

# 6 Feeding the hungry

## Poor relief and famine in northwestern Europe, 1500–1700

*Jessica Dijkman*

### 1. Introduction

Providing food to the needy – or the means to obtain it – is one of the most common reactions when famine threatens. Even today impending famine gives rise to relief operations organized by governmental or international organizations that employ private donations and public funds to purchase, transport and distribute basic food products in order to relieve the victims. Food aid has historical roots in many parts of the world, although the way in which it was organized varied. In Qing China, for instance, relief relied on a system of state-controlled granaries (Will and Wong 1991; see also Chapters 2 and 12 in this volume), whereas in pre-colonial India private charity dominated (see Chapter 9 in this volume). In premodern northwestern Europe yet another arrangement prevailed. Here a large part of the burden was shouldered by local governments or poor relief institutions organized on the level of the parish, village or town. These institutions frequently had religious roots and, in some cases, had preserved an ecclesiastical connection, but they operated as civic bodies, supervised by the local authorities and managed by laymen. In the wider framework of this volume they can be seen as hybrid constructions that bridged the gap between “state” and “civil society”. This chapter focuses on the contribution of these locally organized poor relief systems to alleviating the consequences of food shortages.

Despite their common features, the exact characteristics of poor relief systems varied significantly between regions. Existing studies of famines and food crises in premodern Europe suggest that well-organized poor relief systems materially contributed to the ability of societies to cope with food shortages.<sup>1</sup> Yet research into the factors that made one poor relief system better able to combat famine than the other is still in an explorative stage. Beneficial effects have been attributed to the Old English Poor Law that provided security by raising the food entitlements of the poor, not just in urban but also in rural parishes (Smith 2011; Healey 2019). However, the comparison of English and continental poor relief implied in these studies is phrased in very general terms: neither the wide diversity of continental systems, nor the changes they experienced over time is fully acknowledged. Comparisons between continental regions are usually more detailed but as a consequence have other weaknesses: they tend to zoom in on small regions or

individual crises (Vanhaute and Lambrecht 2011; Van Onacker and Masure 2015; Curtis and Dijkman 2019).

This chapter steers a middle ground by comparing the contribution of poor relief to the alleviation of famines and food crises between 1500 and 1700 in three regions around the North Sea: southeastern England, northwestern France and the northwestern Low Countries. The choice for these three regions has been determined by the fact that they are not only well-documented and relatively homogeneous, but were also, in the context of the respective countries in which they were situated, all three fairly affluent and had relatively elaborate poor relief systems (Kent and King 2003; Van Bavel and Rijpma 2016; Hufton 1974: 175–176). This neutralizes at least some of the possible causes of variation, thus allowing for a focus on the impact of the systemic characteristics of poor relief. The time frame has been selected because in these two centuries the features of the poor relief systems in the three regions were formed. In 1500 differences were not prominent. Everywhere, aid to the poor consisted of almsgiving by a variety of religious institutions, often unpredictable and indiscriminate. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries a wave of poor relief reforms swept through Europe: attempts were made to restrict relief to the “deserving poor”, concentrate and rationalize relief efforts, and impose supervision by the civic authorities (Jütte 1994: 100–103). In this process regional differences developed, which by 1700 stood out very clearly. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are also the period when two of the three regions (southeastern England and the northwestern Low Countries) managed to conquer famine while the third (northwestern France) continued to face serious problems up until the early eighteenth century (Béaur and Chevet 2017; Curtis et al. 2017; Hoyle 2017).

The systemic characteristics of poor relief organization feature prominently in the literature on the contribution of English poor relief to famine alleviation, where they run parallel to Peter Solar’s positive interpretation of the impact of the English Poor Law on economic development (Solar 1995). A generous and reliable system of allowances provided security to the most vulnerable groups by placing sufficient cash in their hands to raise food entitlements to acceptable levels. Comprehensiveness and uniformity prevented the wandering of hungry masses in search of food, thus limiting the spread of contagious diseases, the main cause of death during famines. Tax-based funding moreover provided the flexibility that was required to cope with peak demand: by the simple expedient of raising the poor rates during periods of crisis, the level of expenditure could be adapted to needs (Healey 2019: 112–113).

As we will see, recent research suggests that the exceptionality of English poor relief may have been overrated. Nevertheless, the elements attributed to the English system – generosity and reliability, comprehensiveness and uniformity, and flexibility – offer a suitable framework for assessing the contribution of poor relief systems to famine mitigation. In this chapter these criteria will therefore be used to compare the poor relief systems in the three regions under study, including their development over time. The analysis is restricted to formal poor relief, defined as relief provided by public authorities or civic bodies authorized by these authorities.

It does include, however, relief systems only called into being in times of crisis for as far as they, too, offered aid specifically targeted at the poor. Not included – except for some occasional references – is informal relief: assistance given by kin or neighbours, patronage relations and other forms of individual donations, and also customary rights such as gleaning. Informal relief was probably important in all three regions, but exactly because of its informal nature it largely remains hidden from the historian's sight.

The chapter discusses the three regions in three separate sections that each start with an overview of the development of poor relief systems in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and then proceed to discuss the contribution of each system to mitigating food crises, and the development of this contribution over time. It is concluded that despite a lack of uniformity the poor relief system of the north-western Low Countries was as instrumental in alleviating famine as parish relief in southeast England, while the ability of poor relief in northwestern France to come to the aid of the hungry was much more limited.

## **2. Southeastern England**

As elsewhere in Europe, poor relief in England experienced important changes in the sixteenth century; and as elsewhere urban authorities were important initiators. Among the innovations they implemented was the establishment, in the second and third quarter of the century, of municipal grain stocks in an increasing number of towns, intended for relief during dearth (Bohstedt 2010: 82). A parallel innovation was the introduction of parish-based poor relief. Although instigated by national statutes, the implementation was left to urban officials and churchwardens (McIntosh 2012: 127–138). In the last quarter of the century an increasing number of parishes introduced, on their own initiative, some form of mandatory rates: taxes payable by the parishioners to cover the costs of poor relief (McIntosh 2012: 252–261).

