

The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century

Edited by Koen Stapelbroek
and Jani Marjanen



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**Patriotic Reform in Europe and
North America**

Edited by

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1

Political Economy, Patriotism and the Rise of Societies

Koen Stapelbroek and Jani Marjanen

One of the most prominent and geographically widespread phenomena in the eighteenth century was the rise of societies that aimed at improving the economic basis of European states. Traces of this development were left in a wide variety of contemporary sources. These societies called themselves improving societies, patriotic societies, agricultural societies and economic societies, among other labels that were used. Not only did these institutions differ semantically, their characters, self-declared missions and attributed functions were shaped by local and national political and socio-economic history. Given this variety, how and why would one attempt to treat these economic societies in a unified way?

A direct reason for doing so lies in restoring historical accuracy. So far, economic societies have been studied almost exclusively from nationally delineated perspectives, but this is not quite how their functions were perceived at the time. The writings and activities by the most celebrated figures in the international network that connected such societies like Arthur Young – who became an honorary member of a number of economic societies, from St Petersburg to Philadelphia and Stockholm to Florence – provide a fascinating insight. Young was himself a practising experimental farmer, whose published observations on husbandry methods, travel notes from journeys in Great Britain and Ireland, France and Italy, and political pamphlets, form a window on the perceived importance of agricultural development in the eighteenth-century social, economic and political landscape. More than that, Young developed an encompassing vision of the various entwined eighteenth-century crises he learned about throughout Europe. Through his outlook on the importance of agricultural development as a central element in his political vision, comprising reflections on the Seven Years' War and the War of American Independence, the

state debts of France and Britain, patriotism, colonialism and the rise of statistics, one gets a sense of the complex of factors that played a part in the international proliferation of economic societies.¹

To what degree agricultural development and its promotion by voluntary associations formed an effective response to the socio-economic and political conditions of eighteenth-century Europe was subject to debate. 'Agromania' was the term for the phenomenon coined by Voltaire, who noticed that aristocratic improvement ideals often fell dead on peasant farmers' ears.² Ridicule befell the 2nd Viscount Charles Townshend, whose idealism earned him the nickname 'Turnip', conferred to him by Alexander Pope.³ If these sceptical remarks were directed at the mythical, pastoral and moralising romanticism that accompanied this movement, its principles were grounded on thoroughgoing analyses of the social and economic history of Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire and connected to the main political reform debates on international trade and the balance of power. Agricultural development across Europe was seen by a number of political writers as a requirement for pacifying international relations and the trade competition that turned eighteenth-century European rivalry into a global battlefield. As such, economic societies were local instruments that served a patriotic function in concrete state development inspired by an idea of the future of the interstate system.⁴ It would however be a mistake to see economic societies as politically motivated institutions. In most cases their agency and statutory structures revolved around notions of 'improvement' whose formulation bore no resemblance to the traditional power-related

¹On Young, see G. E. Mingay (ed.), *Arthur Young and His Times* (London: Macmillan 1975), John G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young, 1741–1820* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society 1973), Liam Brunt, 'Rehabilitating Arthur Young', *Economic History Review* 56 (2003), 265–99. A bibliography of Young's writings is in G. D. Amery, 'The Writings of Arthur Young', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* 85 (1924), 175–205.

²Voltaire, 'Blé ou Bled', *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (Paris: 1829), vol. 2, 389. In June 1762, Friedrich Melchior Grimm mentioned in his *Correspondance Littéraire* the publication of a *Préservatif contre l'agromanie* by L. B. Desplaces.

³Alexander Pope, *The second epistle of the second book of Horace* (London: 1737), 18.

⁴Istvan Hont, 'Correcting Europe's Political Economy: The Virtuous Eclecticism of Georg Ludwig Schmid', *History of European Ideas* 33 (2007:4), 390–410. For background, see Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005).

and controlling objectives of the state. To better understand the manner in which economic societies tended to operate independently from hierarchical political reasoning – which has been likened to an early form of popular representation – we need to go back to the membership facts, techniques of data collection and grass-roots activities initiated by the range of eighteenth-century economic societies.

This volume brings together a series of studies on the most influential eighteenth-century societies and contributes to the reconstruction of the emergence, visions and impact of economic societies as witnessed by contemporaries. Read in conjunction, the chapters reveal common patterns in political discourses, organisational and associational characteristics and actual activities – like prize essay contests and networking methods to gather and disseminate practical farming knowledge. At the same time, the contributions shed light on how societies responded to similar questions of political economy that manifested themselves under different local circumstances. Free associations of patriotic citizens who aimed to develop the basic agricultural foundations of the economy took on different forms, following alternative civic traditions. Thriving on newly emerged communication modes, economic societies and their networks became carriers of, and active contributors to, the development of combined theoretical and practical outlooks on how to reform the European (or rather global) interstate system of economic competition and cooperation.

The volume loosely charts the process whereby this movement took shape, starting from the genesis of the Scottish and Irish early societies of the 1720s and 1730s. The successes of modernised Scottish and Irish agriculture and industry (those parts allowed to develop by the English political core of the Empire) were quickly noticed by merchants and writer politicians in other parts of Europe as well as in newly independent America and sparked a desire for emulation, notably also in not fully sovereign or economically dependent states such as Austrian Lombardy, Austrian Tuscany, the Dutch province of Zeeland, the Swiss Canton of Berne, Finland within the Swedish realm, and Norway as part of the Danish composite state – not to mention colonial territories. Soon, what was a British peripheral phenomenon turned into an associational movement that spread across the world and continued to have an impact on national socio-economic and political dynamics until deep into the nineteenth century. Grounded on a common awareness – even if political interpretations differed – of the relations between both the eighteenth-century agricultural subsistence crises and economic warfare that swept through Europe and the peculiarly inverted (trade-led rather

than agriculture-based) historical development of European states,⁵ which had previously inspired colonial ventures, economic reformers often were self-declared patriots. Moreover, they shared an implicit agenda that without being over(t)ly politically laden connected to the core of Enlightenment political economy.

The chapters in the volume consider variations among different economic societies in terms of geographic delimitations, political and economic ambitions and definitions of patriotic and economic activity, in order to grasp their historical stature. The aim is not to come to a comprehensive definition of 'economic societies', but to use the deployment of similar concepts and rhetoric by members in different national contexts as a starting point for a comparative reevaluation of the range of economic societies. Placing the societies' experimental agriculture and patriotic zeal for including all strata of society adds depth and detail to, for instance, the more straightforward new institutional analyses of the contribution by economic societies to modernity. Precisely by not anachronistically imposing onto economic societies either social or political functions or intellectual motives that belong to later ages, the reasons for their spread and perceived significance in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe are recaptured.

The remainder of this introductory chapter brings out the range of domestic and international, political, ideological and sociological aspects that played a role in the rise of economic societies throughout Europe and indeed outside the continent. Firstly, a number of political contexts and intellectual discourses of the eighteenth century are discussed to tentatively explain why economic societies came into being. Secondly, we will inquire into the range of institutional structures, sociological backgrounds, geographical spread of membership and conceptual and symbolic representations of eighteenth-century economic societies.

Economic development and the history of European government

The rise of economic and patriotic societies cannot be seen independently of contemporary accounts of a set of concurrent crises experienced in the mid eighteenth century. Subsistence crises across Europe during and following the Seven Years' War were linked not only to

⁵See Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 354–88.

problems of agricultural productivity and the wrecking of local economies, but to a wider set of legal, political and social conditions that caused commercial competition between states to spill over into global warfare and the stagnation of international trade in peacetime. Unrest over the future of colonial possessions of Britain and France and rising state debts threatened the territorial integrity of small European states, affected the stability of dominant states and the legal principles of the European state system and Balance of Power in general. Awareness of these crises is present in the major part of eighteenth-century political thought and policy reform discussions.⁶ Likewise the rise of economic societies was related to these crises, even if their engagement with the deeper roots of the need for economic improvement was at times implicit. Consequently, rather than seeing economic societies as designed to realise a supra-historical Baconian-Promethean dream of economic science,⁷ another category of myths – about population density in antiquity, the economic development of China, the figure of a ‘Rural Socrates’ and the political Utopia of Macaria – is considered relevant for understanding economic improvement as an acronym for crisis response.

Most societies discussed in this volume were mainly concerned with issues relating to agriculture.⁸ Agriculture was an important focus, since increasing the productivity of the land represented the most direct way to counteract some of the most acute threats that eighteenth-century crises put to the lives of human beings. Agricultural improvement could repair the manifest inability of states to provide subsistence to its members. Yet, the status of agriculture in relation to the genres of political thought of the later eighteenth century was more profound and had widespread historical, moral, philosophical and, in the end, political connotations.

Among the intellectual reference points in eighteenth-century texts pointing to the need for agricultural improvement are the Enlightened

⁶Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*.

⁷Joel Mokyr, ‘The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth’, *Journal of Economic History* 65 (2005:2), 285–351; Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain 1700–1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2010); Marco E. L. Guidi and Massimo M. Augello, *The Spread of Political Economy and the Professionalisation of Economists: Economic Societies in Europe, America and Japan in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge 2001). For a different take, Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁸In the Dutch case this concern related to the price of grain imports, see Stapelbroek’s chapter.

histories of humankind that accounted for the inverted structure of European economies that had formed since the fall of the Roman Empire. By the middle of the eighteenth century European states had conquered large parts of the globe but were unable to feed their own members. How had this situation arisen? And why was it so difficult to get out of this condition? Writers formed different answers to these questions, attempting to resolve the paradox of why Europe's wealth and power were accompanied by undernourishment. In doing so a common template was to start from the fall of the Roman Empire and reconstruct how the forms of government and socio-economic customs of barbaric tribes that had invaded Europe blended with the remnants of Roman civilisation and gave rise to a kind of society whose moral tissue relied on the values of commercial exchange. Writers like Montesquieu, David Hume and Adam Smith (to name few authors whose works have remained famous) all in their own manner recreated explanations of how this historically contingent and, on a global scale, unique event was related to concepts like inequality and luxury and the concomitant development of what was seen as modern government: territorial property- and inheritance-based stately rule, mitigated by proto-representative structures. In so doing they connected the principles of statehood to those of international relations and devised political theories that fed into the older juridical genre of natural jurisprudence.⁹

The historicisation of eighteenth-century political theory and modern government provided a template for rival explanations of the relative underdevelopment of European agriculture and the turn to imperial conquest that European states had made. This template enabled political writers to debate the prospective effects of various economic reform strategies for European states. When Arthur Young, famously, referred to the 'Vandals and Goths of open fields' (in Oxfordshire) he implicitly lumped together theories of the history of modern government and agricultural underdevelopment, which in turn connected to his message that misconceived agricultural reform programmes would cause Europe to fall back into a primitive state of military despotism.¹⁰

⁹See J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997); Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007).

¹⁰Arthur Young, *View Of The Agriculture Of Oxfordshire* (London: 1813), 35. Young's rejection of agriculture-driven economic reforms and the fear of military despotism resembles the ideas of Schmid. Hont, 'Correcting Europe's Political Economy'.

One of the questions that drew great attention was whether modern government, notably the idea of the monarchy contained in Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*, not only was the remarkable outcome of the historical inversion of the normal development of societies, but also generated possible antidotes for its own evils. Montesquieu's critique of empire-building to compensate for the failure of European states to maintain its own population – 'Europe cannot be repaired in this manner', he wrote – was mirrored by his vision that the intra- and inter-state balance between the development of trade and agriculture had to be monitored through the social welfare institutions of the state.¹¹ Montesquieu's argument relied on the idea that whereas ancient small states needed laws to repair overpopulation, modern European states needed, and were able to put into place, laws that promoted population growth by recreating the socio-economic conditions that had been reached in late feudal times when a natural balance between urban and rural productivity and exchange occurred. The debate about population spread across Europe from Sweden to Naples and would intersect with the economic society movement. Hume's critique of Montesquieu's views on ancient population as unhistorical and partial to 'zealous partizans of civil liberty',¹² was echoed by Arthur Young's refutation of French physiocratic ideas and Richard Price's statements about British national wealth in his *Political Arithmetick*, which was 'Addressed to the Oeconomic societies of Europe'.¹³

Just how fundamental the historical inversion of the natural pattern of economic development was in theoretical terms, was a main source of contention. The relevant debate was held in terms of the development of the human mind and the passions. Could agriculture really be understood as a primitive socially innocent activity or did it require the same mental forms as the ones that dominated commercial society? And was agriculture, because of the nature of its output and the characteristics of the market for subsistence goods destined to become the Achilles heel of modernity? This moral philosophical as well as

¹¹ Book 23 of Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*, entitled 'Of laws in the relation they bear to the number of inhabitants'.

¹² David Hume, 'Of the populousness of ancient nations', in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics 1987), 377–464. See also James Bonar, *Theories of Population: from Raleigh to Arthur Young* (London: Allen & Unwin 1931).

¹³ Arthur Young, *Political Arithmetic. Containing observations on the present state of Great Britain; and the principles of her policy in the encouragement of agriculture* (London: 1774), 208–302, 322–31.

political economic debate, which developed through Rousseau's legacy into a major directly political debate about inequality and revolution, also intersected with the themes addressed by economic societies. On the one hand, there was the idea – played out at various levels and associated with different reform visions – that in order to stabilise states and guarantee peace, agriculture had to be promoted and morally or institutionally sheltered in order to correct the fundamental imbalance that had crept into the development of European societies. The Swiss myth of the Rural Socrates played an important popular role as an illustration of moral and political reform theories that were at odds with, but thematically overlapped with radical cultural critique. Arthur Young, who himself published an English translation of Hirzel's *Socrate Rustique*, in his *Political Arithmetick*, judged of the latter ideas, which circulated among European economic societies, as 'founded upon principles extremely false'.¹⁴

On the other hand, a distinction was made between agriculture 'old' and 'new'. Whereas primitive agriculture had been need-based and focused on the self-subsistence of families and tribes, eighteenth-century markets and production systems for agricultural goods rapidly innovated and were virtually indistinguishable from manufacturing markets. The latter form of agriculture relied on trade for its progress and required different principles of government from primitive farming – while its exercise remained equally salutary for body and mind.¹⁵

Within these debates about agriculture it was generally recognised that land was the source of all nourishment. Yet, this idea could be related to rival outlooks on luxury, inequality and the future of

¹⁴Young, *Political Arithmetic*, v; Arthur Young, *Rural Oeconomy: or, Essays on the Practical Parts of Husbandry ... To which is added, The Rural Socrates: Being Memoirs of a Country Philosopher* (Dublin: 1770). See Bela Kapossy, 'Republican political economy', *History of European Ideas* 33 (2007:4), 377–89. On moral and political reforms in relation to self-sufficiency, see Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge and his Sans-culottes: An Eighteenth-century Emblem in the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2008); Isaac Nakhimovsky, *The Closed Commercial State: Perpetual Peace and Commercial Society from Rousseau to Fichte* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2011); James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2001).

¹⁵Henry Home Lord Kames, *The Gentleman Farmer: Being An Attempt To Improve Agriculture By Subjecting It To The Test Of Rational Principles* (London: 1776) was built on this distinction, which was clearly expressed throughout the nineteenth century, e.g. by Carlo Cattaneo, *Civilization and Democracy*, eds. Carlo G. Lacaïta and Filippo Sabetti (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2006), 99.

international trade politics that further developed late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century notions about how to understand and accommodate human self-interest.¹⁶ Similarly, patriotism was a common feature of the identity of economic societies, yet also reflected the same variety of eighteenth-century perspectives on sociability, politics and trade, and was understood differently from context to context.¹⁷

In one sense the books published about agricultural reform all adapted to local circumstances – Lord Kames's *Gentleman farmer* for instance was concerned with Scotland and Young's *Political Arithmetick* was supposed to convince a British audience. At the same time, internationally, the same topos recurred. The cover of this volume, portraying the French Dauphin ploughing the land, became a commonplace. It in itself referred to the frequently mentioned story in which the Chinese Emperor performed this annual ritual.¹⁸ Likewise, passages from classical texts about ancient agriculture were universally cited.¹⁹ More importantly, the explanatory categories of the history of agriculture in Europe became nearly universal: by 1790 a Sicilian Paolo Balsamo published in Arthur Young's *Annals of Agriculture* a piece on Flemish agriculture. He also referred to the agrarian laws of Rome and the history of property laws in a manuscript entitled *Dell'agricoltura ovvero economia rurale con l'aggiunta di alcuni principii di legislazione e di economia relativi all'agricoltura ed alla ricchezza delle nazioni*, in which he applied the

¹⁶Istvan Hont, 'The Early Enlightenment Debate on Commerce and Luxury', in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, eds. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 379–418. Arthur Young, *Political Arithmetick*, 6, for instance, quoted with approval Butel-Dumont's *Theorie du Luxe* in relation to misconceptions about English political economy.

¹⁷See Robert Dodsley, *Public Virtue: A Poem. in Three Books. I. Agriculture. II. Commerce III. Arts* (London: 1753); Kames, *Gentleman Farmer*, xvii, discusses 'natural agricultural' patriotism. For French agricultural patriotism, see John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2006).

¹⁸Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 90–2; Kames, *Gentleman Farmer*, xiv. Famously, the Chinese Emperor was depicted ploughing on the frontispiece of Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*.

¹⁹Key texts being Cato and Varro, *On Agriculture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1934); Columella, *On Agriculture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1941). See Richard Bradley, *A Survey Of The Ancient Husbandry And Gardening, Collected From Cato, Varro, Columella, Virgil and others* (London: 1725); See also Richard Cantillon, *Essai sur la Nature du Commerce en Général* (London: 1755) for observations from classical authors on agriculture and population density.

framework of Smith's *Wealth of Nations* to the challenges of Sicilian economic reform.²⁰

Although inevitably influenced by these debates about the history of modern government and trade, economic societies in their missions remained close to the facts and appearances of concrete agricultural and other crises and addressed these directly. Their mission was not to develop political visions or choose sides, but through practical improvements contribute to the dissolution of the social and economic problems of European states. While in a sense no instrument within the arsenal of any society's activities was entirely politically neutral (from field rotation, enclosure and share cropping to introducing seed drills, grain storage machines and new plough designs or running vaccination programmes) mostly the institutions themselves did not have a strong reformist identity vis-à-vis the state.

Looking at economic societies and recognising their ambiguous relationship towards the moral and political issues of the age provides a historical corrective to exclusively economically focused analyses of demographic shifts, subsistence crisis and theories of the interrelations between mortality, price developments and the availability of food-stuffs.²¹ That historical corrective starts with the development of the discourse of improvement around 1650.

The discourses of patriotism and the development of (experimental) agriculture fused in Britain around 1650 and produced the notion of

²⁰Paolo Balsamo, 'Some particulars relating to Flanders: Husbandry', *Annals of Agriculture* 14 (1790), 325–58. The manuscript is in the Biblioteca Comunale di Palermo, classmark 2 Qq E 56. Some passages are in Roberto Salvo, 'Di Agricoltura. Un inedito di Paolo Balsamo', *Il pensiero economico italiano* 2 (1994:1), 183–97. See also Giuseppe Giarrizzo, 'Paolo Balsamo economista', *Rivista Storica Italiana* 78 (1966:1), 5–60; Pasquale Matarazzo, 'L'Accademia di agricoltura di Palermo. Stato e feudalità a confronto nel tardo Settecento', *Studi Storici* 43 (2002:4), 1003–27; Arthur Young, *A view of the present state of Sicily* (London: 1811).

²¹Noteworthy social and economic histories of agricultural improvement are G. E. Fussell, *The Classical Tradition in West European Farming* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1972) and 'Agricultural Science and Experiment in the Eighteenth Century: an Attempt at a Definition', *Agricultural History Review* 24 (1976:1), 44–7. Classically, B. H. Slicher van Bath, *The Agrarian History of Western Europe, A.D. 500–1850* (London: Arnold 1963). More recently, Mauro Ambrosoli, *The Wild and the Sown: Botany and Agriculture in Western Europe 1350–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997). From, respectively, a world history and Marxist perspective, Vernon Gill Carter and Tom Dale, *Topsoil and Civilization* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press 1955), David McNally, *Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism: A Reinterpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1988).

'improvement' that in the 1720s was embraced by the first Irish and Scottish societies. Numerous studies have contributed to the current understanding of how political ideas of 'improvement' stimulated the development of the experimental agriculture of what is known as the British Agricultural Revolution and have identified the significance of Walter Blith's *The English Improver* of 1649 and its sequel the *English Improver Improved*, dedicated to Oliver Cromwell and published with the motto 'Vive la Re Publick'. Cromwell would, until deep into the eighteenth century, retain his image as a patron of Scottish and Irish agriculture as part of the more general transformation of Britain into a commercial empire grounded on principles that were very different from its trade rival the United Provinces. In the process the endeavours of the Hartlib circle – including the emulation and study of Flemish agriculture, the establishment of the experimental scientific society of the 'Invisible College' and the publication of the utopian manifesto for the socio-economic reform of Britain entitled *A Description of the Famous Kingdome of Macaria* – were absorbed (though not Hartlib's peculiar visionary scheme of the *Reformed Commonwealth of Bees* to promote large-scale beekeeping in order to replace French wine imports with the consumption of domestic mead).²²

²²General works are Lord Erle, *English Farming Past and Present* (London: Longmans 1912); Robert Trow-Smith, *English Husbandry: from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Faber and Faber 1951); Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy 1500–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996); Robert C. Allen, 'Tracking the Agricultural Revolution in England', *Economic History Review* 52 (1999:2), 209–235; G. E. Fussell, *The Old English Farming Books from Fitzherbert to Tull 1523–1730* (London: Lockwood 1947). On Cromwellian science and politics: Christopher Hill, *Gods Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (New York: Dial Press 1970); Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007); Thomas Leng, *Benjamin Worsley (1618–1677): Trade, Interest, and the Spirit in Revolutionary England* (London: Royal Historical Society 2008); Charles Webster, 'Benjamin Worsley: Engineering for Universal Reform from the Invisible College to the Navigation Act', *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, eds. Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994), 213–35. Timothy Raylor, 'Samuel Hartlib and the Commonwealth of Bees', in Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (eds.), *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press 1992), 91–129; John Campbell, *A political survey of Britain* (London 1774), vol. 1, 228, portrays Cromwell as a patron of Scottish and Irish agriculture.

Proliferation of economic societies

How did the transformation of 'improvement', from a Cromwellian vision into a voluntary organisation aiming to promote agricultural development, culminate in a European movement of civil communication and practical reform? During the heyday of the later eighteenth century, members of a virtually uncountable number of local clubs, fraternities and societies corresponded with their counterparts across the continent and beyond. Their main models were the Dublin Society of Improvement of Husbandry, Agriculture and other Useful Arts (founded 1731, Royal from 1749 onwards) and the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in London (founded 1754, Royal prefix added in 1908),²³ while the first blending of patriotic rhetoric with the organisational form of a voluntary association to improve local economic conditions stemmed from the Honourable Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland (founded 1723). The organisational model of an economic society proved so compelling that it gained endless variations under different local circumstances and also spread to unlikely areas. While British associational life in the eighteenth century hosted by estimation around 25,000 different clubs and societies, the Free Economic Society (*Vol'noe ekonomičeskoe obščestvo*, founded 1765) in St Petersburg was, as Colum Leckey points out in his chapter, the second society to be founded in the whole of Russia.²⁴ Prize essay competitions, printing economic journals, and handing out premiums would become central tenets of the society movement. Responding to local needs, societies also developed new programmes of education, health care (e.g. small pox vaccination), the production and publication of statistical accounts and poor relief. Beyond functionally ascribing to economic and patriotic societies the roles of being forerunners in experimental agriculture, and platforms for political participation for new strata of society,²⁵ it would be hard to deny that these activities

²³Derek Hudson and Kenneth W. Luckhurst, *The Royal Society of Arts 1754–1954* (London: John Murray 1954), 18.

²⁴Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 2, 4–5. Cf. Roger Bartlett, 'The Free Economic Society: The Foundation Years and the Prize Essay Competition of 1766 on Peasant Property', *Russland zur Zeit Katharinas II: Absolutismus – Aufklärung – Pragmatismus*, eds. Eckhard Hubner, Jan Kusber and Peter Nitsche (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag 1998), 182.

²⁵Apart from the chapters in this volume see also Richard van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment: The Rise of the Middle Class and Enlightenment Culture in Germany* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1992), 65–81; Ulrich Im Hof, *Das gesellige*

paved the way for their later professionalisation in the disciplines of education, health care, economic science and social affairs.

Determining the number of 'economic societies' that sprang up from 1720 is a virtually impossible task. A look at the vast historiography on eighteenth-century economic associations targeting particular societies or several societies within a particular national setting illustrates the nature of this problem, which has everything to do with variety.²⁶ One aspect is nomenclature. In order to capture the characteristics of groups of societies the previous studies have deployed a range of nationally confined short hands, such as improvement societies in Britain and Ireland, agricultural societies in France and the United States of

Jahrhundert. Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung (Munich: C. H. Beck 1982), 112–75.

²⁶Many useful works were commissioned by particular societies themselves. Noteworthy scholarly syntheses are Robert Jones Shafer, *The Economic Societies in the Spanish World, 1763–1821* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 1958); Daniel Roche, *Le Siècle des Lumières en Province: Academies et Academiciens Provinciaux 1680–1789* (Paris: Mouton 1978); Luis Miguel Enciso Recio, *Las sociedades económicas en el siglo de las luces* (Madrid: Real academia de la historia 2010); María Consolación Calderón España (ed.), *Las Reales Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País y el Espíritu Ilustrado: análisis de sus realizaciones* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla 2001); Kenneth Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit: British Agricultural Societies in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Hugh Evelyn 1972); Henry E. Lowood, *Patriotism, Profit, and the Promotion of Science in the German Enlightenment: The Economic and Scientific Societies 1760–1815* (New York: Garland Publishing 1991); Rudolf Vierhaus (ed.), *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften* (Munich: Kraus International 1980); Marcus Poppow (ed.), *Landschaften agrarisch-ökonomischen Wissens. Strategien innovativer Ressourcennutzung in Zeitschriften und Sozietäten des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Münster: Waxmann 2010); Juliane Engelhardt, *Borgerskab og fælleskab. De patriotiske selskaber i den danske helstat 1761–1814* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Forlag 2010); Emile Justin, *Les sociétés royales d'agriculture au XVIIIe siècle (1757–1793)* (Saint-Lô: 1935); Martin Stuber, Peter Moser, Gerradina Gerber-Visser, Christian Pfister (eds.), *Kartoffeln, Klee und kluge Köpfe. Die Oekonomische und Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft des Kantons Bern OGG (1759–2009)* (Bern: Haupt 2009). The context of international economic rivalry comes to the fore in John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2006), 83–92, 159–68, 208–11 and Hont, 'Correcting Europe's Political Economy'. General surveys are James E. McClellan III, 'Learned Societies', in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, ed. Alan Charles Kors (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), 43–7; Henry E. Lowood, 'Patriotic and Economic Societies', in *The Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. J. L. Heilbron (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), 620–2. See also Mokyr, 'The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth', 285–351.

America, patriotic societies in Germany and Spain, and economic societies in Sweden, Switzerland and much of remaining Europe.²⁷ Only in some cases, such as in France, does the used term represent fairly accurately the actual naming of societies. However, at the time various labels – such as patriotic or economic societies – were regarded as near synonyms, even if contemporaries were fully aware of the complexity in rhetoric, activities, composition and aims of the different societies.

Bearing in mind that contemporaries understood societies with different names as part of the same movement one quickly sees that earlier, tentative attempts to determine the number of eighteenth-century societies remain gross underestimates. Ulrich Im Hof surveyed society life from Scotland to Florence and New York to St Petersburg, ending up with the estimate of 116 societies for the ‘promotion of economic improvement and the common good in Europe and overseas’ in the period 1731–1789. Combining the figures given by van Dülmen, Im Hof, Müller, and her own data for the Danish conglomerate state, Juliane Engelhardt arrived at the sum total of 233 ‘patriotic societies’.²⁸ A more detailed survey of available national and regional synthetic studies leads to much higher estimates.

In Great Britain and Ireland at least 82 ‘agricultural societies’ were active prior to 1810.²⁹ Some twenty regional Royal Agricultural Societies (*Sociétés royales d’agriculture*) were established in pre-revolutionary France (mostly in the 1760s). If local branches to the societies are included 29 societies ought to be added.³⁰ In Spain, some seventy

²⁷ Hans Hubrig, *Die patriotischen Gesellschaften des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1957); Focko Eulen, ‘Die patriotischen Gesellschaften und ihre Bedeutung für die Aufklärung’, in *Wirtschaft, Technik und Geschichte. Festschrift für Albrecht Timm zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. E. Jäger and V. Schmidtchen (Berlin: Camen 1980); Vierhaus (ed.), *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*. For naming policy in German see Bödeker’s chapter and Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*, 260–3.

²⁸ Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*, 260–3; Engelhardt’s chapter and her ‘Patriotism, Nationalism and Modernity: The Patriotic Societies in the Danish Conglomerate State, 1769–1814’, *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (2007): 205–23, 208; *Borgerskab og fælleskab. De patriotiske selskaber i den danske helstat 1769–1814* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag 2010), 421–32.

²⁹ Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 130–3. The list omits societies that remained short-lived or were not included in 1810 as agricultural societies.

³⁰ Justin, *Les sociétés royales d’agriculture*, 275. The work limits itself to agricultural societies and thus omits for instance the Free Society of Emulation (*Société libre d’émulation*) founded in 1776 (See Showlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 131).

'Economic Societies of Friends of the Country' (*Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País*) were established, while at least 14 societies were 'created or suggested' in the Spanish colonies.³¹ Information about societies in European colonies is very sparse. In 1781 Barbados got a society modelled on the Dublin Society, as did the Dutch-Indonesian capital Batavia,³² but these are isolated examples of what may well have been a more intensive network. Figures on German-speaking Europe vary. Müller accounts for 46 'patriotic societies' in Germany, while Richard van Dülmen builds upon Müller's list and gives 71 'public-spirited societies', including societies from Switzerland and Imperial Austria. Henry E. Lowood suggests the figure of 146 patriotic or economic societies in German-speaking Europe.³³ In the United Provinces 57 local departments were founded in 1777 under the Economic Branch (*Oeconomische Tak*) of the Holland Society of Sciences (*Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*) while a handful of local economic societies continued to exist.³⁴ Apart from the eight most significant agricultural societies in the federation, in the state of New York only, more than fifty agricultural societies were founded in the 1790s as a result of public financial support and the establishment of a Board of

³¹ Shafer, *The Economic Societies in the Spanish World*, 48, 146 and *passim*. See also Enciso Recio, *Las sociedades económicas*. For the colonies, see Gabriel B. Paquette, 'State-Civil Society Cooperation and Conflict in the Spanish Empire: The Intellectual and Political Activities of the Ultramarine *Consulados* and Economic Societies, c. 1780–1810', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 39 (2007): 263–98.

³² J. P. M. Groot, *Van de Grote Rivier naar het Koningsplein: het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1778–1867* (Leiden: PhD thesis, 2006).

³³ H. H. Müller, *Akademie und Wirtschaft im 18. Jahrhundert. Agrarökonomische Preisaufgaben und Preisschriften der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1976); van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, 148–51; Lowood, *Patriotism, Profit and the Promotion of Science*, 31. van Dülmen omits regional branches and societies established after 1800. Lowood, 'Patriotic and Economic Societies', 620, mentions two hundred 'patriotic and economic' societies in the German-speaking parts Europe between 1760 and 1815, but included numerous scientific societies.

³⁴ See Stapelbroek's chapter. 'Independent' societies, like the Amsterdam-based Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture (*Maatschappij tot Bevordering van den Landbouw*, founded 1776), are not included. More broadly, W. W. Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom, Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750–1815* (Amsterdam: Rodopi 1988).

Agriculture in New York.³⁵ In the Danish state 57 'patriotic societies' were founded between 1769 and 1813. In Norway, the establishment of the The Royal Society for the Welfare of Norway (*Det Kongelige Selskab for Norges Vel*) in 1809 triggered the foundation of 26 district societies, most of which had an independent existence before the newly founded umbrella-organisation, and are included in the 57 Danish patriotic societies.³⁶ In the Swedish realm the number of economic societies grew from seven to 25 between 1809 and 1820 owing to the creation of the Royal Swedish Agricultural Academy (*Kongl. Svenska Lantbruks-Academien*, founded 1811).³⁷ In neighbouring Russia, only one economic society was active in the eighteenth century, which adds up to a tentative sum total of 562 societies.

For the non-German parts of the Habsburg Empire, where economic societies did not thrive, solid figures on economic societies are yet to be collected.³⁸ Furthermore, the (no doubt immense) number of economic societies or comparable academies in the Italian peninsula remains hard to grasp precisely because many of them existed only on a local level or were shortlived experiments. Moreover, owing to the differentiated political cultures and economic characteristics within the old Italian states any reliable figure on its own would be meaningless in other respects.³⁹

³⁵Margaret W. Rossiter, 'The Organization of Agricultural Improvement in the United States, 1785–1865', in *The Pursuit of Knowledge in the Early American Republic: American Scientific and Learned Societies from Colonial Times to the Civil War*, eds. Alexandra Oleson and Sanborn C. Brown (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1976), 284–90. The New York Board may have been special, but it is unlikely that states like Pennsylvania and Massachusetts would not have experienced at least a portion of similar activity. For the United States of America figures remain to be systematically collected.

³⁶See Engelhardt's chapter.

³⁷Olof Kåhrström, *Regionala Främjare av de areella näringarna under 200 år. Hushållningssällskapens historiker, periodiska skrifter och arkiv* (Stockholm: Kungl. Skogs- och lantbruksakademien 2002), 145–260; and Marjanen's chapter. Figures of Swedish short-lived societies, like the Agricultural Society in Vårdinge (active 1811–1815) are incomplete.

³⁸See Norbert Schindler and Wolfgang Bonß, 'Praktische Aufklärung – Ökonomische Sozietäten in Süddeutschland und Österreich im 18. Jahrhundert', in Vierhaus (ed.), *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*, pp. 267–8. See also George Barany, 'Hoping Against Hope: The Enlightened Age in Hungary', *American Historical Review* 76 (1971:2), 319–57.

³⁹The classical investigation is Michele Maylender, *Storia delle Accademie d'Italia* (5 vols., Bologna-Trieste: Cappelli 1926–30). A recently attempted synthesis for entire Italy is Michele Simonetto, 'Accademie agrarie italiane del XVIII secolo. Profili

The economic society movement remained (presumably for the wider reasons outlined above) by its very nature a predominantly European phenomenon. The merits of European societies were discussed in the Portuguese Empire, but did not trigger emulation, except perhaps for the Economic Society of the Good Patriots and Friends of the Common Good (*Sociedade Económica dos Bons Compatriotas, Amigos do Bem Público*), founded in 1780 in Ponte de Lima.⁴⁰ Within the Ottoman Empire the development of economic societies would have been blocked by strict regulation limiting the creation of associations.⁴¹

Relation to scientific organisations and the state

Economic societies operated as an interface between civil society, academic institutions and state organisations and along with other eighteenth-century societies, clubs and associations provided platforms for new elites. The rise of the middle class through these associations contributed to the breakdown of traditional estate-based society. Whereas scientific and language societies during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had a rather exclusive membership, economic societies in the eighteenth century often were principally open-to-all, even if in reality large parts of the population were excluded due to inconvenient meeting times, high membership fees or educational requirements. Farmer membership remained underrepresented, while female membership was uncommon.⁴²

storici dimensione sociale', *Società e Storia* 32 (2009: 2/3), 261–301, 445–65; See also *Le Società economiche alla prova della storia (secoli XVIII–XIX)* (Rapallo: Busco 1996) and *Associazionismo economico e diffusione dell'economia politica nell'Italia dell'Ottocento: Dalle società economico-agrarie alle associazioni di economisti*, eds. Massimo M. Augello and Marco E. L. Guidi (Milan: FrancoAngeli 2000).

⁴⁰ António Almodovar and José Luís Cardoso, 'From learned societies to professional associations: The establishment of the economist profession in Portugal', in *The Spread of Political Economy and the Professionalisation of Economists*, 128–9. Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*, 200, suggests 1783 as year of foundation for the society on Ponte de Lima. In 1839, the Maritime and Colonial Association (*Associação Marítima e Colonial*) followed the model of economic societies, but differed in its focus on colonial affairs. Gabriel B. Paquette, 'State-Civil Society Synergy in the Portuguese Atlantic World: Academies, Associations, and State Policy, c. 1780–1850', Paper presented in Helsinki, 17 December 2008.

⁴¹ On the limits of association in the region, see Lydia Papadakis, *Teaching the Nation: Greek Nationalism and Education in Nineteenth Century Macedonia* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies 2006).

⁴² See the chapters in this book; van Dülmen, *The Society of Enlightenment*, 67–9; Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, 234–44.

Membership of Masonic lodges and economic societies often overlapped, yet in contrast to Masonic institutions most economic societies publicly announced their objectives and published their findings to guarantee the spread of ideas of improvement.⁴³ Compared with academies and scientific societies, economic societies used similar ways of acquiring and producing knowledge, and as several of the case studies in this book show, economic societies engaged in a constant cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices with scientific organisations. In Berne, the Economic Society modelled its international network of honorary members on such institutions and, like many of its sister societies, used prize essay competitions as a means for knowledge production.⁴⁴ The main difference was that economic societies, from the Dublin Society onwards, stressed their practical functions in relation to reform.⁴⁵ This did not prevent the Dutch from copying the model of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in London in establishing the Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences⁴⁶ – a model also explored by Catherine II of Russia before creating the Free Economic Society in St Petersburg as an independent body.⁴⁷ In Sweden too, the borders between academic institutions and economic societies were murky. The Patriotic Society in Stockholm of 1766 (*Patriotiska sällskapet*, Royal from 1772) was deemed a potential rival to the Royal Swedish Academy of Science (*Kungliga Svenska Vetenskapsakademien*, which itself, founded in 1739, was almost created with the title economic society), but saw itself as one among Europe's 'learned societies'. On the other side of the Baltic Sea, The Royal Finnish Economic Society (*Kongl. Finska Hushållningssällskapet*, founded 1797) drew on the legacy of the Academy in Turku (*Akademin i Åbo*, founded 1640) which was in fact a university.⁴⁸

⁴³ van Dülmen, *The Society of Enlightenment*, 65–9. The Royal Patriotic Society in Sweden is an exception. It started off as a secretive order with closed membership. Staffan Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia. Med särskild hänsyn till den gustavianska tidens agrara reformsträvanden* (Stockholm: P. A. Nordstedts & söner 1961), 50–1.

⁴⁴ See the chapter by Wyss and Stuber.

⁴⁵ See James Livesey, 'The Dublin Society in Eighteenth-Century Irish Political Thought', *Historical Journal* 47 (2004:3): 615–40.

⁴⁶ See Stapelbroek's chapter.

⁴⁷ See Leckey's chapter as well as Bartlett 'The Free Economic Society'; Joan Klobe Pratt, 'The Free Economic Society and the Battle against Smallpox: A "Public Sphere" in Action', *Russian Review* 61 (2002:4): 560–78; Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2009); Colum Leckey, *Patrons of Enlightenment: The Free Economic Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Newark: University of Delaware Press 2011).

⁴⁸ See Marjanen's chapter. Cf. McClellan III, 'Learned Societies'.

The *Accademia dei Georgofili* in Florence was another famous hybrid organisation (and later renamed itself as an economic society).

Academic chairs in political economy sprang up across Europe around the same time. First these were established in Prussia (Halle and Frankfurt and der Oder both in 1727, and Rinteln in 1730), Sweden (Uppsala, 1741; Turku/Åbo, 1747; Lund, 1750) and Naples (1754). A key motive was to repair the underdevelopment of the local economy, which tied in well with the objectives of the economic society movement. Thus one understands why the Economic Society of Berne invited Anders Berch, professor of 'jurisprudentiae, oeconomiae et commercium' in Uppsala, as honorary member.⁴⁹ In 1776 the Patriotic Society in Stockholm launched an economic journal (*Hushållnings Journalen*) in which it presented Science Academies, economic chairs and publications by economic societies as contributing to a common cause.⁵⁰

Relations between state organisations, civil servants and economic societies remained close. In Brittany the Society of Agriculture, Commerce, and the Arts (*Société d'agriculture, du commerce et des arts*, founded 1757) was directly supported by the local estates, while in Berne the Economic Society functioned both as a stepping stone for young patricians into office and as an alternative channel for policy development. Likewise, the Free Economic Society in St Petersburg was established to be 'free' from government control, even if some of its prominent members were close to Catherine II.⁵¹ In contrast, The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture (*Det Kongelige Danske Landhusholdningsselskab*, founded 1768) and the Royal Patriotic Society in Stockholm emerged from private initiative to become Royal in 1770 and 1772 respectively.⁵² In Berne, the limits of engaging in state affairs were crossed when the Economic Society published a prize essay dealing with emigration and decrease in population and received a government order in 1766 to abstain from discussing politically sensitive matters.⁵³

⁴⁹See Lars Magnusson, 'Economics and the Public Interest: The Emergence of Economics as an Academic Subject during the 18th Century', *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 94 (1992: Supplement), 249–57; See also chapters in Augello and Guidi (eds.), *The Spread of Political Economy*, many of which shortly treat eighteenth-century societies as well.

⁵⁰See Marjanen's chapter.

⁵¹See the chapters by Shovlin, Wyss and Stuber, and Leckey. See also Pratt, 'The Free Economic Society', 1, 7–12.

⁵²See the chapters by Engelhardt and Marjanen.

⁵³See Kapossy, 'Republican Political Economy', 387–8. Emigration issues were debated at the time in Stockholm as well. See Marjanen's chapter and Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia*, 41–7.

Concerns that economic societies might become channels for faction politics recurred during the period, as the cases of the United Provinces and the Society for Agricultural Economy in Celle (*Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft in Celle*, founded 1764) demonstrate. Yet, to retrospectively impose party politics and political interests onto the life of the Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences and the Society of Agriculture, Commerce, and the Arts in Brittany is historically misleading.⁵⁴

Formal relations to governing bodies were less significant in trade cities, like in the Patriotic Society in Hamburg (*Patriotische gesellschaft für Beförderung der Künste un nützlichen Gewerbe*, founded 1765) or in regions that did not enjoy political independence. In the Scottish and the Irish cases the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland and the Dublin Society of Improvement of Husbandry, Agriculture and other Useful Arts answered some of the demands for political representation that resulted from the inclusion of Scotland and Ireland into the British Empire. In Finland the establishment of the Economic Society was in a similar way a reaction to experienced neglect from the seat of power in Stockholm.⁵⁵

Eighteenth-century economic societies shaped their organisational forms to fit the administrative nature of the state or region.⁵⁶ The first societies in Scotland, Ireland, Brittany and the first Spanish society in the Basque country (*Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País*, founded 1765) formed central forums for discussion in order to repair the underdevelopment of certain regions. In France and in Spain networks of associated 'agricultural societies' and 'societies of the friends of the country' soon emerged on a national level. In the Dutch case, the establishment of a national network of societies was inspired by the Spanish model and the writings of Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes.⁵⁷ In Switzerland, the Helvetic Society (*Die Helvetische Gesellschaft*, founded 1761) acted as an umbrella organisation for previously existing local societies in the cantons.⁵⁸ In Norway the Royal Society for the Welfare of Norway promoted Norwegian interests within the Danish and from 1814 the Swedish state.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ See the chapters by Bödeker, Stapelbroek and Shovlin.

⁵⁵ See the chapters by Bonnyman, Livesey and Marjanen.

⁵⁶ See also Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*; van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, 52–81.

⁵⁷ See the chapters by Stapelbroek and Neele.

⁵⁸ Ulrich Im Hof, 'Die Helvetische Gesellschaft 1761–1798', in *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*, 223–40.

⁵⁹ John Peter Collet and Ernst Bjerke (eds.), *Vekst gjennom kunnskap. Det Kongelige Selskap for Norges Vel 1809–1814* (Oslo: Det Kongelige Selskap for Norges Vel 2009).

In Sweden, the Royal Agricultural Academy incorporated existing local societies, established new ones, and formed a similar centrally orchestrated organisation.⁶⁰ In both cases the demise of the Danish and Swedish empires in the Napoleonic Wars created space for these organisations to function as nation-building agents. Conversely, border-transgressing attempts in Germany to form organisations that represented the national interest were initiated from the 1780s by Joachim Heinrich Campe and later by Rudolf Zacharias Becker, but remained unsuccessful.⁶¹

Insofar as there was an economic society movement there was no transnational membership or brotherhood. While doors of Masonic lodges opened globally, economic societies created a transnational projection of their activities through processes of comparison, collaboration and emulation.

The rise of a movement

Following the mid-seventeenth-century English improvement programme, briefly discussed above, the seeds of what became a movement first germinated in Scotland and Ireland during the 1720s. Circles of aristocrats in politically weaker parts of the gestating British Empire in the early eighteenth century adopted the gist of the agricultural 'improvement' discourse that associates of the English Hartlib circle had devised in the 1650s as a strategy to reform the English economy. The aim of the first Scottish and Irish institutions was to carve out a niche for their own local economies so that they simultaneously contributed meaningfully and substantially to the growth of the British economy *and* remained faithful to their own true interests and locally present natural and human resources.

In Ireland this happened in the same context in which Protestant Whigs like Robert Molesworth compared the constitutional histories and freedoms of France and Britain and the possibilities for Irish economic development within a British Union. Molesworth's ideas as well as the founding of the Dublin Society are best seen against the background of a series of British debates about rival designs for British global economic empire and Anglo-Irish debates about the Irish freedoms

⁶⁰See H. Juhlin Dannfelt, *Kungl. Lantbruksakademien 1813–1912 samt svenska landthushållningen under nittonde århundradet* (Stockholm: C. E. Fritzes Böckförlags Aktiebolag 1913) and Marjanen's chapter.

⁶¹See Bödeker's chapter and van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, 76–8.

of trade and the realisation of the Irish economic potential.⁶² In his chapter on the Honourable Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture, Brian Bonnyman discusses its emergence as an answer to comparable issues emanating from Scotland's new position in the British Empire from 1707.⁶³ The Dublin Society, as James Livesey writes, itself drew from the Scottish example, but also from the rich native tradition of civic improvement, which turned into a model followed by later societies from Brittany to Philadelphia and St Petersburg.⁶⁴

In Brittany, as John Shovlin shows in his chapter, the Irish model was a very direct source of inspiration. Inspired by the perceived successes of these societies the model was adapted through the creation of the *Société d'agriculture, du commerce et des arts* in 1757. Brittany, not Paris, developed France's first agricultural societies, laying the groundwork for a network of societies supported by Vincent de Gournay and his circle of political writers. That Franco-British processes of emulation played a key role in the initial stages of the spread of the economic society movement is no surprise. From the 1720s, French political writers like Montesquieu, Jean-François Melon and Voltaire were obsessed with British political economy and its institutions. The translation of agricultural treatises, such as Duhamel du Monceau's edition of Jethro Tull's *New Horse-Houghing Husbandry* from 1731, was part of this process.⁶⁵

If rivalry was the ideal catalyst for the development of the science of agronomy, the Seven Years' War marked a turning point in the spread of economic societies. Next to Brittany, Berne (founded 1759), Leipzig (1764), Zürich (1764), Hamburg (1765), St Petersburg (1765), Vergara (Bergara, in Basque country, 1765), Stockholm (1766) and Copenhagen (1768), among many others, followed suit.⁶⁶ The societies of London, Brittany and Berne became models in their own right alongside the Dublin society. From this stage, agriculture turned into an object of

⁶²Viscount Robert Molesworth, *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture, and Employing the Poor* (Dublin: 1723) was written from this perspective. See Livesey's chapter.

⁶³For perspective Istvan Hont, 'The "Rich Country–Poor Country" Debate Revisited: The Irish Origins and French Reception of the Hume Paradox,' in *David Hume's Political Economy*, eds. Carl Wennerlind and Margaret Schabas (London: Routledge 2008), 243–322.

⁶⁴See the chapters by Shovlin, Wyss and Stuber, Leckey and Marjanen.

⁶⁵H. L. Duhamel du Monceau, *Traité de la culture des terres* (Paris: 1750), see also his *École d'agriculture* of 1759, which from their introductions onwards displayed the patronage of Gournay.

⁶⁶Cf. van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, 66–7.

mainstream popular culture in Britain,⁶⁷ and lay at the roots of a European exchange of ideas that found political applications in different contexts, such as in the south of Italy where the publication of agronomical treatises, along with the establishment of a chair of political economy in 1754 fed into a governmental programme for a large-scale scientifically grounded economic reform.⁶⁸

Accompanied by the feverish activity of printshops across Europe, the political orientations and functions of the establishment of economic societies in the second half of the eighteenth century became subject to major discussion. The first sentences of Arthur Young's *Political Arithmetick* (which served to correct European misconceptions about the principles of British wealth to prevent the influence in Britain of agricultural reformist schemes that would undermine the foundations of the state) declared that 'the great encouragement which agriculture at present meets with in Europe has been either the cause or effect (probably both) of many publications upon that part of political œconomy which concerns the culture of the earth'.⁶⁹ Yet, remarkably, simultaneous to agriculture becoming integral to an intensely sensitive debate about economic development, trade politics and the reform of the interstate system, most economic societies shielded themselves from these hotly debated issues through their inward, domestic and practical orientations, which produced new diversifications of functions and activities geared to local circumstances and opportunity, almost as a way to act without choosing sides.

In German-speaking Europe the Economic Society of Berne (*Die Oekonomische Gesellschaft Bern*, founded 1759) was one of the first to be established. Regula Wyss and Martin Stuber demonstrate in their chapter that the Bernese society was also modelled on science academies and strived to gain an international reputation through its publications

⁶⁷John Abercrombie, *Every Man His Own Gardener* (London: 1767) became a true bestseller. Authors like James Marshall, James Anderson, John Sinclair and John Symonds became 'titans' of British agronomy. See Pamela Horn, 'The Contribution of the Propagandist to Eighteenth-Century Agricultural Improvement', *Historical Journal* 25 (1982), 313–29, Mauro Ambrosoli, *John Symonds: agricoltura e politica in Corsica e in Italia: 1765–1770* (Turin: Fondazione Luigi Einaudi 1974).

⁶⁸Bartolomeo Intieri funded the chair whose first incumbent also published agricultural works and reflected on the political requirements for transforming the Kingdom of Naples into a modern commercial society; see Antonio Genovesi, *Scritti economici*, ed. Maria Luisa Perna (2 vols., Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici 1984).

⁶⁹Young, *Political Arithmetick*, v, which (again) resembles Schmid's scepticism about such schemes, see Hont, 'Correcting Europe's Political Economy'.

and practice to invite famous foreigners as honorary members. The Economic Society of Berne complemented the improvement endeavours of the ruling Great Council.

As Hans Erich Bödeker points out in his chapter on economic societies in the German lands, the Hamburg Patriotic Society became a regional model. Modelled on English examples,⁷⁰ the Patriotic Society absorbed the activities of loose groups of friends and active citizens by setting up rules and practices both for improving agricultural production, mechanical innovation and social work, and to offer new middle-class elites a channel for engendering societal reform. A similar function was performed by the patriotic societies in the Danish state, as stressed in Juliane Engelhardt's chapter.⁷¹

Civic life in Russia was based on specific principles. While the Free Economic Society in St Petersburg appropriated the idea of an economic society and achieved an international reputation, it was the politically charged questions of serfdom and the decay of Russia's agriculture, as Colum Leckey shows in his chapter, that made for the Society's internationally reputed prize essay question.

The aims of other organisations from the same period, like the *Accademia dei Georgofili* of Florence (founded 1753) and the *Accademia dei Pugni* in Austrian Lombardy (founded 1762), dealt with by Vieri Becagli and Sophus Reinert resembled those of the economic societies so far discussed and also drew on the same political economic discourses, while continuing the strong Italian academy tradition.⁷²

From the 1760s, economic societies popped up across Europe. In the United Provinces, the establishment of the Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences in 1777 was a spin-off from a major debate about the Dutch trade republic. Starting from a national economic reform vision and inspired by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in London, tensions between autonomous local departments ultimately led to its demise, as Koen Stapelbroek and Arno Neele explain.

The agricultural societies of the United States of America, discussed by Manuela Albertone, that flourished in the post-Revolutionary era

⁷⁰Franklin Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe (Patriotische Gesellschaft von 1765) im Zeitalter der Aufklärung. Ein Überblick', in Vierhaus (ed.), *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*.

⁷¹See Engelhardt, 'Patriotism, Nationalism and Modernity', 207–8.

⁷²Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*, 260–3 considers the *Georgofili* a society for the 'promotion of economic improvement and common good'.

facilitated the diffusion of physiocratic, and more broadly, French political economy. They served as platforms of opposition to federalist financial, manufacturing and trade politics. Later picked up by Progressive historians, French 'agricultural societies' played a role in the agrarian democracy programme of Jefferson's Republican party.

The economic societies that were created around the turn of the century (in colonies, smaller cities and regional centres) continued to deploy the discourses of underdevelopment and patriotism and referred to the usual famous societies as their models. Yet, their functions shifted somewhat. In the Swedish realm, for instance, regional economic societies were reorganised in the 1810s as branches to the newly founded Royal Agricultural Academy, giving the societies a much more administrative role and also narrowed down their focus to agriculture and forestry. Through the secession of Finland to Russia in 1809, the Finnish Economic Society gained, as shown by Jani Marjanen, new momentum and experienced its golden age during the 1810s.

By this time the core business of economic societies, the approach of agricultural improvement, around Europe had either developed into a form of scientific inquiry or been included into state politics, thus making the previously arisen mechanisms of civic engagement largely redundant. Likewise states took over the proto-health care and poor-relief functions that economic societies fulfilled, as well as the proto-representative functions that societies served in creating a voice for the new middle classes. The emancipation of economic thought as a specific field of inquiry and its detachment from terminologies of the common good and patriotism also made societies recede into the background.⁷³ In this position a number of economic societies continue to exist until this day as witnesses of the appearance of a somehow familiar set of crises that expose the imperfections of existing global markets in their relation to the production and distribution of subsistence goods.

⁷³See Augello and Guidi (eds.), *The Spread of Political Economy*. On patriotic language, see Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1995); Hugh Cunningham, 'The language of patriotism', in *Patriotism: The Making and the Unmaking of British National Identity, Volume I: History and Politics*, in Raphael Samuel (ed.) (London: Routledge 1989); Mary G. Dietz, 'Patriotism', in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, eds. Terence Ball, James Farr & Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989); Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten. Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2006), 218–39.

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Agrarian Patriotism and the Landed Interest: The Scottish ‘Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture’, 1723–1746

Brian Bonnyman

Founded in Edinburgh in June 1723, ‘the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland’ was the first of Europe’s patriotic improving societies. Consisting of around 300 members drawn predominantly from the Scottish aristocracy, landed gentry and legal profession, the society quickly widened its concerns from purely agricultural matters to the wider economy and the patriotic goal of national improvement. Despite its early foundation, eight years before the Dublin Society and thirty-one years before the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in England, the Society of Improvers has received surprisingly little attention.¹ Of contemporary societies, the Dublin Society was undoubtedly the closest to the Society of Improvers, both in terms of chronology, outlook and

¹For example, Hudson’s influential survey fails to mention the society and begins with the Dublin Society. Kenneth Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit: British Agricultural Societies in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Hugh Evelyn 1972), 3. This lack of attention is due in part to the paucity of surviving sources for the society, whose only surviving records are those published in the society’s *Select Transactions*. The society is generally held to have ceased its activities around 1746, but may have continued on in a less active form for another decade. Robert Maxwell of Arkland, described it in 1756 as ‘now declining, by the Death of near all the Founders’. Robert Maxwell (ed.), *Select Transactions of the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland* (Edinburgh 1743); Robert Maxwell, *The Practical Husbandman: being a collection of miscellaneous papers on Husbandry etc.* (Edinburgh 1757), 383. The fullest account of the society is in D. D. McElroy in *Scotland’s Age of Improvement, A Survey of Eighteenth-Century Literary Clubs and Societies* (Washington: Pullman 1969), 8–10.

practice. The Society of Improvers cited their influence over the founding of the Dublin Society as amongst their most important achievements, and subsequently quoted from its publications and praised its activities.² Recent research into the Dublin Society has emphasised the extent to which its establishment was a response to Ireland's particular constitutional and economic position within the developing British Empire, while also highlighting the society's focus on agrarian improvement as the key to Irish 'national flourishing'.³ This essay will argue that the Society of Improvers can be seen as a similar institutional response to Scotland's related, but very different position within the emerging British polity. Building on the work of N. T. Phillipson, who has argued that the society represented the first of a number of civic institutions that took on 'para-parliamentary' functions and attempted to provide civic leadership and economic regeneration to post-union Scotland, this essay aims to place the founding of the society in its wider political and socio-economic context.⁴ By examining its social composition, agenda and practices, it also attempts to reconstruct the key aims and attitudes of the society, and, in doing so, to locate it in the development of the wider culture of improvement that emerged as the dominant ideology of the Scottish landed classes in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Precedents and contexts

The founding of the Society of Improvers in the summer of 1723 can be seen as one of a number of cultural initiatives that marked the

²In 1743, Robert Maxwell of Arkland noted, 'The Sea itself has not been able to confine the Influence of your Example; for the *Irish* have entered into a Society in Imitation of yours; and it appears, even by what they have published, that they are exceedingly useful and of singular Service to their Country'. Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, ix.

³James Livesey, 'The Dublin Society in Eighteenth-Century Irish Political Thought', *The Historical Journal*, 47 (2004): 615–40. See also Livesey's chapter in this volume.

⁴N. T. Phillipson, 'Towards a definition of the Scottish Enlightenment' in *City and Society in the eighteenth century*, eds. P. Fritz and D. Williams (Toronto: Hakkert 1973), 125–47; N. T. Phillipson, 'Culture and Society in the 18th Century Province: The Case of Edinburgh and the Scottish Enlightenment', in *The University in Society*, vol. II, ed. L. Stone (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1974), 407–49; N. T. Phillipson, 'Lawyers, Landowners, and the Civic Leadership of Post-Union Scotland', *The Juridical Review* 21 (1976:2), 97–120; N. T. Phillipson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, eds. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981), 19–40.

re-emergence of Edinburgh as the country's centre for social, cultural and political life after the initial economic and political disruption that followed the union settlement.⁵ These initiatives, which included the establishment of the city's first regular assembly rooms in 1723, a circulating library in 1725, and the Musical Society and art school later in the decade, sought to combine the spread of polite sociability with the patriotic goal of national 'improvement' – an 'improvement' that was conceived of in both cultural and economic terms.⁶ In terms of formal precedents, Scotland could trace an associationist tradition back to the small *Vitioso* clubs sponsored by the polymath physician Sir Robert Sibbald in the 1680s and 90s.⁷ This was continued in the early post-union years by the emergence in Edinburgh of a number of small voluntary clubs, the most influential being the poet Allan Ramsay's Easy Club (1712–15), and the philosophical Rankenian Club (c.1716–1771).⁸ The Society of Improvers was, however, on an altogether different scale, both in terms of its membership and its practical ambitions. The closest precedent was probably Sibbald's unrealised proposals for the founding of a 'Royal Society of Scotland for Improving of Useful Arts' made in the 1690s, which envisaged practical improvements, including agriculture, alongside literary and philosophical interests, but failed to win the necessary political backing.⁹ As N. T. Phillipson has argued, however, in terms of its social composition and improving agenda, the Society of Improvers real precursor was the pre-union Scots Parliament of the 1690s.¹⁰

Although the Scots had actively pursued a policy of economic development since the early 1680s, with the founding of the Privy Council Committee on Trade under James, Duke of York, the pace and scope of

⁵Phillipson, 'Culture and Society', 435; Phillipson, 'Lawyers, Landowners, and the Civic Leadership of Post-Union Scotland', 110.

⁶Roger Emerson, 'The contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. A. Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), 20; Ian D. Whyte, *Scotland's Society and Economy in Transition, c.1500–c.1760* (London: Macmillan 1997), 67.

⁷For Edinburgh clubs for the Intelligentsia, see Roger Emerson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment and the End of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 21 (1988): 33–66, 65.

⁸Phillipson, 'Culture and Society', 433–5.

⁹John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005), 112; Charles W. J. Withers, 'Sibbald, Sir Robert (1641–1722)', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004).

¹⁰Phillipson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', 31–2.

this policy radically altered after the Revolution Settlement of 1688–9. The settlement saw the re-emergence of the nobility and landed classes as the dominant force in the Scottish Parliament, and created the framework for what was to become a much more independent and pro-active institution.¹¹ It was in this context that the parliament began to pursue what has been characterised as a new ‘economic politics’, centred on an ambitious raft of improving legislation and initiatives which attempted to stimulate the economy, improve the country’s balance of trade and emulate the more advanced economies of England and Holland. These included the founding of the Bank of Scotland and the Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies (both established in 1695), and the creation of a number of joint-stock companies intended to encourage the woollen and linen trades.¹² Although the encouragement of trade remained the parliament’s primary objective, in 1695 it also passed a number of acts that aimed to encourage agricultural improvement by allowing landowners to consolidate traditional holdings and enclose common land, legislation which, as one historian has noted, amounted to ‘a definite policy of encouraging agrarian reform’ and which would provide the legal underpinning for the improvement of Scottish agriculture in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹³

Although research has shown that Scotland’s agriculture was far from static during the seventeenth century, little attempt seems to have been made by the Scottish elites to actively encourage improvement. By the 1690s, however, commentators were beginning to lament the relative backwardness of Scottish agriculture and making the first proposals for its improvement.¹⁴ This growing concern was exacerbated by the series of climatic and demographic disasters that beset Scotland in the final years of the century. A series of poor harvests and particularly harsh winters from 1695–9 devastated Scottish agriculture and led to what

¹¹ Richard Saville, ‘Scottish Modernisation Prior to the Industrial Revolution, 1688–1763’, in *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives*, eds. T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (East Linton: Tuckwell Press 1999), 8. See also Tim Harris, ‘Reluctant Revolutionaries? The Scots and the Revolution of 1688–89’, in *Politics and the Political Imagination in Later Stuart Britain: Essays Presented to Lois Green Schwoerer*, ed. Howard Nenner (University of Rochester Press 1998), 97–116.

¹² Saville, ‘Scottish Modernisation’, 6–9; Ian D. Whyte, *Scotland’s Society and Economy in Transition, c. 1560–1760* (London: Macmillan 1997), 154.

¹³ The key acts were the ‘Division of runrig act’ and the ‘Division of commonty act’, both passed in 1695. Ian Whyte, *Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald 1979), 100, 98–110.

¹⁴ Whyte, *Agriculture and Society*, 252–5.

has been described as ‘probably the most severe mortality crisis in the nation’s history’, with famine and emigration combining to produce an estimated 13 per cent fall in population.¹⁵ At the same time, the failure of the Darien scheme, the Company of Scotland’s disastrous attempt to establish a trading colony on the Isthmus of Panama, with losses of over £150,000 representing, by some estimates, up to a quarter of the country’s liquid capital, fatally undermined Scotland’s aspirations to economic and political independence within the composite monarchy and further limited the options available to the Scots.¹⁶ Although the general consensus of the political community behind the economic legislation of the mid-1690s broke down in the polarisation of Scottish politics in the run up to union with England in 1707, the various factions remained broadly agreed on Scotland’s pressing need for economic development.¹⁷

The establishment of the Society of Improvers was in some important respects a revival of the pre-union attempts to revive the Scottish economy. Although the immediate dislocation and political factionalism of the early post-union years had subsided by the 1720s, the founding of the society was also an admission that incorporating union with England had failed to deliver the rapid economic growth that its proponents had hoped for. Although historians formerly argued that the short-term economic effects of the union in Scotland had been broadly neutral, recent research has suggested that the impact, although ‘enormously varied and complex’, was much more dramatic than was previously believed.¹⁸ While there were substantial and almost immediate increases in the cross-border cattle trade, and similar rises in the export of grain and the tobacco trade, these successes were off set by a marked down turn in Scotland’s woollen and linen industries, the country’s largest exports, with the brewing and paper making trades also being negatively affected.¹⁹ The possible downsides of entering into a free

¹⁵ Christopher A. Whatley, *The Scots and the Union* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2006), 141–2; T. C. Smout, ‘The Improvers and the Scottish Environment’, in *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives*, eds. T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (East Linton: Tuckwell Press 1999), 211.

¹⁶ David Armitage, ‘Making the Empire British: Scotland and the Atlantic World, 1542–1717’, *Past and Present* 155 (1997): 34–63, 58.

¹⁷ Saville, ‘Scottish Modernisation’, 12–13.

¹⁸ Christopher A. Whatley, *Scottish Society, 1707–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2000), 53.

¹⁹ T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation* (London: Penguin 1999), 55; Whatley, *Scots and the Union*, 335–8.

trade zone with a larger, richer and more economically advanced country had been well rehearsed during the union debates, and had led to a range of protectionist clauses in the treaty that sought to protect vulnerable Scottish interests.²⁰ Despite these concessions, however, increased competition from more advanced English and overseas manufactures combined with Westminster legislation aimed primarily at supporting English mercantile interests to hit Scotland's already struggling economy particularly hard. For many, the most tangible economic effect of the union settlement was the dramatic increase in taxation, which rose five-fold after 1707, and was accompanied by the introduction of a much more effective excise service. The effects of these ongoing economic problems were compounded by the fact they came after expectations of the economic benefits of union had been raised to unrealistic levels.²¹ The overall effect was the widespread belief that far from reviving the Scottish economy, the union had actually made the economic situation worse. The fact that Westminster seemed at best indifferent or even dismissive to Scottish sensitivities heightened this perception and contributed to the Earl of Findlater's 1713 motion in the House of Lords to dissolve the union, a move which was supported by all the Scottish peers and only failed by four proxy votes.²² The contrast between the vigorous (if ultimately ineffectual) programme of economic reforms attempted by Scottish Parliament and the subsequent disinterest of the British Parliament in Scottish affairs is stark. Economic legislation concerning Scotland fell from fifty-three acts in the twenty years preceding union to only six in the twenty years that followed.²³

The unpopularity of the union and its perceived negative economic effects also underpinned much of the civil disorder that took place in the post-union period. Although the Jacobite rising of 1715, which saw over 10,000 men in arms, was essentially driven by dynastic and confessional concerns, it also drew on a wide-spread anti-unionism that had a strong economic basis. By the early 1720s the situation in terms of civil disorder based on economic grievances was, if anything, deteriorating. The winter of 1719–1720 saw serious food riots breaking out up and down the east coast, which in terms of 'their size, intensity,

²⁰Whatley, *Scots and the Union*, 284–6, 307–11; A. I. MacInnes, *Union and Empire: The Making of the United Kingdom in 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 319.

²¹Whatley, *Scottish Society*, 57; Whatley, *Scots and the Union*, 329.

²²William Ferguson, *Scotland 1698 to the Present* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press 1994), 61–2.

²³Whatley, *Scots and the Union*, 339.

geographical spread and longevity' were unprecedented in Scotland.²⁴ These were followed in 1724 and 1725 by the large scale civil unrest of the so-called Levellers' Revolt in Galloway in the south west, and, most seriously of all, by the Malt Tax riots of 1725, which broke out in urban areas across the Lowlands. In Glasgow, the scene of the worst riots, it took 1,300 troops and a number of weeks to restore order, creating a situation whereby Scotland had become almost 'ungovernable'.²⁵ As C. A. Whatley has summarised:

The roots of the problem were poverty and the weakness of domestic manufacturing. Expansion was essential to provide full- and part-time employment not only for the growing numbers of village and town dwellers but also to sustain rural communities, as well as to provide, by stimulating demand, the means by which agricultural reform could advance further.²⁶

It was against this backdrop and with these pressing concerns that by the 1720s a consensus had begun to emerge amongst Scotland's landed elite that economic development would not happen spontaneously, but would have to be actively promoted.²⁷ And it was in this context and with these aims that the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture was formed in the summer of 1723.

Membership, constitution and aims

According to the account later recorded in the society's published *Select Transactions*, the Society of Improvers was initiated by the duke of Atholl and a group of 'other Persons of great Distinction', who 'consulted together, formed the Plan, and began the Work'.²⁸ In a later account, Maxwell of Arkland, the society's secretary described how, 'several Noblemen and Gentlemen, afflicted with the Consideration of the low Condition of *Agriculture and Manufactures*, and excited by Love to their Country, did institute *the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge*

²⁴Whatley, *Scots and the Union*, 341–2, 344; Whatley, *Scottish Society*, 187–94.

²⁵Whatley, *Scots and the Union*, 345.

²⁶Whatley, *Scottish Society*, 60.

²⁷Rosalind Mitchison, 'Patriotism and National Identity in Eighteenth-century Scotland', in *Historical Studies 11: Nationality and the Pursuit of National Independence*, ed. T. W. Moody (Belfast: Appletree Press 1978), 76–7.

²⁸Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, iv.

of Agriculture in Scotland; and the Number of the Members increased so much, that it amounted to upwards of 300 of the Flower of the Nation'.²⁹ According to the society's first publication, which appeared the year after the society's foundation, the practicalities of Scotland's post-union constitutional position had an important bearing on her propensity to improve. The fact that the management of Scotland's public affairs were now confined to 'a few hands' meant that the 'main body' of Scotland's gentry were able to reside at home and were thus free to 'seriously apply' themselves to the improvement of her manufactories and 'the tillage of our grounds'.³⁰

The list of the society's 301 members later published in the *Transactions* in 1743 reveals a membership drawn almost wholly from the landed classes, including a significant proportion from the highest ranks of the Scottish peerage. In addition to the duke of Atholl, the dukes of Hamilton and Perth were members, along with twenty earls (including the earls of Islay, Hopetoun, Kinnoul and Stair), the marquis of Lothian and Tweeddale, the viscount of Arbuthnot, twenty-one lords and forty-five knights.³¹ Sixty-eight members were designated by their legal professions on the membership list, including nine senators of the College of Justice (Scotland's most senior judges) and forty-nine advocates. The majority of these lawyers would have been landowners themselves or come from landed families, and seem to have participated in the society 'by virtue of their estates rather than their gowns', although growing absenteeism by the greater landlords also meant an increasing role for lawyers as agents administrating absentee estates.³² The membership also included a number of leading members of the Scottish public administration, including two Barons of the Exchequer and three Lord Provosts of Edinburgh. Four professors from the University of Edinburgh were listed, including the distinguished

²⁹ Maxwell, *Practical Husbandman*, 382.

³⁰ A treatise concerning the manner of fallowing of ground raising of grass seeds, and training of lint and hemp for the increase and improvement of the linen manufactories in Scotland (Edinburgh: 1724), 4–5. The work is usually attributed to Thomas Hope of Rankeillor. See Heather Holmes, 'The circulation of Scottish agricultural books during the eighteenth century', *Agricultural History Review* 54 (2006:1): 45–78, 48.

³¹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, xviii–xxiii.

³² Phillipson, 'Lawyers, Landowners', 111; Mitchison, 'Patriotism and National Identity', 83; I. H. Adams, 'The Agents of Agricultural Change', in *The Making of the Scottish Countryside*, eds. M. L. Parry and T. R. Slater (London: Croom Helm 1980), 171.

professor of mathematics (and later founder member of the Edinburgh Philosophical Society) Colin MacLaurin, as well as two other members who were described as ‘mathematicians’.³³ Of other members designated by their professions, there were seven doctors, two booksellers, six army officers and an ‘engineer’. Perhaps surprisingly, given the society’s later concerns with the encouragement of manufactures, only three members were listed as merchants, one of whom, Mr Archibald Eagle, acted as the society’s ‘seedman’. And despite the society’s attempts to attract tenant farmers, the only professional husbandmen included on the list were three ‘gardeners’.³⁴ Another group notable by their absence was the clergy, members of which would play an important role in the improving movement in the second half of the century but were not represented in the society or the wider debates over improvement in the 1720s and 30s.³⁵

The membership included almost all of the most notable agricultural improvers active in Scotland during the first half of the eighteenth century:³⁶ from the nobility, John Dalrymple, second earl of Stair (1673–1747), Thomas Hamilton, sixth earl of Haddington (1680–1735), and Charles Hope, first earl of Hopetoun (1681–1742); from the gentry the MPs John Cockburn of Ormiston (1679–1758) and Archibald Grant of Monymusk (1696–1778), probably the most highly regarded improvers of their day, and Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (1676–1755) and Patrick Lindsay (c.1686–1753), whose writings helped shape the debate over the future of the Scottish economy during the 1720s and 30s. The most influential and active members of the society were Sir Thomas Hope of Rankeillor (c.1681–1771), who was one of its founder members and elected its first president, and its energetic secretary, Robert Maxwell of Arkland (1695–1765).³⁷ As secretary of the society from its foundation until its demise, as editor and publisher of the society’s *Select Transactions* and as author of much of material included therein, Maxwell was probably more responsible for shaping the aims

³³Roger Emerson, ‘The Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, 1737–1747’, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 12 (1979:2): 154–91, 161.

³⁴Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, xviii–xxiii.

³⁵Mitchison, ‘Patriotism and National Identity’, 80–1.

³⁶The only notable exception is the improving author William Mackintosh of Borlum (1657–1743) who was imprisoned for his involvement in the Jacobite rebellion. Despite this, he seems to have cooperated with the society during his imprisonment. Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 274.

³⁷See Peter G. Vasey, ‘Hope, Sir Thomas, eighth baronet (c. 1681–1771)’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

and practices of the society than any other single individual. Through his work with the society, his career as a supervisor of improvements and his subsequent publications and public lectures on agriculture, he was one of the most influential improvers of eighteenth-century Scotland.³⁸

Apart from the dominance of the landowning classes, another notable feature of the society was the geographical range of its membership. Although the largest concentration of members was to be found in the counties around Edinburgh, there were significant numbers spread throughout the Lowlands and southern Highlands, from Caithness in the northeast to Galloway in the southwest. Indeed, apart from the Western Isles and the north and western Highlands, members of the society could be found in every county of Scotland.³⁹ In what seems to have been a revival of the cross-party consensus of the pre-union political community for economic improvement, the society included members drawn from across the political spectrum. Both sides of the union debates were represented, eight members having been commissioners for the Treaty of Union, while a number of prominent members, including Hope of Rankeillor, had opposed its signing.⁴⁰ Notable members of the two main Whig interests, the 'Squadron' and the 'Argathelians', were represented, as were a number with strong links to the Jacobite cause (including George Lockhart of Carnwath and Laurence Oliphant of Gask).⁴¹

These key characteristics of the society's membership would have an important bearing on its aims and activities. The society's membership made up a significant proportion of the total number of substantial landowners in Scotland (estimated to be around 1,500 in c.1700) and

³⁸ Maxwell was responsible for replying to members' queries, material which later formed the basis for the society's *Select Transactions*. Although edited and published by Maxwell, the *Transactions* were revised and approved by a committee appointed by the society. Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, ii. Maxwell's later publications included *The Practical Beemaster* (1747) and *The Practical Husbandman* (1757). His public lectures on agriculture, delivered in Edinburgh in 1756, are thought to have been the first on the subject in Britain. W. A. S. Hewins, 'Maxwell, Robert (1695–1765)', rev. Rosalind Mitchison, in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

³⁹ R. C. Boud, 'Scottish Agricultural Improvement Societies, 1723–1835', *Review of Scottish Culture* 1 (1984): 70–90, 72.

⁴⁰ McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement*, 8; Vasey, 'Hope, Sir Thomas, eighth baronet'.

⁴¹ See M. Sankey and D. Szechi, 'Elite Culture and the Decline of Scottish Jacobitism 1716–1745', *Past and Present* 173 (2001): 90–128.

of its 130–150 or so titled peers.⁴² This gave the society both the legitimacy and authority to speak on behalf of the Scottish landed interest and, to a large extent, the nation itself. On the pragmatic level of pursuing its goals of agrarian improvement, the wide geographical range of the membership also allowed the society to advise on and, to some extent, experiment over a range of soil types and climatic conditions, the importance of which the society repeatedly stressed. Finally, the social status of its membership increased the probability of encouraging improvement by example and this, coupled with the geographical range of the membership, made it possible for the founders to envisage pockets of improvement in every county acting as examples for neighbouring landowners and farmers.⁴³

The general aims of the society were first set out in a resolution of 8 June 1723 that announced its formation as ‘The Honourable The Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland’:

The Noblemen and Gentlemen mentioned, considering in how low a State the Manufactures in *Scotland* are, and how much the right Husbandry and Improvement of Ground is neglected, partly through the want of Skill in those who make Profession thereof, and partly through the want of due Encouragement for making proper Experiments of the several different Soils in this Country capable of: Therefore, being willing and desirous to contribute to the Advancement of so great a Benefit as may be reaped from the two Articles mentioned, they do resolve to meet . . . and to have under their Consideration such Measures as may be proper for advancing the foresaid Ends.⁴⁴

The following month the first formal meeting of the society took place, where a provisional committee was appointed to draw up a ‘Scheme of General Rules’ to be presented to the society in a week’s time.⁴⁵ The ten-part ‘Scheme of Resolutions’ put before the society on 20 July set out both the organisational structure of the society and the initial methods by which it would attempt to achieve its aims. The society would be headed by a committee, to be known as the ‘Society’s

⁴²Robertson, *Case for the Enlightenment*, 86. John Shaw estimates the figure of active peers during the period 1707–1745 at 196. John Shaw, *The Management of Scottish Society 1707–1764: Power, Nobles, Lawyers, Edinburgh Agents and English Influences* (Edinburgh: John Donald 1983), 5.

⁴³Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 74, viii.

⁴⁴Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 3.

⁴⁵Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 3–4.

Council', consisting of twenty-five members, thirteen of whom were required to be resident 'in and about' Edinburgh and three of whom would form a quorum. The society would meet quarterly, with its 'anniversary' or annual general meeting to take place on the penultimate Saturday of February, at which point the council and president would be elected. Once appointed, the council was empowered to make further 'Rules and By-laws for their own Government' and to conduct the business of society general aims as they saw fit.⁴⁶ It was essentially through this body that the practical work of the society was to be carried out.

The scheme of resolutions passed at the society's first meeting was largely concerned with the society's two main aims: firstly, the accumulation and pursuit of knowledge of the best methods of husbandry, and secondly, the diffusion of this knowledge to the society's membership and the wider community. In pursuit of the first aim, the council was to divide itself into separate sub-groups or 'classes', each examining a different aspect of agriculture. Their findings were then to be recorded and then discussed and revised by the council as a whole. The council was also to correspond with 'the most Intelligent in all the different Counties in the Nation' regarding the different methods used in managing their lands, so that 'what may be amiss may be corrected, and what is profitable imitated'. Similarly, the members of the society were also to be invited to submit details of the current practices employed on their own farms.⁴⁷ Any funds remaining after administrative costs were to be used to build up a library and to pay for any 'experiments' or 'Machines of Husbandry' deemed necessary by the society. To this end, advertisements were to be placed to attract suitably skilled workmen and artisans with the aim of building up a pool of skilled labour for the use of the society and its members.⁴⁸

The knowledge subsequently accumulated by the society was to be disseminated in a number of ways. Firstly, the council's findings would be written up and then communicated to the general meetings of the society. The council would also offer advice regarding the management of any of the members' farms or grounds free of charge, on the receipt of a description of the 'exact Situation and Nature of them' along with

⁴⁶ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 4.

⁴⁷ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 5.

⁴⁸ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 5–6. The society had provided 'Models of such Instruments of Husbandry, which have been found upon Trial much to abridge the Trouble of the Labourer'. Hope, *Treatise concerning the manner of fallowing*, 5–6.

specific queries. After following the council's advice, members would be requested to send the secretary a detailed account of the results, which would then be published in the newspapers.⁴⁹ As the published transactions of the society would later record, this became one of the most important methods by which the society attempted to influence agrarian practice throughout the country.

From its outset, the society was also keenly aware of the need to reach the tenant farmers who actually worked the land. To this end, the members were to be encouraged to form small societies of 'Gentlemen and Farmers' throughout the country to further diffuse the methods recommended by the council. It was also resolved that entry and membership fees, which had both been set at five shillings, would be waived for any farmer or gardener who wished to join the society, on condition that the council found them suitably qualified.⁵⁰ This intention to reach a wider audience was further stressed when the sub-committee appointed to oversee the society's first publication were instructed to use a straightforward and 'familiar Stile, such as the Country Farmers might easily understand' and to ensure that their directions should be made in the 'most circumstantial Manner they could devise'.⁵¹

Although the initial scheme of resolutions concentrated exclusively on agriculture, it soon became apparent that the encouragement of related manufactures, in particular the linen industry, would play a central role in the society's early activities.

Encouraging manufactures

Introducing the society's attempts to improve manufacturing and fisheries, Robert Maxwell noted, 'after they had laid a foundation upon Husbandry, the life and support of all the Arts and Sciences, and the sources of all solid riches, took the languishing state of the manufactures very early under consideration; with a design not only to prevent the then shameful extent of Import, but, if possible, to make provision for export'.⁵²

From the outset, the linen industry was singled out by the society as being of particular importance, both because of its leading role in the Scottish economy and its close links to agriculture and rural employment. Linen goods were by some way Scotland's largest export

⁴⁹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 6.

⁵⁰ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 5.

⁵¹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 8.

⁵² Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 309.

by value in the early eighteenth-century, accounting for approximately 22 per cent of exports by value in 1704/05.⁵³ As the industry was predominantly part-time and domestically based, linen spinning and weaving were also important sources of rural employment: as the second largest employer in the economy behind agriculture, improving the linen industry had the dual benefit of raising landowners' rentals while reducing the numbers of poor who would otherwise have to be supported.⁵⁴ The promotion of linen was also closely allied to the society's broader aims of agrarian improvement, as linen flax could be grown in Scotland, a practice the society was particularly keen to encourage. It was estimated that less than half of the flax used in the Scottish linen industry was home grown, with the remainder being imported from Holland and the Baltic region. Furthermore, what flax was cultivated in Scotland tended to be grown from imported seed and was generally held to be of inferior quality, contributing in turn to the notoriously poor standard of the yarn and cloth produced from it.⁵⁵ The improvement of the linen industry therefore offered the combined benefits of stimulating the agricultural sector while, by reducing imports of foreign flax and flax seed and increasing exports of higher quality linen products, improving the nation's balance of trade. Maxwell highlighted the importance of this link between agrarian improvement, commercial development and economic independence in his introduction to the society's *Select Transactions*. As long as Scotland was dependant upon foreign markets for flax, flax seed, or indeed any other raw materials, he argued, 'we only farm our Manufactures, and consequently our most profitable Trade, from other Nations, on very precarious Titles'. Only when the improved knowledge and practice in flax cultivation was widespread, Maxwell concluded, 'shall we have full Power and Command over our Trade and Commerce; for they can only flourish as Husbandry, the Foundation on which they are built, succeeds'.⁵⁶

Another important consideration in the society's emphasis on the linen industry was the awareness that Scottish economic development would have to take place within the existing British mercantile system. Unlike Scotland's other main textile manufacture, wool, linen could be

⁵³ Richard Saville, *Bank of Scotland: A History, 1695–1995* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1996), 59–62.

⁵⁴ Alastair J. Durie, *The Scottish Linen Industry in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: John Donald 1979), 11.

⁵⁵ Durie, *Scottish Linen Industry*, 35.

⁵⁶ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, xi–xii.

promoted as a complementary 'staple' to the English woollen industry rather than as a competitor. As the society's president, Sir Thomas Hope noted in private correspondence, it was understood that only public money could 'retrieve and establish the trade of this country' and 'the getting thereof depends upon the countries being as harmonious as possible in the laying down of a rational and unpartial plan; not interfering with the staple of South Britten'.⁵⁷ This need for economic development that would be complementary to the English economy was made all the more urgent by the serious decline of the Scottish linen industry that had set in following the act of union. The freer competition from Irish and continental manufacturers that followed virtually wiped out the Scottish fine linen trade, while a range of British legislation passed between 1711 and 1717, aimed primarily to protect the English woollen industry, imposed damaging export duties on Scottish linen.⁵⁸ It was with these pressing concerns that the society began its campaign to encourage the manufacture of linen in Scotland.

An early indication of the society's interest in this area was given at the first meeting of the society's governing council in July 1723, where it was proposed that the society's first publication would include directions on sowing linen flax with instructions on dressing and preparing it for manufacture.⁵⁹ Over the following months the council set up a number of committees to investigate the shortcomings of the linen industry and to look into methods for improving the quality and overall standard of linen cloth. This included examining ways of enforcing existing parliamentary legislation concerning linen production in Scotland, and seeking parliamentary funding for premiums to encourage better practice.⁶⁰ The importance of the campaign was also highlighted by the involvement of some of the society's most senior

⁵⁷Quoted in Shaw, *Management of Scottish Society I*, 129–30. Some improvers believed that wool was a more natural staple than linen. See also Mitchison, 'Patriotism and National Identity', 81; Gentaro Seki, 'Policy debate on economic development in Scotland: the 1720s to the 1730s', in *The Rise of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, eds. Tatsuya Sakamoto and Hideo Tanaka (London: Routledge 2003), 22–38.

⁵⁸Durie, *Scottish Linen Industry*, 8–9, 10.

⁵⁹Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 7–8.

⁶⁰Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 309. These were the Acts of 1712 and 1714 'to Prevent Abuses in the Making of Linen Cloth and Regulating the Length, Breadths and equal Sorting of Yarn for each Piece made in Scotland'. These were 'almost completely disregarded, primarily because no effective mechanisms existed for enforcement'. Durie, *Scottish Linen Industry*, 12. On premiums, see Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 309.

members. In early 1724 the duke of Atholl supplied the society with details of 'several good Acts and Regulations made by him for suppression the Frauds and Abuses' in the 'weaving, bleaching and dressing of Linen-cloth', which the council resolved to publish along with their own observations and an abridgement of the relevant parliamentary acts.⁶¹ Around the same time the duke of Hamilton made a patriotic appeal to his fellow members and their families to boycott foreign linen and to use only British manufactured cloth for all their clothing and household needs. The council, being 'highly approven' of Hamilton's call, printed and distributed his resolution to its members and published it in the newspapers. As a consequence it was later noted that 'even at publick Assemblies of Persons of the greatest Distinction, the whole Company appeared dressed in Linen of our own Manufacture', and further patriotic resolutions followed against the drinking of foreign spirits, in order to encourage the distilling of grain in Scotland and to keep the 'great Sums annually sent to *France* for Brandy' at home.⁶²

After investigating the various bad practices committed in the manufacturing of linen cloth, which led to the poor quality that they believed was the fundamental cause of the trade's decline, the council widened its campaign to the more active role of attempting to 'suppress these abuses'. Extracts of the existing legislation were to be published and circulated to local officials, who were to have them read out at the parish churches and market towns, while members of the society were directed to use 'their own Authority within the several Counties where they live' to ensure that the acts were enforced. The following year, in February 1725, the society resolved that it should recommend to the sheriffs and justices of the peace in each county to call together all the weavers and bleachers within their jurisdictions and direct them 'under Caution and Penalty' to weave and bleach all linen cloth to the regulation standards. The council also resolved that society members should exert their influence over their neighbours to persuade landlords not to shield transgressors by trying them under their own heritable jurisdictions, handing out what it referred to as 'Mock-fines', which, it argued, undermined the existing legislation.⁶³

⁶¹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 310–11.

⁶² Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, iv–v. For an example of such a 'patriotic ball', where all attending had to wear home fabrics see Mitchison, 'Patriotism and National Identity', 75.

⁶³ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 311–13, 315. On landowners protecting their tenants' bad practice see Sir John Clerk, 'Observations of the Present Circumstances of Scotland, 1730', *Scottish History Society*, 4th series, ii (Edinburgh 1965), 195–6.

As it was investigating the shortcomings of the Scottish linen industry and attempting to use the authority of its members to enforce existing laws, the society also began to look into the possibility of securing new legislation to help improve the quality of the product and further encourage its manufacture. From the outset of its campaign, the society had used Scottish networks overseas to look for insights into better methods and practices. Attempts had been made to attract linen weavers and bleachers from Rouen, while a correspondent in Holland, who was commissioned to compare the industry there with practices at home, argued that the best way of learning the 'secret' of Dutch bleaching would be to 'bribe some of their good servants to come to Scotland'.⁶⁴ But it was Ireland and, in particular, the legislation that had led to the setting up of the Board of Trustees of the Linen Manufacturers of Ireland in 1711 that provided the society with what it saw as the most applicable model for the public encouragement of the linen industry in Scotland. The Scots largely attributed the rapid growth that had occurred in the linen industry in Ireland to its ability to grow its own flax and the regulatory encouragement given by the founding of the Irish Board.⁶⁵ The society's interest in Ireland as a potential model was evident as early as February 1724, when the council ordered copies of the designs for looms and other instruments in the Huguenot émigré Louis Crommelin's 1705 *Essay towards the Improving of the Hempen and Flaxen Manufactures in the Kingdom of Ireland*.⁶⁶ At the same meeting, the society commissioned an Edinburgh bookseller, James Macewen, to procure from his correspondents in Dublin copies of the petitions and other applications that had been made in Ireland to secure government funding for the Irish Board of Trustees, along with copies of the resultant

⁶⁴ It was recommended that one of the society members, Mr Gordon of Cluny, should 'enquire about, and treat with some of the most proper Weavers and Bleachers of Linen Cloth and dressers of lint and hemp' to see 'upon what encouragement they would engage to come to Scotland, in order to instruct the people in this country in the several parts of their respective trades and employments'. Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 310. 'A Letter from Holland' was included in its *Select Transactions*, 316–21.

⁶⁵ Durie, *Scottish Linen Industry*, 12–13.

⁶⁶ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 311. The society's *Treatise on fallowing* noted 'It could be wished our Country People here would observe well, and follow the above and following Directions of that ingenious Man [Crommelin]; for to him the Kingdom of Ireland to this Day owe their flourishing in that Manufactory'. Hope, *Treatise on fallowing*, 75. For Crommelin and the Irish linen industry, see Raymond Gylton, *Ireland's Huguenots and Their Refuge, 1662–1745: An Unlikely Haven* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press 2005), 158–60.

legislation.⁶⁷ The council also proposed that one of the managers of the Royal Linen Manufacture of Ireland, who was now residing in Scotland, should be invited to Edinburgh at the society's expense in order to converse on 'the several Particulars of the *Irish Manufacture*' and to learn 'upon what Stock and Footing the same was established'. The following year, James Macdonald, a linen draper 'lately concerned in the *Irish Manufactory*' was interviewed by the council regarding the various stages of linen production and was commissioned to have examples of various 'Tools, Instruments and Materials' made for the use of the society. Macdonald also furnished the council with details of the establishment and methods of Royal Manufacture in Ireland, including the relevant acts of parliament, and an account of the powers of the trustees and their instructions regarding the stamping of linen cloth. A further committee was then set up by the council to compare the British and Irish acts of parliament regarding the manufacturing of linen cloth, 'To observe what was most material in both; and to point out wherein they are deficient' in order for an application to be made to Parliament 'as might be effectual for obtaining proper Laws and Encouragement for carrying on the Linen-manufactures in *Scotland* to better advantage'.⁶⁸

The society's attempts to promote the linen industry and other manufactures through legislative means culminated with its cooperation with the Royal Convention of Burghs from the summer of 1726 in the campaign to found a Scottish Board of Trustees on the model of the Irish Linen Board. The Convention of Royal Burghs, the independent representative body of Scotland's privileged trading communities, had been preserved by the Treaty of Union, and had thereafter assumed a lobbying role to the British parliament on behalf of the mercantile interests of its members, employing agents in London to represent their various causes to parliament.⁶⁹ In July 1725 the magistrates of Dunfermline had petitioned the Convention for an application to parliament for new legislation to improve the failing quality of linen being produced by introducing a public stamp to guarantee quality.⁷⁰ The Convention appointed a committee to consult with the Society

⁶⁷ This remit was later widened to all the acts of the Irish Parliament relating to the manufacture of linen. Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 311–12.

⁶⁸ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 314–15.

⁶⁹ Bob Harris, 'The Scots, the Westminster parliament, and the British state in the eighteenth century' in *Parliaments, nations and identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660–1850*, ed. Julian Hoppit (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003), 125; Whatley, *Scottish Society*, 58–9.

⁷⁰ Durie, *Scottish Linen Industry*, 15.

of Improvers on the matter, and in February 1726 a letter was sent to Scottish members of parliament in London outlining what was described as ‘the improvers proposition’. This included the proposal that a Board of Trustees for Manufactures and Fisheries be established, funded by money which had been set aside by Article XV of the Treaty of Union to encourage the manufactures of Scotland, but had yet to be used. After prolonged debate in a largely hostile Westminster, the motion to fund the proposals was passed, mainly due to the intervention of Robert Walpole, who argued that economic integration was the best way to secure stability north of the border. After a formal invitation from the Crown, a committee, again dominated by society members, drew up a further set of proposals, and the resultant legislation, passed in May 1727, set up the Board of Trustees for Fisheries and Manufactures to administer the £6,000 per annum allocated to improve the Scottish economy.⁷¹

The founding of the Board of Trustees was widely regarded as the Society of Improvers’ most significant achievement, with Robert Maxwell later arguing that it represented ‘the greatest national Good that has been done this Country these hundred Years past’.⁷² Certainly, the establishment of the Board marked the point where the British government began to promote economic development in Scotland as an active policy with the central aim of securing social and political stability, and the Board was the first of several semi-public bodies that combined political motives with improving aims.⁷³ In campaigning for the foundation of the Board, the society had taken upon itself the task of analysing the existing economic situation and developing a strategy to encourage the improvement of a key sector of the Scottish economy. By attempting to enforce existing statutes, by investigating and borrowing ways to improve and encourage the industry, and finally, by lobbying and drafting new legislation, the society had assumed a clearly para-parliamentary role with the ultimate goal of national improvement.⁷⁴ The founding of the Board also effectively ended the society’s active involvement in the promotion of manufactures, a role that was

⁷¹ Durie, *Scottish Linen Industry*, 15–16, 18; Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 22.

⁷² Maxwell does so in praising the earl of Islay (society member and political manager of Scotland under Walpole from the mid-1720s). *Select Transactions*, vi–vii. For an assessment of the Board see Durie, *Scottish Linen Industry*, 162–5.

⁷³ See Whatley, *Scottish Society*, 96–141. For the political background of the Board of Trustees, see Shaw, *Management of Scottish Society*, 126–30.

⁷⁴ See Phillipson, ‘The Scottish Enlightenment’, 32.

now assumed by the Trustees, whose twenty-one member board was dominated by leading society members.⁷⁵

Agrarian patriotism and the culture of improvement

Despite the high-profile nature of its campaign to improve Scottish manufactures, the society's primary goal remained the encouragement of agricultural improvement through the dissemination of improved husbandry.⁷⁶ There were obvious reasons for this: in what was an overwhelmingly agrarian society, the vast majority of Scots relied upon the land to some degree for their subsistence, and landowners' incomes were ultimately dependent on the productivity of their estates. Agricultural improvement could be presented as an essentially patriotic activity where private advantage and public interest overlapped. There was also a growing awareness of the comparative backwardness of Scottish husbandry, an awareness heightened by the closer social and cultural connections with England that followed the Union of 1707.⁷⁷

These practical concerns were also underpinned by the particular view of economic development put forward by the society, a view that saw agriculture as the foundation that supported all other economic growth.⁷⁸ Writing in the society's *Transactions* Robert Maxwell made this point repeatedly, arguing that husbandry was 'the life and support of all the Arts and Sciences, and the source of all solid riches', and that manufactures, trade and commerce could only 'flourish' as husbandry 'the Foundation on which they are built succeeds'.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Durie, *Scottish Linen Industry*, 18.

