property rights or their monetary value)	Succession (transfer of use rights)	
	Single succession	Multiple succession
equality	I. Preservation of the unity of the farm. Property is transferred to one heir; the other heirs receive monetary compensation. France, Denmark, Belgium.	II. Farm is dispersed into several units. Property is divided among heirs. Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal.
Inequality	III. Preservation of the unity of the farm. Property is transferred to one heir; the other heirs get little or no monetary compensation. U.K., Ireland, Netherlands, Germany.	

This diversity of national and regional contexts coincides with a variety of family practices (Blanc and Perrier-Cornet 1993). These may be ordered according to whether heirs are treated equally upon inheritance, and whether the unity of the farm is preserved. The inheritance may either involve land, or its monetary value. A classification of existing practices in Europe based on these variables, is presented in Table 1.

Blanc and Perrier-Cornet (1992, *passim*) refer to the principles of equality and maintaining the unity of the farm as 'norms,' which often have ancient roots in peasant communities. They also assert that such normative principles are not static. In interpreting practice Blanc and Perrier-Cornet implicitly touch upon the classic relationship between economic constraints (external pressure on farm viability), practice (how farm families reproduce the family farm) and normative principles (which values are mobilized for legitimating practice). Their theoretical assessment of current practices can be partially deduced from their description of types of inheritance and succession, although it raises more questions than it answers.

Economic pressure and financial problems oblige farm families in the northern countries of the European Community to preserve the unity of the farm and to reduce claims from nonsuccessor coheirs (Type III). Capital intensive farming in these countries exerts significant pressure toward keeping resources together and minimizing loss of capital at farm succession and inheritance. Nonsuccessors seem to relinquish high compensatory sums and willingly sacrifice themselves for the sake of farm continuity. This model suggests that the more agriculture becomes modernized, and the more farmers conceptualize their land as an economic resource, the more they rely on family commitment.

This model does, however, leave a number of unanswered questions. How are these practices related to economic circumstances and family values? Did family commitment, that is, the norm that nonsuccessor children should forego their claims on the farm, exist before modernization, and was it therefore an enabling cultural factor in the transformation of farming? Or is the cultural background irrelevant, with farm families simply adapting their behavior to the requirements of farm development? Finally, this model may be based on fundamental changes in family ideology, for instance from equality to inequality.

If the first hypothesis is correct, economic constraints cannot be understood as the factor determining practice. On the contrary, these are perceived as a challenge and a unique opportunity for modernizing the

farm. Existing family solidarity, based on indigenous cultural norms, proves useful for maximizing owner-occupied capital and maintaining the unity of the farm. In other words, internal relations can be defined in noncommodity terms by mobilizing prevailing cultural resources, enabling farmers to deepen commodity relations with external capitals and to become professional entrepreneurs.

The other two hypotheses suggest that economic constraints force farm families to define intrafamily relations in accordance with economic needs. In both cases, external economic parameters mechanically determine family commitment. They assume that family values are either irrelevant to practice, or are transformed by economic necessity to legitimize practice. This, of course, immediately poses the question of how practice would be legitimized if not on a cultural basis. How do farmers and successors raise support from other family members? On what sort of ideological principles is family commitment based? It also raises the question of how economic factors can transform fundamental family values.

Blanc and Perrier-Cornet are not explicit about their assumptions, but they suggest that the principle of equality varies in accordance with economic constraints. Thus, having already posited that normative principles guide practice, they then regress to rather a crude form of economic determinism.

The principle of equality is firmly entrenched in France, Denmark and Belgium, and is reflected in the fact that nonsuccessor children receive equal, or nearly equal, monetary compensation for leaving the land in the hands of the successor (Type I). This means a relatively high level of indebtedness for the successor and, consequently, lower family income. Access to possible bank loans for enlarging or intensifying the farm is also restricted.

It is again unclear whether this practice emanates from a deeply rooted cultural notion of equality, or reveals a recent change in family values. Economic pressures on farm modernization certainly seem to work out in ways that differ from the previously mentioned model. The suggestion is that the norm of equality is a remnant of traditional family ideology, and that the transfer of economic resources is still subject to patrimonial principles. The farm enterprise has not yet been completely emancipated from domination by family logic. Although the unity of the farm is no longer challenged, coheirs still tend to project traditional kinship preoccupations on the division of the monetary value.

The authors do not explore the hypothesis that attitudes toward land, the farm and the family may in fact be of recent origin, and not reflect a traditional family ideology. It is possible that practice is grounded in a modern form of individualism, which rejects attachment to family projects and goals and seeks individual status achievement. In this form, family behavior would reflect new patrimonial strategies that lack any reference to collective economic or social projects.

The third type of succession and inheritance is predominant in Mediterranean countries (Type II). Here the farm is susceptible to division upon inheritance, resulting in fragmentation. All heirs receive equal portions and, if siblings exchange land, the market price serves as the standard. In the *Rapport de synthèse* this is correlated with scarcely developed professional agriculture. Land is not primarily conceptualized as an asset for a modern commercial enterprise, but rather as a traditional family patrimony. Access to equal portions of land reflects local economic conditions where agriculture is poorly developed. Securing a subsistence basis, together with off-farm jobs, characterize livelihood strategies.

This type is considered most traditional in terms of 'development,' and it is predicted that with the commercialization of farming, farm succession will respect the integrity of the farm and the position of the successor. Thus, the authors see in this another example of how economic conditions determine practice. They make no allusion to how ancient these practices might be nor to their cultural centrality in Mediterranean countries. If individual title to property is not a modern phenomenon, associated with an industrial frame of reference, then it is quite possible that local economic conditions correlate inversely with traditional customs in these European areas.