Up until this point, differences with events on the continent were modest. However, whereas elsewhere in Europe the organization of poor relief remained first and foremost a local matter, funded largely by voluntary charity and revenues from property, in England it was integrated in a wider framework supported by legislation. The Elizabethan Poor Laws, a series of acts with the statutes of 1598 and 1601 as main landmarks, laid the foundations for a secular, national system funded by systematic taxation. The responsibility for administering relief was placed in the hands of the overseers of the poor in every parish, urban and rural alike, with a supervisory role for the justices of the peace in each county. The overseers were to survey the poor, determine their needs for assistance and administer relief, either as weekly pensions or as “casual” payments. To cover the costs, the overseers were to collect poor rates from all households able to pay (Slack 1988: 122–131).

As mentioned in the introduction, research carried out in the last two decades has nuanced English exceptionality. The Elizabeth Poor Laws, to begin with, did not mark as radical a change from pre-existing practices as sometimes believed (McIntosh 2012). At least up until the middle of the seventeenth

century other forms of relief than parish allowances continued to play a vital role. Besides the informal support of family and neighbours and customary rights such as gleaning, this also included “doles”, usually distributed by the churchwardens and funded by donations or testamentary bequests (Hindle 2004: Chs 1 and 2).

In the course of the seventeenth century the number of pensioners dependent on parish relief and the level of the pensions they received did rise markedly (Slack 1988: 176–177). For England as a whole, expenditure on formal relief around 1700 has been estimated at around 1.2 percent of GDP (Van Bavel and Rijpma 2016: 173) and the share of the population relieved at about 3.6 percent (Slack 1990: 30). Nevertheless, according to Steve Hindle “parish pensions were never universal and never intended to be anything other than income supplements even when they were granted” (Hindle 2004: 92). Parish relief was also not as uniform as previously assumed: substantial differences existed that cannot be explained by economic structure alone. Whether these difference were regional or local in nature is debated. In the eighteenth century the welfare regime in the south and east appears to have been much more generous than in the north and west (King 2000); the late eighteenth-century situation actually suggests levels of expenditure in the south and east of twice the national average (Van Bavel and Rijpma 2016: 177). In the seventeenth century, however, local differences may well have been more important than regional ones (Hindle 2004: 282–285).

The question at stake here is how this revised interpretation of the characteristics of English poor relief translates into the ability of the system to respond to peak demand during food crises. In England famines faded out in the first decades of the seventeenth century: first in the south, where parish relief was institutionalized at an early stage, and only then in the north, where the implementation of the Poor Laws took until the 1620s. The chronology clearly suggests a connection (Healey 2019: 112–113). Still, in order to get a better idea of the coping capacity of poor relief institutions we need to look at the concrete responses of these institutions to some of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century food crises.

As we saw, tax-funded parochial poor relief predated the Elizabethan Poor Laws. In London, but also in several other towns in the southeast poor rates – as part of a broader package of funding – were introduced well before 1600. In Norwich, Lynn, Ipswich and Colchester this happened before 1560 (Slack 2000: 367), but especially in the southeast many smaller towns and even villages followed in the last two decades of the sixteenth century. Detailed research has brought to light a total of 135 parishes in the southeast that levied mandatory rates of some kind (McIntosh 2012: 254). Still, it is not clear if the assistance they offered also included a prompt response to food shortages. In Hadleigh (Suffolk), for instance, a for the era unusually elaborate and generous relief system developed in the second part of the sixteenth century. In the last two decades of the century this system included both transfers in cash to people living at home, mostly in the form of casual payments, and the operation of two almshouses and a workhouse. Four to five per percent of households received some form of aid. Funding was partly provided by donations and endowments, but about a quarter of the expenses was covered by poor rates

imposed on the community's well-to-do households (McIntosh 2013: 2–5, 47). A direct relationship between grain price levels and expenditure on poor relief, however, seems to have been absent: while in some dearth years expenses rose markedly, in others they did not (McIntosh 2013: 164–165).

When it came to combating famine, the municipal grain stocks mentioned earlier had an advantage: they were installed for exactly this purpose. The magistrates of London had started making grain purchases during periods of dearth in the late Middle Ages. Some of the provincial capitals followed in the early sixteenth century and by the 1590s public grain stocks were present in many smaller towns as well (Clark 1985: 57–58; Bohstedt 2010: 82–83). Sometimes these stocks were simply released on the urban market to lower or stabilize market prices, but in other cases they were employed for targeted relief. In London, for instance, during the dearth years 1594–1597 around 1,000 quarters of grain per year were sold to the poor at prices below market levels; the purchase had been financed by loans from the city's guilds (Sharp 2016: 218). As emergency facilities, municipal stocks allowed for a flexible response to dearth. The sparse quantitative data available moreover suggest that their contribution to alleviating distress was substantial: the amounts of grain towns purchased in the 1590s were frequently sufficient to feed thousands of people for several weeks (Bohstedt 2010: 83). Geographical coverage moreover improved in the early seventeenth century: the practice of buying grain and selling it to the poor at reduced prices was widespread during the dearths of 1621–1623 and especially 1629–1631, not just in towns but, at least in the south and east of the country, also in many rural parishes (Leonard 1900: 187–191; Bohstedt 2010: 84).

After the 1630s municipal grain stocks disappeared. In Norwich, for instance, the urban authorities allowed the stock to run down after the dearth of the 1640s; twenty years later the building in which it had been stored was sold (Slack 1988: 147). It is tempting to think that municipal stocks, as a more primitive form of relief, were superfluous once a sufficiently generous system of parish relief was in place. However, the fact that the abandonment of grain stocks was a general phenomenon that did not mirror variations in the liberality of parish relief points in another direction. Rising agricultural productivity, improved market integration and a slow-down of population growth reduced scarcity-related problems – at least temporarily, for they returned in the eighteenth century. Moreover, the growing political influence of the English gentry gave rise to policies that prioritized the interests of producers over those of consumers (Bohstedt 2010: 91–94).

The disappearance of municipal stocks did not put an end to all forms of aid in kind. Among the doles that survived the secularization of poor relief were the so-called “bread charities”: regular distributions of bread by the churchwardens, usually to dutiful churchgoers, funded by an endowment (Hindle 2004: 149–154). Bread charities were quite common until well into the eighteenth century, but because of their nature they were also inelastic. The flexibility to cope with shocks, then, largely had to be found within the framework of the Poor Law. Grain price movements indicate that such episodes did occur,

the main one being in the second half of the 1690s, even if it was not accompanied by significantly raised mortality (Hoyle 2017).