⁷⁶ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, ix–x.

⁷⁷ T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560–1830* (London: Collins 1969), 276–7.

⁷⁸ Emphasising of agriculture can be found in other contemporary Scottish writers, and would find its most developed expression in Adam Smith's theory of the 'natural progress of opulence' outlined in Book III of the *Wealth of Nations*. See for example Sir John Clerk's writings from 1711 and 1730. Gentaro Seki, 'Policy debate on economic development in Scotland', 25–6. For Smith and agriculture, see John Dwyer, *The Age of the Passions: An Interpretation of Adam Smith and Scottish Enlightenment Culture* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press 1998), 54–80.

⁷⁹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 309, xii, iii–iv, 74. Maxwell wrote in his *Practical Husbandman*, 'I have shown that Husbandry, the Foundation and Support of Manufacturers and Trade may be, on an equal Stock, more profitable than either of them', 385.

Maxwell argued that the success of fisheries and manufactures ultimately depended on cheapness of 'provisions and materials'. Increased productivity through agrarian improvements would lower the price of farm produce, leading in turn to cheaper raw materials and labour for manufacturers. Maxwell presented the system as a virtuous circle: the flourishing of manufactures and trade, increased employment opportunities and a lower cost of living would mean that 'people shall be encouraged to stay at home, and foreigners to come and reside among us'. This in turn, would boost the market demand for agricultural produce and further encourage farmers to expand and improve agriculture.⁸⁰ Improvements would not only make 'bread cheaper', but, as the improvements proposed by the society tended to require more labour rather than less, would 'also give the Poor an Opportunity, by their Labour, to get Money to buy it'.⁸¹

Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, another leading member of the society and an acknowledged economic authority, concurred with Maxwell's analysis in his unpublished *Observations*, written in 1730. He also added that in addition to stimulating domestic demand and improving the competitiveness of Scottish manufacturers, agricultural improvement would also lead to landowners reinvesting their rental incomes in Scotland, rather than spending them in London or on imported luxuries, both of which were considered as a dangerous drain on Scotland's meagre capital reserves.⁸² The framework for the society's view of economic development remained essentially mercantilist, with the improvement of the country's balance of trade their underlying consideration. Although their thinking lacked the sophistication of the 'poor country–rich country' debate that would later emerge in 1750s prompted by the writings of David Hume, the society's commitment to agrarian improvement as a national goal did acknowledge that for Scotland to participate equally within the new British polity while

⁸⁰ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, iii–iv. In his lectures on agriculture, Maxwell expanded this point: 'Wherever People can live well and cheap, thither they will resort; there they can afford to work cheapest, there they will labour with the greatest Vigour both of Body and Mind, and there they will not be discouraged from entering into the conjugal State by the Fear or Want: Thus a Kingdom becomes rich and happy, for it is in the Number of industrious Inhabitants, and the Plentifulness of Provisions, that the true Strength and true Riches of it consist'. Maxwell, *Practical Husbandman*, 384.

⁸¹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 2–3.

⁸² Clerk, 'Observations', 207–8.

avoiding economic dependency, catching up with England should be a priority.⁸³ As Maxwell noted in the introduction to the *Transactions*:

If our Agriculture and Manufactures were improved and carried on to the Height they could bear, we might be near as easy and convenient in our Circumstances, as even the People of our Sister Kingdom of *England*; seeing neither our Soil nor our Climate is unfriendly, and since we enjoy the same Privileges of Trade with them. If we are far behind, we ought to follow the faster.⁸⁴

Although the society drew on agricultural practices from continental Europe, the methods they promoted were primarily based on progressive English husbandry, including crop rotations, the use of sown grasses, fallowing, enclosure, turnip husbandry, drainage and water meadow husbandry, the reclamation of bogs, the preparation of seeds, flax and root vegetable cultivation.⁸⁵ The society's first publication described at length the different practices of various English counties, arguing that Scottish farmers invested far less in their land, putting up with far lower returns and farming land so exhausted that it would be considered 'sterile' in England.⁸⁶ The society was also an early propagator of Jethro Tull's drill husbandry, as outlined in his *The Horse-Hoeing Husbandry* of 1733, and corresponded directly with the author. Tull in turn provided the society with a summary of the key principles of his system and the benefits it could bring to their country, noting that 'Twenty years ago, there was much the same way of Tillage in *England* as is now in *Scotland*: but it has been since exploded by full Experience, and the Farmers have enriched both the Land and themselves by plowing it more than they were wont.'⁸⁷

Although English husbandry formed the basis for much of the agricultural knowledge disseminated by the society, its approach went further than merely importing existing practices. An important

⁸³ Istvan Hont, 'The "rich-country-poor country" debate in Scottish classical political economy', in *Wealth and Virtue: the Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, eds. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983), 271–315.

⁸⁴ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 1.

⁸⁵ Hope of Rankeillor, for example, travelled in France, Flanders and Holland studying agricultural methods. Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, vii; Vasey, 'Hope, Sir Thomas'.

⁸⁶ Hope, *A treatise concerning the manner of fallowing*, 35–6.

⁸⁷ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 180–5, 181.

characteristic of the society's methodology was its emphasis on agriculture as a science, based on philosophical and rational principles, and best furthered by the experimental method and the application of natural knowledge. The importance of this underlying principle was announced in the founding resolution of the society, where the failure to adopt 'right Husbandry' was attributed to the farmers' lack of skill and the 'want of due Encouragement for making proper Experiments of the several Improvements' that the various soils in Scotland were capable of, and this experimental approach underpinned much of the advice given by the society.⁸⁸ The society's writings repeatedly stressed the need to adapt English husbandry to the different soils and climates of various parts of Scotland, and correspondents would sometimes be given a range of different practices to experiment with, and then be asked to report back their findings.⁸⁹ The advice also maintained that a rational understanding of the underlying principles of agriculture were a necessary prerequisite for successful improvement, something that Maxwell emphasised in his dedication to the society's *Select Transactions*: 'Agriculture', noted Maxwell, 'certainly comprehends more parts of Philosophy than any other Profession, Art or Science in the World',⁹⁰ and 'they that do not study Agriculture as a Science, do right only by chance; and that rarely happens'.⁹¹ 'I believe you are all satisfied, that Agriculture is not only a Science, but the Life and Support of all Arts and Sciences; and that yet the generality of Land-labourers work more like Tools or Machines than Men of Reason, going on blindly, as leg by Custom, in the often unaccountable ways of their Forefathers . . . proceeding upon no Principle, or, if upon any, upon wrong ones.'⁹² Maxwell would use his farm at Cliftonhall near Edinburgh to conduct experiments in farming methods and sought financial backing from the Scottish Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge to enable him to educate boys there in the principals of modern husbandry.⁹³ It was this conviction that natural knowledge should underpin improvement that led Maxwell to propose that agriculture should be taught 'in a College-way, as other Sciences are', and that a Professor of Agriculture should be appointed, preferably to be held by a 'practical Farmer' who

⁸⁸ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 3.

⁸⁹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, xvi.

⁹⁰ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, xiii.

⁹¹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, xii.

⁹² Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, x.

⁹³ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 222–9.

could teach rules that had been established 'upon rational Experiments tried in our own Country'.⁹⁴

How successful was the Society of Improvers in its aims of furthering agricultural knowledge and facilitating improvement? In his public lectures on agriculture, delivered in Edinburgh in 1756, Robert Maxwell singled out the founding of the society as the single most significant cause of the great advances that he claimed had been made in agriculture and manufacturing, arguing that 'Before this Society commenced, we seemed to have been Centuries behind our Neighbours of *England*; now I hope we within less than one.'⁹⁵ While modern scholarship has reassessed how far Scottish agriculture had previously lagged behind English practice, it has also been more sceptical of the extent of its progress up to the middle of the century. Although improved practices were adopted by a number of improving landowners, these tended to be restricted to the home farm, and the overall spread of improved husbandry before the 1760s seems to have been slow and piecemeal.⁹⁶ Furthermore, a number of early improvers prominent within the society, including Maxwell, Hope of Rankeillor and Cockburn of Ormiston, financially overreached themselves and became bankrupt, and it was not until the more favourable market context of the last four decades of the century that the methods advocated by the society began to become widespread. The society did, however, undoubtedly play an important role in the development of the culture of improvement that would come to the fore in the second half of the eighteenth century, a culture that linked patriotism, civic responsibility and improvement. The society's pursuit of experimental agriculture based on scientific principles marked the beginning of an important alliance between natural knowledge, cultural institutions and agrarian improvement that was to become a distinctive feature of Scottish agrarianism in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁹⁷ It was a tradition carried on by such later

⁹⁴ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, x, xiv.

⁹⁵ Maxwell, *The Practical Husbandman*, 382.

⁹⁶ Whyte, *Agriculture and Society*, 217; T. M. Devine, *The Transformation of Rural Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald 1994), esp. Chapter 2.

⁹⁷ See the series of essays by Charles W. J. Withers: 'A neglected Scottish agriculturist: the "Georgical Lectures" and agricultural writings of the Rev Dr John Walker (1731–1803)', *Agricultural History Review* 33 (1985): 132–56; 'William Cullen's Agricultural Lectures and Writings and the Development of Agricultural Science in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *Agricultural History Review* 37 (1989): 144–156; 'On Georgics and Geology: James Hutton's "Elements of Agriculture" and Agricultural Science in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *Agricultural*

organisations as the Select Society (founded 1754), the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Art, Science, Manufactures and Agriculture (founded 1755) and the Royal Society of Edinburgh (founded 1783), and which culminated with the setting up of the first chair of Agriculture in Britain, at the University of Edinburgh in 1790.⁹⁸ The society's scheme to set up 'small Societies of Gentlemen and Farmers' resulted in the forming of at least two local farming societies in the 1730s and started a tradition that was to become another distinctive feature of improving culture in Scotland:⁹⁹ by 1772, the date of the founding of the first agricultural society in England, Scotland had already produced at least eleven; by 1784 there were a further three, and by 1835 over 133.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps even more importantly, the society was a key element in the development of the personal networks of improvers that helped to facilitate the later transformation of Scottish agriculture, a transformation that was arguably the most rapid and dramatic in Western Europe in the eighteenth century.¹⁰¹ It was also a revolution that, particularly in its early stages, was largely implemented 'from above' by a pro-active landowning class whose 'interventionist role . . . and . . . determination to break with past practice and impose a new economic and social order' was a major factor in its speed and success.¹⁰² The pioneering work of the society and its members during the first half of the eighteenth century in the diffusion of agricultural knowledge ensured that

History Review 42 (1994): 38–48. See also Stewart Richards, 'Agricultural Science in Higher Education: Problems of Identity in Britain's First Chair of Agriculture, Edinburgh 1790–c.1831', *Agricultural History Review* 33 (1985): 59–65; Steven Shapin, 'The Audience for Science in Eighteenth Century Edinburgh', *History of Science* 12 (1974:2): 95–121.

⁹⁸ Withers, 'William Cullen's Agricultural Lectures', 145–6; Richards, 'Agricultural Science in Higher Education', 59–65.

⁹⁹ Maxwell, *Select Transactions*, 5. 'A Small Society of Farmers in Buchan', in northeast Scotland, was formed around 1730, and the influential Ormiston Agricultural Society in East Lothian was founded by John Cockburn of Ormiston in 1736. Boud, 'Scottish Agricultural Improvement Societies', 73; Adams, 'Agents of Agricultural Change', 171.

¹⁰⁰ Boud, 'Scottish Agricultural Improvement Societies', 73, 76–7.

¹⁰¹ Adams, 'Agents of Agricultural Change', 155–75; Devine, *Transformation*, 61.

¹⁰² Devine, *Transformation*, 60–1; See also T. C. Smout, 'Scottish Landowners and Economic Growth, 1650–1850', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* 11 (1964:3): 218–34; T. M. Devine, 'The Great Landlords of Lowland Scotland and Agrarian Change in the Eighteenth Century', in *Scottish Power Centres from the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, eds. S. Foster, A. Macinnes and R. MacInnes (Glasgow: Cruithne Press 1998), 148–61.

improved practices were available when the more favourable market conditions emerged in the years after 1760.¹⁰³

The founding of the Society of Improvers marks not only an important point in the development of Scotland's distinctive culture of improvement but also united the 'landed interest' in its commitment to economic improvement as a national goal.¹⁰⁴ It also marked the point where agrarian improvement began to emerge as the most important means by which this end would be achieved. In its practical role in the transformation of rural Scotland this ideology would have significant and far-reaching effects.

¹⁰³For an environmental assessment, see Smout, 'Improvers and the Scottish Environment', 210–24.

¹⁰⁴For improvement as a unifying ideology for the landed classes, see Julian Hoppit, 'The landed interest and the national interest', in *Parliaments, nations and identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660–1850*, ed. Julian Hoppit (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003), 95, 97. For the leading role of the nobility and landed classes in economic improvement, see Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), 187–8.

3

A Kingdom of Cosmopolitan Improvers: The Dublin Society, 1731–1798

James Livesey

The Dublin Society of Improvement of Husbandry, Agriculture and other Useful Arts, was founded in June 1731 at a meeting in Trinity College at which it was ‘proposed and unanimously agreed to form a society, by the name of the Dublin Society, for improving husbandry, manufactures and other useful arts’.¹ Incorporated by royal charter in 1749, the Dublin Society could congratulate itself in 1800 on having ‘the satisfaction of seeing that that their endeavours have not been fruitless’.² By the turn of the century it ran an experimental farm, a chemical laboratory and a botanical garden alongside its extensive library. Its proceedings circulated throughout the country, reported weekly from 1736 in *Pue’s Occurrences*, Faulkner’s *Dublin Journal* and the *Dublin Newsletter* and as individual pamphlets on topics in agricultural improvement.

The society played a prominent role in the history of improving, economic, agricultural and patriotic societies outside Ireland. It stood out from the myriad of institutions of intellectual sociability founded in this period because of its sustained focus on the problems of agriculture. Well before the mid-eighteenth-century discussion of uneven development began, the Dublin Society had identified the fate of agriculture as the most important determinant of national flourishing.³ It also stood

¹Minutes of meeting of 25 June 1731, Royal Dublin Society Minute Book 1. For histories of the society see Henry F. Berry, *A History of the Royal Dublin Society* (London: Longmans, Green & Co 1915); Terence de Vere White, *The Story of the Royal Dublin Society* (Tralee: Kerryman 1955).

²‘Petition of the Dublin Society for promoting husbandry and other useful arts in Ireland’, *Transactions of the Dublin Society*, Volume 1, Part 1 (Dublin: 1800), vi.

³Istvan Hont, ‘Adam Smith and the Political Economy of the “Unnatural and Retrograde” Order’, in *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press 2005), 354–88.

out because it blended two different ways of talking about agriculture, as an ethic and a set of values, a discussion often associated with the 'Christian agrarianism' of Fenélon, but also as a suite of techniques, amenable to improvement through the application of the methods of the new sciences. The focused but wide-ranging character of the society directly inspired emulation, such as the Breton Agricultural Society in 1757, and the network created by the French minister at the Maison du Roi, Bertin, after 1763.⁴ The Dublin Society was not the first group of men to gather in the hope of pursuing the 'great instauration', or even the first devoted to the improvement of technical knowledge in agriculture in Britain and Ireland; that distinction was claimed by Thomas Hope of Rankeillor in 1723.⁵ The Dublin Society succeeded in identifying a new strategy a dependent country or region could follow in order to survive, and even flourish, in a world of developing commercial states. As the century progressed powerful fiscal military states reduced more areas in Europe to this condition and the Dublin Society's example became ever more relevant.

Failing to improve? Irish seventeenth-century societies

The Dublin Society was the late offspring of a genealogy of failure. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were littered with failed attempts toward the 'improvement of Ireland'.⁶ Ireland was declared a kingdom, rather than a lordship, at the parliament of 1541. The kingdom was an aspiration, a project to institute the king's law across the island and so bring the Irish into civility, rather than an actual set of institutions or a political community.⁷ As Edward Walshe explained law could be introduced to Ireland by two means, 'the plots for the reformation of Ireland are of two kinds. One which undertake to procure it by conquest and by peopling of countries with English inhabitants . . . Another kind is

⁴See Shovlin's chapter.

⁵John Sinclair, *Analysis of the Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh: 1825), 55. See Bonnyman's chapter.

⁶On schemes for improvement in Ireland see principally, Toby Barnard, *Improving Ireland? Projectors, Prophets and Pamphleteers 1641–1786* (Dublin: Four Courts Press 2008).

⁷There is debate on the agency for this project between Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979) and Ciaran Brady, *The Chief Governors: The Rise and Fall of Reform Government in Tudor Ireland 1536–1588* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994).

of those wherein is undertaken to make reformation by public establishment of Justice.⁸ Force was understood as just another attribute of effective government, another way of instituting the common law. The sudden collapse of the plantation of Munster in October 1598 changed everything. The plantation of 661 households and 4,000 persons had seemed secure; by disappearing in a month in the face of military threat it had vividly portrayed the fragility of a colonial society. A fascinating literature exemplified by Edmund Spenser's *View of the State of Ireland*, now argued that the reformation of Ireland had to be pursued by a vigorous conquest and the imposition of martial rather than civil law.⁹

Some of the elements of the eighteenth-century vision of reform, such as the promotion of long leases as a spur to investment, were already represented in Spenser's work. However the core of his argument was a cold appraisal that Ireland would have to be conquered, brought to order by the power of the sword, before it could be transformed, 'even by the sword; for all these evils must first be cut away by a strong hand, before any good can be planted . . . by the sword I mean the royall power of the Prince, which ought to stretch itself forth in the chiefest strength to the redressing and cutting off'.¹⁰ In the dialogue the inquisitive Eudoxus suggests that the imposition of stronger religious discipline might civilise the country. The local expert Ireneus rejects the idea, 'ere we seek to settle a sound discipline in the clergy, we must purchase peace unto the laity, for it is ill time to preach among swords'.¹¹ Ireland was the theatre in which Protestant humanist ideals for the creation of a new kind of order were challenged by fears of the power of Counter-Reformation Catholicism. That challenge was met by the power of the state in its most naked form. Spenser argued that a war to end Irish rebellions would have to be conducted without mercy and pity. The army would have to destroy everything in rebellious regions to starve out rebels and their supporters, 'whatever they leave unspent, the souldier when hee commeth there, spoyleth and havocketh likewise, so that betweene both nothing is very shortly left'.¹² This odd symbiosis between an autonomous politics of the sword in union with a project of

⁸David B. Quinn, 'Edward Walsh's "Conjectures concerning the state of Ireland"', *Irish Historical Studies* v (1946–7), 303.

⁹Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland* (Oxford: Blackwell 1997). The *View* was started in 1596, finished at some point in 1598 and then circulated in manuscript until published in Dublin by James Ware in 1633.

¹⁰Spenser, *View of the State of Ireland*, 93.

¹¹Spenser, *View of the State of Ireland*, 85.

¹²Spenser, *View of the State of Ireland*, 102.

civility remained central to the project of improvement even after the military obsession of Spenser had ceased to be relevant.

Nicholas Canny and Toby Barnard argue that the focus of speculation on the creation of civility in the early seventeenth century developed from an obsession with conquest as an originary and creative act to a more complicated discussion of the conditions that could transform conquest to settled order.¹³ Mid-seventeenth-century thinkers such as Gerard Boate, Richard Lawrence, Vincent Gookin and the Irish branch of the multi-national Hartlib circle specified the vision of civility involved in this effort.¹⁴ Boate formed the initial bridge from Ireland to Hartlib. Boate came into contact with Hartlib when he began his attempted natural history of Ireland in 1645, and after Boate's death the *Naturall History* was published with Hartlib's help.¹⁵ William Petty, who was to have a long Irish career and to be central to the reframing of Irish politics in terms of political economy, saw his role as an extension of the efforts of the Hartlib group. Petty was careful to sustain contact with the network writing to Hartlib during his first week in Ireland, 'The Irish although extremely backward to all kind of corporall labour yet have been held generally very laborious in the way of letters. Few Irish can read or write their own tongue, I find many English, Latin and Spanish words made Irish. I wish I had many things more worth your knowledge, but accept of this till more comes. This is only to shew you, that I do not forget my friends.'¹⁶ Petty's *Political Anatomy of Ireland* became the best-known product of this network and a central contribution to the elaboration of political economy as an autonomous discipline. Ireland became the site of a now well-studied debate on the possibilities of transformation through reform, of an instauration.

¹³T. C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland: English Government and Reform in Ireland 1649–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1975); Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001).

¹⁴Richard Lawrence, *The Interest of England in the Irish Transplantation Stated* (London: 1655); Richard Lawrence, *The Interest of Ireland in Its Trade and Wealth Stated* (Dublin: 1682); Vincent Gookin, *The Great Case of Transplantation in Ireland Stated* (London: 1655); T. C. Barnard, 'The Hartlib Circle and the Origins of the Dublin Philosophical Society', *Irish Historical Studies* 19/73 (1974): 56–71; Patricia Coughlin, 'Natural History and Historical Nature: The Project for a Natural History of Ireland', in *Samuel Hartlib and the Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, eds. Mark Greengrass, M. Leslie and T. Raylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994), 281–97.

¹⁵Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, 214–15.

¹⁶William Petty to Samuel Hartlib, Kilkenny, October 13 1652, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Osborne Mss F 16799.

Between the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution this debate on improvement had two institutional outcomes: the Irish Council of Trade, created in 1664 under the aegis of the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Ormond, and the Dublin Philosophical Society, founded in 1683 by William and Thomas Molyneux.¹⁷ Richard Lawrence, who had written on the possibilities of development, was the Duke's agent guiding the Council of Trade. It met for several years and produced a body of reports on such topics as the linen trade and the growth of commerce, but 'the Duke of Ormond leaving before a Parliament met, or those who were capable of forming these regulations into acts of state, as the council of trade was their nursery, so the council table became their sepulchre, where they remain in their urn to this day'.¹⁸ Hopes vested in the possibility that the political institutions of the country might lead the programme of improvement were to be revived and frustrated time and again. In 1689 the Jacobite Parliament laid out another, equally impressive, plan for the economic transformation of the country, which again came to nothing. The Parliament passed a series of laws protecting the infant Irish coal mining industry, allowing Irish merchants to participate in the colonial trade and creating premiums for shipbuilding, among other projects.¹⁹ In the eighteenth century the Irish Parliament was to be more successful in supporting economic development, but by that time it had a series of partner institutions through which public funds could be channelled.²⁰ The state's commitment to improvement was a consistent theme, but no project of economic and social transformation, even plantation, succeeded in reconstituting the polity.

The project of improvement recruited adherents from outside the state. The moving intelligences behind the Philosophical Society were the Molyneux brothers, Thomas and William. 'About half a score or a dozen of us met about twelve or fifteen times', originally in a coffee

¹⁷For the Irish Council of Trade see Richard Lawrence's account in Henry Redmond Morres Mountmorres, *The History of the Principal Transactions of the Irish Parliament for the Years 1634 to 1666*, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1792), ii, 221–34. For the Dublin Philosophical Society see K. Theodore Hoppen ed., *Papers of the Dublin Philosophical Society 1683–1709*, 2 vols. (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission 2008); K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Common Scientist in the Seventeenth Century: A Study of the Dublin Philosophical Society 1683–1708* (London: Routledge and K. Paul 1970).

¹⁸Mountmorres, *Principal Transactions*, 227.

¹⁹P. H. Kelly (ed.), 'The Improvement of Ireland', *Analectica Hibernica* 35 (1992), 47; J. G. Simms, *Jacobite Ireland, 1685–91* (Dublin: Four Courts Press 2000), 92.

²⁰Eoin Magennis, 'Coal, Corn and Canals: Parliament and the Dispersal of Public Moneys 1695–1772', *Parliamentary History* 20 (2001): 71–86.

house on Cork Hill in the late summer of 1683 and eventually in rooms at Trinity College, when Thomas returned from Leiden to complete his medical degree.²¹ The brothers had been inspired to create a society devoted to natural philosophy by their time in similar societies while studying in Leiden, where Thomas had become friendly with John Locke who was also studying medicine, and London. The society united the veterans of the debate on the improvement of Ireland, most importantly Petty, who became its first president, with the new international world of natural philosophy. The society was intellectually confident, collaborating with Gaelic Catholic scholars such as Roderic O'Flaherty, and even including two Catholic members, Mark Baggot and Daniel Huolaghan.²² The society formed part of a cosmopolitan world that crossed many of the boundaries that characterised the late Stuart realms.

William Molyneux was frankly surprised at how easily the fledgling Dublin Philosophical Society was recognised as a partner by the Royal Society and stitched into an emerging network, alongside a similar institution in Oxford. McClellan identifies this triad as the first instance of formal inter-institutional association of any real substance among scientific societies and points out the traces of more fragile efforts in Boston, Bristol and other nodes in the British Atlantic as signs of potential for an even wider set of connections.²³ Fifteen of the members of the Dublin society were made fellows of the Royal Society, *Philosophical Transactions* accepted fifty-four articles for publication and members of the Dublin Philosophical Society were only levied half dues for their membership of the Royal Society. John Evelyn junior even referred to it as 'a colony of the Royal Society'.²⁴ In the aftermath of the violence of the Williamite Wars, which caused an interruption in its meetings, the society quickly

²¹ William Molyneux to Thomas Molyneux, 30 October 1683, Hoppen, *Dublin Philosophical*, ii, 479.

²² Roderic O'Flaherty, *Ogygia, sue, Hibernicarum chronologica ex pervetustis monumentis fideliter inter se scollitis eruta* (London: 1685).

²³ James E. McClellan, *Science Reorganized: Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press 1985), 57.

²⁴ Hoppen reckons that fourteen Dublin society men were made FRS. K. T. Hoppen, 'The Royal Society and Ireland: William Molyneux, F.R.S. (1656–1698)', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (December 1963), 129. The dual members were Ashe, Bulkeley, Lloyd, Molyneux, Mullen, Pembroke, Petty, Pratt, Redding, Robartes, Rycout, Smyth, Sylvius, Tollet, Wetenhall; John Evelyn jr. to John Evelyn, Dublin, 5 May 1694, Hoppen, *Dublin Philosophical*, ii, 679.

revived itself and reasserted its claim to partnership through its secretary Owen Lloyd, 'the Dublin Society is again revived and they have ordered me to give you notice of it and desire to renew their correspondence with you'.²⁵ In 1694 Richard Bulkeley wrote to Martin Lister that 'our society comes on apace'.²⁶ Yet by 1697 the society had ceased to meet and the attempted revival in 1707 came to nothing.

The Dublin Philosophical Society and its connections were elements of a federative model for a new British polity. By 1680, in the face of the Exclusion Crisis, it was clear that the old Stuart composite monarchy could not continue and that some new structure was immanent.²⁷ James II attempted to model reform on the new, efficient French monarchy of Louis XIV, but his initiative was controversial, unpopular and unsuccessful. An alternative Whig vision of British liberty animated subjects across all the Stuart realms to see themselves as potential citizens. The federative alternative to James's absolutism did not survive the Glorious Revolution, and so neither did the Dublin Philosophical Society.²⁸ The community comprised of the clients of the Boyle family, friends of Robert Southwell and William Petty, the Ormonde connection and the Irish correspondents of John Locke, did not succeed in institutionalising their vision of a British empire as a federation.²⁹

The members of the Dublin Philosophical Society were at the forefront of protests at the disappointing outcome of political change. William Molyneux complained in his famous *Case of Ireland* that 'since the late Revolution in these kingdoms, when the subjects of England have more strenuously than ever asserted their own rights, and the liberty of the Parliaments, it has pleased them to bear harder on their poor neighbours than has ever yet been done in many ages foregoing'.³⁰ Molyneux

²⁵Owen Lloyd to Richard Waller, Dublin, 3 June 1693, in Hoppen, *Dublin Philosophical*, ii, 671.

²⁶Sir Richard Bulkeley to Martin Lister, Dublin 1694, in Hoppen *Dublin Philosophical*, ii, 681.

²⁷See Alan Houston and Steven Pincus (eds.), *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001).

²⁸See J. G. A. Pocock, 'Archipelago, Europe and Atlantic after 1688', in his *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005), 107–14.

²⁹The Irish context of an innovative idea of Britishness is alluded to by David Armitage, 'Britain and Ireland after the Glorious Revolution', in *Political Thought in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony?*, ed. Jane H. Ohlmeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), 223–4.

³⁰William Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland being bound by Acts of Parliament in England Stated* (Dublin: 1706 [Orig. ed. 1698]), 102.

argued that during the emergency of 1689 the Irish Protestants accepted that Acts passed by the English parliament for the relief of refugee Irish clergy, interdicting Irish trade with France, declaring all attainders by the Jacobite parliament sitting in Dublin null and void and even, most importantly, settling the Irish Act of Supremacy in 1692, did indeed bind Ireland.³¹ However all of these were emergency measures, broke with precedent and, Molyneux argued, should not determine the future relationship between England and Ireland. Indeed for the English parliament to claim a right to legislate for Ireland because of the risks it had taken and the costs it had incurred in eliminating the Irish Jacobites, would be as perverse as the Dutch claiming the same right over England for similar cause.³² By the time Molyneux wrote this the political vision it encapsulated had already been made irrelevant. Unfortunately for Molyneux and his friends the political and economic organisation of the emerging British Empire developed in a manner directly opposite to their hopes and aspirations. The Navigation and Cattle Acts of the middle part of the century were supplemented with the 1699 Wool Acts that closed English markets to Irish product. The 1696 Board of Trade, which was to co-ordinate and control the economic relationships between the realms under the English crown, was dominated by neo-Machiavellians such as John Cary and further restricted Irish agency.³³ John Locke, who was more sympathetic to the idea of unrestricted trade and federated political institutions, could only console his ally Molyneux with his commitment to secure the linen manufacture for Ireland, 'I will neglect no pains or interest of mine to promote it as far as I am able'.³⁴ Locke was unsuccessful and the proposal he presented to the Board of Trade to discourage rather than eliminate the Irish Wool Trade was rejected.³⁵

The economic restrictions that Molyneux complained about were paralleled and institutionalised by political developments. In the early

³¹ Molyneux, *Case of Ireland*, 103–5.

³² Molyneux, *Case of Ireland*, 141.

³³ John Cary, *An Essay on the State of England in Relation to its Trade, its Poor, and its Taxes, for carrying on the present War against France* (Bristol: 1695); John Cary, *A Vindication of the Parliament of England, in Answer to a Book written by William Molyneux of Dublin, Esq.* (London: 1698).

³⁴ John Locke to William Molyneux, Oates, 10 January 1697/8, *Familiar Letters*, 258.

³⁵ H. F. Kearney, 'The Political Background to English Mercantilism, 1695–1700', *Economic History Review* 11 (1959:3), 481. But see Patrick Kelly, 'The Irish Woollen Export Prohibition Act of 1699: Kearney Revisited', *Irish Economic and Social History* 7 (1980): 22–44.

years of Queen Anne English public opinion began to conceptualise a unitary British Empire.³⁶ Figures such as William Atwood offered a simple and powerful idea of unified sovereignty within Parliament as the cornerstone of the polity, and if the legal and historical roots of this doctrine were dubious that did not detract from its utility.³⁷ The incorporating union between England and Scotland of 1707 and the Declaratory Act of 1720 reiterated the claim to the supremacy of the Union Parliament in the British Empire and its right to legislate for all its members.³⁸ The terms of the Treaty of Utrecht that ended the War of Spanish Succession reflected both the commercial nature of the new polity that was being constructed and the claim to supremacy of the British Parliament. Matthew Prior, the English negotiator of the treaty explained his thinking to his French counterpart Torcy that England was a trading nation, 'and as such must secure our traffic'.³⁹ Parliamentary sovereignty organised an imperial trading system that in turn amplified the power of the post-revolutionary Parliament, buttressed by new fiscal and governing structures such as the Bank of England.

Work on the Irish Protestant responses to the changing nature of the relationship to Britain has stressed the challenge the new structures posed to their identity as free-born Englishmen.⁴⁰ There has also been a fascinating discussion of the constitutional and institutional responses proposed by the Anglo-Irish elite and in particular on the debate within the political nation on the possibility of union with England as an acceptable exit

³⁶Anon., *The Queen an Empress, and her Three Kingdoms One Empire* (London: 1706); Hugh Chamberlen, *The Great Advantages to both Kingdoms of Scotland and England by a Union* (n.p.: 1702). David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), 162.

³⁷William Atwood, *The history and reasons of the dependency of Ireland upon the imperial crown of the kingdom of England* (London: 1698); Charles C. Ludington, 'From Ancient Constitution to British Empire: William Atwood and the Imperial Crown of England', in *Kingdom or Colony?*, 244–70.

³⁸John Robertson ed., *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the Union of 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995); Allan I. Macinnes, *Union and Empire: The Making of the United Kingdom in 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007); Isolde Victory, 'The Making of the 1720 Declaratory Act' in *Parliament, Politics and People: Essays in Eighteenth-Century Irish History*, ed. Gerald O'Brien (Dublin: Irish Academic Press 1989), 9–29.

³⁹L. L. Wickham Legge, 'Torcy's Account of Matthew Prior's Negotiations at Fontainebleau in July, 1711', *English Historical Review* 29 (1914), 525–32.

⁴⁰Jim Smyth, "'Like amphibious animals'", Irish Protestants, Ancient Britons 1691–1707', *Historical Journal* 36 (1993), 785–97.

from an impossible situation.⁴¹ Union was not politically possible but the centrality of liberty to political identity remained unshaken and in consequence the community was driven to respond to the limitations on their agency, rather than address the root causes of that limitation. Dependency was a fact, but how was liberty to be sustained in that condition? One thread of that response led to the conceptualisation of the nation as a civil rather than political society.⁴² This solved the intellectual and cultural problem faced by the Irish political nation, but did not in itself address the practical issues created by the new circumstance. One could imagine exercising liberty in civil society; it was harder to describe the institutions and practices of that liberty. Robert Molesworth, a friend of Molyneux and ‘a hearty admirer and acquaintance’ of Locke was particularly alert to the relationship between liberty and prosperity.⁴³ His study of Denmark was designed to illustrate the difference between the states of Europe that had maintained their ‘Gothic’ constitutions (England, Poland and Ireland) and those who had fallen under tyranny.⁴⁴ Denmark served this purpose because it had only lost its liberty in the previous generation and the effects of absolutism were therefore new and obvious. The observed effect of tyranny was to destroy confidence in the rule of law and so in the enjoyment of property, ‘the difficulty of procuring a comfortable subsistence and the little security of enjoying what shall be acquired through industry, is a great cause of prodigality’.⁴⁵ Molesworth was impressed in particular by the difficulties faced by the peasantry who might have anything they created expropriated by unrestricted landlords, ‘if any one of these wretches prove to be of a diligent and improving temper, who endeavours to live a little better than his fellows, . . . , it is forty to one but he is transplanted from

⁴¹ Jim Smyth, “‘No remedy more Proper’: Anglo-Irish Unionism before 1707’, in *British consciousness and identity: the making of Britain, 1533–1707*, eds. Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), 301–20; James Kelly, ‘Political and public opinion in Ireland and the idea of an Anglo-Irish Union, 1650–1800’, in *Political discourse in seventeenth and eighteenth century Ireland*, eds. D. George Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan (Basingstoke: Palgrave – now Palgrave Macmillan 2001), 110–44.

⁴² James Livesey, *Civil Society and Empire: Ireland and Scotland in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press 2009); James Livesey, ‘The Dublin Society in Eighteenth-Century Irish Political Thought’, *Historical Journal* 47 (2004:3), 615–40.

⁴³ William Molyneux to John Locke, Dublin, 11 September 1697, in, Anon., *Some Familiar Letters between Mr Locke and several of his Friends* (London: 1708), 237.

⁴⁴ Robert Molesworth, *An Account of Denmark as it was in the Year 1692* (London: 1694), 43.

⁴⁵ Molesworth, *Account of Denmark*, 83.

thence to a naked and uncomfortable habitation, to the end that his gripping landlord may get more rent'.⁴⁶ Molesworth observed exactly the same lack of incentive to productive labour in Ireland.⁴⁷ He had recommended political liberty and extensive trade to the Danes as the means of creating prosperity. Ireland, being a special case, neither free nor bound but dependent, needed special remedies to solve its problems. Thomas Prior made the most ironic response to the problem of the limitations on its agency when he argued that the imperial organisation of trade guaranteed that Ireland would remain poor and since 'tis better to enjoy poverty with ease' there was a strong argument for lethargy.⁴⁸ The Dublin Society's programme of improvement of agriculture as a means of stimulating the domestic economy and compensating for trade restrictions was the answer to that temptation.

The Dublin Society, improvement and empire

The ground on which the Dublin Society was built was littered with the ruins of all the projects for a transformed Irish kingdom as an element in a British empire of liberty. Those ruins could be mined for building blocks for something new. The new Dublin Society acquired three important inheritances from the old Dublin Philosophical Society: members with experience of collective work, a cosmopolitan vision and the continuous commitment of the Molyneux family. Only five of the members of the original Dublin Philosophical Society are listed as members of the Dublin Society in 1733 but another fourteen were recruited from families that had taken part in the earlier society.⁴⁹ Friendships also connected the two societies. Arthur Dobbs' father had been a correspondent of William Molyneux's and prepared a section on Antrim for Moses Pitt's proposed Irish atlas, one of the first activities of the Philosophical Society.⁵⁰ George Berkeley was one of the enthusiasts for

⁴⁶ Molesworth, *Account of Denmark*, 87.

⁴⁷ Robert Molesworth, *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture and Employing the Poor* (Dublin: 1723), 4.

⁴⁸ Thomas Prior, *A list of the absentees of Ireland and the yearly value of their estates and incomes spent abroad with observations on the present state and condition of that kingdom* (Dublin: 1729), 73.

⁴⁹ Anon., *A List with Members of the Dublin Society for the Improvement of Husbandry and other useful Arts for the Year 1733* (Dublin: 1734). The five remnants were Thomas Coote, Richard Cox, Thomas Molyneux, John Madden and Edward Pearce.

⁵⁰ Desmond Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs Esquire 1689–1765: Surveyor-General of Ireland, Prospector and Governor of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1957), 13.

reviving the society in 1707 and his agent and friend was Thomas Prior. The society inherited a body of men who expected to participate as equals in transnational communication. That expectation was strongest on the part of the Molyneux family and they articulated it most clearly. Samuel Madden, the nephew of Thomas and William Molyneux spelled out that the Dublin Society should learn from international experience, 'to say nothing of Holland, whose government is nothing more than a great council of merchants, the chambers of commerce established in France and the Board of Trade in England, are plain proofs how vast a benefit those kingdoms have gained', but he reserved a special place for 'the Royal Society'.⁵¹ He argued that the experimental programme of a new agricultural society would provide a universal benefit, 'by such a method as this, under constant application, and judicious management, I question not, but we might see in the progress of some years, as great improvement in agriculture, by a long course of experiments in all the branches of it, as we have seen in philosophy, by those of the Royal Society; and as this might possibly in time contribute as much to the advantage and service of mankind, it seems therefore as much deserving any care or expense we may lay out on it'.⁵² It is worth noting as well that Madden stressed the practical, Hookeian aspect of the work of the Royal Society rather than the methodological inheritance from Newton. Ireland needed an improving society because of the pathologies of empire. Madden was appalled that a free people of English blood could be perverted by the perverse incentives of the structure of empire, 'for betwixt the monstrous mismanagement of the splendour and expense of the rich on foreign counties and commodities, and the idleness and laziness of the poor, the tradesman, labourer and husbandman (chiefly for want of encouragement) we have been ground to pieces as between the upper and the nether millstone'.⁵³ It was impossible that a 'people with the honour of having English blood in their veins' should feel 'the burden of Irish poverty galling their backs'.⁵⁴

Madden was not the only commentator to argue that political dependency threatened moral and institutional corruption. In 1720 a proposal to create a national bank by subscription was contested by

⁵¹ Samuel Madden, *A Letter to the Dublin Society on the Improving their Fund and the Manufactures, Tillage etc in Ireland* (Dublin: 1739), 11.

⁵² Madden, *Letter to the Dublin Society*, 35.

⁵³ Samuel Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions proper to for the Gentlemen of Ireland as to the Conduct for the Service of their Country* (Dublin: 1738), 15.

⁵⁴ Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions*, 27.

Swift in one of his anonymous pamphlets, 'he could not understand how a country wholly cramped in every branch of its trade, of large extent, ill peopled, and abounding in commodities, which they had neither liberty to export nor encouragement to manufacture; could be benefitted by a Bank, which be all he had read, or heard, or observed in his travels, was only usefull in free countries'.⁵⁵ Creating money was one of the attributes of sovereignty and in conditions of dependency such as those suffered by Ireland a national bank would not provide credit to stimulate the economy but merely give a monopoly of credit to a corporation who would use it further to impoverish the country. Henry Maxwell, one of the most vocal advocates for the plan, was forced to agree in principle that a bank could make Ireland vulnerable to economic manipulation and could only assert that, 'England does not want the assistance of a bank, either to cramp our trade, or increase our dependence . . . so a bank in this respect makes us neither better nor worse'.⁵⁶ The bank controversy was quickly followed by huge public outcry at the grant of the patent to supply copper coin to Ireland by George I to an English manufacturer, William Wood. The Wood's Halfpence affair was the most vibrant public debate on political economy in the first half of the century in Ireland. More than one hundred pamphlets, including Swift's *Drapier's Letters*, educated the Irish public in the connections between political dependency and economic well being.⁵⁷ Public opinion succeeded in forcing Wood's patent to be withdrawn, but successful resistance to imposition from abroad could not and did not supply an alternative political economy.

An anonymous pamphleteer, supporting the tillage campaign, made the connection between money, an attribute of sovereignty, and tillage. He explained that Ireland imported nearly a quarter of a million pounds worth of corn each year, and that given restrictions on Irish trade the wealth necessary to support those imports could not be generated by exporting the superfluity of Irish goods abroad, 'this may seem but a small sum, when compared with millions, the wealth of a neighbouring nation; but it is a large one to a people, whose whole circulating coin hath not for many years been computed at more than 500,000 pounds. It is evident that a decay in the circulating money is a disease in the

⁵⁵ [Jonathan Swift], *The Eyes of Ireland Open; being a short view of the project for establishing the Bank of Ireland* (London: 1722), 11–12.

⁵⁶ Henry Maxwell, *Mr Maxwell's Second Letter to Mr Rowley; wherein the objections against the Bank are answered* (Dublin: 1721), 9.

⁵⁷ Sabine Baltes, *The Pamphlet Controversy about Wood's Halfpence (1722–25) and the Tradition of Irish Constitutional Nationalism* (Berlin: Peter Lang 2003).

political body of a mortal nature, the remedy appears easy, to increase our own tillage.⁵⁸ Independence was undermined by the lack of control over money argued Thomas Prior. Money was scarce in Ireland and so interest rates were high, seven per cent he calculated, which led to the stagnation of business.⁵⁹ The solution was to stop the withdrawal of money from Ireland in rent by its reinvestment in agriculture. Prior was to become one of the leading lights of the Dublin Society, alongside Arthur Dobbs, whose writings supported the same strategy of domestic improvement through encouragement of tillage.⁶⁰ The most imaginative of these responses to Ireland's situation of dependency was George Berkeley's *Querist*.⁶¹ Though only recently installed as Bishop of Cloyne on his return from an abortive effort to found a college in Rhode Island, Berkeley was an old friend of Thomas Prior's and been part of the revived Dublin Philosophical Society in the first decade of the century. Berkeley understood the political constraints around Irish economic strategy perfectly, 'whether our hankering after the woollen trade be not the true and only reason, which hath created a jealousy of Ireland in England'.⁶² He did not allow his thinking to be constrained by the political impasse. Berkeley inquired if the assumption that the only route to wealth was through trade, and that trade required a staple, was in fact justified. He even wondered if money might be supplied in some new way, 'a nation within itself might not have real wealth, sufficient to give its inhabitants power and distinction, without the help of gold and silver'.⁶³ Berkeley's real breakthrough was his insight that wealth was only represented by coin; real wealth was productive activity, or as he put it, 'industry'.⁶⁴ He went on to argue that wealth, or industry, might be represented by any and all forms of paper money, so breaking the

⁵⁸ Anonymous, *Some Thoughts on the Tillage of Ireland: Humbly dedicated to the Parliament* (Dublin: 1738), 2.

⁵⁹ Thomas Prior, *A List of the Absentees of Ireland* (Dublin: 1729), 19. Madden advanced the same argument, Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions*, 4–7.

⁶⁰ Arthur Dobbs, *An Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland* (Dublin: 1729).

⁶¹ George Berkeley, *The Querist: containing several queries proposed to the consideration of the public* (Dublin: 1735).

⁶² Berkeley, *Querist*, 19.

⁶³ Berkeley, *Querist*, 24.

⁶⁴ Constantine George Caffentzis, *Exciting the Industry of Mankind: George Berkeley's Philosophy of Money* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers 2000) argues that Berkeley's attention to economic affairs was driven by his worries about the revenues of the bishopric.

connection between sovereignty and money.⁶⁵ The key issue was not to amass wealth through trade but to mobilise the productive capacity of the country. Berkeley's critique transcended the Irish situation and addressed all state economic strategies obsessed with engrossing trade.⁶⁶ He identified an alternative development strategy, 'whether on the whole, a domestic trade may not suffice in such a country as Ireland, to nourish and cloathe its inhabitants, and provide them with the reasonable conveniences and even comforts of life'.⁶⁷ The most direct route to that end was labour-intensive agriculture: tillage. Query 115 encapsulated the strategy of the nascent Dublin Society most succinctly, 'might we not put a hand to the plough or the spade, though we had no foreign commerce?'⁶⁸

These antecedent debates explain why the early work of the society was focused on the problem of internal development through the stimulation of new agricultural methods, and in particular on methods that would employ as much labour as possible. Dr Stephens argued for the introduction of woad in those terms, 'the design of this society, being to inquire into such foreign improvements as may be introduced here to lessen the value and quantity of our imports; I conceived it would not be improper to inquire into such vegetable substances as are imported here, whose culture, or improvement, were either not known, or neglected among us, and would very well agree with our soils and climate'.⁶⁹ One of the most striking aspects of the work of the society, especially in its early years, was the sustained focus on agriculture, import substitution and the problems of stimulating the domestic economy. The key issue was raising productivity. Prior introduced a paper written by Captain William Cobb on the lessons to be learned from the cultivation of hops in Hampshire and who made the connection between the particular plant he was interested in, the role of the society and the general goal of improvement, 'I hope this direction which I lay before you, will be a help towards the improvement of this kingdom, and since there is a society of gentlemen of so laudable a design, I here

⁶⁵David Berman, *George Berkeley: Idealism and the Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994), 168–9.

⁶⁶Patrick Kelly, 'Ireland and the Critique of Mercantilism in Berkeley's *Querist*', in *George Berkeley: Essays and Replies*, ed. David Berman (Dublin: Irish Academic Press 1986), 109–12.

⁶⁷Berkeley, *Querist*, 24

⁶⁸Berkeley, *Querist*, 23.

⁶⁹Minutes of Meeting of 14 October 1731, Royal Dublin Society Minute Book, Royal Dublin Society Library (hereafter RDS) 1.

offer my mite, and hope so necessary a plant as hops, when rightly managed, will save this nation great sums of money annually.' Cobb sustained the specificity, commenting that the cultivation of hops was probably most fit 'for the inland counties of Leinster and Munster'.⁷⁰ Cobb's first contribution was followed up and in the summer of 1733 the society funded an agricultural tour by Hatfield to Hampshire to observe the best methods of cultivation.⁷¹ Hops and woad were only two of the crops the society considered. Christian Ussher wrote to the society explaining the experiments that had been conducted by Robert Taylor of Limerick, who had rotated his flax seeds and so sustained high yields. Ussher put it to the society that the improvement of productivity by one farmer could be a synecdoche for the country:

in this kingdom, where the farmers and the cottiers are everywhere confined to so small a share of the land they cannot put this in practice, but as great quantities of seed are annually imported to supply the demands of the north, and other parts of this kingdom, I do not see, but it would turn greatly to the account of this nation, if the people of the southern parts, would raise seed for the supply of the rest, by which means they would not only have a market for their seed, but would also be introduced into the linen trade, as much as the flax once raised would not be thrown away.⁷²

Agriculture was being used and imagined in the work of the society not as an element in the political economy of the nation, but as the core of the nation itself. Locke, Davenant, Cary and Defoe had all identified the staple, the key traded good in which a country enjoyed comparative advantage in trade, as the defining element that underpinned national flourishing. The Dublin Society compensated for the restrictions on Irish trade by replacing foreign trade with domestic agricultural improvement as the engine driving the nation. Samuel Madden characteristically made huge claims for this kind of agricultural vocation, arguing that it promised not only a coherent response to the situation of Ireland but 'the improvement of the natural, artificial and moral world'.⁷³

⁷⁰Minutes of Meeting 14 October 1731, RDS 1.

⁷¹Minutes of Meeting 25 April 1733, RDS 1.

⁷²Minutes of Meeting 18 December 1731, RDS 1.

⁷³Madden, Letter to the Dublin Society, 48.

The ploughs of cosmopolitans

Throughout the life of the society one of its most sustained interests was in technology, particularly in plough technology.⁷⁴ Technological change offered the possibility of flourishing without challenging the political parameters that defined Ireland's role in an imperial economy. One of the first publications by the society was a pirated edition of Jethro Tull's *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*.⁷⁵ The society actively sought out new kinds of agricultural machinery, set up a testing ground at Poolbeg, near Trinity College and an exhibition of model machinery in the basement of the Parliament House on College Green, the first elements being models of Tull's machines donated by Lord Limerick.⁷⁶ The exhibition of machinery was so successful that the society had to employ a messenger to introduce them 'to gentlemen that may be desirous to see them'.⁷⁷ As early as 1733 the society was printing 2,000 copies of advertisements for new plough types that it hoped to disseminate around the country and in 1735 it began sending out ploughmen to demonstrate the operation of new ploughs.⁷⁸ In 1738 Arthur Gore put it to the society that it should recommend ploughs for all types of soil and 'give to the members of the society in the several parts of the kingdom an account of where plows might be had and at what rate'.⁷⁹ The society had established itself as a credible authority on the most basic kinds of agricultural machinery. Technological implements created a material culture of improvement and allowed it to have a base in experiment. Technology widened and specified the role of the agricultural improver.

The society did not only rely on emulation and the dissemination of information as the engine of improvement but directly intervened in the introduction of new technology as well as new techniques. Throughout its history the society sponsored and tested new ploughs, and even inspired Irish landowners to experiment. Lord Trimblestown sent a new three-coultered plough he had invented to be tested by the society in

⁷⁴ For a different context see Peter D. McClelland, *Sowing Modernity: America's First Agricultural Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1997); Joyce E. Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730–1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1993).

⁷⁵ Jethro Tull, *The Horse-Hoeing Husbandry, or, an Essay on the Principles of Tillage and Vegetation* (Dublin: 1733).

⁷⁶ Minutes of Meetings 9 March 1732, 16 November 1732, RDS 1.

⁷⁷ Minutes of Meeting 12 December 1734, RDS 1.

⁷⁸ Minutes of Meetings 13 December 1733, 13 January 1735, RDS 1.

⁷⁹ Minutes of Meeting 23 March 1738, RDS 2.

1737 and a report was made on it after only a month.⁸⁰ Speaker Connolly at Leixlip invited the society to 'make an experiment with' his new draining plough in 1738 and Charles Monaghan of Corbetstown presented a new plough designed to turn over furrows, or hentings, in 1740.⁸¹ The society eventually sponsored and supported the mechanical instruments factory established by John Wynn Baker at Celbridge, just outside Dublin. He was overwhelmed by the demand for the new instruments, 'when I began this factory, I had no conception that the demand would, in many years, be equal to the calls of the past year'.⁸² One long-term effect of the society's promotion of the transformative potential of agricultural technology was the institution of the ploughing match. Sinclair endorsed the utility of ploughing matches 'nothing has been found so useful, as annual ploughing matches' and he thought the first matches had been promoted by Hugh Reoch of Alloa in 1784.⁸³ When the Dublin Society published its volumes of statistical accounts of the Irish counties after 1800 they remarked on ploughing matches all around the country, from Wicklow in Leinster to Clare and Cork in Munster.⁸⁴ Commentary on Archer's survey of Dublin, material for which had been gathered in the 1770s, unearthed a dense culture around ploughing matches. The authors complained that at a ploughing match in Castleknock that participants and judges had their own, local, criteria of judgement, 'here the farmers of the neighbourhood seemed to prize the man that carried the greatest weight of earth, and kept his left hand nearest to the ground'.⁸⁵ In any case ploughing matches had become so integrated into rural life in Ireland that after its foundation in 1800 the Farming Society of Ireland was able to institute a national ploughing championship (which is continued to the present day).⁸⁶ The ploughing matches were an institution that escaped the limitations imposed on the project of improvement by a hierarchical society. The emulative mechanism driving improvement did not need the either

⁸⁰ Minutes of Meetings 20 January 1737, 24 February 1737, RDS 2.

⁸¹ Minutes of Meetings 7 December 1738, 6 November 1740, RDS 2.

⁸² John Wynn Baker, *A Short Description and List with the Prices of the Instruments of Husbandry made in the Factory at Laughlinstown* (Dublin: 1767), 1.

⁸³ Sinclair, *Analysis of the Statistical Account*, 303.

⁸⁴ Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political* (London: 1812), 409; Henry Dutton, *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare: With Observations on the Means of Improvement* (Dublin: 1808), 56; Horatio Townsend, *Statistical Survey of the County of Cork* (Dublin: 1810), 560.

⁸⁵ Hely Dutton, Joseph Archer and John Ratty, *Observations on Archer's Statistical Survey of the County of Dublin* (Dublin: 1802), 34.

⁸⁶ George Newenham Wright, *A Historical Guide to Ancient and Modern Dublin* (Dublin: 1821), 69–70.

to 'enforce by laws such a course of husbandry' or employ the coercive power of landlords when it could be transmitted through collective institutions of sociability organised around machines.⁸⁷

The agricultural mission of the Dublin Society, to which it had committed itself largely because all other avenues of improvement were closed, proved to be a narrow gate that led to a cosmopolitan vision. As early as 1732 the members of the society realised that their circumstance was not particular to themselves. They began to imagine themselves, not as a dependent community excluded from full participation in a world of trade, but as a creative, leading body in a world of production. They began to plan a library that would gather the agricultural knowledge of Europe, 'ordered it be offered to a standing committee to draw up a catalogue of all the books of husbandry and mechanic arts in the English, Latin, Greek and French tongues, as also to find out what books in foreign languages give the best account of the husbandry and arts now practiced in France, Flanders, Holland, Germany, Poland and Italy'.⁸⁸ The society kept abreast of technological publication, acquiring the six volumes of plates of machinery published by the *académie royale des sciences* in 1737.⁸⁹ It also began to send out feelers to cognate groups in the British Isles including, 'the society erected in North Britain for the encouragement of tillage', the Society of Improvers in Edinburgh.⁹⁰ In the late eighteenth century its influence spread into the British Empire. In 1781 it began corresponding with the Barbados Society, founded in its image in that year.⁹¹ The breadth of the society's activities allowed it to broach social as well as international barriers. The hierarchies of land and status that conditioned social activity could be shelved in pursuit of collective interests.⁹² The society consciously directed its activities, though not its membership, to 'artists, tradesmen and husbandmen' who were invited, particularly to the meetings of the Committee of Arts, 'to assist and inform the members in such arts and improvements as shall be thought useful and fit to be encouraged'.⁹³ In the pursuit of improvement

⁸⁷ Molesworth, *Some Considerations*, 5.

⁸⁸ Minutes of Meeting 20 January 1732, RDS 1.

⁸⁹ Minutes of Meeting 10 March 1737, RDS 2.

⁹⁰ Minutes of Meeting 21 June 1733, RDS 1.

⁹¹ Berry, *Dublin Society*, 217.

⁹² See principally Sean Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland, 1660–1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995); Toby Barnard, *A New Anatomy of Ireland: The Irish Protestants, 1649–1770* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press 2003).

⁹³ Orders of the Dublin Society, RDS 1.

the society was willing to acknowledge that gentlemen did not have a monopoly of knowledge and that 'mechanics' were necessary collaborators. In 1735 the board of the society asked Prior to 'endeavour to prevail upon James Moore, a carpenter, to go to Scotland to see the mill there in order that he may be able to make one for this kingdom'.⁹⁴

Even in the late eighteenth century the writings of the two generations of Irish natural philosophers and agricultural improvers remained alive in European provincial scientific discourse. Pierre Joseph Amoreux, a member of the Montpellier scientific society, listed Dobbs' work on aphids and William Molyneux's work on insects as well as the contributions both had made to the *Philosophical Transactions* in his bibliographical notes in the 1790s.⁹⁵ The Dublin Society clearly plays an important role in the networks that constituted a European world of knowledge in the eighteenth century and should be placed alongside other important stimuli, such as Linnaeus's Uppsala or the Birmingham of Watt and Priestley. In 1912, when Louis Passy was listing the early eighteenth-century societies that had inspired the foundation of the French National Agricultural Society he listed the Dublin Society alongside the Oeconomical society of Berne and the Bath and West.⁹⁶

The specific contribution of a model of an agriculturally focused, technologically interested improving society as the template for a modern, rural society, and possibly even nation, was still more important. John Sinclair, writing about Scottish agricultural societies, explained the necessity for organising rural society through the promotion of associations, 'as associations, by promoting a mutual communication, or interchange of ideas, and exciting a spirit of emulation, are found highly advantageous to the other arts, they certainly deserve encouragement, when directed to agriculture. Indeed farming, in some respects, requires such aid more than the other arts, because it is more of a solitary employment . . . To make up for this disadvantage on the part of the husbandman, it seems necessary, that he should occasionally meet with his brethren.'⁹⁷ Regions whose comparative advantage lay in agriculture were becoming vulnerable in an international political economy, dominated by trade and beginning to generate significant separate economic paths due to the emergence of comparative advantage. Countries such as

⁹⁴Minutes of Meeting 2 July 1735, RDS 2.

⁹⁵Pierre Joseph Amoreux, 'Projet d'une édition de la philosophie entomologique de Fabricius', Bibliothèque municipale de Montpellier Ms 91.

⁹⁶Louis Passy, *Histoire de la société nationale d'agriculture de France: Tome premier 1761-1793* (Paris: P. Renouard 1912), 2.

⁹⁷Sinclair, *Analysis of the Statistical Account*, 302.

England and the Netherlands who specialised in the carrying trade had an inbuilt political advantage because the communicative mechanisms, such as coffee-houses, newspapers, clubs and bourses, that were necessary to conduct trade could be and were turned to co-ordinate politics as well. Their success, and particularly that of Britain, created an emerging problem of nations ruled as provinces, identified by John Robertson, of once independent elements of composite monarchies potentially being reduced to dependent status. This was a new kind of dependency, not just an artefact of warfare and state-building but generated from dynamics within the political economy of commercial monarchy itself.⁹⁸ A world of trade generated agricultural nations through the workings of comparative advantage, and if such nations were not to become *politically* dependent on trading centres they needed to generate their own communicative structures, specific to the kinds of societies they were becoming.⁹⁹

Ireland's situation dramatised the new opportunities offered by the most successful eighteenth century commercial monarchy, Britain, and the threat to inherited ideas about liberty posed by the new kinds of power it created.¹⁰⁰ The foundation of the Dublin Society was an important moment in which an agricultural region of a commercial monarchy developed a strategy to manage its dependent status.¹⁰¹ It created a context in which local and imperial feeling could be aligned and a new style of patriotism, defined as 'agrarian patriotism' by Christopher Bayly, could develop.¹⁰² It is striking that agrarian patriotism would be very successful in Ireland, but it would not support Ireland's membership of empire in the manner imagined. Over the long run defining the agricultural vocation of the nation proved easier than directing its political destiny.

⁹⁸ John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005), 147–201.

⁹⁹ Emergent comparative advantage is a core topic in New Trade Theory. See Paul R. Krugman, 'Increasing Returns and Economic Geography', *Journal of Political Economy* 99 (1991), 483–99.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Whatmore, 'Review Article: Monarchisms and Republicanisms', *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, No. 3 (2009), 420.

¹⁰¹ James Livesey, 'Improving Justice: Communities of Norms in the Great Transformation', in *Markets in Historical Contexts: Ideas and Politics in the Modern World*, eds. Frank Trentmann and Mark Bevir (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), 25–45.

¹⁰² Christopher Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London: Longman 1989), 155; Daniel Sanson, "'The Yoke of Improvement': Sir John Sinclair, John Young, and the Improvement of the Scotlands, New and Old', in *Transatlantic Rebels: Agrarian Radicalism in Comparative Context*, eds. Thomas Summerhill and James C. Scott (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press 2004), 90.

4

The Society of Brittany and the Irish Economic Model: International Competition and the Politics of Provincial Development

John Shovlin

Economic societies flourished in France during the second half of the eighteenth century, propagating in three distinct waves between the late 1750s and the latter part of the 1790s.¹ The first such organisation established, and the model for the later associations, was the Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts (*Société d'agriculture, du commerce et des arts*), established in Brittany in February 1757.² The society had nine sections (*bureaux*), one in each diocese of the province, including a central corresponding bureau in Rennes, the provincial capital. The number of associates ranged from six to eighteen per section, with the membership recruited from local merchants, clerics, and noble landowners.³ The society's mission was to foster the development of farming, manufactures, and trade in Brittany by gathering and diffusing useful knowledge, by offering encouragement for practical schemes of economic improvement, and by advising the provincial Estates

¹John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2006), 83–92, 159–68, 208–11.

²On the history of the society, see Catherine Dumas, 'Aux sources de la Société d'Agriculture de Bretagne', *Bulletin et mémoires de la Société archéologique et historique d'Ille-et-Vilaine* 108 (2004), 97–118; Emile Justin, *Les sociétés royales d'agriculture au XVIIIe siècle (1757–1793)* (Saint-Lô: 1935), 36–41, 301–3; Louis de Villers, *Histoire de la Société d'agriculture de commerce & des arts établie par les Etats de Bretagne (1757)* (Saint-Brieuc: R. Prud'homme 1898).

³Originally each section was to have six members, but this number was subsequently expanded, with up to eighteen in Rennes and twelve in each of the other sections, along with a number of free associates resident outside the province. See Archives départementales d'Ille-et-Vilaine (hereafter Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine), C 3913. Archival sources are not paginated unless otherwise indicated.

on economic policy. Like economic societies elsewhere in Europe, it claimed to serve the public and the nation and enveloped its activities and pronouncements in a mantle of patriotism.

The paradigm for the new organisation was the Dublin Society for Improving Husbandry, Manufactures and Other Useful Arts, which was viewed by the founders of the Breton association as an engine of Irish economic transformation.⁴ Ireland occupied a privileged place in the thinking of the circle of political economic writers linked in the 1750s to the Intendant of Trade, Jacques-Claude Vincent de Gournay (1712–1759). Gournay was a prominent Breton merchant who had entered the royal administration of commerce in the 1740s. With the support of other figures in the administration, he used his position to encourage public discussion of political economic questions by patronising a group of young writers, many of whom would go on to become leading figures in French political economic debate.⁵ These theorists saw Ireland as a telling example of how rapid economic development could follow from intelligent legislative intervention combined with the activation of civil society by voluntary associations. Gournay provided a key impetus for the establishment of the Society

⁴Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 2687, 182r ff. On the Dublin Society, see Henry F. Berry, *A History of the Royal Dublin Society* (London: Longman, Green and Co. 1915), 1–87; James Meenan and Desmond Clark (eds.), *The Royal Dublin Society 1731–1981* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan 1981), 1–55.

⁵Gournay's protectors in the administration were Daniel Trudaine (1703–1769), Intendant of Finance; and Chrétien-Guillaume Lamoignon de Malesherbes (1721–1794), *premier président* of the Cour des Aides (the chief tax court in Paris) and Director of the Book Trade. The members of the network were Louis-Paul Abeille (1719–1807), Louis-Joseph Plumard de Dangeul (1722–1777), François Véron de Forbonnais (1722–1800), Georges-Marie Butel-Dumont (1723–1788), Simon Clicquot-Blervache (1723–1796), Jean-Gabriel Montaudouin de la Touche (1722–1781), Pierre-André O'Heguerty (1700–1763), and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727–1781), with, in a supporting role, abbé André Morellet (1727–1819), Jacques-Claude Herbert (1700–1758), abbé Gabriel-François Coyer (1707–1782), abbé Jean-Bernard Le Blanc (1707–1781), abbé Jean-Paul Gua de Malvès (1713–1785), and perhaps Jean-Baptiste de Secondat. See Loïc Charles, 'French "New Politics" and the Dissemination of Hume's *Political Discourses* on the Continent', in *David Hume's Political Economy*, eds. Margaret Schabas and Carl Wennerlind (London: Routledge 2008), 181–202; Simone Meyssonnier, *La balance et l'horloge: La genèse de la pensée libérale en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Montreuil: Editions de la Passion 1989); Antoin E. Murphy, 'Le développement des idées économiques en France (1750–1756)', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 33 (1986), 521–41; Arnault Skornicki, 'L'Etat, l'expert et le négociant: Le réseau de la "science économique" sous Louis XV', *Genèses* 65 (2006), 4–26.

of Brittany; two of its founding members – Jean-Gabriel Montaudouin de la Touche, and Louis-Paul Abeille (the first secretary of the society) – were part of his intellectual milieu.⁶

Gournay's initiative intersected with other forces to bring the society into being and to shape its activities. Brittany was one of the French provinces still partially governed by Estates in the eighteenth century. The Estates met every two years, and its Intermediary Commission (*Commission intermédiaire*) functioned between sessions to make the authority of the body an everyday reality in the administration of the province. Both the Intermediary Commission and the royal administration sought to foster economic improvement in Brittany in the 1750s, and envisioned the new society as a partner in these efforts. The provincial Estates exerted a major influence on the Breton Society, providing its funding, approving its membership and shaping its statutes and conduct. While the society adopted many of the forms and rhetoric of a voluntary association its close links to the Estates ultimately proved a critical influence on its development. However, the Breton Society should not be seen as a vehicle for a traditional politics of provincial resistance to the incursions of the administrative monarchy. It represented something quite different: a form of civic association that promised to mediate the tensions of Brittany's dependent relationship with Versailles.

The final determining influence on the establishment and trajectory of the society were the interests and sensibilities of the Breton notables who composed its membership. The new society depended on the energies of landed gentlemen, wealthy merchants and other local notables, some of whom were already engaged in projects of economic improvement before the society was founded. A key inspiration for these projects was the 'new agriculture' pioneered in the British Isles and, reflecting this engagement, the principal activities of the society took an agronomic form. Many of the other proposals for economic development emanating from the province before the foundation of the society might be seen as a kind of provincial Colbertism, embodying a demand that the monarchy become more engaged in developing Brittany's economic resources. While distinct in their assumptions from the Gournay circle, in practice these constituencies sought the same overall objective: the economic development of the province. The tensions among them could generally be accommodated within the structures of the society.

The circumstances of the Breton Society's establishment suggest the force of ideas about global economic competitiveness in France at mid

⁶On Gournay's role, see Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 2687, fol. 80r.

century, and the sophisticated way international rivalry with Britain was beginning to be understood, even on the peripheries of the kingdom. Its foundation also points to the modular quality of the Dublin Society – its perceived relevance and applicability in contexts beyond the British Isles. Some of the activities of the Society of Brittany, and the story of its ultimate decline, however, also point to its refractory quality as an instrument for the kind of political economic agenda proffered by Gournay and his circle. Local energies, once mobilised in the form of a voluntary association, could not always be depended upon to serve the purposes of grand economic strategy – the more so given the directing role the Estates assumed over the society from the start, and the commitments of leading members to other visions of economic development.

The Gournay circle, the Irish model, and the foundation of the society

The foundation of the Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts was inspired by a vision of international economic competition disseminated by the writers of the Gournay circle.⁷ Gournay and his collaborators stressed the importance of fostering domestic commerce and the agricultural economy that was its foundation, calling for the liberalisation of the grain trade in order to stimulate commercial agriculture. They also sought to develop manufacturing, and were hostile to monopolies and exclusive economic privileges. While arguing, in theory, that commerce ought to be the basis for peace and harmony among nations, they recognised that trade was a major strategic resource and a weapon in the international struggle for preeminence among states. A principal preoccupation of the group was explaining how England, a country with limited natural endowments, had become so powerful economically. Part of the answer, they argued, lay in its colonies, part in its advanced agriculture. But a central aspect of English success, they believed, was the way Ireland had been harnessed to England's purposes.

Ireland was widely viewed in the mid eighteenth century as a region recently transformed from a state of backwardness to a scene of prosperous industry. The linen manufacture was the leading sector of the new Irish

⁷In the 1750s, the writers linked to Gournay published about forty works of political economy, including translations of foreign works. See Christine Théré, 'Economic Publishing and Authors, 1566–1789', in *Studies in the History of French Political Economy: From Bodin to Walras*, ed. Gilbert Faccarello (London: Routledge 1998), 1–56.

economy, and it was the rapid expansion of this industry that caught the imagination of continental observers. (Irish exports of linen, which were less than half a million yards in 1698, grew to 40 million yards by the 1790s.⁸) Political economic writers universally attributed the establishment of the linen manufacture to the British government's efforts to stifle the Irish woollen industry while fostering a substitute that would complement British needs rather than compete with its own manufactures.⁹

Several of the British works translated by members of Gournay's circle emphasised that England had turned Ireland into a kind of *machine de guerre* in its economic and political struggle with France. By preventing the export of Irish woollens and establishing a linen industry in Ireland, John Cary observed, the English 'would in time alter the Ballance of our Trade with France, when we shall send thither more Woolen, and receive thence less Linnen'.¹⁰ Georges-Marie Butel-Dumont's translation of, and extensive commentary on, Cary's work underlined the success of this project, pointing to the substantial economic benefits England derived from its Irish pawn. The reengineering of the Irish economy had permitted England to break out of dependence on foreign imports of linen, especially imports from France.¹¹ Another of Gournay's associates, François Véron de Forbonnais used an annotated translation of Charles King's *British Merchant* to make a similar argument. Forbonnais insisted that French readers must understand the ways in which Ireland (and Scotland) contributed to a favourable English balance of trade. The decline of markets in England for French linens was directly linked to the establishment of a linen industry in Ireland, Forbonnais observed.¹²

⁸L. M. Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660* (London: B. T. Batsford 1987), 53. Also, generally, W. H. Crawford, 'The Rise of the Linen Industry', in *The Formation of the Irish Economy*, ed. L. M. Cullen (Cork: Mercier Press 1969).

⁹See Istvan Hont, 'Free Trade and the Economic Limits to National Politics: Neo-Machiavellian Political Economy Reconsidered', in *The Economic Limits to Modern Politics*, ed. John Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990), 41–120.

¹⁰John Cary, *An Essay on the State of England in Relation to Its Trade, Its Poor, and Its Taxes, for Carrying on the Present War Against France* (Bristol: W. Bonny 1695), 109–10.

¹¹Georges-Marie Butel-Dumont, *Essai sur l'état du commerce d'Angleterre*, 2 vols. (London and Paris: Nyon 1755), vol. 1, xxii–xxiii, 75. Also, *Journal économique, ou Mémoires, notes et avis sur les arts, l'agriculture, le commerce et tout ce qui peut y avoir rapport* (November 1755), 185–6.

¹²François Véron de Forbonnais, *Le négociant anglois, ou Traduction libre du livre intitulé: The British Merchant, contenant divers mémoires sur le commerce de l'Angleterre avec la France, le Portugal & l'Espagne*, 2 vols. (Dresden and Paris: Estienne 1753), vol. 1, xxxiii; vol. 2, 72–3n, 81–2n.

Nowhere had the bite of Irish competition been felt more keenly than in Brittany, the centre of the linen industry in France. In the 1680s, half of the total value of Brittany's linen production had been exported to England, most in the form of the cheap *créés* fabrics produced for popular wear. Over the course of the eighteenth century this market collapsed in the face of high duties and Irish competition. (By contrast, the other major branch of Breton linen production – the higher quality *toiles de Bretagne*, which had its main markets in Spanish America – continued to prosper at least into the 1770s.)¹³

Most commentators on the Irish developmental model stressed that the decisive factors in Irish success were intelligent legislative intervention combined with the successful activation of civil society.¹⁴ From 1696, Irish linen cloth could enter the British market duty free, a major advantage for Irish producers.¹⁵ The Irish Parliament in Dublin was also credited with offering financial encouragements to linen manufacturers, and with importing seeds to improve the quality of Irish flax and hemp.¹⁶ A key ingredient of Irish success had been the Dublin Society. Little advantage had been taken of the premiums offered by the Parliament for flax cultivation, according to Butel-Dumont, until the foundation of the society in Dublin, 'the object of which was the improvement of cultivation of land'.¹⁷ Louis-Joseph Plumard de Dangeul described the Dublin Society as 'one of those first societies which took as their object the advancement and the study of trade, manufactures, and agriculture', and 'whose success was the most striking'. He highlighted the premiums for improvement offered each year by the society, and went on to enumerate fifteen

¹³Jean Martin, *Toiles de Bretagne: La manufacture de Quintin, Uzel et Loudéac, 1670–1830* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes 1998), 188ff; Jean Tanguy, *Quand la toile va: L'industrie toilière bretonne du 16e au 18e siècle* (Rennes: Editions Apogée 1994), 101–3.

¹⁴Forbonnais and Josiah Tucker also stressed that lower wages in Ireland compensated for the high wages paid to English workers. Josiah Tucker, *A Brief Essay on the Advantages and Disadvantages which Respectively Attend France and Great Britain, with Regard to Trade*, 2nd edn. (London: T. Trye 1750), 73n. François Véron de Forbonnais, *Questions sur le commerce des François au Levant* (Marseille: Carapatia 1755), 20–1. Also, Butel-Dumont, *Essai sur l'état du commerce d'Angleterre*, vol. 1, 51.

¹⁵Butel-Dumont, *Essai sur l'état du commerce d'Angleterre*, vol. 1, 78.

¹⁶Joshua Gee, *Considérations sur le commerce et la navigation de la Grande-Bretagne*, trans. Jean-Baptiste de Secondat (Amsterdam: F. Changuion 1750), 97–8; *Journal œconomique* (November 1754), 184–5. The Irish Parliament was increasingly generous in its grants from the 1740s onwards. See Cullen, *Economic History of Ireland*, 96

¹⁷Butel-Dumont, *Essai sur l'état du commerce d'Angleterre*, vol. 1, 77.

prizes specifically, praising the generosity of Dr Samuel Madden whose personal financial contribution funded many of the awards.¹⁸ Dangeul was here developing a theme adumbrated by others, including Montesquieu and Josiah Tucker, who saw in Ireland a successful instance of the use of prizes to excite the emulation of farmers and manufacturers to carry their crafts to the highest perfection.¹⁹ By the 1750s, Ireland was also frequently mentioned in French sources as a site of agricultural innovation.²⁰

The success of the Dublin Society in transforming Ireland was cited in the report establishing the Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts drafted by the Commerce Committee of the provincial Estates. It was under the auspices of such a society that 'Ireland, which had been one of the world's poorest countries, became prosperous. . . . This Society caused instructions and recompenses to be distributed, and Ireland took on a new face.'²¹ The initial proposal for establishing the society had come from Jean-Gabriel Montaudouin de la Touche, a wealthy Nantes merchant, in a memorandum he sent to the Estates in 1756. The Commerce Committee endorsed the proposal, noting that it had Gournay's enthusiastic backing (half of the members of the committee subsequently became members of the society).²² Knowledge of the Dublin Society may already have been widespread in Brittany. There was a substantial and prominent Irish merchant community in Nantes.²³ One Irish resident, a Mr Gallwey, had undertaken land

¹⁸Louis-Joseph Plumard de Dangeul, *Remarques sur les avantages et les désavantages de la France et de la Grande Bretagne, par rapport au commerce, & aux autres sources de la puissance des Etats, traduction de l'anglois du chevalier John Nickolls*, 2nd edn. (Leiden: 1754), 170–4.

¹⁹According to Montesquieu, 'This practice succeeded in our own day in Ireland; it established there one of the most considerable linen [toiles] manufactures in Europe'. Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix*, Book 14, chapter 9. See also Tucker, *A Brief Essay*, 103; Anon., *Observations critiques et politiques, sur le commerce maritime; dans lesquelles on discute quelques points relatifs à l'industrie & au commerce des colonies françaises* (Amsterdam and Paris: Jombert 1755), 17–18.

²⁰*Journal œconomique* (May 1752), 38; (May 1753), 173; (August 1753), 164ff.

²¹Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 2687, 166v–167v.

²²Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 2687, 36r.

²³L. M. Cullen, 'The Irish Merchant Communities of Bordeaux, La Rochelle and Cognac in the Eighteenth Century', in *Négoce et industrie en France et en Irlande aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, eds. Louis M. Cullen and Paul Butel (Paris: Editions CNRS 1980). In 1750, Montaudouin's first cousin married the daughter of an Irish merchant established in Nantes. See Archives municipales de Nantes, GG 252.

improvement projects in the Nantes area 'following the methods of his Country'.²⁴ Another Irish agricultural improver named Naigle was subsequently consulted by the Nantes bureau of the society.²⁵

One of the early initiatives of the Breton Society was to sponsor a translation of the Dublin Society's *Weekly Observations*.²⁶ Published in a single volume in Dublin in 1739, the *Weekly Observations* had appeared serially as short articles in the *Dublin Newsletter* in 1737 and 1738.²⁷ The first eight letters described the political economic problems the Dublin Society sought to address, and the rest were short memoranda on practical matters including linen manufacture, drainage, land reclamation, cider-making and brewing. The translation of the *Weekly Observations* was undertaken by Mathurin Thébault, a teacher of mathematics, who became a member of the Breton Society in 1759. (In his annotations, Thébault also cited works written or translated by members of the Gournay circle.²⁸) The Breton society followed the translation and publication of the *Weekly Observations* with its own *Corps d'observations* the following year.

The Dublin model as diffused by the Gournay group was not, however, the only inspiration for the Breton Society. Indeed, had the initiative of Montaudouin and Gournay not intersected with the agendas of local improvers it is unlikely that the society would have received the support of the Estates, or successfully mobilised the energies of the Breton gentlemen who made up its membership. Widespread among the landowners of the province by the 1750s was an interest in agronomic improvement. Some of the original associates of the society, notably the *président* de Montluc and Louis-René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais were already prominent agricultural experimenters.²⁹

²⁴ *Corps d'observations de la Société d'agriculture, de commerce et des arts, établie par les Etats de Bretagne, 1757 & 1758* (Rennes: Vatar 1760), 176.

²⁵ *Corps d'observations, 1757 & 1758*, 118.

²⁶ *Essais de la Société de Dublin, traduit de l'anglais par M. Thebault* (Paris: Estienne 1759).

²⁷ *The Dublin Society's Weekly Observations* (Dublin: R. Reilly 1739). The volume was reprinted the following year in London as *Essays and Observations on the Following Subjects. Viz. On Trade, Husbandry of Flax . . . on Brewing. Published by a Society of Gentlemen in Dublin* (London: C. Corbett 1740). Another edition appeared in Scotland under the title *The Dublin Society's Weekly Observations for the Advancement of Agriculture and Manufactures* (Glasgow: R. & A. Foulis 1756).

²⁸ *Essais de la Société de Dublin*, 36n, 39n.

²⁹ On the former, see Henri Sée, 'Un mémoire du Président de la Bourdonnaye Montluc sur la culture et le commerce du lin (juin 1758)', *Annales de Bretagne* 39, no. 3 (1931), 301–5; on the latter, see Louis de Villers, *La Chalotais agriculteur* (Rennes: M. Simon 1894).

La Chalotais turned two estates into model farms where he cultivated turnips, clover, alfalfa, ryegrass and potatoes. The society became a forum for other agricultural improvers whose work clearly predated its formation.³⁰ Theirs was an economic agenda compatible with that of the Gournay circle, but not primarily motivated by the same kinds of political economic commitments.

Another set of local agendas that were largely congruent with the Gournay perspective, but hardly identical to it, were the demands of provincial Colbertists such as Julien-Joseph Pinczon du Sel des Monts (1712–1781), and François-Joseph de Kersauson, both founding members of the society. Pinczon du Sel was an improving noble landlord and the proprietor of a substantial textile manufacture established in the early 1740s to produce coarse cotton and linen fabrics, destined principally for the colonies. His *Considérations sur le commerce de Bretagne*, published in 1756, proposed plans for the commercial development of Brittany. Many of his recommendations were Colbertist staples: more punitive inspections of manufactures to prevent fraud; the enforcement of edicts against the sale of foreign cloth; the expulsion of vagabonds from the province, or their commission to forced labour; the standardisation of weights and measures. He also called for the reclamation of wasteland, the liberalisation of the grain trade, and the construction of canals.³¹ Canals were a central concern for the comte de Kersauson also. He presented a memorandum to the Estates in 1746 calling for an ambitious program of canal construction, which he envisioned as a means to stimulate the commerce and manufacturing of the province.³² His model was the Canal de Languedoc, constructed under Colbert to join the River Garonne to the Mediterranean. He argued that the network of canals he proposed would be a boon to the French East India Company, and to the navy, and that a privileged company sponsored by the Crown would offer the best means to finance and engineer the project. The society thus emerged at the confluence of diverse forces, some with a local orientation, others with a national, or international, frame of reference. The decentralised structure of the association – unburdened

³⁰See *Corps d'observations*, 1757 & 1758, 75, 85.

³¹Julien-Joseph Pinczon du Sel des Monts, *Considérations sur le commerce de Bretagne* (n.p.: n.d. [1756]).

³²François-Joseph de Kersauson, *Mémoire présenté aux Etats de Bretagne, tenus à Rennes en 1746* (Rennes: Vatar 1748). Kersauson published another memorandum on this subject in 1765. See, *Mémoire présenté aux Etats de Bretagne, séances à Nantes par. M. le comte de Kersauson* (Nantes: P.-I. Brun n.d.).

by much in the way of precedent for its activities – proved capable of accommodating a variety of agendas.

The structure and activities of the society

In modelling their organisation on the foreign Dublin Society, the Breton associates might be said to have rejected, or bypassed, a domestic model of sociability – the academies established in many provincial French cities. The academic model probably did not appear a promising one for fostering technical improvements or spurring economic renewal. Academies had originally functioned as ornaments of the state, monuments to kingly glory, and sources of royal panegyric.³³ They offered a model of intellectual sociability focused on producing theoretical and humanistic kinds of knowledge (albeit a pattern beginning to change in the 1750s, led by the Academy of Amiens). Academic culture could hardly have been more alien to the social world of the farmers and craftsmen whom the Breton associates ultimately wished to influence. Moreover, the society seems to have been anxious to avoid the kind of snobbishness typical of some provincial academies.³⁴ It opted for a structure open to gentlemen of all three estates, and when it was decided within weeks of its foundation to admit a number of dignitaries, they joined as simple associates rather than as ‘protectors’ – a fact commented upon by the *Journal de Trévoux* as indicating a ‘taste for equality’.³⁵

It was not the tradition of the provincial academies, but that of British voluntary associations, and the patriotism they were believed to foster, that the Bretons sought to emulate.³⁶ It was the exuberance of British associational life that caught Plumard de Dangeul’s imagination, and it was as an exemplar of this kind of sociability that he recommended the Dublin

³³Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1992), 49–59.

³⁴For example, of 181 academicians elected to the Academy of Bordeaux between 1712 and 1793, only four were merchants. Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2000), 169.

³⁵Arch. dép. d’Ille-et-Vilaine, C 2687, fol. 244v. See *Mémoires pour l’histoire des sciences et Beaux-Arts (Journal de Trévoux)* (June 1757), 1516.

³⁶Voluntary associational life was differently configured and less vigorous in France than in the British Isles. Confraternities and alternative forms of church-based sociability, or guilds and other privileged corporate bodies, dominated the associational life of French towns. The major secular exception was freemasonry, which enjoyed significant popularity, but it dwelt in a legal half-light.

Society. Dangeul placed his discussion of the society in a section on the value of the British constitution 'for directing minds towards the public welfare'. 'In a Constitution in which everyone participates, or imagines himself to participate in government', Dangeul noted, 'all citizens will be occupied with the public thing, each according to his capacity.'³⁷ The founders of the Breton Society hoped to animate a similar kind of patriotism. They referred constantly to citizens (as opposed to subjects) in their writings, and regularly invoked the good of the nation, the public, and the *patrie*.³⁸ But theirs was not a form of patriotism that made claims to a governing role, or that contested the authority of the Estates or the Crown. Rather they sought to serve the *patrie* by contributing to the enlightenment and prosperity of the province, and by stirring the energies of its citizens.³⁹

Noting that enlightenment, so long as it was the possession only of dispersed and isolated individuals, had no 'utility for the Public', the *Corps d'observations* suggested that the society would function as a clearing house for information. Each member was called upon to produce a communication on a subject of his choice at least every two years. The society eventually established a central depository in Rennes, open several hours a week to the public, to permit interested individuals to consult its memoranda.⁴⁰ Many of these communications appeared in the society's *Corps d'observations*, its most substantial publishing project. Montaudouin and Abeille collaborated to produce the first volume, using annotations to recommend works by other members of the Gournay group as authorities on 'economic science'.⁴¹ The society also published several short brochures on technical subjects such as flax husbandry, or fodder crops. Three thousand copies were printed of its brochure on clover cultivation.⁴² Yet the society rejected the notion that

³⁷ Plumard de Dangeul, *Remarques sur les avantages et les désavantages*, 167.

³⁸In his rendering of the Dublin Society's *Weekly Observations* into French, Thébault translated 'gentlemen' as 'citoyens'. See, for example, *Essais de la Société de Dublin*, 1, 41.

³⁹See, for example, *Avertissement publié par la Société d'agriculture, de commerce, et des arts établie par les Etats de Bretagne* (n.p.: n.d. [1759]), 1.

⁴⁰Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3820, fol. 1335–6, 1442–3, 1462.

⁴¹The term appears in the *Corps d'observations*, 1757 & 1758, xi.

⁴²*Mémoire sur la culture du grand Trefle* (Rennes, Vatar n.d. [1757]). For the figure of three thousand copies, see Jean Quéniart, *La Bretagne au XVIIIe siècle (1675–1789)* (Rennes: Editions Ouest-France 2004), 292. Other short brochures included the *Instruction sur les moyens de prévenir la maladie des grains, connue sous les noms de Nielle, de Charbon, ou de Carie, distribuée par la Société, d'agriculture, de commerce et des arts* (n.p.: n.d. [1758]); *Instruction sommaire sur la culture du lin, distribuée par la Société d'agriculture, des arts et du commerce* (n.p.: n.d. [1758]).

it occupied a directing role; the members were merely the 'depositories of the instructions furnished by Citizens'. Not the associates, but the public, would revitalise the provincial economy.⁴³

The society proposed to educate farmers using the example of successful agronomic experiments conducted locally by associates or correspondents. In one trial, samples of flax from Holland, the Baltic, Ireland and Brittany were grown side by side to demonstrate the viability of local seed.⁴⁴ Another series of trials tested Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau's contention that the best harvests of alfalfa could be produced by planting the crop in rows and by thorough and frequent weeding. Duhamel's publications in the 1750s marked the beginning of sustained attention to questions of agricultural improvement in France, and his works were frequently referenced by the Breton associates.⁴⁵ Though the trials vindicated Duhamel's methods, the society recommended a less labour-intensive form of cultivation, for fear of putting off ordinary cultivators.⁴⁶ The society regarded the expansion of fodder crops as a key objective. In 1759, it persuaded the Estates to buy three thousand livres worth of clover seed to distribute freely in the province. At the same time the Estates established a fund of six thousand four hundred livres to be used to give prizes to the two farmers in each administrative district (*subdélégation*) who sowed the largest quantity of clover on land newly brought into cultivation.⁴⁷

The society also hoped to use prizes to galvanise the emulative impulses of craftsmen and women and to enlist them in the perfection of local manufactures. The report of the committee of the Estates that established the society implied that the craftsman's sweetest recompense was 'consideration'; by offering him such symbolic rewards he might be induced to imitate the best practices of other countries.⁴⁸ Pinczon du Sel had proposed that a prize, 'a distinctive mark', be awarded in each parish to the farmer who brought the most waste land into cultivation.⁴⁹ Even ordinary farmers could have their 'emulation'

⁴³ *Corps d'observations, 1757 & 1758*, vi–viii.

⁴⁴ *Essais de la Société de Dublin*, 61n.

⁴⁵ Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau, *Traité de la culture des terres, suivant les principes de M. Tull, Anglois, Nouvelle édition corrigée & augmentée* (Paris H.-L. Guérin et L.-F. Delatour 1753–1761). On French agronomy, see André J. Bourde, *Agronomie et agronomes en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N. 1967).

⁴⁶ *Corps d'observations, 1757 & 1758*, 74–9.

⁴⁷ *Corps d'observations, 1757 & 1758*, 83n.

⁴⁸ Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 2687, fol. 182r ff.

⁴⁹ *Considérations sur le commerce de Bretagne*, 35–6.

aroused by such distinctions, he observed. In practice, the prizes offered by the society seem to have taken a cash form. In 1763, the society arranged a prize competition to perfect the craft of spinning, so vital to the province's textile industry. The royal governor, the duc d'Aiguillon, put up the prize money, paid in 1764 to some women in the diocese of Tréguier by M. de Kergariou, an associate of the local bureau.⁵⁰

The society also looked to the Estates to revivify the economy of the province. Indeed, this is hardly surprising considering how closely the association was linked to the provincial governing body. All new associates had to be approved by the Estates. The body paid all the expenses of the society, including the salary of the secretary, and the costs of printing the *Corps d'observations*.⁵¹ The diocesan sections of the society were offered the use of the meeting rooms, and clerks, of the Estates' Intermediary Commission.⁵² The provincial governing body seems to have envisioned the society as a consultative corps on economic policy. It asked the association to furnish memoranda for its deputies at court in order to support requests made by the Estates to the royal administration.⁵³ The Intermediary Commission corresponded with the society on questions of economic improvement, and some of the proposals sent to the Estates' Commerce Committee were forwarded to the society for comment.⁵⁴ General assemblies of the society were timed to correspond with the sittings of the Estates, and members of the society were occasionally referred to as 'commissioners' of the governing body.⁵⁵

⁵⁰On prizes, see Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3819, fol. 808–9; C 3820, fol. 2096; *Avertissement publié par la Société d'agriculture*, 5. The idea of using emulative impulses to produce economic improvement was ubiquitous in French economic thought of this period. See John Shovlin, 'Emulation in Eighteenth-Century French Economic Thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36 (2003: 2), 224–30.

⁵¹On the secretary's salary, see Archives départementales de la Loire-Atlantique (hereafter Arch. dép. Loire-Atl.), C 443, fol. 294v; C 444, fol. 199v; C 445, fol. 190v. On printing costs, see Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 445, fol. 175v.

⁵²Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3913. Later, when the central branch established assembly rooms and a depository, the Estates paid the rent. See, Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 443, fol. 297r; C 444, fol. 229r–229v; C 445, fol. 190v–191r; C 446, fol. 212v; C 447, fol. 211r.

⁵³Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 444, fol. 199r.

⁵⁴Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 443, fol. 293r, 296r; Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3818, fol. 1625–26.

⁵⁵Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3913. Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3819, fol. 707; C 3820, fol. 1462.

Some of the wider objectives of the society could only be achieved by appealing to the Estates, or the royal government. A key demand was for liberalisation of the grain trade. In the 1750s, the trade in cereals was still closely regulated by the royal administration and by local administrative bodies, with the chief object being to ensure supply and keep prices within reach of consumers.⁵⁶ There was wide support among Breton landowners, the Parlement and the Estates for freedom of the grain trade, including freedom of export.⁵⁷ The Intermediary Commission and the society exchanged views on the need for greater liberty.⁵⁸ Jean-Baptiste Gellée de Prémion, mayor of Nantes, and founding member of the society, laid out the case for liberalisation in a memorandum composed for the comptroller general (*contrôleur général*, effectively minister of finance) in 1761.⁵⁹ Through its *Corps d'observations* the society made the case for freedom of export, citing in support works by Jacques-Claude Herbert and Plumard de Dangeul.⁶⁰ Abeille and Montaudouin were active in the national controversy over liberalisation, publishing works calling for freedom of export.⁶¹ La Chalotais also played a prominent role in the national debate, and was viewed in liberal Paris circles as a champion of deregulation.⁶² A wide measure of domestic deregulation of the grain trade was, in fact, introduced by the Crown in 1763, with freedom of export following in 1764.

While the Breton social elite could unite around a call for the liberalisation of the grain trade, calls for relaxation of manufacturing

⁵⁶See Steven L. Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1976); Judith A. Miller, *Mastering the Market: The State and the Grain Trade in Northern France, 1700–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999).

⁵⁷J. Letaconnoux, 'Les subsistances et le commerce des grains en Bretagne au XVIIIe siècle', *Annales de Bretagne* 20 (1904: 1), 126–35.

⁵⁸Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3818. fol. 1640, 1712.

⁵⁹Jean-Baptiste Gellée de Prémion, 'Mémoire à consulter sur la liberté du commerce des grains', Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 69.

⁶⁰*Corps d'observations, 1757 & 1758*, 100–2.

⁶¹Louis-Paul Abeille, *Effets d'un privilège exclusif en matière de commerce, sur les droits de la propriété, &c* (Paris: A. L. Regnard n.d. [1765]); Abeille, *Lettre d'un négociant sur la nature du commerce des grains* (n.p.: n.d. [1763]); Abeille, *Réflexions sur la police des grains en France et en Angleterre* (n.p.: 1764); Jean-Gabriel Montaudouin de la Touche, *Supplément à l'Essai sur la police générale des grains* (The Hague: 1757).