This description of types of succession and inheritance assumes that economic constraints determine practice, and that the underlying normative principles are either economically determined, or irrelevant. The prediction, consequently, is that with agriculture becoming increasingly subject to market forces and international competition, the transmission of the farm in Europe will gradually evolve toward only one model, characterized by single succession and inequality between heirs.

I do share the conclusion that the context of modern agriculture compels farmers to preserve the unity of the farm, to enlarge it if possible, and to achieve the best possible financial position at succession. I also agree that strategies applied to reach these goals are based on mobilizing

cultural capital from the kinship sphere. I do not, however, accept that this cultural capital is always readily available when it is functional for economic purposes. This not only presupposes the uncontested interest of farm family members in the farm, but also disregards the theoretical status and wider context of the cultural sphere.

Specific family and kinship values mediate farm succession and inheritance, and it is unlikely that these are invariably in the interests of farm continuity. The modernization of agriculture is only possible if farmers can rely on sufficient commitment in the kinship sphere. Since this commitment depends upon culturally defined notions of the relationship between patrimony and market, on the one hand, and kinship and the individual on the other, a wide range of attitudes toward farm continuity can be expected. Some attitudes are likely to provide a basis for withstanding economic pressure, whilst others involve different priorities, resulting in a failure to reproduce the farm.

This obviously means that the selective force of the market only partly determines the viability of farms. The outcome of family negotiations is equally important. The cultural idiom of these family negotiations should form the core of any research. Such research should explore the degrees of differentiation among farm families in Europe to keeping a farm alive.

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Samenvatting

IN ONTWIKKELDE MARKTECONOMIEËN wordt de landbouw hoofdzakelijk beoefend op relatief kleine gezinsbedrijven. Arbeids- en bezitsverhoudingen berusten op verwantschaps- en gezinsbanden. De externe produktieverhoudingen, daarentegen, worden gekenmerkt door nauwe bindingen met markten. Deze tegenstelling vormt het uitgangspunt van een studie, die gericht is op de vraag wat de consequenties hiervan zijn voor het handelen en denken van boerenfamilies. Deze thematiek wordt vanuit een aantal theoretische en empirische invalshoeken belicht.

Op de eerste plaats wordt een theoretische verhandeling gewijd aan de verhouding tussen verwantschap en economie. Dit mondert uit in een pleidooi om het gezinsbedrijf te beschouwen als een sociaal-cultureel systeem, waarbinnen actoren vanuit een specifieke culturele achtergrond vorm geven aan hun sociale verhoudingen en handelen. De politiek-economische context is slechts van invloed in combinatie met culturele factoren. Het karakter van op verwantschap gebaseerde produktieverhoudingen wordt voorts geanalyseerd via vereringspatronen. Transacties binnen de groep van verwanten worden hoofdzakelijk gestructureerd door het lokale statussysteem en verwantschapsopvattingen. Centraal staat de vraag in hoeverre deze traditionele noties veranderen onder druk van commercialisering en modernisering.

Aan het eind van de negentiende eeuw werd in Nederland veel aandacht besteed aan de vererving van grondbezit. Men verwachtte destijds dat het erfrecht op den duur tot de ondergang van de boerenstand zou

leiden. Voor het eerst werd toen gewezen op de weerbarstigheid van lokale gewoonten, die ondanks een uniforme wetgeving en toenemende commercialisering niet van wijken wisten. Vooral de lokale gewoonten in het Oosten van Nederland stonden in de belangstelling. Na de Tweede Wereldoorlog veranderde de aard van het debat rondom de generatiewisseling. Meer aandacht ging uit naar de economische levensvatbaarheid, terwijl de rol van familie en verwantschapsrelaties uit het oog werd verloren. Dit gegeven wordt onderzocht aan de hand van een analyse van het politieke en sociologische discours over het gezinsbedrijf.

Het laatste gedeelte van dit proefschrift, bevat een analyse van vereringspatronen in een Twentse boerengemeenschap. Aan de hand van archiefbronnen en veldwerk wordt getracht de verandering over een lange tijdsduur in kaart te brengen. Er blijkt sprake te zijn van een hoge mate van continuïteit. De grondprincipes van de vererving van het boerenbedrijf verschilden aan het eind van de jaren tachtig maar weinig van die in het midden van de negentiende eeuw. Dit blijkt onder andere uit het feit dat de ongedeelde hoeve nog steeds centraal staat. De vraag in hoeverre deze gang van zaken door de niet-opvolgende kinderen bezwaarlijk wordt gevonden, leidt tot een verhandeling over het contextuele karakter van familie-transacties. Gelijkheid en ongelijkheid kunnen niet begrepen worden met gangbare economische begrippen, maar moeten gekoppeld worden aan een lokaal waarden-systeem, waarin materiële- en niet materiële zaken op een ingenieuze wijze tegen elkaar worden afgewogen.

Curriculum Vitae

Hendrik Jan de Haan werd geboren in het Zuid-Hollandse dorp Bleskensgraaf, in 1951. Na het behalen van zijn MULO en HBS diploma studeerde hij culturele antropologie; eerst in Utrecht, daarna aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam. Voordat hij in 1981 werd aangesteld als Universitair Docent bij de Vakgroep Sociologie van de Landbouwuniversiteit in Wageningen, werkte hij enige jaren als wetenschappelijk bibliothecaris bij het ASC, en als Assistent bij de Vakgroep Sociaal-Economische Geschiedenis van de Universiteit van Amsterdam. Sinds 1991 is hij hoofdredacteur van het tijdschrift *Sociologia Ruralis* – The Journal of the European Society for Rural Sociology.