The most obvious strategy was, of course, to temporarily raise the poor rates to compensate for increased numbers of applicants and higher food prices. In practice, however, this may not have been easy. For a better understanding it is worthwhile to briefly return to events during the dearth years 1629–1631. County authorities in several counties had admonished the overseers in their districts to double the poor rates in order to meet the additional expenses (Hindle 2004: 261–262). However, in the market town of Ware (Hertfordshire), the rates, which normally brought in 80 pounds annually, in 1630 rendered 93 pounds: an increase, but by no means a doubling. The fact that Ware at the time still possessed a public grain stock may have played a part: the overseers were able to sell bread grain to the poor at prices significantly below market levels. Moreover, the addition to the poor rates was outstripped by the revenues from a charitable collection held at Christmas, which brought in 26 pounds (Thomson 2013: 111). In other words: poor relief in Ware, at least at this point in time, did not depend on taxation alone, which may have induced the overseers to only modestly increase the rates.

If attempts to raise income were insufficient, relief had to be focused on those that needed it most – at the expense of others who were not in quite as desperate a situation. During the crisis of 1629–1631 this appears to have been the case in Berkhamsted, also in Hertfordshire. Here the overseers of the poor even called a meeting to ask the parishioners for advice on how to spend the budget available to them. This resulted in a series of measures that affected the distribution of relief: double allowances were granted to the sick and elderly and parents of large families unable to sustain themselves, while in all other cases relief was restricted to casual payments (Hindle 2004: 261–262). Measures like this were increasingly practiced as in the course of the seventeenth century pressure on parish relief increased. This is hardly surprising. In the course of the seventeenth century poor rates rose: temporarily doubling them must have become more difficult when they were already high, or when the tax base had gradually been extended to households at the lower end of the social scale (Slack 1988: 176). Generosity, in other words, may have come at the expense of flexibility. Flexibility must also have been hampered by the expansion of workhouses taking place from the early eighteenth century onward as part of a wider attempt to reduce the costs of relief (Kent and King 2003: 142). Although it might be possible to put workhouse residents on a more parsimonious diet, cutting them off from support altogether was not a viable option.

It can perhaps be argued that flexibility did not disappear, but simply took a different shape. As a result of attempts to control the costs of poor relief, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries expenditure on weekly pensions declined while “casual” payments increased. These casual payments fluctuated considerably from one year to the next. To a significant extent these fluctuations were responses to changes in demand, which could be triggered by a variety of circumstances. Among them, dearth was not the most important one: raised costs for medical care and for burials during outbreaks of contagious diseases had a far greater impact. Still, high food prices did induce overseers to come to the aid of

people who in normal years could fend for themselves but were now unable to make ends meet, by way of small payments in kind or cash. During the crisis of 1740–1741, for instance, the overseers in Ashwell, a large rural parish in Hertfordshire, made many small payments in cash to people in need, despite a policy of confinement of the poor in the local workhouse (Kent and King 2003: 129–132). Whether it sufficed, however, can be doubted: from the crisis of 1740–1741 onward, the occurrence of food riots during years of high prices rose to unprecedented heights (Bohstedt 2010: 105).

Poor relief in southeastern England, in short, combined a number of features that allowed the system to cope with food crises with a considerable degree of success. Even if reliability and uniformity were not as great as previously believed, in an international perspective allowances were nevertheless generous, while a parish-based institutional framework embedded in national legislation and enforced by supervision at the county level provided a significant degree of comprehensiveness. The financial flexibility offered by tax-based funding should perhaps not be overrated: while in theory rates could be raised to meet peaks in expenses during food crises, in practice there were limits to budgetary flexibility, especially towards the end of the century. In fact, it is hard to escape the impression that by then the overseers of the poor were performing an increasingly complicated balancing act: while the partial replacement of pensions by casual payments improved flexibility, it came at the expense of generosity and reliability.

### **3. The northwestern Low Countries**

Reforms of poor relief in the sixteenth-century northwestern Low Countries display several similarities to developments in England, although there were differences in timing. Municipal grain stocks were established earlier than on the other side of the North Sea: the first references date back to the famine of 1437–1438, suggesting that it was this famine that prompted their emergence (Van Schaik 1999: 483–484; Dijkman 2011: 298). Initiatives to replace medieval, fragmented almsgiving by coordinated relief systems under supervision of the local authorities, on the other hand, came relatively late, despite the detailed instructions to this end issued by the Habsburg emperor Charles V as early as 1531. There were exceptions: in the towns in the northern province of Friesland partial reforms took place in the first half of the sixteenth century (Spaans 1997: Ch. 2, esp. 40–54). In Holland, however, they did not materialize until after the Dutch Revolt. In the late 1570s Leiden, an industrial town where poverty was rife, was the first town to initiate reforms (Sluijter and Schmidt 2003: 119–120; Ligtenberg 1908: 228–230). Other towns in Holland only followed at the very end of the sixteenth or in the early seventeenth century (Prak 1998: 56–61).

In the Dutch Republic national and even provincial coordination was virtually absent: neither the Estates General nor the estates of the separate provinces attempted to regulate poor relief. Local organization and regulation dominated. Common medieval roots created common patterns: in many smaller towns and villages in Holland, for instance, the Table of the Holy Ghost, an institution that

despite its religious roots had long since acquired a civic character, remained the main provider of outdoor poor relief (Van Deursen 1974: 104). Soon, however, the religious diversity that characterized the Dutch Republic gave rise to renewed variation. The Dutch Reformed Church established its own relief organizations, the diaconates; some protestant minority churches had diaconates as well. In the first decades of the seventeenth century a variety of local arrangements came into being: in some towns relief institutions collaborated closely, in others they agreed to each take care of their “own” poor (Prak 1998: 61). Although rural poor relief is under-researched, it is clear that similar provisions were available in the countryside: villages had their own relief institutions, frequently also organized along confessional lines (Van Deursen 1974: 102–127; Abels and Wouters 1994: 271–286 Van Deursen 1995: Ch. 13; Dijkman 2017a).