⁶²Friederich-Melchior Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique, et critique, adressée à un souverain d'Allemagne, depuis 1753 jusqu'en 1769* (Paris: Longchamps 1813), vol. 4, 263–4.

regulations were more divisive. The second volume of the *Corps d'observations* carried an attack on what was represented as excessive regulation of the textile industry, charging that regulations intended to guarantee the quality of fabric were cramping the development of the industry and hampering the province's ability to compete with Silesian producers on Spanish-American markets.⁶³ A blistering critique of this argument was published by an anonymous critic, who asserted that regulation was vital to ensure quality, to create confidence among consumers, and thus to guarantee a continued market for Breton cloth. The critic rejected the contention that Breton producers were suffering from Silesian competition; in fact, *toiles de Bretagne* sold at a 15 per cent premium over Silesian linens. He implied, moreover, that memoranda supporting continued regulation had been suppressed by the society.⁶⁴ This critique represented the perspective and interests of an oligarchy of Saint-Malo merchants who dominated the trade in *toiles de Bretagne* with Spain and who remained committed to the view that quality control was the best guarantee of foreign markets.⁶⁵

Calls for replacing imports with home produced goods struck a far more consensual note. Import substitution was both a key recommendation of the Gournay circle's model of international economic competition, and a central aspect of the Dublin Society's activities. In one of its earliest bulletins, the Dublin association complained that over £500,000 worth of goods were imported into Ireland each year that the country could produce for itself. A primary purpose of the fund with which Dr Samuel Madden endowed the society in 1739 was to offer premiums to encourage domestic production of goods then imported into the country.⁶⁶ The Breton Estates made a similar commitment to import substitution, offering premiums and encouragements, to be supervised by the society, for paper manufacture, twills, woollen cloth, muslins, printed textiles and beaver hats.⁶⁷ One of the obvious targets for import

⁶³ *Corps d'observations de la Société d'agriculture de commerce & des arts, 1759 & 1760* (Paris: Veuve de B. Brunet 1772), 357 ff.

⁶⁴ Anon., *A Cadiz le 30. avril 1763* (n.p.: n.d.) (Archives municipales de Nantes, HH 18).

⁶⁵ Quéniart, *Bretagne au XVIIIe siècle*, 346–8, 352. More broadly, see Philippe Minard, *La fortune du colbertisme: Etat et industrie dans la France des Lumières* (Paris: Fayard 1998).

⁶⁶ Samuel Madden, *A Letter to the Dublin Society, on the Improving their Fund; and the Manufactures, Tillage, &c. in Ireland* (Dublin: R. Reilly 1739), 28–32. On premiums, see Meenan and Clark (eds.), *Royal Dublin Society*, 7–8.

⁶⁷ *Corps d'observations, 1757 & 1758*, 17–27.

substitution was Irish salt-beef.⁶⁸ Forbonnais remarked on the 'tribute' France paid Ireland each year for its salt-beef, to the ultimate benefit of Britain. He recommended that premiums be offered for salt-beef from other European countries, or better yet for French salt-beef. With an investment of just six hundred thousand livres a year France could deprive its enemies of a trade worth five millions.⁶⁹ The Intermediary Commission understood the potential for cutting out the Irish trade and corresponded with the society on methods for salting beef. It published a brochure on the subject in 1762.⁷⁰

However, the imports that the Breton Society and Estates envisioned replacing with local products came not just from foreign countries but also from neighbouring French provinces. The society called for the establishment of a woollen manufacture to compete with those of Elbeuf and Louviers, for a muslin industry to replace fabric from Le Mans, and for the production of flour in the style of Nérac.⁷¹ The society's *Corps d'observations* complained that the woollens of nearby Cholet 'inundate the province'. Here was a golden opportunity for import substitution, a chance for Brittany to substitute home-produced goods 'in place of consuming the production of the agriculture and industry of neighbouring provinces'.⁷² With this vision of interprovincial import substitution, the imperatives of local prosperity and local politics trumped the national vision of the Gournay circle, which envisioned import substitution as a weapon in an economic and political struggle for preeminence with Great Britain. Such policies also raise the question whether the *patrie* the Breton associates claimed to serve was primarily a national or a provincial one.

The Breton Society and the politics of provincial autonomy

Brittany was unusual in the degree of self-government it enjoyed within the absolutist structures of the French monarchy. Nevertheless, from 1675, when the last great seventeenth-century peasant revolt was

⁶⁸ Bertie Mandelblatt, 'A Transatlantic Commodity: Irish Salt Beef in the French Atlantic World', *History Workshop Journal* 63 (2007: 1), 18–47.

⁶⁹ François Véron de Forbonnais, *Divers mémoires, sur le commerce, recueillis du meme auteur* (Paris: 1757), 83–5. The *Journal œconomique* suggested that Canada might be established as France's main supplier of salt-beef, cutting out the Irish trade. *Journal œconomique* (November 1754), 90.

⁷⁰ 'Méthode pour saler le boeuf', Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3818, fol. 1625–26.

⁷¹ *Corps d'observations, 1757 & 1758*, 17–27.

⁷² *Corps d'observations, 1757 & 1758*, 252.

crushed, the region became more fully integrated into the administrative structures of the monarchy. A royal intendant was installed at Rennes in 1689, along with a network of subdelegates across the province who reported to him. One of the defining conflicts in eighteenth-century Breton political life set the 'bastion' – parts of the Breton social elite committed to preserving the ancient liberties of the province – against the intrusions of the administrative monarchy. The leading historian of the Breton nobility, Jean Meyer, has suggested that the Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts was a front for such *bastionnaire* elements. From its inception, he claims, the organisation was 'marked by the political identity [etiquette] of its participants' not one of whom could be regarded as 'a partisan of royal policy'. Indeed, the society united nobles playing a prominent role in the provincial Estates, the likes of Pinczon du Sel des Monts, and Le Loup de la Biliais, with a parliamentary noble opposition built around a core of political Jansenists, including La Chalotais, de Pontual, Cornullier and Grénédan. To this alliance of nobles, Meyer argues, the society joined the merchant oligarchy of the ports some of whom (including Montaudouin, he suggests) shared the Jansenism of the *parlementaires*.⁷³

It is tempting to read the politics of the society through such an optic, culminating in the celebrated *affaire de Bretagne*, one of the great political crises of the *ancien régime*, in which several members of the society were embroiled. The *affaire* is too complex to describe in detail, but it derived its power from the way it conjoined layers of political conflict from the local to the national level. In 1764 the Parlement of Rennes, in support of *bastionnaire* elements in the Estates, issued an edict designed to prevent an increase in indirect taxation in the province. The Royal Council quashed this declaration and, in response, most of the magistrates resigned. Over the following years, the resistance of the magistrates became a focal point for the parlements' national struggle against the perceived 'despotism' of the monarchy. Underlying these quarrels, was a conflict between political factions led in Brittany by the *procureur général* of the parlement, La Chalotais, and the royal provincial governor, the duc d'Aiguillon, with both sides enjoying support from opposing factions at court. In 1765 when Louis XV received threatening letters identified by hand-writing experts as written in the hand of La Chalotais, the *procureur* and his son were jailed. La Chalotais was later joined in prison by another leading

⁷³Jean Meyer, *La Noblesse bretonne au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N. 1966), 580.

member of the Breton Society, Pinzcon du Sel, who had published an attack on d'Aiguillon.⁷⁴

Notwithstanding the important role played in the *affaire* by members of the society, an interpretation reading the politics of the association as those of provincial liberty is not convincing. While the society harboured oppositional elements, some of its prominent members were linked to d'Aiguillon's faction rather than to La Chalotais' (see below). It is unlikely that the association was conceived by its founders – even by La Chalotais and Pinzcon du Sel – as a stalking horse for a politics of provincial autonomy. The horizons of La Chalotais and Pinzcon were not so limited. The former rose to national prominence in the early 1760s when, in his capacity as an officer of the Parlement of Rennes, he attacked the Jesuit order, and later published a treatise on education in which he called for the replacement of Jesuit education with a training more attentive to the sciences and to civic values.⁷⁵ In 1764 he told the Parlement that liberalisation of the grain trade would make possible 'a plan of taxation based on true and unique principles', by which he meant the Physiocratic principles of the *impôt unique*.⁷⁶ Though the connections are murky, La Chalotais appears to have established links with François Quesnay, the founder of the Physiocratic movement, in hopes of using Quesnay's close relationship with Madame de Pompadour to ascend to the comptroller generalship.⁷⁷ (Henry Pattullo, a close associate of Quesnay, had become a free associate of the Breton Society in 1759, and may have served as the liaison between the two men.⁷⁸)

If Pinzcon du Sel was pushing for a scheme of provincial economic development in 1756 this was not a plan conceived under the aegis of provincial political autonomy. As an entrepreneur he had long solicited the support of the royal Bureau of Commerce. His operation was perpetually starved of the capital necessary for expansion and, over a period of almost ten years, he had looked alternatively to the Bureau and to the provincial Estates for financial subventions. In 1746, he petitioned the former for a loan of 30,000 livres, the right to characterise his establishment as a royal manufacture, and for immunity from duties imposed

⁷⁴ Quéniart, *Bretagne au XVIIIe siècle*, 108.

⁷⁵ Louis-René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais, *Essai d'éducation nationale, ou Plan d'études pour la jeunesse* (n.p.: 1763).

⁷⁶ Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy*, vol. 1, 159.

⁷⁷ Jean Meyer, *La Chalotais: Affaires de femmes et affaires d'Etat sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Perrin 1995).

⁷⁸ Arch. dép. Loire-Atl, C 443, fol. 304v.

by the tax farms on the entry of his raw materials into the province. He applied again to the Bureau of Commerce in 1747, securing an exemption from some duties, and an immunity from militia service for his workers. But he felt he had been dealt with ungenerously by both the Bureau and the Estates. He was nostalgic for the age of Colbert when he might have been more munificently subsidised – a sentiment hardly in keeping with a *bastionnaire* vision.⁷⁹

Pinczon du Sel was also frustrated by the difficulty of finding local investors to back his manufacture, even when some of the risk was absorbed by government. When the provincial Estates agreed to stand guarantee for a loan of 40,000 livres, Pinczon was able to secure investments of only 21,500. For him, the Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts surely constituted a vehicle to foster a more expansive entrepreneurial culture. In his *Considérations sur le commerce de Bretagne*, he entered the lists in support of the abbé Coyer's recently published *La noblesse commerçante*. Following Coyer, he cited as obstacles to economic development the 'gothic' prejudices that still persisted against noble investment in commerce, and he endorsed the idea that poor nobles ought to throw themselves into entrepreneurial activity, representing this as a form of service to the *patrie*.⁸⁰

Rather than striving to protect provincial liberties, the Breton Society offered a mode of participation in public life that transcended traditional political fault lines. Here may lie another parallel with the Dublin Society. According to James Livesey, the Dublin association sought to negotiate a place for Ireland in a British Empire that denied full political or economic partnership to its provincial members. Instead of challenging Ireland's political dependency – instead of seeking political autonomy or equality for Ireland within the empire, as some Irish 'patriots' were wont to do – it elaborated a privatised vision of the public good based on creating utility and happiness, and it sought to make that

⁷⁹On Pinczon du Sel's economic activities, see Charles A. Foster, 'Honoring Commerce and Industry in 18th Century France: A Case Study of Changes in Traditional Social Functions', Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1950, 278–94.

⁸⁰Pinczon du Sel des Mons, *Considérations sur le commerce de Bretagne*, 125ff. Gabriel-François Coyer, *La noblesse commerçante* (London: 1756). On the controversy generated by the text, see J. Q. C. Mackrell, *The Attack on 'Feudalism' in Eighteenth-Century France* (London: Routledge & K. Paul 1973), chp. 4; Jay M. Smith, 'Social Categories, the Language of Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution: The Debate over *Noblesse Commerçante*', *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000), 339–74.

vision a reality through instruction and improvement.⁸¹ While the situation of the Society of Brittany was different, it seems to have embraced a similar strategy, opting for a patriotism of the private sphere which sidestepped confrontation with the administrative monarchy.

The decline of the Society and its legacy

The Breton Society was active from its foundation in 1757 until 1764, but from this point forward there was a general slackening of activity. In itself, this is unsurprising. Most voluntary associations in eighteenth-century Britain, Peter Clark suggests, lasted no more than three or four years, plagued by structural problems of low attendance, lack of suitable venues, conflicts between members or inadequate resources.⁸² The Society of Brittany suffered from the same kinds of troubles. In a reflection on the reasons for its decline, a 1768 report mentioned the number of vacant places, the breakdown of communication between the diocesan sections and the central bureau in Rennes, which was accused of high-handedness, and the slighting of the individual contributions of some members.⁸³ There is also some evidence from this period that the Estates was becoming impatient with the society's demands for money.⁸⁴ Yet the difficult political circumstances in the province during the *affaire de Bretagne* also, likely, contributed to the slackening of the society's activity. The *affaire* began in 1764, the point from which life began to ebb from the association. The society could not very well have avoided the fallout from the crisis; its own ranks, notably those of the central bureau at Rennes, were divided among the partisans of La Chalotais and those of d'Aiguillon. One of the associates, the bishop of Rennes, was virtually driven from the province after the reestablishment of the parlement in 1769, and the society's secretary since 1765, Julien Busson, who was physician to the duc d'Aiguillon, seems to have left the province under similar circumstances.⁸⁵

⁸¹James Livesey, 'The Dublin Society in Eighteenth-Century Irish Political Thought', *Historical Journal* 47 (2004:3), 615–40.

⁸²Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 60, 234–44.

⁸³Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 449, fol. 170v–171r.

⁸⁴In May 1767 an annual payment of 1000 livres was authorised for its upkeep under the express condition that there be no demands for an augmentation for the next five sittings of the Estates. Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 447, fol. 211r.

⁸⁵On the bishop's links to d'Aiguillon's party and his departure from the province, see Quériart, *Bretagne au XVIIIe siècle*, 104–5. On Busson, see Jean-Prosper Levot, *Biographie bretonne*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Le Doyen and P. Giret 1852–57), vol. 1, 217.

A virtual refounding of the society was undertaken early in 1769 under the auspices of the new royal governor, the duc de Duras, his right hand man in Brittany, François Bateau de Girac, Bishop of Saint-Brieuc, and the new royal intendant, François-Marie d'Agay.⁸⁶ The Estates allotted a generous subsidy to the society and admitted a new slate of members.⁸⁷ But the new association does not appear to have got off the ground. The secretary, Busson, apparently was not replaced, La Chalotais' nominee Thébault having been rejected.⁸⁸ There is some evidence that the noble contingent in the Estates was reluctant to vote further funds for the society in 1770 – perhaps in reaction to the slighting of La Chalotais.⁸⁹ Mention of the Society, which is routine in the minutes of the provincial Estates from the late 1750s and 1760s (and, between sittings, in the deliberations of the Intermediary Commission), ceases after 1770. In 1785, the comptroller general, Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, attempted to contact the society through the intendant, only to be told that there had not, for a long time past, been an agricultural society in the province.⁹⁰ Two years previously, a Patriotic Society (*Société patriotique*) had been established in Brittany, and in 1785 it called for renewed attention to agricultural matters in the province, but the appeal does not seem to have been answered.⁹¹

Most historians of the Society of Brittany agree that it achieved little of lasting importance in the realm of agricultural improvement or economic transformation. Its chief legacy lay elsewhere, in the network of agricultural societies established by the royal administration in the 1760s. The foundation of the Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts received wide publicity in France. Most of the major journals

⁸⁶ Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 449, fol. 204r; Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3913.

⁸⁷ Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 449, fol. 171r. The Estates approved another round of new members late in 1770. Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 450, fol. 208v.

⁸⁸ La Chalotais nominated Thébault in the summer of 1770. See Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3913.

⁸⁹ Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 1789.

⁹⁰ Jean Quéniart, *Culture et Société Urbaines dans la France de l'Ouest au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck 1978), 439.

⁹¹ Arch. dép. d'Ille-et-Vilaine, C 3913. The reasons for this inaction are unclear, but it may be that the Patriotic Society was perceived to be intruding on the prerogative of the Estates. The *Société patriotique* was a different kind of organisation than the Breton Society. It was devoted to literary pursuits and to the animation of public and private virtue. During the 1790s, an agricultural society was established in Nantes, though little can be discerned from the archival record of its organisation or subsequent history. Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., L 370.

serving the French republic of letters commented on it enthusiastically.⁹² By 1760, a convinced *agronome*, Henri Bertin, had become comptroller general, and turned for advice to several members of Gournay's circle, especially Abeille and Dangeul. In the autumn of 1760, Bertin decided to establish a national network of agricultural societies modelled on the Society of Brittany.⁹³ Over the following years, more than a dozen societies were established, coordinated by another of Bertin's collaborators, Louis-François de Menon, marquis de Turbilly, who had been a free associate of the Society of Brittany since 1760.⁹⁴ These bodies did not devote the same attention to manufactures as their Breton forerunner, specialising generally in agricultural matters, but in several important respects they continued the precedents established in Brittany.

They promoted a revivification of rural prosperity as a means to regenerate French power in the aftermath of the disastrous Seven Years' War, while pressing the government to consider the interests of agriculture in the formulation of its economic policies. The new societies served as key supports for the government's policy of liberalising the grain trade. Like their Breton predecessor, they sought to activate the energies of cultivators using a combination of instructions and prizes. They became centres for the diffusion of a discourse linking economic improvement and patriotism. The rhetoric of the societies, feeding into the broader currents of French patriot discourse after mid century, moulded public understanding of the political economic predicament of the nation, and would later shape public perceptions of the financial and economic crisis of the monarchy in the late 1780s.⁹⁵

Apart from its immediate legacy in a French context, the establishment of the Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts represents a singularly important moment in the development of European economic societies. Its foundation brought renewed attention to the model of sociability and improvement offered by British voluntary associations. It served to naturalise the Dublin model in France – and perhaps more broadly on the continent. Its establishment highlights the transnational spread of ideas and practical models of action in eighteenth-century Europe, and also the globalising economic context in which

⁹²See, for example, *Journal encyclopédique* (15 June 1757); *Journal œconomique* (November 1757), 124; *Journal des sçavans* (August 1757), 519; *Journal de Trévoux* (June 1757), 1509–16.

⁹³Bourde, *Agronomie et agronomes*, 1102n.

⁹⁴Arch. dép. Loire-Atl., C 444, fol. 122v.

⁹⁵Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, passim.

that transnational migration of ideas and models took on meaning. While the ultimate decline of the Breton Society may underline the limits of economic societies as vehicles for a transformative political economic agenda, the very fact of its establishment suggests the power of political economic visions of international rivalry at mid century.

5

The *Georgofili* of Florence, 1753–1783: From ‘perfect anarchy’ to Royal Academy

Vieri Becagli

The Richecourt years

On 4 June 1753 eighteen people met in a house in Florence’s Piazza Pitti with the purpose of founding an academy whose aim, as stated by the architect of the initiative, was to ‘perfect the highly beneficial art of Tuscan cultivation’.¹ Behind this initiative was Ubaldo Montelatici, a Lateran Canon in his early fifties, who had been a lector of philosophy and theology outside Tuscany and on his return had been granted the concession of an abbey near Laterina, where he developed a passion for agriculture while managing its lands.

Thus was born the ‘Academy of the *Georgofili*’ (*Accademia dei Georgofili*), as the members called it: the first of several Italian academies, whose object was the scientific and empirical study of agriculture,

¹Piero Bargagli, *L’Accademia dei Georgofili nei suoi più antichi ordinamenti* (Florence: M. Ricci 1907), 27. See also *Accademia economico-agraria dei Georgofili*, *Archivio storico. Inventario 1753–1911*, eds. Antonietta Morandini, Francesca Morandini, Giuseppe Pansini (Florence: Azienda Litografica Toscana 1970). Montelatici’s memoirs, the statutes until after the 1767 reform, and other sources related to the establishment of the Academy are published by Bargagli. Essential references on the Academy in this period are Renato Pasta, ‘L’Accademia dei Georgofili e la riforma dell’agricoltura’, *Rivista storica italiana* 105 (1993): 484–501; Carla Basagni, ‘L’Accademia dei Georgofili in età leopoldina. Note per una ricerca’ (University of Florence: unpublished thesis 1988–89); Marco Tabarrini, *Degli studi e delle vicende della Reale Accademia dei Georgofili nel primo secolo di sua esistenza* (Florence: M. Cellini 1856) which provides a register of academicians. For general background, Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore* (Turin: Einaudi 1969); Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore V. L’Italia dei lumi (1764–1790)* (Turin: Einaudi 1987); Eric Cochrane, *Tradition and Enlightenment in the Tuscan Academies, 1690–1800* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1961).

the primary sector of the economy. This was a time when interest in such matters was on the rise throughout Europe, partly because of the spread of the new agronomy born in England and brought to notice by the works of French authors. The importance of agricultural efficiency as a key contributor to a nation's wealth increasingly drew the attention of the European public through the vast literature that analysed the differences between the two countries that appeared to be challenging one another for supremacy, France and England.

The success of English agriculture, seen as a fundamental element in the prosperity and power of the nation, was linked solely to the joint efforts and initiatives of individuals, who by themselves would have had insufficient resources. Amongst those who underlined this was Jean-Bernard Le Blanc, in his *Lettres d'un François concernant le gouvernement, la politique et les moeurs des Anglois et des François* published in 1746. In these letters the author, who would become a correspondent of one of the Georgofili's founders, Giovanni Lami (to whom he would dedicate his translation of Hume's *Political Discourses*), recalled and extolled the work carried out for public benefit by the Royal Society in London, praising it particularly for having 'brought honour back to Agriculture'. With its projects and experiments, so he wrote, the society had shown the English the potential wealth of the primary sector, and had stimulated the spread of farming wherever British power was dominant, including the New World.²

The Academy did not therefore spring from nothing. In the previous year, 1752, Montelatici had published his *Ragionamento sopra i mezzi più necessari per far rifiorire l'agricoltura*, which proposed a new role for landowners as a solution to the deterioration of the sector in Italy, deemed to be caused by the backwardness and ignorance of peasant farmers tied to traditional and often harmful practices. The landowners were the only people who, once instructed in the art of 'perfect cultivation', would be able to compel workers to accept correct techniques. In arguing for the importance of agronomic culture Montelatici mentioned, alongside the names of foreign authors, those of writers on Tuscan agriculture, thereby bridging the gulf between indigenous tradition and modern texts. The short volume was an immediate success, to the point that at the end of 1753, a few months after the foundation of the Academy, a Neapolitan reprint appeared prefaced with one of the

²Jean-Bernard Le Blanc, *Lettres d'un François concernant le gouvernement, la politique et les moeurs des Anglois et des François* (Amsterdam: Aux depens de la Compagnie 1749), 2: 69.

founding texts of the new role assigned to men of culture, the *Discorso sul vero fine delle lettere e delle scienze*, by Antonio Genovesi.

Montelatici had dedicated his short work to Emmanuel, Count of Richcourt, the head of the Regency which governed Tuscany from Florence on behalf of the Emperor, Grand Duke Francis Stephen of Lorraine. In the dedication, while recalling how he had proposed a 'simple and easy way' – namely the agrarian education of landowners – to eliminate the damage caused by ignorance, he underscored his conviction that agriculture was one of the most important 'among the many means' that the regent adopted 'with tireless and extremely thoughtful vigilance to render more thriving and wealthy' the 'very happy state of Tuscany'. This was the agriculture which, as had 'recently' been written by the 'highly cultured Muratori in his *Libro della Pubblica Felicità*, should be procured not only by wise citizens, but also by Princes, so it might grow as much as possible'. This was an appeal, and also a request, made in with the later initiative in mind.³

The Academy's programme, which was drawn up by, apart from Montelatici, Giovanni Lami, the erudite librarian to the Marquis Riccardi and founder and compiler of a celebrated literary periodical, the *Novelle letterarie*, and by two well-known and important doctors and scientists linked to the Botanical Society, Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti and the younger Saverio Manetti, called for a structure not particularly rigid. Montelatici would later define the 'regiment' of the Academy as 'democratic and popular, so that it might be called a perfect anarchy'.⁴ There might have been some echo of Renaissance academies here, yet it merely placed the Academy in a tradition widespread in Italy.

Given the complete equality of the members, the only post provided for was that of secretary, which was entrusted to the founder, Montelatici. The delegates who had drawn up the laws were the first to propose topics for study, but all other members would have their turn. As for the meetings, a minimum of a mere four per year were called for. The only restriction was that among the members there should always be one who belonged to the same religious congregation as Montelatici.⁵

³Ubaldo Montelatici, *Ragionamento sopra i mezzi per far rifiorire l'agricoltura più necessari, colla relazione dell'Erba Orobanche detta volgarmente Succiamela, e del modo di estirparla, del celebre Pier Antonio Micheli* (Florence: Gaetano Albizzini 1752), vi. The reference is to Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Della pubblica felicità oggetto de' buoni principi* (Lucca 1749).

⁴Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 78.

⁵Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 79.

Once the laws were approved, in the following meeting, apart from identifying subjects to work on, it was decided to widen participation to associates while making it clear that they should not be considered full members of the Academy. These would be people involved in or expert in country skills, such as the first to be elected, the head gardener of the Giardino della Gherardesca. Although the questions that the Academy proposed to deal with generally related to technical matters or experimenting with new tools, Domenico Maria Manni, a well-known Tuscan scholar and man of letters, proposed a history of Florentines who in past centuries had achieved fame for studies and work carried out in favour of agriculture. This was a recovery and defence of a native cultured tradition, which Montelatici himself had spoken of in his book.⁶

Richecourt did not remain indifferent to what was happening, which demonstrated that accepting the dedication meant more than receiving an honour. The minister, who was engaged in an ambitious and difficult project aimed at modernising the institutions of the Grand Duchy, had certainly considered both the possible role of the Academy in the launch of a new agriculture – one of the issues that was receiving the government's attention – as well as the benefits to its image that might be gained from an initiative which, probably thanks to Lami's network of contacts, had already been talked of abroad. The news of the Academy's creation had in fact been reported almost immediately in the columns of the *Mercure de France*.⁷ Thus there was some logic when the head of the Regency, accompanied by Staff-Adjutant Dumesnil, 'suddenly' – as Montelatici noted – attended the third meeting of the Academy.⁸

Responding to the early efforts of the Academy, Richecourt advanced two sharp objections and a single request. Firstly he stated that he found the number of members to be excessive (at this time there were twenty-seven and one associate), and then that 'the essays and other items, such as histories etc. were of no benefit to agriculture'. Finally he stated that a delegation of twelve academicians should be formed, divided into four classes to which the various aspects of agriculture (and he gave precise instructions) should be allocated. Once the Academy

⁶Montelatici, *Ragionamento sopra i mezzi per far rifiorire l'agricoltura*, 40–2.

⁷*Mercure de France* (August 1753), 193.

⁸Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 32. For the regency period and Richecourt, Alessandra Contini, *La Reggenza lorenese tra Firenze e Vienna. Logiche dinastiche, uomini e governo (1737–1766)* (Florence: Olschki 2002); and Marcello Verga, *Da 'cittadini' a 'nobili'. Lotta politica e riforma delle istituzioni nella Toscana di Francesco Stefano* (Milan: Giuffrè 1990).

had demonstrated its ability to obtain good results, he would personally ask the Sovereign to grant it his patronage.⁹

The academicians hastened to carry out the minister's requests. However, once the twelve deputies had been elected, four classes appeared insufficient to cover the vast subject matter, and it was counter-proposed to increase the number to eight and the deputies to twenty-four.¹⁰

Richecourt's immediate consent makes one doubt that his objection to the inordinately high membership had really been his main concern. It seems more likely that this was connected to his objection regarding the space given to scholarly historical knowledge, which he considered useless. He was possibly worried that the Academy might deviate from direct research into science-based practical applications, which he believed should be its prime purpose. It is also possible that he had other worries, such as a hidden fear that the Academy's prime purpose might be accompanied by an exaltation of the Tuscan tradition that could attract the currents of Florentine opinion hostile to the renewal projects he wanted to drive forward.

Since it is impossible to give a certain answer to this question, we shall try to examine another, albeit in the knowledge of the precariousness of what we are about to expound and of the imperfect nature of the source we will be using. The source is the reconstruction in chronological order of the membership of the Academy that was carried out by Tabarrini midway through the nineteenth century, a text which is irreplaceable because it is unique albeit plagued by inexactitude and vagueness. If we examine the list of the eighteen original academicians, we find a group composed of doctors and scientists, men of letters, landowners with an active interest in the cultivation of their Florentine lands or residents of the capital at least a third of whom belonged to illustrious patrician families. Among the latter, the most typical were the Marquis Ubaldo Feroni and Giulio Orlandini, then a court chamberlain and a senator, who were two of the biggest landowners in the Grand Duchy. And distinguished for his role as *spedalingo* (rector) of the *Spedale degli Innocenti*, was Count Giovanni Michele Maggi.¹¹

The eight members who were added immediately after were four doctors, two of whom lived outside Tuscany, and four men belonging to leading Florentine families – one from the Verrazzanos, one from the

⁹ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 33.

¹⁰ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 34.

¹¹ Tabarrini, *Degli studi*, 65.

Gherardesca family, one Orlandini and Carlo Riccardi, the very young marquis who owned the library directed by Lami.¹²

The months following Richecourt's intervention saw an increase in the number of academicians, to the extent that in April 1754, when the time came to elect the anticipated twenty-four, they had risen to forty-eight, of whom all but a very few were linked to Florence by either birth or residence. Notable among the outsiders, other than the two doctors mentioned above, were two Neapolitans, Romualdo De Sterlich and the Duke of Grottaglie, Giacomo Caracciolo. But the most striking point about the additional names is the large increase in people linked to government circles: the senator and member of the Council of War, Leonardo del Riccio, the aforementioned Major Dumesnil, the Commissioner of the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova Francesco Maggi, the Finance Secretary Giovan Francesco Pagnini and the Director of the Gervais gardens. There was also an abbot, Giovanni Neri, brother of the powerful Pompeo, and a lawyer, Michele Ciani, who would both go on to play important roles inside the Academy.¹³

The nomination of prominent people to the Academy can certainly be explained by the desire to bring prestige to the institution. However, such a distinguished company and the status of some of the people listed could also lead one to suspect a desire in some quarters to keep a close eye on an institution that was growing in importance, and of establishing ties with a view to exercising internal control.

All that notwithstanding, the Academy struggled to organise its activities with the bare minimum of continuity. The nomination of deputies met with difficulties, and in at least two cases did not succeed in reaching the three that were needed. The six meetings held in the first year were followed by only three in 1754 and two in 1755, and were therefore below the minimum.¹⁴

Yet despite this, the institution's fame continued to spread, and there was even a request from Madrid for detailed information about its rules and activities, probably because of the news sent from the Minister of Spain, Marquis Luigi Viviani, who was an academician from 1754.¹⁵

Even so, 'rumours' about the 'slowness' of the Academy continued to spread around Florence. All this led to structural changes prompted, as he himself affirmed, by Montelatici.¹⁶ Other innovations had already

¹²Tabarrini, *Degli studi*, 65.

¹³Tabarrini, *Degli studi*, 66.

¹⁴Bargagli, *L'Accademia*; Tabarrini, *Degli studi*.

¹⁵Tabarrini, *Degli studi*, 66.

¹⁶Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 41.

been enacted. It had been decided that the election of new academicians would take place by means of a secret ballot requiring a majority of two thirds of those present, a sign of emerging internal divisions that made the original open cooption inadvisable. The chronic lack of funds necessitated the introduction of an annual membership fee, and the administrative role of trustee was established. Finally, to satisfy the demands in respect of Richecourt's requests, the single post of historian was instituted and entrusted to Domenico Maria Manni.¹⁷

In the first sitting of 1757 a further step was taken. Montelatici proposed, in opposition to the principle of equality enshrined in the founding laws, the election of a head and 'prince', whose term would last a year. This was Giovan Gualberto Franceschi, chosen because of his willingness to carry out experiments at his own expense. Nonetheless, the fact that the senator and chancellor Neri Venturi, who had only a few months before been called to join the Regency Council, was invited to the meeting and appointed an academician, and at the same time the Sovereign issued a warrant that granted the use of premises in a public building for a period of three years, makes one think that there may have been some guarantees requested in exchange for what appeared to be the concession of official patronage. Franceschi, an erstwhile president of the Botanical Society, came from a patrician family and was highly regarded for his personal qualities. Apparently, he was also among the Florentines who adhered to the Freemasons and this might constitute a link with Richecourt, who belonged to the brotherhood, as did the Sovereign himself. However, the relationship between Freemasonry and the birth and the early events of the Academy, whose membership included people presumed to be Freemasons, while being an area for research that would probably be fruitful though difficult, is as yet unknown.¹⁸

Franceschi's nomination coincided with greater activity. In that year there were six meetings, during which Targioni Tozzetti read his *Ragionamenti sull'agricoltura Toscana*. Published in Lucca in 1759, this

¹⁷ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 10 and 79.

¹⁸ For Tuscan Freemasonry, Renato Pasta, 'Fermenti culturali e circoli massonici nella Toscana del Settecento', in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 21. La Massoneria*, ed. G. M. Cazzaniga (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore 2006), 447–83. Information on masons and attendance at masonic meetings, see M. A. Timpanaro Morelli, *Per una storia di Andrea Bonducci (Firenze, 1715–1766). Lo stampatore, gli amici, le loro esperienze culturali e massoniche* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per l'Età Moderna e Contemporanea 1996); M. A. Timpanaro Morelli, *Autori, stampatori, librai, per una storia dell'editoria in Firenze nel secolo XVIII* (Florence: Olschki 1999).

was the first important concrete sign of the existence of the Academy, and an articulate tribute to its goals by the author, who dedicated his work to it.¹⁹

But the most important act of the new 'prince', was to entrust Targioni Tozzetti with the task of drafting a new programme of laws that diverged significantly from the original. In this, the aim of the institution was described as being 'to correct, amplify and perfect the theories and practices of Tuscan agriculture'. Academicians were thereafter limited to 100 (a number that had yet to be reached), and the payment of an annual subscription was made mandatory. New nominees had to be proposed by the newly instituted President and be approved by a majority of two thirds. Alongside associate members the laws provided for correspondent members, who were exempt from payment and included academicians unwilling to pay the annual fee.

The new laws also introduced the role of Patron 'a person well-considered by birth, dignity and by love towards the sciences and arts', renewable annually. The Patron was free to make proposals he considered useful for the development of the institution, and when the need arose would plead its cause before the Sovereign and the ministers, and be its international point of reference. The government of the Academy was formed by a president and by an indeterminate number of counsellors, and also included a secretary, 24 study delegates, a trustee and a superintendent.

Other more minor figures were also provided for, including an archivist, a librarian, assistants for the museum and the garden as required, and a historian. These 'officials' formed a support group for the president and to a certain degree restored some balance of power since their agreement had to be sought before the prerogative to 'put forward proposals' and to call meetings could be used. The positions were held for one year, with the exception of those delegated to study, the secretary (Montelatici) and the historian. If competitions with prizes were introduced, adjudicators could be appointed for the occasion. Four general meetings would take place each year, but private ones could also be called.

This was a constitution that limited the freedom initially foreseen. Moreover, it established a hierarchy among the academicians which was

¹⁹ *Ragionamenti del dottor Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti sull'agricoltura toscana* (Lucca: Nella Stamperia di Jacopo Giusti, 1759). The dedication read: 'To the most illustrious and most learned Prince and members of the most respectable Academy of the Georgofili instituted for the advancement of Tuscan agriculture Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti dedicates and consecrates these two works as suiting the aims of the Academy.'

linked to the seniority of membership and roles held, as evidenced by the fact that anyone who had served as president afterwards became a counsellor by right.

When reconstructing the story of the Academy, scholars have habitually written that these constitutions never came into force.²⁰ However, this view appears to be contradicted by Montelatici in the memoirs he wrote in his function of secretary. Indeed, in the meeting of September 1758, which was attended by thirteen academicians, another change took place. Marquis Orazio Roberto Pucci (a large-scale landowner interested in agrarian experimentation, the holder of several part-time honorary appointments, and later a senator, who would play a dominant role at least until the middle of the 1770s) was named 'President'. This was the first appearance of that position. Pucci accepted it on condition that Franceschi, Marquis Lorenzo Ginori (who held important offices and was both a landowner and involved in the porcelain manufacturing company of his father), Francesco Maggi and Targioni Tozzetti, would all serve as counsellors. If Targioni's terms were not entirely accepted, it seems that their substance was acknowledged.²¹

In his report Montelatici expressed a great deal of bitterness towards the changes brought about by what he called 'new laws', which he claimed to have learned of by accident, and which he believed destroyed the original structure through the powers attributed to the President and the introduction of a majority system. In his opinion, all of this provoked envy and discontent among the academicians and were one of the reasons for the decline of participation in the meetings.²² The fact that the importance of his role had been substantially reduced also contributed to his discomposure. It would not be long before Pucci's request for a personal secretary would bring about a partial loss of Montelatici's authority.

²⁰The text of the decree composed by Targioni Tozzetti, according to Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 89, stems from 1756. However, as Giovanni Gualberto Franceschi (who assigned the task to Targioni) was referred to as the principal of the Academy that the correct year is 1758 – the year following the appointment of Franceschi (10 March 1757) and before Roberto Pucci was elected president (16 September 1758). This imprecision has filtered through in the literature, from Luigi Bottini, *Cenni storici editi a cura della Reale Accademia dei Georgofili* (Florence: Tipografia Mariano Ricci 1931), 1–96, up till Paolo Caserta, 'Le modifiche apportate agli statuti dell'Accademia dei Georgofili dal 1753 al 1789', *Rivista di storia dell'agricoltura*, 34 (1999): 105–31.

²¹Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 44.

²²Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 44–5.

It is interesting to note that, as in earlier cases, a meeting of fundamental importance for the future of the Academy occurred in the presence of a restricted number of participants – and this at a time when total membership seems to have been around eighty. Among those that took part only three, Targioni Tozzetti, Montelatici and Forzoni Accolti, belonged to the original nucleus, while six had only recently become members. The heavy representation of those belonging to some of the most illustrious families of the city is noteworthy (Marquis Lorenzo Ginori, then head of the Arts, and a year later deputy of the Abbondanza, then senator, Marquis Roberto Pucci, the counts Lorenzo and Pietro Pierucci, Orlando Malevolti del Benino, Matteo Biffi Tolomei, Giuseppe da Verrazzano and Franceschi himself) and alongside them was the court doctor Mesny, the Professor of Physics at the University of Pisa Carlo Guadagni, and a nobleman named Settimanni (not described in greater detail).²³

It should also be noted that only a few months after Franceschi's election, voices began to circulate about a replacement of Richecourt – who had already been struck by an illness which would soon lead to his death – as head of the Regency, something that would be officially confirmed in August 1757. The nomination of his successor, Marshal Botta Adorno, reflected a change in Vienna's policies towards the ruling classes in Tuscany, with whom it sought greater collaboration, and this was accompanied by a renewed interest in the economic circumstances of the Grand Duchy. All of this occurred in the new climate of international alliances that from 1756 established territorial stability in the Italian peninsula, and which was an early prelude to the marriage agreement that bestowed the Tuscan second geniture on Peter Leopold.²⁴

We do not know to what extent this evolving situation affected the Academy. It should however be considered that in the same year (1758), before the meeting in which Roberto Pucci was elected President, Tabarrini had registered the membership of seventeen new academicians, the highest number since the first two-year period. Five of these participated in that meeting, including Pucci himself (and also Mesny, Ginori, Malevolti del Benino, Biffi Tolomei and Settimanni). If considered for their importance, we should also note the names of Antonio Filippo Adami, Superintendent of the Guild of Doctors and Herbalists and a future senator, Antonio Uguccioni, who was an *Avvocato dei Poveri* (an official acting as a pro bono lawyer), and Senator Andrea Ginori.²⁵

²³ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 44.

²⁴ Contini, *La reggenza lorenese*, 225–336.

²⁵ Tabarrini, *Degli studi*, 67.

In light of these facts, the nomination in July of Vincenzo degli Alberti (brother of one of the founders, Canon Giorgio degli Alberti), might have been significant. He was one of Francis Stephen's men, a member of the Council of Tuscany and Vienna, who would later defend the liberalisation of the grain trade and rise high under Peter Leopold. His membership possibly went beyond a mere act of homage and search for patronage.²⁶

This new order did not bring new life to the Academy, if we are to believe Montelatici who did not report any meetings in 1759. Certainly, in the following years activity took off again but with fewer than ten members present at every meeting. Then, from September 1763 to July 1766 there is an interruption in the records, in all probability because of the secretary's journey to and residence in Vienna, but we do not know if this signifies that the institution's activities ceased in this period.²⁷

A 'perpetual patron'

The advent of Peter Leopold to the throne in 1765 did not at first appear to bring any change. From July 1766 there was an increase in the frequency of meetings, but always with limited attendance. The turning point came in January 1767 when, in the presence of twelve academicians, Franz Rosenberg-Orsini, who from the previous October had been Prime Minister and effectively head of government, was named 'Principal member, Head and perpetual patron'.²⁸ The title recalled the figure hypothesised by Targioni Tozzetti, but in reality it gave the minister absolute presidency over the Academy, and 'President' would be the appellation due to him from that point on. Since there was only a small number of academicians present at the meeting, Montelatici was asked to consult some others, and four gave their approval.

The first initiative taken by Rosenberg during the meeting for his acceptance, which was held in his palace, was to commission a very new academician, Ottaviano di Guasco, and Pietro Pierucci and Montelatici to draft new regulations.²⁹ In truth it does not appear that this was the result of an impromptu initiative. It is more likely that the minister was behind it, given Guasco's proactive involvement. Guasco – a count,

²⁶ For Giovanni Vincenzo degli Alberti, see Timpanaro Morelli, *Per una storia di Andrea Bonducci*, 100–1.

²⁷ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 52.

²⁸ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 54.

²⁹ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 55. The *Progetto del Regolamento da stabilirsi per l'Accademia dei Georgofili* is also in Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 62–76.

a canon, brother of a general in the Imperial army, a cosmopolitan close to the Viennese court circles, and a friend of Montesquieu – was a member of a wide variety of academies and, apart from reforming the Georgofili, spent his short stay in Florence publishing the *Lettres familières*, by the author of the *Esprit des Lois*.³⁰

The new plan was closely tied to the nomination of the new President. The laws made no provision for choosing a replacement nor was the mechanism for this laid out. Instead the laws dealt only with renewing the structure that depended on him. The impossibility of the head to be able continuously to follow the activities of the Academy was taken for granted, and so it was stipulated that a director would substitute him for a period of one year at a time, working with a secretary and a treasurer. Two counsellors were to be elected to stand alongside the President, or rather only one, given that the other had to be the annual director, thus two direct links with the institution were constituted, in a certain sense rebalancing the role of director. Moreover, there were to be two censors, whose task was to ensure that no publication in which the author referred to himself as a Georgofilo would appear without their prior approval.

Members of the Academy were divided into three groups: honorary, ordinary and correspondent. The number of honorary members was restricted to twenty and of ordinary members to thirty. This hierarchy would be reflected in the positioning of academicians in the official meetings: honorary members sat immediately behind the counsellors and before ordinary members to either side of the president. Honorary members were to be drawn from ‘gentlemen and people of dignity and in distinguished positions’ who could advise and promote studies ‘by personal involvement and by setting an example with the care of their own land’. They did not have to provide the Academy with papers, dissertations or practical experiments, which tasks were the responsibility of ordinary members, who had to complete them at least once a year. To become academicians these had to have had either practical experience or have written on the subject of agriculture. Each academician could propose others who they felt to be suited for membership on the basis of these prerequisites, and the proposal would then be subject to secret ballot. Finally, correspondents had to meet the same criteria, and were either Tuscans from outside the capital or citizens of foreign states.³¹

³⁰ For Ottaviano Guasco (1712–1781), see C. Preti, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana 2004), vol. 63, 457–60.

³¹ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 64–5.

The meetings, which Guasco had intended to be fortnightly, became monthly at the request of the academicians, and were open to the public twice a year. Honorary members had to pay an annual contribution to assist with finances and it was thought that other income might be derived from the publication of journals and reports.³² Prize competitions on issues which the Academy deemed of relevance were also introduced, but were not open to members. The Sovereign would then approve them and award a prize of a gold medallion worth twenty-five Florentine sequins.³³ In order to encourage the efforts of ordinary members an attendance allowance was introduced in the form of a silver coin bearing the image of the Sovereign and the Academy's insignia.

The declared object of research continued to be 'all aspects of rural agriculture'. However, the perspective was widened when, after listing the more strictly technical subjects, 'connected political and economic themes' were added.³⁴ The first necessity was to identify the obstacles, physical or political, that could impede the increase in production, and the second was to determine how best to facilitate the marketing and sale of the various products at home and abroad. Also studied was the relationship between an increase in production and progress in industry and manufacture, the means of matching population growth to agriculture, and the possible employment of vagrants and the like to repopulate the countryside. If we add to these issues the role of landowners and the importance of their presence on the land, the improvement and maintenance of the road system, and the function and usage of common lands, we find ourselves not only before many of the themes that were to engage the Academy and become the objects of prize competitions in the following few years, but also many of the questions discussed in government and in the wider political debate, and which, by using the instruments offered by the economic theories of the time, would in the long run inspire and divide the ruling class and Tuscan intellectual circles.

These regulations were approved in June 1767. The following September the government issued a law that abolished the old system of food rationing and its rigid control of the sale and pricing of cereals, the limitations of which had become clear when in 1764 the country was hit by famine. The change of approach thus made its first impact, and the new policy that licensed the free export of grains was the first

³² Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 69.

³³ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 75.

³⁴ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 71.

step towards complete liberalisation that, not without wavering and uncertainty, would be finalised in 1775, making available fresh opportunities to agriculture and to Tuscan landowners. The November before, the Deputation on Agriculture, Commerce, Arts and Manufacture had started a statistical analysis of the conditions of the country's production and commercial sectors, afterwards making proposals for improving them. A reform of customs procedures would stem from this work and in 1781, with a new tariff, would unite the country and, at least in principle, lead to the liberalisation of trade with the abolition of prohibitions.³⁵

The new order did not in theory alter the nature of the Academy. The nomination of Rosenberg had been the formal outcome of a free election by the members and they, in accordance with the statute, continued to fund its activities through their annual subscriptions. Nevertheless, the very fact that the man who was the president for an indefinite period was also the prime minister, and the Sovereign's personal approval of the statute, which also confirmed the Grand Duke's patronage, as well as the provision of gold medals for competitions and silver coins for attendance – all of which established a direct link with the Secretary of Finance who had to approve expenditures as they arose – signified a further move towards an official and organic relationship with the administration.

In keeping with this tendency was the instruction, contained in the regulations, that in the event of orders, projects and resolutions being transmitted by the Sovereign to the Academy, it would be the duty of the president, or the director, to put them to the members in a private meeting, thereby giving the members the opportunity to make observations or objections regarding any eventual 'difficulty'.³⁶ Thus the institution was given a de facto consultancy role that in the years to come would become more explicit.

Roberto Pucci was made the annual director of the new organisational structure and so remained in fact the head of the Academy, with Giovanni Neri as counsellor. Once the minor positions had been assigned and the twenty honorary members nominated, the selection

³⁵ Mario Mirri, *La lotta politica in Toscana intorno alle 'riforme annonarie' (1764–1775)* (Pisa: Pacini 1972), 29; Vieri Becagli, *Un unico territorio gabellabile. Le riforme doganale leopoldina* (Florence: University of Florence 1983), 9 and the following section. See also Mario Mirri, *Riflessioni su Toscana e Francia. Riforme e rivoluzione. Estratto dall'Annuario XXIV – 1990 dell'Accademia Etrusca di Cortona* (Cortona: Calosci 1990).

³⁶ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 68–9.

of ordinary members required several exclusions in order not to exceed the maximum of thirty, but several new members were also added. The infrequent attendance of the old members that was recorded before this reorganisation suggests that many of them had no desire to keep their place. According to a note it seems that the invitation to be included in the new list was sent to forty-two people of which twenty-seven replied positively. Moreover, the new minute secretary, Piero Pierucci, observed that the limiting of members to thirty took into account the fact that many of them were no longer fulfilling their prescribed obligations. As for the method behind the selection of new members, it is fair to assume that this was monitored from above and made on the basis of their personal qualities as well as their support for government policy. If we look through the list of academicians in 1770, among the ordinary members nominated in 1767 we can see the names of the lector in botany Giovanni Lapi; Ferdinando Morozzi, an engineer; di Raimondo Cocchi, a professor of anatomy and Court Antiquarian; the doctors Molinelli and Durazzini; the doctor and writer on economics Luigi Tramontani; Felice Fontana, a scientist and Court Physician; and a parish priest, agronomist and student of economy with links to physiocracy, Ferdinando Paoletti.³⁷

With the addition of the highly cultured Giuseppe Bencivenni Pelli, secretary of the Pratica Segreta of Pistoia and Pontremoli, promoter of translations of works by Bertrand and Baudeau, and a man closely linked to physiocracy, we find we are dealing with the inclusion of some of the key intellectuals of the country at that time. It is of little consequence that in some cases this occurred without the person concerned knowing, as was the case with Pelli, who wrote in his *Efemeridi* that he had been made a Georgofilo despite never asking (even so he became a most assiduous and active academician).³⁸

In contrast to ordinary members, who were assigned to studies, experimentation and research, and were predominantly intellectuals, scientists and experts in agronomy, the honorary members reflected the adoption of distinctive criteria based on nobility, rank, importance of position and property ownership. Thus they included senior government officials, such as the counsellor of State and Secretary of War Vincenzo degli Alberti, the Superintendent of Mountains Uguccioni, the Director of

³⁷ Bargagli, *L'Accademia*, 76–7.

³⁸ See the unpublished diary of Giuseppe Bencivenni Pelli, *Efemeridi*, 2 September 1767 (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Nuovi Acquisti 1050). For physiocracy in Tuscany, Mario Mirri, 'La fisiocrazia in Toscana: un tema da riprendere', in *Studi di storia medievale e moderna per Ernesto Sestan. II: Età moderna* (Florence: Olschki 1980), 703–60.

the Zecca Fabbrini, and the secretary of Finance and Chancellor of the Grand Duchy's Taxes Pagnini. There were also others who belonged to the topmost Florentine families, some who held important positions in the organs of the administration – like Lorenzo Ginori and the deputy of the Annona Ottaviano de' Medici – or those in elevated positions like the six senators, and the *Gran Cacciatore* (Royal Huntsman) Corsi. The latter two – along with Orlandini, Guicciardini, Viviani, Malevolti del Benino, and Biffi Tolomei – are names that imply conspicuous patrimony (though representatives of the wealthiest Florentine families, such as the Corsini, the Salviati, Rinuccini, to name but a few, were absent).

It was therefore an Academy with strong links to the administration and the Court, links which were reinforced by the presence among the honorary members of Peter Leopold's personal secretary, Sauboin. Moreover, it was an Academy with roots in that part of Florentine society which supported, not without divisions and nit-picking below the surface, the policy of reform which began with the opening of free trade in agricultural products and had a certain cohesion in the assertion and defence of property rights.

The reorganisation was followed by an increase in activity. From summer 1768, meetings were held with greater regularity, almost always managing to meet the prescribed number of eleven per year (November was dedicated to holidays). An average of some twenty academicians attended the sittings in the 1770s. A summary examination of their names shows that twelve of the twenty honorary members participated intermittently, and practically all the ordinary members did so. The first of the prize competitions were held between 1767 and 1771 and dealt with livestock breeding, how to harness the labour of the poor and vagrants, and how to boost the Tuscan wine trade. In October 1771, the Sovereign's request to find ways of alleviating the misery of the peasantry appears to have led to consultancy activity.³⁹

³⁹ Mario Mirri, 'Un'inchiesta toscana sui tributi pagati dai mezzadri e sui patti colonici nella seconda metà del Settecento', *Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. Annali*, Second year (1959): 483–559. Regarding the Academy after the 1760s, see Renato Pasta, *Scienza, politica e rivoluzione. L'opera di Giovanni Fabbroni (1752–1822) intellettuale e funzionario al servizio dei Lorena* (Florence: Olschki 1989); Renato Pasta, 'Scienza e istituzioni nell'età leopoldina. Riflessioni e comparazioni', in *La politica della scienza. Toscana e stati italiani nel tardo settecento*, eds. Giulio Barsanti, Vieri Becagli and Renato Pasta (Florence: Olschki 1996), 3–34; Mario Mirri, *Ferdinando Paoletti. Agronomo, 'georgofilo', riformatore nella Toscana del Settecento* (Florence: La nuova Italia 1967). For data relating to participation *Filza di verbali di varie adunanze ed atti relativi* (Accademia dei Georgofili di Firenze, Archivio storico, B.3).

In the meantime, at the end of 1770 Rosenberg had returned to Vienna for good, though he retained the presidency of the Academy. Angelo Tavanti, nominated state counsellor and director of finance, would substitute him in these important responsibilities and set out to gain a controlling position in the management of political economy which he would use in the pursuit of liberal policies influenced, broadly speaking, by physiocracy. The most important outcomes of these policies were the establishment of absolute free trade in grains in 1775 and a liberalised customs tariff that unified the territory of the Grand Duchy and was approved in 1781, the year of Tavanti's death.⁴⁰

These events caused institutional uncertainty in the Academy, producing disquiet and debate among its members. The departure of the elected president had left it without its head, guided only by the annual director who stood in for him. In mid-1771 there was therefore a discussion about the need to move towards a new election to the post considered by many 'very necessary' for the Academy. It was added, however, that they should not proceed without first receiving word from the Sovereign to whom, some thought, the 'whole matter and the election' should be put, and it was subsequently decided to do this 'on paper' with a written supplication to Peter Leopold. By majority decision (fourteen votes to five) a deputation (comprising Giovan Francesco Pagnini, Senator Giulio Orlandini and Ferdinando Paoletti) was then chosen to put the problem directly to the Grand Duke. The result was that things remained unchanged since at the hearing Peter Leopold's response was that 'he would think about it, and would determine what was best for the Academy'.⁴¹

We do not know if the Georgofili, or some of them, had a possible new president in mind, nor if this represented a general consensus as appeared to have been the case before. With the post of prime minister abolished, the person closest to that position and who took over the control of finances, and thus had a link to the Academy, was Angelo Tavanti. If he was the candidate that some might have thought of, it seems the time for his nomination was not yet ripe nor was there unanimous agreement. In any case it had already become apparent that the Academy had neither sufficient power nor the ability to regain its autonomy; rather, it was now an academic body that preferred to entrust itself to the will of the Sovereign, perhaps for the added advantage of overcoming internal divisions. The nomination of deputies (who

⁴⁰ Mirri, *La lotta politica*, 73; Becagli, *Un unico territorio*, 141.

⁴¹ Accademia dei Georgofili di Firenze, Archivio storico, busta. 3.

did not include the director) and the request for a direct meeting served only to save the Academy's dignity. Anyway, even in the following years the Grand Duke took no decision regarding the matter, so Rosenberg had to remain nominal president until his death and, until 1783, the Academy had to be governed by an annual director elected periodically.

A new era of reform proposals

It was not long before the function and the rules of the Academy were once again the object of debate. Among the papers of the Finance Secretariat is a memorandum attributed to Raimondo Cocchi in which he assessed the state of the institution and proposed its total transformation. Albeit undated, the text can be traced to the years 1771 to 1773, given a reference to the Academy's eighteen years of existence, and considering that Cocchi, who as we have seen was nominated in 1770, is shown to have occasionally been present at the meetings until autumn 1772.⁴²

In an early passage, the Academy's regulations were scathingly accused of duplicating a model (which the writer likened to that of a 'confraternity') characteristic of the 'thousand other academies' that had patently failed to make Italy 'more cultured'. He noted that even though a lack of money had prevented bitter internal conflicts like those of the Botanical Society from emerging, this had not stopped the formation of 'numerous private and turbulent cliques' and the kindling of internal disagreements. Also, he claimed that the distinction between the honorary and the ordinary had divided the academicians into those who paid for the right to do nothing and those who had to work without pay and clearly defined tasks, not to mention how an unspecified high number of members created nothing but confusion and greater opportunities for the work-shy.⁴³

He then criticised the low number of meetings and the meagre participation in them, and the poor quality of papers presented, even though in relation to the first point it should be noted that he referred to data from previous years. As for the second, as he himself recognised, he had heard readings of essays which were 'most praiseworthy' (but he added that these were rare). And finally, he said, if one took account of

⁴² Raimondo Cocchi, *Sentimento di R.C. sull'Accademia dei Georgofili cioè. Come sia presentemente. 2. Come forse potrebbe essere. 3. Come cambiarla*, is in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Segreteria di Finanze ante 1788, f. 234. On Cocchi, U. Baldini, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana 1982), vol. 26, 477–80.

⁴³ Cocchi, *Sentimento*, ff. 1–2.

the members who were not really interested in the Academy, or were busy with their own jobs or the duties of other roles they covered, and even if one was prepared to accept that they were all capable people, he calculated that five-sixths of the total were completely inactive and surplus to requirements.⁴⁴

In his opinion the Academy needed to be transformed into a 'society of philosophers', chosen by the Sovereign from among the Georgofili and beyond, who should all be 'equal and paid'. He predicted that in total no more than five people with the necessary qualities would be found, and it would be possible to pay them from savings obtained by abolishing medals and appearance tokens. They need not concern themselves with agronomy, a subject which had by now become the preserve of physicists, nor pretend to preach to 'distant, oppressed, servile' peasantry, especially not from the capital. This body, not to be seen as a new magistrature, must work for the government 'according to the orders of the sovereign', both by gathering 'factual' information and by expressing opinions on 'questions of public economy' in general, and 'not without risk', 'on behalf – for the most part – of the less contemplative, the less illuminated'.⁴⁵

One of the first initiatives to implement would need to be the 'dispelling of public complaints about the new freedom', in order to shed light on it as much as possible and as far as allowed by the 'many secret and eloquent enemies of the government', which had no one to defend it. This was a defence which could be carried out, for example, through the dissemination of pamphlets or letters to the press which would be simple and comprehensible ('within reach of idiots') and which countered the attacks and arguments of adversaries and contributed to calming the public.⁴⁶

Bringing about this transformation would be easy, he concluded. It would be enough, once the new nucleus was chosen, to transfer all the others into the category of honoraries, relieving them of working obligations and the payment of the annual subscription, in addition to suspending until further notice the nomination of new members. Everything should be done with the least possible formality to save the image and reputation of an institution that was now well known even beyond Tuscany.⁴⁷

That Peter Leopold did pay some attention to the Academy is demonstrated by the fact that, in November 1772, he invited Giuseppe Pelli,

⁴⁴ Cocchi, *Sentimento*, f. 4.

⁴⁵ Cocchi, *Sentimento*, ff. 7–8.

⁴⁶ Cocchi, *Sentimento*, f. 10.

⁴⁷ Cocchi, *Sentimento*, f. 12.

Giovan Francesco Pagnini and Ferdinando Paoletti to examine the constitution of the London-based Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, an extract of which was sent to them, in view of a possible reform of the Georgofili.⁴⁸

In the same month, the Florentine periodical *Notizie del mondo* reported the forthcoming appearance of an Italian translation of an English work published that year, *The Advancement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce* by William Bailey. This presented a series of plates illustrating the machines kept by the English Society of which Bailey was the archivist, an institution whose efforts to promote innovation and to develop techniques applied to the arts had enjoyed great success. The translation, completed very quickly, appeared in 1773 with a dedication to Peter Leopold. The Italian preface, written by a mathematician, Pietro Ferroni, was followed by an extract from the constitution of the society, probably the same text examined by Pelli and the others.⁴⁹

This editorial undertaking, which was of considerable importance given the size of the volume and the number of illustrative plates it included, was largely financed by Roberto Pucci, the director of the Georgofili.⁵⁰ We can therefore assume that even if he had not been directly involved in the translation work, he must at least have checked and approved Ferroni's *Discorso preliminare degli Editori*.

In the final part of this work, which took a sweeping view through human history and took an anti-Rousseauian stance in praise of the role of the sciences and technical arts, the author discussed the establishment of the Society for the encouragement of arts, manufactures and commerce. It was born in 1753, maintained by membership fees, and from the outset it had succeeded its aim of encouraging new discoveries and useful innovations by awarding prizes and honours, achieving some noteworthy results. Ten years after it was founded it had no fewer than 2,500 members.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Pelli, *Efemeridi*, 26 November 1772.

⁴⁹ *Notizie del mondo* (number 91, 14 November 1772), 750. William Bailey, *Avanzamento dell'arti, delle manifatture e del commercio, ovvero descrizione delle macchine utili e dei modelli che si conservano nel Gabinetto della Società istituita in Londra per l'incoraggiamento dell'arti, delle manifatture e del commercio* (Florence: Allegrini, Pisoni and Co. 1773). On this translation see Pietro Ferroni, *Discorso storico della mia vita naturale e civile dal 1745 al 1825. A cura di Danilo Barsanti con un saggio introduttivo di Leonardo Rombai* (Florence: Olschki 1994), 148–53; Daniele Baggiani, 'Tecnologia e riforme nella Toscana di Pietro Leopoldo: la traduzione del "The Advancement of Arts Manufactures and Commerce" di William Bailey', *Rivista storica italiana*, 105 (1993): 515–54.

⁵⁰ Ferroni, *Discorso storico della mia vita*, 153.

⁵¹ Bailey, *Avanzamento*, xxv.

Ferroni wrote that 'sovereignty plays no part in this patriotic body, not even by giving it formal protection'. He also stressed the difference 'in spirit' to other societies, including the one in Dublin (then a reference model throughout the continent) given that the latter was not animated by the 'patriotic spirit', as was the case in the London society, insofar as it was not financially autonomous but was heavily subsidised by Parliament; indeed there was no other example in Europe of the 'generous patriotic intentions' that had animated 'the industrious inhabitants' of London. It was not a lack of resources that deterred others following this example, considering the amount of precious metals lying 'idle' or used for 'paltry and idle excesses of life' throughout Europe. If a small part of this had been invested in finance prizes for the development of the 'fecund genius of the most advantageous discoveries', the reward would have been great: increases in production would stimulate the cultivation of land hitherto abandoned, thereby driving the 'strongest landowners to respond with rapid increases in industry' which would then require the employment of 'many lazy and useless citizens' accustomed, at the state's expense, 'to making a profit from their indolence and the kind hearts of their fellows'.⁵²

There were three reasons for the 'patriotic fervour of the English': the 'unique system of their political constitution'; the 'needs that depend on the nature of the soil' that had forced them to 'establish commerce as a fundamental maxim'; and the 'spirit of superiority and pre-eminence' over other European countries (a good thing in politics, he said) as regards progress in agriculture and the arts. The identifying of this 'enthusiasm to favour industry' with the spirit of the nation had important and rapid consequences, considering the 'forlorn expression' presented by a large part of the country's territory only a short time earlier, and also the miserable and sad conditions endured by some of its people. The English could therefore be emulated – this became apparent when holding Tuscany up to the light of their example – and physical conditions need not be an obstacle but could even act as a stimulus.⁵³ The problem that needed to be tackled was political and moral.

In April 1773, Pelli, Paoletti and Pagnini forwarded to the Grand Duke the proposals they had formulated after examining the London statute.⁵⁴ Their starting point made it clear that they were familiar with

⁵² Bailey, *Avanzamento*, xxvi.

⁵³ Bailey, *Avanzamento*, xxvi.

⁵⁴ The *Proposizioni fatte a S.A.R. sotto dì 2 aprile 1773 dai deputati Sig. Segretario Pelli, Sig. Pievano Paoletti, Sig. Giov. Fran. Pagnini* are conserved in the Guarnacci di Volterra Library, LII.5.12.

Ferroni's *Discorso preliminare*. The essence and 'impetus' of the plan given to them was 'the spirit of patriotism' and the riches of the English people. Considering the results of that approach anyone would have wanted to imitate it, yet it was doubtful whether Tuscany could act with the same force and whether the 'animating spirit' of the noblest actions 'carried out to gladden the nation' was as widespread as it was in England. The great difference in resources was also noted. This was why Tuscans could not so easily translate spirit into concrete action, and yet even though it was 'much less vibrant and almost stagnant' the spirit was there. Therefore, taking into account the lower costs and possible economising, one could try to obtain results similar to England's even in the 'tiny vortex' of Tuscany.⁵⁵

They then described the conditions they believed would be necessary for success. First of all, the time was right for a new President of the Academy to be nominated: a person of prestige close to and trusted by the Sovereign. This appointment would in itself demonstrate to everyone the Sovereign's approval of any action taken in favour of agriculture and would be an incentive to engage in studies and experimentation. The President would also be the spokesman through whom the Academy could present its achievements directly to the Court, as well as its requests for funding and so on.⁵⁶

Secondly, given that it was fundamental for the studies to join theory to practice, they proposed to unite the Academy of the Georgofili and the Botanical Society (judged to be barely active), bearing in mind that most members of the two institutions belonged to both. The Georgofili could then make use of the Botanical Garden for their experiments and its maintenance budget would be an additional source of income for them.⁵⁷

Furthermore, seeing that agricultural development was relevant to everyone, thought should be given to setting up similar academies in all provinces. The various literary academies of Tuscan cities would be well suited to this purpose and the invitation to apply their attention to agriculture would revive their 'languid' spirit, prompting the Academy members to feel the sector was their own, whereas now they felt indifferent to it. The surrounding communities themselves could provide estimates of what funds were required to be used for prize awards – some of which could be relatively modest – which with special

⁵⁵ Pelli, Paoletti and Pagnini, *Proposizioni*, f. 66.

⁵⁶ Pelli, Paoletti and Pagnini, *Proposizioni*, f. 67.

⁵⁷ Pelli, Paoletti and Pagnini, *Proposizioni*, ff. 68–9.

honours alongside would encourage involvement in finding solutions to problems.⁵⁸

Seeing that the general objective was to stimulate the study of agronomic theory, it was thought that a possibly easier and surer approach would be to create a professorship for agricultural studies in the capital. The lessons it offered would be principally for landowners and their sons, but also for the clergy, as it was they who educated the peasant farmers. In fact, agricultural lessons should be part of the curriculum of religious colleges and seminaries.

As for the subject of these academic studies, they should be limited to 'agricultural matters' suited to the Tuscan climate. Therefore questions should focus on the best means to expand production, on how to manage forests and waterways, ways of increasing the bee population, and similar issues. It was made clear that all other issues would remain under the control of the Camera dell'Arti e Manifatture, the Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁹

Thus there were conflicting propositions about how best to reform the Academy, propositions which at the same time called into question both the structure and the objectives that had different motivations and stemmed from various failings.

Cocchi's memorandum effectively repudiated all the Academy's justifications for existence. Guasco's attempt to unite variously qualified members of society – landowners, representatives of the administration, scientists and experts in the wider sense – in the same organisation, and to combine the examination of technical and practical problems with the political-economic analyses of the primary sector in one common effort was deemed not only a failure, but also a mistaken judgement. Such problems could and should be dealt with within their respective areas of competence. They differed in the same way as the related sciences differed and, ergo, as their subjects also did. Agronomy, the science of agriculture, belonged to the 'physicists,' while public economy was reserved for the 'philosophers' thus acknowledging that it was a science undeniably influenced by physiocracy. Moreover, it made no difference if the philosophers should work in support of the government, for the importance of their role as expert custodians of knowledge, underlined by their task of 'illuminating' the people's idea of liberty, was self-evident.⁶⁰

The concealed motivations that are evidence of intolerance within certain government circles – and Cocchi, who was Tavanti's brother-in-law,

⁵⁸ Pelli, Paoletti and Pagnini, *Proposizioni*, ff. 72–3.

⁵⁹ Pelli, Paoletti and Pagnini, *Proposizioni*, f. 74.

⁶⁰ Cocchi, *Sentimento*, f. 10.

could well have been in direct contact with them – are made clear by the allusions to the ‘useless and ignorant’, ‘generally the richest’, who silenced the ‘capable and less ignorant’ members of the Academy, and the expression of astonishment at hearing ‘many approving the idea of admitting rich landowners, even ignorant and useless ones’ in the hope that this would be good for the countryside. If we add to this the reference to the government, which had ‘no one to defend’ its work for the ‘new liberty’, the picture starts to become clear.⁶¹

It seems the criticism was a general one levelled at more than the Academy, and if we bear in mind that most of the translating and publishing of the works of the physiocrats in support of free trade had from 1768 onwards been initiated by the ministers Rosenberg and Tavanti or by private citizens such as Pelli, who had acted independently of his membership of the Georgofili, we see that the complaint of inadequate collaboration had cause. Up to that time, the most significant publications that presented the Academy’s reports to a wider public, thereby giving its academic activity an official image, were *Della necessità di accrescere e migliorare l’agricoltura Toscana* by Anton Filippo Adami and the *Dissertazione accademica sopra l’uso giusto del lusso* by Bindo Peruzzi. Both appeared in 1768 and gave no impression of supporting the course of thought, close to physiocracy, which prevailed in government circles.⁶² It is true that in some way the two prize-winning essays (particularly the former) in the 1771 competition on the poor, *De’ mezzi per impiegare i mendichi in vantaggio dell’agricoltura e delle arti* and the *Metodo per sollevare i mendichi a beneficio dell’agricoltura*, had sections dedicated to praising the Sovereign’s reform policy, yet even these contained not a few discriminating judgements and reservations.⁶³ More seriously, to make their essays eligible for competitions and general distribution, two academicians had contravened the Academy’s rules by hiding behind

⁶¹ Cocchi, *Sentimento*, f. 11.

⁶² Anton Filippo Adami, *Della necessità di accrescere e migliorare l’agricoltura nella Toscana. Discorso letto in un’adunanza dell’Accademia de’ Georgofili o sia d’Agricoltura di Firenze il dì 4. di Novembre dell’Anno 1767*, (Florence: Bonducciana 1768); *Dissertazione accademica del Cavalier Bindo di Bindo Simone Peruzzi letta nell’Accademia de’ Georgofili Il dì 2. Settembre 1767. Sopra l’uso giusto del lusso relativamente all’agricoltura, arti e commercio* (Florence: Gaetano Cambiagi 1768).

⁶³ *De’ mezzi per impiegare i mendichi in vantaggio dell’agricoltura e delle arti. Dissertazioni dell’Eccellentiss. Sig. dottore Luigi Andreucci* (Florence: Stecchi e Pagani 1771); *Metodo per sollevare i mendichi a beneficio dell’agricoltura. Dissertazione Presentata all’accad. D’Agricoltura di Firenze dall’Eccellentiss. Sig. Dottore Francesco Dei* (Florence: Per lo Stecchi e Pagani 1771).

pseudonyms. The author of the first and winning essay was Luigi Andreucci, the nom de plume of Michele Ciani, and the real name of the second-placed winner, Francesco Dei, was Luigi Tramontani.⁶⁴

A British model

By its nature and composition, the Academy expressed a wide variety of ideas and could not be forced, except with extreme difficulty and dubious political opportunism, to return to speaking with one voice – something that could otherwise exist only on the basis of a low common denominator. These differences of opinion and outlook reflected what was happening both in the salons of Florentine society and in government circles. The highborn landowning class of the capital, who had welcomed the free circulation and (albeit more cautiously) free imports of grains, was divided and uncertain on the issue of forming a policy for manufacturing and raw materials because some of them at least, in addition to making money from the land, increased their wealth through the production of goods – manufactured or part-finished – mainly linked to the silk industry.

The ongoing demolition of the model, which had until then guaranteed the success and survival of Florence as a manufacturing centre even as its economic regulations proved inadequate for the times, provoked the promotion of conflicting interests not yet crystallised. This activity stimulated a search for alternatives, sparking a debate in which European political and economic ideas were used or adapted to interpret what was happening in Tuscany. Pietro Ferroni relates that he learned ‘without studying excellent maxims of government’ by taking part in the discussions held in Filippo Neri’s house (and which after his death were hosted by Lorenzo Ginori and then Francesco Assandri). In addition to the large landowners, key ministers and heads of departments in the administration participated and spoke ‘willingly about agrarianism, commerce, skills, manufacture, public economy and politics’; among them were certain ‘followers . . . of Sully’s ideas, others still under the banner of Colbert’.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ For the attribution, Antonio Rotondò, *Riforme e utopie nel pensiero politico toscano del settecento. A cura di Miriam Michelini Rotondò* (Florence: Olschki 2008), 162. For Tramontani, G. Gualberto Goretti Miniati (1923) ‘Luigi Tramontani’ in *Gli scienziati italiani dall’inizio del Medioevo ai nostri giorni*, ed. Aldo Mieli (Rome: Nardecchia), vol. I, 2, 292–8.

⁶⁵ Ferroni, *Discorso storico della mia vita*, 134.

In 1768, in order to tackle the problems that beset the manufacturing sector and to promote its regeneration, a plan was made to launch a Chamber of Commerce with the aim of entrusting all 'matters relating to commerce, crafts and manufacture' in the Grand Duchy to it, in particular the task of 'administering to craftsmen, manufacturers and traders . . . all the help needed to revive their industry'.⁶⁶ At its inauguration in 1770 it was headed by the same people who had supervised its creation, Filippo Neri, alongside Lorenzo Ginori, Giovan Battista Guadagni and Michele Ciani. Together with the effective disbandment of the craft guilds system and the liberalisation of labour, the Chamber had begun, not without difficulty, the promotion of innovation through the translation of technical texts, the recruitment of foreign experts and the acquisition of machinery.⁶⁷ These initiatives were taken forward despite the severe restraints caused by lack of funding, which to a certain degree also dictated the relatively generic rules that accompanied the founding charter.

With this in mind, on re-examining Bailey's translation up to the initial epigraph taken from the elegy of Sully by Antoine-Léonard Thomas ('Rois, Princes, Ministres . . . l'Agriculture est la base de la puissance . . . la liberté est l'âme du commerce: il parcourt l'univers fuyant les lieux de l'oppression'), what strikes one most is the unofficial recognition of the primary role of agriculture alongside the exaltation of the fundamental task of the 'artists', who are not 'creators' (the 'class reproducing true wealth' are the agriculturalists) but transformers of raw materials into saleable goods. It is they, as it were, who bring 'new energy to the moving parts of the social exercise' from which population growth, the 'greater promotion of natural produce' and a more comfortable life – in short the 'perfection, the enlargement and the destiny of revived nations' – are derived.⁶⁸ There was also a progressive shift of emphasis towards the driving force of labour and exchange which altered the language and initial physiocratic theoretical basis by means of an acceptance of Gournay's legacy, a direction in which Turgot and others of that time would move. In such a vision of the inseparable symbiosis between the higher estimation of the primary sector and the development of crafts and commerce as the engines of progress, the role of technical innovation was fundamental and did not relate solely to the secondary sector.

⁶⁶ Becagli, *Un unico territorio*, 56.

⁶⁷ Daniele Baggiani, 'Progresso tecnico e azione politica nella Toscana leopoldina: la camera di Commercio di Firenze (1768–1782)', in *La politica della scienza*, 67–99.

⁶⁸ Bailey, *Avanzamento*, xxiv.

Furthermore, it is hard to see how one can read in the exaltation of the London model with which Ferroni concludes his discourse and the possibility of applying it to other contexts, an invitation to start a brand new initiative in Tuscany.

It seems more than probable that at the heart of his ideas (or of those who inspired him, given Pucci's part in the initiative) were the Georgofili themselves. This is all the more true in light of Pelli, Paoletti and Pagnini being simultaneously entrusted with the task of examining the possibility of applying the London Society's constitution to the Academy. A transformation in this direction would have led to the abandonment of the Academy's research and experimentation activities, which had in fact been extremely difficult to realise since the Academy had no land of its own and found it hard to obtain funds from the administration. Instead it would have had to concentrate on the promotion, through prize competitions and other awards, of the inventiveness and abilities of private individuals, an activity that could and should be sustained through an increase in the number of members who would be called on to pay subscriptions, and with an appeal to their patriotism (attached, perhaps, to self-interest). In addition, the extension of the field of action to manufacture would undoubtedly have increased the number of subjects to study. This prompts the thought, admittedly one without backing, that Cocchi's reference to the proposal by some people of introducing ignorant and useless landowners to the Academy could refer to this type of hypothesis.

Moreover, a possible enlargement of the Academy's duties had to be taken into consideration when, albeit in vague terms, Bindo Peruzzi had ended his dissertation on luxury, written in 1767 and published the following year, hoping that the Georgofili could be 'one of the means in our city of Florence of promoting and restoring these three important subjects, namely Agriculture, the Crafts, and Commerce, which, united, fit well together and give one another support'.⁶⁹ This consideration would probably not have been lost on Pucci, given that Ferroni remembers that he had planned, constructed and got working a windmill for him, which was then used to grind grains and dried materials and also in manufacturing, with an excellent financial return.

What was more, an Academy reduced to promoting technical innovations would probably have kept out of any involvement in questions

⁶⁹ Bindo Peruzzi, *Sopra l'uso giusto del lusso relativamente all' agricoltura, arti, e commercio* (Florence: Gaetano Cambiagi 1768), 27.

of political economy, and thus would avoid the internal divisions that those issues might provoke.

This reading certainly does not contend that a reform of the Academy was the one and only aim of the publication of a work that fits into a much wider perspective. It was, among other things, an initiative that undoubtedly pleased the Sovereign, who though he had not commissioned or championed it, had subscribed to the English original. We are left to work out – a task that is by no means simple – the connection between the translation, the possible proposition associated with it, and the activities being launched by the Chamber of Commerce. The transformation of the Academy might have been an attempt to assist the institution's initiatives by means of a more direct involvement of the landowners (whose commitment had hitherto been lukewarm, partly because they lacked confidence when dealing with the administration) whose economic support combined with private enterprise and invention could give birth to an autogenous circular process. Alternatively, it may have been a way of loosening the hold that the Chamber of Commerce was taking. Certainly, this would fit both with Peter Leopold's distrust of this organisation, which he feared could become a centre of power in itself, and his intention to scale it down, or even abolish it, once the task of revoking the rules and regulations of the cooperative system was accomplished.⁷⁰ In fact, he might well have been favourably disposed to a greater involvement of landowners in the care of what were their own interests.

The reaction of those who were asked to express an opinion on the eventual reform of the Academy (seemingly without it being involved, at least officially) too can be interpreted in various ways. Suggesting, as a counterproposal, a method of realising the potential of and finally making efficient the institution's work without modifying its shape and aims (and carefully examining the problem, common to all, of meeting its financial needs) could, be the defence made by those who wished to maintain the original aim of supporting agriculture and its closely related interests. Yet, it could also be a way of foiling an attack aimed at sterilising the Chamber of Commerce by relieving it of its more political functions.

If we look again at these events in chronological order, they appear to be intertwined. At the end of 1772 Ferroni had – from what we can

⁷⁰ Baggiani, 'Progresso tecnico e azione politica nella Toscana leopoldina', 91–7; Vieri Becagli, 'La pipa di gesso di Pietro Leopoldo', in *Il Granducato di Toscana ed i Lorena nel secolo XVIII*, eds. Alessandra Contini, Maria Grazia Parri (Florence: Olschki 1999), 285–324.

tell from his records – ended his preliminary argument, and by the beginning of 1773 Bailey's work was in print. In the meantime, in the first few days of the year, he had presented the Grand Duke with the first draft of the dedication for his approval. The volumes, however, did not appear until the summer, despite the *Gazzetta Toscana* having announced its publication for February. Pelli, Pagnini and Paoletti took nearly six months to write their observations, which were sent to the Sovereign in early April 1773. On the fifteenth of the same month they were summoned by Tavanti to draw up an accord for the amalgamation of the Academy with the Botanical Society and the act that ratified this decision was issued on 10 May by the Council of Finance, being signed by Tavanti as well as Peter Leopold. The speed by which the decision to move in the direction recommended by Pelli and the others makes one suspect Tavanti's active interest and possible prior knowledge. Certainly, within the context of these hypotheses, the minister appears to have been the least willing to accept a scaling down of the Chamber, which would have weakened one of the pillars of the governance of political economy left to him by Rosenberg. At that point everything went quiet. For a moment it appeared that even the proposed establishment of a network of academies linked to the Georgofili had got under way in other parts of Tuscany when the Botanical Society of Cortona became the Academy of Agriculture, Botany and Commerce, and the Academy of Crafts, Agriculture and Commerce of Pistoia was merged into the Florentine Academy. However, in both cases the decisions taken were not carried through and things remained the same. Likewise, a plan presented in 1773 by Michele Ciani for the Academy to boost the technical aspects of its work and to take steps to collate data on the condition of agriculture in various parts of the country was not followed up.⁷¹

Thus in the following decade the Academy followed its usual activity. The competitions continued – both for the publicity they generated and for the political uses that they might have – notwithstanding difficulties that led, in cases where the entries were deemed unsatisfactory, to the events being rerun. There were, once more, winning entries by contestants who were academicians writing under false names: thus Saverio Manetti wrote as Cosimo Villifranchi for the competition on the wine trade. Similarly, Luigi Tramontani used the pen-name Giovanni Paolo Franceschi for the competition about fallow land, and his doing so caused a mess that cost Saverio Manetti his position as secretary.

⁷¹ Accademia dei Georgofili di Firenze, Archivio Storico, busta 188.

Even the meetings continued as normal, but in a more tired way owing to the repeated failure of ordinary members to stage the requisite annual lecture. Consequently, in 1775 they were threatened with sanctions. In 1777, Pelli, in his diary, castigated the Academy, writing that 'the assembled members are pathetic, and seen from close up the meetings are risible':⁷² a judgement unsubstantiated and perhaps ungenerous, which was perhaps aimed specifically at the leadership of the time, yet was nevertheless passed by one who gave untiring commitment.

In spite of such internal disquiet, externally the Academy maintained its prestige thanks to a network of contacts and, even more so, through the nomination of several illustrious people to the role of honorary correspondent (a category parallel to associate membership that allowed the Academy to co-opt people who could not be expected to pay contribute financially) so as to enhance its reputation. It hardly mattered whether it was the Academy that derived prestige from the new member's importance or whether the advantage went to someone who had reason to vaunt his membership of several academies. Furthermore, the publication of periodicals dedicated exclusively (or mostly) to agricultural issues – such as, in Florence, Montelatici's *Veglie non meno utili che piacevoli di materie particolari attinenti all'economia della villa* and later Manetti's *Magazzino toscano* and *Nuovo Magazzino toscano*, as well as Gaspero Sella and Luigi Targioni's *Magazzino georgico* and, finally, the *Giornale fiorentino di agricoltura, arti, commercio ed economia politica* by Jacopo Tartini and Giovanni Fabbroni, which in 1789 concluded this venture in Tuscany – provided the opportunity to publish the minutes and other work that came from the Academy's activities, increasing their dissemination and influence.⁷³ It should be noted that these initiatives were the work of private individuals who were academicians and not part of the official voice of the institution, which sometimes promoted them more or less openly yet always disclaimed ownership. Works published by members could not automatically be ascribed to the Academy for only those in which the author explicitly declared his membership were considered to speak for it.

In 1775 Pucci requested not to be reconfirmed as annual director as he had been up to that point and from then his participation was sporadic. There was a series of replacements, generally reconfirmed for a biennium, from Giulio Orlandini (April 1775 to March 1777), to Giovanni

⁷² Pelli, *Efemeridi*, 5 February 1777.

⁷³ For an overall picture, *Periodici toscani del Settecento. Studi e ricerche*, ed. Giuseppe Nicoletti (Fiesole: Cadmo 2002).

Neri (March 1777 to March 1779), Giuseppe degli Albizi (March 1779 to March 1781), Giuseppe Pelli (March 1781 to March 1783), in a succession of honorary and ordinary members. Niccolò Panciatichi, who succeeded Pelli, must have been in charge for only a few months for in October 1783 the Academy's constitution underwent another change.

Royal Academy

In the meantime the political scene had changed profoundly. In 1779 Filippo Neri, who had been the Chamber of Commerce's driving force, died. The passing of Tavanti in 1781 just as his ultraliberal customs tariff was approved further spelled the end of the Chamber, which was abolished the following year. In 1784 the new tariff was itself once again under discussion.⁷⁴

Between 1783 and 1784 a total reorganisation of Florence's learned academies and societies was carried out and this resulted in amalgamations and adjustments of focus as the state assumed the management and control of knowledge and information. This intervention imposed changes and a uniformity of internal rules, which weighed heavily on the institutions' traditional autonomy and founding articles, with the intention of making a general redistribution of tasks based on a unitary concept of knowledge.⁷⁵

Furthermore, by 1780, Francesco Zacchioli had presented his plan for a 'Royal Florentine Academy of Science and Arts' into which along with other academies the Georgofili would be merged, though not its agricultural section (the sections were to be Languages, Metaphysics, Physics, History, Literature, Fine Arts and Crafts, Inventions and Discoveries). The project was rejected because of its high cost, but its substance (modelled on Paris's *Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*) formed the basis of the subsequent reorganisation.⁷⁶

The Academy of the Georgofili kept its autonomy in the reorganisation and, fundamentally, its existing structure – based on a foreign model – from Guasco although it was at last fused with the Botanical

⁷⁴ Furio Diaz, *Francesco Maria Gianni. Dalla burocrazia alla politica sotto Pietro Leopoldo di Toscana* (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi 1966), 65–93; Vieri Becagli, 'La Tariffa doganale del 1791 e il dibattito sulla libertà del commercio', in *La Toscana dell'età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica*, ed. Ivan Tognarini (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane 1985), 279–92.

⁷⁵ Vieri Becagli, 'Economia e politica del sapere nelle riforme leopoldine. Le Accademie', in *La politica della scienza*, 35–65.

⁷⁶ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Reggenza 1031, ins. 204.

Society and thereupon gained the use of an experimental vegetable garden. The scientific part and the botanical garden were, according to a reference in the Physics Museum, founded in 1775 and directed by Felice Fontana. With the regulations, issued on the 22 October 1783, the transition from the early-day 'perfect anarchy' to the new Royal Academy of the Georgofili (or Florentine Economic Society as it was now called) was complete.⁷⁷

The object of its studies was, as before, 'principally Agriculture in the widest sense' alongside 'public and private Economy' (an ambiguous title, which amongst other things gave space to subjects of political economy) and, for the first time, 'all the sciences', which could be connected to it. It was expected that the President would be directly nominated by the Sovereign, and would remain in office for as long as he felt opportune. He retained the role of spokesman to the throne and was also responsible for ensuring adherence to the rules, authorising expenditure as well as nominating a treasurer. It fell to him, too, to submit three names from which to elect the vice-president (a two-year office) who would substitute him in case of absence or impediment. Also, it was he who would have to put forward the names of applicant members for the assembly's approval and, additionally, it was his job (in agreement with the deputies assigned to studies) to propose three subjects from which members would choose one for the prize competition. The deputies – five elected, whose posts were biennial and rotary – had the tasks of promoting studies and experiments to be carried out and overseeing the garden. They also had to act as censors and to examine essays sent to the Academy, including competition entries.⁷⁸ The garden later received a managing director who, apart from supervising experiments, had to run an annual course of lessons, whose syllabus would be set by the deputies who would also see to its eventual publication.⁷⁹

As far as the members were concerned, several significant changes were introduced. The old distinction of honorary, ordinary and associate members remained, and their relative duties remained unchanged. However, the previously imposed limit on numbers was altered. The maximum number for honorary members was abolished, while the number of ordinary members was now fixed at fifty. It was agreed then

⁷⁷ The regulations are published in *Atti della Real Società Economica di Firenze ossia dei Georgofili I* (Florence: Ant. Giuseppe Pagani 1791) 56–68.

⁷⁸ *Atti della Real Società Economica*, 56–60.

⁷⁹ *Atti della Real Società Economica*, 61–2.

that, seeing that the greatest contribution was expected of the ordinary members, they would be the only ones deemed 'proficient for the Academic Tasks', thus the value of their role was accentuated and they became the pillars of the Academy.⁸⁰

As for the prize competitions, the ban on entries from honorary and ordinary members was reaffirmed, although they were now allowed, in the event of unsatisfactory results, to present entries with glory as their sole reward. This point, and the introduction of the possibility of granting prizes to those said to be being engaged 'in some rural occupation' or involved in contests of practical ability (as found in the constitution of the Society of Arts), such as the launch of educational activity, appear to echo the proposals put forward ten years earlier.⁸¹

After the possible opening of sittings to the public (these continued to be split between ceremonial and normal meetings and were held as often as before) had been confirmed, the requirements for the legitimate validation of decisions were established for the first time. These had to be passed with a majority of two thirds by an assembly of at least fifteen members. This acknowledged what was already happening. Also provided for was the publication of the acts, at least one volume every two years, the first of which, however, did not appear until 1791.⁸²

The Georgofili's first move was once more to request the Grand Duke to nominate a new President, but again Peter Leopold refused and left the absentee Rosenberg in position. Instead he nominated a vice-president: Giovanni Neri, who thus became the head of the Academy, remaining so until his death in 1794.⁸³

The new structure, with greater means at its disposal and wider scope given to its technicians, enabled the Academy to operate with greater incisiveness and led to its final configuration. In the ensuing years, however, participation in the meetings appears to have fallen, and averaged only fifteen or so attendees per sitting, although a higher quality of academicians may have compensated for this. At the end of

⁸⁰ *Atti della Real Società Economica*, 57.

⁸¹ *Atti della Real Società Economica*, 66.

⁸² *Atti della Real Società Economica*, 67.

⁸³ Letter by the director of that year Panciatichi to Peter Leopold of 4 October 1783 (Archivio storico dell' Accademia, busta 1, ins. 6). The *motu proprio* containing the confirmation of the presidency to Rosenberg is in *Atti della Real Società Economica di Firenze ossia de' Georgofili II* (Florence: Ant. Giuseppe Pagani 1795), 8.

the 1780s, and more so in the 1790s, new attacks (first from within the government and then, with Ferdinand III, through regulatory changes) against what had become a deadlock, the free trade in cereals, led the Academy to champion that cause to the point of openly taking issue with the government, and thus it gained its definitive character.⁸⁴ The problem of what policy to pursue with regards to manufacture resurfaced periodically to sow dissension among the academicians. The regulations of 1783 remained in force until 1817.

⁸⁴ Mirri, *Riflessioni su Toscana*, 162, 184–5.

6

Patriotism, Cosmopolitanism and Political Economy in the *Accademia dei pugni* in Austrian Lombardy, 1760–1780

Sophus A. Reinert

This essay focuses on the *Accademia dei Pugni*, or *The Academy of Punches*, a celebrated institution which flourished for a few years in 1760s Austrian Milan, and its journal *Il Caffè* (1764–1766). It does so to revisit one of the cardinal questions of Italian Enlightenment studies, the vexing relationship between ‘patriotism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ in the so-called ‘age of reason’.¹ How, in short, historical actors mediated between local loyalties, transnational allegiances and universalist ethics. More specifically, this essay considers the question as it relates to the economic identity of eighteenth-century Lombard reformers. Where previous studies have tended to simply conflate the two categories ‘patriotism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ as twin expressions of an ‘enlightened’ spirit based on ‘*doux commerce*,’ what follows will reassess the *Accademia’s* project by analysing it not only in the context of a cosmopolitan coffee-shop culture, but also of the realities of international competition at the time, of Lombardy’s complex economic past amidst rival zones of foreign influence, and the role of Milan in the

¹ My work has benefited from the generosity of Barbara Costa and the Fondazione Raffaele Mattioli. I am grateful to Carlo Capra, Robert Fredona, Pier Luigi Porta and Roberto Scazzieri for comments. In what follows I rely much on Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 7 vols. (Turin: Einaudi 1969–1990), particularly vol. I, 645–747; ‘*Il Caffè*, 1764–1766, eds. Gianni Francioni and Sergio Romagnoli (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri 1993); Carlo Capra, *I progressi della ragione: Vita di Pietro Verri* (Bologna: Il Mulino 2002). The classic on Verri’s political economy remains Pier Luigi Porta and Roberto Scazzieri, ‘Pietro Verri’s Political Economy: Commercial Society, Civil Society, and the Science of the Legislator’, *History of Political Economy*, 34 (2002:1): 83–110.

larger projects of the House of Habsburg in the wake of the Seven Years' War. Though the *Accademia* has often been heralded as a pre-eminent example of the forces at play in the emergence of a 'public sphere' in eighteenth-century Italy, and political economy has often been discussed as the science of Enlightenment *par excellence*, the two issues have not hitherto been considered organically.

The *Accademia* was not a learned academy in the technical sense of the term inaugurated by the seventeenth-century establishment of the *Académie des sciences* in Paris, though this certainly inspired the Milanese endeavour.² The *Accademia* did not enjoy in-house research facilities like a botanical garden or an anatomical theatre on the model of Frederick II's *Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Berlin, nor did it offer essay prize contests like that of the *Académie des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Dijon* which lionised Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It certainly did not read reports pertaining to sightings of the Kraken, as would the *Royal Society of Edinburgh*.³ In effect, the *Accademia dei Pugni* did not even enjoy a physical existence, and it left no traces of such with the exception of a 1766 group-portrait by Antonio Perego, sundry collections of manuscripts, and the two volumes of the aforementioned journal. It was, at best, a virtual academy.

The issue of defining this institution is not simplified by the fact that the name *Il Caffè* – in Italian literally signifying both 'the coffee-shop' and 'the coffee' – served as a shorthand for several disparate but concatenated concepts: the group of people meeting and the imaginary place in which they met, but also for their means of communicating with the world and what they were drinking while so doing, thus embodying, as one survey of the phenomenon has asserted, 'the whole concept of the coffee-house revolution'.⁴ It consisted of a group of leading upper-class Milanese and, to a lesser extent, other North-Italian statesmen and intellectuals. It was led by Pietro Verri, then in his early thirties, and included his younger brother Alessandro, Cesare Beccaria, Gian Battista Biffi, Gian Rinaldo Carli, Sebastiano Franci, Paolo Frisi, Luigi Lambertenghi, Alfonso Longo and Giuseppe Visconti. Verri wrote in an autobiographical pseudo-letter of 1762 that 'a select company of

² E.g., Giuseppe Visconti, '[Osservazioni meteorologiche fatte in Milano]', in *Il Caffè*, 78–82.

³ *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1790), vol. II, 16.

⁴ Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2004), 205.

talented youths is gradually taking shape in my house', and, in private correspondence, referred to this 'society of friends' as a 'Coffeepot Society'.⁵ Their choice of a humorous name for their group mirrored those of more famous institutions in Italy (like the *Accademia degli Oziosi* [Academy of the Slothful] in Naples and the *Accademia degli Ottusi* [Academy of the Obtuse] in Spoleto),⁶ and derived specifically from gossip circulating around Milan in the summer of 1763, according to which Verri and Beccaria had resolved an intellectual dispute by resorting to 'powerful punches,' giving life to the idea of an *Academy of Punches*.⁷ So what is one to make of their project, and how did it relate to patriotism, political economy and contemporary ideals of cosmopolitanism? To answer those questions, it is useful to first consider the *Accademia's* political and institutional context as well as the precise nature of the 'Milanese state' under scrutiny at the time.

An independent polity from the 1183 Peace of Constance, and briefly a republic in the mid-fifteenth century, Milan was claimed for France by Louis XII in 1499 and incorporated into the fledgling House of Habsburg after the 1525 Battle of Pavia. Soon after, Milan passed to the Spanish line of that family and remained under the Crown of Spain until the War of Spanish Succession. The Treaty of Utrecht ending that conflict in 1713 gave sovereignty over the Milanese state back to the Austrian Habsburgs, and it remained part of their dominions until Napoleon's invasion in 1796, when it became capital of the short-lived Cisalpine Republic.⁸ In the 1760s, then, Milan was one of the premium possessions of the Austrian Monarchy, which Renato Pasta memorably defined as 'a multinational and supranational coacervation of states, not a rigidly centralised

⁵ Pietro Verri, 6 April 1762, in *Memorie*, ed. Enrica Agnesi (Modena: Mucchi 2001), 139; Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Carli, 25 January 1765 and Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Carli, 8 February 1765, both in Francesco De Stefano, 'Cinque anni di sodalizio tra Pietro Verri e Gian Rinaldo Carli (1760–1765) con XXIV lettere inedite di Pietro Verri', *Atti e memorie della Società istriana di archeologia e storia patria* XLV (1933): 43–103, 72–4 and 74–8 respectively. See also Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, vol. I, 683.