The poor relief system of Dutch Republic, then, was comprehensive despite its lack of uniformity. It was also generous, especially in the northwest. For the middle of the eighteenth century the share of Holland’s GDP spent on welfare provisions has been estimated at 2.9 percent and the percentage of the population relieved at 8.9 percent. Although by 1700 levels were probably somewhat lower, this is in the same order of magnitude as in southeastern England (Van Bavel and Rijpma 2016: 171–173, 176). Local differences were substantial, but as we saw such variations existed in England as well. One deviation from English poor relief was the fact that in the Dutch Republic assistance was usually partly provided in kind. A more fundamental difference, however, was the funding system. Poor relief organizations in the Dutch Republic developed a variety of strategies to finance their operations, but most of these strategies ultimately relied on voluntary charity. Institutions with medieval roots could fall back on the revenues from real estate portfolios built up over the centuries, while the diaconates in particular largely depended on collections, gifts in alms boxes and bequests. Over time, most institutions made substantial investments in capital assets, which began to develop into a major source of income towards the end of the seventeenth century. Some by that time also required municipal subsidies to remain afloat in an era when economic conditions raised the demand for relief. Nevertheless, up until the very end of the eighteenth century the system was sustainable and continued to generate high levels of welfare provision (Van Nederveen Meerkerk and Teeuwen 2014). But was it also able to cope with acute shocks in the shape of food shortages?

In the middle decades of the sixteenth century such shocks were still frequent. They posed serious problems for the medieval poor relief institutions, which had to fall back on the local authorities to make ends meet. Events in Leiden, with its large group of poor fullers, spinners and weavers, illustrate this. In 1545, 1552 and 1556, all years of high food prices, the poor relief organizations were asked by the urban authorities to regularly distribute bread, for free or at reduced prices, to thousands of unemployed and poor inhabitants who could not afford the raised price levels. While the institutions were willing to cooperate, they were unable to pay for the high costs of a large-scale operation like this. The urban authorities had to come to their aid, although they, too, faced financial problems. In the end,



several collections among the well-to-do inhabitants of Leiden were held to finance relief peaks; on one occasion it was even decided to impose a one-off tax to cover the costs (Ligtenberg 1908: 294–297).

As in southeastern England, in sixteenth-century Holland municipal stocks provided a valuable addition to the limited capacities of poor relief institutions, although they seem to have been restricted to towns. In Leiden, it seems, the urban authorities were propelled into making grain purchases exactly because poor relief institutions were unable to cope (Dijkman 2017b: 27–28). Grain purchases also took place in Amsterdam. We are particularly well informed about the famine year 1556–1557, when in that city the quantities purchased were sizable enough to provide the urban poor with bread at submarket prices for many months on end (Friis 1953). Similar purchases were made in other dearth years in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Van Dillen 1915).

In contrast to England, in Holland municipal stocks were long-lived. In the first three quarters of the seventeenth century Amsterdam even maintained a permanent stock, which was regularly refreshed (Dijkman 2017b: 28). This, admittedly, was exceptional: other towns only bought grain when they saw problems coming. Still, they continued to do this until well into the eighteenth century. For the dearth years 1698–1699, for example, grain purchases have been documented for Leiden,<sup>2</sup> Delft,<sup>3</sup> Rotterdam (Hazewinkel 1942: 173) and Alkmaar. In the latter town, the authorities reportedly purchased enough grain to satisfy needs for an entire year (Noordegraaf 1980: 76). In fact, during this particular crisis attempts were made to coordinate urban efforts at the provincial level, although these were only very partially successful. The Amsterdam merchants entrusted with the purchase did manage to buy large quantities of rye and wheat in the Baltic region and even in the Mediterranean, but distributing the grain between the towns and settling the finances turned out to be much more complicated (Van Dillen 1964).

Why municipal stocks continued to exist in Holland while they disappeared in seventeenth-century England is not quite clear. The fact that Holland produced but little grain – most was imported from the Baltic region – may have raised awareness of vulnerability. On the other hand, Amsterdam at the time was the main center of the European grain trade: if anywhere, it was here where reserves were to be found. Perhaps, then, opportunity rather than need was the driving force: at least in Amsterdam private stocks, storing facilities, and money were available. Whatever the reason, municipal grain stocks apparently continued to be seen as a valuable addition to the regular poor relief system in times of dearth, at least in urban contexts.

This brings us to the performance of Holland's complex system of welfare provisioning on the issue of flexibility. This system, based on income from property and voluntary donations, did indeed show signs of inelasticity, although not for every institution to the same degree. The crisis of 1698–1699 again provides a good example. In Delft outdoor relief was provided by a single institution, the Chamber of Charity, in which the civic poor masters and the diaconate of the Dutch Reformed both participated (Van der Vlis 2001: 37–

48). The detailed and well-preserved accounts of the Chamber show that although total expenditure over 1698 and 1699 was 24 percent above the level in the previous two years, the number of recipients had hardly increased, while the amount of bread distributed had in fact been reduced by 7 percent.<sup>4</sup> Apparently the Chamber had prudently decided to restrict admittances and lower allowances to avoid overspending. The situation in Amsterdam was probably not very different. During the crisis, expenditure of the diaconate of the small Lutheran community increased by 26 percent: about the same as in Delft.<sup>5</sup> For the diaconate of the much larger Dutch Reformed Church, however, the increase was, at only 12 percent, considerably less (Wagenaar 1765: 511). Restricting access or cutting allowances was a familiar pattern, and not without reason: contracting debts, and even more so selling property, would damage income in the long run (Prak 1994: 156).

Organizations with larger financial reserves were obviously better able to respond than those that were already in a tight financial position. During the crisis of 1698–1699, expenditure of the diaconate of the Dutch Reformed Church in Berkel en Rodenrijs, a rural community between Delft and Rotterdam, rose slightly in the first year. Although income from collections also rose, this was not enough to sustain unusually high expenses for a long time: expenditure actually decreased in the second year of the crisis. Fortunately for the villagers, Berkel en Rodenrijs also had a civic relief organization, the Table of the Holy Spirit, which was the owner of a substantial and diverse portfolio of landed property and capital assets and seems to have shouldered most of the burden. During the crisis of 1698–1699 expenditure by this institution increased by about 50 percent in comparison to the pre-crisis period. Still, even this was barely enough to cover the high bread prices (Dijkman 2017a).

In short, poor relief in the northwestern Low Countries was at least as generous and reliable as in southeastern England, and despite its lack of uniformity it was also comprehensive: poor relief was available in all communities, urban and rural, although at varying levels. The fact, however, that funding was based on assets and donations instead of taxes did impose restrictions on flexibility. Perhaps, then, the continued existence of municipal grain stocks also has to be viewed in this light: their use for the distribution of bread at submarket prices to the needy during episodes of dearth may have provided some much-needed elasticity to an otherwise rather rigid poor relief system. Nevertheless, we may question whether this sufficed when the economic efflorescence of the Dutch Republic came to an end. In seventeenth-century Holland food riots were highly unusual, but from the crisis of 1698–1699 onward they became more frequent (Dekker 1982: 23).

#### **4. Northwestern France**

In the sixteenth century reform of the medieval poor relief system also took place in France, along similar lines as in the other two regions. In many towns and cities new institutions were established to provide outdoor poor relief: the *bureaux des pauvres* (or *aumônes générales*, or *bureaux de charité*). In Rouen and Paris such

institutions came into being in 1534 and 1544 (Jütte 1994: 119). Nantes and Amiens followed somewhat later, in 1568 and 1573 respectively (Tingle 2006: 537; Deyon 1967: 348). The funding of these institutions depended on a combination of charitable donations and endowments and municipal subsidies in the form of the revenues of some local excises. Direct taxation for the benefit of the poor was limited to crisis periods (Jütte 1994: 119). In addition, towns and cities in northwestern France, just as their counterparts in the other two regions, regularly purchased grain during serious food crises; as in the Low Countries, this practice seems to date back to the fifteenth century (Desportes, Desportes and Salvadori 1990: 12–15; Dijkman 2017b: 24–25).

In the countryside other institutions dominated. Traditionally, part of the tithes collected in each parish, stored in the parish barn, was to be reserved for relief of the poor in times of distress. As an ideal the use of tithes for the subsistence of the rural poor was still alive at the time of the French Revolution (Arnoux 2012: 597–598). However, indications that they were actually used for this purpose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are scarce and indirect. Irregular handouts of food by monasteries, almshouses and small hospitals were a common source or relief (Hickey 1997: 15). In addition, rural communities made use of village funds to provide support to the poor: donations by villagers, small legacies in money or landed property the revenues of which had been assigned to the benefit of the local poor, or income from common lands (Berger 1978: 395; Hufton 1974: 137).

In the course of the seventeenth century changes took place both in urban and in rural settings. The larger towns were the scene of a development, which, although by no means uniquely French, acquired a more prominent position in France than in most other countries: the confinement of the poor in designated institutions, the *hôpitaux généraux*. Although these hospitals were originally intended as benevolent institutions where the poor, having sought access voluntarily, would receive care, religious instruction and professional training, the desire to put an end to vagrancy and begging contributed to the evolution of the hospitals into institutions of enforced confinement, harsh living conditions and strict labour regimes. The first *hôpitaux généraux* were founded in towns in southern France in the early seventeenth century. In the 1630s and 1640s towns in the north started copying the model. Diffusion gained speed towards the end of the century, stimulated by the zeal of catholic reformers and encouraged by the crown (Hickey 1997, 54–55; McHugh 2016: 43–48).

Pressure increased to shut down almshouses and hospitals in small towns and villages and transfer their assets to the urban *hôpitaux généraux*. Admittedly this was a gradual process; small town elites actively opposed this development and were frequently successful in maintaining local facilities. Nevertheless, although in the late seventeenth century many local hospitals were still in operation, their numbers were declining (Hickey 1997: 5–6, 56–59, 130–133). At the same time rural communities, suffering from repeated warfare and fiscal exactions (Hoffman 1996: 201–203), found it difficult to maintain the village funds on which local poor relief relied (Berger 1978: 396, 400).

At the end of the eighteenth century, the levels of welfare provision generated by poor relief systems in northwestern France have been estimated at 0.5 to 1 *livre* per inhabitant: while higher than in the south and central part of the country, this was substantially below the levels generated in southeastern England or the northwestern Low Countries (Van Bavel and Rijpma 2016: 177–179; Lindert 1998: 107; Hufton 1974: 173–176). Although the situation may not have been as bleak a century earlier, it is likely that even then differences in the level of relief existed. It is also clear that French poor relief lacked the comprehensiveness which the systems in the other two regions possessed: in the countryside relief was not widely available. But did this also mean that flexibility required to cope with food crises was absent?

The emergence of the *bureaux des pauvres* was in fact a reaction to the recurrent food crises of the sixteenth century, and these institutions did indeed try to come to the aid of the hungry. During the famine of 1586 the Rouen bureau initially set almost 5,000 men, women and children (about seven per cent of the urban population) to work on the town's fortifications in return for bread rations and a small sum in cash; this number increased even further afterwards. Data for one of the four quarters of the town suggest that at the peak of the famine the *bureau* distributed at least twice as many loaves of bread as at other times (Benedict 1981: 10).

The limited financial means of the bureaux did not allow them to maintain such efforts for lengthy periods of time (Deyon 1967: 349), but in many cases relief was supplemented by grain purchases made by the urban authorities. For the second half of the sixteenth century such purchases have been recorded, for instance, for Rouen (Benedict 1981: 21), Amiens (Pelus 1982) and Nantes (Tingle 2006: 536, 540). Urban grain purchases did not always target only, or even mainly, the poor, but instances where poor relief was at least part of the agenda are not difficult to find. Nantes in the 1580s presents such a case. For several years in a row, the urban authorities used the grain stocks they had formed to support the urban poor; they even took the unusual step to also distribute bread, on a regular basis, in the rural parishes in the surroundings, to discourage people from coming to the town. Relief efforts were financed through loans and taxes levied for this purpose (Tingle 2006: 539–541). Employed in this way, urban grain stocks had the same function as in the northwestern Low Countries: they added some much-needed elasticity to the system as a whole.

While urban grain purchases during crises remained a standard practice in the seventeenth century, in the course of that century some of the elasticity at the other end of the system – the regular poor relief institutions – seems to have disappeared as part of the transition from outdoor to indoor relief. In the 1650s the Parisian *grand bureau des pauvres* had made way for the new *hôpital général*. Originally planned for around 3,000 people, the hospital found itself short of both space and money almost immediately after the opening. Subsequent expansions of the buildings raised the capacity to 8,000 to 10,000 residents at the end of the century (around three per cent of the urban population), and additional sources of income were found in the revenues of new excises

imposed by the city authorities. However, neither physical nor financial capacity offered much room for dealing with acute emergencies. During the famine of 1662–1663, when the city was flooded with starving people from the surrounding countryside, even maintaining the already sober diets of the inmates of the hospital became impossible, let alone accepting more residents. Attempts to remove all “vagabonds” from the city met with only limited success, and special taxes imposed on religious communities and house owners to combat the raised costs of the hospital proved very difficult to collect during the famine (McHugh 2016: 96, 102–105).