⁶ See Eric Cochrane, *Tradition and Enlightenment in the Tuscan Academies, 1690–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1961).

⁷ Capra, *I progressi della ragione*, 189. See Pietro Verri's unpublished [*Al lettore*], in *Il Caffè*, 814.

⁸ See Domenico Sella and Carlo Capra, *Il Ducato di Milano dal 1535 al 1796* (Turin: UTET 1984); Girolamo Arnaldi, *Italy and its Invaders* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005).

political and economic organism,' and which many Italians eyed with pained diffidence.⁹

Yet, this period was characterised by a marked tendency towards centralisation throughout Habsburg lands, by which Vienna sought to rationalise the functioning of its culturally heterogeneous dominions in what aptly has been called a 'revolution from above', a rapid and wide-ranging overthrow of Old Regime institutions with few equals in contemporary Europe.¹⁰ Ultimate jurisdiction over Milan changed when the Austrian Monarchy's Italian-Spanish Council was disbanded in 1757 and replaced by an Italian Department within the Austrian Chancellery of State run by Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz. Officially, and it is worthwhile to remember that the Seven Years' War was raging at the time, this structural transformation of Austria's relation to its Northern Italian dominions occurred 'because of the existing connection between foreign policy and the domestic affairs of these two lands'.¹¹ It was, in short, a conscious attempt by Kaunitz to wrest control of Italian affairs from local leaders and increase the effectiveness of metropolitan management over the growing possessions of the Habsburg Monarchy,¹² one of numerous episodes in the process of absolutist consolidation of sovereignties in eighteenth-century Europe.¹³

⁹ Renato Pasta, *La battaglia politico-culturale degli illuministi lombardi* (Milan: Principato Editore 1974), 8, quoted and discussed also in Norbert Jonard, 'Cosmopolitismo e patriottismo nel "Caffè"', in *Economia, istituzioni, cultura in Lombardia nell'età di Maria Teresa*, eds. Aldo de Maddalena, Ettore Rotelli and Gennaro Barbarisi (Bologna 1982), vol. II, 65–95, 65. On Italian ideas of Vienna, see Carmen Flaim, "'Un paese cotanto remoto e strano": considerazioni italiane sulla cultura settecentesca viennese', in *Il Settecento tedesco in Italia: Gli italiani e l'immagine della cultura tedesca nel XVIII secolo*, eds. Giulia Cantarutti, Stefano Ferrari and Paola Maria Filippi (Bologna: Il Mulino 2001), 217–56. See also Grete Klingenstein, 'The Meanings of "Austria" and "Austrian" in the eighteenth century', in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, eds. Robert Oresko, G. C. Gibbs and H. M. Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 423–78.

¹⁰ Dino Carpanetto and Giuseppe Ricuperati, *Italy in the Age of Reason 1685–1789* (London: Longmans 1987), 223.

¹¹ Franz A. J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 1753–1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994), 50. On the 'Italian Department' see Carlo Capra, 'Luigi Giusti e il Dipartimento d'Italia a Vienna (1757–1766)', in *Economia, istituzioni, cultura*, vol. III, 365–90.

¹² Elisabeth Garms Cornides, 'La destinazione del conte Firmian a Milano: Analisi di una scelta', in *Economia, istituzioni, cultura*, vol. III, 1015–29, 1020.

¹³ See Istvan Hont, 'The Permanent Crisis of a Divided Mankind: "Nation-State" and "Nationalism" in Historical Perspective', in Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005), 447–528, 456–63. See also Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Franci, 12 January 1762, in De Stefano, 'Cinque anni di sodalizio', 63.

Towards the end of 1762, new regulations for the Italian Department were approved which explicitly cited merit as the only means of careerism in the administration in emulation of the reforms instituted in Prussia by Frederick the Great.¹⁴ With this followed a gradual realignment of the employee-base of the Italian Department, away from Spanish and Southern-Italian political protégés and towards statesmen elected for their actual abilities. Similarly, these reforms were aimed at, and resulted in, a forceful rolling back of the power-base of the state's old patrician oligarchy and increasing metropolitan control over provincial government.¹⁵ The nature of the Milanese Enlightenment, and of the activities of the *Accademia* in particular, can only be understood in light of this generational shift, which in the 1760s was both personal, as young patricians such as Pietro Verri and Cesare Beccaria turned their backs to their familial loyalties, and institutional, as the structures and nature of government in Milan changed.¹⁶ Verri himself officially entered Habsburg service in 1764, even before he took it on himself to edit and publish *Il Caffè*.

Coffee-culture and political economy

The immediate motivation for *Il Caffè* was explicitly the group's wish to 'spread some useful ideas among our citizens while amusing them' on the model of 'Steele and Swift and Addison [sic] and Pope'.¹⁷ Addison and Steele's extraordinarily influential *The Spectator*, originally published in the 1710s, reached the *Accademia dei Pugni* through French translations and inaugurated there, as it did everywhere, a wildly popular genre of reporting on fictitious encounters and debates in often imaginary

¹⁴ See Wilhelm Bleek, *Von der Kameralausbildung zum Juristenprivileg. Studium, Prüfung und Ausbildung der höheren Beamten des allgemeinen Verwaltungsdienstes in Deutschland im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag 1972). On meritocratic reforms in the French context, see Michael Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes: An Eighteenth-Century Emblem in the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2008), 281–361.

¹⁵ Capra, 'Luigi Giusti', 385–6.

¹⁶ Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, vol. I, 647 and *passim*. On the economic reforms, see Carlo Capra, 'Riforme finanziarie e mutamento istituzionale nello Stato di Milano: gli anni sessanta del secolo XVIII', *Rivista storica italiana* XCI, n. II–III (1979), 313–68.

¹⁷ Pietro Verri, 'Introduzione', in *Il Caffè*, 11.

spaces.¹⁸ Not only was the 'plan' of the *Spectator* 'laid and concerted (as all other Matters of Importance are) in a Club', meeting twice a week 'for the Inspection of all such Papers as may contribute to the Advancement of the Publick Weal', precisely as Verri hoped the *Accademia* would, but among the many places habitually visited by the anonymous *Spectator* was a special coffee-shop: 'I appear on Sunday Nights at St. James's Coffee-House', the character of 'The Spectator' announces in his first dispatch, 'and sometimes join the little Committee of Politicks in the Inner-Room, as one who comes there to hear and improve.'¹⁹

The virtual *Accademia* and the journal they published seem to have drawn their principal inspiration from *The Spectator's* weekly debates over political issues in the St James's Coffee-House, which, in translation, became their entire world.²⁰ *Il Caffè* namely revolved entirely around a romanticised Milanese coffee-shop supposedly owned by a Greek immigrant named Demetrio, who, as appropriate given the exotic tastes and expectations of contemporary coffee-consumers, was dressed in 'oriental' garb and had seen 'entire fields covered in coffee' in Arabia. His shop was tastefully 'decorated with wealth and great elegance', serving 'a coffee which really deserves the name coffee'.²¹

Verri himself had envisioned the goal of *Il Caffè's* publication in private correspondence in 1765: 'We will always make all efforts in our coffee-shop to attack the nation's barbarism with the most powerful weapons at our disposal.'²² Appropriately, the shop offered its customers a multitude of Italian newspapers bringing information from around the continent, 'which ensure that men, who previously were Romans, Florentines, Genoese, or Lombards, all now are almost Europeans'. And in order for patrons to follow the consequences of the information they gathered, there was 'more than one good atlas' there, 'which decides

¹⁸ On the international reception of *The Spectator*, though she does not mention the *Accademia*, see Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke, 'The Spectator, or the metamorphoses of the periodical: a study in cultural translation', in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 142–59. See also Luigi Ferrari, *Del 'Caffè', periodico milanese del secolo xviii* (Pisa: Tipografia Successori Fratelli Nistri 1899), 28–31.

¹⁹ *The Spectator*, 8 vols. (London: S. Buckley and J. Tonson 1712–1715), vol. I, 4–7.

²⁰ On legitimisation of such cultural translations, see Pallares-Burke, 'The Spectator', 158–9.

²¹ Pietro Verri, 'Introduzione' and 'Storia naturale del caffè', in *Il Caffè*, 11–17.

²² Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Carli, 9 March 1765, in De Stefano, 'Cinque anni di sodalizio', 83.

the questions born in the new policies [*politiche*].²³ It was in this vein that Verri, in his later work on political economy, would insist on keeping the movement of printed books and scientific instruments free of tariffs.²⁴

Among Demetrio's many virtual customers was the *Accademia dei Pugni*, 'a small society of friends' driven by the 'ambition' to promote the arts and sciences and 'self-love, but a self-love useful to the public'. The pen with which their debates were written was held by 'an honest liberty worthy of Italian citizens', which kept a 'total silence on sacred subjects, and which had never forgotten the respect which every prince, every government, and every nations deserves'.²⁵ The hand, in short, had pursued all the liberty that was legal to pursue in Austrian Lombardy, procuring 'what good we can for our fatherland'.²⁶ That said, Pietro Verri's anonymous character defined himself as 'born and raised in Italy'.²⁷ Already from the outset, then, the *Accademia* was an institution of multiple allegiances: to Milan, to Italy, to Austria, and of course to Europe and, beyond, to the quickly developing network of intercontinental trades to which it ironically owed its precious elixir of reason.

The *Accademia's* justification for engaging with a wide, freely debating public through the medium of political economy, the primary means of renewing the fatherland, was penned by Pietro Verri:

I think it is good that many write and think about the true interests of a nation, about finances, about commerce, and about agriculture; mist and mystery serve the immunity of a few and the misery of many. It is good that the facts of political economy are known, because it is good that many think about them, and truth is always rendered clearer and simpler by the ferment of different opinions. Whoever sends us reasonable writings on these matters will always have a place of honour in the pages of this journal.²⁸

As an enterprise, then, the *Accademia* fulfilled all the 'institutional criteria' outlined by Jürgen Habermas for the emergence of a 'public

²³ Verri, 'Introduzione', 12.

²⁴ See Capra, *I progressi della ragione*, 354.

²⁵ 'Al lettore', *Il Caffè*, 5.

²⁶ Verri, 'Introduzione', 11.

²⁷ Verri, 'Introduzione', 13.

²⁸ Pietro Verri, introduction to 'la coltivazione del tabacco', in *Il Caffè*, 55–6.

sphere'.²⁹ When one then considers that authoritative voices have defined, as Verri had, political economy as the principal preoccupation of 'The Enlightenment', a question begs itself: what relation did these two central concepts of the *Accademia* have to one another?³⁰ How, in short, did coffee-culture and political economy interact in Austrian Lombardy, and how did this interaction in turn play into the tangible tension between patriotism and cosmopolitanism, between universal ideals and local constraints? The answer lies in a more rigorous archaeology of the economic and political ideas propagated by the *Accademia* in the mid 1760s, and thus a deliberate turn away from the cultural and political context of their writings towards the substance of their theories and policy proposals.

Economic decline and the bloodless war

The first and best known article of political economy published in *Il Caffè* was Pietro Verri's 'Elements of Commerce', the complex history of which has been obfuscated by the author's aggressive autobiographical revisionism.³¹ What is certain is that Verri encountered the Welsh soldier and later political economist and Major-General Henry Lloyd in the fields outside Bautzen in September 1759 while both served in the

²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1989), 36–7. See also Edoardo Tortarolo, 'Opinione pubblica und italienischen Aufklärung – einige Lektürnotizen', in *Beiträge zur Begriffsgeschichte der italienischen Aufklärung im europäischen Kontext*, eds. Helmut C. Jacobs and Gisela Schlüter (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2000), 133–45; Rebecca Messbarger, *The Century of Women: Representation of Women in Eighteenth-Century Italian Public Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Sandro Landi, *Naissance de l'opinion publique dans l'Italie moderne: Sagesse du peuple et savoir de gouvernement de Machiavel aux Lumières* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes 2006), 165–8, 179–80; Raymond Abbrugiati, *Études sur Le Café (1764–1766): Un périodique des Lumières* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence 2006).

³⁰ Venturi, *Utopia e riforma nell'Illuminismo* (Turin: Einaudi 2001); John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005).

³¹ Pietro to Alessandro Verri, 24 January 1760 and 29 December 1760, both in *Lettere e scritti*, vol. I, 110–15 and 134–8; Pietro Verri, *Meditazioni mie sul commercio fatte in Vienna 1760*, Fondazione Mattioli, Milan, *Archivio Verri*, 374.8; Pietro Verri, *Cose varie buone, mediocri, cattive del conte Pietro Verri fatti ne' tempi di sua gioventu, le quail con eroica clemenza ha trascritte di sua mano nell'anno 1763 ad uso soltanto proprio o degl'intimi amici suoi*, Fondazione Mattioli, Milan, *Archivio Verri*, 373.1, 187. Capra, *I progressi della ragione*, 157 and n.

Austrian army during the Seven Years' War.³² This encounter, and the formative friendship which followed, provided Verri with new armaments in his ongoing generation conflict with his father and the institutions of Old Regime Milan. In effect, his 'Elements' would draw on a venerable European tradition of thinking about the relationship between commerce, welfare and independence.³³ Verri introduced it to the readers of *Il Caffè* as the contribution of one of their readers, who signed himself 'Filantropo'; and it was, in the spirit of the *Accademia's* endeavour, presented as 'even more populist [*popolari*] than those of Mr. Forbonnai[s], since those of the illustrious Frenchman are greater and more philosophical than mine'.³⁴ Employing the same vocabulary of 'active' and 'passive' trades, in essence a way of emphasising the need to export manufactures rather than raw materials that had been harnessed by some of the best-selling political economists of the eighteenth century, Verri emphasised the quintessentially economic foundations of liberty in the modern world:

Every year, the nation which preponderantly has an *active commerce* renders itself in a multiple manner master, if not de jure, then de facto, of the nations which have a less vigorous commerce than it. Then the nation becomes really wealthy . . . The nation which preponderantly has a *passive commerce* loses these goods every day, and risks its own destruction. Evils multiply, bad consequences become bad causes until, reduced to a perfect dependence on its neighbours, privy of inhabitants, it becomes a country good for nothing but transplanting colonies into.³⁵

³² Pietro to Alessandro Verri, 15 September 1759, in *Lettere e scritti inediti di Pietro e di Alessandro Verri*, ed. Carlo Casati, 3 vols. (Milan: Galli 1879–1880), vol. I, 48–63. On Lloyd see Patrick Spielman, *Henry Lloyd and the Military Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Westport: Greenwood 2002); Franco Venturi, *Le vite incrociate di Henry Lloyd e Pietro Verri* (Turin: Editrice Tirrenia-Stampatori 1977); Sophus A. Reinert, "'One will make of Political Economy . . . What the Scholastics did with Philosophy": Henry Lloyd and the Mathematization of Economics', *History of Political Economy* 34 (2007:4): 643–77.

³³ Seizo Hotta, 'European Sources of Pietro Verri's Economic Thought', in *Pietro Verri ed il suo tempo*, vol. II, 709–26; D. Parisi, 'Gli studi economici del giovane Pietro Verri: I bilanci del commercio', in *Pietro Verri ed il suo tempo*, vol. II, 789–811.

³⁴ Letter signed 'Filantropo', in *Il Caffè*, 30.

³⁵ Pietro Verri, 'Elementi del commercio', in *Il Caffè*, 30–8, 31. The footnotes he added to the corresponding passages in Verri, 'Meditazioni', 85–86n indicate the sources were Forbonnais' *Elémens du commerce*, 2 vols. (Leyden: Chez Braisson 1754), vol. I, 47 and Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989), 352 respectively.

Unlike earlier political paradigms equating the condition of liberty with direct participation in government,³⁶ Verri's readings in the canon of political economy had convinced him that these political exigencies were ultimately trumped by economic conditions. Only 'when a nation has arrived at having within it all that is needed for the fulfilment of its needs, is it entirely independent of others, and no longer needs to fear those trades which are ruinous'. 'Enlightened legislators' in Milan should therefore actively encourage the development of domestic manufactures as the only means of approaching a state of liberty and welfare, even when this would entail that local consumers, at least for a while, paid more for their goods. Not all trade was sweet and civilising in the eighteenth century:

Every advantage of a nation in commerce hurts another nation; the study of commerce, which today is spreading, is a real war which the different peoples of Europe deadlly wage upon each other.³⁷

What was needed, Verri argued, were 'gradual' reforms aimed at strengthening the industries of Austrian Lombardy, relying rather on tariffs than on 'prohibitions' to reduce the import of foreign manufactures and foster domestic ones. 'This ship's helm' of balancing tariffs, Verri wrote forcefully, 'is always in the hands of the sovereign.' Quoting the same slogan by Jean-François Melon about commerce requiring 'liberty and competition', around which the Neapolitan Professor of Political Economy Antonio Genovesi had written at length, Verri too justified tariffs as the premier institution of political economy, for 'Liberty and competition are the soul of commerce; that is the liberty which is born from laws, not from licence.'³⁸ As long as laws were clear and not arbitrary, any successful economic policy, no matter what reigning theoretical dogmas preached, was not only acceptable but indeed desirable. As he put it in a contemporary treatise on tariff reform:

I believe that a reasonable man, when he is entrusted with organizing a system, should neither adopt things because they are old,

³⁶ See particularly J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2003); Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008).

³⁷ Verri, 'Elementi', 32–3, 33–8, 38.

³⁸ Verri, 'Elementi', 33–5, 36.

nor because they are new, but solely because they are true and good.³⁹

It was true, he wrote, that when commerce failed a nation, as it had Milan since the Renaissance, this was due to an ‘organic defect of the system’, but this did not at all mean that ‘the prince’ would have to ‘reduce impositions for a while’. It meant instead that he had to levy them differently, and Verri therefore laid down four basic points to follow to successfully steer a political economy to wealth. It was ‘good commerce’ to put tariffs on exported raw materials and imported manufactured goods; it was ‘bad commerce’ to put tariffs on exported manufactured goods and imported raw materials.⁴⁰ This is essentially the scheme, reflecting centuries-old English policy, proposed by Charles King in his *British Merchant*, a work Verri had read in François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais’ French translation and praised in private correspondence, as well as by Genovesi’s seminal translation of George-Marie Bûtel-Dumont’s translation of John Cary’s *Essay on the State of England*.⁴¹

Before publishing this despondent vision of international trade, Verri had composed, but did not publish, another largely overlooked contribution to contemporary debates about political economy, the *Considerations on the Commerce of the State of Milan*, which by virtue of having a more local focus than his *Elements* spoke more directly to his loyalties. Crucially, it also had a tangible influence on how Verri’s collaborators in the *Accademia* mediated the exigencies of patriotism and cosmopolitanism in formulating their political economies. This book, which saw integral publication only in the twentieth century, was divided into three parts. The first part mapped out the economic history of Milan from the fifteenth century to 1750; the second explored the ‘actual state of Milanese commerce’; and the third suggested ‘means’ by

³⁹ Pietro Verri, ‘Proposizione per la riforma delle tariffe, ossia dato della mercanzia’, in *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Pietro Verri*, vol. 2: *Scritti di economia finanza e amministrazione*, 2 vols. (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura 2006–2007), vol. I, 735–49, 745.

⁴⁰ Verri, ‘Elementi’, 37.

⁴¹ Charles King, *The British Merchant; or, Commerce Preserv’d*, 3 vols. (London: John Darby 1721), vol. I, 2. Verri’s reliance has been noted before: Hotta, ‘European sources’, 716; Peter Groenewegen, *Eighteenth-Century Economics: Turgot, Beccaria and Smith and their Contemporaries* (London: Routledge 2002), 271. See, on Cary’s essay, Sophus A. Reinert, ‘Traduzione ed emulazione: La genealogia occulta della *Storia del Commercio*’, in *Genovesi Economista*, eds. Bruno Jossa, Rosario Patalano and Eugenio Zagari (Naples: Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici 2007), 155–92, and Sophus A. Reinert, *Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2011).

which the Milanese economy could be 'restored'.⁴² As a whole, it was meant to map 'the fate of this Province from the point of its ancient opulence until its present depression'.⁴³

The main point Verri sought to convey in the first part of his unpublished *Considerations* was that Italy, uniquely among European powers, twice had declined from a state of absolute power over the continent, with the fall of Rome and with the rise of unified nation-states at the end of the Renaissance. And it had achieved dominion both through conquest and through commerce. In fact, 'Italy's sovereignty over Europe through commerce in the fifteenth century was perhaps greater and more peaceful than that through arms had been before'. The laws of Italy, and of Milan as part of it, had been extremely conducive to economic development up through the sixteenth century. 'With such domestic laws, and with the vicinity to the great commerce of the Venetians, Lombardy had to prosper, were it not that those shackles began to form, in it and equally in all of Italy, which keep our commerce in a total dependence on those of the other Nations.' Since that time, the primacy of commerce had migrated around Europe, from the Portuguese to the English via the Dutch and the French, 'but it is enough only to observe that, as the commerce of the Italian cities gradually was weakened, it gradually reduced itself to that dependence in which it earlier kept the rest of Europe'. Commerce, liberty and power were in the end inseparable.

The outcome was predictable. 'As the Portuguese advanced with great strides to take the sovereignty over Europe's commerce from Italy, internal ills were getting ready in Lombardy, destined with the loss of its natural Princes to become the Province of a vast monarchy,' a monarchy under whose 'bad government' it would be debilitated by excessive contributions to the Spanish Empire. In matters of commerce, Verri decried from his historical studies, laying down the blueprint of the *Accademia's* programme of political economy in the process:

what is useful for one Nation hurts another: yes, this war is more humane, but the Power of Principates is no less disputed in it, nor is

⁴² On the history of this work, see still Pietro Verri, *Considerazioni sul commercio dello stato di Milano*, ed. Carlo Antonio Vianello (Milan: Università L. Bocconi 1939), v-xxi. On his plan for this work, see Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Carli, 3 September 1762 and Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Carli, 27 June 1763, both in De Stefano, 'Cinque anni di sodalizio', 64-5 and 68-70 respectively.

⁴³ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 9.

it blind fortune, but the conduct of who presides over it, which has the principal influence on the outcome.⁴⁴

Lombardy suffered in this war by being subject to a 'declining' Empire which, though 'master of the treasures of Potosi, found a way to put itself ever more in dependence on the other Nations of Europe'. Thus oppressed, the Lombards could not 'think of manufactures', and things only deteriorated until 1720, when, under a better foreign ruler and assisted both by high tariffs on imported manufactures and a plague striking French competitors, Lombardy's textile manufactures, for Verri the cornerstone of the region's economy, finally began to recover. 'This example proves, indeed, that when cloths don't reach us from France, our internal manufactures prosper.' The most important event in Milan's economic history, however, to which Verri would return often throughout the rest of his *Considerations*, was the plan for an economic recovery formulated by 'Court Chancellor Count Sizzendorff [Philipp Ludwig Sinzendorf]' on behalf of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI.

That Minister planned to avert French textiles from all the States of His Majesty, and to grant free access to ours in the Hereditary States of Germany, proposing compensation in copper, wax, cloth, iron, and common garments: *thus one allowed an internal circulation among the subjects of the same Monarch, all members of a political body*, opening the way for us to supply large parts of Germany with our manufactures.⁴⁵

Timothy H. Breen has demonstrated how choices of consumption habits – whose goods one consumed and whose markets one relied on – were understood to be, and exercised as, signs of political allegiance in colonial America.⁴⁶ Verri's take on the political dimension of markets hints at a similar resolution in light of his earlier analysis of the bellicosity of international trade. Milan's ultimate economic interest, he in essence argued, was to embrace its political allegiance to the Habsburgs in a context of ruthless economic competition from France and England. A sense of patriotism to the local economy could only flourish in relation to a political patriotism to the House of Habsburg.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 11, 16, 18, 21, 27.

⁴⁵ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 31, 35–46, 65, 67. Emphasis added.

⁴⁶ Thomas H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004).

⁴⁷ Verri made a very similar argument a year later in relation to the intersection of political and economic sovereignties, see his 'Proposizione per la riforma delle tariffe', 736–7.

Sinzendorf's plan was eventually corrupted by the interest of merchants which, echoing mainstream political economy at the time, 'is not always that of the Nation', and by the 'ancient system left by the Spanish'. In effect, 'the most efficient orders of the Sovereign' and 'the most salutary institutions for the Nation' could go nowhere as long as the spectres of Spanish oppression haunted the institutions of the Milanese government. Yet, Austrian economic policies of 1725 were 'among the best writings' Verri had 'seen on the present subject', proposing tax exemptions on 'raw materials' and 'what is needed for local factories', 'permission for Nobles to engage in commerce', 'lowering the tariffs on the export of domestic manufactures', and attempts to attract workers from abroad. These decrees too, however, were ineffectual because of 'the tenaciously bad institutions of [the Milanese] system'. Again, in 1732, tariffs were removed on imported raw materials and reduced drastically on exported manufactures 'produced in the State'. But yet again, these were corrupted by the remnants of Spanish misrule, and would continue to do so into the realm of current concerns. As soon as Maria Theresa of Austria could turn her attention away from the War of Austrian Succession in 1748, she 'renewed the project of Count Sizzendorff [*sic*]' for an imperial system of economic development, but again this was overcome by local, short-sighted interest, though a fund for the encouragement of commerce did emerge from her attempts.⁴⁸ That was the despondent history of Milan under foreign administration, the forlorn narrative of its second decline.

In an often quoted analogy, Verri then went on to compare the relationship between the States of Europe to that between 'private families' inside a state; but whereas this has been taken to be an undiluted expression of the *doux commerce* thesis, he was all too clear about the ruthless competitiveness of families. Not to mention nations. Historically, Milan had lost out in this competition, and its present state rendered meaningful reforms for economic melioration exceedingly complicated. Dextrously, Verri saw himself bound to decry the negative outcome of subjection to foreign powers while simultaneously praising Habsburg rule. 'Milan remained in the mournful and shameful dependence on foreign nations, in spite of the generous assistance and providential help of the extremely clement Sovereigns of Austria.' The pivotal importance of institutions for the process of economic development was evident to Verri from studying the political mosaic that was

⁴⁸ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 67–9, 70, 73–4.

the Lombard region. For whereas the valleys of Bergamo, which remained the westernmost outpost of the Venetian Empire throughout the period under analysis, had 65 textile factories in 1763, Milan, so long subject to Spain, had only two. This was, obviously, neither an issue of resources, peoples, climate or technologies. It was a question of politics. Milan had lost ‘the envy of emulating Nations’, and the survival of Spanish institutions was the root of the problem.⁴⁹

So what could be done? In private correspondence, Verri realistically noted that while ‘to think of returning [Milan’s] ancient splendour would be a chimera, to diminish many branches of the ruinous commerce which we pursue would not . . .’ Principally, now that Milan was becoming an integral part of the Austrian Monarchy, legislation would have to establish a functioning economic policy, and one had to ‘begin with a reform of the tariffs’.⁵⁰ As he put it in his *Considerations* at the time:

‘Tariffs’, which we call ‘*Dato della Mercanzia*’, are the primary mover deciding the direction taken by commerce; to eyes which reflect on public matters, they are the most precious part of political economy, and the masterpiece of legislation, because whether the commerce of a Nation is useful or ruinous depends largely on Tariffs. . . . And with many thorny and delicate operations the expert hand of legislation must conduct the line between dependence on foreigners, the Nation’s competitiveness, and the danger of smuggling, which increases with the Tariff.⁵¹

This was an altogether new way of conceiving of the wealth and power of nations. ‘The Romans, sons of Mars, thought themselves born to forcefully subject emulating Nations and to enrich themselves with their spoils, and never descended to competing industriously in commerce, the name of which they barely understood.’ That a government had to shepherd the economy was fully realised in the modern world by the French Minister of Finances Jean-Baptiste Colbert, one of Verri’s enduring political icons, and

⁴⁹ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 79–80, 81, 84, 102, 121. On Bergamo’s manufactures, see Walter Panciera, ‘Il lanificio bergamasco nel XVIII secolo: lavoro, consumi e mercati’, in *Storia economica e sociale di Bergamo: Il tempo della Serenissima*, vol. III: *Un Seicento in controtendenza*, eds. A. De Maddelena, M. A. Romani, and M. Cattini (Bergamo: Fondazione storia di Bergamo 2000), 99–131.

⁵⁰ Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Carli, 3 September 1762, in De Stefano, ‘Cinque anni di sodalizio’, 64–5.

⁵¹ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 124–5.

the massive encouragements and tariffs adopted by the English demonstrated the way to greatness.⁵² The main problems were thus political, in defining the spatial extensions of economic policy and their relation to competing interests, and cultural, in terms of overcoming the survival of Spanish ceremonies and institutions. Massive reforms were needed, not only of laws but of people's minds and cultural attitudes towards the organisation of material life. Chief among these reforms, Verri thought in the wake of Sinzendorf's plan, of the Gournay circle's propaganda in the 1750s, and of Kaunitz' own recent agenda, the nobility had to be actively encouraged to engage in commerce and absolved of any negative social consequences of so doing.⁵³ The principal instrument of reform, however, even in terms of directing the cultural and political dimensions of the local Lombard economy, remained the tariff:

As for the '*Dato della Mercanzia*', it will have to aim to make the tariff on foreign luxury goods heavier, and proportionally lower those on goods used by the plebs; it must also burden goods which compete with our internal factories, and raise to a preference the manufactures of States subject to the August [Austrian] Sovereign . . . and it would also be desirable that that fraternity which was benignly proposed, or rather ordered, first under the reign of the August Charles VI [by Sinzendorf], then under the very happy current reign, in this occasion could establish itself, so that the Hereditary States and Lombardy reciprocally protected their manufactures, lightening tariff taxes in mutual benefit.⁵⁴

Verri's political economy in the early 1760s embodied four different orientations. Economically, its head was resolutely buried in Milanese soil; culturally and historically, it spoke to the heart and mind of *Italia*, Petrarch's beloved peninsula betwixt ocean and Alps; yet politically, its gaze was fixed across those very mountains, towards Vienna and the Hungarian heartland of the Habsburg Monarchy. Ideally, however, in spite of these conflicting loyalties, it moved in a land of no borders, its ears open to the news,

⁵² Verri, *Considerazioni*, 151, 157, 179. For a later eulogy of Colbert, see Pietro Verri to Alessandro Verri, 20 September 1768, in *Carteggio di Pietro e di Alessandro Verri dal 1766 al 1797*, eds. E. Greppi, F. Novati, A. Giulini and G. Seregini, 12 vols. (Milan: Cogliati, then Milesi & Figli, then Giuffrè 1910–1943), vol. I, 45–8.

⁵³ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 197. See, on the French debate with which Verri was familiar, John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2006), 58–65 and *passim*.

⁵⁴ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 185.

innovations and institutions of the world. And paradoxically, it was precisely by marauding around a cosmopolitan every-man's land that Verri's political economy found the means for its prejudices to flourish:

Now that the true interests of States, and their real and physical force can be seen in bookshops; now also that governing a Nation is no longer a magical art, but rather a public science and subject to the laws of reason; now that the universal light has warmed the souls of the Europeans; now finally that every State is on guard and active to profit from the somnolence of their neighbours, nothing remains for us to do but to wake up too, to contemplate, to meditate on the true causes of happiness in Provinces, or instead placidly present our neck to that yoke which industrial peoples impose on the slothful, and no longer complain about the dependence or the misery we ourselves wish for.⁵⁵

Only by learning from and emulating foreign ideas and practices could the local succeed in international rivalries. Patriotism and cosmopolitanism were not the same for Pietro Verri as they were not the same for the *Accademia*, something which was made remarkably clear in the most powerful article on political economy to be published in *Il Caffè*. This was Abbé Sebastiano Franci's undervalued and understudied '*Alcuni pensieri politici*', or 'Some political thoughts', the most succinct theorisation of political economy to be based on Verri's narrative of Italian and Milanese economic history. Originally, Franci intended his essay to be entitled '*La guerra senza sangue*', or 'The Bloodless War', but Verri insisted on changing the title while editing the manuscript for publication, only one of several serious editorial interventions which underline the *Accademia's* torn loyalties.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Verri, *Considerazioni*, 202. See also Pietro Verri, 'Considerazioni sulla proposizione di restringere il lusso nello stato di Milano 1763', in *Edizione nazionale* 2:1, 93–106, 105–6.

⁵⁶ Sebastiano Franci, 'La guerra senza sangue', edited by Pietro Verri, Fondazione Mattioli, Milan, *Archivio Verri*, 380.4; cf. Sebastiano Franci, 'Alcuni pensieri politici', in *Il Caffè*, 143–50. For observations on the editing of this essay, see Gianni Francioni, 'Storia editoriale del "Caffè"', in *Il Caffè*, lxxxi–cxlv, cxxxiii–cxxxiv and the 'apparato critico', in *Il Caffè*, 883–5. The passages below on Sebastiano Franci build on Sophus A. Reinert, 'The Italian Tradition of Political Economy: Theories and Policies of Development in the Semi-Periphery of the Enlightenment', in *The Origins of Development Economics: How Schools of Economic Thought Have Addressed Development*, eds. Jomo K. Sundaram and Erik S. Reinert (London: Zed Books 2006, rev. edn.), 24–47.

Franci's principal preoccupation was with the 'so often praised [*decan-tato*] equilibrium of power between the nations of Europe'. Once upon a time, one feared nations overpowering others with only 'military glory', Verri's 'sons of Mars'. This because for millennia, 'a sovereign who wished for a major number of subjects was forced to conquer a larger extension of land'.⁵⁷ That was the old model. But Italy had changed all that; not just through one of its regions, but through a galaxy of commercial societies stretching from the far south to the far north of the peninsula:

Around the thirteenth century the Florentines, Pisans, Amalfitans, Venetians, and Genoese began adopting a different policy for enhancing their wealth and power because they noticed that the sciences, the cultivation of land, the application of the arts and of industry, and the introduction of extensive trade could produce a large population, provide for their countless needs, sustain great luxury and gain immense riches without having to add more territories.⁵⁸

First among the Europeans, Italians had discovered the principles of political economy to circumvent the Malthusian trap of poverty, nurturing activities yielding increasing returns to scale. More people, they observed, could be supported on a given piece of land by manufactures and trade than by sheer agricultural surplus.⁵⁹ Precisely like Verri in his *Considerations*, Franci demonstrated that Italy had twice risen to dominate the world, with the iron legions of Rome and with the golden trade of the Renaissance.⁶⁰ 'So happy was their success that the world for the second time turned its gaze towards Italy . . . and their example was quickly imitated.' Indeed, 'now all of Europe agrees that one must draw the power of kings and the happiness of peoples from such principles, and that it seems inconvenient to search for one's own greatness and the equilibrium of others outside of the above mentioned sources'.⁶¹ The world, in short, had changed, and the means of achieving supremacy depended more on economic than on military success. Yet, had this revolution pacified international relations? The only answer was no.

⁵⁷ Franci, 'Alcuni pensieri politici', 143, 144.

⁵⁸ Franci, 'Alcuni pensieri politici', 144.

⁵⁹ Of the four largest European cities in 1500, only Paris was not in Italy. See Jan de Vries, *European Urbanization, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1984), 35.

⁶⁰ On these dynamics see Giorgio Ruffolo, *Quando l'Italia era una superpotenza: Il ferro di Roma e l'oro dei mercanti* (Turin: Einaudi 2004), and Sophus A. Reinert, 'Lessons on the Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Conquest, Commerce, and Decline in Enlightenment Italy', *American Historical Review* 115 (2010: 5): 1395–425.

⁶¹ Franci, 'Alcuni pensieri politici', 144.

If a people are lazy, not knowing how to provide for their own needs, the industrious nations punctually rush in, and with a simulated piety present them with all which is useful for them: they give them food, clothing, they exonerate them of every effort, and if they see them inclined to luxury they show them a thousand trifles to ferment and satisfy it. One must quickly find a remedy for these grandiose damages, and one must vigorously defend oneself against these extremely pernicious enemies with the most opportune weapons, which are the sciences, the arts, industry and commerce.⁶²

Economic policies had become the only ‘weapons with which a nation defends itself against its enemies’. It was, thus, ‘not impossible to remedy the poverty of a state and to avert the enemies causing it’, but this required a properly political understanding of international trade and of what was at stake in its right development. Nations had to actively choose their partners in trade to assure future welfare and defend themselves against dependence in international relations.⁶³

A weak people of little wealth, generally speaking, does badly in supplying the richer and more powerful with its raw materials. These nations full of industry will manufacture them, doubling their value many times over, and, sustaining a large part of their population and making immense profits from this very fine art, constantly maintain their superiority.⁶⁴

What a nation traded, in short, was of truly existential importance. But political economy was not simply a means of defending oneself against hostile forces in the modern world; it was also a means of attacking them.

Once the most formidable of enemies has been defeated, one can attempt to make conquests. The most secure method is to reduce one’s manufactures, already perfected as far as possible, to that low price with which others cannot sell them, and then diligently look for a way of making them penetrate foreign countries through commerce and opportune treaties with their princes . . . This is how one makes important conquests.⁶⁵

⁶² Franci, ‘Alcuni pensieri politici’, 147.

⁶³ Franci, ‘Alcuni pensieri politici’, 147–8.

⁶⁴ Franci, ‘Alcuni pensieri politici’, 148.

⁶⁵ Franci, ‘Alcuni pensieri politici’, 149.

This was the way to 'make important conquests', Franci argued, this was the '*guerra d'industria*', the 'war of industry'. And only success in the 'war of industry' could prepare one for the inevitable real wars which forever would plague the interactions of nations.⁶⁶ Franci's original manuscript, and Pietro Verri's editorial changes, further emphasise the importance of the issue at hand. As the opening passages of 'The Bloodless War' observed:

It would by now be about time that one thought of a new kind of war in Europe, which did not demand the destruction of humanity, and which promoted the interests of states more effectively.⁶⁷

Whereas Franci's published essay never engaged with the actual economic conditions of contemporary Milan, one of the characters in his manuscript asked his interlocutor explicitly to 'descend to give me all of this in more minute detail and teach me how we Milanese can make agriculture, the arts, industry, and commerce assert themselves [*far valere*].' He also praised Verri's *Considerations*, mentioning 'the registers of Milanese customs, diligently examined by a great citizen', and, when a minute account of the Lombard economy turned out to be too voluminous a subject for discussion, cut right to the chase: 'tell me how one can weaken the enemy without a bloody war'. Much like the question itself, the answer did not bode well for cosmopolitanism. Most importantly, Franci repeatedly argued in his manuscript, Milan should not export any raw materials. Not only did such asymmetrical relations of trade create poverty in one's fatherland and subject it to a state of dependence on other nations, but they would further encourage the 'superiority of heretics over Catholics'. The case of the herring-trade, for example, and 'our rituals' such as the institution of not eating meat on Fridays and other special occasions [*giorno magro*], every year brought new gold to Protestant coffers. 'If the Church came to the opinion of prohibiting fish fished by heretical hands, our critical century [*il nostro secolo critico*] could call this ban an excessive scruple, and it would certainly be that in the face of religion itself; but to the eyes of politics

⁶⁶ Franci, 'Alcuni pensieri politici', 149–50; see similarly Pietro Verri, 'Considerazioni sulla proposizione di restringere il lusso nello stato di Milano 1763', in Verri, *Edizione Nazionale*, 2:1, 93–106, 98.

⁶⁷ Franci, 'La guerra senza sangue', 1r.

it would be considered a reasonable precaution.⁶⁸ Finally, the listener intervenes:

All this is well, I too know that this sort of bloodless war is the most necessary and useful, but it does not suffice, I think, to keep bloody wars at bay. The interests of princes, always tricked by a great number of sterile treaties which every now and then are brought back onto the scene, produce discords which do not permit any other decision but war [*quella delle armi*].⁶⁹

Of course he was right, but, as in the published version, there was no better way of preparing for a bloody war than to successfully conduct a bloodless one. The ‘war of industry’, what he also called ‘the bloodless war’, was, as such, ‘our modern war’, and perpetually raging across Europe. In effect, it was a parallel war, a companion and prelude to slaughter.⁷⁰ Franci’s manuscript was too explicit for Verri, who, in spite of the group’s very good relations with both Firmian and Kaunitz, rightly feared alienating Austrian censors and their friends in the administration.⁷¹ His personal experience with discussing Milanese matters had resulted in a reprimand by Kaunitz, and he obviously did not wish to see this happen again through Franci’s reference to his text.⁷² His caveat, in the introduction to the first issue of *Il Caffè*, that the *Accademia* would keep a ‘total silence on sacred subjects’ similarly trumped Franci’s observations on the relationship between religious life and economic might in the modern world.⁷³ Though somewhat mellowed in the transition from manuscript to printed text, Franci’s fundamental message about the importance and ruthlessness of economic competition survived unscathed, deeply problematising received opinion regarding his group’s loyalties and the nature of their cosmopolitanism.

Patriotism and cosmopolitanism

The eighteenth century was profoundly cosmopolitan, actively shaped by international trade and cultural transfer. Volumes of trade, of

⁶⁸ Franci, ‘La guerra senza sangue’, 4v, 5v, 6r–6v.

⁶⁹ Franci, ‘La guerra senza sangue’, 7r–7v.

⁷⁰ Franci, ‘La guerra senza sangue’, 8r.

⁷¹ Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Carli, 27 February 1765, in De Stefano, ‘Cinque anni di sodalizio’, 79.

⁷² See the letter from Kaunitz reprinted in Verri, *Considerazioni*, xiv–xvi.

⁷³ ‘Al lettore’, *Il Caffè*, 5.

travel and of translations in effect exploded as the eighteenth century progressed. Yet, it might be argued that excessive emphases on the eighteenth-century buzzwords ‘cosmopolitanism’ and, by some quirky default, ‘laissez-faire’ have served to obfuscate our understanding of the historical record and of the nature of Enlightenment reformism in Milan. So dominant has this vision of peaceful, reasoned universalism been that most attempts to come to grips with the coexistence of ‘patriotism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ in the *Accademia dei Pugni* alternatively have conflated the two (‘this was a time of optimism, when the words “patriot”, “cosmopolitan” and “philosophe” were, for Verri, one and the same’⁷⁴) or in fact presented the latter as a simple extension of the former, arguing that ‘cosmopolitanism only extends patriotism just as individual happiness finds its fulfilment in that of the public’. This effectively emasculates ‘patriotism’ and safeguards the Milanese Enlightenment from being associated with often demonised currents of political philosophy.⁷⁵

A fundamental assumption of such patriotic cosmopolitanism is that the international system is in intrinsic alignment, or at the very least that it can become so aligned in the immediate future.⁷⁶ In the case of the *Accademia dei Pugni*, scholars have located this unifying force in an idealised logic of commercial societies bound together by the exigencies of peaceful international trade.⁷⁷ Known in the eighteenth century through variations of Montesquieu’s *doux commerce* thesis and celebrated in modern historiography by the work of Albert Hirschman,⁷⁸ this line of analysis fails to account for the reality of international economic competition at the time and of the *Accademia*’s explicitly ‘patriotic’ solutions to the problem based on tariffs, subsidies and other political interventions in economic life. Their patriotism was not simply a more local manifestation of a greater love for humanity, but a torn allegiance divided between loyalties to the historical polity of Milan, to the Italian peninsula as a

⁷⁴ Carpanetto and Ricuperati, *Italy in the Age of Reason*, 265.

⁷⁵ Jonard, ‘Cosmopolitismo’, 95; Giuseppe Rutto, ‘Riforme e patriottismi nell’Austria di Maria Teresa’, in *Economia, istituzioni, cultura*, vol. II, 903–23.

⁷⁶ For modern approaches, see *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate*, eds. Edward D. Mansfield and Brian M. Pollins (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2003). For a critique, see Katherine Barbieri, *The Liberal Illusion: Does Trade Promote Peace?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2002).

⁷⁷ Jonard, ‘Cosmopolitismo’, 87.

⁷⁸ Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997).

cultural entity, to the House of Habsburg as their worldly sovereign, and ultimately to European civilisation and to humanity at large.

For if the *Accademia's* political economy was all too aware of the tensions between local needs, the dynamics of economic development, and the cruel realities of international competition, so their most explicit engagement with the concept of 'patriotism' confounds the ideals of peaceful cosmopolitanism. Gianrinaldo Carli was the oldest member of the *Accademia*, an Istrian nobleman whose earlier work had engaged both with economic matters and with the erudite controversies over witchcraft in early eighteenth-century Italy. His only article for *Il Caffè* appeared in the second volume, and was entitled '*Della patria degli Italiani*', 'On the Fatherland of Italians'.⁷⁹ It tells the story of a stranger who one day entered Demetrio's coffee-shop. The local patron Alcibiades, a character representative of common Milanese opinions in the dialogue, asked him if he was a 'foreigner', and the stranger replied negatively. 'Are you Milanese, then?' replied Alcibiades. '*No, sir, I am not Milanese*', the stranger retorted to everyone's bafflement. 'I am Italian, the unknown man answered, and an Italian in Italy is never a foreigner just as a Frenchman is not a foreigner in France, an Englishman in England, A Dutchman in Holland, and so on.'

Gradually, the patrons of the coffee-shop realised the stranger was 'a good patriot', and decried 'the infelicity we are condemned to by an all too irrational prejudice of believing that an Italian is not co-citizen of other Italians' born in 'that space *the Apennines divide and sea and the Alps surround*'. Carli's reference was to Petrarch's *Canzoniere* CXLVI, one of the founding documents of Renaissance patriotism, by which Italy was understood to be a cultural rather than political unity.⁸⁰

Italy had, in the past, been one 'nation . . . bound in a single body and in a single system', but the vicissitudes of history had broken it.⁸¹ His

⁷⁹ Gian Rinaldo Carli, 'La patria degli Italiani', in *Il Caffè*, 421–7. On Carli see Antonio Trampus, 'Gianrinaldo Carli at the Centre of the Milanese Enlightenment', *History of European Ideas*, 32 (2006:4): 456–76.

⁸⁰ Carli, 'La patria', 423; Petrarch, *The Canzoniere or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, ed. Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1999), poem CXLVI, 236–7, lines 12–14. The English translation is his. On the history of a cultural 'Italy', see Gene A. Brucker, 'From *Campanilismo* to Nationhood: Forging an Italian Identity', in Gene A. Brucker, *Living on the Edge in Leonardo's Florence: Selected Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2005), 42–61 and Angelo Mazzocco, 'Un'idea politica italiana in Petrarca?', in *Petrarca politico* (Rome: Istituto storico per il Medio Evo 2006), 9–26. For a critique, see Carlo Dionisotti, *Geografia e Storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin: Einaudi 1999).

⁸¹ Carli, 'La patria', 424–5.

conclusion drew on Galileo, a character often praised by the *Accademia dei Pugni* for his 'Italian' contribution to the world of learning, to explain the relationship between cultural patriotism and political life. 'Let us transport', he says, Galileo's star system 'to our national politics':

Whether the cities are large or small, whether they are in one place or another, whether they have particular laws in their revolutions around their own axes, whether they are faithful to their natural sovereign and to the laws, have more or less subaltern bodies: though divided in different dominions and obedient to different sovereigns, they should once and for all form a single system for the progress of the sciences and the arts; and the love of patriotism, that is to say the universal good of our nations, should be the Sun which illuminates and attracts them . . . In the meantime we should all again become Italians in order not to stop being men.⁸²

The secondary literature surrounding *Il Caffè* often returns to Verri's supposed dislike for Carli's article, but such an analysis relies on a very selective reading of his epistolary.⁸³ In light of his letters and his economic writings alike, it is difficult not to conclude that he indeed shared many of Carli's opinions with regards to the cultural unity of Italy already in the 1760s. For what were the *Accademia's* economic policies if not partial? And what did their arguments for a properly peninsular Italian language in opposition to the rarefactions of old do, if not contribute to the development of a cultural identity based on politicised geographical criteria?

An answer, and the point at which Verri in the end came to an agreement with Carli, lies in the differentiation of sovereignties. There were, in the end, at least four different kinds of patriotism at play in the *Accademia dei Pugni*, each of which found its more or less explicit and idiosyncratic resolution in respect to the actual institutional context of Austrian Lombardy. Religiously, as Franci's manuscript for the 'Bloodless War' demonstrates, the *Accademia* looked to Rome in opposition to the 'heretic' commercial Nations of North-West Europe. Politically, they could not but turn to Vienna, the seat of the House of Habsburg for which Milan was a key province. Culturally, they actively and expressly sought to resurrect a Petrarchan ideal of peninsular unity in dominant

⁸² Carli, 'La patria', 427.

⁸³ Pietro Verri to Gian Rinaldo Carli, 23 March 1765 and 27 March 1765, in De Stefano, 'Cinque anni di sodalizio', 85–6, 88.

opposition, on the basis of Italy's peculiar history, to the rest of Europe. This same national history, characterised by Italy's unique dual decline, informed the *Accademia's* economic patriotism. Because of its political loyalties, Verri and his group identified solutions to the vexing problems of international competition and material melioration in collaboration with Austrian authorities, and chief among them Sinzendorf's oft-praised plan for imperial economic development. Yet their eyes were always set on ways to make the Milanese province flourish within that sphere, primarily through the exports of its modernised agricultural system and through the pointed improvement of its manufactures.⁸⁴

Though contributing to the political economy of a de-facto empire, the *Accademia* had in the end drawn nothing but warnings from the lessons of France and England. In clear opposition to the continental ideal of universal betterment envisaged for its dominions by the Austrian Monarchy, the English and French texts reaching Milan primarily envisaged imperial economic systems as vampiric, drawing raw materials from the colonies to fuel metropolitan manufactures.⁸⁵ In the Habsburg case, Milan was conceived of as a valuable manufacturing centre in its own right, a centre which could help enrich the empire symbiotically. There was, as such, opportunity – in the form of larger markets – rather than sacrifice involved in Milan's submission to Habsburg authority, a fact which in turn must have greatly facilitated the *Accademia's* complex mosaic of patriotic loyalties. These loyalties, however, cannot simply be deflated into a toothless *laissez-faire* cosmopolitanism without insulting the complexity of the group's expressive aims and historical context, indeed their very *raison d'être*.

The *Encyclopedie's* definition of 'cosmopolitanism' simplified a Montesquieuan dictum thus: 'I put my family above myself, my country above my family, and the human race above my country.'⁸⁶ The idea was clear. A cosmopolitan had no particular loves. His emotional commitments were universally distributed, a viewpoint influentially adopted by Immanuel Kant and many others.⁸⁷ Material concerns were pre-eminent litmus tests of loyalties, shaping, nurturing and reflecting economic identities. Wealth was, in practical terms, not an infinite resource in an eighteenth-century world of ruthlessly partitioned empires, resources and

⁸⁴ See, on the relation between nationalism, capitalism and development, Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2001).

⁸⁵ See Reinert, 'Blaming the Medici'.

⁸⁶ In April Carter, *The Political Theory of Global Citizenship* (London: Routledge 2001), 36.

⁸⁷ See Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2003), 153–4 and *passim*.

manufactures. Wealth was rather, as many thinkers at the time began to reveal, the fiercely contested key to a flourishing political life. Economic differences decided military and thus political and, importantly, cultural hierarchies. Trade could thus not, as often has been argued in the secondary literature, be a universal solvent of patriotic commitments for the *Accademia*. Through their explicit conceptual analogies of commerce with conquest, they were rather galvanised by it. Cosmopolitanism looked good on paper, but, as economic development proved to be an inherently uneven and competitive process, could its geographical distribution ever be truly immaterial for the *Accademia*? In spite of their deeply utilitarian moral philosophy and their assurance that the goal of politics was 'the greatest possible happiness divided with the greatest possible equality', the answer was no.⁸⁸ Verri and his collaborators had succeeded in founding an 'imagined community',⁸⁹ a wide public sphere of culturally unified subjects of different polities, but though some of their interests overlapped in a Venn-diagram of their cultural, political and economic loyalties, large parts did not.

Though the *Accademia* had no fixed physical presence as the more famous learned societies of its age did, it by no means defaulted into simply being a local embassy of the *Respublica literarum*, the truly cosmopolitan, meritocratic and egalitarian 'Republic of Letters' which first began to flourish in the sixteenth century. For even if the high-minded toleration professed by this earlier international community of scholars at times had run aground of practical concerns, its ideals nonetheless remained clear. As one 1699 commentator wrote, 'The Republic of Letters . . . embraces the whole world and is composed of all nationalities, all social classes, all ages and both sexes.'⁹⁰ Demetrio's coffee-shop was certainly a 'world made by words' in Anthony Grafton's apt phrase, but it was a world which mirrored reality and the practical exigencies of inter-state competition far more closely than that which Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc had helped weave together in the early seventeenth century.⁹¹ Though inclusive and tolerant of women,

⁸⁸ Pietro Verri, *Meditazioni sulla felicità*, ed. Gianni Francioni (Como: Ibis 1996), 61 and Francioni's notes, 82. See also Robert Shackleton, 'The Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number: The History of Bentham's Phrase', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* xc (1972): 1461–82.

⁸⁹ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso 2006, new edn.).

⁹⁰ In Anthony Grafton, 'A Sketch Map of a Lost Continent: The Republic of Letters' in Anthony Grafton, *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2009), 9–34, 9.

⁹¹ Grafton, *Worlds Made by Words*. On Peiresc see Peter N. Miller, *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2000).

the imaginary world of *Accademia* purposefully occupied an importunate landscape of borders and differential relations of power. When push came to shove and the cosmopolitan ideal risked threatening economic conditions in Lombardy, they happily shoved it aside. Ultimately, the *Accademia's* cosmopolitanism and openness to foreign cultures and ideas informed a relentlessly realist and patriotic programme of economic development, a programme in which international allegiances were honoured only as long as they contributed to local needs. So when the Supreme Council of the Economy was inaugurated by Austrian authorities in Milan in 1765, and the institution, however meritocratic, came to be dominated by foreigners, Verri's choice was clear. He did not embrace cosmopolitanism. He turned on his heels and resolutely took sides with the home interests he previously had scorned: the patrician class from which he descended and in which he partook.⁹² Political economy was meant to illuminate practical policy, not to derail it with chimeras. This was why both Verri and Beccaria purposefully abandoned their earlier faith in the mathematical modelling of economic concerns later in life, and why, in spite of recent scholarship to the contrary, Verri never abandoned his belief in the crucial importance of tariffs for demarcating allegiances and developing local manufactures.⁹³ As he put it even in the later editions of his 1770s masterwork *Meditations on Political Economy*, a work in which Verri supposedly 'abandoned his old arguments in favour of state intervention':⁹⁴

A tax [*tributo*] on the export of a raw material can be a very strong incentive to increasing annual reproduction by reducing it to a manufacture. A tax on a foreign manufacture can give vigour to a similar domestic manufacture.⁹⁵

After its metaphorical doors had closed, the *Accademia's* members kept its ideas alive, transmitting them to the next generation, and even institutionalising them. The coffee brewed fresh by the *Pugni* would still be drunk in the years and even the centuries to come. Like all the best coffee, it left its drinkers delighted and positively restless.

⁹² Capra, 'Riforme finanziarie'.

⁹³ Reinert, 'They will do with political economy'.

⁹⁴ Cf. Till Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness: Political Economy in the Italian Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004), 177.

⁹⁵ Pietro Verri, 'Meditazioni sulla economia politica', in *Edizione nazionale 2:2*, 391–570, 541–51. Sebastiano Franci would, if anything, become even more set in his old ways. See his *La moneta oggetto storico, civile, e politico. Parti due* (Milan: Giuseppe Galeazzi 1769), 195.

7

Paternalism and Agricultural Reform: The Economic Society of Bern in the Eighteenth Century

Regula Wyss and Martin Stuber

The Economic Society of Bern (*Die Oekonomische Gesellschaft Bern*) was established in 1759 as one of the first societies in continental Europe to focus on economic topics. The founders, a group of Bernese patricians, referred to several famous academies and societies as their models, such as the ones in Stockholm (founded 1739), Copenhagen (1742) and Göttingen (1751) as well as the first economic societies in Edinburgh (1723), Dublin (1731), London (1754) and Rennes (1757).¹ Within years the Bernese society gained a European reputation and itself served as a model for other societies. In 1764, the well-known traveller count Karl von Zinzendorf wrote about the Economic Society of Bern: ‘[It] is a mother to all similar organizations established afterwards in France, England, Germany and even in Switzerland.’² While this may not quite be historically correct, Zinzendorf’s remark all the more illustrates the international esteem this particular society enjoyed among contemporaries.³

¹The introduction builds on *Kartoffeln, Klee und kluge Köpfe. Die Oekonomische und Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft des Kantons Bern OGG (1759–2009)*, eds. Martin Stuber, Peter Moser, Gerrendina Gerber-Visser and Christian Pfister (Bern: Haupt 2009), 14–25.

²Otto Erich Deutsch, ‘Bericht des Grafen Karl von Zinzendorf über seine handelspolitische Studienreise durch die Schweiz 1764’, in *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 35 (Basle: Verlag der Historischen und Antiquarischen Gesellschaft Universitätsbibliothek Basle 1936), 303.

³See Martin Stuber, “‘dass gemeinnützige wahrheiten gemein gemacht werden.’” Zur Publikationstätigkeit der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern 1759–1798’, in *Landschaften agrarisch-ökonomischen Wissens: Strategien innovativer Ressourcennutzung in Zeitschriften und Sozietäten des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Marcus

The foundation of the Economic Society of Bern grew out of the experience of a subsistence crisis that coincided with the beginning of the Seven Years' War.⁴ Two successive failed harvests instilled a fear in the founders of the Economic Society about the Republic of Bern's capacity to preserve its independence:

This ongoing armament costs both people and money; public revenues rest on the industry and dexterity of the inhabitants and soldiers are recruited from the population; and on what else do these two foundations of power of every state depend than on agriculture? Alliances, victories, conquests can only give a fleeting and uncertain power to a nation; wealth derived from the growth of trade, the manifold fruits of an effective diligence of the inhabitants, and observant strenuous government by the rulers render a state more powerful in comparison to others, but this power too is limited. Only the treasures of the earth and the force of the population are reliable pillars of the nation's power, and only these can guarantee its independence.⁵

This argument was published in the Society's journal *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* in 1762, in a preface by Vinzenz Bernhard Tschärner (1728–1778), one of the prominent members of the Economic Society of Bern.

The aristocratic city republic of Bern was ruled by the Great Council ('CC'), whose members belonged to patrician families. The largest canton of the Swiss Confederation, Bern reigned over a wide territory covering different types of agrarian landscapes, a vine belt at the shores

Popplow (Münster: Waxmann 2010); Emil Erne, 'Topographie der Schweizer Sozietäten 1629–1798', in *Die europäischen Akademien der Frühen Neuzeit zwischen Frührenaissance und Spätaufklärung*, Bd. II, eds. Klaus Garber and Heinz Wismann (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1996), 1506–26; Henry Ernest Lowood, *Patriotism, Profit, and the Promotion of Science in the German Enlightenment: The Economic and Scientific Societies 1760–1815* (New York and London: Garland Publishing 1991), 139; Ulrich Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert. Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Munich: C. H. Beck 1982), 153; Conrad Bäschlin, *Die Blütezeit der ökonomischen Gesellschaft in Bern 1759–1766* (Laupen: Fr. Hagenmacher 1917), for example 287, 289, 310, 363.

⁴Christian Pfister, *Agrarkonjunktur und Witterungsverlauf im westlichen Schweizer Mittelland zur Zeit der ökonomischen Patrioten 1755–1779. Ein Beitrag zur Umwelt- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Liebefeld, Bern: Geographica Bernensia. Reihe G, H. 2, 1975), 190–2.

⁵[Vinzenz Bernhard Tschärner] 'Vorrede', in *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen durch die oekonomische Gesellschaft zu Bern gesammelt* (1762:1), I–XLI: II.

of Lake Geneva, a grain belt in the lowlands, a zone of mixed farming in the hills and a dairy belt in the Alps.⁶ In its reform programme the Economic Society strived to improve agriculture, crafts and commerce in the different agrarian zones. This aim was specified in an extensive programme that consisted of 416 research questions that were divided into these three categories. Central to the society's programme, which was published in the *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* of 1762,⁷ were its outlooks on agrarian and forest modernisation.⁸

The members of the Economic Society operated systematically. Through topographic descriptions of the different parts of the Bernese territory they created an instrument for generating up-to-date practical knowledge about its conditions, which could be used to identify space for improvement. These descriptions had a wide focus and included the natural history of the terrain, the conditions of the soil, the plants, animals and the character of the inhabitants, as well as their education, customs, diseases and nutrition.⁹ The society established a meteorological measurement system and created a stock of botanical resources.¹⁰ It maintained a wide correspondence network, thereby connecting other

⁶See *Berns goldene Zeit. Das 18. Jahrhundert neu entdeckt*, eds. André Holenstein et al. (Bern: Stämpfli 2008); André Schluchter, 'Agrarzonon', in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, Bd. 1 (Basle: Schwabe 2002), 14–147; Christian Pfister, 'The Early Loss of Ecological Stability in an Agrarian Region', in *The Silent countdown: Essays in European Environmental History*, eds. Christian Pfister and P. Brimblecombe (Berlin: Springer-Verlag 1990), 43.

⁷[Vinzenz Bernhard Tschärner], 'Entwurf der vornehmsten Gegenstände der Untersuchungen, die zur aufnahme des feldbaues, des nahrungsstandes und der handlung abzielen sollen', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1762:1): 1–54.

⁸Christian Pfister, *Im Strom der Modernisierung. Bevölkerung, Wirtschaft und Umwelt im Kanton Bern 1700–1914* (Bern: Haupt, 1995), 175–209; Martin Stuber, *Wälder für Generationen. Konzeptionen der Nachhaltigkeit im Kanton Bern (1750–1880)* (Cologne: Böhlau 2008), 67–148.

⁹Gerrendina Gerber-Visser, *Der ökonomisch-patriotische Blick, Statistik und Volksaufklärung in den Topographischen Beschreibungen der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern* (Bern: PhD thesis Historisches Institut 2009); Gerrendina Gerber-Visser, "'Statistik' für eine private Gesellschaft. Die Oekonomische Gesellschaft in Bern und ihre Informationsbeschaffung', in *Information in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Arndt Brendecke, Susanne Friedrich and Markus Friedrich (Münster: Lit Verlag 2007), 376–92.

¹⁰Christian Pfister, 'Meteorologisches Beobachtungsnetz und Klimaverlauf', in *Berns goldene Zeit*, 63–6; Martin Stuber and Luc Lienhard, 'Nützliche Pflanzen. Systematische Verzeichnisse von Wild- und Kulturpflanzen im Umfeld der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern', in *Nützliche Wissenschaft und Ökonomie im Ancien Régime. Akteure, Themen, Kommunikationsformen*, eds. André Holenstein, Martin Stuber and Gerrendina Gerber-Visser (Heidelberg: Palatina 2007), 65–106.

societies and scholars across Europe, to local collaborators in the Bernese country, such as magistrates and pastors.¹¹ The members exchanged knowledge about methods and literature amongst each other, as well as seeds and textile samples.¹² Much like national academies and previously founded economic societies, the Bernese Society published prize questions in order to compare practical methods, diffuse knowledge about these methods and to discuss socio-economic questions.¹³ Topics included were: 'How to proliferate forage by seeding foreign or domestic sorts of herbage?' (1761), 'Is it useful to distribute the commons?' (1762), 'How to educate the peasantry?' (1763), 'Which grain price is the best for producers and for consumers?' (1766), 'How to construct stoves to save wood?' (1768), 'How to organise an institution for the poor?' (1779), 'Establishing a new criminal legislation' (1779), 'Establishing a fire insurance' (1788). The questions were published in the Society's journal as well as in Swiss and European periodicals. The Society rewarded the best essays with a medal and published them in the *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen*, which apart from local authors (56 per cent) included contributions from other parts of Switzerland (10 per cent), Sweden (10 per cent), France (6 per cent), Germany (3 per cent) and Great Britain (2 per cent). From the outset the *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* was developed as a medium for the transfer of knowledge across spatial and social borders and as a platform for public debate.¹⁴

In the first years since its establishment the Economic Society of Bern prospered.¹⁵ In this period the Society initiated the founding of associated societies in other parts of the Republic, such as Aarau, Lausanne or Vevey.¹⁶ For the entire period between 1759 and 1800, we know of 120 ordinary members, 192 honorary members as well as 67 subscribers

¹¹ Martin Stuber, 'Das Korrespondenznetz der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern, 1759–1800', in *Kulturen des Wissens im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrich Johannes Schneider (Berlin: de Gruyter 2008), 123–32.

¹² Martin Stuber, 'Kulturpflanzentransfer im Netz der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern', in *Wissen im Netz. Botanik und Pflanzentransfer in europäischen Korrespondenznetzen des 18. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Regina Dauser et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2008), 229–69.

¹³ Katrin Keller, 'Vielleicht fand das Publicum diese Preisfrage so wichtig nicht, als solche uns geschienen'. *Die Preisfragen der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern 1759–1801* (Bern: Lizentiatsarbeit Historisches Institut 2008).

¹⁴ Stuber, "dass gemeinnützige wahrheiten gemein gemacht werden."

¹⁵ Daniel Salzmann, *Dynamik und Krise des ökonomischen Patriotismus. Das Tätigkeitsprofil der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern 1759–1797* (Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz 2009).

¹⁶ Bäschlin, *Blütezeit*, 144–245.

who paid a yearly contribution to the announced prize questions of the Economic Society. The associated societies listed a total of 228 members.¹⁷

The honorary members included international exponents of the high nobility and republic of letters like Johann Hartwig Ernst Baron von Bernstorff, the Marquis de Mirabeau, the Marquis de Turbilly, the Prussian minister of state, Count Podewils, the Polish Staroste, Count Michel Mniszech, Count Romney, President of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, the Margrave of Baden Durlach, the botanist Carl von Linné, the Uppsala professor of economics, Anders Berch, Voltaire, and the English writer on agriculture, John Mills.¹⁸ Within the associated societies country pastors were dominant among the membership.¹⁹ Of the ordinary members and subscribers of the society about two thirds were members of the Great Council. Thus, the core of the Economic Society consisted of representatives of the Bernese government. Still, only a minority of government representatives took part in the activities of the Economic Society. The society's members were first and foremost patricians, who addressed the improvement of agricultural productivity to feed the growing population.²⁰ In so doing they never aimed to fundamentally change the political system itself. In this sense one also needs to understand the label of 'economic patriots' that previous studies have applied to these reformers along with members of economic societies in other Swiss cities, who also tended to hold official functions.²¹

Key members of the Society, such as Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner (1727–1794), Vinzenz Bernhard Tschärner, Emanuel von Graffenried

¹⁷All prosopographic statements are based on the *Forschungsdatenbank zur Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern*, eds. Martin Stuber et al. (Historisches Institut der Universität Bern); see Daniel Flückiger and Martin Stuber, 'Vom System zum Akteur. Personenorientierte Datenbanken für Archiv und Forschung', in *Nachhaltige Geschichte. Festschrift für Christian Pfister*, eds. André Kirchofer et al. (Zürich: Chronos, 2009), 253–69.

¹⁸Béla Kapossy, 'Republican political economy', *History of European Ideas* 33 (2007): 377–89, 381.

¹⁹Gerendina Gerber-Visser and Regula Wyss, 'Formen der Generierung und Verbreitung nützlichen Wissens. Pfarrherren als lokale Mitarbeiter der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern', in *Nützliche Wissenschaft*, 41–64, Regula Wyss, *Pfarrer als Vermittler ökonomischen Wissens? Die Rolle der Pfarrer in der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern im 18. Jahrhundert* (Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz 2007).

²⁰On the supply situation, see Anton Brandenberger, *Ausbruch aus der 'Malthusianischen Falle'. Versorgungslage und Wirtschaftsentwicklung im Staate Bern 1755–1797* (Bern: Peter Lang 2003).

²¹Georg C. L. Schmidt, *Der Schweizer Bauer im Zeitalter des Frühkapitalismus. Die Wandlung der Schweizer Bauernwirtschaft im achtzehnten Jahrhundert und die Politik der Ökonomischen Patrioten*, vol. I (Bern: Paul Haupt 1932), 2.

von Burgistein (1726–1787) and Franz Jakob von Tavel (1729–1798) were later – in 1764 – elected members of the Great Council. Before starting a career in the government young Bernese patricians took part in society life. As Johann Georg Heinzmann remarked in 1794, in his description of the city and Republic of Bern: ‘The young Bernese is free from any fixed duties. He may be employed as a clerk in some administrative chamber, dedicate himself to social life, the beauties of his place and the study of social refinement.’²² At the time of the founding of the Society, in 1759, the above mentioned Tscharnher, von Tavel and Graffenried were between thirty and thirty-five years old and could only start their magistrate careers in five years. The minimum age to become a magistrate was thirty and elections took place only every eight to ten years. The availability of these figures was an essential precondition for the first heyday of the society. Once this generation had joined the Great Council the Society also became less active. Yet, from that point onwards the outstanding exponents of the Economic Society, being members of the Great Council, who now occupied seats in important committees (*Kammern und Kommission*) and held official positions such as bailiff (*Landvogt*) or Salt-Director (*Salzdirektor*) were able to directly influence state affairs.

Close links between the Society and the government did not preclude the Society’s far-reaching independence. The Economic Society had been founded on private initiative. Its financial position was broadly carried, and relied mostly on membership fees and donations. In this, the Bernese society was like equivalent institutions in Great Britain and in the German free cities, and unlike otherwise comparable institutions in France, the Habsburg territory and the German principalities.²³

Comparison with other societies also reveals the extent to which the Bernese society functioned as an intermediary between global and local knowledge stocks, in ways that fit with the Bernese constitution. The Republic of Bern had no university, and lacked princely or royal patrons to fund a scientific academy. Consequently, experiments with newly cultivated plants took place on private estates or at the bailiff’s domains (*Domänengüter*). Instead of conducting state-paid international research trips, one built an international network through which relevant information reached Bern.²⁴ The Bernese society also

²²Johann Georg Heinzmann, *Beschreibung der Stadt und Republik Bern. Nebst vielen nützlichen Nachrichten* (Bern: Typographische Societät 1794), 62.

²³Daniel Salzmann, ‘Finanzierung nützlicher Wissenschaft. Die Rechnungen der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern 1759–1797’, in *Nützliche Wissenschaft*, 131.

²⁴Following Stuber, ‘Kulturpflanzentransfer’, 268.

to some degree abided by the same goals as the paternalistic authorities, whose economic policies were geared towards the public welfare and 'gute Policey'.²⁵ The following two case studies illustrate how the 'economic patriots' added innovation to the paternalistic orientation of the state.

Distribution of the common lands

Since its foundation, the Economic Society of Bern discussed the distribution of the common lands. On this topic, the protagonists of the Economic Society followed the views of cameralist authors.²⁶ In 1754, the German cameralist Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717–1771), for instance, identified general access to common pasture (*Gemeinweide*) and the existence of common lands an obstacle to agricultural productivity. Justi was convinced that domestic policy (*Landespolicey*) ought to promote private land ownership.²⁷ The exponents of the Society agreed with Justi's assessment. However, the issue how to distribute the commons remained unresolved. Whereas the award winner of a prize essay on the legal framework of agriculture argued for private property rights,²⁸ others within the Economic Society preferred lifelong right of use, particularly to offer chances to the poor.²⁹ In the end, the Council of Bern established its own Land

²⁵'Gute Policey' simultaneously meant the 'well-established order of a community' and the entirety of legislative and administrative measures necessary to keep this order. See André Holenstein, 'Gute Policey' und lokale Gesellschaft im Staat des Ancien Régime. Das Fallbeispiel der Markgrafschaft Baden (-Durlach), Bd. 1 (Tübingen: Bibliotheca academica 2003), 20.

²⁶For cameralist views, see Frank Konersmann, 'Genossenschaftliche Markennutzung versus Agrarindividualismus? Positionen und Argumentationen in der deutschen Aufklärung (1720–1817)', in *Allmenden und Marken vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit*, eds. Uwe Meiners and Werner Rösener (Cloppenburg: Stiftung Museumsdorf 2004), 141–56; Reiner Prass, *Reformprogramm und bäuerliche Interessen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1997); Hartmut Zückert, *Allmende und Allmendaufhebung. Vergleichende Studien zum Spätmittelalter bis zu den Agrarreformen des 18./19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius 2003). On Justi and *Policey* see Achim Landwehr, *Policey im Alltag* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann 2000): 78f.

²⁷Prass, *Reformprogramm*, 30f.

²⁸Jean Bertrand, 'Wettschrift, welche den Preis erhalten', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1765:2): 41–132.

²⁹Emanuel von Graffenried, 'Auszug aus verschiedenen eingelaufenen Wettschriften', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1765:1): 1–40.

Committee (*Landesökonomiekommission*) to deal with the question.³⁰ In the early years, the committee consisted exclusively of members of the Economic Society. Earlier scholarship saw this as a sign of the great influence of the 'economic patriots' on Bernese politics.³¹ However, in 1760 only fifteen per cent of the members of the Great Council were members of the Economic Society.³² If the 'economic patriots' wanted to push through with their intentions, they both had to reach an agreement amongst each other about their position and gain a majority in the Great Council.³³

In 1762 the Economic Society announced a prize question on the advantages and disadvantages of distributing common lands and the most suitable procedure for this.³⁴ The idea to distribute common lands and make them accessible for private use predated the Economic Society. In some areas of the territory of Bern, such as the Emmental, common lands were distributed as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁵ In the writings of the society, this topic appears right from the beginning. In the first edition of the Society's journal, Deacon Stapfer, later an honorary member, wrote that 'if the common lands were distributed among their owners, we would see beautiful, fertile domains develop, covered in grain, fruits of the earth and thick grass, there where, now are only poor badly esteemed pastures'.³⁶ The interdependence of the Economic Society and the state administration in respect of distributing the commons

³⁰See already Karl Geiser, 'Studien über die bernische Landwirtschaft im XVIII. Jahrhundert', *Landwirtschaftliches Jahrbuch IX* (1895): 1–88; Alexandra Kraus, *Die Einflüsse der physiokratischen Bewegung in Literatur und Gesetzgebung und ihre praktische Auswirkung in der Landwirtschaft der Schweiz* (Vienna: G. Davis & Co, 1928), 80–9; Barbara Sommer, *Von grossen Hoffnungen und bescheidenen Ergebnissen. Zum Beispiel Bleienbach: Allmendepolitik Berns im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert* (Bern: Lizentiatsarbeit Historisches Institut 2006): 87–90.

³¹Kraus, *Einflüsse*, 81; Fritz Häusler, *Das Emmental im Staate Bern bis 1798 – Die altbernerische Landesverwaltung in den Ämtern Burgdorf, Trachselwald, Signau, Brandis und Summiswald*, Bd. 2 (Bern: Stämpfli & Cie, 1968), 192.

³²Sommer, *Hoffnungen*, 89.

³³For recent development in the study of 'Policey' see Holenstein, 'Gute Policey'.

³⁴*Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1763:1), LXIII. See also Gerber-Visser, *Blick*, pp. 174–8.

³⁵See Häusler, *Emmental*; Burgerbibliothek Bern GA Oek. Ges. 123 (2), Topographische Beschreibung des Emmentals, 1764:18.

³⁶Albrecht Stapfer, 'Gedanken über die Aufgabe der Schweitzerisch-Oeconomischen Gesellschaft in Bern für das Jahr 1759', *Der Schweitzerischen Gesellschaft in Bern Sammlungen von landwirthschaftlichen Dingen* (1760:1): 54–112, 89.

can be illustrated through the example of the case of Emanuel von Graffenried von Burgistein. In the description of his domain of Burgistein, written in 1756, he dedicated one paragraph to the problem of the common pastures and pointed to the problems caused by the intensive use of common lands. It appears that Burgistein supported distribution also within the society.³⁷ Like Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner, Burgistein belonged to the core of the society from its early years. In 1764 he too was elected into the Great Council and immediately proposed a general distribution. Together with another young patrician, Tschärner drafted a mandate to enforce the distribution of common lands in the entire territory.³⁸ Elsewhere Tschärner expressed himself:

We are fighting for our country's true principles, and hope for another victory tomorrow, through which, and without citizen bloodshed we believe to conquer one sixth of the state's territory, by favouring the distribution of the common domains.³⁹

The mandate, which would have obliged the municipalities to distribute their common lands, was rejected by the Great Council, some of whose members feared ratification would trigger a flood of requests and an unmanageable situation. Others wanted to leave the decision to the bailiffs, who could act according to the particular local situation.⁴⁰ Instead of a law, the Council established the Land Committee to deal with the municipalities' requests to distribute the common lands and, if required, settle disputes. Comparing the report written by the Land Committee members, all chosen from circles of 'economic patriots' to the report on the essays that had reached the Economic Society in 1762

³⁷See Emanuel von Graffenried, 'Gedanken von dem Nutzen und Nachtheile des Weidganges', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1763:3): 105–53; Emanuel von Graffenried, 'Auszug aus verschiedenen eingelaufenen Wettschriften, über die für das Jahr 1762 ausgeschriebene Preissfrage: Ist es nützlich, die Allmenten zu vertheilen? u. [s.w.]', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1765:1): 1–40. See also Regula Wyss, 'Magistrat und Reformier – Emanuel von Graffenried und die Allmendteilung (1764)', in *Kartoffeln, Klee und kluge Köpfe*, 91–4.

³⁸Karl Wälchli, *Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner. Ein Berner Magistrat und ökonomischer Patriot 1727–1794* (Bern: Stämpfli 1964), 86.

³⁹Letter by Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner to Isaak Iselin (1728–1782), following: Wälchli, *Tschärner*, 86.

⁴⁰Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern AV 1479 Responsa Prudentum, Vol. 10, 405f.

the similarities stand out.⁴¹ Distribution prevented the problems of intensive use, increased productivity and tax revenues, and sustained a larger population. Finally, grazing cattle on the common land was deemed to support the spread of diseases. Both reports argued that distribution also supported social policy. The propertyless would receive a patch of land for individual plantation and would no longer need to live off municipal funds. Most 'economic patriots' were in favour of lifelong use rights as opposed to the transfer of property rights to individuals who were feared to immediately sell the land, squander the money and as before burden the community.

One might get the impression from this that the establishment of the Land Committee provided the 'economic patriots' with a platform for political activity. However, comparison of the terms of the prize question of 1762 and the motion proposed to the Bern government brings out a restriction. The prize question from 1762 had openly asked: 'would it not be suitable if the common lands, grazing rights and common domains were abandoned and grounds were distributed among individuals or sold off? And how should this alteration be brought about to the greatest advantage for the municipalities?'⁴² Two years later, the motion proposed to the Council averted: 'were it not good and fruitful if in My Lords German and Romanic lands of our territory a different arrangement was made concerning part of the common lands, thus without in these places giving away property, nor without touching anyone's currently held property?'⁴³ The motion that was proposed to the government, explicitly ruled out any change of property

⁴¹The report was probably written by Graffenried. *Bürgerbibliothek Bern GA Oek. Ges. 29 (5) Gutachten: Wettschriften über die Verteilung der Allmenden*, 21. Januar 1763; *Gutachten der Landesökonomiekommission, Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern BIV Manual der Landesökonomiekommission 1764–1797*, 21–32. Friedrich Sinner, Member of the Council, was one of the founders of the Economic Society and also its President in 1764. The other eight members of the Land Committee were either members – like Johann Friedrich Freudenreich (1710–1780), Emanuel von Graffenried von Burgistein, Albrecht von Haller (1708–1777), Franz Ludwig Jenner (1725–1804), Albrecht von Mülinen, Franz Jakob von Tavel und Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner – or subscribers – like Karl Stürler (1711–1799) of the society. With Haller, Graffenried and Tschärner, three very active members of the Economic Society joined the Land Committee. In 1766, Gabriel Herport, member of the Economic Society and its President in 1765, replaced Sinner as president of the Land Committee. Up to 1772 the Land Committee was heavily influenced by the circle of the Economic Society.

⁴²*Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1762:1): LXIII–LXIV.

⁴³StAB BIV, *Manual der Landesökonomiekommission, 1764–1797*: 1e.

rights. Whereas in the writings of the society both options were still discussed, only the milder version of the reform idea found its way into the political process of implementation. Looking at the practical work of the committee, it becomes obvious how restricted the leeway was which the protagonists of the Economic Society had as members of the Land Committee. In the German part of the canton only sixteen distributions of common lands occurred during the century. In most cases the distribution of common lands was due to initiatives of the municipality. Oftentimes proposed distributions resulted in quarrels between richer and poorer community members.⁴⁴ Rich farmers were often interested in keeping the common lands as a grazing ground for their cattle, whereas poorer ones, possessing only a few goats, supported the distribution of the common lands in the hope of receiving their own patch of land. Sometimes these quarrels about the distribution of common domains carried on for decades. For example, in Wattenwil, Emanuel von Graffenried mediated in the dispute since 1765, but only in 1791, three years after Graffenried's death, a definite agreement on a regulation was reached. Graffenried became committed to distributing the common lands not only as a member of the Land Committee,⁴⁵ but also in his function as a bailiff. Graffenried supported the distribution of the common lands at different levels: as an expert within the Economic Society, as a member of the Great Council, as a member of the Land Committee and as a bailiff. Yet, the diligence of the 'economic patriots' ran into the rather cumbersome structures and practices of the government.

For instance, the Council's instructions to the Land Committee forbade the use of force. The members of the committee were to facilitate the trials on distributing the common lands through mediation.⁴⁶ They were not permitted to settle quarrels, but listened to the arguments of the various parties and wrote reports to the 'Vennerkammer', the most

⁴⁴See Walter Frey and Marc Stampfli, 'Agrargesellschaften an der Schwelle zur Moderne. Die "Grosse Transformation" in Büren und Konolfingen zwischen 1760 und 1880', in *Die Bauern in der Geschichte der Schweiz*, eds. Albert Tanner and Anne-Lise Head (Zürich: Chronos 1992), 187–205.

⁴⁵See preserved files of the Land Committee, Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern BIV Manual der Landesökonomiekommission, 1764–1797; See also Sommer, *Hoffnungen*; Wyss, 'Magistrat und Reformier'; Regula Wyss and Nelly Ritter, 'Kammern und Kommissionen', in *Berns goldene Zeit*, 32–6.

⁴⁶Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern BIV Manual der Landesökonomiekommission 1764–1797, 1c–1d.

influential body of the Bernese administration, which made decisions on these matters. Thus, the Council controlled the work of the Land Committee through the authority of the 'Vennerkammer'. However, not every committee and chamber was administrated as strictly as the Land Committee. The Sanitary Council (*Sanitätsrat*), for example, had much more leeway and administrative jurisdiction.⁴⁷

As members of the Land Committee, the protagonists of the Economic Society always confronted local decision makers. When in 1769 Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner went to the assembly of the municipality of Thalheim, in the hope of convincing them to distribute the Commons, the German Treasurer (*Deutschseckelmeister*) and the *Venner* congratulated him for his persuasiveness, due to which the municipality had realised its 'true best'.⁴⁸ On this occasion Niklaus Emanuel perhaps relied on the arguments of his brother, Vinzenz Bernhard Tschärner, who had published a bit-by-bit refutation of the arguments against distribution of the common lands.⁴⁹

Typically, the 'economic patriots' followed a carefully planned procedure in dealing with the common lands question on the local level. In 1761 they published in their journal a government regulation on distributing commons from the year 1717.⁵⁰ The government enactment stressed the need 'to counsel with our subjects on this question and to demand the opinions of the town, domain and municipality, so as to prevent that an establishment of such importance is decided without complete knowledge of the matter'.⁵¹ Precisely this point is emphasised by the Economic Society in praising the regulation 'in terms of utmost adoration, both for its sheer content and in relation to the effort of

⁴⁷The Sanitary Council needed to be able to react quickly for instance in fighting human or cattle diseases. See Eugène Olivier, *Médecine et santé dans le pays de Vaud au XVIIIe siècle 1675–1798*, 2 Bde. (Lausanne: Payot 1939); Urs Boschung, 'Epidemien: Pest – Ruhr – Pocken', in *Berns goldene Zeit*, 69–71; Martin Stuber and Regula Wyss, 'Der Magistrat und ökonomische Patriot', in *Albrecht von Haller – Leben, Werk, Epoche*, eds. Hubert Steinke, Urs Boschung, Wolfgang Proß (Göttingen: Wallstein 2008), 368–71; Martin Stuber and Regula Wyss, 'Die Bekämpfung der Viehseuche 1772/73', in *Berns goldene Zeit*, 71–3.

⁴⁸Wälchli, *Tschärner*, 112–14.

⁴⁹Vinzenz Bernhard Tschärner, 'Prüfung einicher Zweifel wider die Vertheilung der Allmennten u.[s.w.]', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1768:2): 181–209.

⁵⁰'Oberkeitlichen Befehl und Ordnung: wegen Einschlagung der Gemein-Güter ... von 1717', *Der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft in Bern Sammlungen von landwirthschaftlichen Dingen* (1761:2): 420–32.

⁵¹'Oberkeitlichen Befehl', 422.

investigating, counselling, and the final concluding based on economic insights and loving prudence on behalf of the rulers who then were entrusted with the country's interest'.⁵² The Bernese government followed a strategy of locally adapted, case specific solutions instead of general regulations. In accordance with the described practice the Council refused to pass a mandate in support of the distribution of common lands even by the 1760s. Only in the autumn of 1770, when the Grain Chamber (*Kornkammer*) suggested, as one possible measure against rising grain prices to distribute common lands and to cultivate them, the Council issued a mandate for the distribution of common lands.⁵³ At that time, five out of seven members of the Grain Chamber belonged to the circle of the Economic Society. Samuel Engel (1702–1784), the first President of the Economic Society, considered the fear for a crisis an opportunity to revive the economic-patriotic agenda and focused on distribution of the common lands as well as on spreading the potato.⁵⁴ During the crisis years Engel had distributed common lands at his place of residence, Nyon, and had planted potatoes on them, but was disappointed by the results of his initiative. Engel remarked that motivated by charity, each poor person had been given a patch of land as well as seed potatoes. Yet, most had not taken the opportunity but had continued living 'at other people's expense'. As a matter of fact, only three people accepted the offer. As Engel bitterly concluded 'Roman farmers' too had preferred eating and drinking to labour. However, it has been argued that Engel did not sufficiently take into account distribution fees and the lack of fertiliser.⁵⁵

Trade policy: between supply security and free trade

Next to the problem of collective utilisation free trade was increasingly considered a principle of economic development through its capacity

⁵²'Oberkeitlichen Befehl', 432.

⁵³Sommer, *Hoffnungen*, 81ff.

⁵⁴Martin Stuber, "'Vous ignorez que je suis cultivateur". Albrecht von Hallers Korrespondenz zu Themen der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern', in *Hallers Netz. Ein europäischer Gelehrtenbriefwechsel zur Zeit der Aufklärung*, eds. Martin Stuber, Stefan Hächler and Luc Lienhard (Basle: Schwabe 2005), 530–1.

⁵⁵Martin Stuber, 'Gescheibelt, getrocknet, gemahlen – Samuel Engels Kartoffelbrot als Rezept gegen den Hunger (1773)', in *Kartoffeln, Klee und kluge Köpfe*, 123–6; for details see Hubert Steinke, 'Die Einführung der Kartoffel in der Waadt 1740–1790. Agrarmodernisierung aus bäuerlicher Sicht', *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* 45 (1997: 1): 15–39.

to iron out the impact of climate on grain production. In the words of Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner:

Nature has distributed different fruits man may enjoy amongst different climates, precisely to stimulate trade among nations. This way, to the benefit of the nation, surpluses of opulent goods were exchanged for good products which were wanting.⁵⁶

Supply security was an essential duty of the state in ancien régime Bern. Since failed crops had an impact on monetary stability grain magazines served also to stabilise prices.⁵⁷ Once dearth occurred the government sold grain against market prices, while good harvests were used to fill up the magazines. Such government interventions followed the paternalist credo of the Bernese government and was expressed through a vast number of ‘Policey’ regulations, more exactly by export bans, price regulations and instructions on stockpiling.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the Bernese government favoured the sale of surplus grain to other Swiss or neighbouring territories to create a favourable balance of trade. The government controlled the grain stocks that were locally stored at the grain houses of the bailiwicks and approved exports once these contained enough grain to supply Bern.⁵⁹ This approach to social security and political stability increasingly came under discussion in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In 1761 Samuel Engel published his ideas on whether free grain trade would increase or decrease grain shortages in the journal of the Economic Society.⁶⁰ Engel criticised the Marquis de Mirabeau and other physiocratic writers who propagated ‘unrestricted grain trade

⁵⁶ Tschärner, ‘Prüffung’, 204–5.

⁵⁷ Christian Pfister, ‘Deregulierung. Vom Paternalismus zur Marktwirtschaft 1798–1856’, *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde* (1998:3): 160–75, 162; Pfister, ‘Klima’, 64–5.

⁵⁸ André Hostenstein, ‘Epilog: “Landesväterlichkeit” und “mildes Regiment” im Selbst- und Fremdverständnis des patrizischen Staats’, in *Berns goldene Zeit*, 510–11; Brandenberger, *Ausbruch*, 314–456 (‘Staatliches Krisenmanagement’); the same priorities were set for forestry policy, see Stuber, *Wälder*, 67–148.

⁵⁹ Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern BVI 1 und 1a Befehlsbuch enthaltend obrigkeitliche Befehle und Weisungen an die Kornkammer, 1 Band 1771–1777 / 1 Heft 1687–1756.

⁶⁰ Samuel Engel, ‘Gedanken über die Frage, ob durch eine uneingeschränkte Getreid-Handlung der Ackerbau in der Schweiz in einen blühenden Zustand gebracht ...’, *Der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft in Bern Sammlungen von landwirthschaftlichen Dingen* (1761:3): 536–93; see Paul Pulver, *Samuel Engel, ein Berner Patrizier aus dem Zeitalter der Aufklärung, 1702–1784* (Bern and Leipzig: 1934).

as the best and only means' to support agriculture and securing grain supply. Engel objected 'that what is useful in one place, often is most harmful in another'.⁶¹ The examples of states given by the physiocrats, according to Engel, were incomparable to the Swiss case. Engel concluded that for Bern, different from Great Britain, a common model for supporters of free grain trade, the export of grain would not be advantageous. The basic reason for Britain's flourishing grain export was maritime trade. But for landlocked Bern the situation was different. Overland transport was expensive, and neighbouring countries such as Burgundy and Swabia were supplied with more and cheaper grain than Bern. Liberalisation of the grain trade, he feared, might cause Bern to be flooded with cheap foreign grain. Consequently, Bernese grain production would decrease and make the state reliant on foreign markets, which in the case of grain was particularly risky. Engel considered the establishment of government operated grain houses to be the only solution. Stockpiling then prevented having to purchase foreign grain and money outflows. Engel agreed on the utility of export in times of surplus. Unrestricted free trade, however, he considered to be harmful.⁶² Ultimately, he remained faithful to his paternalist credo:

That a true and useful political prudence must be shown when a territorial master concerns himself with the future, so that the subject will always be supplied with the most necessary foodstuffs; that he will unfailingly show his generous paternal love when this territorial ruler does not use stockpiling mostly or exclusively with a view to personal gain, but seeks first and foremost to avert hunger, need and price rises; that ultimately such caring behaviour will sometimes cost the government dearly, all these are statements which need neither explanation nor proof.⁶³

In 1766 the Economic Society announced a prize question on the grain trade, raising the question: which grain price will be most advantageous both for consumers and producers and how could it be achieved and stabilised?⁶⁴ The Economic Society awarded two writings whose arguments

⁶¹ Engel, 'Gedanken', 537–38.

⁶² Engel, 'Gedanken', 562, 587–8.

⁶³ Samuel Engel, 'Abhandlung über eine neue Weise das Getreid lange Jahr zu erhalten', *Der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft in Bern Sammlungen von landwirthschaftlichen Dingen* (1760:4), 785–6.

⁶⁴ Abraham Pagan, 'Versuch über die Frage: Welcher ist der Preis des Getreides in dem Cantone Bern ...', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1767:1): 1–129, 3.

differed strongly from Engel's. The authors, the Nidau country scribe (*Landschreiber*) Abraham Pagan (1729–1786) and the Waadtland priest Jean Louis Muret (1715–1796) both advocated free grain export.⁶⁵ Pagan emphasised the significance of agriculture as the foundation of the two secondary fields of crafts and trade.⁶⁶ Muret stressed the importance of opening up new markets for farmers to be able to sell their grain at a profit in good years. Likewise, the legal status of the wine trade, Muret argued, had benefited the wine-growing areas.⁶⁷

Both Pagan and Muret considered lifting grain export bans a suitable expedient for encouraging its cultivation. They each had as their ultimate goal to support the state's autarchy and eliminate its reliance on grain imports in times of crisis. Yet, Muret went one step further and openly criticised the government's stockpiling: 'where to the farmer's great disadvantage there exist common supply houses, where one hears the mob's wailing and shouting, and the affairs of the poor grain farmer find less favour than those of the wine grower, there it happens that grain farming perishes ... This is why immediately in the next bad year one sees grain prices increase [and] arable land no longer suffice.'⁶⁸ Strong, price-regulating measures discouraged farmers. Instead, he argued that competition among grain merchants, who were generally seen as 'misers' ('Geizhalse') and 'usurers' ('Wucherer'), guaranteed ideal price formation: 'grain speculators [are] no other than benefactors of the people; and once grain is expensive we cannot attribute this to another reason than this: we have no one who speculates on the grain price'.⁶⁹ Thus, Muret called for the state to give up its monopoly. Only in times of true crisis, such as war or famine, should the state interfere and take over the market.⁷⁰ These statements were deeply controversial in a paternalist state which was essentially based on running grain storehouses and in which grain sales were an integral part of the state's financial politics. In the published version of Muret's essay, the

⁶⁵ Pagan and Muret were both members of local branches to the society, and contributed to the mother society in letters and with essays.

⁶⁶ Pagan, 'Versuch Getreidepreis', 4.

⁶⁷ Jean-Louis Muret, 'Abhandlung über die Frage: Versuch über die Frage: Welcher ist der Preis des Getreides in dem Cantone Bern ...', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1767:2): 1–128, 15.

⁶⁸ Muret, 'Abhandlung Getreidepreis', 16.

⁶⁹ Muret, 'Abhandlung Getreidepreis', 18–19; see Ernst Honegger, *Ideengeschichte der bernischen Nationalökonomie im 18. Jahrhundert* (Bern 1923), 124–5.