The rigidity imposed by the fixed capacity of the Parisian hospital and the tight financial constraints under which it operated, was, however, compensated for by another mechanism, already employed in 1662 but better known from later years. During the famine of 1693–1694 some 30 large ovens were constructed near the royal palace, enough to produce around 100,000 pounds of bread per day, to be sold at sub-market prices: losses were covered by the king, who obviously had much to lose if riots should break out in the city. Improvisation was required to tackle some of the problems that arose. When it turned out that the sale of the bread also attracted customers from the middle ranks of society and that in some cases people even resold the bread at higher prices, the distribution was left to the parish priests, who were expected to be acquainted with the situation of their parishioners. Likewise, when the bakers claimed that the king’s ovens represented unfair competition it was decided to shift from distribution of bread to distribution of cash, for which the king set aside the very considerable sum of 120,000 livres per month (Lachiver 1991: 131–132; Cole 1943: 203–204).

The direct involvement of the crown in Paris was exceptional, but the king did, on several occasions, grant tax remittances to regions hit by calamities and he also financed purchases of grain abroad. In 1698 and 1700, for instance, large-scale purchases of wheat were made in Italy to provision Paris, Rouen and Toulon. The net costs for the crown amounted of almost 400,000 livres (Cole 1943: 202). The royal *intendants*, the chief officials of the crown in the provinces, were in some cases also actively involved in organizing relief. In 1693 the intendant in Amiens, together with the bishop of that town, organized the distribution of 12,000 pounds of bread per week in the generality; the costs were covered by a tax imposed for this purpose (Cole 1943: 203).

In most towns, however, the initiative lay primarily with local institutions and agents. In Rouen more than 21,000 inhabitants (around 30 percent of the total population) were registered as being in need of relief, while the two main hospitals normally provided room for no more than 1,300. Fitting four patients into one bed instead of the usual two obviously only very partially solved the problem. Attempts were made to organize food distributions: these were, at one pound of bread per day per person, meagre enough, but just as in Paris it turned out to be impossible to raise the required sum of 20,000 livres per month. Even including contributions from the archbishop and the chapters, in March 1694 no more could be collected than around 13,000 livres (Lemarchand 2000: 173–175.)

It bears emphasizing that the sums made available for emergency relief in Paris and Rouen, at 0.2 livres per capita per month or more, were nevertheless substantial: for the duration of the crisis this came down to the levels comparable to those generated by the poor relief system of the towns in the Dutch Republic on a regular basis (Curtis and Dijkman 2019: 250). More striking than the volume of relief in those two cities, however, is the variety of local arrangements, illustrated by a survey composed by Marcel Lachiver of the measures taken during the famine of 1693–1694. Arrangements in Tours resembled those in Rouen: here the municipal authorities distributed relief among 9,000 urban poor (around 40 per cent of the urban population). Saumur first assigned all poor to a religious institution or a well-to-do family, who were expected to take care of them. As the situation deteriorated the town shifted to another system: the poor were given tokens that entitled them to collect a loaf of bread at one of the local bakers. In Dreux the bishop of Chartres organized a series of collections. The revenues were distributed in portions of 14 *sou* per week – less than the daily wage of an unskilled labourer – among some 300 poor selected by the parish priest: perhaps six per cent of the urban population (Lachiver 1991: 138, 146–148). The wide variety of arrangements is indicative of the absence of a stable and functioning system, not just nationally, but also locally: much depended on improvisation and experiment.

The famine of the early 1690s also demonstrates that the availability of emergency relief in the countryside was even more erratic than in the towns. Admittedly, some lords or ecclesiastical institutions rose to the occasion. In 1693 the count of Pontchartrain donated almost 4,000 livres for the purpose of offering relief to the people living on his estates near Versailles, more than twice as much as in the previous year. The money was used to buy food, which was used to make soup or distributed directly among the poor (Berger 1978: 401–402). The records of the abbey of Saint-Germer-de-Fly (near Beauvais) claim that in the parish of Saint-Germer nobody had died from hunger because of the relief provided by the monks, comparing the situation favourably to a parish at only a day's distance where 60 per cent of the population had fallen victim to starvation. In the famine year, the abbey spent a total of 6,000 livres on alms; the monks even reduced their own rations to make this possible (Lachiver 1991: 486). The records may well present matters in a favourable light, but it is nevertheless clear that the abbey made an effort to save lives.

Equally clear, however, is that this was by no means self-evident. In many places in the countryside, possibly in the majority of them, little or no relief was forthcoming. Many small hospitals and almshouses had by this time disappeared, and many village funds had been depleted. The migration of large numbers of destitute people from the countryside to the towns during food crises speaks for itself. In the second half of the seventeenth century attempts were made to stimulate the establishment of *bureaux des pauvres* in the countryside, but in the absence of a structure for the governance of the bureaux their creation and continuance largely depended on the wealth, generosity and organizational talents of individuals. Few rural bureaux came into existence, and fewer still survived for a substantial period of time (Hufton 1974: 163–166).

All in all, a lack of generosity was perhaps not the main problem of French relief systems: even in the late seventeenth century aid efforts could be quite substantial. The flexibility of poor relief institutions was limited, not only because of financial constraints but in the seventeenth century also because of the focus on indoor relief by institutions with limited available space. Still, in large towns interventions of the urban authorities or, in the case of Paris, of the crown, provided at least a partial solution. On the issue of coverage, however, problems were serious. Relief was spotty, to say the least, especially in the countryside, and became even more erratic towards the end of the seventeenth century. Much – too much – depended on improvisation and on the actions of individuals.

## **5. Conclusions**

The aim of this chapter was to compare the contribution to famine alleviation of the poor relief systems of southeastern England, the northwestern Low Countries and northwestern France: three regions in which, despite geographical proximity and common medieval roots, the organization of poor relief developed in different directions between 1500 and 1700. While the analysis partly supports the conclusions of earlier research, it also adds to them.