⁷⁰ Muret, 'Abhandlung Getreidepreis', 17–25.

statement was qualified in a footnote, which stated that the author's opinion did not in all respects correspond to that of the Society:

While this very sentence may go down badly with some readers, we must remind them to postpone their judgement until the end, in order to make allowances for those exceptions that the author himself has considered necessary. The Society's approval regards the excellence of one writing compared to another. It does not mean that all the author's principles and conclusions are guaranteed: the award or the accessit is granted to those as seeming to have most thoroughly discussed the matter.⁷¹

It is not clear whether the author intended this remark to be printed or the Economic Society insisted on it. Quite possibly the Society attempted to avoid conflict. In 1766, namely, it had published Jean Muret's award-winning prize essay on the problem of declining population in the Waadt, which met with protests by the government.⁷² The statements provided by the experts⁷³ of the Economic Society in 1767 on Pagan's essay appear to support this interpretation: 'This emphatic and fiery writing [by Muret] too often touches upon the state's high policy and thereby makes, according to our unanimous opinion, the German treatise [by Pagan], which is put in pure economic terms, comparatively preferable.'⁷⁴ In all likelihood, Engel was behind this criticism of Muret's treatise. It illustrated his general mixed feelings about the efforts of the younger generation bearing fruit. The only point on

⁷¹Muret, 'Abhandlung Getreidepreis', 13.

⁷²See Christian Simon, 'Hintergründe bevölkerungsstatistischer Erhebungen in Schweizer Städteorten des 18. Jahrhunderts. Zur Geschichte des demographischen Interesses', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 34 (1984): 186–205; Christian Pfister, "'Entvölkerung": Genese, handlungsleitende Bedeutung und Realitätsgehalt eines politischen Erklärungsmodells am Beispiel des alten Bern in der Spätaufklärung', in *Nürnberg–Bern. Ein Städtevergleich*, ed. Rudolf Endres (Erlangen: Universitätsbund Erlangen-Nürnberg 1990); Gerber-Visser, 'Statistik'; Christian Pfister, 'Warum Jean-Louis Murets Abhandlung über die Bevölkerung der Waadt Anstoss erregte (1766)', in *Kartoffeln, Klee und kluge Köpfe*, 95–8.

⁷³We assume that Niklaus Emanuel and Vinzenz Berhard Tschärner, von Burgstein, Tschiffeli and Engel were on the panel. The handwritten originals of the essays are not preserved. On another (preserved) prize essay we find the names of the mentioned persons in the margins, which suggests they read the treatises. The report was written by a secretary.

⁷⁴Burgerbibliothek Bern GA Oek. Ges 29 (35) Gutachten vom 6. März 1767, 5.

which Engel and the younger members agreed was that grain imports were detrimental to the state's budget.

Understood in this way, the debate on grain trade and supply security reveals rival attitudes within the Society about economic reform. Within the Economic Society typically country priest and local clerks were more eager advocates of free trade than the exponents of the Great Council. During their administrative careers, Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner and Samuel Engel both oversaw the government's grain stores, both as members of the Grain Chamber and as bailiffs. Engel was more suspicious of free grain trade (and more than twenty years older) than Tschärner. During the dearth of 1770–1772 they proposed contrasting measures. Engel's paternalism⁷⁵ ran counter to Tschärner's view that: 'freedom is the spirit of trade; the more unrestricted and more general the former, the more flourishing the latter'.⁷⁶

Tschärner's position did not simply mean he was an unconditional apologist of free trade. His statements on forestry add a dimension to his position on grain trade. Tschärner considered forests both as consumption goods and as a natural export good for Berne: 'once good forest legislation, competent forestry and improved economy, policy, diligence and parsimony are combined in the cultivation, procurement and consumption of wood, ... wood should be in abundance not only for our own use but also for trade'.⁷⁷ Here, Tschärner's position echoed Engel's, who also associated free wood trade with a future export forest economy but, like Tschärner, held that for as long as the envisaged forest export economy 'will not be achieved ... the supreme government's very wise ban must be sustained'.⁷⁸ In other words, Tschärner and the younger generation specifically with regard to grain, which in contrast to wood was not just an economic but a 'political good', felt that freeing up the grain trade was in the government's best paternalistic interests.

These rival views among Bernese reformers were contested between the different camps under various socio-economic conditions. During the subsistence crisis of the late 1760s Engel claimed, in private correspondence that 'it is commonly accepted that I am to be thanked for that prices did not rise even higher'.⁷⁹ Engel's system of grain legislation,

⁷⁵ Engel was supported by Albrecht von Haller. Stuber, 'Vous ignorez que je suis cultivateur', 528–30.

⁷⁶ Wälchli, 'Tschärner', 171.

⁷⁷ Tschärner after Stuber, *Wälder*, 71–2.

⁷⁸ Stuber, *Wälder*, 72.

⁷⁹ Pulver, *Engel*, 217.

which was based on a grain trade ban with partial exceptions, was sustained for a remarkably long period. In 1792 the Bernese government decreed a new, more liberal, grain trade regulation. In contrast to the older edict grain trade was now in principle free, though subjected to certain conditions. As long as the grain prices moved within a certain range, trade was not restricted. Only when grain prices exceeded a specific bandwidth were restrictions enforced.⁸⁰ The profit-oriented intermediate grain trade (*Fürkauf*), which government mandates had condemned since the Middle Ages, and seen as the main cause of high prices, became allowed. The new decree by the Bernese government, which had been discussed for so long, however, soon met its tragic fate. Only four months after being established, governmental intervention was required due to high grain prices and exports were banned. Apart from during some short spells of price drops, the bans remained in effect until 1797, when prices dropped under the set limit,⁸¹ only to be followed by the collapse of the ancien régime in March 1798 with the invasion by Napoleon's armies.

These instances of debate on the grain trade in the Bernese Society – by themselves illustrations of the way in which the Society dealt with a wider variety of problems, also unrelated to political economy – are among the more successful points in the Society's continuous engagement with the problem of supply security and free trade. They were directly related to other attempts to raise discussion about the Bernese export profile. In 1763 the Society issued a prize question setting the task of compiling a trade balance of the Canton of Bern. The only entry that was submitted demonstrated, by means of a table of imports and exports, that more money had entered the country than had left it.⁸² Because this essay did not respond properly to the criteria of the Economic Society it was sent back to the author for revision. The Society expressed its disappointment by the low response rate to this 'both important and difficult matter'.⁸³ In 1780, the topic resurfaced. The Society requested a complete register

⁸⁰ *Die Rechtsquellen des Kantons Bern, Stadtrecht Bd. 8.1 Wirtschaftsrecht*, ed. Hermann Rennefahrt, (Aarau: Sauerländer 1966–1967), 94f. See also Brandenberger, *Ausbruch*, 417; Pfister, 'Deregulierung', 169.

⁸¹ Brandenberger, *Ausbruch*, 417f.

⁸² Bürgerbibliothek Bern Mss. Hist. Helv. XI 137 Mémoire sur le bilan du Commerce du Canton de Berne, 1764. This treatise is possibly incomplete. We express our thanks to François de Capitani for pointing out this source.

⁸³ Bürgerbibliothek Bern GA Oek. Ges. 29 (16) Gutachten zu den eingegangenen Wettschriften, 1765, 1.

of exported products and their destinies as well as suggestions for further potential export products, but received no answers.⁸⁴ Precisely at this point, a state-initiated overview of the export economy appeared. This overview, with the existence of an export surplus was written by the customs commissioner Johann Jakob Mumenthaler (1730–1820) who collected the data for this overview on behalf of the Council of Commerce (*Kommerzienrat*).⁸⁵ Via Emanuel von Graffenried von Burgistein, who himself had been a member of the Council of Commerce from 1764 to 1771, this table found its way to the circle of the Economic Society.⁸⁶ At an assembly in 1784, the Society decided to award the author a silver medal.⁸⁷ Two months earlier, Mumenthaler had been honoured with a gold medal by the Small Council (*Kleiner Rat*) for his trade tables which he presented in eight volumes between 1782 and 1783.⁸⁸ A decade later, a member of the Customs Chamber (*Zollkammer*), himself not a member of the Economic Society, proposed to issue a new prize question requesting the compilation of a trade balance.⁸⁹ Since the end of the seventeenth century the Bernese government had been interested in a register of imports and exports and had charged the newly created Council of Commerce to provide such a record.⁹⁰ The record of the prize questions issued by the Society on the trade balance must be seen as evidence of the interdependence of the Economic Society and the state. Coming from different

⁸⁴ Bürgerbibliothek Bern GA Oek. Ges. 4 Manual der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft, 20.3. 1780, 33.

⁸⁵ Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern B IV 76 Übersicht über Produktions- und Exportverhältnisse, s.d. (ca. 1781). The compilation is based on notes by the customs commissioner of Langenthal, Johann Jakob Mumenthaler (1733–1820). The source is published and commented on in Erika Flückiger Strebel and Anne Radeff, 'Globale Ökonomie im alten Staat Bern am Ende des Ancien Régime', *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde* 62 (2000): 5–40.

⁸⁶ Also, since 1784 Graffenried von Burgistein was a member of the Land Committee, together with Samuel Haller (1721–1794); the latter was a member of the 'Kommerzienrat' from 1771–1792 and from 1769–1793 a member of the 'Landesökonomiekommission'.

⁸⁷ Bürgerbibliothek Bern GA Oek. Ges. 4 Manual der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft, 11. April 1784, 63. However, the copy is no longer to be found in the archive of the Economic Society.

⁸⁸ Flückiger Strebel and Radeff, 'Globale Ökonomie', 8; Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern, B.V.32: 325, Manual des Kommerzienrats vom 13.2.1784.

⁸⁹ Flückiger Strebel and Radeff, 'Globale Ökonomie', 9–10.

⁹⁰ Flückiger Strebel and Radeff, 'Globale Ökonomie', 6; see: Ernst Lerch, *Der Bernische Kommerzienrat im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: J. B. Hirschfeld 1908).

perspectives and working along different logics, the objectives of the Society and the state dovetailed seamlessly.

Next to grain, the Bernese 'economic patriots' also considered butter, due to its nutritional value, a vital product that the whole population ought to be able to afford. The production of cheese and butter belonged to the common Alpine dairy economy. Whereas non-perishable hard cheese was an export product, butter was produced mostly for local markets. In the course of the eighteenth century, the mountain pastures (*Alpweiden*), which had originally been owned by cooperatives, were mostly bought by private owners to kickstart an Alpine capitalism that concentrated on the production of hard cheese rather than butter.⁹¹ To prevent shortages and price rises, the Bernese government put in place an export ban on butter and strict market regulations.

In 1787 the Small Council decided to charge the Economic Society with the task of announcing a prize question on the causes of the rising butter prices and the possible countervailing measures.⁹² The next year, the society awarded two prizes to the priests Gottlieb Sigmund Gruner (1756–1830) and Louis Auguste Curtat (1759–1832).⁹³ The experts, Rudolf Gabriel Manuel (1749–1829) and Johann Georg Albrecht Höpfner (1759–1813) praised the two treatises for being in accordance with the goals of the society.⁹⁴ Gruner's statement that the inflation was imagined rather than real and his general remarks on improving agriculture gained recognition. Curtat's argument breathed the spirit of physiocracy:

If one considers things in a wider perspective, one sees that all objects of economy are ruled by a natural balance which establishes, sustains

⁹¹ See Rudolf Ramseyer, *Das altbernische Küherwesen* (Bern: Haupt 1961); Johann Jakob Dick, 'Welches ist der gegenwärtige Zustand der Alpenökonomie und der ihr anhängenden Sennerei in den verschiedenen Gegenden des Kantons', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1771): 31–97; Karl Viktor von Bonstetten, *Briefe über ein Schweizerisches Hirtenland* (Basle: Carl August Serini 1782).

⁹² Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern AII 974 Ratsmanual vom 15. February – 12. April 1797, 191.

⁹³ On the role of priests see Wyss, *Pfarrer*; Wyss and Gerber-Visser, 'Formen'.

⁹⁴ GA Oek. Ges. 4 Manual der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft, Protokolle 24. January 1778–23. Mai 1823, 86. Rudolf Gabriel Manuel (1749–1829) and Johann Georg Albrecht Höpfner (1759–1813) belonged to a generation of members belonging to the Economic Society both before and after the radical political change of 1798. In the early nineteenth-century Manuel was one of the leading actors of the society. Peter Lehmann, 'Rudolf Gabriel Manuel und die Wiederbelebung der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft', in *Kartoffeln, Klee und kluge Köpfe*, 147–50.

and restores itself following the moment at which the equilibrium is upset. This balance derives from the concurrence of particular interests that all tend with the same force towards the same goal.⁹⁵

In principle, Gruner agreed with this argument, yet whereas Curtat argued for a competition of particular interests and considered export bans as unsuitable for a flourishing economy, Gruner felt that in times of surplus the butter trade should be free, but in times of shortage an export ban was in order. Gruner's treatise was printed as late as in 1796 in the journal of the Economic Society, which at that time was published only sporadically. The same volume also contained considerations by Karl Ludwig von Haller (1768–1854) on the butter trade.⁹⁶ Haller was a fervent advocate of free trade. He judged that export bans interfered with the property rights of salesmen and producers:

If, however, the value of his [the producer's] goods is reduced or their price brought down by preventing sales outside the country or by taxing them domestically, this is basically the same as if a part of his property were taken from him and to rob the most useful, i.e. the productive class of society in favour of its other classes.⁹⁷

Moreover 'the development of export bans and the interior monopoly system can only be explained as emanating either from not having thought about their domestic dearness or from the incorrect belief that the common welfare can contradict the complete freedom of property'.⁹⁸ Haller was convinced that the common welfare within the state required free trade, yet Haller's support for liberalisation waned later in life. In 1798, just before the Helvetic Republic was installed, Karl Ludwig von Haller worked out a republican draft constitution, which was finally not implemented. In 1810 he left the Economic Society and

⁹⁵ Burgerbibliothek Bern GA Oek. Ges. 60 (9), Louis Auguste Curtat, *Mémoire sur cette question proposée par l'illustre Société Oeconomique Quelles sont les causes du rencherissement du Beurre & les moyens d'y remédier sans nuire au commerce des fromages* (1787), 10.

⁹⁶ Karl Ludwig von Haller was a member of the Economic Society in the years 1791–1798 and 1808–1810. He was the grandson of the scientist Albrecht von Haller, who presided over the society for several years.

⁹⁷ Karl Ludwig von Haller, 'Über den freien Kauf und Verkauf der Butter', *Neueste Sammlung von Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1796), 280.

⁹⁸ Von Haller, 'Über den freien Kauf', 281.

adopted ultra-reactionary views. Between 1816 and 1834 he published his main work, *Restauration der Staatswissenschaft*, which helped the period to its name and earned Haller a European reputation.

Among the members of the Economic Society in the last two decades of the eighteenth century another supporter of free trade was Karl Viktor von Bonstetten (1745–1832), a member of the Economic Society since 1771, bailiff of Saanen 1779–1780 and author of *Briefe über ein schweizerisches Hirtenland* (1782). Bonstetten emphasised that Bern ought to develop its role in European trade. Exports were required to finance the import of subsistence goods. Bonstetten stressed the trade in dairy products: 'Free trade in dairy products is the only gate through which the money might come in that can pay for the expenses of the many things which have become a necessity.'⁹⁹

Conclusion

The Economic Society of Bern developed similar activities to its European sister societies. Its members corresponded with other societies and scholars across Europe and contributed to international reform debates. In some aspects their thinking was inspired by the international proliferation of physiocracy, French and British Agronomy and German and Austrian late cameralism. Yet, while economic reformers like Thomas Jefferson and George Washington in North America were simultaneously bearers of a new political system, an important part of the members of the Economic Society Bern in the eighteenth century were exponents of the ancien régime, the paternalistic government of Bern. The Economic Society aligned itself with the economic policy of the government. Its core members mostly grew up in the patrician society of Bern and had the prospect of taking up office in the Bernese administration. The cases discussed above further illustrate the character of the interdependence between the Economic Society and the Bernese government.

The Economic Society's aim in improving agriculture was to create self-sufficiency. Supply security was a central goal of the government and equally of the Bernese 'economic patriots'. Within this same limit, the Society's journal formed a platform for the discussion of different opinions on, for instance, the most appropriate policies concerning the grain trade, precisely to support the aim of supply security.

⁹⁹Bonstetten, *Hirtenland*, 74.

Distributing the commons was another avenue explored to enhance agricultural productivity. Here the discussion was between the policy of transforming the common lands into private property and the one of granting lifelong utilisation rights. Here too, paternalism loomed large in the debate. The undisputed basis for all reforms was the existing political and economic system, which the members of the Economic Society accepted and intended to carefully adjust in order to be able to confront new challenges. Members of the Economic Society did not connect agricultural reforms to far-reaching changes of property regimes or of legal and administrative structures. Distancing himself from the physiocratic supporters of a system change, such as Mirabeau, Quesnay and Turgot, Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner formulated: 'They [the physiocrats] were out for different humans, new worlds, without taking into account our times and institutions ... they cut the Gordian knot with the sword and ignore what stands in their way.'¹⁰⁰ Adjustment instead meant negotiating with local communities and considering local conditions. Dealing with local interest groups and a style of checks and balances was a ruling strategy of the Bernese government and also taken as a given by the 'economic patriots'.¹⁰¹ Towards the end of the eighteenth century, notions of free trade and the public benefits of self-interested competition became more prominent in debates within the Economic Society between supporters trade restrictions and of freedom of trade as the optimal way to gain supply security.¹⁰²

Next to these political and economic goals, the Bernese 'economic patriots' established the Economic Society as a platform for discussion on socio-economic topics that required differentiated argument and a variety of opinion. Clearly, and importantly, the Bern 'economic patriots' were not a school with a homogeneous economy-political doctrine. Rather typical is the plurality of positions, even in respect of essential questions such as the distribution of the common lands and

¹⁰⁰*Ephemeriden der Menschheit* (Basle: 1782), 379ff., 635 ff., here 380; see Stuber, *Wälder*, 72.

¹⁰¹On this see Rolf Graber, 'Gab es Ansätze zu einem aufgeklärt-absolutistischen Regierungsstil in den Schweizer Städteorten?', in *Der aufgeklärte Absolutismus im europäischen Vergleich*, eds. Helmut Reinalter and Harm Klueting (Vienna: Böhlau 2002): 57–8.

¹⁰²Niklaus Emanuel Tschärner, 'Physisch-oekonomische Beschreibung des Amtes Schenkenberg', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1771): 99–220, 207–15.

trade policy.¹⁰³ It is one of the main features of these reform societies that in their publications different experiences and opinions, results and insights were published next to each other, which made them places of public discourse.¹⁰⁴ Precisely this way of understanding itself is expressed by the Bern society in its preface from 1766: 'We hope that readers who in these writings encounter opinions contradicting their own convictions will not disapprove of this freedom; we will accept reasonable disapproval in the same way. Since this is the most secure way of determining the truth.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³This following the older relevant literature: Honegger, *Ideengeschichte*; Kraus, *Einflüsse*; Hans Rudolf Rytz, *Geistliche des alten Bern zwischen Merkantilismus und Physiokratie* (Basle: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1971); Brandenberger, *Ausweg*, 447–8.

¹⁰⁴Hans Erich Bödeker, 'Medien der patriotischen Gesellschaften', in *Von Almanach bis Zeitung. Ein Handbuch der Medien in Deutschland 1700–1800*, eds. Wilhelm Haefs and York-Gothart Mix (Munich: Beck 1999): 300; Holger Böning: 'Weltaneignung durch ein neues Publikum. Zeitungen und Zeitschriften als Medientypen der Moderne', in *Kommunikation und Medien in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Johannes Burkhardt and Christine Werkstetter (Munich: Oldenburg 2005), 130–1.

¹⁰⁵'Vorrede', *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen* (1766:1), III.

8

Economic Societies in Germany, 1760–1820: Organisation, Social Structures and Fields of Activities

Hans Erich Bödeker

Introduction

The German Enlightenment was not so much a scientific or literary movement, but a many-sided social cultural process that was institutionalised through a variety of associations which contemporaries called *Sozietäten*. These *Sozietäten* facilitated the unfolding of an Enlightenment mentality and culture.¹ As the Enlightenment spread geographically and reached Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century, its structure changed to become a comprehensive reform movement affecting all areas of life.² Simultaneously, socio-cultural associations went through a process of intensification and diversification. Whereas previously societies for the cultivation of language and literature had been dominant, in the second half of the eighteenth century they were overtaken by reading societies and other societies. The latter, although they assumed different forms, were all similar in one respect: in the language of the eighteenth century, they saw themselves as 'promoting the common weal'.

¹See Richard van Dülmen, 'Die Aufklärungsgesellschaften in Deutschland als Forschungsproblem', *Francia* 5 (1977), 251ff; Ulrich Im Hof, *Das Gesellige Jahrhundert. Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Munich: C. H. Beck 1982); Wolfgang Hardtwig, *Genossenschaft, Sekte, Verein in Deutschland, I: Vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Französischen Revolution* (Munich: C. H. Beck 1997), 285ff; Rudolf Schlögl, 'Die patriotisch-gemeinnützigen Gesellschaften', in *Aufklärungsgesellschaften*, ed. H. Reinalter (Frankfurt am Main: Lang 1993), 61ff.

²Cf. Hans Erich Bödeker, 'Stichworte zur Fragestellung: "Gesellschaftliche Verbesserungen" in Nordwestdeutschland im späten 18. und frühen 10. Jahrhundert', *Nachrichten der Lessing-Akademie* 4 (1984), 6ff.

This type of society, which concentrated on practical concerns, had existed in Western Europe since the 1730s. From the early 1760s it began to spread throughout the German language area.³ The movement reached a first peak in the period between 1764 and 1769, when societies were founded in Hamburg, Karlsruhe, Neuötting-Burghausen in provincial Bavaria, and, through influence from England, in Hanoverian Celle, as well as in Leipzig, Kassel and Bautzen. The founding of new societies continued, slowly but steadily, throughout the whole of Germany in the 1770s and 1780s, until practically every principality had a society of this sort. The majority of them were founded during the 1790s and in the early years of the nineteenth century. Societies modelled on the one set up in Hamburg were established in the Hanseatic town of Lübeck in 1788–9 and in the free imperial town of Nuremberg in 1792. Between 1760 and 1820, a good sixty of such societies were established in Germany and Switzerland. Economic societies did not emerge in centres of learning and education, but rather in those of power and administration. Not a single society was established in a university town or city with an academy. Obviously, economic societies took over functions of scholarly communication that elsewhere already existed through scholarly circles. Seven of these societies were located in residential cities of minor territories. Another seven societies were founded in secondary residential cities or in regional centres of administration. The remaining societies were divided among free imperial cities, country towns or small rural towns where they were established by engaged supporters of the Enlightenment.

The societies that were thus created were especially numerous in the Protestant territories of Northern and Central Germany. In Catholic Southern Germany they not only appeared on the scene later, but were also less influential. In fact, most of the societies were of local or regional importance. Only the Celle, Kaiserslautern, Hamburg and Leipzig economic societies could make an impact beyond their

³ Cf. R. Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten. Ein Beitrag zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Würzburg 1934); Hans Hubrig, *Die patriotischen Gesellschaften des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Weinheim: Beltz 1957); Focko Eulen, *Vom Gewerbefleiß zur Industrie. Ein Beitrag zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Duncker u. Humblot 1967), 127ff, 144ff; Focko Eulen, 'Die patriotischen Gesellschaften und ihre Bedeutung für die Aufklärung', in *Wirtschaft, Technik und Geschichte. Festschrift für Albrecht Timm zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. E. Jäger and V. Schmidtchen (Berlin: Camen 1980), 173ff.

own geographical area. Not many of these societies survived the turn of the century.⁴

The founding of economic societies for the promotion of the common good (referred to hereafter simply as 'economic societies') was a direct response both to the wider European associationalist movement of economic societies and to the economic and social crises of the eighteenth century; notably the state of European societies following the Seven Years' War and the outbreak of famines during the 1770s, but also numerous political, economic and social problems that existed on a local or regional level. Some societies were founded with the encouragement of local *Regierungen* (governments), but mostly they were founded on private initiative. These latter societies defined themselves, to quote from the constitution of the privately established Hamburg Patriotic Society (*Hamburger Patriotische Gesellschaft*), as 'voluntary association[s] of free citizens' who 'feel obliged to maintain and promote the best aspects of community life' with united strength. The society of Hamburg's purpose, so the text of its constitutional document continued, was 'to discuss subjects of benefit to all and, by bringing discerning men of different estates, ages and professions closer together, to establish and maintain ties of friendship and patriotism, as well as avenues for the communication of useful information and experience'.⁵ The founders thus intended to establish an economic society whose membership and influence cut across all social barriers without collapsing them and would make citizens more interested in the common good, facilitate the exchange of information, and most important of all, disseminate knowledge of benefit to the public. Societies founded on the initiative of rulers or high officials may have been organised or funded differently, but were ultimately committed to the same aims.

Given the number of German economic societies and their ambitions one cannot but be surprised by the present state of the art of research on these institutions. Economic societies in Germany have been insufficiently researched to date. Existing studies are seriously marred by methodological shortcomings, and do not cover the material

⁴For a list of societies, see Hans-Heinrich Müller, *Akademie und Wirtschaft im 18. Jahrhundert. Agrarökonomische Preisaufgaben und Preisschriften der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1975), 276f.

⁵'Ausführliche Nachricht von der Hamburgischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe', *Journal von und für Deutschland* 8 (1791), 91ff, 94, 100.

adequately. So far, only the Hamburg Patriotic Society and the Celle and the Burghausen societies have been the subject of relatively detailed study.⁶ The Hamburg society in particular is now considered a model case for the further study of the German movement. In addition to the scarcity of studies dedicated to economic societies per se, the moral-political aspects of patriotism and the issue of Enlightenment sociability too, have so far only drawn the attention of scholars whose focus lay on the social history and mentality of the German Enlightenment.⁷ These factors explain to some degree why the amount of materials included in the research on which the present overview is based is relatively small. This is the case not only because the surviving records of many societies – scanty enough in most cases – have not yet been investigated, but mainly because the work that has been done so far has taken place according to highly divergent approaches. The present attempt to bring together and assess existing research therefore barely permits the status of a general overview. Its approach instead, is to try to understand economic societies neither as traditional corporate, nor as modern associative social organisations,⁸ but to see them as representing a specific kind of Enlightenment institution within the *société absolutiste*⁹ of territorial states and the urban societies at the end of the ‘Old Empire’.

Here it must be borne in mind that economic societies themselves were the expression of a reform-oriented Enlightenment process that produced its own social institutions. To understand the German economic societies in relation to the Enlightenment, one has to look

⁶See Franklin Kopitzsch, ‘Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe (Patriotische Gesellschaft von 1765) im Zeitalter der Aufklärung. Ein Überblick’, in *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*, ed. Rudolf Vierhaus (Munich: Kraus International Publications 1980), 71ff; Sieglinde Graf, *Aufklärung in der Provinz. Die kurbayerische ‘Gesellschaft sittlich-landwirtschaftlicher Wissenschaften’ von Altötting und Burghausen (1765–1802)* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Munich, 1982); Ludwig Deike, *Die Entstehung der Celler Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft. Ökonomische Sozietäten und die Anfänge der modernen Agrarreformen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Hahn 1994).

⁷Cf. Rudolf Vierhaus (ed.), *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*; Graf, *Aufklärung in der Provinz*; Sieglinde Graf, ‘Provinzpatriotismus. Untersuchungen zum Mitgliederprofil der “Churbayerischen landwirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft” von Ötting-Burghausen (1765–1788)’, in *Über den Prozeß der Aufklärung im 18. Jahrhundert. Personen, Institutionen, Medien*, eds. Hans Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1987).

⁸See Richard van Dülmen, ‘Aufklärungsgesellschaften’; Graf, *Aufklärung in der Provinz*.

⁹François Furet, *Penser la Révolution Française* (Paris: Gallimard 1978).

at how they came into being and operated. This overview therefore starts by describing the organisation of these societies. The subsequent sections of this chapter examine their membership structures and reconstruct how they operated and which fields they covered in their activities. Finally, an attempt is made to assess the practical impact of the societies on the development of the political consciousness of the Enlightenment.

Organisation of economic societies

What fundamentally distinguished economic societies from traditional types of informal sociability was the very act of drawing up a constitution. Economic societies were far from amorphous and fortuitous associations of friends and acquaintances. The major difference between the Hamburg Patriotic Society of 1765 and the loose groups of friends that formed the first society devoted to the common good in Hamburg was that the first had a formal constitution.¹⁰ The arrangements agreed by the members among themselves and the writing down of statutes created a form of social organisation that was governed by a regular set of principles. The rules thus laid down were intended not only as guidelines for the behaviour and actions of founder members, but were also regarded as binding for members who later joined the society. These regulations were considered necessary to allow the society's individual members to pursue common activities, thus constituting a unified body that was capable of generating its own action. Concretely, the statutes contained regulations about the aims of the society and its membership, the nature, frequency, and venue of its meetings, its voting- and other decision-making procedures and rules concerning the society's offices. These regulations reflected quite specifically how these societies saw themselves and their functions.

The key membership principles of German economic societies were voluntary action, equal rights and responsibility.¹¹ Institutionally they could on occasion resemble academies and maintain connections with for example literary societies, yet economic societies were not bound to any particular organisational structure and simply developed

¹⁰Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe (Patriotische Gesellschaft von 1765) im Zeitalter der Aufklärung. Ein Überblick', in *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*, 75f.

¹¹See Graf, *Aufklärung in der Provinz*, 141ff, 180ff.

themselves in a way that was adequate to their own needs.¹² Societies based in towns – such as the Hamburg Patriotic Society and those in Lübeck and Nuremberg (which were modelled on the Hamburg example) – differed noticeably from societies whose working terrain was limited to a given geographical area. The statutes of town societies featured ordinary, honorary and associated members, and generally did not provide for the inclusion of corresponding or external members. Most territorial societies, by contrast, following the example of existing academies and set great store by the system of corresponding and external members,¹³ whose function was to guarantee integration of the local institution into a supra-regional network of communication in the emergent German Enlightenment.

Despite other differences between urban and territorial societies, they shared a tripartite system of meetings. Usually, the statutes distinguished between informal, formal and official assemblies. Informal meetings, often held weekly, were only for members and were used either for sociable communication or for the discussion of works that were considered ‘good’ reading for members of the society. Formal meetings, held once or twice a month, were open only to the innermost circle of members, and in the territorial societies only to the professional core of members. These meetings were devoted exclusively to the running of the society’s affairs – current business and the examination of proposals that had reached the society. Finally, there were the official assemblies of members, held once or twice a year, during which the society informed its members about its work and presented itself to the public. These public occasions, in which the society demonstrated its position within traditional social and authority structures, were considered to be of great importance. Through these outward presentations a society affirmed its desire to be publicly recognised as an Enlightened society on the basis of the statutory rules of its own framing. This new way of establishing itself as an independent social body fundamentally distinguished economic societies from other Enlightenment associations such as reading societies.

¹²See references in Ludwig Hammermayer, ‘Akademiebewegung und Wissenschaftsorganisation während der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts: Formen, Tendenzen, Wandel’, in *Wissenschaftspolitik in Mittel- und Osteuropa. Akademien und Hochschulen im 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert*, eds. E. Amburger, M. Ciésła, and L. Sziklay (Berlin: Camen 1976), 1ff; Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*.

¹³Hammermayer, ‘Akademiebewegung’, emphasises this difference.

Some economic societies divided members and projects into classes and sections on the basis on widely varying criteria – a practice often found in use among Academies. When The Society of Belles Lettres of Öttingen am Inn (*Gesellschaft der schönen Wissenschaften zu Öttingen am Inn*), was transformed into an economic society in 1769, its first section was devoted to educational reform, the second to ‘improving the cultivation of crops and meadows, paying special attention to the noble science of forestry’ and to ‘agriculture in general’, while the third dealt with ‘philosophy’ – which concerned mainly physics, chemistry and botany.¹⁴ However, maintaining three classes was beyond the resources of the society in a small administrative sub-centre in provincial Bavaria, and the agricultural side naturally came to dominate over the other classes. The Leipzig Economic Society (*Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät*), one of the oldest and most important on German soil, also consisted of three classes: natural sciences (mineralogy, chemistry and mechanics), manufacturing and trade, and agriculture. Each class met separately and kept its own minutes. In Leipzig as well, the agricultural section soon proved the most popular. In May 1767 this class counted 50 members, while manufacturing had 26, and natural science 40.¹⁵

A number of territorial societies, including those in Leipzig, Silesia, Mecklenburg and Celle constituted themselves as centres from which the establishment of local branches was encouraged. The institutional forms these local branches assumed varied heavily, depending also on the degree of dependence on the mother institution and their ability to generate their own activities. The agricultural society in Celle founded daughter societies – known as Cantons-Gesellschaften – in Celle, Ülzen, Hannover, Nienburg, Dannenberg and Stade,¹⁶ while in the late 1760s the Leipzig society held meetings at various other cities in Saxony, including Dresden, Freiberg, Zwickau, Wittenberg and Meißen.¹⁷

The membership statutes of German economic societies enshrined the principles of voluntary action, equal rights and responsibility, as prerequisites for the activities that the societies intended to engage in. Given the social diversity of its members, no society could fail to include in its statutes an article that stipulated that everyday communication among members should be based on equality. Rank and social standing should

¹⁴ Graf, *Aufklärung in der Provinz*, 180ff.

¹⁵ H. Eichler, ‘Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät im 18. Jahrhundert’, *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 2 (1978), 357ff, 360.

¹⁶ Hubrig, *Patriotische Gesellschaften*, 60; Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*, 154.

¹⁷ Eichler, ‘Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät im 18. Jahrhundert’, 361.

count neither in the admission of members, nor in the ordering of seats during the meetings and in the actual discussions. Every member had an equal vote. This strong emphasis on equality is striking and found an expression in democratic voting and decision-making procedures, for example in the Hamburg and Nuremberg societies.¹⁸ These societies were led by democratically elected boards consisting of presidents, vice presidents, secretaries and treasurers. Here, it is necessary to distinguish between paid and honorary offices. In Leipzig, for example, the director and the deputies who advised him (altogether eight and later twelve persons) participated in devising the programme in an honorary capacity. Only the secretaries, who dealt with the voluminous correspondence and were responsible for the society's finances, the librarian, some administrative personnel and the supervisory and teaching staff were paid.¹⁹ The statutes of the societies reveal that they had organised their work according to a thoroughly rational model, as was the ideal at the time. Subscriptions and donations by members formed the financial backbone of the societies. There were only a few societies that were subsidised by the state.

Membership structures

One of the primary concerns in the composition of the statutes of all German economic societies was the definition of the requirements and conditions of membership. Unlike in the case of traditional associations, where the creation of a separate corporative identity of their members served a merely symbolic purpose, economic societies were directed towards a specific aim. They accepted 'any civilised citizen [*Bürger*]' as a member, and 'observed neither rank nor precedence'.²⁰ In this way, they created a forum for enlightened, pragmatic communication and an atmosphere of cooperation between equals, which, in theory at least, lifted the barriers between the estates. Geographical or social origin, confessional allegiance, and membership in professional corporations were all irrelevant. Membership applications were considered not by

¹⁸See references in Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft'; Norbert Weppelmann, 'Die Gesellschaft zur Beförderung gemeinnütziger Tätigkeit in Lübeck im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert als Zentrum bürgerlicher Eigeninitiative', in *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*, 143ff.

¹⁹Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 361f; Graf, *Aufklärung in der Provinz*.

²⁰*Bemerkungen der Kurpfälzischen physikalisch-ökonomischen Gesellschaft* 1 (1771), v.

taking into account social or professional status, but purely on the criterion of persons having specific useful knowledge and their willingness to contribute to the realisation of the aims of the society. In contrast to traditional learned societies, which valued only theoretical learning and the ability to form scholarly judgement, economic societies took an interest in knowledge that had been gained through practical experience and that had already proved itself to be useful. While erudition derived from academic education and training, members of economic societies regarded knowledge that served the common good and the desire to apply as more important. Precisely the fact that the only criterion for membership was ability in a specific subject allowed societies to be socially open, rather than draw upon the exclusive circles of particular estates, or clubs of learned academics and professionals.²¹

While the nobility played a role in territorial societies, they did not join urban societies. The societies in Hamburg, Lübeck and Nuremberg counted no noble members, and the one in Kaiserslautern only had two. At first sight it seems that the nobility outweighed the bourgeoisie in the Leipzig Society. Twenty-eight of the eighty-four founder members were nobles and between 1764 and 1779, about 42 per cent of its members (both honorary and ordinary) were noble. Nobles also filled most of the higher administrative positions in Saxony. However, a significant proportion of the nobles who appear in the membership lists of the Leipzig society were of middle-class origin, having been ennobled in the eighteenth century. The same thing was the case with the Burghausen society, half the members of which were nobles. The vast majority of them (about 70 per cent) occupied political offices and were thus integrated into state authority structures. Some other nobles held military ranks (about 10 per cent), while others were liberal professionals. These aristocrats either came from the lower aristocracy or were newly ennobled. It is unfortunately not possible to say how many of them were feudal landowners or owned estates themselves and therefore had a personal interest in improving agriculture. Whether this pattern, which came up in studies of the Breslau and Celle societies, of middle-ranking, lower and recent nobility joining economic societies was a general one cannot be concluded based on the currently available evidence.

²¹ Cf. Graf, *Aufklärung in der Provinz*, 197ff.; Graf, 'Provinzpatritismus'. The few social history studies that exist concentrate mainly on the occupational structure of society membership, and are insufficient basis for a comparative study. See Vierhaus (ed.), *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*; Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät'; and Graf, 'Provinzpatritismus'.

Any attempt to gauge the degree of bourgeois participation in economic societies will have to take into account the social and professional categories that have been deployed in previous studies on this topic. While members of urban societies were drawn almost exclusively from the bourgeoisie, their share of the membership in local and regional territorial societies varied widely. Having said that, there were considerable differences on this aspect between urban societies. In Hamburg, for example, merchants and academics worked together from the start. While the commercial bourgeoisie dominated the Hamburg society – 82 per cent of the founder members and 155 of the 188 new members admitted between 1764 and 1789 were merchants – only four merchants were involved in founding the Lübeck society, which was influenced by Hamburg, in 1789. The other founder members were one noble canon and twenty professionals – ten lawyers, five clergymen, three teachers and two medical doctors. Although the proportion of merchants rose, academically trained men continued to dominate the membership. In the Nuremberg society, too, members with an academic background, not the propertied classes, set the tone.

Within the territorial societies, the presence of the commercial bourgeoisie was much smaller, even than in Nuremberg or Lübeck. The Burghausen society, for instance, whose new members all came from Bavaria, counted no members from this background. About 18 per cent of the members of the Celle society were town residents. Mainly they were traders, though about 4 per cent of all the members were artisans and trained gardeners. Given the catchment area's level of economic development, however, this can hardly be called a commercial bourgeoisie. Only two (French) entrepreneurs were enlisted in the Hamburg society in 1777. Nor did the Kaiserslautern society have any members from the commercial bourgeoisie. Even in Leipzig, between 1764 and 1769 the ordinary members of the society included only twelve or thirteen merchants, ten artisans and traders (representing just under 5 per cent of the ordinary, and 2.5 per cent of all members who joined during this period), as well as two manufacturers.

The proportion of members with a university education, especially those in the service of the state, by contrast, was relatively large in the territorial societies. But here too, local and regional differences are such that one can only provide a broad sketch. Among those with a university education, lawyers clearly had the edge over clergy and scholars in the traditional sense. The range of offices occupied by university-trained lawyers included those of Aulic councillor (*Hofrat*), treasury councillor (*Kammerrat*) and councillors in the chief administrative body (*Regierungsrat*).

The proportion of the clergy representation, by comparison, varied widely. While in Burghausen the clergy accounted for about 18 per cent of the society's membership, making it the second largest group after the nobility, in Hamburg, where merchants and traders were the socially dominant groups, it provided only a tiny proportion of the members. Between 1765 and 1789, the six clergymen represented made up about 0.02 per cent of the total membership (to be compared with 237 merchants and traders, who made up 83 per cent). It is unknown what proportion of members of the Leipzig society were clergy members, as existing studies do not distinguish between clergy and nobility. In the Celle society, under the longstanding direction of its president Superintendent Friedrich Jakobi, 14 per cent of members were pastors. Examples of a leading role taken by Protestant clergy in the economic societies are provided by the cases of the pastor J. F. Roth and the preacher J. F. Suhl. The Nuremberg society was established on Roth's initiative, while Suhl founded the Lübeck society. The proportions of teachers (at school level, universities and academies), librarians, members of the liberal professions, doctors, apothecaries and lawyers all varied.

Compared with the categories discussed above, the traditional elites, governmental councillors and heads of regional administrations were insignificantly represented in the various societies. Yet, as the example of the Karlsruhe society, which was founded from 'above', shows, their involvement was not inconceivable. In the Burghausen society, too, the traditional leadership elites – the clergy and the nobility – were more strongly represented than in other comparable organisations. The same holds true for the agricultural society in Celle.²²

Notwithstanding the absence of a clear view of the social composition of the membership of economic societies, we can say with some confidence that the membership basis of the more active institutions consisted largely of the 'educated orders'. Members were drawn from the university educated nobility, in particular from the *Verdienststadel* (the nobility whose titles derived from being in the sovereign's service), but mainly from the rising bourgeoisie in the expanding administrative and educational professions and (but to a much smaller extent) from the trading profession. The cooperation between 'education' and 'money' really succeeded only in Hamburg, whereas it failed in Lübeck

²² See the references in Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten*, 62ff; Graf, 'Provinzpatriotismus'; Deike, 'Die Celler Sozietät und Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft von 1764', in *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*, 161ff.

and Nuremberg. While the new bourgeoisie tended to be involved in the territorial economic societies, sections of the old middle classes took a leading part in founding and running the town societies.²³

However inclusive the membership principles of economic societies might have been, relatively high subscription fees made for a certain social exclusiveness from the start and considerably reduced the circles from which ordinary voting members were drawn. Citizens (*Bürger*) with a small income could not afford to become members. The registration fee for new members of the Leipzig Economic Society, for example, was five *Taler*, while the annual subscription for ordinary members was ten *Taler*, which were large sums of money for that time. From 1767 this society accepted small traders, artisans, manufacturers, foresters and farmers as 'associated members' whose practical experience was useful for the work of this society. This category of members were exempted from paying subscriptions.²⁴ As a rule, however, the lower middle classes, simple artisans and small farmers had no access to these societies, despite the fact that they were the actual target of the societies' educational initiatives. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that individual societies – for example, the extremely active and influential Hamburg Patriotic Society – attempted to break down this exclusive character by changing their statutes. Before 1790, artisans in Hamburg had been able to take part in meetings only in an advisory capacity, but the new statutes stated, that 'anybody who pays 2 *Species-Ducaten* is an ordinary member [and] that [a]ny well-mannered man, without exception, can join the society, needing no invitation'.²⁵ It seems that these societies did not include any small farmers and ordinary peasants as members, which meant that the people who actually possessed practical farming experience and who were addressed by the activities of the societies were not represented.

Although the traditional political elites were not represented in the societies (as was discussed earlier), this did not mean there could not be close connections between the economic societies and – particularly

²³In this respect, Thomas Nipperdey's interpretations in 'Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert. Eine Fallstudie zur Modernisierung I', in his *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie. Gesammelter Aufsätze zur neueren geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1976), 174ff, 439ff, must be modified.

²⁴Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 361.

²⁵'Ausführliche Nachricht von der Hamburgischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe', 97.

lower levels of – the political elites. Members of urban societies were often engaged, directly or indirectly, in the administration of the towns. Many members of the Hamburg Patriotic Society, for example, were involved in Hamburg's self-administration, or took part in the conventions of the so-called old families (*Erbgesessene Bürgerschaft*). In the neighbouring town of Lübeck the overlap between middle-class commitment and government service is illustrated by the fact that 10 per cent of the society's members were town councillors.²⁶ In the territorial societies in particular, members often had official functions within their distinct territory. Mostly they belonged to the local governing or administrative elite. In the Kaiserslautern society, middle ranking and local office holders set the tone, providing more than 50 per cent of the society's members.²⁷ The strong presence of state officials in the territorial societies suggests that these civil servants to absolute rulers were receptive to ideas of reform.

To conclude, something must be said about the total membership figures of economic societies, which varied from a couple of members to a few hundred. As we saw, their social composition depended to a large extent on the social structure of the distinct city, its administrative and economic functions, as well as the ambitions and the capacities of the founders. Altogether the number of members of German economic societies may have reached the figure of 3,000. This figure equalled the membership of the Academies of the time. However, it was far smaller than the membership of the circa 300 Masonic lodges and the circa 400 reading societies, each of these categories comprising about 15,000 members.²⁸

Fields of activity

Members of the German economic societies believed that intensive discussion about alternative solutions was required in order to launch successful reform initiatives. Within these discussions they expressed disdain of *Projektemacherei*: Chimerical projects were not to be taken into consideration. Instead, the aim was to alleviate widespread social

²⁶Weppelmann, 'Die Gesellschaft zur Beförderung gemeinnütziger Tätigkeit', 148ff.

²⁷Norbert Schindler and Wolfgang Bonß, 'Praktische Aufklärung – Ökonomische Sozietäten in Süddeutschland und Österreich im 18. Jahrhundert', in *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*, 298ff.

²⁸Schlögl, 'Die patriotisch-gemeinnützige Gesellschaften', 61–81, 61.

problems by disseminating useful information and putting it into practise. Of course, the activities of societies had to fit with the prevailing socio-political conditions: the geographical characteristics of absolutist territories, problems of the rural economy, the existing administrative structures of the towns with its free councils, and numerous issues relating to trade, industry and craft were all significant factors to reckon with. For all the differences in context and conditions, however, the German economic societies shared the common aim of serving the 'common good' through the encouragement of rational and public-spirited thinking and activities.

The Hamburg Patriotic Society described its reformist goals in retrospect as follows:

As its aims were primarily to be useful and effective at a local level, it seemed sufficient for this purpose to encourage and collect suggestions for the common good relating to the circumstances and needs of the time, and, as far as it lay in the power of a small circle, to put them into practice silently or, where this was not the case, to make the matter known in its appropriate place.²⁹

The ambitious aim of the Leipzig Economic Society was to promote all branches of industry to the greatest possible extent:

The society recognises as the object of its activities everything relating to the question of subsistence in the widest sense, including all facets of the urban and rural economy, and the system of manufacturing and trade, as well as all the ways in which mathematics, physics, and chemistry can be beneficially applied, in particular as they relate to Saxony and the lands belonging to it.³⁰

In 1814 the statutes of the Nuremberg societies stated concisely: 'The society for the promotion of local industry has set itself the following goals: 1. to promote the productivity of industry, 2. to establish charitable institutions, 3. to support impoverished persons of the rank of artisan, 4. to encourage everything that promotes the common good.'³¹

²⁹'Aus einer Rede von Dr. J. A. H. Reimarus gelegentlich der 25-jährigen Jubelfeier am 15. April 1790', quoted from Gustav Kowalewski, *Geschichte der Hamburgischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe*, 3 vols. (Hamburg: 1897–1936), vol. 2, 43.

³⁰Quoted from Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten*, 52.

³¹Quoted from Hubrig, *Die patriotischen Gesellschaften*, 110.

Economic societies assumed various public functions that until then had been the responsibility of the formal authorities or of specific corporations. Consequently, the problems which the societies discussed covered a broad range of topics, as did the initiatives which they launched for the improvement of all areas of life. Their activities included promoting industry by providing advanced training, offering prizes and organising exhibitions; supporting existing (or establishing new) charitable institutions; reforming poor relief, the rescue services and health education, setting up schools for midwives and promoting new policies on vaccination programmes. They also encouraged the building trade, supported changes in banking, credit and insurance systems, reformed the education system and dealt with the 'moral corruption' of servants. Among all these activities upon which the largest societies in particular embarked, the four main areas were: agriculture; trade and industry, *Policey* (domestic and social policy) and education.

Activities in the field of agriculture included investigations of the soil, diffusion of knowledge of rational farming methods and new cultivation techniques, as well as of up-to-date knowledge about seed cultivation and animal breeding, ranging as far as fish breeding and bee keeping. Societies concerned specifically with agricultural improvement addressed the problems of crop rotation and the enclosure of the common lands in order to encourage more efficient dairy farming. These societies were also involved in rural health issues, education, banking, credit and insurance, as well as in fiscal policy – in short, the whole array of agriculture in theory and practice. However, these societies often found their efforts to introduce new methods hampered by the traditional organisation of agricultural production – the open-field system, the division of fields into the traditional unit of the *Gewann*, the *Flurzwang* or 'the field constraint', which bound farmers to conform to the community routine of cultivation, as well as the use of the *Allmende* or common pastures. Nevertheless, there was potential for improvement within the existing system, and this is what the societies focused on. The reliance of the agricultural sector on tradition placed clear limits on the possible achievements of improvement or on the successful introduction of the cultivation of clover and other seed plants or cash crops.

In the area of industrial production, societies discussed reform of the guild system, but their main interest was in promoting the textile industry. The Leipzig Economic Society, for example, was commissioned by an official commercial deputation to encourage weaving, as well as cotton and silk production. The society issued prize essay contests and

offered small awards to encourage the improvement of flax cultivation and the spinning of thread. Members of the society suggested setting up a spinning school (to be linked with an orphanage), a thread factory, and a bleachery in a mining town, and laid this proposal before the commercial deputation.³² In promoting textile production, societies tried from the start to benefit from the experience of other countries. The Leipzig society commissioned a manufacturer who had travelled abroad to write a report on current methods of processing flax and the machines required. One member of this society sent from England plans and a description of a large 'spinning machine', which had been awarded a prize by the Society for the Promoting of the Arts in London. This machine enabled six to eight people using one wheel to spin far more and higher quality thread than traditional spinning wheels did.³³ The Leipzig society enthusiastically encouraged the production of textile dyes in Saxony. On the recommendation of the Saxon authorities, it successfully supported the cultivation of Dutch madder and Breslau dyer's madder. Going beyond the field of textiles, the society supported the Saxon territorial authorities' policy of self-sufficiency by establishing a dye manufactory in Dresden. It was set up in 1767 as a limited company, whose shares were held by members of the Leipzig society. In the first year of its existence it produced considerable quantities of white lead, which was used in the manufacture of red lead and paint. Many other examples demonstrating the Leipzig Economic Society's support for the state's policy of self-sufficiency could be cited.³⁴ In practice, the aim of 'promoting local industry', however, was also implemented by structural measures – for example by founding a relief fund intended to increase production by handing out loans in Schleswig Holstein.³⁵ The Society for the Promotion of Public Happiness in Lübeck (*Die Gesellschaft zur Beförderung gemeinnütziger Tätigkeit in Lübeck*) also attempted to influence artisans by setting up a special loan fund. Efficient craftsmen were to be given interest-free loans to buy materials and invest in workshops, and to provide support in case they fell ill or ran into poverty due to causes that were not their own fault.³⁶

³² Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 368ff.

³³ Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 374ff.

³⁴ Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 373f.

³⁵ Kai Detlev Sievers, 'Patriotische Gesellschaften in Schleswig-Holstein zwischen 1786 und 1829', in *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*, 119ff, here 139.

³⁶ Weppelmann, 'Die Gesellschaft zur Beförderung gemeinnütziger Tätigkeit', 157.

The major concern for most economic societies was domestic and social policy. The measures taken by the Hamburg Patriotic Society were intended to offer people better protection against illness and accident, indigence and poverty. Opposing various prejudices, it attempted to introduce lightning conductors, improve fire-fighting (1769), clean the town and pave the streets (1782) and introduce drainage and street lighting (1767–1771). It also advocated the relocation of cemeteries outside the town. After 1790, the society tried to modernise Hamburg's backward medical system by providing training for surgeons.³⁷ Medicine in particular was a central concern in most economic societies. In 1766 the Leipzig Economic Society extended its charitable works to the free training of midwives.³⁸

The Hamburg society was more successful than others in setting up institutions that increased social and economic security. In 1778 it founded the *Allgemeine Versorgungsanstalt*, which in its turn established the first public saving's bank, the *Ersparungskasse*. The Society created another bank, the *Kreditkasse für Erben und Grundstücke*, in 1782.³⁹ In 1766, the Leipzig society had set up lending houses for similar reasons and to combat usury, and had made their services available to the town council.⁴⁰ Economic societies paid special attention to the social conditions and personal needs of the poorer groups of the population. In 1800 the Lübeck society set up a *wohlfeile Speiseanstalt*, which provided cheap or free meals.⁴¹ Important in this regard is to note that the fundamental re-organisation of Hamburg's poor relief, probably the most significant reform of the Hamburg Enlightenment, would have been unthinkable had it not been prepared by the Hamburg Patriotic Society. Their poor-houses occupied the unemployed, gave relief to those incapable of working, and provided education and employment to the children of both groups. It has often been pointed out that efforts in education and poor relief to a large extent served the same purpose. For the men of the Enlightenment, educational and economic measures in the field of poor relief were closely connected and had to be implemented together. In a prize-winning essay of November 1773 on the statement that the 'mass of God-fearing, civilised, diligent, and useful residents makes up the true and essential welfare of the state', the author drew the conclusion

³⁷ Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 86ff.

³⁸ Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten*, 54f.

³⁹ Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 89f.

⁴⁰ Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten*, 54.

⁴¹ Weppelmann, 'Die Gesellschaft zur Beförderung gemeinnütziger Tätigkeit', 156.

that the 'transformation of bad and useless or even harmful residents into good and Enlightened people must become the main objective of all patriotic efforts'.⁴² The elimination of poverty and the reform of social conditions needing reforms were deemed of the utmost necessity. The reformers of Hamburg's poor relief recognised that poverty could not be understood in moral-ethical terms, but had clearly definable economic and structural causes. This recognition provided the starting point for their reform enterprise.⁴³ Their activities, based entirely on bourgeois self-organisation, were so successful that they were imitated elsewhere.⁴⁴

German economic societies did a lot more than popularise the findings of contemporary science, but wanted to apply these findings in practice for the benefit of trade, industry and the state's social institutions. In his review of the first twenty-five years of the Hamburg Patriotic Society, J. A. Günther expressed a view which was shared by the members of most economic societies:

From the start, the society did not intend actively to work in science. It wanted merely to apply every useful result of human knowledge, discovery, and invention as far as possible to practical life of the citizen [*Bürger*]; it had no intention of involving itself in investigations, discovery, or invention on its own account.⁴⁵

It is obvious that for supporters of the Enlightenment, education was of major importance. The large number of schools planned, founded, and maintained by the societies are the clearest expression of this conviction. The Lübeck society alone set up numerous schools: a Sunday school and a drawing school for young artisans in 1795; a commercial school for girls in 1797; a swimming school in 1789 and a seminar for

⁴² Quoted from Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 89.

⁴³ Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 90; Franklin Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburger Aufklärung und das Armenproblem', in *Arbeiter in Hamburg. Unterschichten, Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung seit dem ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert*, eds. Arno Herzig, Dieter Langewiesche and Arnold Sywottek (Hamburg: Verlag Erziehung und Wissenschaft 1983), 51ff.

⁴⁴ Cf. P. Albrecht, 'Die Übernahme der Prinzipien der Hamburger Armenreform für die Stadt Braunschweig. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Bedeutung von geselligen Zirkeln bei der Verbreitung und Durchsetzung aufklärerischen Gedankengutes im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert', *Jahrbuch der Sozialarbeit* 4 (1981), 181ff.

⁴⁵ 'Rede auf der 25-jährigen Stiftungsfeier am 25. April 1790', quoted from Kowalewski, *Geschichte der Hamburgischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 220.

teacher training in 1807.⁴⁶ Economic societies in particular frequently established drawing schools. The various educational institutions established in Hamburg by 1795 were in fact extensions of the drawing school founded in 1767, in a first effort to improve the training of artisans. The apprentice riots of the 1790s stimulated the society to expand its work in this field. In between 300 and 400 artisans were instructed in arithmetic, geometry, general chemistry, mechanics and practical engineering. The *Hamburger Anstalten für den Unterricht in der Naturgeschichte*, which taught natural sciences, intended to give artisans greater familiarity with the raw materials they used in their trades.⁴⁷

Economic societies were concerned with trade and commercial schooling in the widest sense. Sunday schools, commercial schools, evening schools and drawing schools were intended to strengthen other initiatives for social and economic reform. The idea was that achieving the aims of the Enlightenment required improvement of the vocational training and moral education of the next generations.

Modes of operation

Within their societies, members acquired knowledge and experience through exchanging ideas with one another. Education also required correcting and examining each other, and providing advice and mutual support. Since the societies' main activities concerned the dissemination of knowledge among members and the shaping of their political and moral awareness, economic societies became a scene for the constant exchange of ideas. In entering these forums for discussion, members did not limit their conversation to economic and technical innovations, but gradually came to subject all areas of life to critical examination. Lists of the societies' publication allow us to reconstruct the full range of topics discussed, and reveal the varying standard of debate. A repeated criticism expressed at the time was in fact that discussion about *possible* reforms might overshadow *actual* reform attempts.⁴⁸

Often societies had their own libraries and reading groups. The Hamburg Patriotic Society's library, which held about 1,000 volumes by 1790, deliberately restricted its scope to technology and *Polizeiwissenschaft*, a distinctly German academic discipline combining economic with administrative theory that formed a large part of the

⁴⁶ Hubrig, *Die patriotischen Gesellschaften*, 111.

⁴⁷ Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 94.

⁴⁸ See references in Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten*, 55.

training of government officials. The library was intended to encourage practical measures and was indeed frequently used. Unlike other societies, the Hamburg society also permitted non-members access to its library.⁴⁹

From the outset, German economic societies kept in contact with each other. Naturally, connections between Lübeck and Hamburg were especially close. The Society for the Promotion of Charitable Work in Lübeck adopted various arrangements used by the Hamburg society. Such arrangements included allowing people to be members of two societies at the same time. German societies maintained contacts with each other by exchanging publications and maintaining voluminous correspondences. It seemed an obvious step to institutionalise this co-operation. In 1786, J. H. Campe called for the establishment of an overall German society whose main purpose would be 'to promote industry in general, and every useful trade in particular'. Campe broadly modelled his proposal on the constitution of the Hamburg Patriotic Society. However, nothing came of it.⁵⁰ R. Z. Becker's attempt to set up the *Kaiserlich Privilegierte Reichs-Anzeiger* in 1794 as the central journal for the publication of all patriotic, charitable and learned societies also failed. His aim had been to create a regular 'association of learned, economic, and commercial societies . . . for their mutual benefit'.⁵¹

Societies naturally also had to look outwards, to non-members, who were to be instructed in useful subjects and concentrated their efforts on disseminating new information. Various societies issued public essay competitions and regarded these as initiatives for encouraging non-members to undertake practical investigations and reflect on specific problems. The subjects that were selected for these contests were typical for the economic society movement and were intended to challenge the interested public. Despite frequent failures, societies continued to use essay competitions as a means for gathering empirical and theoretical knowledge and disseminating it through publication.⁵² In the

⁴⁹ Eulen, *Vom Gewerbefleiß zur Industrie*, 153.

⁵⁰ J. H. Campe, *Über einige verkannte, wenigstens, ungenützte Mittel zur Beförderung der Industrie. 2 Fragmente* (Wolfenbüttel: 1786), 18ff.

⁵¹ Rudolf Zacharias Becker, *Der Reichs=Anzeiger oder Allgemeines Intelligenzblatt*, 3 February 1794, 241ff. For context, see Hubrig, *Die patriotischen Gesellschaften*, 59ff.

⁵² On essay competitions, see Hans-Heinrich Müller, 'Wirtschaftshistorische und Agrarökonomische Preisaufgaben der deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften im 18. Jahrhundert. Überblick und Tendenzen', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (1972), 183ff.; Müller, *Akademie und Wirtschaft im 18. Jahrhundert*.

first twenty-five years of its existence, the Leipzig Economic Society announced about twenty-five essay competitions. Not all of them were successful. Several had to be advertised more than once before any replies were received and some even had to be abandoned because of lack of response. Essay topics typically raised issues related to agriculture, trade and industry. The topics chosen reflected the practical orientation of the time. Although in Saxony industry was more developed than elsewhere, the economy was still dominated by agrarian structures and consequently most of the questions set regarded agriculture and animal breeding (covering topics such as tobacco cultivation, improving grape, hop, hemp and flax crops, the cultivation of various types of cereal and fodder crops, encouraging food growing, increasing wool production by more advanced sheep breeding, and silk and cotton cultivation). Certain questions were clearly tailored to fit the specific economic conditions of Saxony, while others were equally relevant for other German societies.⁵³ Although most of the set questions were of a practical nature, some related to problems of economic policy. However, one ought not to mistake these questions, that were issued in the Celle and Kaiserslautern society, for an early form of scientific economics.⁵⁴

The prize questions and their solutions were published not only in learned periodicals and special scientific and scholarly journals, but also in weekly newspapers and advertising circulars with a broader readership. Publications of these sorts offered means of exerting influence and the societies gratefully made as much use of them as they could.⁵⁵

At first the Hamburg Patriotic Society had no journal of its own. It published in the local newspapers and worked closely with the *Journal von und für Deutschland* and the *Reichs-Anzeiger*, which had a close commitment to economic societies. In Hamburg itself it published in the *Hamburgischen Adreß-Comptoir-Nachrichten* and the *Wöchentlichen Gemeinnützigen Nachrichten von und für Hamburg*, which were also widely read by the middle and lower classes. In addition, it cooperated with the *Hanseatische Magazin*, which was published by Johann Schmidt in Bremen from 1799 to 1804.⁵⁶ Then, in 1790, 'men of insight and

⁵³ Cf. Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 370ff., 381ff.

⁵⁴ Cf. Henry E. Lowood, *Patriotism, Profit, and the Promotion of Science in the German Enlightenment: The Economic and Scientific Societies, 1760–1815* (New York: Garland Publishing 1991).

⁵⁵ Hans Erich Bödeker, 'Medien der patriotischen Gesellschaften', in *Von Almanach bis Zeitung. Ein Handbuch der medien in Deutschland 1700–1800*, eds. Ernst Fischer, Wilhelm Haefs and York-Gothard Mix (Munich: C. H. Beck 1999), 285ff.

⁵⁶ Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 86f.

reputation, also from outside Hamburg', began to direct the society, and brought the prize essays and other works to the attention of a wider audience. At this stage, when it was recognised that having its own journal brought increased prestige and visibility, the membership reversed its earlier decision by deciding to bring out regular *Verhandlungen*, comprising a selection of papers and essays submitted to the society. It was even decided that the *Verhandlungen* had to be published on good quality paper and 'with a simple elegance appropriate to the object' of their investigations.⁵⁷

Not until they published their own journal or monthly review were territorial societies guaranteed to have an impact on the outside world. Almost all of the more significant territorial societies founded their own journal. These periodicals had a major effect on the circulation of ideas through the network of communication that connected German economic societies. The *Anzeiger* of the Leipzig Economic Society appeared from 1771 onwards. Following each spring and autumn assembly, it printed extracts from the minutes of the meeting, so that a larger number of people had access to what was discussed.⁵⁸

In addition to organising annual competitions and publishing periodicals, many societies also published books that were important in their own right and represented the state of the art of economic knowledge at the time. In Leipzig, selected works were made available to the interested audience in the society's publication series. The foundation and fate of the *Bayerisch-ökonomische Hausvater* (1773–1779), the publication organ of the Burghausen society, demonstrates the practical problems and shortcomings which almost all the societies faced.⁵⁹ Although they could hardly imagine having a direct effect on peasants, society members believed it was possible and necessary for economic knowledge and information about the society's activities to be spread widely among local officials and landowners. It was generally believed that these circles of people, who were well placed to pass the relevant information on to a large number of other people, formed the best channels for

⁵⁷Johann Arnold Günther, 'Vorbericht', *Verhandlungen und Schriften der Hamburgischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: 1792), *3v–*4v.

⁵⁸See Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 362; Schindler and Bonß, 'Praktische Aufklärung', 300.

⁵⁹See *Aufklärung in der Provinz*, 376ff; Ludwig Hammermayer, 'Zur Publizistik der Aufklärung. Reform und Sozietätsbewegung in Bayern, Die Burghausener Sittlich-Ökonomische Gesellschaft und ihr "Baierisch-Ökonomischer Hausvater" (1779–1786)', *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 58 (1995), pp. 341ff.

transmitting knowledge. The regular publication of a journal was to inspire 'thoughts of activity'.⁶⁰ The agricultural society in Celle selected rural pastors as the best disseminators of information about improved production methods to the peasants and distributed copies of its proceedings to them free of charge.⁶¹ Likewise farmers' almanacs and advertising leaflets were used to reach and instruct the peasant population.⁶²

The German societies' practical efforts stretched to the point where they initiated the introduction of new cultivated plants, agricultural implements and projects of experimental agriculture. The Kaiserslautern society, for example, decided in 1772 to finance the acquisition of a model agricultural estate by selling shares.⁶³ The Leipzig Economic Society did the same thing. On these estates, societies experimented with way to increase yields and control pests. Yet, attempts to develop improvements were usually left to the private initiative of individual members. Practical experiments and in-house testing of new ideas often could not take place because societies were not prepared to expose themselves to possible public criticism by taking financial risks. Another reason was that most societies owned no land. It seems never to have occurred to the Burghausen society to ask one of its land-owning members for a plot of land on which to conduct experiments and give demonstrations.⁶⁴ Nor did it make any attempt to follow the example of the Kaiserslautern or Leipzig societies and acquire the use of one of the ruling prince's properties as a model estate. Attempts to introduce agricultural reforms include the establishment of bee gardens in Dresden and the construction of the botanical garden with an apiary and tree nursery in Kaiserslautern. As early as 1769 the Leipzig society had set the lead in distributing seed, plants and saplings to those who were interested. At a later stage seeds, especially clover seed, were often given out to farmers free of charge.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ K. von Reinhardtstöttner, 'Die sittlich-ökonomische Gesellschaft zu Burghausen (1765–1802)', *Forschungen zur Kultur- und Literaturgeschichte Bayerns* 3 (1895), 48ff.

⁶¹ Deike, 'Die Celler Sozietät und Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft', 186.

⁶² Cf. H. Böning, 'Das Intelligenzblatt als medium praktischer Aufklärung. Ein Beitrag zur geschichte der gemeinnützig-ökonomischen Presse in Deutschland von 1768–1780', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 19 (1994), 53ff; B. Niemeck, 'Die Anfänge agrartechnischer Diskussionen in der gemeinnützig-ökonomischen Literatur und Publizistik des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Nützliche Künste. Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte der Technik im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrich Troitzsch (Münster: Waxmann 1999), 81ff.

⁶³ Schindler and Bonß, 'Praktische Aufklärung', 302.

⁶⁴ Cf. Graf, *Aufklärung in der Provinz*, 208ff.

⁶⁵ Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 368f.

Other activities developed to enlighten and stimulate the public included the establishment of a white lead factory financed by subscription in Leipzig in 1768. The Leipzig society also established a model brewery in 1770 with financial help from the prince elector.⁶⁶ The founding of a textile workshop by a small economic society in Kaiserslautern was another notable achievement.⁶⁷

Such initiatives were supplemented by demonstrations of new machinery, tools and drawings, which later were incorporated into 'collections' that were put on show by economic societies. The Leipzig society, for example, kept an exhibition of new tools, stoves, implements and drawings, known as a 'model collection'. Because it was continuously being added to, it was one of the sights of Leipzig for decades.⁶⁸ In 1772, the Kaiserslautern society opened a model collection, which later was considerably expanded, to demonstrate unknown agricultural implements and household utensils. These collections were maintained primarily for teaching purposes, as the job of providing technological instruction fell to the societies.⁶⁹

Apart from economic and agriculture textbooks of a lower level, the societies also published manuals for sanitation. The Hamburg society, for instance, distributed many copies of B. C. Faust's *Gesundheitskatechismus*.

Practical impact of economic societies

Through the founding of economic societies, local and regional enlightened elites publicly presented themselves as participating in the Enlightenment movement within the traditional social and political order.⁷⁰ The creation of independent societies with aims and statutes agreed on by members grew out of a development process of moral-political sensitivity that these elites had gone through. In this sense, the newly established economic societies confirmed and served to stabilise new patterns of socio-political relations between different social strata. New responsibilities and claims for recognition developed in this way.⁷¹ On the basis of their everyday experience as inhabitants of an urban community or a territory, members of economic societies desired to

⁶⁶ Eichler, 'Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät', 375ff.

⁶⁷ Schindler and Bonß, 'Praktische Aufklärung', 302.

⁶⁸ Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten*, 56.

⁶⁹ Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 83.

⁷⁰ Cf. van Dülmen, 'Aufklärungsgesellschaften'.

⁷¹ Cf. Schindler and Bonß, 'Praktische Aufklärung', 255ff.

take an active part in shaping social processes. As voluntary associations of individual subjects, societies felt justified in contributing to the common good; indeed, they felt it was their duty. They derived their justification from the discourse of natural law and the idea of individual human reason. This also meant that by their very nature they questioned any claims made by the authorities of state and church to a monopoly of power.

Yet, rather than confront these traditional powers directly, the economic societies functioned as vehicles for much subtler processes of social reform. The members of local and regional societies, whether as citizens of the republic of letters or as officials, were closely linked to their respective territorial states or urban communities and used their connections to help them put their reform ideas into practice. These ties offered the educated classes important opportunities to exercise influence, for example, in the writing of government commissioned reports, through directly submitted suggestions for reform, but mainly through their everyday activities as enlightened officials in central, regional or local administrations. Contemporaries were only too aware of these patterns. In J. A. Günther's 1792 postscript to the revised statutes of the Hamburg Patriotic Society, we read:

A free association of enlightened citizens, some of whom are involved in the administration of the state, but who come here purely in their capacity as private citizens, pooling their diverse and varied knowledge and experience with that of their fellow citizens in order to use it . . . for the good of the fatherland is infinitely more important and useful for the state than is commonly realised.⁷²

Largely because of these close connections between the association movement and the state executive, members of economic societies repeatedly faced the question how much freedom of action they possessed. From the start, they tried to define a secure space in which they had some scope for action. Almost all societies applied for official recognition, obviously to clear a space which they felt was necessary in order to achieve their intended reforms. The fact that official recognition was mostly granted without problems shows that in the majority of cases, governments saw no reason to obstruct the activities of the economic societies. On the contrary, they usually supported societies by

⁷²Quoted from Kowalewski, *Geschichte der Hamburgischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 43.

cooperating with and subsidising their work. This attitude on the part of governments was one of the things that made it possible for many German economic societies to be established within a relatively short time.⁷³

Deliberate attempts to define their scope for action can also be found in the societies' regularly published programmes. These programmes offer a catalogue of judgements on a variety of issues concerning science and the economy. In Erfurt, for example, the statutes forbade 'theological questions, questions that touch upon state-law and other powers of European princes . . . , which might offend the others, as well as abstract concepts which do not have useful purpose in everyday life'.⁷⁴ Lists of subjects excluded from discussion in other societies were virtually identical to this one. In Burghausen, for instance, the statutes of 1791 identified theology, politics and law as forbidden subjects.⁷⁵

To make sure they would be left free to develop their initiatives, the societies publicly limited themselves to activities which 'are not the subject of official regulations and have not been assigned as duties to other bodies, but which nevertheless have some influence on the well-being of the state'.⁷⁶ The Celle society consciously stated 'not to interfere into subjects or not to treat issues that belong to judgements of the territorial government, the financial board or the ministry of war'.⁷⁷ Societies did not want to meddle in those areas of town or territorial administration that were regulated by government departments. For example, they did not want to get involved in the official bureaucracy, or in the organisation of the guild system. However, in their activities they *did* take over public functions which up until then had been fulfilled by the authorities, or specific corporations and where a vacuum existed in the state's responsibilities. The fact that even in Hamburg where the society had a strong status, its 'involvement in the affairs of the state administration' was explicitly described as a 'blunder' by as late as 1790,⁷⁸ and shows how vulnerable the societies were. Traditional political and social

⁷³This is repeatedly pointed out in Vierhaus (ed.), *Deutsche patriotische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaften*.

⁷⁴Thiele, 'Die Gründung der Akademie nützlicher (gemeinnütziger) Wissenschaften zu Erfurt und die Schicksale derselben bis zu ihrer Wiederbelebung durch Dalberg (1754–1776)', *Akademie gemeinnütziger Wissenschaften zu Erfurt. Jahrbuch* 30 (1904), 1ff, here 31ff.

⁷⁵Graf, 'Provinzpatritismus', 196ff.

⁷⁶Quoted from Hubrig, *Die patriotischen Gesellschaften*, 62.

⁷⁷Quoted from Lowood, *Patriotism, Profit, and the Promotion of Science*, 54.

⁷⁸Quoted from Kowalewski, *Geschichte der Hamburgischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 43.

structures could definitely feel threatened by their initiatives, which would immediately close down the above outlined patterns of communication that the society needed, precisely in order to function as an Enlightened society.

In practice, societies created and secured their scope for action in different ways. Originally, the Society for Agricultural Economy in Celle (*Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft in Celle*) had not limited its activities to agriculture, but had also worked in trade and industry. In 1788, however, after the Commerz-Collegium was established in Hanover, the Celle society decide only to address only agricultural problems, in order to secure its freedom to act.⁷⁹ And through attempting to bind itself more strongly to the territorial state by recruiting carefully selected honorary members, the Kaiserslautern society aimed to increase its chances of exerting influence.⁸⁰ At the same time, however, members of societies were only too aware that ultimately the social and economic problems they were dealing with had to be solved also by means of laws and decrees. The Celle agriculture society found – as did other societies – that ‘they repeatedly had to ignore the “statutes” which limited their activities to areas that had no bearing on the government of the country, on matters relating to the treasury [*Kammer*], or war’.⁸¹

In the long term societies tried to implement their desired reforms in cooperation with the traditional elites. This cooperation determined the extent, direction and speed of social action. In reality, however, this involved processes that were complicated, full of tensions and not always pleasant. Societies often had to ward off, or increasingly put up with arbitrary interference from the authorities. On occasion members found that their activities were limited to observing, advising and preparatory work. In many cases societies found themselves forced into a depressingly narrow political framework, where they were dependent on the favour and protection of a princely, high-noble or patrician-republican authority. Thus the danger of the societies being made to serve the purposes of the state executive was ever present. Although the Enlightenment in the German territorial states owed its success partly to the fact that its intentions to a large extent overlapped with the interest of the traditional ruling elites, its institutional influence went far beyond playing a complementary role. The Leipzig society, which was founded by a circle of enlightened civil servants at the Dresden

⁷⁹Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten*, 60.

⁸⁰Deike, ‘Die Celler Sozietät und Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft’, 183.

⁸¹Schindler and Bonß, ‘Praktische Aufklärung’, 303.

court and Leipzig merchants and scholars, shortly after its foundation already resembled the committee that was established in 1763 to direct the reconstruction of the principality after the Seven Years' War (called the *Restaurationskommission*).⁸² The Leipzig society actually took over the administrative institution. Except for a few cases – among which are Karlsruhe, Silesia and Trier – the ruling powers did not succeed in incorporating economic societies into their functions. Despite their close cooperation with the state executive with sections of the traditional ruling elites, economic societies tended to be a lot more than merely an extension of, or complement to, state policy.

When the Hamburg senator and at the same time co-director of the local patriotic society Johann Arnold Günther in 1790 looked back at the society's activities he identified as the customary faults of economic societies in general 'their interference into the matters of state administration'. To Günther's mind, a society's purpose should simply be 'to elucidate beneficial suggestions, to reflect their applicability in terms of the local conditions, balancing of the pros and cons of these suggestions'. In such an association of citizens even officeholders could participate as private persons.⁸³

Many members of the Hamburg Patriotic Society were indeed involved in Hamburg's administrative bodies or took part in the conventions of the *Erbgessenen Bürgerschaft*. These close connections also reveal themselves in the circumstance that twenty two of the senators elected between 1765 and 1792, representing about 60 per cent of all the councillors elected during that period, were members of the society. Especially since the early 1790s the members of the Hamburg political elite, which beforehand had only rarely joined the society, discerned the benefit the society could provide them. Gradually membership in the society proved one of the criteria to be considered in the election of new senators and syndics.

The supporters of the Enlightenment who joined economic societies were fully aware that the progress and reforms they advocated could only be achieved in small steps. Eventually, the practical significance of these societies lay in their ability to mediate between ideas of reform, and the concrete social and political conditions of their respective 'fatherlands'. The success of their activities can only be reconstructed with difficulty. Societies repeatedly encountered resistance on the

⁸² Cf. A. Schöne, *Die Leipziger Ökonomische Sozietät von 1764–1825*, *Neues Archiv für Sächsische Geschichte* 70 (1999), 53ff here 69.

⁸³ Cited from Hubrig, *Die patriotischen Gesellschaften*, 50ff.

objects of their reforms. Several factors helped to sustain the often unbridgeable gulf separating them from the peasants. The peasants' lack of education and their traditional customs were large obstacles. Yet, the main problem was undoubtedly that peasants often saw the societies as nothing more than an extension of the arm of the authorities. The attitude of society members towards the common men was also extremely patriarchal. It is difficult to establish the precise extent of any improvement in living conditions, especially among ordinary people as the result of the societies' activities. On the one hand, we cannot exclude the possibility that there were some successes, but on the other, there is no lack of critical voices of the time complaining that the results of the society's work did not meet the expectations.⁸⁴

Whatever the societies achieved they arrived at without attacks on the traditional social, political and economic order. The societies carefully preserved the difference between individual engagement and political action. Criticisms of the still prevailing feudal system, for example, were pronounced neither in the societies' meetings, nor in their own publications and prize essays. This, however, does not mean that the members in general behaved apologetically or uncritically. Reformist suggestions and proposals for substantial changes of the prevailing modes of production were frequently put forward by individual members. The abolition of serfdom also was repeatedly postulated by individual members. With regard to trade, individual members also turned against the guild system and pleaded for free trade. In particular Johann Albrecht Heinrich Reimarus turned his face constantly against monopolies of any sort,⁸⁵ and in the context of the Hamburg Journeymen's riots in the 1790s, debates within the society on the causes of pauperisation were on the verge of transgressing the limits set by the Hamburg constitution.⁸⁶

If economic societies played a significant role in developing and spreading awareness of human dependence on social conditions, they also stressed the possibility that humans influenced social conditions. As the patriots of Hamburg argued:

A voluntary association of citizens is infinitely more important and useful for the state than is commonly realised. In such an association private men can debate things which the state cannot debate, they can examine and try out things which the state cannot examine and

⁸⁴ See Schindler and Bonß, 'Praktische Aufklärung', 303.

⁸⁵ See Rübberdt, *Die ökonomischen Sozietäten*, 55.

⁸⁶ Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 92.

try out directly, and can receive correction and instruction which would otherwise remain hidden from them forever.⁸⁷

The Hamburg patriots were fully aware of the 'limits of admission to bourgeois [*bürgerlich*] offices', but they too, eventually, came down in favour of retaining existing regulations governing political participation.⁸⁸ The educated classes in Germany did not demand the right of political participation until very late, but felt they were involved in the business of government through the political offices they held. A specific notion equating the holding of office with 'participating in the state' had developed among those whose material and social existence was tied up with a sovereign and the 'state', and this notion increased the self-confidence of the bourgeoisie. As long as the Enlightenment figures who were excluded from direct political involvement regarded the economic societies as providing scope for action, having political participation did not seem necessary. Nonetheless, members of economic societies became increasingly aware of the conflict between bourgeois interests and those of the sovereign authorities. By the end of the eighteenth century individual enlightened figures were clearly thinking beyond the limits of the old constitution.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Kopitzsch, 'Die Hamburgische Gesellschaft', 93.

⁸⁸ Quoted from Kowalewski, *Geschichte der Hamburgischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 43.

⁸⁹ See Hans Erich Bödeker, 'Prozesse und Strukturen politischer bewußtseinsbildung der deutschen Aufklärung', in *Aufklärung als Politisierung – Politisierung der Aufklärung*, eds. Hans Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1987), 10ff.

9

Patriotic Societies and Royal Imperial Reforms in Denmark, 1761–1814

Juliane Engelhardt

Introduction

Denmark in the eighteenth century was a Nordic imperial state with aspirations to gaining a place among Europe's commercial nations. This chapter deals with the 57 patriotic societies that were established in the Danish conglomerate state in the later eighteenth century and the various outlooks that were formed within these societies on the main challenge of the time within Danish politics. The members of these societies, who were primarily recruited from the middle classes, typically advocated reforms within economic life, general education, health care and poor relief. The idea was that economic progress should be built up by simultaneously eliminating widespread apathy and laziness among the lower orders, as a domestic complement to, in international trade, adhering to protectionist policies to keep out foreign imports. Creating an industrious work ethic among the population, however, turned out to be more difficult than was initially believed.

The state of Denmark and its patriotic societies

The Danish state did not cover the same territory as Denmark does today, but was a small empire, which, besides Denmark, also comprised Norway, Schleswig and Holstein, together with several possessions in the north Atlantic and in the West Indies, and some smaller trading posts in India and West Africa. Norway and Denmark had been united since 1380 and Norway brought the crown colonies Iceland, the Faeroe Islands and Greenland into the union. The Danish monarch ruled these territories until the peace Treaty of Kiel, of 1814. The separation was confirmed at

the Congress in Vienna, where Norway entered into union with Sweden, while all overseas possessions remained under Danish control. Under his title of the Duke of Holstein the Danish King had a seat in the German Reichstag and was a vassal of the German Emperor. Within the rest of the state he formally ruled as an absolute monarch by virtue of the arrangement of 1660. In reality, however, his power was not absolute. The landed gentry in Denmark, Schleswig and Holstein wielded considerable influence during most of the eighteenth century. Each estate was an area with its own jurisdiction where landowners were responsible for elementary schooling and poor relief. The independent power hold of the landowners over their estates began to disintegrate only towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the state extended its administrative and social welfare institutions and land was being sold to small farmers. In the course of this process the patriotic societies, which were established in towns and provinces throughout the empire, played a supporting role.

The first patriotic society in Denmark, The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture (*Det Kongelige Danske Landhusholdningsselskab*), was established as a private association in 1769, but formed close ties with the monarchy shortly after. In Norway several regional societies were established in the 1770s and the 1780s, and in 1809 a society that covered the entire country was established, The Royal Society for the Welfare of Norway (*Det Kongelige Selskab for Norges Vel*). This triggered the establishment of 26 district societies in the Norwegian provinces, which each managed an area of the country and prompted the establishment of local parish societies.

In the provinces of Denmark and the two duchies, patriotic societies were established from 1780 onwards. From 1784 societies popped up everywhere. Altogether 57 patriotic societies were established in the Danish conglomerate state between 1769 and 1813; 35 in Denmark, 16 in Norway and six in Schleswig-Holstein. A large part of these societies were geographically anchored in a region or a city and took their name accordingly. The societies in the provinces typically had between fifty and a hundred members. There was also a large concentration of patriotic societies in the capital, Copenhagen. Those societies were also the largest ones measured in the number of members. Several of the societies had four to five hundred members, a few counted more than a thousand. In almost all societies the majority of the members were recruited among the middle classes. They were usually merchants or belonged to the educated part of the population, such as university professors, vicars and other public servants.

Danish patriotic societies can be subdivided into three groups: economic societies which primarily focused on improving the national

economy through commercial reforms, societies of enlightenment, which focused on educating and enlightening the population at large, and finally philanthropic societies, which made an effort to support the poor and fight unemployment. Although the patriotic societies organised activities in different areas, their unifying objective was to promote the welfare of the fatherland and propagate patriotic feelings among the population. The members continually stressed their love of country, their commitment to the common welfare and their duty to help fellow citizens in support of the state.¹ The geographic dispersal of the patriotic societies reflected the fact that patriotic ideas by the second half of the century were reaching wider social circles in the population than previously.

The establishment of the Danish Society of Agriculture

In 1761 the university student Christian Martfelt (1728–90) set out on a year long journey, that led him from Copenhagen to Schleswig and Holstein, Hamburg, Lübeck, Amsterdam, England, Ireland and France until in 1768 he reached the Danish West Indies. The journey was not a classical grand tour. Sponsored by the entrepreneurial merchant Niels Ryberg, Martfelt was sent out to investigate the industry and commerce of the respective countries. During his journey Martfelt continuously wrote detailed descriptions for Ryberg about road systems, flax cultivation, meat salting and candle-making to the number of paper mills. He studied responses to urban social problems such as poverty, begging and lack of elementary schooling among the lower orders.² Martfelt estimated that the population in Great Britain had a higher standard of living than the Danish, a difference he ascribed to the organisation of agriculture and trade and business. In his reports to Ryberg he described British technology and production systems in detail and reflected on the possibilities for emulating Great Britain.³

¹ For the relation between love of country and national identity, see Tine Damsholt, *Fædrelandskærlighed og Borgerdyd. Patriotisk diskurs og militære reformer i Danmark i sidste del af 1700-tallet* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Forlag 2000); Juliane Engelhardt, 'Patriotism, Nationalism and Modernity: The Patriotic Societies in the Danish Conglomerate State 1769–1814', *Nations and Nationalism: Journal of the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism* 13 (2007:2), 205–23.

² For Martfelt's account, see the Royal Library Copenhagen, Ny Kgl. Saml. 1343, 2^o, 377 d 4^o, and 129^d fo1.

³ 'Martfelt's travel to Ireland and Holland 1764', *Betænkninger over det foregaaende i henseende til Danmark*. Ny Kgl. Saml. 377 d, 4^o.

Martfelt believed that the Danish government alone could not orchestrate productivity increases. Inspired by the British improving societies' efforts to reform and industrialise agriculture he argued that a similar society should be established in Denmark to disseminate knowledge of new working methods and award prizes to innovative entrepreneurs.⁴

The Danish Society of Agriculture was founded as a private civil society by Martfelt upon his return to Denmark in 1768. One of the co-founders was Martin Hübner, who had been a legal adviser to the Danish legation in London and had repeatedly sent information about the improving societies in Edinburgh, Dublin, London and France to the central state administration in Denmark. Fifteen other people participated in the founding. They were businessmen, university professors or civil servants. In 1770 the society achieved royal designation and the name it still holds today, The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture.⁵

A primary source of inspiration for the founders was The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, which had been established in London in 1754 and of which both Martfelt and Hübner were members. The rules and regulations of the Danish society bear great similarity to the practices of approving members, electing presidents, awarding prizes and the ambition to improve industry within the society in London.⁶ The Danish society never acknowledged its British model and no formal cooperation was ever established. The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce was a far bigger society and had a much greater focus on the development of machines and other technologies.⁷ The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture did not have the same financial backbone and did not actually introduce technology. Instead it focused on raising productivity within all sectors and professions, especially

⁴ 'Martfelt's travel to Ireland and Holland 1764', *Betænkninger over det foregaaende i henseende til Dannemark*. Ny Kgl. Saml. 377 d, 4^o.

⁵ Ole Degn, 'Flids og vindskibeligheds belønning', *Erhvervshistorisk Årbog 1968* (Århus: Erhvervsarkivet, 1968); Vagn Dybdahl, *For Fædrelandets bedre Flor. Bidrag til Det Kgl. Danske Landhusholdningsselskabs Historie 1769–1969* (Copenhagen: Det Kgl. Danske Landhusholdningsselskab 1969).

⁶ The Archive of The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce: Minutes of the Society. Vol. 1, 1754–1757; Plans, Premiums and Members List 1754–1756; *Rules and Orders of the Society, Established at London, for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce*, London 1758.

⁷ D. Hudson and K. W. Luckhurst, *The Royal Society of Arts 1754–1954* (London: John Murray 1954).

agriculture, by introducing new crops and new methods of cultivation. Immediately upon the establishment of The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture the members initiated a campaign to recruit members in the provinces of the realm. The members sent out invitations to the county governors and chief administrative officers, the town judges and chiefs of police, administrators of crown lands, bishops, rural deans and other civil servants and other 'respected citizens' in Denmark and Norway.⁸ Many recipients promised support by stating they would further the goals of the society in their area, but declined to become members because they could not afford the subscription fee of ten *Rigsdaler*. Thus, the absolute political, clerical and economic elite came to constitute the membership of The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture, which lent it a distinctively aristocratic character. In 1770 the number of members was 309, 100 of which were royal officials, among whom were the foreign minister A. P. Bernstorff, the ministers of state Henrik Stampe and J. O. Schack-Rathlou, the finance minister E. H. Schimmelmann, the head of the exchequer C. D. F. Reventlow and his brother, the wealthy estate owner J. L. Reventlow, who was also known as an advocate of general education. Several of these men were the architects of the reforms in agriculture, general education and poor relief, carried out by the government in the later eighteenth century. The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture gained massive support from the royal family, both in terms of patronage and economic support. The society's meetings themselves were held in a palace attached to the royal castle. Even though the society was established as a civil association, in reality it featured as a semi-state organ.

Patriotic societies in Norway

The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture not only was the first patriotic society in the Danish state, it was also the only society that aimed at working in the greater part of the Danish conglomerate state. Yet, whereas the society never really established itself in Norway, other, smaller, patriotic societies did emerge in these areas. The first regional societies arose in Norway. Between 1773 and 1778, regional societies were established in Bergenhus, Sunnmøre, Romsdal, Stavanger, Inderrøy, Bratsberg and Akershus. Kristiansand and Åmot followed in

⁸ *Det kongelige danske Landhuusholdnings-Selskabs Skrifter*, I (1776), xv–xvii.

1782.⁹ One of the reasons why regional societies first arose in Norway lay undoubtedly in the country's close contacts with Great Britain, its principal trading partner. The Norwegians were influenced by the British reform movement before it caught on in Denmark. The establishment of Norwegian societies was probably due to The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture's concentration on problems concerning Danish agriculture. In Denmark farming was the primary sector. Ninety per cent of the population were peasants and about 69 per cent of the farm land belonged to the 700 private estates. Most of the land was rented by copyholders. The payment was partly villeinage (*hoveri*), partly manorial dues, which was payment in kind, such as rye, barley, butter and pigs. Until 1800 all fit men were tied down to the estate through adscription.¹⁰ All in all, this system meant the estates effectively constituted small states within the state and that a large part of the population was legally subjected to their estate owner. Many of the publications by The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture dealt with the topical issues of abolition of adscription and the transition to freehold.¹¹

However, the Norwegian economy had a completely different make up from the Danish. Farming was not a principal industry in Norway and there were only three estates in the country. Instead, Norway had a very dynamic fishing industry, woods and timber trade, iron- and copper works, and silver works in Kongsberg. The production of raw

⁹ The societies were: The Useful Society for Bergenhus (*Det Nyttige Selskab for Bergenhus*, 1773), The Practical Society of Agriculture in Synnmøre (*Sunnmøre Praktiske Landhusholdningsselskab*, 1773), The Practical Society of Agriculture in Romsdal (*Det Romsdalske Praktiske Landhusholdningsselskab*, 1776), The Society of Agriculture in Stavanger County (*Stavanger Amts Landhusholdningsselskab*, 1776), The Society of Agriculture of Inderøyen (*Det Inderøyske Landhusholdningsselskab*, 1776), The Economic Society of Encouragement in Bratsberg County (*Bratsberg Amts Økonomiske Opmuntringsselskab*, 1777), The Patriotic Society of Akerhus (*Det Akerhusiske Patriotiske Selskab*, 1778), The Economic Society in Kristiansand (*Det Kristiansandske Økonomiske Selskab*, 1790), The Patriotic Society in Åmot (*Det Åmotske Patriotiske Selskab*, 1782), and The Corresponding Topographical Society in Norway (*Det Korresponderende Topografiske Selskab for Norge*, 1791).

¹⁰ Ole Feldbæk, *Danmark-Norge 1380–1814, 4: Nærhed og Adskillelse 1720–1814* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget 1998); Ole Feldbæk, 'Historikerne og landboreformerne. Traditioner og problemer', *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Danish) 89 (1989:1), 38–54; Claus Bjørn (ed.): *Det danske landbrugs historie, 2: perioden 1720–1810* (Copenhagen: Landbohistorisk Selskab 1988); Birgit Løgstrup, *Jorddrot og offentlig administrator. Godsejerstyret inden for skatte- og udskrivningsvæsenet i det 18. århundrede* (Copenhagen: Gad 1983).

¹¹ *Fortegnelse over Skrifter passende for den dansk-norske Landalmue* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Landhusholdningsselskab 1807).

materials made it possible to maintain a large export, especially of timber. Still, the agricultural produce was too small to feed the population and, until 1788, Norway relied for its grain imports on a Danish monopoly. Additional problems were that the quality of the grain often was poor and that Danish supplies were insufficient. The Norwegians had to revert to substitutes, such as moss, rose hips, bone flour and lichen. The monopoly was temporarily annulled from 1771 to 1774, parallel to the establishment of the Norwegian patriotic societies. These years were characterised by bad harvests and famine threats. From a Norwegian perspective, there was thus an urgent need to improve its own farming industry so that the country could become self-sufficient. This was a crucial condition stimulating the establishment of Norwegian economic societies.¹²

Even after the Danish grain monopoly was lifted in 1788, lack of grain remained a problem in Norway, and Norwegian societies continued to focus on extending the farm land through forest clearing and on the establishment of granaries. In 1809 The Society for the Welfare of Norway was established as an interregional organisation to cover the whole of Norway. It kept more of a distance from the Danish Government than earlier Norwegian societies. Although the society applied for, and received, royal designation in 1811 and was funded through large royal subsidies,¹³ it did not subject itself to the Danish monarchy. Instead, it remained a platform for expressing discontent with the union with Denmark and the shaping of a burgeoning Norwegian national identity.

Patriotic societies in the provinces in Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein

Most societies in Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein were established after 1784, the year crown prince Frederic assumed power. The crown prince advocated reforms and public debate in pamphlets and magazines, which dovetailed with the interests of the members of the patriotic societies. They only were obliged to notify the commissioner of police of their establishment and inform him of their meetings,

¹² Andreas Bull, *Oekonomiske Tanker om Fabriksvæsenet og raae Produkters Forarbeidelse i Landet* (Copenhagen 1786), 71–2; *Plan til et Bygde-Magazin for Asker Præstegjeld* (Christiania 1810).

¹³ Kristian Kaus, *Viktige trekk fra Norges Vels historie 1809–1995* (Oslo: Det kgl. selskap for Norges vel 1996), 13; John Peter Collett and Ernst Bjerke (eds.), *Vekst gjennom kunnskap. Det Kongelige Selskap for Norges Vel 1809–1814* (Skjetten: Det Kongelige Selskap for Norges Vel 2009).

so that he could show up unannounced. This relatively extensive freedom of speech lasted until 1799, when a long ordinance (clearly suffused by fear of Napoleonic revolutionaries across Europe) was issued.¹⁴

Generally, there was no need for curbing the patriotic societies' freedom. The government in fact greatly benefited from the efforts of the patriotic societies. Earlier in the century a series of attempts to set up systems of poor relief and general education had run into resistance both by farmers and estate owners protecting their rights. At this stage, the societies in the provinces and peripheral regions came to function as tools to gain support for and implement reforms in parts of the realm where the royal administration was weak.¹⁵

The first regional economic society in Denmark was Næstved's Patriotic Society (*Næstveds Patriotiske Selskab*), which was established by Niels Ryberg in 1780. The society was established in order to set up a linen mill and spinning schools in villages in the mid- and southern parts of Zealand. The aim was to interrupt textile imports that weighed heavily on the national balance of payments. The spinning schools aimed both to provide yarn for the linen mill and employment for the poor, children of peasants and the elderly. The effects were believed not only to lie in a direct reduction of the need for poor relief in the region, but also in a shift in mentality among the poor and the stimulation of industriousness.

During the 1780s the society established thirteen spinning schools in market towns and villages in mid- and south Zealand. Most of the schools had ten to twenty spinners, some of whom were old women, but the members of Næstved's Patriotic Society preferred children from four to thirteen years of age because they spun a finer thread and were considered a long-term investment that benefited the state and helped foster children into industrious citizens.¹⁶ As such, the spinning schools were considered both a solution to acute economic and social problems, and part of a long-term preventative strategy. The educational aspects of the schools were also given as the reason why children were put in

¹⁴Harald Jørgensen, *Trykkefrihedsspørgsmålet i Danmark 1799–1848* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard 1944); Jens Arup Seip, 'Teorien om det opinionsstyrte enevelde' *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Norwegian) 38 (1958), 397–463.

¹⁵The government administration in Copenhagen, for instance, asked The Patriotic Society of Schleswig-Holstein (*Die Schleswig-Holsteinische patriotische Gesellschaft*) to prepare a description of the poor relief in the duchies. Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landesarchiv Abt. 422.3, nr. 1.

¹⁶C. E. Mangor, *Efterretning om Næstveds Patriotiske Selskab* (Copenhagen 1782), 65.

the spinning schools at the age of four, even though they probably were not able to do real work.¹⁷

Næstved's Patriotic Society was closely tied to the royal family and court. Of its 88 members in 1788, 31 were members of the royal family or civil servants connected to the royal court. King Christian VII, crown prince Frederic and several of his siblings donated considerable subsidies.

In Schleswig-Holstein two societies with the name *Die Schleswig-holsteinische patriotische Gesellschaft* were established after one another. A. C. H. Niemann, a professor in cameral sciences (*Kameralwissenschaft*) at the Christian-Albrecht-Universität in Kiel, initiated the establishment of the first society in 1786, which published the periodical *Schleswig-holsteinische Provinzialberichte. Landeskunde* – knowledge about the topography, economy and population of the duchies – played a central role in the society's work, and the *Provinzialberichte* published detailed descriptions of the parishes, market towns and villages in the duchies. Niemann furthermore made a great effort to disseminate statistical knowledge. Schleswig and Holstein were predominantly agrarian areas, but, differently from Denmark, its estates were bigger and serfdom remained predominant until 1805. Both men and women were subject to a lifelong highly restrictive serfdom. The president of the society W. E. Christiani, a history professor at Kiel, was a very sharp critic of serfdom, both for political economic reasons and because he believed it an infringement of basic human rights.¹⁸

The society dissolved around 1800, to be re-established by the factory owner J. D. Lawätz in 1812, though on a different footing. Whereas the first society had strong academic leanings, the second worked towards practical targets to stimulate the economy in the duchies. Whereas the first society was based in the University City Kiel, the second was

¹⁷ 'Since spinning schools are like a nursery of industry, in which young plants are fostered and raised, its fruits will not at first be recognizable, but cost money, time and hard work. In time these plants will reward the state with many ripe fruits, which will form the state's wealth and secure many clever citizens, which will help increase the welfare and strength of the state.' J. F. Gæde, *Udførligere Underretning om et patriotiskpraktisk Selskab til Industriens og Handelens Forfremmelse* (Copenhagen 1788), 15, 17.

¹⁸ 'Ueber die Leibeigenschaft, nach Gründen des Naturrechts. Eine Vorlesung des Hrn. Justizr. Christiani in der Versammlung der schleswig-holsteinischen patriotischen Gesellschaft am 30sten December 1786, bei der Uebergabe des Direktorats an den Herrn Prof. Fabricius', *Schleswig-holsteinische Provinzialberichte* 1787, 134–66.

founded in the commercial city Altona. Like Næstved's Patriotic Society, the second Schleswig-Holstein society was established to improve large-scale textile production in Altona and Neumühlen, which Lawätz was head of and which employed between 600 and 800 workers.¹⁹ Lawätz also established a poor house based on a Dutch model, Friederichsgabe, where paupers were taught practical skills.

Next to these economic societies, a second group of patriotic societies was concerned with education and diffusion of useful knowledge to wider circles in the population. They established peasant schools, reading societies and libraries that loaned books to the lower orders. The Society for Civic Virtue and The Society for Posterity (*Selskabet for Borgerdyd* and *Selskabet for Efterslægten*), established in Copenhagen in 1785 and 1786 respectively set up secondary schools, primarily for the members' own children, but also admitted a few poor children.

Some societies published pedagogical works, such as *Almuens Lærer* (The Peasants' Teacher), which became one of the most widely distributed publications at its time.²⁰ *Almuens Lærer* contained practical instructions on gardening, enclosure of farmland and hop growing, but first and foremost aimed at changing the peasants' sullen, superstitious and fatalistic mentality.

A final third group consisted of philanthropic societies. Among these was The Sisterly Charity Society (*Det Søsterlige Velgørenhedsselskab*), a society situated in Copenhagen, which only accepted female members. It established a school, which admitted thirty to forty poor girls. The girls attended the school for 38 hours per week to follow classes in elementary reading, writing, maths as well as knitting, sewing, spinning and cooking. The school was not only supposed to take care of the students' literary and practical education, but prepare the girls for future life as wives and mothers.²¹ The society's patroness was crown princess Marie Sophie Frederikke, while the queen mother Juliane Marie, the heir presumptive Sophie Frederikke and her daughters all supported the society financially. Another

¹⁹ Manfred von Essen, *Johann Daniel Lawätz und die Armenkolonie Friederichsgabe, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte Schleswig-Holsteins*, vol. 97 (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag 1992).

²⁰ The Society for Civic Virtue initiated the publishing of *Almuens Lærer* and The Royal Danish Society for Agriculture recommended it. Several of the other societies distributed it.

²¹ Niels Lang Nissen, *Det Søsterlige Velgørenheds-Selskabs Fortids Tilskikkelser og Dets Fremtids Udsigter* (Copenhagen 1800), 11.

philanthropic society was The Voluntary Society of Friends of the Poor in Kiel (*Die Gesellschaft freiwilliger Armenfreunde zu Kiel*), which made a great effort to consult poor families, urge the able-bodied to work and support the ones unable to work. This society established a combined spinning- and reading school in 1793, in which poor children were offered literary classes in the morning and spinning instructions in the afternoon. Like in Næstved the pedagogical argument was that children attended the spinning school to develop an industrious work ethic.

The societies' organisational structure

Patriotic societies were regarded by their members as a movement sharing an overarching goal to improve the general welfare among all citizens. This was in line with more or less shared understandings of the concept of patriotism. Nonetheless, each society was self-organised and established locally. Some societies corresponded with each other, but never established formal cooperation. The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture never had plans to establish regional branches or incorporate the many local societies.

In the German Reich, by contrast, several attempts were made from the late 1780s to establish a countrywide German patriotic society. In these efforts, the philosopher Johan Gottfried Herder's *Idee zum ersten patriotischen Institut für den allgemeingeist Deutschlands* in 1788 served as a manifesto. The periodical *Allgemeinen Reichs-Anzeiger*, which was published 1794–1806 by the German author and publisher Rudolph Zacharias Becker, equally was supposed to address all German patriotic societies. Whereas the efforts to establish a central organisation of the patriotic societies in the German Reich were never fulfilled, this actually happened in Norway. When The Royal Society for the Welfare of Norway was established it had a distinct plan for a centralised organizational structure. None of the Norwegian societies, which were established in the 1770s and 1780s had had any cooperation, but The Society for the Welfare of Norway aimed both at incorporating the already existing societies and establishing new local societies under the aegis of the mother society. Almost all the Norwegian parish- or district societies were renamed 'The Society for the Welfare of . . . ' the particular parish or the district, which underlined their attachment to The Society for the Welfare of Norway. The establishment of district- and parish societies was quite successful during the first years. The amount of societies peaked at 66 in 1813. The number of members in The Society for the

Welfare of Norway had then reached 2,652, most of whom lived in Trondheim and Christiania.²²

The economic goal of self-sufficiency

One of the Danish societies' missions was to reduce the import of foreign goods and increase domestic production in order to make the state self-sufficient as far as possible. As the membership invitation of The Corresponding Topographical Society in Norway put it:

Love of Country means to favour goods made within the state over imported goods, to support the entrepreneur, to teach the manufacturer and to endure small errors until time and hard work have straightened them out; patriotism means being the engine behind export, but equally being frugal in the things we use ourselves.²³

This quote is characteristic of the patriotic societies' view of the development of the national economy. The patriotic societies aimed at developing all sectors in the domestic production to such a level that they met the total national demand. In this they supported the aims of the government's economic policy. Throughout the eighteenth century several decrees were issued which forbade the import of luxury goods and commanded simplicity. Several of the societies had preambles, which declared they would observe these decrees and reward initiatives that made it possible to replace foreign goods.²⁴ And so The Society of Agriculture in Randers County (*Randers Amts Husholdningsselskab*) which was established in 1810 was not atypical in offering prizes in the fields of cattle breeding, pig breeding, bee-keeping, gardening, potato growing and tree planting, the cultivation of flax and hemp,

²² S. Hasund, *Det Kgl. Selskab for Norges Vel 1809–1909* (Gjøvik 1941), 5; L. S. Platou, 'Fortegnelse over de Norske Sogne-Selskaber, der have vedtaget at staae i Forbindelse med det Kongl. Selskab for Norges Vel', *Budstikken* nr. 3 (Christiania 1812), 143–50; Collett and Bjerke, *Vekst gennem kunnskap*.

²³ 'Indbydelse til et Corresponderende Topographisk Selskab for Norge, tilligemed Selskabets Love', *Topographisk Journal for Norge* (Christiania 1792), 7.

²⁴ In The Society for Civic Virtue: *De første fem og tive Vedtægter som ere antagne af Selskabet for Borgerdyd den XIV September 1785* (Copenhagen 1785); H. Muhle Hoff, 'Nogle Opmuntringer og Vink til det Danske Publikum, i Anledning af den Kongelige Proklamation af 15 Juni 1812, til Tarvelighed og Vindskibelighed', *Patrioten. Et Maanedsskrift af Blandet Indhold* (Randers 1813), 234–42; in The Society for the Welfare of Norway: *Budstikken* nr. 36 og 37 (Christiania 1812), 279–84.

shoemaking, brush and wool manufacturing and the production of straw (rather than expensive wooden) coffins. In the same spirit the societies published magazines, from which the readers could learn how to economise on light and fuel, make soap from fish, bake bread from bone meal, schnapps from sugar, how to avoid rot in shoe soles and dry-rot in building timber.²⁵

In all this the patriotic societies were fully in tune with the political economic thinking that prevailed in most of the eighteenth century. The fact that their activities fully focused on domestic affairs does not mean the members did not have an international perspective. A number of society members had made considerable economic profits during the Napoleonic wars. Denmark had stayed neutral for a long time in the wars that took place between the European states in the wake of Napoleon's rise to power and benefited from its status to carry belligerents' goods. It was not until the Danes refused to surrender the Royal Navy to the British and Copenhagen was bombed in September 1807 that Denmark was forced into war.

Although the members did not use terms like export development or international competitiveness, they developed strategies that devised economic progress as built from below. In order to achieve this they had three areas of focus. First, domestic raw materials should be extracted more efficiently and worked locally. Second, the state should engender industriousness in the population and increase its number. Third, productivity in the primary sectors of the economy – farming, fishing and crafts – ought to be increased by, for instance, introducing new crops and more efficient work methods. Agriculture should be reformed through free-holding and the elimination of shared property rights in land.

Extraction of raw materials

Four patriotic societies compiled accounts of the raw materials and minerals in the Danish state, The Patriotic Society of Schleswig-Holstein (*Schleswig-Holsteinische patriotische Gesellschaft*) of 1786, The Corresponding Topographical Society in Norway, The Society for Posterity in Bornholm (*Selskabet for Efterslægten på Bornholm*) and The Society for the Welfare of Norway. The members sent in articles for publication by their respective society discussing the fauna, geography,

²⁵ The Regional Archives for Zealand and Copenhagen: The records from The Patriotic Society in Kalundborg: 'Fortale', *Det kongelige danske Landhusholdningsselskabs Skrifter* II (Copenhagen 1790).

geology and mineralogy of their region. Furthermore they produced cartographic studies, primarily coastline surveys. A large part of the articles concerned fishing and farming and especially the cultivation of flax, hemp, hops, tobacco, mustard seeds, rasp, potatoes and forage plants.²⁶ The intention was that these local studies together provided insight into the developmental potential of the national economy. The topographical accounts were to shed light on the possibilities of extracting raw materials and increasing agricultural productivity.

Public spiritedness of the population

The size and labour output of the population was a central theme in the societies' economic debates. The lower orders were considered an unexploited source for economic development. The preamble of the invitation to Næstved's Patriotic Society for instance stated that the welfare of the state should begin with an improvement of the condition of the peasants:

A conviction that no truly useful and lasting arrangement can be fixed in our fatherland unless it is founded among the poorest rank, and furthermore improves the peasants' social conditions and ways of thinking, has encouraged some Danish patriots to establish a society, which might contribute to such a noble and useful enterprise.²⁷

The preamble added that the economic growth of the state should not depend on Danish overseas trade, instead 'the day will come when it [the merchant class] will turn its noble attention to the more lasting and wiser gold mine that we have in our peasantry.'²⁸

Farming and crafts provided a more stable guarantee for the employment of the population. A large population furthermore made possible the development of new professions and lifted the economy from the fragile condition in which the entire workforce was involved in the

²⁶ The journal of The Patriotic Society of Schleswig-Holstein, *Schleswig-Holsteinische Provinzialberichte* (Altona 1787–1798) contained almost only topographical articles. So did the journals published by The Corresponding Topographical Society in Norway and The Society for Posterity in Bornholm: *Topographisk Journal for Norge*, vols. 1–34 (Christiania 1792–1808); *Samlinger udgivne af Det Bornholmske Selskab for Efterslægten*, vols. 1–3 (Copenhagen 1806–1810).

²⁷ The invitation is dated 26 May 1780 and is filed in the Archives of the society in the regional archive for Zealand.

²⁸ C. E. Mangor, *Efterretning om Næstveds Patriotiske Selskab* (Copenhagen 1782), 3ff.

provision of subsistence goods. In addition, population increases created higher tax revenues and potential military power.²⁹

Denmark indeed saw a population increase in the second half of the eighteenth century. In mainland Denmark itself the population increased by 20 per cent while the Norwegian population increased by 43 per cent and that of the two duchies by 14 per cent (from 1768 to 1803).³⁰ However, the general welfare of the rising population, if anything, went down rather than up.³¹ Several society members therefore argued that economic growth did not show itself to reside in a large population, but in having a healthy, well-educated and relatively well-paid population. Therefore, the chairman of The Society for the Welfare of Norway, bishop Bech, underlined the necessity of public schools, which ensured that the *entire* population received elementary education. This he regarded as a precondition for a rise in productivity. Furthermore a general increase in the prosperity of the population increased the general demand for goods, and profits for investments in new enterprises.³²

Internal economic freedom

While the members of the patriotic societies generally advocated protection of domestic industries against foreign competition, they distanced themselves from encouragements through state subsidies and legal monopolies. In a pamphlet from 1786, Andreas Bull, who was chief constable in Christiania, argued that grain provided through the Danish monopoly was wet and inedible. His criticism was a matter of political

²⁹ F. J. Bech, 'Forslag til Almuens Ungdoms-Læreres Dannelse', *Budstikken* 2 (1810: 15 and 16), 57–63; A. C. H. Niemann, *Schleswig-Holsteinische Provinzialberichte* (Altona 1786), 11, 34–43. Attention towards population growth was widespread, as the censuses in 1769 and thereafter in 1787, 1801, 1834 and 1840 show.

³⁰ Hans Chr. Johansen, *En samfundsorganisation i opbrud 1700–1870: Dansk Socialhistorie*, vol. 4 (Copenhagen: 1979), 55, 74; Ole Feldbæk, *Danmarks økonomiske Historie 1500–1840* (Herning: Systime 1993), 123–4.

³¹ Both the official ordinances and the public debates stated beggary as an increasing problem and complained about myriads of poor people. The complaints mirrored real social problems, in that the number of poor actually was steadily increasing. A government commission from 1787 estimated that there were about 38,000 people who needed poor relief, but only 15,000 (3.3 per cent of the population) of them actually received help. Each individual received ca. 4 rdl. per year, which corresponded to 2–3 weeks salary for an artisan. See Johansen, *En samfundsorganisation i opbrud 1700–1870*, 178–9.

³² Bech, 'Forslag til Almuens Ungdoms-Læreres Dannelse', *Budstikken* II (1810: 15 and 16), 57–63. See also James Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the eighteenth-century origins of compulsory schooling in Prussia and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988), 131.

economic principle. It served to illustrate what the consequences were when producers were ensured buyers and did not have to compete for customers.³³ This dissatisfaction was the main reason why he in 1791 became one of the co-founders of The Corresponding Topographical Society for Norway.

The economist Johan Friderik Gæde levelled a more general criticism at the idea of state interferences through subsidies. He argued that artificial regulations of prices, licenses and state subventions should be abolished, since they hindered the development of the country's industry and trade. In the magazine *Patrioten* (The Patriot), written by and for members of patriotic societies in Denmark, the high court judge Heinrich Muhle Hoff criticised the existence of trade licenses, through which the state opened sources of wealth for some of the country's citizens and closed them for others.³⁴ Bull, Gæde and Muhle Hoff all opposed government policies that artificially kept industries alive. Instead, they favoured internal freedom of trade and argued that entrepreneurs should be able to freely establish their own businesses.

Most society members would have been familiar with the leading ideas of physiocracy and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which was translated into Danish in 1779, only three years after it appeared in Great Britain. And Danish writers entered in the same kinds of late eighteenth-century political economic discourses when they argued that politics should heed the laws of nature.³⁵ It was the task of the government, they believed, to create the *preconditions* for economic growth, but not go any further and try to actively regulate the market.

The members' arguments for economic freedom often referred to more general notions of human sociability. They drew attention to the peasants' laziness and aversion to change, which they considered *the*

³³ Andreas Bull, *Oekonomiske Tanker om Fabriksvæsenet og raae Produkters Forarbeidelse i Landet* (Copenhagen 1786), 25–8.

³⁴ Gæde, *Udførligere Underretning om et patriotiskpraktisk Selskab*, 12, 28–9, 38–9; Bull, *Oekonomiske Tanker om Fabriksvæsenet*, 35–6; Muhle Hoff, 'Nogle Opmuntringer og Vink til det Danske Publikum', 195.

³⁵ Gæde, *Udførligere Underretning om et patriotiskpraktisk Selskab*, 40; Bull, *Oekonomiske Tanker om Fabriksvæsenet*, 5, 87. Christensen argues that their ideas derived from Arthur Young and physiocracy, since the patriots focused on mechanisation of agriculture, instead of crafts and industry, and especially since Bull insisted on free import and export of grain. Dan Ch. Christensen, *Det moderne Projekt. Teknik og kultur i Danmark-Norge 1750–(1814)–1850* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1996). There are no explicit references to either Young (or to Smith) in any of the publications societies.

major stumbling block to the implementation of reforms. One long-term strategy to overcome this was to educate the peasant population. Yet, the actual cause of the peasants' laziness lay in the adscription in Denmark and of the serfdom in the duchies which instilled apathy in the peasant population. Also, the economic societies criticised the system whereby farmers had to rent the soil they cultivated from the estate owners and did not have property rights. Individual freedom and property rights were the real triggers of economic activity, whereas compulsion created corruption. The pursuit of money, power and prestige was considered to be a basic instinct in every human being. When these instincts were subdued man would fall into a slave mentality.

The difference between the free and oppressed man's working ethics was depicted in a speech to The Society for Civic Virtue in 1785. The speaker explained that as a citizen, one would necessarily have to give up a part of one's natural freedom. However, when civic obedience became slavery the citizen turned lazy and careless: 'he hears the encouraging voice that shouts at him, but his answer is the rattle of the chains'.³⁶ If the peasant had his own land to cultivate and could reap the harvest of his work, however:

He gets up cheerfully and by sunrise starts working at the uncultivated soil with his sharp coulter and earns the richest harvest. Happily he returns to his cottage, which he built with his own hands, and surrounded by a hardworking wife and a healthy crowd of children, he praises the joys of freedom with a silent, serious thankfulness. With a natural speech he impresses on his children a deep love of country . . . Yes! When the sense of freedom encourages the citizen, the workshops will be filled with diligence and skilled trade fed with activity.³⁷

Civil liberty was not only believed to promote industry and new enterprises, but also trigger a spirit of patriotism and feed the idea that the peasants' work equally benefited himself and the entire state. It was in this way that peasant property rights were no less than 'a source for the affluence of the state'.³⁸

³⁶ Anonymous, S*****, *Tale holdt den 31 Martii 1785* (Copenhagen 1785), 13.

³⁷ Anonymous, *Tale holdt den 31 Martii 1785*, 14–15.

³⁸ Anonymous, *Tale holdt den 31 Martii 1785*, 17. The same argument is presented in: Anonymous, 'Geschichte in der den Herzogthümern Schleswig und Holstein bereits vollführten Zergliederung königlichen Domänengüter, nebst zwei Anmerkungen von verschiedenen Verfassern', *Schleswig-Holsteinische Provinzialberichte* (1788), 323–36.

The peasants' response to the reforms

One can only form an understanding of how the peasants themselves responded to these visions of the members of Danish patriotic societies through statements delivered by these same members. In almost all the societies there were complaints that the peasants generally resisted their well-meant efforts. The vicar Niels Blicher in 1811 established The District Society for Useful Occupation in Randlev (*Det Randlevske Distriktselskab for Gavnlig Virksomhed*) which gives one such account. Unlike most societies, this society actually invited peasants to become members. This succeeded to some extent. Nine of its 23 members were farmers and five were smallholders. Yet, the rest belonged to the well-educated middle classes. Even though the society's board of administration tried to recruit more members among the local peasantry by distributing pamphlets about the society, these efforts were in vain. The peasants refused to accept the pamphlets, even though they were distributed for free.³⁹ The spinning schools started by Næstved's Patriotic Society also never really got established. One of the reasons was the shortage of flax, and even though the society made a great effort to encourage the peasants to grow flax, it was still necessary to import it from abroad. The greatest hindrance to the success of the spinning schools was the aversion of the local population to accept work there. The head teachers complained that the children's attendance was irregular and that the parents disliked sending them to the schools. The spinning schools eventually closed and in 1808 the society gave up the whole idea.⁴⁰

These experiences were common among patriotic societies. Almost all initiatives were unsuccessful, usually because the target group – the peasants – failed to respond. The lower orders probably saw the

³⁹ 'It is regrettable that some of the local inhabitants – maybe because of conceit- edness, contrariness or envy – have showed resentment and prejudice against our society. There were even some, who declined to accept the written invitation, even though that it was offered to them for free.' Niels Blicher, *Udskrivt af Hoved-Protocollen for det Randlevske gavnlige Virksomheds Selskab* (Århus 1812), 3–4.

⁴⁰ Markussen sees the spinning schools' efforts to install an industrious work ethics as derived from Great Britain, but also German pietism and cameralism. In pietism disciplined work ethics (expressed in the dictum *Praxis Pietatis*) and in cameralism economic incentives to work harder and more skilfully were emphasised. Ingrid Markussen, *Til Skaberens Ære, Statens Tjeneste og Vor Egen Nytte. Pietistiske og kameralistiske idéer bag fremvæksten af en offentlig skole i land- distrikterne i 1700-tallet* (Odense: Odense University Press 1995).

societies' efforts at making them more industrious as no less patronising from how they had been treated previously. They did not actively resist the patriots' efforts, but protested indirectly and passively. The patriots on their part responded by venting their frustration that the peasants did not understand what was for their own good.

Conclusion

Although the patriotic societies here have been discussed as if a unified movement, there were individuals, such as Tyge Rothe and Henrik Muhle Hoff, who expressed more radical opinions than other members of societies. Many of the societies established in the university cities of Copenhagen, Kiel and Christiania were more politicised and ideological than those in regional zones, which focused on implementing practical reforms. By and large however the societies presented themselves publicly as a coherent movement. It was important to them to uphold frictionless lines of communication between the members and retain consensus among the societies. Shortly after the establishment of The Society for Civic Virtue a dispute arose about the contents of the statutes. A group of members resigned their membership and founded The Society for Posterity in 1786. The dispute was public knowledge at the time, and severely criticised in pamphlets and magazines. In this way the societies formed a political class. Henrik Horstbøll has in fact demonstrated how the societies served as forums for parliamentary debates among the middle classes, which in the long run prepared this part of the population for actual participation in politics, when the country was granted a liberal constitution in the nineteenth century.⁴¹

Some of the Danish societies continued to exist throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and a few of them still exist today, notably The Royal Danish Society of Agriculture and The Society for the Welfare of Norway. Today these are primarily agricultural societies, occupied with practical problems. So why were most of the patriotic societies dissolved? The simple answer is both that they depended too much on the energy and intentions of their founders and that most tasks of the societies were gradually institutionalised by the state.

If this seems an inglorious ending to a movement that often was unsuccessful in reaching its aims, this is not, I believe, an entirely

⁴¹ Henrik Horstbøll, 'Den ubanede vej og sporløse sti mod borger-dyd. En borgerlig bevægelse i Kronprinsens København 1785', *Magasin fra Det kongelige Bibliotek* 5 (1990:3), 25–37.

justified conclusion. The Danish societies had an important cultural impact in bringing about a culture in which hard work became a value in itself, in which change become regarded in a positive key, and in this way, and in others, paved the way for greater and more successful reform projects and in a certain sense also for the foundation of modern Denmark.⁴²

⁴² See Juliane Engelhardt, *Borgerskab og fællesskab. De patriotiske selskaber i den danske helstat 1769–1814* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag 2010).

10

Patriotism, Agronomy and the Peasant Question: The Free Economic Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia

*Colum Leckey**

Introduction

Writing in 1748, the *philosophe* Montesquieu assessed the progress of European *manières* and *mœurs* in Russia since the reforms of Peter the Great:

It was tyrannical to ordain the law which required the inhabitants of Moscow to cut off their beards and shorten their clothes; it was tyrannical for Peter I to use violence to compel those entering the city to cut off their long cloaks at the knee. Means exist for preventing crimes, the establishment of penalties by law; means exist for changing *manières*, the power of example . . . The ease and speed with which this nation achieved order proved both that its ruler had too low an opinion of it, and that the people were not animals, as he had called them. There was no necessity for the violent means he employed; he could have achieved his ends just as well by milder means.¹

Montesquieu's famous words capture the Janus-faced nature of Russia's westernisation in the eighteenth century. On the one hand, Peter readily used force to achieve his ends – one historian has aptly characterised

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¹ Montesquieu, *Selected Political Writings*, edited and translated by Melvin Richter (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett 1990), 212.

his reforms as 'progress through coercion'.² On the other hand, he and his successors tried to mould the sons of the Muscovite boyar class into Europeans through a wide variety of official and non-official cultural institutions.³ When mandatory noble service to the state was finally ended by royal decree in 1762, the manifesto claimed that Peter's reforms had produced a class of Russian Europeans who had proved themselves worthy of freedom. Its most cited passage calls to mind Montesquieu's own words: 'Manners have been improved, knowledge has replaced illiteracy . . . civil and political concerns have attracted many intelligent people; in a word, noble thoughts have penetrated the hearts of all true Russian patriots . . .'⁴

The formation of the St Petersburg Free Economic Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Household Management in 1765 helped put the finishing touches on the Russian nobility's cultural makeover. While not the first society in Russia, it certainly proved to be the most durable, surviving until 1915.⁵ 'Free' (*vol'noe*) represented the organisation's unique non-governmental status, symbolised most vividly by the royal charter that guaranteed its autonomy. 'Economic' (*ekonomicheskoe*) stood for agriculture and animal husbandry, the foundations of Russian civilisation which the Society vowed to bring to the level of perfection. 'Society' (*obshchestvo*) signified Russia's small educated elite, who,

² Evgenii Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great: Progress through Coercion in Russia*, translated by John T. Alexander (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe 1993), 9.

³ For a recent overview of eighteenth-century Russian public life, see Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Russia's Age of Serfdom, 1648–1861* (Malden, MA: Blackwell 2008), pp. 144–65. See also Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *The Play of Ideas in Russian Enlightenment Theater* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press 2003); Douglas Smith, *Working the Rough Stone: Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press 1999); Cynthia Hyla Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy: Eighteenth-Century Rulers and Writers in Political Dialogue* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press 2003); Gary Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700–1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985); Marc Raeff, 'Transfiguration and Modernization: The Paradoxes of Social Disciplining, Paedagogical Leadership, and the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Russia', in *Political Ideas and Institutions in Imperial Russia* (Boulder, CO: Westview 1994), 334–47; Walter Gleason, *Moral Idealists, Bureaucracy, and Catherine the Great* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1981).

⁴ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov russkoi imperii s 1649 goda* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia II Otdelenii 1830), first series, volume 15, 912.

⁵ The first society was the Society for Historical Research, founded in 1759 and lasting until 1768. See Susan Smith-Peter, 'How to Write a Region: Local and Regional Historiography', *Kritika* 5 (2004), 529.

motivated by a spirit of patriotism, combined their talents to introduce a Petrine revolution in ‘agriculture and household management’ (*zemledelie* and *domostroitel’s tvo*). The roots of the term *domostroitel’s tvo* reach back to Muscovy and in particular to the *Domostroi*, a sixteenth-century manual on managing the patriarchal Christian household.⁶ While painstakingly thorough on religion, marriage and childrearing, the *Domostroi* says practically nothing on agriculture. Its silence here reflected the long-standing practice of the Muscovite boyar class to hand farming completely over to peasants. It was this ‘old-fashioned way’ (*po starine*) of estate management that the FES sought to replace with its blend of rationalism, activism and paternalism.

Like Peter the Great, the FES drew from an eclectic assortment of foreign sources: German cameralists; English agricultural improvers; even French natural law theorists. Emulating its sister organisations in Western Europe, it used its journal, *Trudy Vol’nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva* (*Transactions of the Free Economic Society*), to build its public and establish a network in the provinces and abroad. Through its essay competitions, it publicised new techniques in cereal cultivation and animal husbandry while monitoring public debates on land tenure and labour management. Except on one notable occasion, it avoided discussing the political dimensions of serfdom – now known as the ‘peasant question’. Comprised as it was of cautious men from the privileged classes, its leaders knew that such controversial issues were off limits. Accepting the rightness of the traditional order, the FES instead offered technical and moral solutions to agricultural stagnation. The balance sheet of its efforts revealed mixed results. Few Russian noblemen responded favourably to the idea of agricultural improvement – most of them continued to administer their estates in the traditional manner. In the long run, the Society’s most enduring accomplishment was its transmission of a distinct culture of noble enlightenment that helped perpetuate serfdom well into the nineteenth century.

‘The decay of agriculture’

Protean by nature, economic societies had begun to spread from the British Isles to the continent during and in the wake of the Seven Years’ War.⁷

⁶ *The Domostroi: Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible*, edited and translated by Carolyn Johnston Pouncy (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1994).

⁷ Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1978), 288–9.

Empress Catherine II had toyed with the idea of creating a state agricultural agency ever since coming to the throne in 1762,⁸ but it was Novgorod Governor Jacob Sievers who most likely sold her on the benefits of a free society. Sievers had attended meetings of the London Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce (founded 1754) while serving in Russia's diplomatic corps in the 1750s. Impressed by its success in galvanising public enthusiasm for farming, he urged the Empress to form an equivalent for Russia. In a note addressed to Catherine after she came to the throne, Sievers envisioned a club of 'three or four members' whose mission 'would be to provide itself with everything that has been written on the subject of agriculture not only in England, but in Germany, Switzerland and Sweden'. He anticipated that the club would expand to include various 'enthusiasts' as well as 'correspondents in the provinces who would send their observations to the society, as has been the case for several years in numerous places'.⁹

The Free Economic Society's original statute bore the imprint of its English cousin. Enjoying the personal protection of the Empress, it freely admitted its own members by nomination and majority vote, thus empowering them with input regardless of their social status. Meeting on a weekly basis, the assembly adhered to the rules specified in its statute, fostering a 'lived experience' conducive to the reasoned debate that was

⁸ For many Soviet scholars, the inspiration for the Free Economic Society came from the academician M. V. Lomonosov. Lomonosov died before the Society was created, but, according to this view, its future co-founder and Secretary Andrei Nartov brought his idea to fruition. See V. V. Oreshkin, *Vol'noe ekonomicheskoe obshchestvo v Rossii, 1765–1917* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk 1963), 15, 18; N. K. Karataev, *Ocherki po istorii ekonomicheskikh nauk v Rossii XVIII veka* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk 1960), 41–2. Others trace the Society's founding to a few men with ties to the court – Catherine's favourite G. G. Orlov, the court librarian Ivan Taubert and Pastor Johann Georg Eisen, an agronomist and early critic of serfdom. See Anthony G. Cross, *'By the Banks of the Thames': Russians in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners 1980), 57; Roger Bartlett, 'The Free Economic Society: The Foundation Years and the Prize Competition of 1766 on Peasant Property', in *Russland zur Zeit Katharinas II: Absolutismus – Aufklärung – Pragmatismus*, eds. Eckhard Hübner, Jan Kusber and Peter Nitsche (Cologne: Bohlaus 1998), 186–7. The author of the Society's official centennial history does not credit any one person with its establishment. See A. I. Khodnev, *Istoriia Imperatorskago Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva s 1765 do 1865* (St Petersburg 1865), 1–4.

⁹ James Arthur Prescott, 'The Russian Free Economic Society: Foundation Years', *Agricultural History* 51 (1977), 505–6; Robert E. Jones, *Provincial Development in Russia: Catherine II and Jacob Sievers* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1984), 154.

the active ingredient in the European public sphere.¹⁰ At first members were expected to attend all meetings and present at least three written articles or experiments annually, but these rules were never enforced. In 1770 a revised statute went into effect that eased membership requirements and permitted members to serve however they pleased.¹¹ As a result, an unstated division of labour emerged that reserved ceremonial posts for notables and empowered them to frame the Society's agenda through essay competitions. The day-to-day tasks of managing the Society – such as overseeing all those competitions – were left to the academicians, writers and civil servants who formed its inner circle.

Over the course of Catherine's reign (1762–1796) the FES admitted 586 people into its ranks.¹² Its fifteen co-founders ranged from wealthy aristocrats and career civil servants to academicians and literati. The FES would continue to draw from these same groups for the rest of the century. It also tried to branch out. In 1766 the assembly resolved to enlist *pomeshchiki* (noble landowners) in the provinces who had retired from state service 'as lovers of farming and household management'.¹³ This campaign yielded more frustration than lovers of farming – after four years the FES counted only six provincial members. Although a number of provincial noblemen achieved prominence as writers for the *Trudy*, many of them were Baltic Germans from the northwestern regions whose agrarian customs and institutions differed markedly from Russia's. By contrast, the assembly had a much easier time recruiting foreign nationals. By 1796, more than one hundred foreigners had been admitted as honorary members, including the British Lord Admiral Rodney, the French Minister of Finance Jacques Necker, the renowned English agricultural improver Arthur Young, and Hans Kasper Hirzel, Swiss author of the international best-seller *The Economy of a Philosophical Peasant* (orig. *Die Wirthschafft eines philosophischen Bauers*). In 1783 the FES even crossed

¹⁰ Margaret Jacob, 'The Mental Landscape of the Public Sphere: A European Perspective', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28 (1994), 96.

¹¹ Colum Leckey, 'Patronage and Public Culture in the Russian Free Economic Society, 1765–1796', *Slavic Review* 64 (2005), 365, 369.

¹² The Society announced new inductees on the opening pages of each volume of the *Trudy Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva* (hereafter *Trudy*). It also appended a membership register (which was incomplete nevertheless) to *Prodolzhenie Trudov Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva* (hereafter *Prodolzhenie Trudov*), 1 (1779).

¹³ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv, St Petersburg (hereafter RGIA), fond 91 (Vol'noe ekonomicheskoe obshchestvo), opis' 1, delo 3, list 7.

the gender line when it inducted Princess Ekaterina Dashkova, President of the Academy of Sciences, friend to Catherine, and the only woman to join the Society before 1800.

The FES worked to tailor the transnational discourse of patriotism to fit the anxieties and expectations of Russian nobles after their liberation from mandatory state service. It fell to co-founder Roman Vorontsov to provide the vision. As a member of one of Russia's great political families and an influential player at court in the 1750s, Vorontsov had advocated transforming the highest echelons of the nobility into a closed corporation, free of state service and enjoying numerous privileges unthinkable under previous rulers.¹⁴ Now as a leading member of the Free Economic Society he urged his fellow nobles to take the initiative in improving the rural economy, promoting stable villages teeming with strong and morally upright peasant families. Above all else, he wanted peasants and nobles to perform their 'natural callings' – farming for the former and leadership for the latter.¹⁵ Vorontsov found support from Timothy von Klingshtedt, a Livonian nobleman and civil servant who also served on the Commerce Commission where he lobbied vigorously for policies that favoured noble economic interests, including lowering tariffs on grain sales and permitting nobles to establish commercial manufacturers.¹⁶ With the end of mandatory state service, Russian landowners now had limitless economic opportunities to improve and profit from agriculture. In a series of programmatic statements, Klingshtedt looked to the 'general truths and economic laws which have been firmly established by the experience of other European peoples and which are equally suitable for Russia'. Although he praised the efficiency and profitability of the industries of England, Holland and France, he also contended that their small size and high population density left them no choice but to develop their manufacturing base. Neither of these restrictions applied

¹⁴ N. L. Rubinshtein, 'Ulozhennaia komissiiia 1754–1766 gg. i ee proekt novogo ulozheniia "o sostoianii poddanykh voobshche"', *Istoricheskie zapiski* 38 (1951), 232–7; Robert E. Jones, *The Emancipation of the Russian Nobility, 1762–1785* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1973), 93, 111, 117.

¹⁵ R. Vorontsov, 'O sposobakh k ispravleniiu sel'skago domostroitel'stva', *Trudy* 5 (1767), 1–12.

¹⁶ On Klingshtedt and the Commerce Commission, see Wallace Daniel, *Grigori Teplov: A Statesman at the Court of Catherine the Great* (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners 1991), 86–7; S. M. Troitskii, 'Obsuzhdenie voprosa o krest'ianskoi torgovle v komissii o kommertsii v seredine 60-kh godov XVIII v.', in *Rossiiia v XVIII veke* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk 1982), 210–14.

to Russia. Moreover, since Russia was a newcomer to the European states system, it could avoid their mistakes by perfecting agriculture and transforming itself into the 'breadbasket for a great part of Europe'. 'Such a state, which possesses boundless expanses of fertile land and a sufficient amount of inhabitants', Klingshtedt wrote, 'may enrich itself more reliably through the production of raw materials and an extension of agriculture than through the most productive factories.'¹⁷ Echoing the rhetoric of the French physiocrats, Klingshtedt urged nobles to focus on growing wheat and fibre crops for export to Europe while leaving rye for peasant consumption. As an incentive, he organised public competitions as mechanisms for spurring nobles and merchants 'to engage in such activities voluntarily'.¹⁸ And like so many Russian officials since Peter the Great, he advocated learning from Europeans such as the 'English gentry (*pomeshchiki*)' whose improvements had begun to revolutionise farming.¹⁹

Klingshtedt overlooked the many impediments to improving agriculture in Russia: its infertile soil and extreme continental climate; the entrenchment of extensive farming practices; the communal land tenure system of the Russian peasantry; and, of course, serfdom. He left it to the public to determine how to overcome them all. Nearly all *Trudy* writers agreed on the imperative to balance grains with animal husbandry, 'the first rule of rural housekeeping' as one of them phrased it.²⁰ To help achieve this equilibrium the FES publicised a slate of fertilising methods, including marl, limestone and gypsum, planting artificial grasses, swamp drainage and even alternative field rotation

¹⁷ T. von Klingshtedt, 'Reshenie voprosa: kotoroi iz zemnykh nashikh produktov bol'she sootvetstvuet obshchei pol'ze i rasprostraneniui nashei kommertsii, pochemu i razmnozhenie onago dolzhenstvuet byt' vsemi vozmozhnymi sposobimi pooshchriaet?' *Trudy* 1 (1765), 160–1, 167–8; T. von Klingshtedt, 'O pol'ze proizkhodiashchei ot umnozheniia l'na v Rossii, i o sredstvakh k tomu sluzhashchikh', *Trudy* 3 (1766), 133–4.

¹⁸ 'Predstavlenie VEO ot sochlena onago, Vitse-Prezidenta-fon Klingshteta', *Trudy* 2 (1766), 268; Klingshtedt, 'O pol'ze proizkhodiashchei ot umnozheniia l'na v Rossii', 132; Klingshtedt, 'Reshenie voprosa', 179–80.

¹⁹ 'O privedenii v lutshee sostoianie senokosov, o raznykh rodakh trav upotrebiaemykh v drugikh gosudarstvakh k seianiiu lugov, o potrebnom zemledelii dlia vozrashcheniia semian, i o upotreblenii onykh trav', *Trudy* 3 (1766), 55–6; Klingshtedt, 'O pol'ze proizkhodiashchei ot umnozheniia l'na v Rossii', 137–8.

²⁰ 'Primechaniia o pravil'nom uravnenii khlebopashestva s skotovodsvom', *Trudy* 6 (1767), 113.

systems.²¹ At the same time it advocated measures for enhancing animal husbandry, concentrating on the prevention and treatment of cattle disease, increasing hay production and perfecting the methods of producing, storing and applying manure.²²

Although the proposed methods were appreciated, to many peasants and nobles the rule of balancing cereal cultures with animal husbandry made little sense in a country like Russia which possessed endless expanses of land free for the taking. Moreover, it was counterintuitive to expend the drudgery in maintaining a small field with new and risky methods when it sufficed just to cultivate a large one the 'old-fashioned' way.²³ Most FES correspondents failed to accept this unhappy truth, insisting that the old ways had reached the point of diminishing returns. 'Everybody wants to sow more', one Livonian baron complained. 'Both the *pomeshchik* and the peasant think they are doing everything possible to improve cereal cultures if they sow a lot, but receive a little.'²⁴ The physician Gustav Orraeus judged the old ways more harshly. In a critique of *suki*, a form of slash-and-burn used in Russia's northern regions, he

²¹ Klingshtedt, 'O privedenii v lutshee sostoianie senokosov', 53–78; Jacob von Shtelin, 'Vypis' sochinenaia statskim sovetnikom von Shtelinym iz nemetskoi knizhki, prislannoi v Vol'noe Ekonomicheskoe Obshchestvo, pod imeniem "Nastavleniia o gipse"', *Trudy* 10 (1768), 97–114; 'Razsuzhdenie v pol'zu domostroitel'stva v nekotorykh mestakh vyborskoii gubernii', *Trudy* 17 (1771), 157–66; A. Bolotov, 'O razdelenii polei', *Trudy* 17 (1771), 175–89; A. Bolotov, 'Prodolzhenie o razdelenii zemli na semi polei', *Trudy* 18 (1771), 48–168; Grasman, 'Otvat na zadachu o udobrenii zemli bez szheniia kubyshei', *Trudy* 19 (1771), 1–114; A. Karamyshev, 'O prichine plodorodii zemli', *Trudy* 27 (1774), 18–54; Rozenkampf, 'O prichinakh neurozhaia khleba v Liflandii', *Trudy* 26 (1774), 92–7.

²² 'Sposob k unavozheniiu i k popravleniiu pashni', *Trudy* 2 (1766), 57–62; A. Bolotov, 'O udobrenii zemel', *Trudy* 15 (1770), 1–65; A. Rudnev, 'O sposobi izbavliat' ovets ot ospy, i o lechenii sei bolezni', *Trudy* 15 (1770), 76–9; 'Kratkoe nastavlenie, kakim obrazom postupat' v sluchae zarazy mezhdu rogatym skotom, a kak onoi pol'zovat', *Trudy* 17 (1771), 1–71; I. D. Regensburger, 'O prigotovlenii navoza', *Trudy* 18 (1771), 169–209; 'O loshadinom navoze', *Trudy* 19 (1771), 132–54; A. Nartov, 'O udobrenii pashen iskustvom. O izvesti, materialiaikh onoi, i o sposob kak onuii zhech', *Trudy* 19 (1771), 115–31; Bacheracht, 'O padezhe rogatago skota', *Trudy* 21 (1772), 1–64; A. Bolotov, 'O upotreblenii v pol'zu skotskago navoza v stepnykh i takikh mestakh, gde zemli onym unavozhivat' obyknoveniia net', *Trudy* 23 (1773), 138–61; Eisen, 'Nastavlenie k predokhraniii i lecheniiu svinei ot bolezni sostoiashchei v opukholi shei', *Trudy* 24 (1773), 185–7.

²³ L. V. Milov, *Velikorusskii pakhar' i osobennosti rossiiskogo istoricheskogo protsessa*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Akademiia nauk 2006), 33.

²⁴ Rozenkampf, 'O prichinakh neurozhaia khleba v Lifliandii', 95.

condemned 'this ancient' and 'strange method of housekeeping' for making the local peasants 'unsociable, slovenly, stubborn, dejected, and even debauched'. Not only was *suki* ineffective, he held, but disloyal: 'Being patriots, should we not start thinking more about preserving the forests than the tiny and uncertain profit derived from them? Should we not start thinking more about the profits for our descendants?'²⁵

The FES believed that Russia could become the agricultural powerhouse of Europe without reforming serfdom. Consider the responses to the following question from an economic survey that Klingshtedt compiled and appended to the inaugural volume of the *Trudy*: 'Has agriculture in certain places decayed or improved in comparison to before, and if so, for what reason?'²⁶ Despite chronic soil infertility and meagre harvests in the central province of Tula, Andrei Bolotov argued that the rural economy in general 'was improving day by day, and especially in the houses of *pomeshchiki*, undoubtedly due to the fact that many *pomeshchiki*, having taught themselves sciences and having seen foreign lands, are establishing new practices as much as possible'. Aleksei Oleshev and Aleksei Zasetkii, two correspondents from the northern province of Vologda, echoed Bolotov's sentiments, tracing improvements in agriculture to the presence of noble landowners, who, as they put it, were singularly qualified to teach peasants 'diligent' farming practices. By the same token, when correspondents perceived agricultural decline, they attributed it to the nobility's neglect of their customary responsibilities as landowners. Academician Erik Laksman, reporting from the northern swamps of Olonets, foresaw an economic catastrophe if landlords continued to permit their serfs to work in the nearby capital of St Petersburg. Describing the chronic land divisions and inefficient fertilising practices along the Gulf of Finland, Baron Frederick von Wol'f blamed the decay of the rural economy on the local gentry's ignorance of basic farming. On the easternmost fringe of Russia, Petr Rychkov of Orenburg singled out noble absenteeism as the root cause of agricultural decline – an odd claim given that agriculture had barely started in his frontier province. Most forceful of all were two writers from Sloboda Ukraine who openly praised the extension of serfdom

²⁵ G. Orraeus, 'Primechanii o vyzhigani zemli', *Prodolzhenie Trudov* 12 (1790), 107, 108, 113, 117.

²⁶ 'Ekonomicheskie voprosy kasaiushchiesia do zemledelii po raznosti provintsii', *Trudy* 1 (1765), 195.

there after 1763 as the 'solution' to the 'decay of agriculture' on the southern steppes.²⁷

In 1770 Bolotov and Rychkov elaborated on these themes for a competition 'on a model instruction for a steward in the absence of his lord'.²⁸ Convinced that their experience as estate managers gave them inside knowledge of the Russian peasantry, they argued that Russian agriculture required eternally vigilant administration in order to thrive. Their inspiration came as much from the traditional *Domostroi* as the agricultural improvers of Western Europe. They endowed their ideal stewards with the same moral qualities they liked to see in themselves. For Bolotov, the steward needed to be 'prudent', 'honourable', 'upright', 'virtuous', 'good-hearted', 'God-fearing', 'observant' and impervious to 'vice, banditry, drunkenness and hypocrisy'. For Rychkov, he had to be a consummate administrator who supervised his peasants with 'an unslumbering eye' so as to ensure that the 'lazy and roguish peasants' commit no 'dirty tricks' against their lord.²⁹ In the hands of the provincial correspondents, enlightened public discourse became a prop for strengthening serfdom. Aleksei Oleshev, one of the leading correspondents from the 1760s, said it best in a piece which fastened the façade of patriotism and enlightenment on to the timeless wisdom of the *Domostroi*. Only the 'enlightened' possessed the intellectual and moral strength

²⁷ A. Bolotov, 'Opisanie svoistva i dobroty zemel' Kashirskago uezda i prochikh do sego uezda kasaiushchikhsia obstoiatel'stve, otvetami na predlozhennye voprosy', *Trudy* 2 (1766), 184; A. Oleshev, 'Opisanie godovoi krest'ianskoi raboty', *Trudy* 2 (1766), 110–13; A. Zasetskii, 'Otvety na ekonomicheskie voprosy, kasaiushchiesia do zemledeliiia v Vologodskom uezde', *Trudy* 23 (1773), 249; E. Laksman, 'Ekonomicheskie otvety kasaiushchiesia do khlebopashstva v lezhashchikh okolo reki Svirii i Iushnoi chasti Olontsa mestakh', *Trudy* 13 (1769), 28; F. von Wol'f, 'Prodolzhenie otvetov gospodina Barona fon Vul'fa na zadannye v pervoi chasti ekonomicheskie voprosy', *Trudy* 10 (1768), 73–5; P. I. Rychkov, 'Otvety na ekonomicheskie voprosy, kasaiushchiesia do zemledelii, po raznosti provintsii kratko i po vozmozhnosti iz'iasnenye v razsuzhdenii Orenburgskoi gubernii', *Trudy* 7 (1767), 155; 'Po Akhtyrskoi provintsii', and 'Po Ostrogzhskoi provintsii', *Trudy* 8 (1768), 143, 171.

²⁸ 'Zadacha', *Trudy* 13 (1769), 121–2.

²⁹ A. Bolotov, 'Nakaz upravitelii ili prikashchiku, kakim obrazom emu pravit' dereviami v nebytnost' svoego gospodina', *Trudy* 16 (1770), 69–71; P. Rychkov, 'Nakaz upravitelii ili prikashchika, o poriadochnom soderzhanii i upravlenii dereven v otsutstve gospodina', *Trudy* 16 (1770), 21–2, 28–9, 33–4. See also Michael Confino, *Domaines et seigneurs en Russie vers la fin du XVIII siècle* (Paris: Institut d'études slaves d'Université de Paris 1963), 260–1; V. A. Aleksandrov, *Sel'skaia obshchina v Rossii (XVII–nachalo XIX v.)* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk 1976), 50, 111.

to distinguish the 'general welfare' from 'private interest', he wrote, thus obliging the lord to present himself to his peasants as their benefactor. The lord's objective should be 'to make every farmer respect his own and the general welfare without severity and cruel punishment, and through this to remove all restraints on household management.'³⁰ Fittingly, the second half of Oleshev's article consisted entirely of rather old-fashioned instructions for ploughing, sowing, harvesting, hay-cutting and animal husbandry. There was no such thing as the 'peasant question', only farming and noble questions.

The political economy of the peasant question

It was left to Catherine II to link the 'decay of agriculture' in Russia to serfdom. Needless to say, Russia's peculiar institution impeded agricultural progress as much as barren soil or the peasantry's subsistence mentality. It frustrated governmental reform efforts in other areas: extending Russia's infrastructure, promoting urban growth and development, and expanding of native industries. Only a few years before Catherine came to power, the government had reaffirmed the right of nobles to own serfs, to inflict corporal punishment on them, to break up peasant families, to arrange marriages and even to exile refractory serfs to Siberia.³¹ At a time when the trend in Western Europe was to free up the labour force, Russia was headed in the opposite direction. Intent on reversing Russia's reputation for despotism, Catherine drew on Montesquieu's idea of fundamental laws to try and limit the arbitrariness of noble power in the countryside. In her *Great Instruction*, she specifically advocated certain laws in order 'to alleviate the Situation of Subjects, as much as sound Reason will permit', particularly 'a Law . . . which gives some *private* Property to a Slave'. It should be stressed that this was simply an unconventional means to a conservative end. In practically the same breath she explicitly reaffirmed her support for the traditional estate structure in which peasants carried out their duties as agriculturalists and nobles performed their tasks as state servants. Her main idea pivoted on making farming an attractive occupation to

³⁰ 'Druzheskie sovety blagorodnym sel'skim zhiteliam, v dvukh otdeleenniakh sostoiashche: iz onykh pervoe o Dobrodetelei i Porokakh, vtoroe o Zemledelii i Domostroitel'stvo', *Trudy* 6 (1767), 3, 8–9.

³¹ A. N. Medushevskii, *Proekty agrarnykh reform v Rossii (XVIII–nachalo XXI veka)* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk 2005), 46.

peasants through laws that '[tend] least to separate the Peasant from his House and Family'.³²

Soon after coming to the throne Catherine began soliciting proposals for the reform of property relations on private estates from her circle of advisors.³³ She also made an anonymous request for the Free Economic Society's input in November 1765, only to have her letter filed away.³⁴ Not one to give up easily, she tried again a year later. In another communication, which she signed 'I.E.' ('Imperatrítsa Ekaterína'), Catherine offered the Society one thousand gold pieces if it posed the following question to the public: 'What does the property of a farmer (*zemledelets*) consist of – the land which he works or his moveable property, and how can he be granted the right to one or the other for the good of all society?' This time the bribe worked. Russian Secretary Andrei Nartov reworded the question to read: 'Would it be more useful for society for peasants to own immovable property or only moveable property, and how far should this right be extended?' The notice was appended to the *Trudy* and soon announced in publications across Europe.³⁵

Judging by the enormous volume of entries – 162 in six different languages – it was assumed that the Empress had initiated the contest. No other competition before or after elicited such an impressive response.³⁶ Participants viewed it as an opportunity to project on to Russia their dreams of social reform in their own countries, while Catherine used

³² 'The Grand Instruction to the Commissioners Appointed to Frame a New Code of Laws for the Russian Empire: Composed by Her Imperial Majesty Catherine II', translated by M. Tatischeff, in *Documents of Catherine the Great: The Correspondence with Voltaire and the Instruction of 1767, in the English Text of 1768*, ed. W. F. Reddaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1931), 256–8.

³³ For an overview, see Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1981), 133–5. See also Roger Bartlett, 'Russia's First Abolitionist: The Political Philosophy of J. G. Eisen', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 39 (1991), 167–8; Roger Bartlett, 'J. J. Sievers and the Russian Peasantry under Catherine II', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 32 (1984), 17–18; Jones, *Provincial Development*, 152–3; I. S. Bak, 'Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Golitsyn', *Istoricheskie zapiski* 26 (1948), 258–72.

³⁴ Khodnev, *Istoriia*, 20–1.

³⁵ RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 43–5; 'Ob'iavlenie', *Trudy* 4 (1766), 201–3.

³⁶ The register is found in RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 388, ll. 111–13. Most of the essays have been preserved in the manuscript division of the Russian National Library in St Petersburg. Uncovered in 1996 by Georges Dulac and V. A. Somov, they still await publication. See V. A. Somov, 'Dva otveta Vol'tera na Peterburgskom konkurse o krest'ianskoi sobstvennosti', in *Evropeiskoe prosveshchenie i tsivilizatsiia Rossii*, eds. S. Ia. Karp and S. A. Mezin (Moscow: Akademiia nauk 2004), 150, 164.

it to reinforce her image as an enlightened monarch.³⁷ Nearly all of the entries were written in foreign languages, 129 in German alone. Prominent contestants included Voltaire (who actually entered twice), his fellow *philosophe* Marmontel, and the physiocrat Du Pont de Nemours. Only seven were in Russian, none from the Society's provincial correspondents. The meagre Russian response reflected the nobility's refusal to acknowledge the peasant question as an issue. In an essay that he never submitted, the future court historian Mikhail Shcherbatov echoed the sentiments of the provincial correspondents, claiming that peasants lacked sufficient knowledge of agronomy to perform their duties. Rather than grant them freedom and property, he urged nobles to return to their estates as enlightened citizens and wean them from the 'old ways' of husbandry. He urged the FES to lead the movement: 'All of Russia, which looks upon you as sincere friends, awaits your advice, not your orders; all reasonable people will follow it down to the last detail, and the profits they earn from it for themselves will be emulated by others and become the general custom, working for the general welfare of Russia, the glory of our ruling monarch, and also yourselves.'³⁸

The peasant property competition is the single most controversial episode in the Society's long history. Many scholars have seen it as a royal publicity stunt that concealed the intensification of serfdom 'in depth and extent' in the late eighteenth century.³⁹ And in fact, there would be no peasant legislation under Catherine's watch comparable to Joseph II's

³⁷ Bartlett, 'The Free Economic Society', 205–9; John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2006), 114–17; M. T. Beliauskii, 'Frantsuzskie prosvetiteli i konkurs o sobstvennosti krepostnykh krest'ian v Rossii', *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta* series 9, 6 (1960), 26–51.

³⁸ M. M. Shcherbatov, 'Zapiski po krest'ianskomu voprosu', in *Neizdannye sochine-nii* (Moscow: OGIZ 1935), 8–11, 14. See also Roger Bartlett, 'Defences of Serfdom in Eighteenth-Century Russia', in *A Window on Russia*, eds. Maria di Salvo and Lindsey Hughes (Rome: La Fenice 1996), 69–71.

³⁹ V. I. Semevskii, *Krest'iane v tsarstvovanie Imperatritsy Ekateriny II*, vol. 1, 2nd edn (St Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha 1903), XXV–XXVI; A. S. Lappo-Danilevskii, 'Ekateriny II i krest'ianskii vopros', in: *Velikaia reforma: Russkoe obshchestvo i krest'ianskii vopros v proshlom i nastoiashchem*, vol. 1, ed. A. K. Dzhivelegov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo I. D. Sytina 1911), 181; Oreshkin, *Vol'noe ekonomicheskoe obshchestvo v Rossii*, 60; M. T. Beliauskii, 'Vopros o krepostnom prave i polozhenie krest'ian v 'nakaze' Ekateriny II', *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta*, series 9, 6 (1963), 46–8; M. T. Beliauskii, *Krest'ianskii vopros v Rossii nakanune vosstaniia E. I. Pugacheva* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta 1965), 285–6; Esther Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics, and the Problems of Russian Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999), 44–6.

reforms in the Habsburg Empire. Other historians view the contest as a tentative step in the direction of gradual serf reform which the Empress was forced to abandon in light of the nobility's opposition.⁴⁰ What is not in dispute is that it exposed serfdom to the devastating critique of natural law theory. Consider the winning essay, written by the Aachen jurist Beardé de l'Abbaye. As Beardé put it, unlike the Ottoman Empire, whose system was based on what Beardé called 'the equal distribution of slavery', Russia had a free noble elite on top of an enslaved peasantry. The first casualty was legality itself: 'All order is shrouded in a thick fog; no one knows if the children born into slavery belong to their father, their lord, or their sovereign.' The second victim was the peasantry, deprived of the most basic human dignity: 'Poor creatures! They cut wood or till the land at their master's command: the smallest desire, the tiniest enterprise is denied them; great actions are forbidden them; they grow old and die. And what have they accomplished?' Although Beardé favoured landed property and personal freedom for serfs, he urged introducing reform slowly. Arguing that 'it would be senseless to demand from a crude peasant the fulfilment of laws unknown to him', he insisted that Russia's noble class must educate peasants before freeing them:

Thus the lord may tell several slave families: last year you worked only 100 *desiatiny* (270 acres) and I received only 300 measures of grain from your arable; double your efforts and labour for my benefit, cultivate the land which I entrust you with zeal; and as soon as you bring it to a level which can increase my income by 100 measures of grain, I will grant you your own land; I will grant you the freedom and power to enrich yourselves through your diligence and labour.⁴¹

Aside from this call for voluntary manumission, Beardé included few specific recommendations. He advised lords to reward the most diligent serfs with conditional property rights, assuming that other peasants would emulate their example. Full emancipation would be postponed until an unspecified point in the future.

⁴⁰ See Medushevskii, *Proekty agrarnykh reform*, 44; Kamenskii, *Ot Petra I do Pavla I: Reformy v Rossii XVIII veka* (Moscow: RGGU 1999), 356–7; Bartlett, 'The Free Economic Society', 198–9; Jones, *Emancipation*, 137–9; Paul Dukes, *Catherine the Great and the Russian Nobility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1967), 91–105.

⁴¹ 'Perevod sochineniia, prislannago v Vol'noe Ekonomicheskoe Obshchestvo v otvete na zadannyi v 1766 godu vopros: 'Chto poleznee dlia obshchestva, chtob krest'ianin imel v sobstvennosti zemliu, ili tokmo dvizhimoe imenie, i skol' daleko ego prava na to ili drugoe imenie prostirat'sia dolzhni,' *Trudy* 8 (1768), 29, 30–2, 42.

Beardé's essay came in first place because it was so harmless. Jacob Sievers thought so, observing that the 'learned scholar has demonstrated the advantage of peasant property; but one can observe that this is unrealisable'.⁴² Nevertheless, when the judges broached the issue of publishing it in Russian translation in April 1768, they triggered an unexpectedly rancorous debate. At first they suggested soliciting the opinion of the Empress, who replied on 2 July, saying that there was 'nothing in the essay which could not be published'.⁴³ Had the topic dealt with anything other than serfdom the assembly would have published the translation; instead, the lower-ranking members rebelled. By 23 July, out of twenty-seven members who voted, only eleven favoured publication, including the Empress.⁴⁴ In his work on the competition, Roger Bartlett has suggested that the great aristocrats voted to publish the essay mainly out of deference to Catherine.⁴⁵ Yet what of the majority who remained opposed to publishing the piece? At the height of the debate, Frederick von Wol'f expressed their sentiments in a stinging rebuke to the sponsors of the contest:

[Not] a single one of these pieces is worthy of a prize, and for this reason should not be published. It is common knowledge that if a man knows of another means of making a living, he will not choose the most difficult one – and arable farming is the most difficult work; thus it is necessary to use the law to force him into performing this hard labour, and no other type of work. Therefore, we must not grant the peasant complete landownership, for once he is free, he will use the freedom granted to him to work only for his own household, and not for the general welfare . . .⁴⁶

Wol'f may have spoken for the rank-and-file, but he failed to convince them to stand their ground. When the 23 July meeting adjourned, the assembly reversed its previous decision. The official resolution drew the

⁴² Quoted in Ralph Blanchard Jr., 'A Proposal for Social Reform in the Reign of Catherine the Great: Aleksei Polenov's Response to the Free Economic Society Competition of 1766–68', (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York, Binghamton 1972), 194.

⁴³ M. T. Beliauskii, 'Novye dokumenty ob obsuzhdenii krest'ianskogo voprosa v 1766–1768 godakh', *Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1958 god* (Moscow, 1960), 405.

⁴⁴ RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 34–6.

⁴⁵ Bartlett, 'The Free Economic Society', 204.

⁴⁶ RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 5, l. 35.

distinction between the 'political' competence of the Society's great patrons and the 'economic' expertise of Baron Wol'f and his friends:

It is more becoming . . . for those Russian members who hold important government posts to judge what appears to be more of a political task than an economic one; as for other persons who perhaps do not possess sufficient knowledge of the matter, they are not in so important a position [as high-ranking Russians] to cast judgment on the imperceptible or important effects that might come from publishing [the essay]. And so we defer to the enlightened opinion of the most notable Russian members of the Society, even though a majority of voices have expressed resolute disagreement [with them] through the ballot.⁴⁷

Few could argue with this kind of decree. Within a month Beardé's essay appeared as the leading item in the *Trudy*.

The peasant property competition cast a long shadow over the Free Economic Society for the remainder of the century. Although the rank-and-file lost the battle over publishing Beardé's essay, they won the larger war over the *Trudy's* editorial policy. In the decades following the contest, the FES consistently avoided the legal dimensions of the peasant question. On occasion it received proposals for land reform, yet rather than discuss the merits of these ideas, the assembly deposited these proposals into its archives.⁴⁸ Having literally taken the politics out of political economy, the FES began promoting a paternalistic style of estate management known as protective tutelage (*popечitel'stvo*).⁴⁹ Its practitioners liked to think they were rescuing their serfs from poverty and superstition while furthering the progress of European *manières* and *moeurs* in the countryside when in fact they were constructing a defence of serfdom. As usual, it was Klingshtedt who set the tone. Analysing the responses to the Society's economic survey, he concluded that Russian peasants were not inherently lazier than European ones, just a lot more primitive:

The history of European countries demonstrates that in their youthful days, nations (*narodny*) tend to produce only for subsistence . . . It is well known that the less corrected the morals of a nation, the

⁴⁷ Beliauskii, 'Novye dokumenty', 406.

⁴⁸ RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 28, ll. 47–47ob; d. 30, ll. 20ob–21, 28, 32ob, 92, 98ob; d. 35, ll. 47ob–50; d. 399, ll. 63–4.

⁴⁹ Michael Confino, 'La politique de tutelle des seigneurs russes envers leurs paysans vers la fin du XVIIIe siècle', *Revue des Études Slaves* 37 (1969), 39–69.

less it is aware of the comforts of life because of its own wildness, and, not extending its wants any further, prefers idleness alone to all other pastimes.

To break the cycle of poverty, he recommended instilling peasants with a taste for 'luxury', which in this context simply meant certain commodities that would raise them a notch or two above the squalor of their everyday lives: candles (instead of torches), leather boots (instead of bast sandals); and a chicken in the pot every week (instead of none). Klingshtedt assured his readers that accustoming peasants to certain 'luxuries' did not entail granting them personal freedom and property rights. The surveys demonstrated that 'giving freedom to people who do not know how to use it does them far more harm than good, and that freedom alone cannot prevent idleness nor prevent the poverty that results from it'. Besides, the reforms of Peter the Great offered proof that new 'tastes' could be implanted in a people from above. 'Human nature is the same regardless of morals, status, inclinations, and geographical location', Klingshtedt concluded. If westernisation worked for the nobility, then something similar could be achieved for the peasantry.⁵⁰

In the meantime, the Society sought a grand solution to the peasant question that was technical, administrative and tailor-made to suit the needs of the absentee landlords whose names adorned its membership lists. This is demonstrated by its main project of the 1770s, a competition sponsored by I. G. Chernyshev and P. G. Demidov on the topic of determining peasant land allotments sufficient for 'meeting all dues and state taxes without falling into poverty or debt'.⁵¹ It took almost seven years to complete. The winner was Gottfried Grasman, a pastor from the Prussian province of Pomerania who had previously earned a medal for his work on clover and other forage crops. The book's comprehensiveness made its publication a culminating point in the Society's history. Here finally was a meticulous criticism of traditional Russian agriculture in its entirety. Like Beardé, Grasman acknowledged the economic advantages of peasant property ownership, but stopped short of recommending such a reform. In his estimation, serfs lacked the intelligence and responsibility to use these rights for the common good:

These treasures [i.e., freedom and property] in and of themselves are not as profitable to the state as they are harmful to society when they

⁵⁰ Klingshtedt, 'Iz'iasnenie voprosa', *Trudy* 16 (1771), 238, 240, 242–3, 244–7.

⁵¹ RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 8, l. 61.

fall into the wrong hands. Freedom may produce unbridled conduct, while property may become grounds for their liberation from dependence. I regard most enserfed peasants as youths who, having escaped from the stringency and supervision of their parents, immediately seize their freedom and property and do with them as they please.⁵²

Grasman believed great landowners could push through a massive reform of customary land tenure and farming practices on their own holdings. In place of the village commune, which periodically redistributed strips of land to households, he recommended that peasants employ the 'English system' where 'everybody owns their own arable, pasture, and meadow'. Under these circumstances, a household would be entitled to 36.5 *desiatiny* of land (98.5 acres), on which it would raise forage crops alongside the customary grains as it reduced common grazing land and stabled livestock permanently. The result would be an English-style village, teeming with modestly prosperous peasant families, who used their land 'without interference and as they please'. Just how were Russian peasants supposed to put Grasman's English system into practice? Assuming that more manure would result in bigger harvests, he urged a drastic expansion of fallow land to increase fertiliser for the sown fields. While feasible in theory, he never explained where all the extra land would come from – since peasants had none to spare, it would have to come from the lord's demesne, an unlikely possibility. Grasman believed his system might succeed as a peasant resettlement programme in the sparsely populated black soil region of Ukraine and southern Russia.⁵³ Households were to be established there on homesteads measuring 16 *desiatiny*. All arable was to be enclosed, divided into eleven fields of equal proportions, and sown alternately with grains and English clover. Livestock would be stabled permanently and fed with clover, therefore putting an end to the commons and increasing fertiliser production.

Like his northern project, Grasman's southern one ignored the limitations of peasant farming in the black soil region. At no point did he explain why Russians should start using manure under his system when they hardly ever used it under their own, or why they should sow clover and stable their cattle – on virgin land no less. Seeing Russia as a blank

⁵² G. Grasman, 'Opredelenie zemli na odno krest'ianskoe tiaglo', *Trudy* 29 (1775), 40.

⁵³ G. Grasman, 'Opredelenie zemli na odno krest'ianskoe tiaglo', 73–5, 81, 84–6, 94–8. Significantly, in 1772 the Society had almost approved holding an essay competition on the same theme. See RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 10, l. 46.

slate, he failed to consider that landowners might hesitate to introduce a system that would disrupt every aspect of the peasantry's communal life.⁵⁴ Fifteen years later, a writer who identified himself as 'K' tried to apply Grasman's system to the steppe lands recently annexed from the Ottoman Empire. According to the author, orderly agriculture required an independent family farm with clear boundaries 'so that [the peasant] may have complete freedom to use it as he pleases'. Like Grasman, 'K' also recommended assigning 16–20 *desiatiny* to each household, assuming that enclosure would transform them into productive tenant farmers: 'No matter how untamed the country, if only it has soil of good quality and a suitable climate, it can be turned into a paradise if the eyes and hands of the worker can be applied to it on a daily basis.' Yet practical considerations compelled 'K' to scale back his expectations. Scarcity of workers on the steppe demanded that peasants pool their labour and resources, much as they had done in the past. Meanwhile, the lord would be responsible for managerial decisions in order to inspire peasants 'to come around to the correct rural economy.'⁵⁵ Beardé and others had said the same thing before; by the 1790s such rhetoric was wearing thin. Grasman's 'new order' in the south replicated the old one from the centre.

In search of a public

Just who wanted to read the kind of speculative literature that appeared in the *Trudy*, nobody could say. Speaking before the assembly in 1793, the writer Fedor Tumanskii dismissed those critics who, 'in conversation', ridiculed the FES for its failure to connect with its audience. It was not the Society's fault, he continued, 'if one does not wish to sacrifice the time and effort, if another despises that which is new and not old fashioned (*po starine*), and if another simply does not know how to read directions'.⁵⁶ Given that the Society's essay competitions had so little

⁵⁴ In 1781 the assembly received a letter from an anonymous landowner in Novgorod province emphasising the total unfeasibility of Grasman's project anywhere in Russia. See RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 20, ll. 1–10b.

⁵⁵ 'O zavedenii novago sel'skago domostroitel'stva, dlia khlebopashestva, skotovodstva i lesovodstva pri novozavodimyykh selakh ili poseleniiax, na sovershenno odichaloi, ne obrabotannoi, otdalennoi, no pri tom plodonosnoi pochve', *Prodolozhenie Trudov Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva* 45 (1792), 260–4, 282–3.

⁵⁶ 'Rech' nadvornago sovetnika Feodora Iosifovicha Tumanskago, govorennaia v sobranii ekonomicheskago obshchestva Dekabria 10-go dnia 1793 goda', *Prodolozhenie Trudov Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva* 49 (1794), 309.

relevance for readers, it comes as no surprise that the *Trudy* sold poorly. To be sure, the assembly made sporadic efforts to circulate the journal.⁵⁷ The repeated failure of these projects gave Klingshtedt in 1776 the idea of sending the *Trudy* to their fellow economic societies in Europe, precisely where they were needed the least. 'Although it would not further the domestic welfare of the state', he admitted, 'it would serve to spread the glory of the monarch'.⁵⁸ In 1779 the assembly conducted an inventory of all the journals distributed since 1765 and arrived at the figure of 26,937 out of a total of 72,000 printed, a mere 37 per cent.⁵⁹ *Trudy* distribution stagnated at the same levels into the middle of the 1790s, after which it found a captive audience in the recently established public schools.⁶⁰ Between 1795 and 1805, the quantity of distributed books increased by about one per cent annually, an indication that the *Trudy* had begun to reach some of its target audience.

The Society's troubles in reaching its audience made it an easy target for Russia's intelligentsia. First there was Nikolai Novikov, the renowned publisher who relocated his business operations from St Petersburg to Moscow in 1779. One of his first decisions as a bookseller there was to decline the Society's request to offer the *Trudy*.⁶¹ Anticipating that it would not sell, he instead chose to market books that were topical, interesting, eclectic and not too challenging. Then there was Mikhail Shcherbatov, who launched a devastating critique of the FES in one of his unpublished essays. In the late 1780s, as millions of Russians went hungry from the first general crop failure in decades, he attacked the Society for its inability to meet the real needs of the rural economy:

At a time when the Economic Society through its essays has laboured all these years to encourage estate management, at a time when all of our labours should be directed towards farming, [agriculture] has completely failed. Instead, just like our unenlightened ancestors, who knew not a word of estate management and did not read any scholarly essays, our stacks of grain are rotting, and we with all our

⁵⁷ RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 7, l. 48, l. 53; d. 13, l. 30; d. 14, l. 1.

⁵⁸ RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 394, l. 5; d. 13, ll. 27, 36.

⁵⁹ John Brown, 'The Publication and Distribution of the *Trudy* of the Free Economic Society, 1765–1796', *Russian Review* 36 (1977), 342. See also RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 17, ll. 17–18.

⁶⁰ Brown, 'Publication and Distribution of the *Trudy*', 346.

⁶¹ See the assembly's correspondence with Mikhail Kheraskov from April to September 1779 in RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 19, l. 32.

enlightenment and all our incentives do not have seeds in plentiful years.⁶²

Certainly the most famous denunciation of the FES came from Alexander Radishchev, author of *A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow* (1790). Modeled after Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, Radishchev's tale of exploitation and corruption in the hinterland shattered the paradigm that had framed the Free Economic Society's discourse: the belief that peasants needed to demonstrate excellence at their 'natural occupation' before earning emancipation in the distant future. Now decades after the peasant property competition, Radishchev urged the public to forget about the 'good intentions which we have not been able to carry out'. Thus, in one village Radishchev's traveller uncovers a bundle of 'projects for the future' collecting dust which praises the government for trying to limit 'slavery' but condemns the nobility for foiling its efforts. When the protagonist later arrives in the town of Vyshny Volochok, he hears of a nobleman who retired early from service with the intention of making a living on his small estate of 100–200 serfs. The lord does virtually everything that the *Trudy* and its correspondents have recommended – forbidding peasants from working off the estate and instituting a disciplined labour regime – with devastating results:

Where the crops were a failure elsewhere, his grain showed a fourfold return, when others had a good crop, his grain had a tenfold return or better. In a short time he added to his two hundred souls another two hundred victims of his greed, and, proceeding with them just as with the first, he increased his holdings year after year, thus multiplying the number of those groaning in his fields. Now he counts them by the thousand and is praised as a famous agriculturalist.⁶³

The fate of Radishchev is well known.⁶⁴ Within weeks most copies of the *Journey* had been confiscated and destroyed; its author was

⁶² 'Razsuzhdenie o nyneshnem v 1878 [sic] godu pochti povsemestnom golod v Rossii, o sposobakh onomu pomoch' i vpred predupredit' podobnoe neshchastie', in: *Sochineniia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, ed. I. P. Khrushchov, (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo kniazia B. S. Shcherbatov 1896), 634–5.

⁶³ A. N. Radishchev, *A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*, edited by Roderick Page and translated by Leo Weiner (Cambridge, MA: 1958), 151, 154, 159.

⁶⁴ G. P. Makogonenko, *Radishchev i ego vremia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury 1956); Allen McConnell, *A Russian Philosopher: Alexander Radishchev, 1749–1802* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff 1964).

arrested and exiled to Siberia. Yet once the dust had settled from the controversy the FES began displaying symptoms of the same sentimentalist bug that had inspired Radishchev. In his first appearance before the assembly in 1792, Tumanskii reminded his colleagues of the debt they owed the common 'villager' for the luxuries they enjoyed in their lives: clothing, embroidery, fine tables overloaded with food and wine. Tumanskii had moved in the same circles as Radishchev in the late 1780s, and the latter's influence is evident.⁶⁵ This new positive image of the peasant received greater publicity the following year when the FES awarded honorary membership to Hans Kasper Hirzel, author of *The Rural Socrates*, a tribute to the Swiss peasant Jacob Gujer (1716–85), also known as Kleinjogg, or Little Jake.⁶⁶ First published in 1761, the book earned Hirzel membership in dozens of economic associations and made its title character a household name across Europe. *The Rural Socrates* had already appeared in Russian translation in 1789. In its preface, the translator V. V. Novikov (no relation to the publisher) expressed the hope that Russian peasants would emulate Gujer's example, but admitted that 'it would be in vain – they don't read books'. Instead, he appealed to the only audience available: 'How honourable it would be for our fatherland if all our noblemen were transformed into Kleinjoggs and their peasants into their children!'⁶⁷

Inspired in part by the success of *The Rural Socrates*, the FES in 1796 launched its own project to transform the Russian peasantry into virtuous farmers who excelled at their natural occupation and quietly accepted servitude as their lot in life. Sponsored by Platon Zubov, the last of Catherine's favourites, the contest pledged a gold medal for the best 'people's book' (*narodnaia kniga*) written 'in the language of the common people' and filled with 'examples, stories, and conversations' concerning 'various things, which, although not new, are still unknown to the Russian peasantry'.⁶⁸ The result was an anonymously written tome entitled *The Village Mirror or All-Purpose People's Book* (*Derevenskoe*

⁶⁵ 'Rech' nadvornago sovetnika Feodora Iosifovicha Tumanskago pri priniatii ego v chleny Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva', *Prodolzhenie Trudov*, 46 (1792), 129–30; Makogonenko, *Radishchev*, 344–51.

⁶⁶ Blum, *End of the Old Order*, 294–5.

⁶⁷ I. K. Girtsel, *Sel'skoi Sokrat, ili opisanie ekonomicheskikh i npravstvennykh pravil zhizni filosafo-zemledel'tsa* (Moscow: 1789), 13, 15.

⁶⁸ RGIA, f. 91, op. 1, d. 53, ll. 111–13; Khodnev, *Istoriia*, 390–1.

zerkalo ili Obshchenarodnaia kniga).⁶⁹ Published in three volumes in 1798 and 1799, the improbable tale unfolds in a village whose retired lord, a good-hearted serviceman named Veleslav, plans to travel abroad for three years to study scientific farming. To manage the estate in his absence, he hires Pravdinin ('Mr Right'), a petty officer who 'wanted to reform completely the souls of his peasants so that instead of recalcitrant, lazy, and depraved people, he would turn them into diligent, good, and honest villagers obedient to the authorities and management; he wanted to correct agriculture and to introduce all the useful discoveries in rural economics like those instituted in various parts of the Russian state and in foreign lands.'⁷⁰ Pravdinin's tutorials far surpass the 'complete course of agriculture' that Jacob Sievers had envisioned in the 1760s. In addition to farming and animal husbandry, he instructs peasants in moral philosophy, personal hygiene, time management, childrearing and household maintenance. All his efforts are rewarded when Veleslav returns home to see his fields filled with grain, his meadows covered in grass and clover, his herds large and healthy, and his peasants working harder than ever before.⁷¹

Pravdinin personifies the miracle-working qualities that Russian nobles had always wanted to see in their stewards. Rather than bark out orders, he tells stories of commoners whose triumphs and failures reflect their own virtues and vices. Dosuzhev, for instance, is a poor peasant who somehow travels all the way to Switzerland where Jacob Gujer (thinly disguised as a peasant named Erich) cheerfully shares with him his secrets. Back in Russia, Dosuzhev's reforms trigger a chain reaction of improvements as others apply his methods and praise him as Russia's own Kleinjogg. While not spinning his didactic tales, Pravdinin also engages the village through public forums in an effort to cultivate the peasantry's natural reason. On one occasion he tries to convince the crowd of the advantages of enclosing the fallow. They all reject his proposal

⁶⁹ L. V. Milov has argued that it was the Society correspondent Andrei Bolotov. Apart from a few sketchy similarities between Bolotov's work and *The Village Mirror*, however, Milov produces no convincing evidence linking the two. See L. V. Milov, 'A. T. Bolotov – avtor krest'ianskoi entsiklopedii', *Voprosy istorii* 7–8 (1991), 14–19, 20–2. Milov also ignores the fact that the prize went to Vasilii Mikhailovich Severgin, an adjunct at the Academy of Sciences and Society correspondent since 1791. On Severgin, see Khodnev, *Istoriia*, 390–1.

⁷⁰ *Derevenskoe zerkalo ili Obshchenarodnaia kniga*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg: Pri gubernskom pravlenii 1798), 17–18.

⁷¹ *Derevenskoe zerkalo ili Obshchenarodnaia kniga*, vol. 3 (St Petersburg: 1799), 204, 280, 210–20.

except for a certain Soshnikov who 'in fact knew that Pravdinin had spoken the truth'. Acting on Pravdinin's advice, he begins growing clover on his own land and before long the whole village follows his example. 'They say that the inhabitants of [the village] are thinking about abolishing the fallow', the author concludes, 'and in order to do this are selecting the best people and sending them to see how it is done by an honourable man of the gentry in Tula'.⁷²

In its 'discovery' of Russian peasant virtues, *The Village Mirror* reveals the same impulses at work in the sentimentalist literature of the day. Yet none of this implies natural equality between the classes. If anything, *The Village Mirror* perpetuates the hierarchies that structured so much of Russian life under serfdom. Like the great patrons of the Free Economic Society, Veleslav represents an ideal of good intentions, but not much else. Pravdinin, for his part, blithely accepts Veleslav's benign uselessness as part of the natural order. Like the regular members of the Society, his is a practical enlightenment that gets results – provided peasants listen to him. In one revealing passage, Pravdinin leaves the village to see if the peasants can manage on their own. Predictably, disaster ensues – they spend all their days in the tavern, stop listening to their elders, and refuse to perform labour for the lord. The entire order unravels in a few short weeks. 'You promised to follow my orders!' Pravdinin cries out to them upon his return. 'Unhappy peasants, you forgot God, your debt to the sovereign, to your lord, and to me.'⁷³

The Village Mirror also placed the idea of 'enlightenment' in the arsenal of serfdom's defenders. Ever since the peasant property competition, champions of forced labour in Russia had employed mainly negative arguments, prophesising the catastrophic collapse of agriculture if peasants were given freedom and property. By the end of the century these fears had receded as projects for peasant emancipation were shelved in favour of administrative and technical reforms spearheaded by the rising class of provincial gentry and backed by the Russian aristocracy. Most of *The Village Mirror's* subscribers came from the middle and higher ranks of the service nobility, men of wealth and education who may have taken its title literally and wanted to see a bit of themselves in Veleslav and Pravdinin.⁷⁴ The pursuit of enlightenment as an ideal

⁷² *Derevenskoe zerkalo ili Obshchenarodnaia kniga*, vol. 1, 68–76, 82, 93, 129, 139–40, 144–5, 151.

⁷³ *Derevenskoe zerkalo ili Obshchenarodnaia kniga*, vol. 2, 255.

⁷⁴ A. Iu. Samarin, *Chitatel' v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka (po spiskam podpisnikov)* (Moscow: 2000), 66.

thus became accessible for everyone – great aristocrats, noblemen in the country, even the humblest of commoners – provided that it did not threaten the social order. The Free Economic Society's last great project of the eighteenth century thus offered serf-owners of all stations a coherent worldview, one that combined pastoral, moral philosophy, and agronomy into a powerful idyll.

11

The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay on the Restoration of Dutch Trade and the Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences

Koen Stapelbroek

In my younger years I have witnessed the emergence of a patriotic association [*vaderlandsche maatschappij*] for the encouragement of national industry [*ationale nijverheid*]. She is still alive under the name of the Oeconomic Society [*Huishoudelijke Maatschappij*], and continues to provide the most important services by awarding prizes on an annual basis. This association renewed the design of William IV, and her members have for quite a considerable time favoured the manufactures of their Fatherland. Yet, this second attempt, just like the first has failed.¹

Thus wrote Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, architect of the 1813 Dutch constitution, in 1831.² The previous year had seen the separation of what is still Belgium from the Dutch United Kingdom and Hogendorp's work served to ensure that the Dutch tax system remained footed on the fiscal principles that best suited the characteristics of the state. The significance of Hogendorp's statement resides in that here one of the

¹ G. K. van Hogendorp, *Brieven over de nationale welvaart, geschreven in de jaren 1828, 1829, september 1830, aan eenen Zuid-Nederlander* (Amsterdam 1831), 103.

² Hogendorp is sometimes miscast as an advocate of the Amsterdam banking scene. For a corrective see Henk W. Plasmeijer and Evert Schoorl, *Managing Markets and Money: Issues and Institutions in Dutch Nineteenth-century Economics* (Groningen: Universiteit van Groningen 2004). For bibliographical notes see Koen Stapelbroek, Ida H. Stamhuis and P. M. M. Klep, 'Adriaan Kluit's statistics and the future of the Dutch state from a European perspective', *History of European Ideas* 36 (2010), 229–33.

most influential figures in Dutch political history commented on the creation of the Economic Branch (*Oeconomische Tak*), the most famous Dutch economic society, in relation to the major eighteenth-century challenge to counter the economic decline of the Dutch Republic, which – by treating the issue in his 1831 work – he compared with the nineteenth-century predicament of the new Dutch state.

In his work from 1831 Hogendorp considered the Economic Branch in three chapters in which he reviewed the economic policies of stadholder William IV.³ Within the overall design of his book on fiscal policy, these three chapters stood out by providing a negative example of general reform politics. According to Hogendorp, William IV's main fiscal project, the 1751 proposal to transform the entire Republic into a 'limited freeport'⁴ was a perfectly appropriate design to restore the state's competitiveness.⁵ However, the exceptions subsequently granted to put import duties on an extensive range of goods, and the campaign launched simultaneously by the stadholder himself to promote patriotic consumption, turned the policy into a dysfunctional attempt to integrate the seemingly opposed interests of merchants and manufacturers. This led to the inevitable result that William IV's 'wishes remained unfulfilled'.⁶ Thus the adage of 'liberty and protection' (Hogendorp argued that only temporary premiums for encouraging infant industries were useful)⁷ turned into a politics of mixed messages.

Hogendorp believed that the Economic Branch replicated the same dysfunctional design. Speaking from the vantage point of 1831, and remembering the events of the 1770s and 1780s, years in which he himself attended meetings of the Economic Branch, Hogendorp alluded that the by themselves 'most important services' of the society not only had failed to reach their purpose, but thereby also had disbalanced the state. Retreating from this level of analysis and commenting on whether patriotism in the 1830s could be an element in guiding economic reform, Hogendorp concluded tartly: 'it would seem as though

³ Hogendorp, *Brieven*, 73–105.

⁴ Johannes Hovy, *Het voorstel van 1751 tot instelling van een beperkt vrijhavenstelsel in de Republiek. (Propositie tot een gelimiteerd porto-franco)* (Groningen: Wolters 1966); Koen Stapelbroek, 'Dutch commercial decline revisited: The future of international trade and the 1750s debate about a limited free port', *Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli* 43 (2009), 227–55, and Neele's chapter.

⁵ Hogendorp, *Brieven*, 73–4, 83–4, 89–95, recognises trade as a primary sector, specifically in relation to the grain price.

⁶ Hogendorp, *Brieven*, 103.

⁷ Hogendorp, *Brieven*, 104.

this patriotic concept is unable to take root. A more secure means is to guarantee that our domestic manufactures are of the lowest price as well as the best quality ... All other means are useless'.⁸

Hogendorp's reconstruction shows how contemporaries saw the single most important Dutch economic society. Its activities were inspired by a longing to revive the Dutch staple market both in its connection with the linen industry in the cities of Holland and the Republic's economy in general. Whether and how revival *could* be brought about depended to a large extent on the degree to which Europe's dominant rival powers Britain and France consented to a renewed flourishing of the Dutch carrying trade by not restricting Dutch markets.⁹

Considering the Dutch economic society from this angle opens up issues in the historiography of Dutch economic patriotism. From the context of nascent Dutch patriotism that would lead to the 1787 Patriotic Revolt and the 1795 Batavian Revolution one would expect the economic society to promote anti-stadtholder views, and so indeed its political aims have hitherto been interpreted. However, as Joh. de Vries and others emphasised, economic patriotism cannot simply be equated with the political patriotism of the later 1770s that culminated in the 1787 and 1795 revolts.¹⁰ Surely, political patriotism *did* acquire an economic side when merchants and financiers in the War of the American Independence granted privileges to the American rebels and France: interests on loans came to depend on political sympathy even if profit was the ulterior motive. Yet, to see the society as the economic expression of a generic spirit of republican freedom,¹¹ would be to shortcircuit the eighteenth-century Dutch economic reform debate.

⁸ Hogendorp, *Brieven*, 104.

⁹ For French–British rivalry, see Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005).

¹⁰ Johan de Vries, 'De oeconomisch-patriottische beweging', *De nieuwe stem* 7 (1952), 723–30; Joh. de Vries, *De Economische Achteruitgang der Republiek in de Achttiende Eeuw* (Amsterdam: University Amsterdam 1959). See also P. B. M. Blaas, 'De patriottenbeweging als epiloog: Rond Colenbrander's *Patriottentijd*', in *Geschiedenis en Nostalgie* (Hilversum: Verloren 2000), 82–98; N. C. F. van Sas, *De Metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2004); E. O. G. Haitsma Mulier, 'De Geschiedschrijving over de Patriottentijd en de Bataafsche Tijd', *Kantelend Geschiedbeeld* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum 1983), 206–27.

¹¹ De Vries, 'De oeconomisch-patriottische beweging', 726, 728–9, leaves some space for this argument.

This chapter responds to the uncertainly shifting historiography of Dutch economic patriotism that oscillates between aligning it with revolutionary politics and detaching the two while arguing that the aim of economic patriotism was to create a 'balanced economy', instead of a trade-based economy.¹² This last idea stems from Joh. de Vries's interpretation according to which the common eighteenth-century assertion by the founder of the Economic Branch, Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel, that wealth ultimately comes from products of the earth, was a sign of a belief that trade was only of secondary importance for the Dutch Republic.¹³ De Vries, however, failed to recognise the theoretical significance of van den Heuvel's citations of Smith and Tucker and concluded that van den Heuvel was concerned with poverty, and not a proper economic thinker.¹⁴

¹² For the Economic Branch, see J. Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak tot Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel 1777–1952* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink 1952); W. M. F. Mansvelt and Evert Schoorl, 'Patriots, the poor and economic progress: Economic societies in the Netherlands', *The Spread of Political Economy and the Professionalisation of Economists: Economic Societies in Europe, America and Japan in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Massimo M. Augello, Marco E. L. Guidi (London: Routledge 2001), 138–51. See also J. A. Bierens de Haan, *De Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen 1752–1952* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink 1952); T. J. Boschloo, *De productiemaatschappij: liberalisme, economische wetenschap en het vraagstuk der armoede in Nederland* (Hilversum: Verloren 1989), 63–80; H. F. J. M. van den Eerenbeemt, 'Armoede in de "gedrukte" optiek van de sociale bovenlaag in Nederland, 1750–1850', *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 88 (1975), 468–500; and his *Armoede en arbeidsdwang: werkinrichtingen voor 'onnutte' Nederlanders in de Republiek 1760–1795* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1977); J. G. van Dillen, *Omstandigheden en psychische factoren in de economische geschiedenis van Nederland* (Groningen: Noordhoff 1949); H. W. Blom, 'Het maatschappijbeeld van de Nederlandse achttiende-eeuwse Verlichting', *Rede, sentiment en ervaring. Sociale wetenschap in de achttiende eeuw*, eds. W. Arts and J. K. M. Gevers (Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus 1983), 51–65; Ida Nijenhuis, 'Republican Risks: Commerce and Agriculture in the Dutch Republic', *The Republican Alternative: The Netherlands and Switzerland compared*, eds. André Holenstein, Thomas Maissen, Maarten Prak (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2008), 269–70.

¹³ For comparison, Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 267–324; Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007), 179–89, 281–90.

¹⁴ De Vries, 'De oeconomisch-patriottische beweging', 724–5. See Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling over de noodzaaklijkheid van het ondersteunen der gemeene industrie* (Utrecht 1780), 12–50. De Vries does not accept that economic patriotism was designed to re-align Dutch manufacturing and trade with the conditions of high wage levels and protective barriers (728–30).

In this chapter I reconsider Dutch economic patriotism by postponing some of the ‘party’ or ‘faction’ based assumptions of the dominant oppositional conception that pits patriots (considered to be pro-French revolutionary republicans) against Orangists (a pro-stadholder, pro-English faction).¹⁵ While this opposition became prominent in the late 1770s and related oppositions existed in public debates throughout the century, the membership of the Economic Branch was too diverse to be directly associated with a particular party.¹⁶ In what follows I align the emergence of the Economic Branch with the longstanding debate about Dutch decline since 1713. That debate may be seen as a breeding ground first for economic patriotism and subsequently for the radically oppositional political patriotism (the expressions of which are too often back-projected onto earlier periods). Specifically, the 1771 prize essay competition of the Holland Society of Sciences (*Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*), which triggered the founding of the Economic Branch, is explored.

The genesis of the Economic Branch and the 1771 prize essay

The Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences was established in 1777 following a 1771 prize essay on the restoration of Dutch trade.¹⁷ The winner of the contest, the clerk to the Utrecht law court Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel (1732–1785),¹⁸ at the end of his entry pleaded for the launch of an institution modelled on the English example of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce that had been founded in 1754 by William Shipley

¹⁵ Though limited to 1672, see D. J. Roorda, *Partij en factie: de oproeren van 1672 in de steden van Holland en Zeeland, een krachtmeting tussen partijen en facties* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff 1979).

¹⁶ Jonathan Israel, *Failed Enlightenment: Spinoza's Legacy and the Netherlands (1670–1800)* (Wassenaar: NIAS 2007), 11–12 argues that before 1785 Dutch societies welcomed members of different political leanings before being ‘conquered by the Patriots’.

¹⁷ Formally in 1779, Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 11.