Relief offered during food crises by the poor relief system in the northwestern Low Countries did not deviate much from the assistance available in southeastern England. Both systems offered generous and reliable assistance; both were comprehensive, despite the lack of uniformity in the Low Countries. Both, however, had problems with the flexibility required to meet peak demands triggered by high food prices. These problems were addressed in different ways, neither of which seems to have been a complete success. Theoretically, in southeast England the option of raising the poor rates offered advantages not available in the northwestern Low Countries, but to which extent this course of action was actually followed and successfully implemented is an issue deserving further research. The tendency towards distributing a greater part of relief in the form of casual payments suggests that alternatives were preferred: options that although they answered to the need for flexibility, at the same time jeopardized generosity and reliability. In the northwestern Low Countries the practice of restricting allowances and admittances when faced with peaks in demand, while necessary to preserve the stability of the system in the long run, also detracted from generosity and reliability. Municipal grain stocks offered a partial compensation, but the fact that these were only available in towns undermined uniformity even further.

Welfare offered by the poor relief system in northwestern France was in many respects decidedly inferior to what was available in the other regions: it was not only parsimonious and unpredictable, but its urban focus also left the countryside largely at the mercy of individual charity. Ironically, on the criterion of flexibility – the one point on which southeastern England and the northwestern Low Countries underperformed – the French system did better than expected: its emphasis on emergency aid and the scale on which that aid

was provided, at least in some places, did lend it a substantial degree of flexibility. That this was not enough to prevent large-scale starvation signals that the importance of flexibility, unless based on a solid foundation of generosity and comprehensiveness, should not be overrated.

## Notes

- 1 In agreement with the definition given by Cormac Ó Gráda (2009: 4) famine is taken to be to a food shortage leading to significant excess mortality from starvation or hunger-induced disease. The term “food crisis” is reserved for shortages with less serious consequences.
- 2 Erfgoed Leiden, Archief der Secretarie van de stad Leiden II, 0501a-2543.
- 3 Archief Delft, Oud Archief Stadsbestuur Delft 1e afdeling 001-17 vol. 4, fos. 309<sup>v</sup>-310<sup>v</sup>.
- 4 Archief Delft, Archief van de Kamer van Charitate, 447-288, 447-1143 and 447-1144; Van der Vlis 2001: 365.
- 5 Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Archief van de Evangelisch-Lutherse gemeente: Diakonie, 381-422.

## References

- Abels, P.H.A.M. and A.P.F. Wouters. 1994. *Nieuw en ongezien. Kerk en samenleving in de classis Delft en Delfland, 1572-162*, vol. 2, *De nieuwe samenleving*. Gouda: Vereniging voor Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis.
- Arnoux, M. 2012. “Des fruits et des hommes.” In *La d me, l’ glise et la soci t  f odale*, edited by M. Lauwers, 591-605. Turnhout: Brepols.
- B aur, G., and J.-M. Chevet. 2017. “France.” In *Famine in European history*, edited by G. Alfani and C.   Gr da, 73-100. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benedict, P. 1981. *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Berger, P. 1978. “Rural charity in late seventeenth-century France: The Pontchartrain case.” *French Historical Studies* 10(3): 393-415.
- Bohstedt, J. 2010. *The politics of provisions. Food riots, moral economy, and market transition in England, c. 1550-1850*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Clark, P. 1985. “A crisis contained? The condition of English towns in the 1590s.” In *The European crisis of the 1590s*, edited by P. Clark, 44-66. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Cole, C.W. 1943. *French Mercantilism 1683-1700*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Curtis, D.R., J. Dijkman, T. Lambrecht and E. Vanhaute. 2017. “Low Countries”. In *Famine in European History*, edited by G. Alfani and C.   Gr da, 119-140. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Curtis, D.R. and J. Dijkman. 2019. “The escape from famine in the Northern Netherlands: A reconsideration using the 1690s harvest failures and a broader Northwest European perspective.” *The Seventeenth Century* 34(2): 229-258.
- Dekker, R. 1982. *Holland in beroering: Oproeren in de 17de en 18de eeuw*. Baarn: Amboboeken.
- Desportes, F., P. Desportes and P. Salvadori (eds.). 1990. *Mercuriales d’Amiens et de la Picardie*, vol. I, *Amiens, XVIIe si cle*. Amiens: Centre d’histoire des soci t s de l’Universit  de Picardie.
- Deyon, P. 1967. *Amiens, capitale provinciale:  tude sur la soci t  urbaine au 17e si cle*. Paris: Mouton.



- Dijkman, J. 2011. *Shaping medieval markets. The organisation of commodity markets in Holland, c. 1200 – c. 1450*. Leiden: Brill.
- Dijkman, J. 2017a. “Bread for the poor: Poor relief and the mitigation of the food crises of the 1590s and the 1690s in Berkel, Holland.” In *Famines during the ‘Little Ice Age’ (1300–1800)*, edited by D. Collet and M. Schuh, 171–193. Cham: Springer.
- Dijkman, J. 2017b. “Coping with scarcity. A comparison of dearth policies in three regions in northwestern Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 14(3): 5–30.
- Friis, A. 1953. “An inquiry into the relations between economic and financial factors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: The two crises in the Netherlands in 1557.” *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 1(2): 193–241.
- Hazewinkel, H.C. 1942. “Misgewas en duurte.” *Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje* 10: 169–181.
- Healey, J. 2019. “Coping with risk in the seventeenth century. The first age of the English Old Poor Law: A regional study.” In *Public goods provision in the early modern economy*, edited by M. Tanimoto and R.B. Wong, 100–117. California: University of California Press.
- Hickey, D. 1997. *Local hospitals in ancien régime France: Rationalization, resistance, renewal, 1530–1789*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Hindle, S. 2004. *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England, c. 1550–1750*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hoffman, P.T. 1996. *Growth in a traditional society: The French countryside, 1450–1815*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Hoyle, R. 2017. “Britain.” In *Famine in European History*, edited by G. Alfani and C. Ó Gráda, 141–165. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hufton, O. 1974. *The poor of eighteenth-century France, 1750–1789*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jütte, R. 1994. *Poverty and deviance in early modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kent, J., and King, S. 2003. “Changing patterns of poor relief in some English rural parishes circa 1650–1750.” *Rural History* 14(2): 119–156.
- King, S. 2000. *Poverty and welfare in England, 1700–1850: A regional perspective*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Lachiver, M. 1991. *Les années de misère: la famine au temps du Grand Roi*. Paris: Fayard.
- Lemarchand, G. 2000. “Crises économiques et atmosphère sociale en milieu urbain sous Louis XIV: Dieppe et Rouen.” *Cahier des Annales de Normandie* 30: 159–181.
- Leonard, E.M. 1900. *The early history of English poor relief*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ligtenberg, C. 1908. *De amezorg te Leiden tot het einde van de 16e eeuw*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Lindert, P. 1998. “Poor relief before the welfare state: Britain versus the continent, 1780–1880”, *European Review of Economic History* 2(2): 104–140.
- McHugh, T. 2016 [2007]. *Hospital politics in seventeenth-century France: The crown, urban elites and the poor*. London: Routledge.
- McIntosh, M.K. 2012. *Poor relief in England, 1350–1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McIntosh, M.K. 2013. *Poor relief and community in Hadleigh, Suffolk, 1547–1600*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press.
- Noordegraaf, L. 1980. “Levensstandaard en levensmiddelenpolitiek in Alkmaar vanaf het eind van de 16de tot in het begin van de 19de eeuw.” In *Van Spaans beleg tot Bataafse*