¹⁸ See A. J. van der Aa, ‘Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel’, *Biografisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden* 8 (Haarlem: J. J. van Brederode 1867), 761–2; L. de Gou, ‘Mr. Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel’, *Maatschappij-belangen: tijdschrift van de Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel* 149 (1985), 112–19.

in London.¹⁹ Following the perceived success of the prize essay, in 1776 van den Heuvel was elected one of the directors of the Holland Society.²⁰ In this capacity he immediately turned his vision for the establishment of a general Dutch economic society into a formal proposal, including a statutory design.²¹

As to the model function of the London society, van den Heuvel believed its activities to have stimulated the rapid growth and knowledge innovation of English manufacturing industries. Encouragement of technological development and dispersion of knowledge equally could be powerful tools for increasing Dutch economic competitiveness. Van den Heuvel admired and also translated the 1776 London Society's award programme.²²

The other model for the Economic Branch came from the Spanish political economist Pedro Campomanes. Campomanes's influence on van den Heuvel stemmed from the mid 1770s and provided him with the idea of an orchestrated network of local departments that

¹⁹ On the London Society, D. G. C. Allan, 'The Society of Arts and Government, 1754–1800: Public Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7 (1974), 434–52; D. G. C. Allan, *William Shipley: Founder of the Royal Society of Arts: A Biography with Documents* (London: Hutchinson 1968). The London Society is mentioned in the *Programma van de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Weetenschappen* (Haarlem 1777) [Knuttel 19162], 6, which includes the founding statutes of the Economic Branch (5–24), an award programme (25–35) and an address by van den Heuvel to the Haarlem society entitled 'Aanspraak van den Heer Mr. H. H. van den Heuvel aan de Heeren Directeuren gedaan in hunne vergaderinge van 21. Mey 1777' (36–45). A folder in the Archive of the 'Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen' at the 'Noord Hollands Archief' in Haarlem [henceforth NHA HMW], T444.383, includes the booklet *Premiums offered by the Society instituted at London for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce*, of 1774. The indications 'Knuttel #', refer to the pamphlet collection of the Royal Dutch Library in The Hague. The Haarlem Society's archive was described by Liesbeth Beelen-Driehuizen, *Inventaris van het Archief van de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* (Haarlem: Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen 1998).

²⁰ Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 8.

²¹ Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 6, 11–16, with reference to the magazine *De Vaderlander* 4 (1778), 81, 87. In 1774, van den Heuvel had put forward a proposal for an economic patriotic society in Utrecht, but was kept at a distance by the Haarlem directors. The statutes of the 1774 proposal were copied into the 1777 founding document.

²² *Programma van de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Weetenschappen*, 6. See also Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 9.

connected the government to the people and created national wealth.²³ Campomanes's work from 1774, *Discurso sobre el fomento de la industria popular*, translated into Dutch and accompanied with a hundred-page treatise by van den Heuvel, exemplified his general political economy.²⁴

Van den Heuvel initially proposed to turn the entire Holland Society into an economic society. This plan met with resistance from the directors. After all, in England the *Royal Society* could exist perfectly well next to a national society for economic improvement and the Holland Society should retain the same general character as the *Royal Society*.²⁵ Having kept van den Heuvel at bay on several counts, at the end of 1777 the directors of the Haarlem society announced an official programme and invited inhabitants of the Dutch Republic to become members of its newly created Economic Branch. Within months 57 local departments were established in the cities of the Republic (including colonial territories) and soon counted around 3,000 members.²⁶

Although its statutory regulations stipulated that the Economic Branch was not to become immersed in political affairs and interfere with the government, a suspicion that the Branch was by nature a political organ always remained, particularly during the time of the Batavian Republic when, under a different name, the Branch remained in existence.²⁷

While the institutional history of the Holland Society and the Economic Branch have been documented²⁸ and it is not my aim to cover the same ground in this chapter, it is useful to look at its initial

²³ L. M. Enciso Recio, *Las Sociedades Económicas en el Siglo de las Luces* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia 2010); Vincent Lombart, *Campomanes: Economista y político de Carlos III* (Madrid: Alianza 1992).

²⁴ Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes, *Discurso sobre el fomento de la industria popular* (Madrid 1774). The full Dutch title was *Verhandeling over de noodzaaklijkheid van het ondersteunen der gemeene industrie, of welvaart van een staat, en de middelen daar toe dienende, met betrekking tot ons vaderland voorgegaan door een verhandeling over datzelfde onderwerp in Spanje* (Treatise concerning the necessity to support the general industry or wealth of a nation and the means thereto with concern to our fatherland preceded by a treatise on the same subject in Spain) and appeared in 1780 and in 1795. It was reviewed in the *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen* (1780), 445–6.

²⁵ Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 6–9, 31.

²⁶ Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel, *Aanspraak door Mr. H. H. van den Heuvel gedaan aan de Claasis van den Oeconomischen Tak binnen Utrecht, bij het openen van derzelver vergadering den 4 Februarij 1778 ten betooge van de noodzakelijkheid en de te verwagten goeden uitslag, van de voorschreve instelling* (Utrecht 1778).

²⁷ Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 16.

²⁸ Bierens de Haan, *De Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* and Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*.

programmes. The key document is the published *Aanspraak* (Address) by van den Heuvel to the directors of the Haarlem Society of 21 May 1777 at the inaugural meeting of the Economic Branch.²⁹

This *Aanspraak* included an outline of a patriotic plan for reform of the Dutch economy.³⁰ The newly founded organisation was to channel the existing economy into an improved version of the old merchant republic. Its members were required to promote domestic manufacturing and trade. The way van den Heuvel presented it, a 'patriotic' correction of the economic behaviour of Dutch citizens was necessary. In previous times of prosperity citizens of each city had come to regard themselves as 'isolated members of the State' and 'patriotic feelings' had gone 'dormant'.³¹ Instead, Dutch merchants and anyone whose interest depended on the Republic ought to consider themselves members of a 'Commonwealth of Bees' and recognise that sectoral interdependencies were essential for the self-preservation of any state, including the Dutch Republic.³² Citizens had to realise that interests of different provinces and cities were inter-related. No conflicts of interest could exist between trade and other sectors, nor between any of the cities of Holland or elsewhere.³³ Creating a competitive national economy required establishing a national fund for encouraging domestic industries and the integration of local economic societies into one body.³⁴ Furthermore, as a small token of 'charity' with great beneficial consequences (van den Heuvel promised a hundredfold multiplication and the disappearance of poverty) citizens were to consume domestic products to bolster the national economy.³⁵

Within this vision, the Economic Branch played a key role. Societies were set up everywhere in Europe to enhance national economies and the Dutch Republic had to follow suit.³⁶ Van den Heuvel's plan was pervaded by an awareness that seventeenth-century perspectives on trade and freedom were due for revision and that Britain had to be emulated as the obligatory model for a powerful economy.

²⁹ 'Aanspraak', 36–45.

³⁰ 'Aanspraak', 36.

³¹ 'Aanspraak', 38, 40.

³² 'Aanspraak', 39.

³³ 'Aanspraak', 43. This was an implicit reference to the debate about the 1751 Proposal for a limited Freeport, which met with fierce resistance from Zeeland. See Neele's chapter; Stapelbroek, 'Dutch commercial decline revisited'.

³⁴ 'Aanspraak', 42.

³⁵ 'Aanspraak', 44.

³⁶ 'Aanspraak', 45.

The Economic Branch's first published programmes included, following the model of the London society, lists of prizes awarded by the Economic Branch to patriotic individuals who had set up, for instance, a factory in mirrored glass.³⁷ Interestingly, these publications and lofty visions were ridiculed in a number of satirical pamphlets.³⁸

While the Economic Branch was not an isolated institution, but part of a wider movement of European associationalism,³⁹ it is an interesting case owing to its unclear status, influence and ideological character. To provide more clarity we need to go back to the prize essay on the decline and restoration of Dutch trade.⁴⁰ Until 1770, the Haarlem Society had mainly been a forum for natural history, science, medicine, arts, civil engineering, geometry and philosophy; the usual subjects of European academy life. The 1771 essay competition on Dutch decline and its remedy represented something of a break with the past in its engagement with politics and trade – a break that would dramatically increase the prominence of the Haarlem society.

Contexts for the prize essay: the Haarlem society, the linen trade and the 1751 'Proposal'

To understand the relations between the 1771 essay competition, its triggering of the emergence of the Economic Branch and the overall dynamic of Dutch patriotism it is useful to consider the blunt facts of the 1771 essay competition.⁴¹ The minutes of the Society's board meetings of 1771 mention that an earlier proposal to hold this competition was made in

³⁷ Knuttel 19202 and 19340.

³⁸ Knuttel 19341, 19342, 20035.

³⁹ W. W. Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750-1815* (Amsterdam: Rodopi 1987); *Om het Algemeen Volksgeluk. Twee Eeuwen Particulier Initiatief: Gedenkboek ter gelegenheid van het tweehonderdjarig bestaan van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*, eds. W. W. Mijnhardt and A. J. Wichers (Edam: Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen 1984); R. P. W. Visser, 'De Nederlandse geleerde genootschappen in de achttiende eeuw', *Documentatieblad Werkgroep 18e eeuw* 7 (1970), 7-18.

⁴⁰ Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 4, 30 mentions contemporary pamphlet responses to the prize contest along Elie Luzac's usage of the prize essays in his *Hollands rijkdom, behelzende den oorsprong van de koophandel*, 4 vols. (Leiden 1780-3).

⁴¹ NHA HMW, T444.13 (1767-1781) and the incoming pieces for the relevant years T444.46-9 (1771-1774).

1769 by Cornelis Ploos van Amstel (1726–1798),⁴² an Amsterdam timber merchant, ship- and insurance broker, who became a printer, art collector and philanthropist and developed a new engraving technique for analogue reproductive printing.⁴³ Judging from the minutes of the society, Ploos van Amstel since the late 1760s made efforts to charm his way into the ranks of the society by offering prints and giving demonstrations of his technique. He was elected a member of the society on 24 May 1768.⁴⁴

The name Ploos van Amstel represents a paradigm case of a merchant family with political interests whose allegiance would be hard to pin down on either side of any party divide. In 1760 Albertus Ploos van Amstel – a distant cousin of Cornelis – argued, using a garbled version of Wolff's moral philosophy (and offering an immature corrective on Vattel's *Droit des gens*), that the Dutch had a near unconditional right as a neutral power to trade in wartime and exploit the benefits arising from the 'useful treaties' that politicians had concluded.⁴⁵ This was an extreme take on Dutch neutral rights close to the radical '*neutraliste*' supporters of the French campaign against British maritime commercial politics in the Seven Years' War.⁴⁶ The name Ploos van Amstel also figured in John Adams's diaries from 1780, the year in which the secret American representative of Congress desperately tried to find support for the American cause and talk-up the American credit to Amsterdam financiers to negotiate a low interest loan.⁴⁷

⁴² NHA HMW T 444.46, n.p. (15 May 1771, Ploos van Amstel to C. C. H. van der Aa). Ploos was supported by Johannes Florentius Martinet. On Martinet, see H. F. J. M. van den Eerenbeemt, 'Dominee J. F. Martinet en de Oeconomische Tak. Zutphen 1778–1781', *Economisch en Sociaal-Historisch Jaarboek* 43 (1980), 19–38; Bert Paasman, *J. F. Martinet; Een Zutphens filosoof in de achttiende eeuw* (Zutphen: Van Someren 1971).

⁴³ G. Ploos van Amstel, *Cornelis Ploos van Amstel: Portret van een koopman en uitvinder* (Assen: Van Gorcum 1980); Th. H. von der Dunk and F. H. Schmidt, 'Petrus Camper en Jacob van Campen: Een polemieek met Cornelis Ploos van Amstel inzake het stadhuis van Amsterdam uit 1767', *Bulletin KNOB* 100 (2002), 158–77.

⁴⁴ See NHA HMW T444.13, ff. 524, 532.

⁴⁵ Albertus Ploos van Amstel, *Verhandeling over het recht van commercie tusschen onzijdige en oorlogvoerende volken: Uyt het Latyn vertaald en vermeerderd met een aanhangzel over het nemen en verbeurdverklaren der schepen, en breedvoerige aantekeningen* (Amsterdam 1760), 35–42.

⁴⁶ Koen Stapelbroek, 'Economic reform and neutrality in Dutch political pamphlets, 1741–1779', in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill 2010), 173–204.

⁴⁷ 'Miscellaneous Memoranda in Amsterdam, August–September 1780', on www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=DJA02d553.

At the same time, Cornelis Ploos van Amstel, who was a main financier of Jan Wagenaar's *Amsterdam in zyne Opkomst* and close friend of the patriotic spectatorial writer Betje Wolff, was on friendly terms with the arch-Orangists Isaac de Pinto and François Hemsterhuis in the late 1770s.⁴⁸ And in the late 1740s Pieter Ploos van Amstel had together with the same Pinto and Thomas Hope orchestrated the transformation of the Dutch India companies into nationalised political enterprises headed by the new stadholder William IV.⁴⁹

Despite his associations with a variety of key political figures, Ploos van Amstel's intentions in persuading the Holland Society at Haarlem to announce a prize competition on Dutch trade would be hard to label in terms of party interests. Likewise, the other prize committee members are hard to pigeonhole. The prize competition proposed and developed by Ploos van Amstel was accepted by the annual general meeting (*grote vergadering*) of the society on 21 May 1771, and was to be organised and supervised by Adolf Jan Heshuysen, his cousin Jan Hope, Nicolaas Willem Kops, Willem Kops and Ploos van Amstel himself. No doubt, looking at the family associations of Jan Hope, for instance, whose Scottish-origin family ran an internationally prominent banking house,⁵⁰ might raise a suspicion that the prize essay was destined to support an Orangist vision of the future of Dutch trade. Heshuysen in the 1787 Patriot revolt was for instance removed from his official position in Haarlem. However, going through the political connections of committee members who internally linked through marriage the image emerges of a faction-like structure with *no* clearly delineated party political orientation.

Families like the Kops's – Haarlem linen magnates – and the Heshuysens – Haarlem merchants – instead may have wondered, with the memory of

⁴⁸ I. J. A. Nijenhuis, *Een Joodse Filosoof. Isaac de Pinto (1717–1787)* (Amsterdam: NEHA 1995), 26–7. See Jan Wagenaar, *Amsterdam in zyne Opkomst, Aanwas, Geschiedenissen, Voorregten, Koophandel, Gebouwen*, 23 vols. (Amsterdam, 1760–8).

⁴⁹ A. J. Veenendaal jr., 'Isaac de Pinto. Anecdotes Historiques touchant le Stadhoudérat des Indes dans l'illustre maison d'Orange en 1749 et 1749', *Nederlandse Historische Bronnen uitgegeven door het Nederlands Historisch Genootschap* 3 (1983), 124–5.

⁵⁰ Jan Hope was a son of the mentioned Thomas Hope, author of the 1751 *Proposal* for turning the Dutch Republic into a limited free port, co-founder of Hope & Co and governor in the Dutch West Indies Company. Adam Smith dedicated the fourth edition of the *Wealth of Nations* to Thomas's successor Henry Hope. See L. van Nierop, 'Over het Huis Thomas en Adriaan Hope te Amsterdam', *Amstelodamum: Orgaan van het Genootschap Amsteldamum* 27 (1940), 27–35; Marten G. Buist, *At Spes Non Fracta. Hope & Co. 1770–1815* (The Hague: Nijhoff 1974).

the events of 1751 in the back of their minds,⁵¹ how under the leadership of William V the reform of the Dutch Republic's economy might be given a new impetus. In the years leading up to 1751 Holland merchants and financiers had initiated similar projects. Could it simply be the case that a group of related figures from the Amsterdam-Haarlem economic elite decided to use the tool of the prize essay in a *bona fide* manner to pave the way for the development of a new foreign trade policy argument in which accounts of the anomalous structure and history of the United Provinces⁵² and the interconnected interests of the different sectors of the Dutch economy were given a central place?

Such an understanding of how the prize essay emerged would be in line with the long debate that may be traced back to Pieter de la Court's manuscript of the late seventeenth century on the '*Welvaren van Leyden*', which in the 1740s and 1750s turned into a more theoretical debate about the causal relations in history between the flourishing of the linen industry in Haarlem and Leiden and the Dutch staplemarket as well as whether the same causalities still existed in a world of commercial rivalry. Thus an older debate about the origins of Dutch wealth and English and French 'Jealousy' turned into a more theoretical discussion about the hierarchy of sectors within the structure of the Dutch economy.⁵³ This new debate absorbed the programmatic vision that was a part of Hogendorp's retrospective on 1751 of William IV's patriotic consumption and promotion of domestic linen manufacturing. The

⁵¹ The 1751 'Proposal' was republished in 1771 in the spectatorial magazine *De Koopman* which questioned Hope's authorship (258). The author believed the 1751 'Proposal' was the best available design for Republic's reform, but, like van den Heuvel and Rogge, recommended additional protective measures. 'Kort Begrip en de Aanmerkingen over het Algemeen Ontwerp van Renforme in de Commercie dezer Republyk', *De Koopman, of Weekelyksche By-dragen ten Opbouw van Neêrlands Koophandel en Zeevaart* 3/33, 257–64; 3/34, 265–72; 3/35, 273–80. On the magazine, Ton Jongenelen, 'Mordechai: Illusie en werkelijkheid in het spectatoriale blad *De Koopman*'. *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 26 (2003), 94–108; Hajo Brugmans, '*De Koopman*: Mercurius als spectator', *Jaarboek der vereeniging Amstelodamum* 10 (1913), 61–135.

⁵² Structural anomaly was central for van den Heuvel, Rogge and Zillesen, 'Antwoord op de Vraag Welk is de grond van Hollandsch Koophandel', *Verhandelingen uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappye der Wetenschappen* 16 (1775), E.g. the essay by Rogge, 233–4, 236.

⁵³ On the linen industry, J. A. F. de Jongste, *Orrust aan het Spaarne Haarlem in de jaren 1747–1751* (The Hague: Bataafsche Leeuw 1984), 16–20; N. W. Posthumus, *Geschiedenis van de Leidse lakenindustrie*, 3 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1908–1939). For the 1751 debate and sectoral interests, Stapelbroek, 'Dutch commercial decline revisited'.

discussions of the 1750s were obvious reference points in the second half of the eighteenth century to notable citizens of Haarlem, where internal discussions between regents and the magistracy about guild organisation and the outsourcing of urban factories to rural zones were always hotly debated in connection with the political economy of the Dutch state.⁵⁴

These were exactly the issues that van den Heuvel addressed in his prize essay and in his other writings where he also took into consideration the wider issues of international trade and – increasingly – the Dutch position in relation to the Anglo-French struggle for hegemony. Van den Heuvel has been portrayed as a mediocre supporter of specifically Dutch patriotism,⁵⁵ but there are reasons against putting him in this corner as well as signs that suggest his political economy ought to be taken more seriously as a Dutch version of the views that writers like Isaak Iselin developed in Switzerland.⁵⁶

Notably, van den Heuvel was concerned with the rise of anti-British sentiments and their political sway that led to the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, to the effect that he was even called an ‘Anglo-Patriot’.⁵⁷ Equally significant in this regard are van den Heuvel’s connections with Orangist figureheads. His Utrecht network included the family names of prominent Orangists and he himself was a legal adviser to the van Haren-Hogendorp family in which capacity he got to know the young Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp whom he stayed in contact with and advised to read certain political economic works, from Forbonnais to Verri and Smith.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ De Jongste, *Onrust aan het Spaarne*, 337–40, 373–4.

⁵⁵ De Vries, ‘De oeconomisch-patriottische beweging’, 726, 728–9; Mansvelt in Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*.

⁵⁶ He concluded his companion piece to the translation of Campomanes with a long quote from Isaak Iselin’s *Träume eines Menschenfreundes*, the Dutch translation of which, *De Droomen van eenen menschenvriend* (The Hague 1780), was dedicated to him. Van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling*, 100.

⁵⁷ H. H. van den Heuvel, *Onpartijdige Raadgevinge tot Eensgezindheid en Moderatie van Batavus* (Utrecht 1779) [Knuttel 19256]; H. H. van den Heuvel, *Klagten van Eenem Gryzen Hollander wegens den Tegenwoordigen Toestand van het Vaderland* (Utrecht 1780) [Knuttel 19314]; H. H. van den Heuvel, *Welmeenende raad aan myne waarde land-genoten* (Rotterdam 1785). The anonymously published *Oeconomische Uitrekening van de Nationale Schuld van Engeland* was sarcastically addressed to van den Heuvel for his ‘sincere Anglo-Patriotic sentiments’ (s.l. 1782) [Knuttel 20091].

⁵⁸ P. Ch. H. Overmeer, *De economische denkbeelden van Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp (1762–1834)* (Tilburg: Gianotten 1982), 16–18.

The same Hogendorp, in his letters to van den Heuvel, provided a testimony to the way in which the Economic Branch was an a-political body – as its statutes decreed. Hogendorp disliked the patriotic rhetoric which was used during the overly lengthy sessions during meetings of the Economic Branch, but also appreciated that economic matters were discussed ‘sans toucher à la politique’.⁵⁹

Finally, the very fact that expressions of patriotic spirit were in fashion among the members of the Economic Branch is hard to see as a characteristic of anti-Orangism if one considers that William V was involved from the start as a formal protector of the society.⁶⁰ Apparently, Orangist politicians such as Bentinck and van Goens even wielded some direct influence in the Haarlem mother-society as can be gleaned from a correspondence between these two figures over the request by the Milanese Enlightened thinker Paolo Frisi made to van Goens to become a member of the society.⁶¹

To conclude, it seems highly unjustified to attribute to the creators of the Haarlem prize essay of 1771 any pre-conceived political intentions or proto-revolutionary patriot motivation. Rather, it seems to have been the case that not long after William V became stadholder, the memory of William IV and his project to encourage Dutch trade and linen manufacturing through domestic consumption and the old question, debated around 1751, how to understand the previous rise and subsequent decline of the Dutch economy were put back on the agenda.

The 1771 question and other prize essays

The very phrasing of the 1771 prize essay seems to support this reading. The text of the 1751 ‘Proposal’ had introduced a formal tripartite causal-analytical framework for the discussion of the rise and fall of Dutch wealth, which the 1771 essay question was generally understood to be based upon. The essay question read as follows:

Which is the ground of Dutch trade, its growth and flourishing?
Which causes and incidents have hitherto exposed this to change
and decline? Which means are best suited and easiest to find, to

⁵⁹ Overmeer, *De economische denkbeelden*, 17.

⁶⁰ Political patriotism too could take an Orangist form as in the case of van Alphen. See P. J. Buijnsters, *Hieronymus van Alphen (1746–1803)* (Assen: Van Gorcum 1973), 95–7.

⁶¹ British Library, Egerton 1862, f. 271rv, 19 April 1769.

protect its current state, to promote its improvement and make it achieve the highest degree of perfection?⁶²

The issue of the decline of the Dutch economy clearly was not about when it started or what shape it had – questions which have occupied economic historians for decades⁶³ – but what the causes were, whether it could be understood in line with any of the available trade theories and how it could be arrested. In fact, the 1751 ‘Proposal’ and the discussion following its publication essentially concerned the validity of its understanding of the sectoral hierarchy of the structure of the Dutch economy. Was trade really the primary sector of the Dutch economy, as the ‘Proposal’ implied, and was a fiscal reform what was needed, or had the politics of international trade changed in such a way that measures to simultaneously revive trade and manufacturing needed to actively protect and encourage Dutch manufacturing?⁶⁴ The phrasing of the question thus invited updated views of the 1751 debate. Moreover, the different entries would be judged as such by the committee members.⁶⁵

Since it was also announced, in magazines that had a foreign distribution, the Haarlem prize essay gained some fame across Europe.⁶⁶ Following the period in which van der Aa was the secretary under the initiative of van Marum the international orientation would increase, which showed in the foreign membership figures. In 1779 Adam Smith became an invited member.⁶⁷ The Haarlem society also in other respects had something of an international profile. Van den Heuvel’s political economy was inspired by the state of the art in European political economy and the model for the Economic Branch was English. The 1771 essay contest itself had a few foreign contenders. Among them Benjamin Carrard wrote not specifically about Dutch trade, but entered a more programmatic Swiss work on agriculture and patriotism.⁶⁸ Another suspected foreigner was the entry

⁶² Referred to by De Bruijn, *Inventaris van de Prijsvragen van de Hollandsche Maatschappij*, 40 [number 21].

⁶³ Koen Stapelbroek, ‘Dutch Decline as a European Phenomenon’, *History of European Ideas* 36 (2010), 139–52.

⁶⁴ Van den Heuvel agreed with the 1751 Proposal that a fiscal reform was necessary, but felt additional measures were required, Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 4.

⁶⁵ The report by Ploos van Amstel T444.383, f.3.

⁶⁶ E.g. the Neapolitan Michele Torcia, *Sbozzo del commercio di Amsterdam* (Naples 1782), 2 of the *Appendice*.

⁶⁷ NHA HMW T444.13, f. 1026.

⁶⁸ Carrard was a member of the Bernese economic society. NHA HMW T444.383.

entitled *La Bource d'Amsterdam*, which Ploos deemed a piece of French political propaganda to stir up popular opinion in the Republic.⁶⁹

These foreign entries were among the thirteen answers in the list published by the Haarlem society. Some of these were sent without 'billet' or not eligible for other reasons.⁷⁰ In addition the essay contest had a 'hidden history' of essays triggered by the prize announcement but not finished on time or not sent in for other reasons.⁷¹ Cornelis van Oudermeulen's two volume *Recherches sur le commerce ou idées aux intérêts des différens peuples de l'Europe* (Amsterdam, 1778), to be discussed below, was a prominent example of the latter category. Oudermeulen declared he found the presuppositions of the essay question tendentious and decided not to enter the competition.⁷²

Looking at two later prize questions on related matters, Oudermeulen's position can be understood. In 1785, the Haarlem society launched an essay contest specifically on the decline of manufacturing.⁷³ This question addressed the issue whether extensive protection of domestic manufacturing served the entire state and was good political economy or served a partial interest and would only have short-term effects. Yet its phrasing and long listing of presupposed economic truths effectively excluded the latter. The prize winning essays of 1771, similarly, for all their differences in style, tended to the same political outlook on the future of Dutch trade. Adriaan Rogge, for instance, averted explicitly that trade – even if once it had effectively been the primary sector of the Dutch economy – now depended on manufacturing. With some encouragement and protection there was a competitive niche to be filled between overly expensive British products and German and French manufactures which were of inferior quality.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ploos sent *La Bource d'Amsterdam* to Jan Hope who disliked the piece. See NHA HMW T444.49, n.p. (17 February 1774). Hope complained about the tendentious nature of the analysis and the manipulation of facts presented in 'gemeen en qualyck' French.

⁷⁰ *Programma van de Hollandsche Maatschappye der Weetenschappen opgericht te Haarlem voor het jaar 1774*; NHA HMW T444.383.

⁷¹ Overmeer, *De economische denkbeelden*, 166.

⁷² Cornelis van Oudermeulen, *Recherches sur le commerce ou idées aux intérêts des différens peuples de l'Europe* (Amsterdam 1778), vol. 1, 1–6.

⁷³ J. G. de Bruijn, *Inventaris van de Prijsvragen van de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen 1753–1917* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink 1977), 65 [number 55], mentions that no responses were received.

⁷⁴ Adriaan Rogge, 'Antwoord op de Vraag Welk is de grond van Hollandsch Koophandel', *Verhandelingen uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappye der Wetenschappen* 16 (1775), 285–6.

A more controversial issue for a prize question proposed by Ploos van Amstel in 1779 concerned the decline of the staplemarket.⁷⁵ While it became a commonplace in European political thought of the eighteenth century that trade had become an 'affair of state',⁷⁶ it remained a commonplace in Dutch writings that a revival of the staplemarket was required to kickstart the Dutch economy. The question asked by the Haarlem society concerned both what might have been required legally and politically, to have protected the ownership of the staplemarket when the Dutch still owned it; *and* what obstacles the Dutch could expect *now* in conquering back the staplemarket if the Dutch regained their reputation as the cheapest and most reliable carriers of goods. Were there any legal or political means available to bind trade to the United Provinces and 'fix' it there?

Precisely this issue had been brought up by Adriaan Rogge in his prize essay which Ploos van Amstel praised for its clear practical expertise in matters of trade.⁷⁷ Although eleven serious essays as a response to a prize competition was a considerable harvest, it emerges from his correspondence and his report to the Haarlem society that Ploos had hoped to receive a more analytical treatment of the issues at hand, rather than naïve calls for frugality and love of the fatherland.⁷⁸ Ploos van Amstel complained that merchants had to be taken as they were, i.e. motivated by profit, not patriotism. In his report he therefore proposed that rather than to publish any complete essay in the society's annual *Verhandelingen*, a through-and-through edited manifesto, comprising of a series of ideas taken from the various essays ought to be published. This idea was rejected out-of-hand by the directors of the *Maatschappij*, possibly because they feared becoming used for a political project. In the end Ploos, who expressed his preference for the essay by Rogge entitled *Bloei des Handels, Holland's Welvaart*, but was not the only committee member, even saw the gold medal going to another essay; the one by van den Heuvel.

⁷⁵ Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 29–30, suggests the 1779 specification of the 1771 question was Ploos's attempt to solicit more satisfactory answers. De Bruijn, *Inventaris van de Prijsvragen van de Hollandsche Maatschappij*, 37, mentions two answers were received.

⁷⁶ Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 186.

⁷⁷ The phrasing echoes Rogge, 'Antwoord', 223–5.

⁷⁸ Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 3, 6, 29, which, however, overemphasises van den Heuvel's political patriotism.

The prize winning essays: van den Heuvel, Rogge, Zillesen

In his gold medal winning essay van den Heuvel confronted the economic problem of the combination of low interest, high wage levels and the large money supply.⁷⁹ As a consequence of the previous development of wealth from trade and finance, manufacturing industries were under high pressure to innovate, but had failed so far. In his analysis of this situation van den Heuvel refused – as would Hogendorp later – to join the chorus of those who saw the economic characteristics of the United Provinces as an adverse effect of the modern history of commercial competition in Europe. These kinds of associations became prominent in the 1770s and fed into the development of revolutionary patriotism. Van den Heuvel disagreed with those who believed there was ‘too much money’ in the country to sustain a flourishing manufacturing industry. The money supply, price levels and low interest rate, instead, could be explained through the historically shaped characteristics of the Dutch economy, which also created the major advantage that grain could be imported cheaply.⁸⁰ Van den Heuvel started his essay with a historical-causal digression on the nature of trade distinguishing between ‘own trade’ (*eigenhandel*) and carrying trade, or ‘active’ and ‘passive’ trade.⁸¹ In the United Provinces, owing to geographical factors and historical contingencies, trade had become a primary cause of wealth.

At this point van den Heuvel copied and referred to the 1751 ‘Proposal’ and its discussion of the causes of Dutch wealth.⁸² He also agreed with the explanation given by the ‘Proposal’ of the rise of Dutch trade as directly related to the negligence of trade by other states. While all nations despised trade and princes saw taxes as means to increase their military strength, the Dutch managed to create a system in which the costs of imported raw materials for the production of Dutch linen and a system of consumption taxes on subsistence goods almost directly were combined into an internationally competitive manufacturing trade.⁸³

⁷⁹ The essay was translated into French as *Dissertation sur le commerce de la Hollande, sur les sources de son ancienne prospérité, les causes de sa décadence, et les moyens de le rétablir* (Dusseldorp 1778). Compare with the parallel Scottish debate, Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 267–324.

⁸⁰ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord op de Vraag Welk is de grond van Hollandsch Koophandel’, *Verhandelingen uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappye der Wetenschappen* 16 (1775), 30–1.

⁸¹ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 4–10.

⁸² Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 11–15.

⁸³ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 23, 26–7.

The success of this system had opened the eyes of other states that recently developed their own trade. Whereas colonial – a different form of internal and ‘active’ – trade continued to flourish, the new competition from other states exposed the weak spots in the original Dutch system. High labour costs, price levels and indirect taxes had formed a chain of characteristics that fit with a developed economy, but in the Dutch case these characteristics were equally derived from other states’ disinterest in trade as well as the Dutch zeal for war with Britain.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, van den Heuvel concluded, ‘now, having arrived at this situation, it is hardly possible to alter the beacons’.⁸⁵

Restoring Dutch ‘active’ trade required the quickest possible alignment of the manufacturing industry with the financial characteristics of the Dutch economy. While some held that only trade in foreign wares could be profitable, van den Heuvel disagreed. Following Forbonnais, whose ideas loomed large in the background of van den Heuvel’s political economy, van den Heuvel concluded that the money that entered the Republic through foreign trade did not *circulate* enough.⁸⁶ Van de Heuvel found in Forbonnais the economic theory that fitted the problem he saw around him and emphasised as a key factor in the Dutch economy, its capacity to import cheap grain.⁸⁷ In addition, he argued that the pricing strategies of foreign wares by Dutch merchants had aggravated the ruin of Dutch manufacturing. Yet, this was only a specific abuse that despite its impact on other sectors (shipbuilding for instance⁸⁸) called for a specific law, not wide-scale protectionism.⁸⁹

In this way van den Heuvel construed the challenge of fixing what was left, and conquering back a part, of the international staplemarket as a transition problem. This was not economic nationalism but a reform programme driven by an idea of improvement to restore and strengthen

⁸⁴ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 28–30.

⁸⁵ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 27, the phrase ‘altering the beacons’ was used in the 1751 Proposal, triggering debate about whether the proposed fiscal reform did affect the very principles of the Republic, Stapelbroek, ‘Dutch commercial decline revisited’, 235–6.

⁸⁶ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 37.

⁸⁷ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 37–8. Van den Heuvel argued that all people need to be fed and clothed through products from land or sea. The ability to import cheap grain satisfied this rule. For similar views by Jean-François Melon and Véron de Forbonnais, see Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, 179–82.

⁸⁸ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 158, added it was essential that Dutch ships carried Dutch trade. The British model, however, could be emulated by habit or out of patriotic sentiment.

⁸⁹ Van den Heuvel, ‘Antwoord’, 31–3.

economic linkages and competencies by means of promulgating a few necessary patriotic laws (to repair leakages), promoting feelings that encouraged domestic consumption, bringing about a fiscal restructuring and, last but not least, by establishing a national economic society that boosted knowledge innovation and dispersion. The objective of this package of reform tools was to create a well-grounded demand for money for domestic investment and repair foreign capital flights. Van den Heuvel associated his reform plan with the sentiment of love for the fatherland and the presence of this spirit in the Holland Society made it possible to think of more and better solutions to secure investments in domestic manufacturing. His argument culminated in a plea for establishing an economic society underlined by the motto of his piece *In magnis voluisse sat est*, 'In big things it is enough to just have the will', taken from Sextus Propertius.⁹⁰

Jealousy might have been a factor when other states turned to trade in the early eighteenth century, but van den Heuvel considered this without bitterness a normal circumstance: 'Europe is these days more than ever enlightened on trade and looks with a jealous eye at the trade we still have'.⁹¹ At the same time, van den Heuvel believed that it could be a transitory condition. It was in the combined long-term interest of the territorial monarchies of Southern Europe (France, Spain and Portugal), he argued, with implicit reference to the Anglo-French struggle for hegemony, to lower their protectionist fiscal barriers in order to let the Nordic nations carry their trade.⁹² Such a development (which van den Heuvel did not discuss in detail) would simultaneously put the Dutch in a different role in international trade (one in which intersectoral relations between trade and manufacturing could flourish) and have a massive impact on global international relations.⁹³

In his *Verhandeling* – the aforementioned companion piece to the Dutch translation of Campomanes – van den Heuvel presented his

⁹⁰ Van den Heuvel, 'Antwoord', 43, 115, 150–60.

⁹¹ Van den Heuvel, 'Antwoord', 44.

⁹² Van den Heuvel, 'Antwoord', 118–20, 122–4, 131–50, esp. 139, with reference to the 1739 commercial treaty with France.

⁹³ Van den Heuvel, 'Antwoord', 119. Van den Heuvel asserted that the best French writers had argued that France itself needed a different strategy from trying to carry their own trade. See Antonella Alimento, 'Competition, true patriotism and colonial interest: Forbonnais' vision of neutrality and trade', *War and Trade: The Neutrality of Commerce in the Inter-State System*, special issue of *COLLeGIUM: Studies Across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences published by the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced studies*, ed. Koen Stapelbroek (Helsinki 2011), 61–94.

political economy in a more systematic and theoretical form. The basic assumption of the entire project was that the United Provinces was no longer an anomaly, but subject to the same political laws of economic development as Spain. Encouraging manufacturing was crucial, van den Heuvel argued, for the economic development of all states. Stereotypes of Dutch virtue and frugality and Spanish slothfulness were both myths of the past that were no longer valid. The same patriotic laws and institutions now played a key role everywhere.⁹⁴

Van den Heuvel's framework derived from Josiah Tucker's position on the economic dynamics between rich and poor countries.⁹⁵ He listed seven steps whereby a rich country could sustain its economic advantage over less developed states. The same principles were laggard states' guide for catching up. More even than Spain, the Dutch sea-borne economy in which linkages between agriculture and manufacturing were non-existent had to promote manufacturing directly and in that way 'feed' foreign trade. As a result it became possible to import cheap grain, van den Heuvel argued, with reference to Adam Smith's opinions on the grain price as a determinant of national competitiveness.⁹⁶

Trying to raise the investment of capital from trade into domestic manufacturing, consolidating the low interest rate and lowering the grain price was much to be preferred over allowing the Dutch and German economies to mix – even if they were naturally complimentary. One had to get used to thinking of the United Provinces as a 'political body', van den Heuvel asserted. Precisely in a trading republic and under the condition of interstate economic competition one had to encourage domestic manufacturing and patch up the gaps in the system that leaked national wealth. Otherwise the entire country would be brought down completely and one could start again from scratch.⁹⁷

This argument directly led onto van den Heuvel's discussion of inequality, unemployment and poverty, which had increased rapidly in the United Provinces.⁹⁸ Staging his 'mini Social Question' van den Heuvel brought together the major eighteenth-century themes of human needs and sociability and the natural history of humankind, fused them with a critique of the problematic ownership of production factors and concluded that only a patriotic economic

⁹⁴ Van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling*, 4–12.

⁹⁵ See Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 267–324.

⁹⁶ Van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling*, 30, also at 12.

⁹⁷ Van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling*, 31–2, 44–7, 57.

⁹⁸ Van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling*, 49–74.

society could correct what had gone wrong. Citing Campomanes, he declared that no government was powerful enough to control a country, but that an economic society with a widespread network of local departments could complement the government and create a harmony between politics and the people.⁹⁹ Portraying the influence of the Economic Branch as realising a form of moral self-government van den Heuvel saw the dawning of a bright patriotic era and in the last sentences of his essay cited Isaak Iselin, whose works he believed breathed the same spirit.¹⁰⁰

Adriaan Rogge (1732–1806) was the author of the essay preferred by Ploos van Amstel that was awarded a silver medal by the Haarlem society.¹⁰¹ Rogge would remain a regular participant in prize contests and an active member of the Economic Branch and later joined the patriot movement. Rogge was a merchant from Zaandam, as well as a shipbroker, insurancebroker, owner of two papermills and investor in the Dutch whalefishery. His background was the ideal profile of a radical patriot, yet his essay was not essentially anti-Orangist.

Rogge's essay differed not too much in spirit from van den Heuvel's in his analysis of the predicament of the Dutch Republic. Its character was less theoretical and he ended up with an institutionally and politically different solution. Its starting points were the geographical and other factors, echoing the 1751 'Proposal', that had turned the United Provinces into the marketplace of Europe.¹⁰² While the Dutch enjoyed their 'miracle' economy in which three-fourths of the population were fed not by agriculture, but through trade, this sparked jealousy and competition from other states thus creating an inevitable cause of decline.¹⁰³

Yet, there were other reasons why the Dutch had lost ground. They had been careless and failed to protect their own knowledge, technology and skills in the manufacturing arts, shipbuilding and sailing. Rogge spoke of 'inappropriate candidness' when he discussed the books published by the Dutch about shipbuilding and technology. A certain

⁹⁹ Van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling*, 93–5.

¹⁰⁰ Van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling*, p. 100.

¹⁰¹ A. J. van der Aa, 'Adriaan Rogge', *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden* 16 (Haarlem 1874), 420. Joachim Rogge, *Het geslacht Rogge te Zaandam: drie eeuwen familiegeschiedenis tegen den achtergrond van nering en bedrijf* (Koog aan de Zaan: P. Out 1948).

¹⁰² Rogge, 'Antwoord', 170, 185–8, with reference to Jan Wagenaar's glorification of the Dutch history of maritime trade and fishery.

¹⁰³ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 185–8.

naïvety on the part of the Dutch had made it all too easy for foreign competitors to emulate the Dutch success.¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, the old frugality that drove the profitability of Dutch commerce had gone down the drain and been replaced with 'badly governed' luxury consumption. Merchants withdrew from trade, no longer invested their money in manufacturing business and instead lived off their rent from capital that was invested abroad where higher interest rates could be obtained. Merchants in their appearance and behaviour had become indistinguishable from the nobility, so Rogge voiced a widespread complaint. He was, however, no enemy of luxury, but of consumption that remained unconnected to reinvestment in manufacturing and trade.¹⁰⁵

While the Dutch had become afraid of losing money, as Rogge put it, and now tasted the 'fruits' of their own 'laziness',¹⁰⁶ he believed there was room for a renewal of the old foundations of Dutch glory which involved virtue, courage and prudence combined with the political protection of the created achievements. The fiscal reform proposed in 1751 was not sufficient to save the inverted (trade-based) Dutch economy.¹⁰⁷ The Dutch had to be encouraged again to go into sailing and take pride in being the best and bravest sailors in the world, as a result of which merchants would choose the Dutch as carriers of their goods over any other nation.¹⁰⁸

Once the carrying trade picked up it had to be properly integrated with the Amsterdam capital market.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the Dutch should emulate the politics of British manufacturing and replace cost-saving strategies with quality and innovation-driven growth.¹¹⁰ That way Dutch manufacturers could occupy the niche between British high-quality expensive products and French and German low-quality goods.¹¹¹ In addition the Dutch should do what they had naïvely failed to do before, create entrance barriers for foreign ships and merchants to protect the staple market.¹¹² Ultimately, for Rogge, the

¹⁰⁴ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 209–11, 225–6, Dutch books describing the functioning of tools and instruments had handed enemy states the knife to cut Dutch throats, Rogge argued.

¹⁰⁵ 'Antwoord', 166–7, 212–16.

¹⁰⁶ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 228–33.

¹⁰⁷ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 232–8.

¹⁰⁸ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 265–8.

¹⁰⁹ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 239.

¹¹⁰ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 244–59, 261–4, 273–4.

¹¹¹ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 284–6.

¹¹² Rogge, 'Antwoord', 223–4.

solution lay not in the creation of a network of patriotic economic societies, but was encapsulated in the image of old-fashioned Dutch virtue of a father smoking his pipe while explaining to his sons the secrets of his trade.¹¹³

Cornelis Zillesen (1736–1828)¹¹⁴ also was awarded a silver medal. He wrote numerous prize essays on water technology, like Rogge became an active member of the Economic Branch, and a prolific patriotic writer – one who himself criticised the extreme views on the militia.¹¹⁵ Zillesen was a senior tax collector in Schoonhoven and Schiedam. Following the suppression of the Patriot revolt of 1787 he fled to the Southern Netherlands.

His main work, in the style of his Haarlem prize essay, was first published in 1781 in six volumes and went through several editions.¹¹⁶ This work appears to have inspired the prize question announced by the Haarlem society in 1785 on the rise and decline of states, which however received no answers.¹¹⁷ Zillesen's project was always highly politically charged and inspired numerous political and financial pamphlets in the 1780s to 1790s,¹¹⁸ a six-volume history of the revolutionary period,¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Rogge, 'Antwoord', 292–3.

¹¹⁴ On Zillesen, see J. C. Ramaer, 'Cornelis Zillesen', *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek* 9 (Leiden 1933), 1313–15.

¹¹⁵ Cornelis Zillesen, *Aanmerkingen op het Leydsche Ontwerp der gewapende Corpsen in Holland* (Haarlem 1786) attacked by [Franz Georg Christopher Rütz], *De eer en het recht van Hollands inwoonders verdedigd* (Dordrecht 1786) [Knuttel 21284]. In the same vein, Cornelis Zillesen, *Welmeenende raad aan mijn vaderland* (Dordrecht 1785) [Knuttel 21021].

¹¹⁶ Cornelis Zillesen, *Onderzoek der oorzaaken van de opkomst, het verval en herstel, der voornaamste oude en hedendaagsche volken* (Utrecht 1781–4). From the second volume the title became *Onderzoek der oorzaaken van de opkomst, het verval en herstel der Vereenigde Nederlanden*.

¹¹⁷ De Bruijn, *Inventaris van de Prijsvragen van de Hollandsche Maatschappij*, 64–5 [number 54], dated 1785.

¹¹⁸ E.g. Cornelis Zillesen, *Finantieel betoog, om in de tegenwoordige omstandigheden zonder buitengewoone geldheffing het noodige geld voor de Bataafsche Republiek te vinden* (Utrecht 1798, 2nd edn 1799); *Wiskunstig berekend plan, hoedanig 's lands oude obligatien, met meer dan eene dubbelde prijswaarde, door eenige toelage van geld, te verwisselen zouden zijn, voor nieuwe obligatien van 4 pct. Interest* (Leiden 1814) [Knuttel 23801]; *Wijsgeerige staatshuishoudkunde, bijzonder voor het thans vergroot Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Rotterdam 1817).

¹¹⁹ Cornelis Zillesen, *Geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden, nevens de voornaamste gebeurtenissen in Europa (zedert den jaare 1793 tot heden voorgevallen)*, 6 vols (The Hague 1798–1802).

and some philosophical treatises on the rights of man and Batavian constitutional politics.¹²⁰

Zillesen's prize essay, like almost all of his other works was based on an anti-British and anti-Orangist rewriting of the history of the Dutch Republic. It started with a long digression on the freedom of the Batavians, the original inhabitants of the Dutch soil, with reference to Wagenaar's *Vaderlandsche Historie* (which, although less than Zillesen's works, was critical of the House of Orange).

Zillesen defined trade by distinguishing two categories: trade for need satisfaction and for profit.¹²¹ The form in which Zillesen presented his argument was a curious mix of axiomatic reasoning and historical case discussion. Through his method Zillesen confronted the question when trade was beneficial for a state and when not.

Discussing the rise of the United Provinces until the declaration of the Navigation Acts Zillesen prepared what turned into a full-blown moral critique of the luxury consumption of Dutch merchants.¹²² Beneficial trade, which perfected humankind, required that the common interest of a nation was put above limited particular interests. Import of luxury goods was the main form of harmful trade, as it went along with the export of money.¹²³ Consumption of foreign luxury goods damaged the Dutch credit, which led to a vicious circle of bankruptcies and further erosion of Dutch credit.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Cornelis Zillesen, *Vrije gedagten of aanmerkingen over het ingeleverd ontwerp der constitutie, ter nationaale vergadering* (Leiden 1796) [Knuttel 22710]; *Wysgeerige verklaring der rechten en pligten van den mensch en burger, en een ontwerp van de daar uit volgende grondwetten van staat, voor een een en onverdeeld Bataafsche gemeenebest-bestuur* (Leiden 1796); *Aanhangsel op het Antwoord der, door de Friesche volksrepresentanten voorgestelde, vraag, over een één en onverdeeld, dan wel een verbeterd bondschappelyk bestuur* (Leiden 1795); *Ontwerp hoedanig der Bataven gemeenebest-bestuur dient ingerigt te zijn en Aangangsel op het Ontwerp hoedanig der Bataven gemeenebest-bestuur dient ingerigt te zijn* (Leiden 1795) [Knuttel 22514]; Cornelis Zillesen, *Wysgeerige beschouwing over de representatieve regeeringe, ter beoordeeling over de aanstaande Bataafsche constitutie* (Leiden 1796) [Knuttel 23013a]; *De eer van het Patriotismus, der Zeven Vereenigde Gewesten*, 2 vols. (Duinkerken 1792).

¹²¹ Cornelis Zillesen, 'Antwoord op de Vraag Welk is de grond van Hollandsch Koophandel', *Verhandelingen uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappye der Wetenschappen* 16 (1775), 324–5.

¹²² Zillesen, 'Antwoord', 352–405.

¹²³ Zillesen, 'Antwoord', 417.

¹²⁴ For context, see Istvan Hont, 'The early Enlightenment debate on commerce and luxury', in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, eds. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 379–418.

The year 1651 was a turning point. The Navigation Acts unleashed English 'Jealousy' and while the English aspired to build a universal commercial empire, Dutch imperfect patriotism found a channel in foreign investment in British manufacturing and public funds.¹²⁵ Zillesen considered foreign capital flows and the lack of investment in Dutch manufacturing almost a direct form of political treason.¹²⁶ Only a concerted joint effort by all institutions and the regents of all the provinces could save the state. Restoring the profitability of Dutch trade and credit and correcting abuses (*schelmeryen*) and deceit (*bedrog*) required a daring fiscal reform which favoured domestic goods.¹²⁷ To beat England at its own game the Republic ought to become equally defensive of its trade and revert to aggressive fiscal retorsions.¹²⁸ It was naïve to believe that non-political means sufficed. Instead it was essential that the Dutch protected their freedom by fighting for their trade.¹²⁹ One opportune measure, that Zillesen recurred to in his essay, was the renewal of the commercial treaty with France of 1739, which had been unilaterally abandoned when the Dutch in 1746 had decided to lend 6,000 auxiliary troops to Britain in the War of the Austrian Succession.

Epilogue: patriotism, revolution and trade

The impact of the 1771 prize essay was significant, not merely through the establishment of the Economic Branch that it inspired. More important is that the winning essays shed light on how the earlier economic reform debate spiralled off into a form of political patriotism. The legacy of the 1751 'Proposal' was clear mostly in the essays by van den Heuvel and Rogge. Zillesen instead opted for a politically tinged historical description. On the other side of the spectrum a merchant from Utrecht, Wijnand Koopman, argued in a prize essay from 1777 that the very 'constitution' of the Dutch Republic would be violated through the kind of patriotic protectionist barriers that van den Heuvel and Rogge proposed as temporary or very partial measures. The discussion between Koopman (and one may add Hogendorp as a later supporter of the same position) and van den Heuvel and Rogge was a technical one about economic reform in the short- middle- and long-term. The position taken

¹²⁵ Zillesen, 'Antwoord', 450.

¹²⁶ Zillesen, 'Antwoord', 426–35.

¹²⁷ Zillesen, 'Antwoord', 518.

¹²⁸ Zillesen, 'Antwoord', 524.

¹²⁹ Zillesen, 'Antwoord', 545–8.

in by Zillesen was formally part of the same debate, but shifted its focus to the idea that Dutch economic reform was primarily a matter of mobilising Dutch virtue and investing into an anti-British commercial–political alliance.¹³⁰ The analyses of the causes of Dutch economic decline and the kind of measures proposed by van den Heuvel and Rogge rested on a political economy that was comparable to views held by French and British theorists writing at the same time. Zillesen’s patriotic vision rested on an older moral critique of modernity that chimed neatly with widespread resentment of British commercial power.

The growing rift between the perspectives of Zillesen on the one hand and Rogge and van den Heuvel on the other soon caught up with the Economic Branch too.

In popular prints the first publications of the Economic Branch and a number of *rekesten* (requests made to local or national authorities) by the merchants of Holland met with satirical responses.¹³¹ On a more directly political level van den Heuvel himself, keen to diffuse tensions, engaged with the manner in which French and Dutch state-building intersected and saw the enormous danger emanating from this process. In 1779 van den Heuvel, ‘as a neutral Hollander’ attempted to mediate between the pro-French patriot and pro-British Orangist positions on the rights of neutral trade. At the end of his text his argument turned into a thinly veiled manifesto for how the Economic Branch of the Haarlem Society led the way in the alignment of ‘strict’ commercial neutrality and economic policy and acted as a proper channel for true Dutch patriotism. The greatest threat facing the Dutch was if they lost their nerve, got overly close to the French and were politically divided by the French offers to the Holland cities of trade privileges in return for political support.¹³²

From 1751 onwards (and arguably going back to the writings of Pieter de la Court) the idea had developed that the Dutch Republic precisely as an anomaly and politically impotent actor could serve as an international commercial clearing-house and civiliser of the interstate system. In hindsight, the transition problem that van den Heuvel confronted in his economic reform programme is best understood in this light, not as a project of economic nationalism.

By the end of the eighteenth century it was clear that van den Heuvel’s project had failed and had sparked political instability rather

¹³⁰ Blom, ‘Maatschappijbeeld’, 60–1, mentions Wijnand Koopman as an opponent of protectionism.

¹³¹ Knuttel 19341, 19342, 20035.

¹³² Van den Heuvel, *Onpartijdige Raadgevinge*, 27–32.

than a restoration of the Republic's foundations. The influential Leiden professor and archfather of Dutch statistics, Adriaan Kluit, in his lectures and writings, distanced himself with remarkable moderation from some of van den Heuvel's recommendations. Kluit saw the initiatives of the Economic Branch as harmless by themselves and constructive if remaining within their proper boundaries, as he phrased it. Yet, he also saw the danger of these views giving rise to unfounded calls for radical restructuring of the economic profile and the political foundations of the Dutch state, towards protective barriers, import substitutions and away from the trade-led mechanisms that lay at the basis of the national wealth.¹³³ In his work on fiscal reform quoted from at the beginning of this chapter, Hogendorp in a similarly strange way praised the initiatives of the Economic Branch, but also saw that society as a factor that had destabilised the political climate in of the Dutch state.¹³⁴

Interestingly, in 1825 the Haarlem society re-ran the 1771 prize question on the rise, decline and restoration of Dutch trade.¹³⁵ This time it was not Ploos but Hogendorp himself, as one of the directors of the society, who tried to monitor the publication of the winning essay. The committee meeting decided in 1827 to award a prize to Jan van Ouwerkerk de Vries, but to publish it along with a long, very critical, but sympathetically phrased, refutation by Hogendorp and a preface and afterword in support of the refutation written by H. W. Tydeman. Hogendorp criticised Ouwerkerk's portrayal of British commercial empire as a model for the Dutch state. By the 1820s Hogendorp clearly considered it a matter of personal duty to closely monitor Dutch economic patriotism and thereby protect the economic mechanisms required for the survival of the Dutch state in the interstate system.

¹³³ Adriaan Kluit, *Iets over den laatsten Engelschen oorlog met de republiek, en over Nederlands Koophandel deszelfs bloei, verval en middelen tot herstel* (Amsterdam 1794), 347–51 and ULL. Ms. BPL 258, f.3, refer to Herman Hendrik van den Heuvel, 'Antwoord', 72–3. On ULL Ms. BPL 1844, f.27–8 Kluit cited Rogge's essay to emphasise that the physical situation of the Dutch Republic was conducive to its international comptoir function.

¹³⁴ Hogendorp, *Gedachten over 's lands finantiën*, 42–5, particularly 45, where Hogendorp criticises the idea that all states need to have their own agriculture and manufacturing. See also Overmeer, *De economische denkbeelden*, 165–6, 214–20.

¹³⁵ De Bruijn, *Inventaris van de Prijsvragen van de Hollandsche Maatschappij*, 245 [number 297], dated 1825.

12

Between Mainstay and Internal Colony: Zeeland and the Decline of the Dutch Republic, 1750–1800

Arno Neele

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, economic societies popped up all over the United Provinces, some as local departments of a general national organisation, others as purely regional institutions.¹ The trade-based economy of the Dutch Republic shaped these societies in ways that were atypical of their counterparts in other parts of the continent.² The following discussion focuses on the case of Zeeland, thus contributing a provincial dimension to the overall picture of the international proliferation of economic societies.

While the Republic of the Seven United Provinces had served as an inspiring example to other European states in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, by the eighteenth century it was known both at home and abroad as a country in decline.³ The consensus was that the Dutch Republic had been overtaken by powers such as Great Britain and France, and had lost its former might in Europe. Numerous domestic restoration programmes were launched in the latter half of the eighteenth century with the aim of halting this decline and reinstating the Dutch Republic in the key role it had once played in the European system of states.⁴ Two problems featured at the heart of the accompanying

¹ Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijndhardt, *1800. Blueprints for a National Community* (London/Assen: Palgrave/van Gorcum 2004), 93–114.

² See Stapelbroek's chapter.

³ Erik S. Reinert, 'Emulating Success: Contemporary Views of the Dutch Economy before 1800', in *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic*, ed. Oscar Gelderblom (Farnham: Ashgate 2009), 19–40.

⁴ Koen Stapelbroek, 'Economic reform and neutrality in Dutch political pamphlets, 1741–1779', in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, eds. Femke Deen, David Onnekink and Michel Reinders (Leiden: Brill 2010), 173–206.

analyses of decline and recovery: economic decline, and the ailing public finances.⁵

From the late seventeenth century onwards, the Dutch Republic was faced with a decline in the goods trade, and most notably in fisheries and industry. The consequent growth in unemployment provoked a mass exodus from the cities in the eighteenth century. This absolute decline was combined with a relative decline in comparison to Great Britain, which had become the economic hub of Europe.⁶ One problem linked to the Netherlands' economic decline was the steep rise in the national debt in the eighteenth century. After the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713) and especially after the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), the national debt increased so dramatically that debt redemptions and interest payments constituted by far the largest items in the Republic's national budget.⁷

Far from being exclusively Dutch themes, however, the economy and the state of public finance were the subject of debate throughout Europe. Economic and political conditions were analysed as interwoven factors everywhere, and political economy was seen as the academic training of choice for an aspiring statesman. This interest in markets and their integration into the political debate arose from the growing commercial rivalries between the states of Europe.⁸ For a state to hold its own, militarily and politically, amid the tightening rivalry between European states in the latter half of the eighteenth century, a flourishing domestic economy was now deemed essential. National prosperity was crucial for generating high tax revenue and for concluding loans to pay for an army and a navy.

⁵ Johan Aalbers, 'Het machtsverval van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden 1713–1741', in *Machtsverval in de internationale context*, eds. J. Aalbers and A. P. van Goudoever (Groningen: Wolters Noordhoff 1986), 7–36.

⁶ Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The first modern economy: success, failure, and perseverance of the Dutch economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997).

⁷ Johan Aalbers, 'Holland's Financial Problems (1713–1733) and the Wars against Louis XIV', in *Britain and the Netherlands: War and Society VI*, eds. A. D. Duke and C. A. Tamse (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977), 79–93; Marjolein 't Hart, 'The Dutch Republic: The urban impact on politics', in *A miracle mirrored: the Dutch Republic in European perspective*, eds. Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), 57–98; W. Fritschy and R. van der Voort, 'From fragmentation tot unification: public finance, 1700–1914', in *A financial history of The Netherlands*, eds. Marjolein 't Hart, Joost Jonker and Jan Luiten van Zanden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 64–93.

⁸ See Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2005).

The debate about political economy in the Republic should be seen within this European context. How did people in the Republic react to the 'jealousy of trade' among the surrounding states? The prevailing belief at this time was that small commercial states had outplayed their role in the continent's new balance of power. Their influence would be swamped by centralist monarchies such as Great Britain and France, which were better equipped to organise the kind of national economies and financial systems that were needed to build up large, permanent armed forces.⁹ The Dutch Republic (like the Swiss Republic) was an exception in the European system of states.¹⁰ It was not in any sense a unitary state with a government led from the centre; on the contrary, it consisted of seven sovereign provinces that were largely governed by the cities. Let us consider the solutions that were proposed within this commercial, city-governed state, for the problems of the state's economy and the national debt. The question is how the Dutch responded, within their federal structure, to demands for policy in these two areas to be placed under stronger central control.

To gain a better picture of the federal character of the Dutch Republic and of the provincial particularism that characterised its internal public debate on the economy, the present discussion, instead of adopting a national perspective or the customary perspective of the dominant province of Holland, focuses on the course taken by the debate in the more peripheral province of Zeeland. The questions addressed are: what position did Zeeland's public figures adopt in the economic debate, and what recovery programmes did they propose? These questions will be addressed on the basis of three examples: the proposal for a limited system of free ports (1751), Zeeland's departments of the society known as the Economic Branch (*Oeconomische Tak*; 1777), and the political economy pursued by Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel, Grand Pensionary of Zeeland (1770–1787). This approach will illuminate the establishment of economic societies in Zeeland and their attitudes towards Holland, the Republic as a whole, and the European commercial politics that permeated their debates.

Particularism

Both within and outside Zeeland, the province was known in the eighteenth century for its particularism, frequent appeals to provincial

⁹ C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1992* (Oxford: Blackwell 1993), 28–33.

¹⁰ A. Holenstein, T. Maissen and M. Prak, *The Republican Alternative: The Netherlands and Switzerland compared* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2008).

sovereignty, obstructionist tactics and its leading role in the opposition to Holland.¹¹ Thus, one political commentator concluded in 1795, during the debate on the desirability of a unitary state following the fall of the Republic, that 'provincial patriotism' was far stronger in Zeeland than in the other provinces: 'its people have a greater attachment to their own land and distinctive character traits, a manifest consequence of the nature and remoteness of their land. The people of Zeeland see themselves as a nation.'¹² Zeeland's particularism effectively spans the entire early modern period, and its complexity precludes a comprehensive analysis in the present context. It has political as well as cultural and religious components, but in the second half of the eighteenth century, Zeeland's frequent invocation of provincial sovereignty appears to have been motivated mainly by financial and economic considerations.

In the 'nationalist' historiography, focusing on those aspects that improved or obstructed an assumed age-long process of national unification, the verdict on civic and provincial particularism in the time of the Dutch Republic was largely negative. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the first professor of 'history of the fatherland' (*vaderlandse geschiedenis*) in the Netherlands, Robert Fruin, went so far as to blame particularism for the demise of the Republic. He roundly condemned the self-serving obstinacy of the provinces that, in his eyes, tried to block any attempt to centralise the Dutch Republic. Although less explicit, for his successors in the first half of the twentieth century like Petrus Johannes Blok, Herman Theodoor Colenbrander and Pieter Geyl a unitary state was still the norm and particularism a deviation and an impediment in the realisation of a nationstate.¹³ Geyl condemned provincialism as 'narrow-minded selfishness'.¹⁴ After 1960, historians abandoned this monarchical and centralist perspective, instead emphasising the Republic's particularist structure and taking a more equitable view of the particularism encountered in Zeeland and elsewhere.¹⁵

¹¹ See e.g. J. van der Poel, 'Het particularisme van Zeeland en de Convoyen en Licenten', *Archief. Vroegere en latere mededeelingen voornamelijk in betrekking tot Zeeland* (1929), 1–113.

¹² *De Vriend des Volks* 40 (1795–1796), 330.

¹³ P. J. Blok, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche volk* (Leiden: Sijthoff 1923–1924); H. T. Colenbrander, *De patriottentijd. Hoofdzakelijk naar buitenlandsche bescheiden* (The Hague: Nijhoff 1897–1899); P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse stam* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek 1961–1962).

¹⁴ Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse stam*, 197.

¹⁵ Blaas describes this as a 'tendency of de-nationalisation'. P. B. M. Blaas, *Geschiedenis en nostalgie. De historiografie van een kleine natie met een groot verleden* (Hilversum: Verloren 2000), 25–8, 192–202.

At the same time, with the growing regionalisation of historiography in the past few decades, regionally-oriented historians have tended to stress the uniqueness and specificity of Zeeland's history. Examples include Kluiver and Priester, who argue that although Holland and Zeeland are frequently bracketed together as commercial coastal provinces, they were in other respects very different.¹⁶ They have sought to explain Zeeland's wayward political course as a derivative of the province's uniquely-structured economy. In my view, both the similarities and differences between these two provincial economies can shed more light on Zeeland's particularism. Before discussing the province's political economy, however, we must take a clear look at its economic structure.

Holland and Zeeland shared a similar relationship to trade. In the late Middle Ages, Zeeland was at the epicentre of European commerce and its cities functioned as outports of the prosperous regions of Flanders and Brabant. Indeed, in 1567 the Florentine Lodovico Guicciardini described the roadstead of Walcheren as a hub of world trade.¹⁷ This unique position within international trade networks greatly boosted urbanisation in the four centuries from 1200 to 1600. Three towns grew up on the island of Walcheren in Zeeland in this period, producing an extraordinarily high degree of urbanisation on this island. But in other parts of Zeeland too, cities arose with inter-regional and international commercial ties. It was accordingly the merchants of Zeeland, together with their fellows in Holland, who laid the foundations for the hegemony of the Dutch Republic in colonial trade, with their joint establishment of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*; VOC) and West India Company (*Westindische Compagnie*; WIC).¹⁸

From the early seventeenth century onwards, however, the economic development of Zeeland and Holland diverged. The economic decline of the cities in Flanders and Brabant decimated the role of Zeeland's towns in international commerce, while Holland moved into the ascendancy, taking over the position vacated by Flanders and Brabant. Zeeland's trade with northern and southern Europe gradually dried up

¹⁶ J. H. Kluiver, *De soevereine en independente staat Zeeland. De politiek van de provincie Zeeland inzake vredesonderhandelingen met Spanje tijdens de Tachtigjarige Oorlog tegen de achtergrond van de positie van Zeeland in de Republiek* (Middelburg: De Zwarte Arend 1998); P. Priester, *Geschiedenis van de Zeeuwse Landbouw circa 1600–1910* (Wageningen: HES Studia Historica 1998).

¹⁷ L. Guicciardini, *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* (Antwerp: 1567).

¹⁸ V. Enthoven, *Zeeland en de opkomst van de Republiek: handel en strijd in de Scheldedelta, c. 1550–1621* (Leiden: Luctor et Victor 1996).

in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cities like Middelburg and Vlissingen acquired a new role as inter-regional hubs in the trade between the Spanish/Austrian Netherlands, Great Britain, and Holland. Because of the monopoly exercised by the VOC and WIC, however, Zeeland remained a key player in colonial trade. Furthermore, the founding of the Middelburg Commercial Company (*Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie*; MCC) in 1720 gave Zeeland majority control of the Dutch Republic's lucrative slave trade.¹⁹

While Zeeland was falling behind Holland in international trade, the two provinces also diverged in the realm of agriculture. As a result of land reclamation and modernisation, Zeeland's agriculture sector was characterised by superior quality and high productivity levels. The farmers produced most of their crops for the market, and grain and madder crops, in particular, were grown on a large scale to be exported to Great Britain, the Southern Netherlands and Holland. Zeeland's husbandry became something of a marvel, and in the eighteenth century even British agriculturalists set off to study farming methods on the islands of Zeeland.²⁰ So while Holland was evolving into a trading province *par excellence* in the early modern period, Zeeland was increasingly focusing on agriculture.

In the eighteenth century, Zeeland had an ambivalent position within the Dutch Republic. While it shared a number of trading interests with Holland, it was also foremost among those championing the interests of agriculture. In both agriculture and commerce, however, Zeeland viewed Holland as a rival. There was little or no support for the interests of agriculture in Holland, and the people of Zeeland were constantly worried that the remaining inter-regional and colonial trade might shift to the cities of Holland. Thus it is not surprising that Zeeland looked for different solutions than Holland for the political and economic problems that faced the Dutch Republic in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Proposal for a limited system of free ports (1751)

One of the most ambitious reactions to the growing political and economic rivalry between the European states and the decline of the

¹⁹ Johannes Postma, 'A Reassessment of the Dutch Atlantic Slave', in *Riches from Atlantic commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, eds. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden: Brill 1992), 115–38.

²⁰ Priester, *Geschiedenis van de Zeeuwse Landbouw*; P. J. van Cruyningen, *Behoudend maar buigzaam: boeren in West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen 1650–1850* (Wageningen: PhD thesis Wageningen University 2000).

Republic was the 'Proposition for the restoration and improvement of commerce in the Republic' (*Propositie*; hereafter 'the Proposition'), dating from 1751.²¹ Stadholder Willem IV submitted the Proposition to the States-General as part of a wider-ranging programme intended to reform the navy and the state's finances as well as revitalising trade. But the ideas it contained did not derive from the stadholder himself; they came from the trading communities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Unsurprisingly, then, they revolved largely around trade. Its authors maintained that trade and the Dutch Republic were inextricably interwoven. The Republic's prosperity was based on trade, and revitalising trade was therefore of crucial importance to recovery. The growing economic competition within Europe had deprived the Dutch Republic of its entrepôt role in international trade. A large proportion of trade flows now bypassed the Republic altogether. Nothing could be done to curtail the commercial aspirations of other countries, but creating a system of free ports could turn them to the Republic's advantage. It would restore the Dutch Republic's position as the entrepôt of Europe, thus bolstering its *raison d'être* in the European system of states.

The free port plan was never implemented, however. Johannes Hovy maintained that the Proposition immediately foundered because of strong opposition from Zeeland.²² Reports drawn up in Zeeland show that while the province's administrative officials and merchants endorsed the analysis set forth in the Proposition, they took a different view of the methods needed to keep afloat in Europe's new balance of power. The longest report from Zeeland was the Advisory Report produced by Zeeland's Admiralty (*Advis*; hereafter 'Advisory Report').²³ This document concurred with the Proposition in observing that the balance of power in Europe had changed, and both attributed the decline of the Dutch Republic to external causes ('the jealousy of foreign Sovereigns').²⁴ But in contrast to the energetic problem-solving

²¹ *Propositie . . . Gedaan, tot redress en verbeeteringe van den Koophandel in de Republicq* (The Hague: 1751). See Koen Stapelbroek, 'Dutch commercial decline revisited: The future of international trade and the 1750s debate about a limited free port', in *Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli* 43 (2009): 193–221; J. Hovy, *Het voorstel van 1751 tot instelling van een beperkt vrijhavenstelsel in de Republiek. (Propositie tot een gelimiteerd porto-franco)* (Groningen: Wolters 1966).

²² Hovy, *Het voorstel van 1751*, 101–5, 433–42, 566–81, 617–18.

²³ *Advis van de Gecommitteerde Raaden ter Admiraliteyt in Zeeland, Behelsende eenige bedenckelykheeden op de Verhandeling, geformeert tot redress van den vervallen koophandel in Nederland met eenige aanmerkingen op het zelve* (S.l.: 1752).

²⁴ *Advis*, 18.

approach of the Proposition, Zeeland's Advisory Report adopted a more sombre tone: 'and we wished only to convey ... that the underlying source of the harm cannot be halted, and that a limited Free Port, as is proposed, is not deemed acceptable'.²⁵

The people of Zeeland believed that the fall in trade volume had nothing to do with the imposition of duties. Indeed, trade had flourished in the seventeenth century, when duties were much higher. A free port would add insult to injury. In the much-used symbolism of disease and cure, Zeeland's spokesmen described the free port idea as one of those 'hazardous medicines that put the sufferer's life at risk'.²⁶ Their own Advisory Report, on the other hand, argued that 'all Trading Nations' were based on measures to stimulate their own factories, products and artefacts by imposing high import duties and keeping export duties low. Zeeland's report did not share the basic assumption that trade was the driving force behind the Republic's prosperity, arguing instead that domestic trade and industry provided the greatest benefit for the public good.²⁷

Added to this, the Advisory Report adopted a far more fiscal approach. It urged that care be taken to reverse the 'dire financial straits' into which the Admiralties, in particular, had fallen. It was a lack of protection, the report maintained, that had brought down trade. To achieve recovery, the Republic and its trade must therefore be protected by a naval power, so that the country would not be 'exposed to utter destruction' at the first hostile attack. To build up the navy, the Admiralties were dependent on revenue from the import and export duties specifically imposed for this purpose (*Konvoeien en Licenten*). A free port might perhaps fill a few merchants' purses, but it would drain the treasury.²⁸

The Proposition's authors had sought to pre-empt criticism from the provinces and cities by arguing that 'the greatest good must be accorded the greatest weight'. They urged that the interests of the Republic as a whole be given precedence over those of a province, and that any minor disadvantage for particular interest groups likewise be discounted.²⁹ Zeeland's representatives quoted this passage, and demanded to know if this principle would also be applied if such losses entailed 'a considerable loss for the province of Zeeland'.³⁰ For a free port system would not

²⁵ *Advis*, 21–2.

²⁶ *Advis*, 28.

²⁷ *Advis*, 66.

²⁸ *Advis*, 11–18.

²⁹ *Propositie*, 30.

³⁰ *Advis*, 43.

only be disastrous for the Republic as a whole, it would also, and more especially, spell disaster for Zeeland.

If goods in transit were exempted from duties, Zeeland would lose its vital transit trade to and from the Austrian Netherlands, which would go through Holland instead. For the truth was that Zeeland's customs offices were very lax in imposing the import and export duties set by the States General. If a free port system were introduced throughout the Dutch Republic, Zeeland would lose the advantage this laxity had conferred. In practice, then, Zeeland pursued its own wayward customs policy to promote its economic interests and to protect them from Holland's supremacy.³¹ In other words, Zeeland operated as an independent state in the competitive world of international trade, seeking to retain its own share of it.³² A shift in the movement of trade would also be disastrous for the revenue of Zeeland's Admiralty, which came from the specific import and export duties paid by merchants.³³ Another important reason for Zeeland's opposition to the free port proposal was its projected impact on the agriculture sector. The Proposition stated that 'the entire Republic is as constituted and ordered with a view to conducting trade' and that the majority of its citizens, especially its most prominent citizens, consisted of 'Merchants, Craftsmen, Fishermen, and Shipowners'.³⁴ The Advisory Report, on the other hand, opposed any reduction in import duties on agricultural produce, especially grain, because of the key role of agriculture in Zeeland's economy;³⁵ lower import duties on foreign grain imports would make Zeeland's own grain far less competitive within the domestic market.

In short, Zeeland's Advisory Report observed that the Proposition 'had not taken full account of commerce in general, but had instead focused on certain commodities, with the probable effect of diverting the Commerce some small proportion of which currently takes place in the provinces to Cities that have already absorbed most of it'.³⁶

Zeeland's entire report is imbued with implicit insinuations that the Proposition mainly favoured Holland's interests and that the

³¹ See Van der Poel, 'Het particularisme van Zeeland', 1–113.

³² Other points of criticism in the Advisory Report were likewise advanced with a view to preserving Zeeland's role as middleman in trade between the Austrian Netherlands, Great Britain, and Holland.

³³ Besides losing the revenue from these *Konvoeien en Licenten*, Zeeland's Admiralty would miss out on other sources of revenue. See *Advīs*, 6–12, 39.

³⁴ *Propositie*, 60, 67.

³⁵ *Advīs*, 32–4.

³⁶ *Advīs*, 61.

introduction of a limited free port system would only benefit Holland's cities and would be detrimental to Zeeland. The Advisory Report therefore sought to draw attention to the needs of Zeeland's economy. It was precisely this one-sided approach that attracted fierce criticism from Thomas Isaac de Larrey, one of the men who had been closely involved in the drafting of the Proposition.³⁷ De Larrey was well aware that Zeeland's position could prove a major obstacle to the introduction of a free port system. Introducing his critical response to the Advisory Report, he wrote that the specific maladies afflicting the Dutch Republic were hard to cure, since to a large extent they had arisen from, and were mixed with, 'specific interests, whether of provinces, cities, or of other kinds'. Unlike Holland's spokesmen, whom he called 'sincere Patriots', Zeeland's people were blinded by 'private and provincial interests', in consequence of which they were making it impossible for the Republic to recover its former position of power in Europe.³⁸

So both Zeeland's spokesmen and the Holland-based drafters of the Proposition accused each other of particularism. Both realised that the Republic had lost its power to Europe's new dominant trading nations. But their divergent proposals for recovery stemmed from their own conflicting economic interests. The Proposition flatly rejected the notion that the trading republics had had their day. On the contrary, introducing free ports would enable the Republic to profit from Europe's new economic reality and to recover its former position as the leading international entrepôt. Zeeland's Advisory Report, on the other hand, emphasised the irreversibility of the new balance of power and saw the entrepôt role as obsolete. While the Dutch Republic had long served as an example to other countries, now it needed to follow the lead of the new major power, Great Britain, by protecting its own economy with high import duties, monopolies and a strong navy.

Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel and the Economic Branch

The Proposition would continue to play a key role in the economic debate of the second half of the eighteenth century. Twenty years after it was first published, Holland Society of Sciences (*Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*) set an essay competition on the subject of the

³⁷ [Thomas Isaac de Larrey], *Aanmerkingen op het Advys van de Gecommitteerde Raaden ter Admiraliteyt in Zeeland, op de Verhandeling, geformeert tot redres van den vervallen koophandel in Nederland* (1752).

³⁸ *Aanmerkingen*, Preface.

historical development of trade in Holland and the way to recovery. The winning essay, by Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel, invoked the 1751 Proposition, but proposed completely different remedies.³⁹ His solutions, rather than focusing on international trade and the Republic's role as an entrepôt, revolved instead around the trade in 'domestic' produce.

Van den Heuvel's analysis of the factors underlying the rise and fall of commerce in the Republic derived directly from the Proposition. In his view, however, now that the Republic had lost its role as an entrepôt in international trade, it was high time to 'heed the expansion of our domestic trade'.⁴⁰ His goal was not merely to promote the prosperity of the country's merchants and trading cities, but to boost the economy of the 'entire body politic'. In his view, it was misguided to suggest that the interests of trade were at odds with those of agriculture and industry. On the contrary, their preservation and growth were intimately related, since domestic production stimulated trade in these home-grown products, and domestic trade was the main means of encouraging trade in foreign goods.

Whereas the 1751 Proposition was largely construed as the narrowly-framed response of Holland's trading cities to their decline, van den Heuvel's plan was not obviously susceptible to such criticism. On the contrary, he took a broader view of the Dutch economy, and discussed the Dutch Republic as a whole. For instance, he referred to the disputes between provinces that had been provoked by the debate on the free port proposal, and expressed a hope that the provinces would now be able to agree on a national programme of economic recovery. To conclude such an agreement, he wrote, it was essential to accommodate Zeeland in the area of the grain trade and in relation to trade with Brabant and Flanders.⁴¹ His concern was not only with Holland, but also with the 'Inland Provinces', and rather than focusing narrowly on the position of merchants, he adopted a more inclusive approach that embraced everyone from the poorest of beggars to the wealthy patricians. He therefore appealed urgently to the 'patriotic zeal' of all citizens of the Netherlands, to join forces to revitalise the prosperity of their country. Inspired by the example of the Society of Arts in London and by the activities of the Spanish economist Pedro Rodriguez Campomanes, he saw founding an economic society as the best means

³⁹H. H. van den Heuvel, 'Over de grond van Hollandsch koophandel', *Verhandelingen, uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappye der Weetenschappen, te Haarlem* XVI (1780), 1–160.

⁴⁰Van den Heuvel, 'Over de grond van Hollandsch koophandel', 44.

⁴¹Van den Heuvel, 'Over de grond van Hollandsch koophandel', 134–5.

of mobilising this patriotism.⁴² An economic society should serve as an instrument for seeking out, expanding and disseminating knowledge on economic matters, by importing knowledge from abroad and by lending financial support to new inventions, experiments and factories.⁴³ He proposed that departments of this new society be set up in cities all around the Republic, so as to reach the entire country.

In response to van den Heuvel's treatise and his call for economic patriotism, Holland Society of Sciences founded an Economic Branch in 1777.⁴⁴ Heeding his insistence on a nationwide approach to economic decline, membership was open to all burghers, and the society was structured along decentralised lines. While in the past, membership of cultural societies had been reserved for the élite, involvement in the Economic Branch was extended to all members of the middle classes. Members lacking political power could now contribute to the revitalisation of Dutch society by taking part in cultural activities. The headquarters of the new Economic Branch were in Haarlem, but departments opened up in cities throughout the Republic. The aim was to integrate different social groups, different economic sectors, and different cities and provinces, to form a patriotic national economy. The Economic Branch was an attempt to restore the Republic's economic power, bypassing the deadlocked apparatus of political decision-making in the Federal Republic. The decentralised structure and the decision to open membership up to all burghers proved a remarkable success formula: within two years, the Economic Branch had a membership of over 3,000, with branches in almost every province – 57 in all.

The Economic Branch in Zeeland and the Zeeland Society of Sciences (*Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen*)

For all the popularity of the Economic Branch in its first few years, the plans proposed by van den Heuvel and the Holland Society of Sciences nonetheless met with a frosty reception in Zeeland. In September

⁴² P. R. Campomanes, *Discurso sobre el fomento de la industria popular* (Oviedo 1774). Van den Heuvel translated this work into Dutch and wrote a lengthy commentary on it: P. R. Campomanes and H. H. van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling over het ondersteunen van de gemeene industrie, in Spanje* (Utrecht: 1780).

⁴³ See H. H. van den Heuvel, *Aanspraak gedaan aan de Classis van den Oeconomischen Tak binnen Utrecht* (Utrecht: 1778), 16.

⁴⁴ For a historical account, see J. Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak tot Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel 1777–1952* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink 1952).

1777, Kornelis van der Helm Boddaert, a member of the political élite in Middelburg, wrote to the Holland Society that his city displayed little zest for launching a local branch.⁴⁵ The political élite who dominated Zeeland's clubs and societies looked askance at the idea of local branches of an economic society whose activities would intrude into the realm of politics. Their suspicions were compounded by a fear of interference by the Holland Society of Sciences in Zeeland's cultural and economic affairs. Most of the élite of Middelburg and Vlissingen took an active or even leading role in the Zeeland Society of Sciences, and saw the Holland Society of Sciences as a potential rival. To understand this, we should recall that the Zeeland Society of Sciences, founded in 1768, had been modelled on the Holland Society, which was sixteen years older. Like Holland, Zeeland's patricians wanted their own society of sciences, which would be a cultural beacon and help to reverse the Dutch Republic's decline in relation to its European neighbours. In adopting the motto 'non sordent in undis' ('they [the Muses] are not soiled amid the waves') the men of Zeeland sought to send a clear message that this delta region did not neglect the arts and sciences, in spite of its inaccessibility and its susceptibility to the ravages of flooding, but on the contrary, cherished a true appreciation of them. Of this, the Society itself constituted the ultimate proof. Thus, at the first general meeting, in 1770, the president lectured on Zeeland's importance in the advancement of sciences in the Republic. For all these aspirations, however, in practice the Zeeland Society operated as a provincial society that was frequently deployed to serve the narrow interests of Zeeland. One of the main ways in which its spokesmen sought to advance their province was by setting essay competitions. The applied and socially-oriented prize essay questions related, almost without exception, to the specific problems of Zeeland.⁴⁶

Clearly then, while the eighteenth-century trend within Europe for clubs and societies had prompted Zeeland to found its own Society of

⁴⁵ Archives of North Holland (NHA), 'Archief van de Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel' 1777–1993, T609.377, n.p.: letter of 24 September 1777 from Kornelis van der Helm Boddaert to the general secretary.

⁴⁶ For a historical account of the Zeeland Society of Sciences, see W. W. Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750–1815* (Amsterdam: Rodopi 1987); for the prize essay competitions set by the Zeeland Society of Sciences, see G. G. Trimpe Burger-Mekking, 'Prijsvragen en conceptprijsvragen van het Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen uigeschreven in het tijdvak 1769–1860', *Archief: vroegere en latere mededeelingen voornamelijk in betrekking tot Zeeland* (2002): 69–254.

Sciences, in the context of the prevailing mood of provincial 'patriotism', this society was more concerned to reverse the decline of Zeeland in the Dutch Republic than to reverse the Republic's decline in Europe. From this point of view, it is not surprising that the advent of the Economic Branch, as an offshoot of the rival Holland Society of Sciences with its explicit call for a form of national patriotism, was initially viewed with suspicion. In 1777, the executive committee of the Zeeland Society therefore urged its members not to join the Economic Branch until its goals and working methods had been clarified.⁴⁷

Still, as soon as it became clear that the Economic Branch was proving a great success throughout the Republic, Zeeland had no wish to be left behind. By 1778, departments were active in Middelburg, Vlissingen and Zierikzee. A large proportion of Zeeland's patricians became members, and many of those serving on the executive committees of the Zeeland Society joined the Middelburg and Vlissingen departments of the Economic Branch. This was the local élite's way of keeping control of the new reformist society. One might even say that in practice, Walcheren's departments of the Economic Branch became mere extensions of the Zeeland Society. By exercising their influence, the patricians of Middelburg and Vlissingen tried to use the Economic Branch to implement ideas on educational reform that had been proposed in the Zeeland Society.⁴⁸

The initial mistrust of the Economic Branch in Zeeland thus had nothing to do with differences of opinion concerning economic issues; the ideas put forward by van den Heuvel and the Economic Branch enjoyed widespread support in the province. Zeeland's patricians had already argued the case for promoting the domestic economy instead of reviving the Netherlands' seventeenth-century *entrepôt* function in the 1750s, in rebuttal of the Proposition. The secretary of the Vlissingen department, Nicolaas Cornelis Lambrechtsen, explaining his commitment to the Economic Branch, professed his admiration for van den Heuvel and stressed the importance of domestic factories. He had led the department's initiative to found a spinning mill in 1780, where boys and girls from poor families were taught how to spin and weave with

⁴⁷ Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom*, 182.

⁴⁸ Zeeland Archives (ZA), Verzameling Aanwinsten Rijksarchief in Zeeland 1960, no. 17, T33.2.246, n.p.: 'Resolutien van het departement 'des oeconomische taks' te Middelburg van de Maatschappij der wetenschappen te Haarlem betreffende het uitschrijven van prijsvragen betreffende verbetering van het onderwijs, 1782-1783'.

flax and cotton.⁴⁹ The Middelburg department supported their city's spinning mill by organising prize-giving ceremonies to reward the best spinners and weavers.

Most importantly of all, perhaps, the Economic Branch was an ideal instrument for furthering private economic interests on a national platform. At the Branch's annual general meeting, each local department sought to promote its own economic interests by suggesting possible topics for an essay competition. Representatives of the fishing town of Zierikzee proposed an essay on the subject of cod fishing, for instance, while those from the harbour town of Vlissingen wanted one on coastal protection.⁵⁰ One proposal in particular proves that the Economic Branch was seen and used by its members pre-eminently as a national platform for their local interests: the Vlissingen department suggested in 1780 that each local branch bring samples of goods produced locally to display to the national assembly.⁵¹ Thus, with instruments like the annual meeting attended by representatives from all over the country, and invitations to propose topics for essay competitions, the Economic Branch set out to integrate specific local interests into a national economic policy.

Notwithstanding the Branch's initial popularity, the 1780s witnessed a rapid downturn in its activities in Zeeland. In other provinces too, the Branch's success was short-lived. Nationwide, between 1778 and 1795, membership fell from 3,056 to 274, and the number of departments fell from 57 to just 11.⁵² Some became ineffectual because of the trend in the 1780s away from 'neutral' economic patriotism towards a more sharply politicised course; they were swept up in the Patriot Revolution that pitted self-styled 'Patriots' against 'Orangists'. In other regions, a more socioeconomic conflict appears to have developed, culminating in a deadlock between patricians seeking to boost trade and middle-class groups' intent on promoting industry.⁵³ Unfortunately, a lack of source material prevents us from drawing any firm conclusions about the demise of the Branch's departments in Zeeland. There is some evidence, however, that the decline of the Economic Branch in this province can

⁴⁹ C. L. M. Lambrechtsen van Ritthem, *Levensberigten van N. C. Lambrechtsen (1752–1823)* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema 1913), 13–15.

⁵⁰ NHA, Archief van de Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel 1777–1993, T609.667, n.p.: letter of 23 May 1778 from the Zierikzee department to the general secretary.

⁵¹ NHA, Archief van de Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel, T609.1, n.p.

⁵² Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 72.

⁵³ Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom*, 109–10.

be attributed in part to disappointment concerning the lack of concrete results. The Middelburg and Vlissingen members were incensed, for instance, when their efforts to implement the education plans devised in the Zeeland Society through the Economic Branch met with implacable resistance at the annual meeting – so much so that they boycotted the annual meeting the following year.⁵⁴

The disbanding of the Zierikzee branch in 1781 also seems to have resulted from the lack of concrete results for its own city and region: members expressed the view that ‘the dues contributed by this department have to date failed to yield the slightest specific benefit for our city’.⁵⁵ The Zierikzee delegates had already protested the year before against the ‘shocking disproportionality’ in the prizes made available to award to boys and girls who were found to excel in weaving from wool, flax or cotton at the local trade schools.⁵⁶ According to the members from Zierikzee, they were entitled to receive more money in comparison to smaller departments, to enable them to promote their economic interests more effectively. They held that the interests of the city and the region could be promoted more effectively locally than in a national context. Most tellingly, this tension between a national and a local approach was embedded in Zeeland’s characteristic aversion to the supremacy of the province of Holland: with the membership dues paid by Zierikzee, they claimed bitterly, ‘the Hollanders had reaped a tidy profit from this city’.⁵⁷

The absence of tangible benefits was a more general problem within the Economic Branch. Even before 1780, it was argued, for instance, that membership dues could be used to better effect if the departments could dispose of this money themselves. Van den Heuvel fiercely opposed this view, arguing that such fragmentation would not only imperil the

⁵⁴ ZA, Verzameling Aanwinsten Rijksarchief in Zeeland 1960, no. 17, T33.2.246, n.p.: ‘Resolutien van het departement ‘des oeconomische taks’ te Middelburg van de Maatschappij der wetenschappen te Haarlem betreffende het uitschrijven van prijsvragen betreffende verbetering van het onderwijs, 1782–1783’; *Resolutien, genomen by de zevende algemeene vergadering des Oeconomischen Taks van de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Weetenschappen te Haarlem* (Haarlem 1784).

⁵⁵ NHA, Archief van de Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel, T.609.377, n.p.: letter of 21 March 1778 from the Zierikzee department to the general secretary.

⁵⁶ NHA, Archief van de Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel 1777–1993, T609.667, n.p.: letter of 16 August 1780 from the Zierikzee department to the general secretary.

⁵⁷ Municipal archives of Schouwen-Duiveland, Archief Departement Zierikzee van de Maatschappij tot Nut van ‘t Algemeen, T291.1, n.p.

objectives and the very survival of the Economic Branch, but that it also posed a grave threat to the general prosperity of the Dutch Republic. He urged the preservation of a 'general fund', with a view to preventing jealousies and conflict between local branches. The 'union of solidarity that had so happily been forged' between departments must not be attenuated by self-interest.⁵⁸ At the 1788 annual general meeting, it was once more concluded that many people had cancelled their membership in the past few years from a belief that the Branch had not been of any benefit in promoting prosperity.⁵⁹

Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel and the national debt

The Zierikzee department was thus disbanded by its members because it was no longer sufficiently able to promote the city's specific interests in the Economic Branch. In other words, its demise had little to do with any political and/or social divisions. As for Middelburg and Vlissingen, whether the politicisation of economic provincial 'patriotism' contributed to the decline of these departments is impossible to say, in the absence of any documentary sources. Still, the torch-bearer of Zeeland's particularism, Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel, did acknowledge the political danger inherent in this movement of economic 'patriotism'. He may be regarded as Zeeland's greatest intellectual heavyweight in the latter half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ He frequently acted as the spokesman for Zeeland's delegation to the States General. In 1780 he was rewarded for these services with an appointment as secretary of the States of Zeeland, followed in 1785 by promotion to the position of Grand Pensionary of Zeeland.

⁵⁸ Van den Heuvel, *Verhandeling over de noodzaakelijkheid van het ondersteunen der gemeene industrie, en de middelen daar toe dienende, met betrekking tot ons Vaderland* (Utrecht 1780), 96–100.

⁵⁹ *Resolutiën, genomen bij de 11^e algemeene vergadering des Oeconomischen Taks van de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Weetenschappen te Haarlem* (1788), 831–2.

⁶⁰ On Van de Spiegel, see G. W. Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel en zijne tijdgenooten (1737–1800)*, IV vols. (Middelburg: Altorffer, 1874–8); F. van Dijk, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel, raad en burgemeester van Goes: de leerjaren van een staatsman* (Assen: van Gorcum 1963); J. C. Boogman, *Raadpensionaris L. P. van de Spiegel: een reformistisch-conservatieve pragmaticus en idealist* (Amsterdam: KNAW 1988); W. W. Mijnhardt, 'Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel: raadpensionaris van de restauratie', in *Nederlanders van het eerste uur: het ontstaan van het moderne Nederland 1780–1830*, eds. H. M. Beliën and D. van der Horst (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker 1996), 51–65; F. B. Schotanus, *L. P. van de Spiegel 1737–1800*, 5 vols. (Loenen: Schotanus 1993–2006).

Unlike many of Zeeland's other patricians, Van de Spiegel did not belong to the membership of the Economic Branch. In the first place, he was wary of clubs and societies. While they undoubtedly helped to disseminate knowledge, he felt that the knowledge they disseminated was superficial. Van de Spiegel saw political economy as part of the science of public administration, and believed that most people were ill equipped to comprehend it.⁶¹ This is probably the context for the treatise he published in 1782 on the economic situation of the Dutch Republic, written especially for 'people with limited knowledge of the subject'.⁶² In this text, he tried to correct the prevailing view of the Republic's decline, as propagated *inter alia* by van den Heuvel and the Economic Branch. Quite aside from his disdain for the culture of clubs and societies and his aversion to the oversimplified discourse of decline, Van de Spiegel probably had political motives for steering clear of the Economic Branch. In an essay written in 1783, in which he analysed the decline of the Republic's power, he identified the founding of the Economic Branch as one of the causes of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War and of the opposition to the hereditary stadholder. According to Van de Spiegel, the Economic Branch had depicted Great Britain as the instrument of the Republic's decline, triggering a trade war with Great Britain and fomenting domestic unrest between Patriots and Orangists.⁶³ In other words, he believed that the Economic Branch had propagated a false image of the state in which the country found itself, and because of its members' incompetence, this movement of economic patriotism had become a dangerous and significant factor in politics. We may conclude that Zeeland was not united in a particular view of the Economic Branch. Some saw the Branch as a means of promoting their own local and regional interests as part of the wider national prosperity, while Van de Spiegel saw it mainly as an obstacle to political and economic recovery. Since Van de Spiegel was very far from being an isolated figure within Zeeland's society, it is fair to assume that his views were shared by others in the province, and that the politicisation

⁶¹ L. P. van de Spiegel, 'Over de Verlichting onzer eeuw', in Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel*, vol. IV, 485–527.

⁶² L. P. van de Spiegel, 'Schets tot een verhoog over de intrinsieke en relative magt van de Republiek', in J. de Vries (ed.), 'Van de Spiegel's "Schets tot een verhoog over de intrinsieke en relative magt van de Republiek" (1782)', *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek* 27 (1958), 81–100.

⁶³ L. P. van de Spiegel, 'Oorsprong, uitbarstingen en voortgang der staatsberoerten in de Nederlandsche Republiek. Schets van den loop der gebeurtenissen', in Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel*, vol. II, 82–8.

of economic patriotism may therefore have played a role in the decline of the Economic Branch in Zeeland.

But what, then, was Van de Spiegel's view of the economic future of the Dutch Republic, and of the province of Zeeland? The two are inextricably interwoven, and must necessarily be analysed in the context of his political and economic views on the national debt and of the policy of neutrality. In his 'Zeeland period', Van de Spiegel wrote two unpublished economic treatises. In 1772, he produced his 'Memorandum, explaining the causes underlying the Decline of the Public Finances, and of the prosperity of those dwelling in the Province of Zeeland' (*Memorie*; hereafter 'Memorandum') and ten years later, he wrote his 'Brief exposition of the intrinsic and relative power of the Dutch Republic' (*Schets*; hereafter 'Brief Exposition').⁶⁴ It is clear from these texts that he approached economic issues largely from the vantage point of public finance.⁶⁵

Like the far earlier Proposition and van den Heuvel's prize-winning treatise, Van de Spiegel's 1782 Brief Exposition explored possible means of revitalising the position of the Dutch Republic in the European system of power, so that the Republic might 'once more become what it once was, namely, the centre of European trade'.⁶⁶ He distinguished here between 'intrinsic' and 'relative' power, which led him to conclude that the Republic's prosperity had not declined when measured in relation to the Golden Age – a uniquely upbeat comment amid the lamentations about the country's economic decline in the latter half of the eighteenth century. While Van de Spiegel conceded that some sectors of the economy had witnessed a decline, this was offset by growth in other branches of industry. And while the Republic's position of power within Europe had been eroded, this was not attributable to superior economic development in other countries, but rather to the financial policies pursued by these European states.