- tijd: Alkmaars stedelijk leven in de 17de en 18de eeuw*, edited by E.H.P. Cordfunke, 55–100. Zutphen: Walburg Pers.
- Ó Gráda, C. 2009. *Famine: A short history*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pelus, M.-L. 1982. “Marchands et échevins d’Amiens dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle: crise de subsistances, commerce et profits en 1586–1587.” *Revue du Nord* 64(252): 51–71.
- Prak, M. 1994. “Goede buren en verre vrienden. De ontwikkeling van onderstand bij armoede in Den Bosch sedert de middeleeuwen.” In *Op lange termijn: Verklaringen van trends in de geschiedenis van samenlevingen*, edited by H. Flap and M.H.D. van Leeuwen, 147–169. Hilversum: Verloren.
- Prak, M. 1998. “Armenzorg 1500–1800.” In *Studies over zekerheidsarrangementen: Risico’s, risicobestrijding en verzekeringen in Nederland vanaf de Middeleeuwen*, edited by J. van Gerwen and M. van Leeuwen, 49–90. Amsterdam: NEHA.
- Sharp, B. 2016. *Famine and scarcity in late medieval and early modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Slack, P. 1980. “Books of Orders: The making of English social policy, 1577–1631.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30: 1–22.
- Slack, P. 1988. *Poverty and policy in Tudor and Stuart England*. London: Longman.
- Slack, P. 1990. *The English Poor Law 1531–1782*. Basingstoke/London: MacMillan Education.
- Slack, P. 2000. “Great and good towns, 1540–1700.” In *The Cambridge urban history of Europe*, vol. II, 1540–1840, edited by P. Clark, 347–376. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sluijter, R. and A. Schmidt. 2003. “Sociale verhoudingen en maatschappelijke zorg.” In *Leiden: De geschiedenis van een Hollandse stad*, vol. 2, 1574–1795, edited by S. Groenvelt, 108–125. Leiden: Stichting Geschiedschrijving Leiden.
- Smith, R.M. 2011. “Social security as a developmental institution? The relative efficacy of poor relief provisions under the English Old Poor Law”. In *History, historians and development policy: A necessary dialogue*, edited by C. Bayly et al., 75–102. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Solar, P. 1995. “Poor relief and English economic development before the Industrial Revolution.” *Economic History Review* 48(1): 1–22.
- Spaans, J. 1997. *Armenzorg in Friesland, 1500–1800: Publieke zorg en particuliere liefdadigheid in zes Friese steden Leeuwarden, Bolsward, Franeker, Sneek, Dokkum en Harlingen*. Hilversum: Verloren.
- Thomson, A. 2013. “Caring for the poor in East Hertfordshire c. 1620–1650”. In *A caring county? Social welfare in Hertfordshire from 1600*, edited by S. King and G. Gear, 99–123. Hatfield: Hertfordshire University Press.
- Tingle, E. 2006. “Stability in the urban community in a time of war: Police, Protestantism and poor relief in Nantes during the French Wars of Religion, 1562–1589.” *European History Quarterly* 36(4): 521–547.
- Van Bavel, B. and A. Rijpma. 2016. “How important were formalized charity and social spending before the rise of the welfare state? A long-run analysis of selected Western European cases.” *Economic History Review* 69(1): 159–187.
- Van der Vlis, I. 2001. *Leven in armoede: Delftse bededen in de zeventiende eeuw*. Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker.
- Van Deursen, A.T. 1974. *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen: Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldebarnevelt*. Assen: Van Gorcum.

- Van Deursen, A.T. 1995. *Een dorp in de polder: Graft in de zeventiende eeuw*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.
- Van Dillen, J.G. 1915. *Duurtemaatregelen te Amsterdam in de zeventiende eeuw*. Amsterdam: Kruyt.
- Van Dillen, J.G. 1964 [1917]. "Dreigende hongersnood in de Republiek in de laatste jaren der zeventiende eeuw." In *Mensen en achtergronden*, edited by J.G. van Dillen, 193–226. Groningen: Wolters.
- Van Nederveen Meerkerk, E. and D. Teeuwen. 2014. "The stability of voluntarism: Financing social care in early modern Dutch towns compared with the English Poor Law, c. 1600–1800." *European Review of Economic History* 18(2): 82–105.
- Van Onacker, E. and H. Masure. 2015. "Unity in diversity. Rural poor relief in the sixteenth-century southern Low Countries." *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 12(4): 59–88.
- Van Schaik, R. 1999. "Marktbeheersing: Overheidsbemoeyenis met de levensmiddelenvoorziening in de Nederlanden." In *Ondememers en bestuurders: Economie en politiek in de Noordelijke Nederlanden in de late middeleeuwen en vroegmoderne tijd*, edited by C. Lesger and L. Noordegraaf, 465–489. Amsterdam: NEHA.
- Vanhaute, E. and T. Lambrecht. "Famine, exchange networks and the village community. A comparative analysis of the subsistence crisis of the 1740s and 1840s in Flanders." *Continuity and Change* 26(2): 155–186.
- Wagenaar, J. 1765. *Amsterdam, in zyne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen, voorregten, koophandel, gebouwen, kerkenstaat, scholen, schutterye, gilden en regeeringe*, vol. 7. Amsterdam: Isaak Tirion.
- Will, P.-É. and R.B. Wong. 1991. *Nourish the people. The state civilian granary system in China, 1650–1850*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, Center for Chinese Studies.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>