⁶⁴ L. P. van de Spiegel, 'Memorie, waarin beredeneerd worden de oorzaken van het Verval der Publyke Finantien en van den Welvaardt der ingezetenen in de Provintie van Zeeland, en aangewezen eenige middelen ter waarschylnlyke Verbeteringe, tot eigen gebruik in het Staatsbesogne tot zoodanigen einde aangelegd. Opgesteld door Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel, als gecommiteerde van de Heeren van Goes in het voorsz. Besogne, den Maart 1772', in G. W. Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel*, vol. I, 216–50; L. P. van de Spiegel, 'Schets tot en verhoog over de intrinsique en relative magt van de Republyk'.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of David Hume and financing public debt, see Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 325–53.

⁶⁶ Van de Spiegel, 'Schets tot en verhoog', 98.

According to Van de Spiegel, the Republic's problems hinged on the lack of an effective army, and most importantly an effective navy, since any republic's survival depends on its ability to protect itself and its trade. What is more, were the Republic to possess a strong army and navy, other countries would be more inclined to forge alliances with it. Van de Spiegel firmly believed that both effective armed forces and allies were essential, if the Dutch Republic was to safeguard its neutrality within Europe, allowing trade to flourish without hindrance. Here he diverged from the views of van den Heuvel, who had advocated a 'strict' neutrality that did not rely on the support of Great Britain and France as allies.⁶⁷

The problem was, however, that the Dutch Republic no longer possessed the public finances needed to pay for decent armed forces. While the country's 'intrinsic' prosperity had not declined, modern warfare had become a costly business, besides which money had been borrowed on credit to fund previous wars, leaving wholly inadequate resources to build up an effective army and navy. This led Van de Spiegel to conclude that 'the finances, or rather, the diminished proportion of the provinces' capital that they can contribute to the expenses of the confederation, are the inherent malady that will lead to the Republic's demise'.⁶⁸ In other words, he identified as the fundamental cause of the relative decline in power of the Republic its ailing finances, and in particular, the deplorable financial straits of the *individual provinces*. For the country's federal structure meant that the army and navy were necessarily financed from the contributions paid by the individual provinces. Ensuring the recovery of the provinces' public debts was therefore an absolute precondition for the political and economic recovery of the entire republic: 'Enabling the Provinces [... to make] the appropriate payment must be the first course of action, before one may proceed with any hope of success to any other plan, however useful and desirable it may be, for the restoration of what has been lost'.⁶⁹

Zeeland saw its public debt soar from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, and claimed that it was therefore no longer able to make its financial contributions to the Republic. The States of Zeeland, led by Van de Spiegel himself, fought a bitter struggle in the States General, in

⁶⁷ Stapelbroek, 'Economic reform and neutrality', 193–6. See also Stapelbroek's chapter.

⁶⁸ Van de Spiegel, 'Schets tot een vertoog', 100.

⁶⁹ L. P. van de Spiegel, 'Reflexien over de gebreken in de gesteldheid der Regering van de Vereenigde Nederlanden', in Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel*, vol. II, 284.

the second half of the eighteenth century, to have the province's contributions lowered. It is in this context that we should interpret Van de Spiegel's 1772 Memorandum. It was intended as an internal discussion paper for the States of Zeeland, with a view to reversing the deplorable state of the province's public finances.

Although his position was not as explicit here as in the later Brief Exposition, Van de Spiegel was already distinguishing between relative and intrinsic economic power in his Memorandum, written ten years earlier. Intrinsic power related to the prosperity of the country's people, while relative power related to the financial vitality of the government. While his Brief Exposition was about the Dutch Republic's position of power in relation to the countries of Europe, the earlier Memorandum was about Zeeland's position of power within the Republic. Van de Spiegel observed that the province of Zeeland had once been 'one of the strongest pillars of the Republic of the United Provinces'.⁷⁰ In this Memorandum he set out to analyse how this powerful and prosperous province had declined to the extent that it could no longer fulfil its financial obligations to the Republic. The primary cause, he concluded, was the War of the Austrian Succession, which had been disproportionately expensive for Zeeland, as the Republic's 'outer wall'. The province's economic decline had reduced the revenue of the States of Zeeland, which was consequently forced to borrow money and to impose new taxes. These policies had led to a further deterioration in the province's finances, since borrowing money had built up an enormous public debt, over which a great deal of interest had to be paid annually, and the higher taxes had led to a fall in population and a decline in prosperity.⁷¹

In his Memorandum, Van de Spiegel dwelt at length on the province's economic situation, arguing that remedies must be sought primarily in the 'domestic constitution of the country, and in the sources from which the finances must be nourished'.⁷² He did not have an unequivocal vision, comparable to the authors of the Proposition or to van den Heuvel. His concern was first and foremost to restore the health of the public finances, and for this, every sector of the economy was significant. Given his preoccupation with the public debt, he appears to have viewed the domestic economy as more important than the international trade in goods. For the rest, he held that public authorities should not impose new taxes in a bid to restore the health of the public purse; instead, what

⁷⁰ Van de Spiegel, 'Memorie', 216.

⁷¹ Van de Spiegel, 'Memorie', 216–20.

⁷² Van de Spiegel, 'Memorie', 243.

mattered in these times of crisis was to invest in the economy. His goal of reducing Zeeland's public debt meant that his programme of economic recovery as set forth in the Memorandum was narrowly provincial. The Memorandum applied the doctrine of the balance of trade not to trade between the Republic and other countries, but to trade between the provinces, most notably to that between Holland and Zeeland. The negative balance of trade was reinforced, he argued, by the exchange rate that applied between Zeeland and Holland. In addition, Van de Spiegel rued the demise of Zeeland's linen-weaving mills, since the province's flax was now being exported as a raw product to Holland, where it was processed in factories. Van de Spiegel also thought it disgraceful that Zeeland's 'most prominent and affluent families' had emigrated to Holland.

Here he was expressing widespread grievances within eighteenth-century Zeeland, where many resented Holland's ascendancy. Together, these two provinces constituted the core of the Republic, but since the seventeenth century, Holland had gradually taken possession of the centre ground, reducing Zeeland to a province in the periphery.

The Commerce that once belonged to Zeeland has been transferred to Holland; Zeeland, being a remote Province, has been compelled to cede the advantage it once shared with Holland to the latter, which is situated in the centre of the Republic and must be regarded as its marketplace: in consequence, every day sees money-making and population size expanding in Holland and shrinking in Zeeland.⁷³

Zeeland's economy needed to be stimulated so as to restore its financial health and political power within the Republic. According to Van de Spiegel's Brief Exposition of 1782, ensuring the healthy public finances of the provinces was also the key to restoring the position of the Dutch Republic within Europe.

Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel and Zeeland's particularism

Van de Spiegel's public life in Zeeland – his political and economic activities alike – were geared towards reinstating the province in its

⁷³ Zeeland Archives, Archief Mathias-Pous-Tak van Poortvliet, inv. no. 324: *Rapport van een Besogne gedecerneerd den 29 January 1767 op eene Missive van Zyne Doorlugtige Hoogheid, den Heer Erf-Stadhouder, van den 20 te voren, ter rescriptie op die van H.Ed.Mog. van 31 December 1766, houdende een ampel en naauwkeurig verslag der tegenwoordige situätie van 's Lands Financiën; benevens eene Concept-Rescriptie op voorsz. Missive van Zyne Doorlugtige Hoogheid, met 3 daar toe relative Memoriën*, 2nd memorandum, 3.

former position of power within the Republic and hence restoring its former status as a pillar of the Union. The only way to do so was by first straightening out Zeeland's public finances. He pursued this aim chiefly by labouring to reduce Zeeland's fixed contribution to the Republic, since without such a reduction, repairing the finances was a hopeless cause.⁷⁴ This provoked a fierce political battle between Zeeland and the other six provinces, which flatly opposed any such reduction: they held that Zeeland should follow its own path to recovery by imposing new taxes.

This struggle was also fought out through pamphlets distributed to the public. Van de Spiegel wrote two pamphlets identifying economic decline and depopulation as the root causes of Zeeland's financial malaise.⁷⁵ Since the province was no longer in a position to pay its contribution to the Republic, it had no choice but to push for a reduction.

A certain contribution was set for Zeeland in a period when its Commerce was flourishing and its population was larger; during this time of great prosperity, it was able to make these payments; but when this situation no longer applied, when its trade had shrunk and some of it had been lopped off, when its Province had become greatly depopulated, and everything was in a state of continuous decline, it sought a reduction in its share of the common expenses.⁷⁶

Van de Spiegel explained that the States of Zeeland were reluctant to impose extra taxes on the people of Zeeland, since the province was already depopulated, and they had no wish to promote its 'complete depopulation'. New taxes would 'completely ruin' the province's financial state.⁷⁷ Van de Spiegel's pamphlets were not really economic treatises, however; they were constitutional and legal expositions. He defended the right of a province to pursue its own financial policy within the Republic, and to determine its own contribution to the confederation. In his view, Zeeland's sovereignty was at stake.

⁷⁴ Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel*, vol. I, 485.

⁷⁵ *Brief van een heer uit Gelderland, aan een zyner vrienden in Zeeland, over het different tusschen de zes provintien en die van Zeeland, nopens de finantien der laatstgemelde* (Amsterdam 1771); *Brief van een s.....'s Heer aan een vriend in Zeeland, ter beantwoordinge van enige opgegeve vragen* (Utrecht 1772).

⁷⁶ *Brief van een S..... 's Heer*, 17.

⁷⁷ *Brief van een S..... 's Heer*, 9.

Zeeland's spokesmen frequently invoked the province's sovereign status in the eighteenth century.⁷⁸ An extreme example of Zeeland's autonomous actions was its foreign policy, with Van de Spiegel at the helm. The latter's Brief Exposition had underscored the need to forge alliances to safeguard neutrality, prevent war and protect trade. Wars were chiefly to blame, in his view, for the loss of both economic and political power, in Zeeland's case as well as that of the Republic as a whole. Which countries should be regarded as potential allies was a question he left unanswered in his Brief Exposition, but he did express a hope that the Republic would never become embroiled in a war with the mighty power of Great Britain (a remarkable hope, in the middle of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War!).

Under his leadership, Zeeland pursued its own course before and during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, and sought to prevent war by making overtures to Great Britain. Slightly less than two months before Great Britain's declaration of war with the Dutch Republic, the States of Zeeland urged that 'attempts be made to resolve the differences that had arisen between the Court of Great Britain and this State amicably, rather than provoking the former to take action that would virtually compel this State to abandon the neutrality that it has so wisely embraced, without possessing the necessary resources to protect itself, as well as its vast Colonies and Commerce'.⁷⁹ Even after Britain's declaration of war on the Republic, Zeeland continued to stress the need to preserve the Dutch Republic's neutrality and to warn of the disastrous consequences that the war would have on trade. On 5 January, Wilhem van Citters, one of Zeeland's most influential patricians, who collaborated closely with Van de Spiegel, went so far as to hold secret negotiations in Bruges with the British ambassador Joseph Yorke and the Dutch ambassador in London, Jan Walraad, in an attempt to prevent war, or in any case to keep Zeeland out of any war that might arise. Understandably, then,

⁷⁸ Besides the dispute on Zeeland's contribution, Zeeland's defenders frequently invoked the province's sovereignty in debates between the Generality Lands and Zeeland regarding the rights to Hoofdplaat and the IJzendijk salt marshes. Van de Spiegel maintained close ties with Willem Schorer, a patrician from Zeeland, who defended Zeeland's sovereign rights to the polderland and salt marshes in the Scheldt and advocated land reclamation in order to restore the province's financial health. See e.g. W. Schorer, *Het nut der bedyking tot redres der finacie voor de provincie van Zeeland beredeneert, en de nadeelige gevolgen voor de gemeene zaak, resulterende uit de oneenigheden tussen de respectie bondtgenooten over de bedykbaere schoren in het committimus* (Middelburg 1770).

⁷⁹ Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel*, vol. II, 3.

Zeeland voted against the League of Armed Neutrality.⁸⁰ This conciliatory policy of neutrality towards Great Britain appears to have been largely informed by the way in which Zeeland's patricians viewed their own political economy and the best methods of achieving economic recovery. Zeeland exported large quantities of grain to Great Britain, which was in the throes of rapid urbanisation – exports that would be harmed if war broke out. Mindful of Zeeland's efforts to avoid war with Britain and its underlying economic motives, Pieter 't Hoen quipped in his *Post van den Neder-Rhijn* that he hoped Zeeland would not make a mistake, and 'send ships carrying cargoes of grain instead of privateering vessels to meet the British'.⁸¹

After the end of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, Van de Spiegel continued to seek a rapprochement with Britain. By then he had been appointed Grand Pensionary of Zeeland, and he was trying to lead his province as well as possible in the Patriot Revolt that had erupted in the Dutch Republic in the 1780s. A text he drafted in 1786 on what he deemed 'the last sheet-anchor, if the Republic is shipwrecked' detailed his view of Zeeland's position in this revolt.⁸² Whatever happened, Zeeland must retain its independence, he urged. In the first place, it should do its utmost to preserve this independence within the federal structure of the Dutch Republic, but should the confederation collapse, Zeeland should seek the protection of a foreign power. Zeeland's 'last sheet-anchor' – the last resort in such a crisis – would be to ally itself to Great Britain while preserving its autonomy. Britain's protection would provide the best means of retaining as much as possible of Zeeland's colonial trade. These were no idle words, as is clear from Van de Spiegel's correspondence with James Harris, who was by then Great Britain's ambassador in The Hague. In May 1786, he told Harris that the crisis rocking the Republic had escalated to the point that Zeeland had to choose between bowing to the Patriots and seeking an alliance with Great Britain. In Van de Spiegel's view, joining the Patriot cause would mean that Zeeland would lose its independence and become subordinate to Holland.⁸³ It was also his fear

⁸⁰ Schotanus, *L. P. van de Spiegel*, vol. I, 89–93.

⁸¹ Quoted in P. J. H. M. Theeuwen, *Pieter 't Hoen en De Post van den Neder-Rhijn (1781–1787)* (Hilversum: Verloren 2002), 152.

⁸² L. P. van de Spiegel, 'P.M. 1786, als het laatste plegtanker, wanneer de Republiek schipbreuk lydt', in Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel*, vol. II, 524–5.

⁸³ *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, first Earl of Malmesbury II* (London 1844), 179–204. See also A. Cobban, *Ambassadors and secret agents: The Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at The Hague* (London: Jonathan Cape 1954), 77–84.

that Zeeland might become an internal colony – effectively of Holland – that had prompted Van de Spiegel to support the stadholder. In 1787 he wrote that the stadholdership was ‘the stronghold that sustains the weaker Provinces against the more powerful ones’.⁸⁴

Final remarks

With the French invasion in 1795, the eighteenth-century fear of the demise of the Republic of the United Provinces became a reality. The unified form of government that was introduced through the new Batavian Republic also brought to an end Zeeland’s political particularism. So when the Middelburg patrician Jan Willem van Sonsbeeck spoke out against this uniform government, we can see his words as one of the last expressions and examples of Zeeland’s particularism, and as exemplifying the dilemmas that faced the Dutch Republic in the latter half of the eighteenth century:

Men of Zeeland! You are dear to me: it is your interests, above all, that impel me to write ... Let me repeat, men of Zeeland! Let not the mood of emulation blind you. Allow your Patriotism to temper its zeal for a while, so as to consult calm reason, in an impartial spirit, on a matter on which your very existence depends. Consider my reasons, reflect on them, and make your decision. – When your consent to a unified form of government has destroyed your supreme authority and all the accompanying privileges, joined you with peoples quite different in matters of law and whose interests are entirely different from yours, squandered all your influence, lops off all the branches of your livelihood and prosperity, prompted a continuous flow of emigration to other parts, and sown a deadly emptiness throughout your streets; when, I say, the jealousy of the regions of Holland has plucked all your trade, leaving you only with the meagre fisheries, and Amsterdam’s ascendancy gobbles up Middelburg; . . . then will I grieve over your fate.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ L. P. van de Spiegel, ‘Geheime Memorie over het door Zeeland aan te nemen stelsel’, in Vreede, *Mr. Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel*, vol. III, 93. Zeeland’s political theorist Johan Canter de Munck also wrote in 1787 on the function of the stadholdership as a means to prevent Holland from treating the other provinces as internal colonies: J. Canter de Munck, *De tegenswoordige regeeringsvorm der Zeven Vereenigde Provintien, gehandhaafd en verdedigd, tegen het ontwerp der volksregering, vervat in zeker werk, betyteld: Grondwettige Herstelling van Nederlands Staatswezen* (Middelburg 1787).

⁸⁵ [J.W. van Sonsbeeck], *Verhandeling over het nadeel eener Nationaale Conventie, en daar uit voorspruitende eenheid van bestuur voor de Nederlandsche Republiek* (n.p. 1795), 4–5; See also *De Vriend des Volks* 42 (1795–1796), 345–60.

So the 'jealousy of trade' did not refer solely to the Dutch Republic as a whole; individual provinces too sought to bolster their competitiveness. Consequently, the United Provinces faced the dual challenge of balancing the 'jealousy' of the European states with the internal 'jealousy' between provinces. To some extent, this tension determined the form taken by the economic debate in the Republic, especially in the more peripheral provinces. Zeeland saw its former prominence in international trade ebbing away, thus eroding its position of power within the confederation. This notion of decline in Zeeland was fuelled primarily by the province's enormous public debt and the resulting difficulties in making the required payments to the confederation. While the Republic's decline was blamed on the booming economies of Great Britain and France, Holland's growing economic power within the Republic had been at the expense of Zeeland. So when Zeeland's spokesmen suggested ways of restoring the confederation, they were also seeking to restore the internal balance among the provinces by halting or reversing the loss of ground to Holland. For that reason, Zeeland insisted that the Republic's recovery should not be based on the recovery of the entrepôt function for international goods trade, believing that this would only benefit its rival, Holland. Invoking the policies of the new major powers within Europe, Zeeland's patricians sought instead to encourage trade in local and colonial agricultural and industrial products by creating tariff walls, a monopoly system, and an investment policy. This broader approach would benefit the entire nation.

Van de Spiegel, as Zeeland's most important representative in national politics, constantly exerted himself, in his writings and other activities, to restore both the Dutch Republic's position of power within Europe and Zeeland's position of power within the Republic. In a sense, he thus embodies the dilemmas that faced the Republic in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In his view, the lack of a strong central power with sufficient financial resources was the most important reason why the Republic was losing the struggle with its main rivals, unitary states like Great Britain and France. At the same time, however, he spearheaded the particularist initiatives of the province of Zeeland, in which context he frequently invoked provincial sovereignty and declared all interference by the States-General or the stadholder in Zeeland's financial and economic affairs to be unlawful. Even in foreign policy, pre-eminently a matter for the confederation, he conducted independent negotiations with Great Britain and was even prepared to take Zeeland out of the Republic of the United Provinces.

The establishment of Zeeland's Society of Sciences should be viewed in the above context. By contributing to the cultural development of the Republic through the pursuit of science, Zeeland sought to achieve emancipation from the cultural centre, the province of Holland. What is more, the society was used primarily to promote Zeeland's own economy, through specific topics for essay competitions. When departments of the Economic Branch were founded in Zeeland, their members were likewise motivated by the hope of using this cultural club to promote their own economic interests. The Economic Branch was van den Heuvel's solution to the dilemma of the Republic: the plan was to set up a nationwide movement of social reform, outside the deadlocked workings of the political machinery. But within a few years, when it became clear that the prospect of reform – especially at local level – was remote, members left in droves. In Zierikzee, amid this disappointment about the ineffectiveness of nationally-oriented economic patriotism, Zeeland's old particularism and its resentment of Holland's dominant role soon resurfaced.

There was certainly no lack of incisive analyses of the decline of the Dutch Republic's power in the latter half of the eighteenth century, nor indeed of ideas and activities designed to restore the United Provinces to a position at the forefront of Europe. Still, none of these analyses led to adequate economic and financial reforms: the divergent, incompatible economic interests between the cities and the provinces, combined with the federal political structure of the Dutch Republic, posed abiding obstacles to reform.

13

Between ‘Public’ and ‘Private Economy’: The Finnish Economic Society and the Decline of Economic Patriotism, 1797–1833

Jani Marjanen

The Royal (later Imperial) Finnish Economic Society (*Kongl./Kejsrerliga Finska Hushållningssällskapet*, founded 1797) was part of a European movement of societies whose aim was to improve the economic basis of the state. In its attempts to reform the economic development of a region that was perceived to be a underdeveloped zone within a composite state, the Finnish Economic Society bore a certain resemblance to the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland (founded 1723) and the Dublin Society for Improving Husbandry, Manufactures and Other Useful Arts (founded 1731).¹

In the period from 1797 to 1809 the Finnish Economic Society encouraged the economic improvement of the entire Swedish realm through regionally focused reform initiatives and articulated itself through patriotic discourse. Yet, this was to change. Following the secession of the remaining Finnish parts of the Swedish realm to Russia in 1809, the Finnish Economic Society’s regional focus was transformed. Through its function as a key forum for economic and political life in the newly established Finnish Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire, it filled a lacuna of political power and helped define a newly established national polity. Remarkably, during a period in which most other societies in Europe lost strength and developed fewer activities, the Finnish Economic Society gained strength in the new political setting. Whether or not it was appropriate that the Society, still through its regional activities, became a political factor was debated within the Economic Society in terms of ‘public’ and ‘private economy’. While

¹ See the chapters by Bonnyman and Livesey.

the Society's political and economic status declined towards the 1820s, the rhetoric of 'public economy', denoting economic policy making, gave way to a new dominance of 'private economy', i.e. improvement of practical agricultural methods and devices only. This division into 'public' and 'private economy' was reminiscent of an older discussion about the limits of public debate on economic policy that concerned the work of the Royal Swedish Academy of Science (*Kungliga Svenska Vetenskapsakademien*, founded 1739) and the Stockholm-based Royal Patriotic Society (*Patriotiska sällskapet*, founded 1766, from 1772 onwards with Royal status).

From the late 1820s onwards, the 'public' and patriotic function, previously exercised by the Economic Society shifted to the field of literature and language, as the new facilitators of national improvement. This shift is illustrated institutionally by the foundation of the Finnish Literature Society (*Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura*²) in the new capital Helsinki (Sw. Helsingfors) in 1831, and semantically by the demise of the rhetoric of economic patriotism. While the Literature Society achieved a central position in the intellectual and political life of the Grand Duchy and literature and language became supremely evocative aspects within nineteenth-century nation building discourse, the Economic Society and its economic patriotism were reduced to a more marginal position.

Eighteenth-century reform organisations in Sweden

The Finnish Economic Society was founded 1 November 1797 in Turku (Sw. Åbo) with the objective to improve the economic conditions in the Finnish parts of the Swedish kingdom. Its activities were inspired by the Royal Patriotic Society, with whom the Finnish Society shared its mission to encourage economic improvement within the entire Swedish realm. The Patriotic Society had recruited some thirty members from the Finnish parts of the kingdom, including the well-known priest and political economic writer Anders Chydenius, the chemistry professor and agriculturalist P. A. Gadd, the professor of '*oeconomia*' Pehr Kalm, and the key figure of enlightened activity in Turku, professor of

²The Finnish Literature Society for programmatic reasons used its Finnish name also in Swedish-language texts. Even though its working language initially was Swedish (as were its statutes), the Swedish title of the Society (*Finska Litteratursällskapet*) was established later. See *Helsingfors Tidningar* no. 55, 13 July 1831.

rhetoric Henrik Gabriel Porthan.³ Following the founding of the Finnish Economic Society, a practical division of labour was established between the two societies. For instance, prizes and acknowledgements were no longer shipped across the Baltic Sea, but remained within the clear discretion of either the Patriotic or the Economic Society. Furthermore, after 1797 most of the members of the Patriotic Society residing in the Finnish parts of the realm were immediately elected members of the Finnish Economic Society.⁴

The Swedish Patriotic Society itself was established in 1766 in a period during which foreign examples, particularly those of the Dublin Society, the London Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, the Society of Agriculture, Commerce and the Arts in Brittany (*Société d'agriculture, du commerce et des arts*), and the Oeconomical Society of Berne (*Oekonomischen Gesellschaft in Bern*) were discussed in Sweden. Proposals to organisations for agricultural reform in Sweden had been put forward in the mid-eighteenth century. Earlier proposed organisations, such as Anders Gabriel Duhre's comprehensive 'Oeconomical Society' (*Oekonomisk Societet*) from 1738, Jacob Faggot's Cameral or Agricultural Guild (*Cammar- eller Landtgille*) from 1746, and the 1752 proposal for Oeconomic Societies for the encouragement of Agriculture in the Realm (*Oeconomie Samhålden til Landthuushåldningens uphielpande uti Riket*), were designed as distinctly administrative, rather than voluntaristic institutions. These proposals were not realised, and seem to have been unaware of Scottish or Irish examples.⁵ Among the initiatives was also a draft invitation to notables in the country to form an 'assembly to encourage agriculture and the improvement of domestic products' written by C. F. Scheffer, the senator (*riksråd*) and later chairman of the Patriotic Society.⁶ Scheffer had been a Swedish envoy in

³ K. G. Leinberg, 'Finska medlemmar af Svenska Patriotiska Sällskapet', *Förhandlingar och uppsatser* 18 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 1904), 78. Leinberg's list omits A. J. Winter and Johan Hisinger. See *Kongl. Finska Hushållningssällskapet, den 1 november 1800* (Åbo: tryck hos Johan Ch. Frenckell 1800); *Åbo Tidningar* no 35, 29 August 1791.

⁴ Staffan Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia. Med särskild hänsyn till den gustavianska tidens agrara reformsträvanden* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & söner 1961); Gustaf Cygnæus, *K. Finska Hushållningssällskapet 1797–1897* (Åbo: Åbo tidnings tryckeriaktiebolag 1897), 269–70.

⁵ See Lars Westerlund, *Sockensamhållen och provinssamfund. Riksdagsbehandlingen av 1752 års organisationsprojekt rörande 'Oeconomiska Samhålden till Landthuushåldningens uphielpande'* (Åbo: Statsvetenskapliga fakulteten vid Åbo Akademi 1988), 23–60.

⁶ See Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia*, 19.

Paris and became an important mediator in the development of enthusiasm for economic societies modelled on French examples. Scheffer's attempts, however, did not bear fruit.⁷ Instead, the Patriotic Society was founded independent from Scheffer's initiatives as a branch to the Pro Patria Order that had been established in Stockholm in the 1760s. A few years later the branch gained an independent status. Compared with many of its sister societies in Europe, the Swedish Patriotic Society initially stood out as a relatively closed institution. Pro Patria was organised as a secret organisation and relied on borrowed rituals from Masonic groups. Only after the Patriotic Society gained Royal status in 1772 was it relieved from its more secretive character.⁸

The foundation of the Patriotic Society was not free from controversy. In importing the model of an economic society, the Patriotic Society entered the territory of the Royal Swedish Academy of Science, which caused tensions between the two organisations. Although the Academy did not present itself as belonging to a movement of economic societies, it promoted the application of science as well as agricultural and economic improvement, and in its ceremonial occasions often expressed itself through patriotic rhetoric. Originally, the Academy was actually meant to be named the Oeconomical Scientific Society and to consider 'oeconomical and practical matters' as its initiator, the merchant, physicist and engineer Mårten Triewald put it. This has even led historians to consider the Academy as a *de facto* economic society.⁹

Precisely when the Patriotic Society was established, the Academy of Science experienced some trouble as a result of its prize question regarding emigration from Sweden.¹⁰ This question was not of a strict economic

⁷ Nils Edling, *För modernäringens modernisering. Två studier av Kungl. Skogs- och Lantbruksakademiens tillkomst och tidiga historia* (Stockholm: Kungl. Skogs- och Lantbruksakademien 2003), 15–61. On Scheffer, see Charlotta Wolff, *Vänskap och makt. Den svenska politiska eliten och upplysningstidens Frankrike* (Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland 2005), and his adaptation of physiocracy, Antonella Alimento, 'Entre "les moeurs des Crétois et les loix de Minos": la pénétration et la réception du mouvement physiocratique français en Suède (1767–1786)', *Histoire Economie et Société* 29 (2010:1): 68–80.

⁸ Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia*, 18–25.

⁹ Sten Lindroth, *Kungl. Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens historia 1739–1818, vol. I: Tiden intill Wargentins död (1783)* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vetenskapsakademien 1967), 225–6, quotation 2, 217. See also Päivi Maria Pihlaja, *Tiedettä pohjantähden alla. Pohjoisen tutkimus ja Ruotsin tiedeseurojen suhteet Ranskaan 1700-luvulla* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica 2009).

¹⁰ For political controversy on emigration in Berne, see Béla Kaposy, 'Republican Political Economy', *History of European Ideas* 33 (2007:4): 377–89, 387–8.

character, but invited authors also to scrutinise the political side of the matter. Several of the entries, among them one by Anders Chydenius, did just this and evoked a controversy that affected the authority of the Academy. In the end none of the essays were published and the Academy was confronted with the question whether or not it should meddle in questions of 'public economy' (*allmänna hushållningen*)¹¹ and 'political economy' (*politisk-ekonomiska frågor*), or concentrate on pure science. In the end, the latter option gained more support and the Academy moved away from its original mission, bringing it closer in character to the science academies in Paris, Berlin and St Petersburg as well as the Royal Society in London, which did not have as powerful ambitions of creating public benefit.¹² It is certainly tempting to regard the establishment of the Patriotic Society as a response to the controversy on migration policy and the Academy's turn away from practical economic reform issues.

The Royal Patriotic Society soon compared itself with the sister societies in 'Bern, London, Dublin, Brittany, Saren and Silesia' and adapted similar methods for economic reform. In its Economic journal (*Hushållnings Journal*) it expressed a concern for the economic development of Sweden, in a way that echoed a rhetoric reminiscent of many its sister-societies in Europe. The Patriotic Society emphasised Sweden's role as a forerunner in setting up institutions to spur the economy, such as the Academy of Sciences and the chairs in economy at the universities in Uppsala and Lund (founded 1741 and 1750 respectively). These examples had been influential in other countries, so much so, that 'they have in similar institutions and published works, not only reached us, but even surpassed us'.¹³ It was to help Sweden keep up with the race that the Patriotic Society launched its journal.

¹¹ The Swedish word *hushållning* is a vernacularised form of the Latin *oeconomia* and often in eighteenth-century texts used parallel to the Latin-based word *ekonomi*. *Hushållning* has since almost altogether disappeared from everyday language.

¹² Lindroth, *Kungl. Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens historia 1739–1818*, 224–6, 367–77; Georg Schauman, *Biografiska undersökningar om Anders Chydenius jämte utryckta skrifter af Chydenius* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 1908), 48–55, 217–26, 242–5; Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia*, 41–7. For scientific academies and societies in Europe, see James E. McClellan III, *Science Reorganized: Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press 1985).

¹³ *Hushållnings Journal*, September 1776, 3–4. The Chairs in Economy in Uppsala were not the first in Europe. See Lars Magnusson, 'Economics and the Public Interest: The Emergence of Economics as an Academic Subject during the 18th Century', *Scand. Journal of Economics* 94 (1992: Supplement): 249–57.

Although the Academy of Sciences and the Patriotic Society formally were concerned with different matters and their memberships overlapped, under the surface a rivalry between them existed for most of the century.¹⁴ Some who were discontented with this situation and believed it hampered economic improvement pleaded for the establishment of a new organisation. One outcome of this debate, which held on during the latter part of the century, was the foundation of the Royal Swedish Agricultural Academy (*Kongl. Svenska Lantbruks-Academien*) in 1811, which focused on agricultural improvement and relating experiments. It did not aspire to deal either with theoretical scientific issues or engage civil society on a national level. Albeit it itself did not form a voluntary organisation, it operated through county-wise branches that were called economic societies (*hushållningssällskap*) and that were formed as voluntary organisations.¹⁵

Improving the region, 1797–1809

The Finnish Economic Society on the one hand drew on a local tradition of economic thought at the Academy in Turku that emphasised the ‘utility’ of economic knowledge. Key figures were the above mentioned disciple of Carl von Linné, Pehr Kalm as well as P. A. Gadd.¹⁶ On the other hand, the Economic Society was an attempt to emulate eighteenth-century economic societies in general, and in particular its older sister society, the Patriotic Society in Stockholm (and to a certain extent the Royal Swedish Academy of Science). Its anchorage in the milieu of the Academy of Turku, in contrast to the mysticism that was popular in the clubs and societies of Stockholm, perhaps contributed to its outlook on improvement.

Like the Patriotic Society and the Academy of Science, the Finnish Economic Society sought to get royal support. Immediately after the foundation of the Society in 1797, the founders applied for permission to become a ‘royal’ society, which was granted and earned the Society

¹⁴ Edling, *För modernäringens modernisering*, 20–4; Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia*, 52–3; Lindroth, *Kungl. Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens historia 1739–1818*, 242–5.

¹⁵ See Edling, *För modernäringens modernisering*, 43–58; H. Juhlin Dannfelt, *Kungl. Lantbruksakademien 1813–1912 samt svenska landthushållningen under nittonde århundradet* (Stockholm: C. E. Fritzes Bökförlags Aktiebolag 1913).

¹⁶ See Heikkinen, Sakari, Visa Heinonen, Antti Kuusterä & Jukka Pekkarinen, *The History of Finnish Economic Thought 1809–1917* (Tammisaari: Societas Scientarum Fennica 2000), 49–53; Matti Klinge, *Napoleonin varjo. Euroopan ja Suomen murros 1795–1815* (Helsinki: Otava 2009), 317–22.

the right to address the king on economic matters and directly receive concrete tasks from him.¹⁷

The foundation of the Society coincided with festivities surrounding the marriage of Gustav IV Adolf and Fredrika Wilhelmina and their planned visit to Finland.¹⁸ Royal visits were part of the array of representational tools that shaped the image of a righteous monarch concerned with the well-being of his subjects, and both the founders of the Economic Society and Gustav IV Adolf were happy to use the ceremonies for their own purposes.¹⁹ At the time, muted discontent with the affairs of the Finnish parts of the realm was widespread among the Finnish political elite.²⁰ This

¹⁷ Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 89–96, 215–49; Lars Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets arkiv och skrifter I–VI* (Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag 2002–2006), VI, 199. For the sake of accessibility, I will quote from Zilliacus' six-volume collection with commentary of sources from the archives of the Finnish Economic Society. I will refer to unpublished sources only when Zilliacus does not cover the issue.

¹⁸ Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 89–93. In the founding statutes of the society, the birthday of Gustav IV Adolf is considered an anniversary day for the founding of the society. *Kongliga Finska Hushållningssällskapets stadgar, antagne de 1 november 1799* (Åbo: tryckta hos Johan Ch. Frenckell 1799), § 4. Regardless of this mix-up, the festivities of the society were tightly connected to the monarch. Remarkably, this tradition continued even after the Society became Imperial.

¹⁹ For Gustav III's theatricality and the staging of him in the Finnish parts of his realm, see Henrika Tandefelt, *Konstens att härska. Gustaf III inför sina undersåtar* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 2007), especially 137–230; Toivo Nygård, *Kustaa III. Vallanomaava mutta alamaisilleen armollinen kuningas* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 2005), 172–95. For comparison see Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1992).

²⁰ For modern interpretations of Finnish separate interests or Finnish-mindedness, see Matti Klinge, *Kaksi Suomea* (Helsinki: Otava 1982), 23–49; Panu Pulma, 'Separatismi ja taloudelliset intressit 1780-luvulla', in *Tie Tulkintaan. Heikki Ylikankaan juhla-kirja* (Helsinki: WSOY 1997), 396–414; Jonas Nordin, 'I broderlig samdräkt? Förhållandet Sverige–Finland under 1700-talet och Anthony D. Smiths *ethnie*-begrepp', *Scandia* 64 (1998:2): 195–223; Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk. Nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stromaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden* (Stockholm: Symposion 2000), 267–327; Juha Manninen, *Valistus ja kansallinen identiteetti. Aatehistoriallinen tutkimus 1700-luvun Pohjolasta* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 2000); Jouko Nurmiainen, 'Frågan om "etnisk nationalism", nationell självbild och 1700-talets Sverige', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 88 (2003:3): 257–75; Gabriel Bladh and Christer Kuvaja, 'Från ett rike till två nationalstater', in *Dialog och särart. Mämniskor, samhällen och idéer från Gustav Vasa till nutid*, eds. Gabriel Bladh and Christer Kuvaja (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 2005); Christer Kuvaja, Arja Rantanen and Nils Erik Villstrand, 'Språk, självbild och kommunikation i Finland 1750–1850', in *Ordens makt och maktens ord* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 2007); Charlotta Wolff, *Noble Conceptions of Politics in Eighteenth-Century Sweden (ca 1740–1790)* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society 2008), especially 109–17; Kati Katajisto, *Isänmaamme keisari. Eliitin kansallisen identiteetin murros ja suomalaisen isänmaan rakentuminen autonomian ajan alussa* (Helsinki: Topelius-seura 2009), 53–65.

discontent also shone through in the rhetoric of the Society's founders: 'The Grand Duchy of Finland has for long been a battlefield for warriors' and 'during short periods of calm brought by peace' the virtues of 'enlightenment, consideration, support and encouragement have been absent'. Furthermore, 'Ignorance, Prejudice and party delirium seems to have intended Finland to be a wilderness, which would with its deserts debar a superior enemy.'²¹ The idea that economic and military competition among states hampered economic development was a well-established topos in much of the eighteenth-century political and economic thought,²² and the Finnish Society's founders held a local perspective on this condition. In their statement they paraphrased Anders Chydenius who already in 1765 had presented the maltreatment of Finland as a misconceived Swedish defence policy against Russian expansionism.²³ Chydenius himself wrote his speech in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, a period in which many economic societies, including the above-mentioned Patriotic Society in Sweden, were founded across Europe. When the founders of the Society expressed the fear that the Finnish parts of the Swedish realm would remain neglected, they did not harbour separatist intentions. Yet, they argued, like Chydenius, that Finnish economic development would strengthen the overall competitiveness of Sweden.²⁴

Rhetorically, a dual strategy was deployed: on the one hand the founders underlined the need to focus on Finnish matters, while on the other hand trust was placed in the goodwill of the monarch. The founders stated, mixing fact and high hopes, that during a period in which 'the

²¹ Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 93–6. The critique of party delirium (*partiyra*) was also a familiar rhetorical topos. During the Age of Liberty, 1718–1772, the Swedish parties – hats (*hattar*) and caps (*mössor*) – tended to be negatively portrayed, particularly towards the end of the period. See Micheal F. Metcalf, 'Hattar och mössor 1766–72. Den sena frihetstidens partisystem i komparativ belysning', in *Riksdag, kaffehus och predikstol. Frihetstidens politiska kultur 1766–1772*, eds. Marie-Christine Skuncke and Henrika Tandefelt (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 2003).

²² See Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005), 1–156.

²³ See Chydenius, 'Vederläggning af de skäl, hvarmed man söker bestrida Öster- och Vesterbottniska samt Vesternorrländska städerna fri segaltion', in E. G. Palmén, *Politiska skrifter af Anders Chydenius* (Helsingfors: G. W. Edlunds förlag 1880), 49–90; Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 32.

²⁴ The underdeveloped character of Finland was known also outside Sweden. For instance, J. H. G. von Justi had argued this in the 1760s: Ere Nokkala, 'Debatten mellan J. H. G. von Justi och H. L. von Heß om frihetstidens författning', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 94 (2009:1): 20–55.

value of Finland to the crown of Sweden was recognised' and the kingdom was 'reigned by a king who did not avoid any trouble to prepare the Independence of the Kingdom or the welfare of [his] subjects through wise economic policy' a group of Finnish men had convened 'under the name of the Finnish Economic Society to support and direct the spirit of economy for the benefit of the common good that has woken up within the nation'.²⁵ This 'double patriotism' was best expressed in a poem written in honour of the Finnish Economic Society by the author, professor and later bishop Frans Michael Franzén in 1800. Franzén eloquently cheered for Finland to elevate itself among the nations and concluded that Finland should do so by the side of Sweden.²⁶

The Finnish Economic Society was not the first regional economic society in the Swedish realm. A small, but rather inactive society (*Gothlands ekonomiske sällskap*) had been founded on Gotland in 1791. The Physiographic Society in Lund (*Fysiografiska sällskapet*) and the Scientific and Literary Society in Gothenburg (*Vetenskaps- och vitterhets-sällskapet i Göteborg*), both founded already in 1773, have also been compared with the Patriotic Society, but had a distinct scientific character and were strictly attached to particular cities.²⁷ More ambitious in its goals and practical activities than the Gotland Society, the Finnish Economic Society did, from the monarch's perspective, not constitute a threat to state stability or interfere with the relations of the various regions in the realms to the capital and the Crown.²⁸

The objectives of the Society were defined as pertaining to everything belonging to 'private Economy in general and Agriculture in particular' and 'anything that bears some resemblance to them'. To make an impact it was necessary to spread knowledge on the mentioned topics both to persons of rank and country people (*allmogé*). Furthermore, the Society announced it would publish texts that were adapted to the needs and abilities of practitioners, collect information about the conditions of farming, distribute useful tools, and possibly hand out prizes for excellence in agriculture and related livelihoods.²⁹ Emphasis was put on

²⁵ Quoted from Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 94–6.

²⁶ *Åbo Tidning* no. 1-2, 8 January 1800.

²⁷ [A. G. Olofsson], *Gotlands läns hushållningssällskap 1791–1941. Minnesskrift utgiven enligt uppdrag av dess sekreterare* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell Boktryckeri 1945); Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia*, 43, 46.

²⁸ For the composition of the Swedish realm see Torbjörn Eng, *Det svenska väldet. Ett konglomerat av uttrycksformer och begerpp från Vasa till Bernadotte* (Uppsala: Studia Historica Upsaliensia 2001).

²⁹ *Kongliga Finska Hushållningssällskapets stadgar*. See also Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 97–8.

educational activity, i.e. the diffusion of knowledge to practitioners. The keywords in the descriptions of the character and aims of the Society were 'patriotism', 'citizen' and the public or common good (*allmänna bästa*). Tied to the economic language of husbandry, agriculture and other livelihoods, this rhetoric clearly found an appeal among the reading public.³⁰

Inspired by its broadly defined objectives, the Economic Society developed a range of activities. Prior to the Swedish-Russian War of 1808–1809, the Society published texts on fertilisers, graining methods, potatoes, parsnips and other issues that were considered at the core of its interests. A significant number of publications were devoted to educational texts, such as a prize-essay draft for a farming handbook, and to topics such as vaccination against smallpox. Apart from a short lived journal, *The Diary* (1800–1803), the Economic Society published three main journals, one called *Information*, which included essays on economic issues and was intended for the reading public; another called *Acts*, which published for instance reports about the activities of the secretary, but also economic essays that had been sent to the Society; and a third series called *Accounts to the Public*, which contained, among other texts, annual reports of the Society. Furthermore, the Society used the local newspaper *Åbo Tidningar* and Almanacs as channels for engaging the public.³¹

On a more practical level, the Society engaged itself in concrete questions related to agriculture, as well as beekeeping, rooting out predatory animals and statistical accounts. The best known activities of the Society in this period were related to combating smallpox and running schools for the peasant population.³²

In the earliest stages of the Society, Bishop Jacob Gadolin, judge (*lagman*) Olof Wibelius, county treasurer (*länskamrer*) A. J. Winter,

³⁰ For a representative example, see *Åbo tidningar* 3 January 1798. Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, VI, 199, notes the popularity of 'patriotism' in the early publications of the Economic Society. For the rhetoric of common good during the Age of Liberty see Jouko Nurmiainen, *Edistys ja yhteinen hyvä vapaudenajan ruotsalaisessa poliittisessä kielessä* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 2009).

³¹ The titles in Swedish are *Utdrag af Kongl. Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapets Dagbok*; *Underrättelser från Kongl. Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapet*; *Kongl. Finska Hushållningssällskapets Handlingar*; *Till Allmänheten. Redogörelser för Kongl. Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapets göromål*. See Eric Holmberg, 'Finska Hushållningssällskapets skrifter 1797–1930. Bibliografi', *Finska Hushållningssällskapets årsbok 1930* (Åbo: Abo tryckeri och tidningsaktiebolag 1931); Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 189. Aulis J. Alanen, 'Almanakka talouden ja sivistyksen opastajana', in *Suomen almanakan juhlakirja* (Helsinki: Weilin & Göös 1957), 107–30, 331–6.

³² See Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*; Cygnæus, K. *Finska*.

professor Jacob Tengström and professor Josef Pipping formed a core group that revised the first constitution of the Society.³³ As with many similar societies in Europe, these key members also represented the various local authorities:³⁴ bishop Gadolin and his successor to be, Tengström, represented the church and the university, professor Pipping stood not only for the presence of the university and medical competence, but was also an active improver on his own estate, while Winter and Wibelius were civil servants of the crown in the region.³⁵

Many of the early members of the Economic Society were estate owners with an immediate interest in developing farming practices. High-level civil servants were invited as members, for instance most county governors in the country were included as members, which clearly gave the Finnish Economic Society a presence outside Turku. Among the founding members burghers formed not quite an insignificant group, but they were overshadowed by the strong clergy presence.³⁶

Beyond the core circle, the Economic Society was by and large successful in engaging the most prominent economic thinkers in the country at the time, among them the priest Anders Chydenius who resided in Ostrobothnia, and could not attend meetings, but contributed with essays. Chydenius's membership is interesting because he was by then one of the foremost economic authors in Sweden and had been active already in the Patriotic Society of which he was a member as well as the Academy of Sciences to which he contributed with several essays, but was never approved as a member (possibly due to his eagerness to strongly criticise prevailing economic policies).³⁷ Chydenius and his

³³ Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 96.

³⁴ See chapters by Shovlin, and Wyss and Stuber; Richard van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment: The Rise of the Middle Class and Enlightenment Culture in Germany* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1992), 65–81; Ulrich Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert. Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Munich: C. H. Beck 1982).

³⁵ *Kongl. Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapet, den 1 november 1799* (Åbo: tryck hos Johan Ch. Frenckell 1799).

³⁶ *Kongl. Finska Hushållningssällskapet, den 1 november 1799*; Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 109–11.

³⁷ Leinberg, 'Finska medlemmar'; Lindroth, *Kungl. Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens historia 1739–1818*, 365–66. The Academy was normally very inclusive, but Chydenius and Anders Nordencrantz, the most prominent economic authors at the time, were never elected members. Chydenius was proposed as a member in 1776, but the proposal was turned down after a ballot. On Chydenius's economic thought, see Palmén, *Politiska skrifter af Anders Chydenius*; Schauman, *Biografiska undersökningar*; Pentti Virrankoski, *Anders Chydenius. Demokraattinen poliitikko valistuksen vuosisadalta* (Porvoo: WSOY 1986); Frängsmyr, *Sökandet efter upplysningen. Perspektiv på svenskt 1700-tal* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur 2006), 166–70; Nurmiainen, *Edistys ja yhteinen hyvä*, 129–58.

contributions were highly acclaimed by the Finnish Economic Society, but his at times harsh critiques of existing laws caused problems. Chydenius himself was certainly aware that his economic views had not gained acceptance among a large portion of the Society's members. In an anonymous prize essay on the obstacles that fettered the industriousness of the Finnish farmer, he noted that the Economic Society 'shall undoubtedly find several reasons' for the lack of industriousness, among them 'natural sluggishness of the Finnish farmer', low density of cities, 'failed encouragement to industriousness and diligence, ruined upbringing of children in general, and the Finnish farmer's inclination to drunkenness'. He added that the Economic Society might seek to remedy all of these problems and others as they saw fit. To Chydenius, however, the nation would remain the same, unless 'a more general cause is heaved, namely the one that *resides in all of our economic statutes and laws*'. To get across his point, he analysed the destructive effects of several pieces of existing legislation and, in conclusion issued a warning against enforcing new legislative restrictions on people living in the country.³⁸

Chydenius's lack of trust in the everyday improvement of different branches of the economy, the very core of the Economic Society's activities, was probably not understood by contemporaries as a hostile attack on the Society, but rather as a rhetorical stepping stone for the presentation of Chydenius's views on legislative reform. However, his ambitious reform proposals caused some uneasiness among the members of the Economic Society, as they recalled the tension between practical 'private' and political 'public economy' that was remembered to have caused considerable commotion in the Academy of Sciences in the 1760s.

The strong presence of the clergy and civil servants was a lasting characteristic in the composition of the Society for years to come.³⁹ The clergy were especially active as so-called corresponding members,

³⁸ Chydenius, 'Svar på K. Finska Hushållningssällskapets prisfråga', 566–608, quote 568. Chydenius's essay was not awarded. However, one of the other responses, by P. J. Bladh, was awarded and published anonymously in the Society's Transactions. Ironically, the published text was commonly believed to be of Chydenius's pen. See Schauman, *Biografiska undersökningar*, 429–66; Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, II, 69–71.

³⁹ *Kongl. Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapet, den 1 november 1799*; *Kongl. Finska Hushållningssällskapet, den 1 november 1800*; *Kejsrerliga Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapet, den 1 November 1813* (Åbo: tryckt hos Johan Christ. Frenckell 1813); Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 106, 116.

persons scattered around the country who contributed with essays or, more often, by sending information about local weather and farming conditions to the Economic Society. They constituted a country-wide network that gave the Society a significant coverage beyond its core area around Turku.⁴⁰

Membership of the Finnish Economic Society was in principle open to all strata of society. All 'enlightened and honourable citizens belonging to all estates' were eligible for membership.⁴¹ This is not to say that the different capacities of members were not taken into account: 'One person contributes to the public happiness by his knowledge, another through his zeal and accord, and yet another through his fortune.'⁴² The Economic Society endorsed and embodied cooperation across estate borders, but rank remained to be somewhat of a conundrum in the everyday work of the Society. This appeared to be a problem especially with the seating order. To create clarity, in 1801 the Society decided that rank outside the Society was of no importance in the everyday life of the Society – only rank *within* the Society was to be taken into account.⁴³

The obvious cultural and educational barriers of being 'enlightened and honourable' meant, however, that members of the peasant estate were in effect kept outside the Society. In addition, the Society collected an annual membership fee, which also excluded poor aspiring members. Among the founding members there were, however, two participants representing the peasant estate. Both had considerable merits, having acted as representatives of the peasant estate at the Swedish

⁴⁰ For the spread of members, see W. R. Mead, 'The Representation of Finland: Further Geographical Reflections on Finska Hushållningssällskapet', *Geografiska Annaler* B 64:2 (1982): 135–41. The accounts in the chapters of this volume as well as van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment* and Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*, suggest that the participation of priests in the Finnish Economic Society was comparatively speaking significant. For the clergy's involvement in economic reforms, see Carin Bergström, *Lantprästen. Prästens funktion i det agrara samhället 1720–1800. Oland-Fröåkers kontrakt av ärkesiftet* (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag 1991); Matti Klinge, *Iisalmen ruhtinaskunta. Modernin projekti sukuverkostojen periferiassa* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 2006), 74–5.

⁴¹ See also *Kongl. Finska Hushållnings Sällskapets Stadgar, antagne den 1 november 1799*. Women were at first excluded. The first female member, Anna Orlov, was elected in 1813. *Kejsrerliga Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapet, den 1 November 1813*; Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 305.

⁴² *Åbo tidningar* 3.1.1798. The original text uses the gender neutral pronoun *sin* instead of 'his'.

⁴³ Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 181.

Riksdag, which included the land-owning peasants as a fourth estate alongside noblemen, clergy members and burghers.⁴⁴

Bishop Gadolin and his son Johan Gadolin played crucial roles in the foundation of the Society. Johan Gadolin, by 1797 a professor in chemistry, was most probably the person to launch the initiative to establish an economic society. In the 1780s he had conducted a two-year tour to Germany and England. In London he had become impressed by the work of Richard Kirwan, the most prominent Irish chemist of that period and an active contributor to the Royal Dublin Society. Gadolin soon established himself as an internationally respected scientist and by 1820 was a member of a range of science academies and societies in Europe, including Uppsala, Ireland, Göttingen, St Petersburg and Moscow.⁴⁵ Being a member of these scientific organisations and of at least one Masonic lodge, it would be very unlikely that Gadolin did not have good knowledge of the improving societies in Britain.⁴⁶ In his memoirs Gadolin would claim to have been, together with his friend professor Pipping, the founder of the Economic Society.⁴⁷ He was also the author of the draft for the Society's first constitution. Complementing Johan Gadolin's initiatives, his father, the bishop, oversaw, from his influential position, the shaping of the Economic Society to give it the best chances of being well received among political officials as well as the king.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ They were Israel Hellenius and Adam Alopæus. Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 111; *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852*, matrikkeli.helsinki.fi/ylioppilasmatrikkeli (read 24.11.2008). Farmers' presence remained fairly limited. See Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 165–6.

⁴⁵ Johannes Jacobi Gadolin, *Anmärkingar om Säkylä qvarnstens-brott, med bifall af phil. fac. vid Kongl. Åbo Academie, under inseende af mag. Johan Gadolin, chemiae professor och ledamot af Vetensk. Academierna och Sällskapen i Dublin, Stockholm, Upsala, Brüssel och Erlangen, samt Kgl. Finska Hushålln. Sällskapet, för Lagerkransen utgifne af Gustaf Johan Bergroth, g. o. t. och phil. kandidat. Til allmän granskning uti academiens nedre lärosal den 12 junii 1801* (Åbo: tryckt i Frenckellska boktryckeriet [1801]); James Livesey, 'The Dublin Society in Eighteenth-Century Irish Political Thought', *Historical Journal* 47 (2004:3): 615–40. I have not been able to identify Gadolin as a member of other economic societies in Europe.

⁴⁶ Gadolin was a member of the Masonic Pilgrim lodge in London. See Gadolin, 'Sjelfbiografisk uppsats', 30, Manuscript at the National Library of Finland, Helsinki, Aa.IV.55.

⁴⁷ Gadolin, "Sjelfbiografisk uppsats", 27.

⁴⁸ See Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 100–1, 109. Johan Gadolin's input has lately been contested by Matti Klinge who believes Ernst Gustaf von Willebrand was the key figure in establishing the Society. Klinge does not present any specific sources or arguments to support this claim. Klinge, *Napoleonin varjo*, 319–20.

The foundation of the Economic Society was not entirely free from controversy. For instance, H. G. Porthan, one of the key figures of intellectual life in Turku and founder of the by then dismantled Aurora Society (*Sällskapet Aurora*), was not immediately invited to be among the founding members of the Economic Society. Perhaps the reason for this was a previous dispute between Johan Gadolin and Porthan on administrative issues within the university.⁴⁹ The Society never was an organ representing a particular faction of political and civic life in Turku, but stayed true to its intention to act as a central forum for debate that neither excluded, nor could it be ignored by any of the influential men of the city. Porthan too was shortly invited to become a member.

In its founding stage, the Finnish Economic Society compared itself with foreign prominent organisations for the rhetorical purpose of underlining its own importance. Several of these foreign organisations and their practices were presented as models: The Royal Patriotic Society in Sweden, the Royal Danish Agricultural Society (*Kgl. danske Landhusholdningsselskabet*), and the Board of Agriculture in Britain.⁵⁰ The former two were 'sällskap' (societies), whereas the latter one was a 'board'. Later on an 'academy', namely the Royal Swedish Agricultural Academy, was also considered an important model for the Economic Society. Apart from the similarities in the objectives of these organisations their royal character was deemed relevant. The Board of Agriculture did not call itself royal, but it received direct tasks and funds from the British government.⁵¹

The organisational form of a 'society', therefore, appears not to have been chosen as a direct consequence of the objective to promote economic development, or to be perceived as potentially at odds with the reception of royal support. What is noticeable is that the organisations that the Economic Society publicly compared itself to were all bodies whose activities covered a large geographical area – the whole of England, Sweden and Denmark – and that were known for politically neutral efforts to realise agricultural improvement in compliance with the state's economic policies. Interestingly, the Royal Dublin Society was not invoked as a model, whereas Johan Gadolin most probably had a good knowledge of its activities.

⁴⁹ Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 104–5.

⁵⁰ Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 111.

⁵¹ See Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia*; Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800. The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 113.

Other European societies would be referred to only indirectly and in a general sense. In a newspaper address to the Finnish public, the useful work of similar associations in England, France, Switzerland and Denmark was mentioned to underline the importance of emulating successful practices in other states.⁵² Although on this occasion no particular societies were mentioned, the French societies, many of which were founded in the 1760s, but which were locally organised, and thus not a direct model for the Finns, were considered as models throughout Europe. The Swiss case could refer to the Bernese society, which was famous throughout the continent and had among its honorary members, the Swedes Carl von Linné and Anders Berch. Yet, it was more likely that the reference was to the Helvetic Society (*die Helvetische Gesellschaft*), which covered the whole of Switzerland and had a similar polity-forging function to it.⁵³ Despite its geographical proximity, the Free Economic Society of St Petersburg (*Vol'noe èkonomičeskoe obščestvo*) was not referred to, and references remained scarce even after the turmoil of 1808–1809.

Window of opportunity, 1809–1821

During the Swedish-Russian War of 1808–1809 the activities of the Society came to a standstill. It would take some time, following the secession of the remaining Finnish areas to the Russian Empire and the acquisition by the Society of a new Imperial status, to shake off its institutional apathy. Owing to the efforts of G. M. Armfelt, was the first chairman of the Committee of Finnish Affairs in St Petersburg and a protégée of Alexander I, the Economic Society was revived and headed by Carl Christian Böcker, the newly recruited secretary of the Society from 1813 onwards.⁵⁴ Armfelt played a major role in the diplomacy that resulted in the inclusion of so-called Old Finland (areas under Russian rule since the earlier eighteenth-century Swedish-Russian wars) in the Grand Duchy and also corresponded with the Society about the Emperor's decision to include these parts of the Society's domain from

⁵² *Åbo tidningar* 3 January 1798.

⁵³ Högberg, *Kungl. patriotiska sällskapets historia*, 15; Kapossy, 'Republican Political Economy'; van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, 72–4; Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*, 160–3.

⁵⁴ Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 288–9; Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, II, 72–4; *Åbo Tidningar* 15 May 1841.

1814 onwards.⁵⁵ From this point, the geographical area covered by the Economic Society coincided with the borders of the newly founded Grand Duchy, whereas beforehand the domain of the Society was defined by a more abstract notion of 'Finland'.⁵⁶

These shifts after 1809 went along with a new membership policy. In 1814 a new category was introduced in the statutes of the Society allowing foreign members into the Society. In 1821 the maximum amount of foreign members was limited to ten persons. Most foreign members were Swedes. While prior to 1809 foreign membership had been a non-issue, the new relation to the old motherland and the desire particularly among learned persons to maintain old contacts and career options gave rise to this question.⁵⁷

While it was agreed that Swedish membership ought to be monitored, in practice the formal limitation was not complied with and eventually abandoned in the 1830s. Russian membership, on the other hand, always remained at a relatively moderate level, but inviting Russians into the Economic Society did serve the important purpose of affiliating political and economic elites with the work of the Society. The Russian general governors of Finland, Fabian Steinheil and Arseni Zakrewsky (the latter from 1824 onwards), were for this reason included into the membership of the Society, as was count Nikolai Rumjanzov, a generous benefactor of both the Free Economic Society in St Petersburg and the Finnish Economic Society.⁵⁸

The combined facts that Swedes remained members and that few Russians joined the Economic Society represent a certain continuity amidst the rupture of 1809. Finland continued to function as a nation built upon old Swedish laws, traditions and Lutheranism – of which the

⁵⁵ Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, II, 72.

⁵⁶ See also Henrik Stenius, *Frivilligt, jämlikt, samfällt. Föreningsväsendets utveckling i Finland fram till 1900-talets början med speciell hänsyn till massorganisationsprincipens genombrott* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 1987), 105; Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, IV, 199–203, 205–6. The resemblance to The Helvetic Society (*die Helvetische Gesellschaft*) is clear. See Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert*, 160–3.

⁵⁷ *Förslag till nya stadgar för Kejsrerliga Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapet* (Åbo: tryckt hos J. C. Frenckel & son. 1821); *Kejsrerliga Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapets Stadgar. Å nyo öfversedde och antagne den 7 November 1821* (Åbo: tryckte i Bibel-Sällskapets tryckeri 1822); *Kejsrerliga Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapets Stadgar. Å nyo öfversedde och antagne den 5 Maji 1835* (Åbo: hos Christ. Ludv. Hjelt 1835); Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 304, 369. See Jan Samuelson, *Eliten, riket och riksdelen. Sociala nätverk och geografisk mobilitet mellan Sverige och Finland 1720–1820* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 2008).

⁵⁸ Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 304, 369.

ceremonial declaration by Alexander I at the Diet of Borgå (Porvoo) in 1809 can be seen as evidence. The new imperial setting was, however, also a new beginning for Finland as a nation.⁵⁹ Accepting and enforcing the traditions of recently occupied territories in incorporating them in the Russian Empire was a prevailing practice in the Russian Empire-building strategy and was not at the time seen as a guarantee for things to stay the same.⁶⁰ The first two to three decades after 1809 were in fact marked by significant investments in setting up new administrative structures in the Grand Duchy, notably the Senate (*Regeringskonseljen* in Turku and from 1816 onwards *Senaten* in Helsinki) and a set of administrative bureaus subordinated to the Senate. Furthermore, Helsinki was turned into the capital city. In 1828, the Academy too was relocated to the capital, and renamed the Imperial Alexander's University, marking a definite change in the intellectual atmosphere in Turku.⁶¹ Some of the new administrative bodies, such as the Collegium Medicum in its work against smallpox, in a sense broke into the Economic Society's domain,⁶² yet without causing upheaval. While the administration of the Grand Duchy was reformed, the Economic Society attempted to put itself in direct relation to the new centres of political power. A majority of the members of the Senate were also members of the Economic Society, and the few who were not in the Society were soon nominated as new members. Five members of the new Senate had even served as chairman of the Economic Society.⁶³

As one of the few semi-governmental bodies that had been established on Finnish soil before 1809 and that remained in existence, the Imperial Finnish Economic Society in the Grand Duchy not only gave some institutional continuity to the shift in 1809, but, profiting from the political vacuum after the Diet in Borgå (Porvoo), the importance

⁵⁹ For a discussion and further references, see Max Engman, 'Den unge falkens flykt', in *Maktens mosaik. Enhet, särart och självbild i det svenska riket*, eds. Nils Erik Villstrand and Max Engman (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 2008).

⁶⁰ Osmo Jussila, *Suomen suuriruhtinaskunta 1809–1917* (Helsinki: WSOY 2004), 27–43.

⁶¹ Raimo Savolainen, *Keskusvirastolinna- ja virastoarmeijaksi. Senaatin ja valtioneuvoston alainen keskushallinto Suomessa 1809–1995* (Helsinki: Hallintohistoriakomitea & Edita 1996), 18–23; Matti Klinge et al., *Helsingin yliopisto 1640–1990, 2: Keisarillinen Aleksanterin yliopisto 1808–1917* (Helsinki: Otava 1989).

⁶² See J. I. Björkstén, *Vaccinationens historia i Finland II* (Helsingfors: Helsingfors centraltryckeri 1908), 30–1.

⁶³ Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 282; Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapet*, VI, 205.

of its role as a forum for economic thinking and action increased. Both the old Swedish tradition and the attitude of the Emperor towards the Society were used as rhetorical tools in stressing its importance as a guardian of the Finnish nation. The secretary of the Economic Society, Carl Christian Böcker, for instance, argued that the Society's

[patriotic] spirit seems to me to be the guarantee for the holiness of the constitution and the laws. . . . If on the one hand the activity of the Society is a product of patriotism, and thus is like a thermometer that shows the degree of its warmth, one should also, in reversed order, expect that the activities of the Society could give rise to patriotism.⁶⁴

Helped by its strong presence in the Senate and by the vigour of its new secretary, Carl Christian Böcker, the business of improvement flourished within the Economic Society. This shows clearly in the amount of publications, the diversification of its domain, the range of activities engaged in by the secretary, and the Society's influence in political life. The Economic Society established four schools, bought itself an estate, facilitated a state project on the encouragement of linen farming and developing linen products, and enforced its position as the primary forum for developing agricultural methods and related technology. The direct tasks given to the Economic Society by the government and the right to propose legal reforms on economic issues directly to the Emperor confirmed the status of the Society. Private persons could even request the Economic Society to present documents of their own, with the Society's approval to governing bodies.⁶⁵

Böcker promoted the idea that the Economic Society served as a channel for expressing the 'voice of the public' (*allmänna rösten*) – a position that was, however, a sensitive matter in the context of lacking political representation. The Diet had not been summoned since 1809, and at the time many within the political elite were waiting for the Emperor to take this course of action. Meanwhile, Böcker assessed that

in a period in which Diet assemblies [*lantdagar*] have become rare and representation in practice takes place through civil servants, and only to a small degree through independent citizens, every means for the public voice, if not in print, at least in writing, and within

⁶⁴ Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, II, 24 and VI, 209.

⁶⁵ Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 295–354; Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, II, 22–3.

the [economic] society to freely express oneself on the most delicate matters of the country, must be considered twice as precious.⁶⁶

Böcker even asserted that the Society was to act as a counterforce to the government should the 'voice of the public' demand it. He was not alone in setting out the responsibilities of the Society in this way, but suggestions of this kind were not always greeted with enthusiasm by the Senate members and others who stood for a more cautious policy within the Economic Society.⁶⁷

Böcker's eagerness to write memorandums to the Emperor concerning various deficiencies in different parts of the country caused some uneasiness within the Society. Some issues were regarded as far too provocative. To take an exceptional example, Böcker wished in 1817 for the Society to give voice to the public opinion against (Russian) military billeting in the countryside. At the meeting of the Society led by Bishop Tengström it was however feared that taking a stance against billeting would trigger unrest among the 'part of the public that reasoned to a lesser degree'. Böcker's memorandum thus was left unpublished, but he kept coming back to this issue – he once even suggested a prize essay competition on establishing a Finnish army – to no avail.⁶⁸ This example illustrates both that there were boundaries to the kinds of matters the Society could engage in, and that it was within the Society itself that these boundaries were negotiated.⁶⁹

In matters such as the Russian billeting issue, the question what was the actual domain of the Economic Society often entered the

⁶⁶ Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, IV, 210.

⁶⁷ On Böcker's statements, see Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, IV, 210–13. The attempts to have the Diet summoned were not successful. The Diet was only summoned in 1863. The Economic Society's agricultural fairs may have been designed to have para-parliamentary functions. See Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 427–32; Maren Jonasson, 'Åbogubbarna och reflexionskulan – det åttonde allmänna finska lantbruksmötet i Åbo 1881', in *Allt af jern. Texter kring en järnmanufaktur och ett industrikvarter metamorfoser*, eds. Maren Jonasson and Ann-Catrin Östman (Åbo: Humanistiska fakulteten vid Åbo Akademi 2004). For comparison, see van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, 66, and Bonnyman's chapter.

⁶⁸ Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, IV, 211–13. For the 1810s debate of the Imperial Army in Finland, see Liisa Castrén, *Adolf Ivar Arwidsson isänmaallisenä herättäjänä* (Helsinki: Suomen historiallinen seura 1951), 73–86.

⁶⁹ For censorship, see Yrjö Nurmio, *Suomen sensuuriolot Venäjän vallan alkuaikoina vu. 1809–1829* (Porvoo: Werner Söderström osakeyhtiö 1934); and for a refreshingly opined view, see Matti Klinge, *Finlands historia 3* (Helsingfors: Schildts 1996).

discussion. Böcker kept insisting that the Society should concentrate not only on issues of 'private economy' (*enskilda hushållningen*), but also questions that belonged to 'public economy' (*allmänna hushållningen*). Sometimes he used the terms 'state economy' (*statshushållning*) or 'political economy' (*politico-ekonomisk*).⁷⁰ Being the Society's secretary he was in charge of putting into effect its decisions and constantly forced to deliberate about its objectives. As with the rhetoric of the 'voice of the public', Böcker's request to include issues of 'public economy' into the work of the Society appeared mostly in cases when he defended a particular action or policy. On a few occasions the initiative to discuss 'public economy' did not originate from Böcker. In 1816, for instance, it was the Emperor himself who urged the Economic Society to describe the state of the public economy in the Grand Duchy and to recommend reforms.⁷¹

In his activism and ambition to create a representational political function for the Economic Society, Böcker represented a younger generation of civil servants who lacked immediate support from distinguished relatives and perhaps also the kind of tact that would have been nurtured within an esteemed family tradition.⁷² Tengström on his part represented a different social outlook on the political life of the period, one that is illustrative of the Finnish *Realpolitik* of the time. In his youth he had entertained more radical ideas, but as a professor, bishop and archbishop he preached stability, calm and quiet regardless of whether he was a Swedish or a Russian subject. Like a number of his peers and relatives, Tengström was supported by the Emperor and recognised as one of the standard bearers of loyalist politics in Finland – and indeed as one of the architects of a peaceful transition of Finland into a Grand Duchy under Russian rule.⁷³

⁷⁰ Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, II, 24–7, VI, 207–15.

⁷¹ Cygnæus, *K. Finska*, 326–7; Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, VI, 211.

⁷² *Åbo Tidningar* 15 May 1841; F. J. Rabbe, 'Angående några förarbeten till en utförlig Statistik för Finland', *Suomi 1852* (Helsingfors: Finska Litteratursällskapets förlag 1852); Lars Westerlund, 'Strävandena till länsrepresentation i autonomins Finland. C. C. Böcker, J. V. Snellman och länsushållningssällskapen', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 71 (1986:2): 200–29.

⁷³ Gabriel Nikander, *Gustaviansk politik i Finland. Essäer* (Åbo: Åbo tidnings och tryckeri aktiebolag 1958), 47–73; Klinge, *Napoleonin varjo*, 323; Max Engman, *Lejonet och dubbelörnen. Finlands imperiella decennier 1830–1890* (Stockholm: Atlantis 2000), 281. For Tengström in the Economic Society, see J. G. Nikander, 'Jacob Tengströms verksamhet i Finska Hushållningssällskapet', *Förhandlingar och Underrättelser* 21 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 1907).

The decline of reform politics, 1821–1833

After 1821 a decline in the activity of the Economic Society set in. At this point Carl Christian Böcker's role in the Society became limited and, more importantly, the political climate in the Grand Duchy restricted the space for public debate. Symbolically important acts in this regard were the shutting down of the radical paper *Åbo Morgonblad* in the autumn of 1821 and the repression of a particular occasion of student unrest. In the following year, the former editor of the *Åbo Morgonblad*, A. I. Arwidsson and professor A. E. Afzelius were discharged from the Academy.⁷⁴

In addition, the implementation of new administrative structures in the capital Helsinki since 1812 and the relocation of academic life to that city diminished the role of the Finnish Economic Society, whose seat remained in Turku. While many of the Society's sister organisations in continental Europe had already experienced marginalisation by the turn of the century,⁷⁵ the Finnish Economic Society's, and especially Böcker's, primary foreign point of reference was the Swedish Agricultural Academy, which coordinated the practical improvements developed by regional economic societies. The Swedish Academy oversaw the activities of its local branches, which were called economic societies. Böcker's enthusiasm for this model ensued from the opportunity it provided for the strengthening of the presence of patriotic reform work in the regions.⁷⁶ Eventually, regional societies were indeed set up within the Grand Duchy, but not at Böcker's initiative or in the manner he envisaged.

By the beginning of the 1820s Böcker's persistent attempts to include questions of economic policy in the Society's work were met by criticism from above. Often the opposition was led by Archbishop (from 1817) Tengström, who declared in 1820, in a discussion on a proposal

⁷⁴ Matti Klinge, 'Turun ylioppilaskunta 1800-luvun alussa', Matti Klinge, *Turun ajoista 1840-luvun aktivismin. Ylioppilaskunnan historia 1828–1852* ([Helsinki]: Helsingin Yliopiston Ylioppilaskunta 1978), 97–113; Castrén, *Adolf Ivar Arwidsson*.

⁷⁵ See van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment*, 65–9.

⁷⁶ Till *Allmänheten Redogörelse för Kejsarliga Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapets Göromål från den 1 November 1820 till den 8 November 1821* (Åbo: Tryckt hos J. C. Frenckell & Son 1822), 33–4. Westerlund, 'Strävandena till länsrepresentation'; Lars Westerlund, *Hushållnings- och lantbrukssällskapen i Finland åren 1797–1909. Plattformer i länen för samhälleligt deltagande* (Åbo: Abo Akademi, Rättsvetenskapliga institutionen 1985); H. Juhlin-Dannfelt, *Kungl. Landbruksakademien 1813–1912 samt svenska landthushållningen under nittonde århundradet* (Stockholm: C. E. Fritzes Bokförlags aktiebolag 1913).

by Böcker for a statutory reform that: 'The Society should in a more cautious manner engage in matters of state economy, and rather try to examine questions of private economy.'⁷⁷ In 1821, Böcker himself, in a letter addressed to corresponding members resigned himself to the fact that 'questions of public economy were no longer likely to be addressed by the society'.⁷⁸

A glance at the prize essay questions issued by the Economic Society in the 1820s confirms that 'public economy' indeed disappeared from the agenda. During this period the prize essay in general, as an institution for scientific communication became less popular in all of Europe, including Finland.⁷⁹ Prize essays had been an important communication tool in the early days of the society. The second question presented by the Society in 1798, which gained great fame, challenged writers to analyse the obstacles that fettered the industriousness of the Finnish farmer.⁸⁰ Even if it was not phrased as an invitation to address economic policy, it certainly left space for doing so, as the above mentioned example of Anders Chydenius's contribution showed. Another prize question, issued in the same year that invited opinions on the benefits and dangers of farmers' right to sail to cities to sell their products (*bondesegregation*) caused such commotion within the society, because it considered existing legislation, that it was in the end abandoned.⁸¹

Following a spell coinciding with the war years, in which no questions were issued, Böcker's appointment as secretary led to a revival of the prize essay contest. As always, the topics were subject to negotiation. Sometimes, as in the case of Böcker's proposed question on the Russian military billeting in Finland, the topic was deemed inappropriate.⁸² However, in the post 1821-era the character of the prize questions changed altogether. Between 1823 and 1827 no prize questions at all were published and when Böcker again proposed questions from 1828 they had a practical focus and no longer invited opinions on economic

⁷⁷ Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, VI, 210.

⁷⁸ Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, II, 26. Böcker continued to raise questions of public economy in texts that did not have immediate connection to the Economic Society. See C. C. Böcker, *Om skogars skötsel i Norden. En skrift författad i anledning af den prisfråga Hans Majestät Konungen af Sverige uppgifvit, om den för Sverige mest tjenliga hushållning med Rikets Skogar* (Åbo: Hjelt 1829).

⁷⁹ See 'Preisfragen als Institution der Wissenschaftsgeschichte im Europa der Aufklärung', www.uni-potsdam.de/u/fea/preisschriften [read September 2007].

⁸⁰ *Åbo Tidningar* 16 April 1798.

⁸¹ Cygnæus, K. *Finska*, 133.

⁸² Zilliacus, *Finska Hushållningssällskapets*, IV, 211–12.

policy. While the prize questions themselves were not labelled as belonging to either category of 'public' or 'private economy', the shift in focus corresponds to the above quoted remarks by Tengström and Böcker on the primacy gained by 'private' over 'public economy'. Topics for questions proposed in 1828 concerned: 1) the cultivation of potatoes in different temperatures, 2) the effect of cutting the stem of the potato plant, 3) the development of fumes whilst distilling potato spirits, 4) the right temperatures and need for liquids in the cultivation of linen, and 5) the excessive fertilisation of linen.⁸³ With the exception of a re-issued question on the history of Finnish commerce since antiquity until the union with Russia (which left the phrasing of the original question intact), the practical orientation in the Society's prize questions remained fixed.⁸⁴

To what extent 1821 was a turning point in the history of the Finnish Economic Society remains an open question. The dismantling of *Åbo Morgonblad* and the general commotion among the students in that same year seem to have had immediate consequences for the expression of political opinions in the country. Next to the turn away from 'public economy' in the work of the Economic Society, it also rebranded its use of its key concept of patriotism. While the *Åbo Morgonblad* and its editor Arwidsson had celebrated patriotism (in particular a new kind of patriotism that related to the improvement of the Finnish language and national spirit),⁸⁵ after Arwidsson's expulsion, the word would only be used in reports on foreign matters.⁸⁶

The forced decline of 'public economy' and patriotism within the Economic Society after 1821 may be seen in a broader light as an accentuated shift from the ideal of improvement of the nation through economic reform and the development of new farming methods to the ideal of improving the nation through the channels of national culture and the Finnish language. By the 1830s this shift had become very tangible. While the Economic Society continued its activities (and does so until today) it was clearly no longer a political factor. Under the

⁸³ Minutes 19 November 1828, § 5, 66–66b, A I 23, Finska Hushållningssällskapets arkiv, Åbo Akademis bibliotek, Turku.

⁸⁴ *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, 4 August 1829; *Till Allmänheten Redogörelser för Kejsrerliga Finska Hushållnings-Sällskapets Göromål från den 1 November 1827 till den 1 November 1830* (Åbo: hos Christ. Ludv. Hjelt 1831).

⁸⁵ See 'Om Nationalitet och National Anda' published in *Åbo Morgonblad* 17 February 1821, 17 March 1821 and 24 March 1821.

⁸⁶ Jani Marjanen, 'Patriotismi, Suomen talousseura ja yhtenäiskulttuuri', forthcoming in *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 117 (2012:4).

influence of J. G. Herder's ideas on language and the nation, which had had a significant reception in Finland, a new development took shape.⁸⁷ Although Carl Christian Böcker had published one issue of a journal on practical farming in Finnish with the title *Sanomia Maanviljelijöille* and thus participated in the creation of a written Finnish language regarding economic matters, language issues remained subordinate in the work of the Economic Society. Instead these were the core tasks of The Finnish Literature Society which was founded in 1831 in Helsinki where it sought to support and build up Finnish culture, history and national language. In the words of its publicly presented statutes:

For each people among which science and literature have rooted, the customs, the language and the Literature of the fatherland have become its most precious interests Language is the prerequisite of Nationality and Patriotic [*Fosterländsk*] Literature is established only through Patriotic [*Fosterländskt*] Language.⁸⁸

The Literature Society from its very beginning took a loyalist approach to national improvement. This way it was never associated with the more radical strands of patriotism, which shows for instance in the aversion to using the Swedish word *patriotisk* in the statutes of the Literature Society. Instead the vernacular and less laden form, *fosterländsk*, was employed. The Literature Society both found Imperial support and attracted the attention of the intellectual elite in the capital.⁸⁹ In the historiography of associational life as well as nation-building and nationalism, the Finnish Literature Society holds a special position as a significant intellectual movement of the 1830s and 1840s.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ For the reception of Herder, see H. K. Riikonen, 'J. G. Herderin tuntemus Turun Akatemian piirissä Porthanin ja Franzénin aikana'; Pertti Karkama, 'Herderin kieliteoria ja sen jälkiä Suomessa', in *Herder, Suomi, Eurooppa*, eds. Sakari Ollitervo and Kari Immonen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 2006).

⁸⁸ *Helsingfors Tidningar* no. 55, 13 July 1831.

⁸⁹ See Irma Sulkunen, *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 1831–1892* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 2004); Stenius, *Frivilligt, jämlikt, samfällt*, 144–51; Matti Klinge, *Suomen sinivalkoiset värit. Kansallisten ja muidenkin symbolien vaiheista ja merkityksestä* (Helsinki: Otava 1982), 270–9.

⁹⁰ See Stenius, *Frivilligt, jämlikt, samfällt*, 145; Miroslav Hroch, *Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas. Eine vergleichende Analyse zur gesellschaftlichen Schichtung der patriotischen Gruppen* (Praha: Universita Karlova 1968), 80–94.

As the Economic Society developed a practical orientation and became an advisory organisation for local farmers, many of its functions in education, economic policy, poor relief, publishing handbooks and spreading vaccines were adopted by new associations, specialised private companies or government bodies that each engaged in one of the vast array of activities formerly understood to fall under the heading of economic improvement.

14

The American Agricultural Societies and the Making of the New Republic, 1785–1830

Manuela Albertone

Amidst the proliferation of agricultural societies in the eighteenth century, the growth of those in America displayed specific characteristics. Flourishing between 1785 and 1830, their spread was linked to the events of the American Revolution and the subsequent clash between the Republican and Federalist parties. Faced with making strategic choices for the new nation, Thomas Jefferson's Republicans encouraged the societies' activities as a means of supporting the party's project of agrarian democracy, which was based on the primacy of agricultural development and opposed to the financial and manufacturing model of Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists who followed the example of Great Britain. All the ideologists of American agrarian democracy, from Jefferson to Benjamin Franklin, George Logan and John Taylor, were involved in agricultural societies and used French economic thought, in particular physiocracy as their theoretic point of reference. This was because physiocratic authors provided the first scientific analysis of an economic process founded on the pre-eminence of agriculture, and outlined an alternative development plan to that of the British model. The aim of this essay is to trace the life of agricultural societies in order to better understand an important moment both in the reinforcing of support for the new republic as well as the United States' response to physiocracy and its contribution to the consolidation of American national identity.

Organising agricultural progress

To appreciate more fully the motivations and the life of these new institutions, it is necessary to place their experiences in a national and international economic context: they grew in the wake of the American

depression of 1785–86, were linked to the post-Revolution agricultural recovery and lasted until the collapse of American cereal and tobacco exports to Europe at the end of the century. While the first and most important agricultural societies rose in the Northern cities – the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Agricultural Reform, the very first, was founded in 1785 – their growth in the South was accelerated by the move towards isolationism that occurred after the 1812 War.¹

The new agrarian spirit of America coincided with the revolutionary period between 1775 and 1790. The composition of agricultural societies was thus made up of a clear majority of progressive members, some of whom had taken part in the Revolution and others who were employed in the new political administration. In 1789 the need to make a recovery after the war with England was felt to be a strong reason for focusing on agriculture,² not least because of the unusually ideal conditions in America: ‘there is, perhaps’, General Warren wrote in 1787, ‘no country in the world, where the situations, nature, and circumstances of things seem to point out husbandry, as the most essential and proper business, more than our own’.³

Apart from the Philadelphia Society, before 1800 the most important agricultural societies were the New York Society for Promoting Agriculture, Arts and Manufactures (1791) and the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture (1792). Others were established in Charleston, South Carolina, Hallowell, Maine and New Haven.⁴ These were not farmers’ clubs established for the interchange of help and

¹ See Percy W. Bidwell, John I. Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620–1860* (Clifton: A. M. Kelley 1973 [1925]); Cecil Gray Lewis, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (Clifton: A. M. Kelly 1973 [1933]).

² ‘An address to the public, from the South Carolina Society for promoting and improving agriculture and other rural concerns’, *The American Museum* V (January 1789), 41–2.

³ ‘Observations on agriculture, its advantages, and the causes that have in America prevented improvements in husbandry,’ by General Warren, of Massachusetts, *The American Museum* (October 1787), 345.

⁴ Rodney H. True, ‘The early development of Agricultural societies in the United States’, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association, for the year 1920* (Washington: Government Printing Office 1925), 295–306; Margaret W. Rossiter, ‘The Organization of Agricultural Improvement in the United States 1785–1865’, in *The Pursuit of Knowledge in the Early American Republic: American Scientific and Learned Societies from Colonial Times to the Civil War*, eds. Alexandra Olesen and Sanborn C. Brown (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1976), 284–7.

practical experience, but rather were composed of groups of wealthy landowners who belonged to the liberal professions – doctors, lawyers and even members of the clergy – who lived in the cities but were interested in improving the condition of their estates. They formed an elite that had no direct contact with the farming population. Having received a classical education and inherited a belief in an agrarian myth that recalled Virgil, in keeping with the example of cultured Europeans, these groups were motivated by the desire to promulgate new agricultural techniques, importing them in the main from Great Britain. They did so in the full knowledge of the backwardness of American agriculture, which had witnessed a low level of experimentation during the colonial period, and of its specific geographical features. They thus represented an ideal of agriculture that was not Arcadian, but modern and dynamic:

The state of Agriculture in all parts of the world is far from perfect. Great progress, however, has of late years been made in Europe in its improvement. Many persons, not practical farmers, have associated for the purpose of encouraging useful experiments. The Massachusetts Society was formed with the same view; and in this country, it may be expected to prove more useful than in old countries. Much useful knowledge in husbandry, is to be acquired from the treatises which have been published on that subject; but as they are mostly calculated for climates, in many respects varying from ours, it is only by experiments made here that we can venture, with safety, to apply their principles.⁵

Many members of the agricultural societies, and not just the most famous, like Jefferson, Washington, Logan, Taylor and Franklin were agricultural experimenters themselves and had first-hand knowledge of new European methods of cultivation and of the English agronomists. They were also active in the exchange of plants, seeds and in importing new breeds of livestock. In 1786 John Warren, while asking John Adams, who was in London, to buy two new books about agriculture

⁵ *Rules and Regulations of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture* (Boston: Thomas Fleet 1796), 3–4. For a reading of the Republicans' agrarian project, interpreted as a model of a modern and commercialised agriculture, compare Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press 1984); Isaac Kramnick, 'Republican Revisionism Revisited', *William and Mary Quarterly* LXXXVII (1982), 629–54.

wrote: 'A Charming Enthusiasm is prevailing for Agriculture.'⁶ Both Jefferson and Washington were in correspondence with Arthur Young and John Sinclair, who in 1797 was pushing for the creation of a national board of agriculture in Philadelphia, inspired by the English one to which seven Americans had gained honorary membership. Young was a direct point of reference for the American experiments and his *Annals of Agriculture* were widely known by American agriculturists. For John Taylor:

Arthur Young alone seems to me to occupy the station among agriculturists, which Bacon does among philosophers. He makes records, and reasons, with great perspicuity, from a great variety of experiments. He was a practical farmer and a good writer. His works, under the titles of annals, travels, &c. are very extensive, and would alone, as they extend to about 20 octavo volumes, constitute a valuable agricultural library.⁷

Before the successes of Young and Sinclair, Jethro Tull's agrarian revolution in England, which was based on tillage, had already become influential in America through Jared Eliot and through Franklin, whose merits as a pioneer in agricultural experimentation are often forgotten.⁸

The model of the learned societies, from which the agricultural societies drew inspiration, was above all that of the American Philosophical Society, within which Franklin, who was among its founders, encouraged the broadening of knowledge of agriculture and introduced a branch of learning called 'Husbandry and American Improvements' as early as 1743. This conformed with the aims of the society (of which

⁶ James Warren to John Adams, 30 April 1786, quoted in Rodney C. Loher, 'The Influence of English Agriculture on American Agriculture, 1775–1825', *Agriculture History* XI (January 1937), 3–15.

⁷ John Taylor to George W. Jeffrey, 16 August 1816, *American Farmer* II (16 June 1820), 93.

⁸ Jared Eliot, *Essays upon Field Husbandry in New England and Other Papers 1748–1762* (New York: Columbia University Press 1934). Eliot hoped that agricultural progress would cement unity between the colonies as well as the spirit of cooperation with England. What is more, his programme of intensive agriculture fitted with the English colonial policy of restricting moves towards lands in the West. See Christopher Grasso, 'The Experimental Philosophy of farming: Jared Eliot and the Cultivation of Connecticut', *William and Mary Quarterly* 20 (July 1963), 502–28; Earle D. Ross, 'Benjamin Franklin as an Eighteenth-Century Agricultural Leader', *Journal of Political Economy* XXXVII (1929), 52–72.

he was elected president in 1769, as was Jefferson in 1796 – his presidency lasting nineteen years), namely that of creating a network of learned societies which would cement the union between North and South through the pursuit of two fundamental Enlightenment objectives: to bring progress in education and in the material conditions of life: ‘all philosophical experiments that let light into the nature of things, tend to increase the power of man over matter, and multiply the conveniences or pleasure of life’.⁹ In 1798 Jefferson presented to the society the results of the famous plough that he had designed himself. Investigations in the fields of botany, chemistry, mechanics, commerce and agriculture did not exclude a strong political interest and such themes as ‘What form of government contributes most to the public wealth?’ were discussed alongside more practical subjects.

The American Philosophical Society was among the most important channels for the flow of French thought into America and enabled the exchange of ideas between the revolutionary cultures of the two countries. Jefferson, Franklin and Saint John de Crèvecoeur took on this responsibility through their personal contacts and through their diffusion of books by French authors, which they obtained during visits to France.¹⁰ The number of French members of the society was high and included Buffon, Lavoisier, Daubenton, Lafayette, Chastellux, Brissot, Volney, Cabanis, many people linked to the physiocratic movement, Du Pont de Nemours, Condorcet, Barbeau Dubourg and La Rochefoucauld. In 1789, Quesnay de Beauregard, grandson of François Quesnay, presented his plan to strengthen cultural and scientific links between America, France and the other European countries through the *Academy of Sciences and Belles Lettres* in Richmond.¹¹

The American Philosophical Society and the learned societies in general thus constituted a forum of discussion for agricultural societies, whose practical orientation marked their origin and made them institutions that were more directly involved in local realities.

Following the model of other European societies, among the ideas proposed for the programmes of agricultural improvement was the award of

⁹ *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. III, cited in Oscar Hansen Allen, *Liberalism and American Education* (New York: Octagon Press 1965), 105.

¹⁰ See Manuela Albertone, ‘Condorcet, Jefferson et l’Amérique’, in *Condorcet. Homme des Lumières et de la Révolution*, eds. A.-M. Chouillet and P. Crépel (Paris: ENS Editions 1997), 189–99.

¹¹ J. G. Rosengarten, *The Early French Members of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia: 1907).

prizes for essays on a variety of topics and the organisation of competitions between farmers at agricultural and livestock fairs. The introduction of the merino sheep in 1807, thanks to the endeavours of Elkanah Watson, an enterprising New Englander who, making the most of his travels in Europe, launched the first livestock fair in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, is one of the more original examples of their success.¹² There were techniques sponsored with the aim of spreading intensive methods through the rotation of crops, the reduction of single crops, the introduction of new varieties of plants and the use of fertilisers, gypsum and lime. Memoirs, proceedings and transactions made the cultured public aware of what had been achieved. Objectives also included the organisation of specialised libraries in which to gather European books about agriculture and informing and guiding public opinion through a specialised press.

Agricultural societies sent in their papers and proceedings for publication in specialised periodicals, English texts on agriculture were republished and fluctuations in agricultural prices were regularly updated. In 1810 the first agricultural periodical appeared, the *Agricultural Museum*,¹³ and was followed in 1819 by John Skinner's *American Farmer*. This became the organ of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle, which had been conceived and shaped by Jefferson and Madison and served as a reference point for national studies of agricultural renewal. Others followed: the *New England Farmer* in 1822, *The New York Farmer* in 1826, *The Genesee Farmer* in 1831, *The Cultivator* in 1834, *The Maine Farmer* in 1835. *The Farmer's Register*, created in 1832 by Edmund Ruffin, an agricultural experimenter from Virginia, became a source of information for farming in the South: 'the best publication on agriculture which this country or Europe has ever produced', was how John Skinner described it. John Taylor published articles within it that shared Ruffin's campaigns against the power of the banks (something which accelerated the end of the periodical in 1842) as well as his cultural and political project for an agrarian South opposed to the North, which distanced the Old Republicans from the even-handed and unifying politics of Jefferson's presidency, leading to the South taking a course that ultimately led to the Civil War.¹⁴

¹² See Bidwell and Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States*, 187–8.

¹³ Claribel R. Barnett, "'The Agricultural Museum': An Early American Agricultural Periodical', *Agricultural History* II (April 1928), 99–102.

¹⁴ Avery O. Craven, 'The Agricultural Reformers of the Ante-bellum South', *The American Historical Review* XXXIII (October 1927–July 1928), 302–14; N. K. Risjord, *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson* (New York: Columbia University Press 1965).

Like the periodicals, almanacs were used to exert influence and as a bridge between a cosmopolitan knowledge and a provincial culture that kept strong support for the concept of freeholding alive. The main points of this were the natural right to possess land and the idea that agriculture was the true source of wealth, capable of guaranteeing independence and democracy and strengthening national pride: 'I eat, drink, and sleep, and do what I please, the King in his Palace can only do these.'¹⁵

The objectives of the agricultural societies included that of exercising social control and checking the speed of westward migration in search of fertile land. In fact, the British-style programmes of intensive agriculture that the societies sought to carry through clashed with the farmers' traditional methods of cultivation, which exhausted land before moving onto more fertile, cheaper and still abundant terrain. Before 1800, strong demand for grain in the Eastern areas kept prices high, and farmers therefore had no interest in increasing the long-term productivity of the land.

The same resistance existed in the South. The system of plantations, the vastness of the country and the high cost of labour all drove farmers towards an expansion that impoverished the land. Arthur Young denounced this in his correspondence with Washington,¹⁶ and John Taylor fought against it in his campaign in support of the use of manure. Meanwhile, the migration of white farmers towards the South weakened the aristocracy of the planters.¹⁷ It was in this favourable climate that the campaigns against the abolition of the right of primogeniture, in which Jefferson was involved, took place. It also favoured

¹⁵ 'The Almanack for 1761', in Nathaniel Ames, *The Essays, Humor, and Poems of Nathaniel Ames, Father and Son of Dedham, Massachusetts, from their Almanacks, 1726-1775*, ed. Samuel Briggs (Cleveland, Ohio: 1891), 318. 'The Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of the World will be transplanted into America: But the Study and Practice of Agriculture must go Hand in Hand with our Increase; for all the Policy and Learning in the World will not enable us to become a rich, flourishing and happy People, without the Knowledge and Practice of Agriculture.' ('The Almanack for 1764', in Ames, *The Essays, Humor and Poems of Nathaniel Ames*, 355). See Chester E. Eisinger, 'The Farmer in the Eighteenth Century Almanac', *Agricultural History* XXVIII, n. 3 (July 1954), 107-12.

¹⁶ George Washington, *Letters on Agriculture*, ed. Franklin Knight (Washington: The Editor; Philadelphia: W. S. Martien 1847).

¹⁷ See Richard Bridgman, 'Jefferson's Farmer before Jefferson', *American Quarterly* XIV (Winter 1962), 567-77; D. Allan Williams, 'The Small Farmer in Eighteenth-Century Virginia Politics', *Agricultural History* XLIII, n. 1 (January 1969), 91-102.

the anti-slavery movement, which received further support from the reverberations of the French Revolution.

It was in the broad setting of the colonial period, characterised by the prevalence of independent producers who managed a self-reliant economy, that Saint John de Crèvecoeur portrayed the farmer in the *Letters from an American farmer*,¹⁸ a figure who was idealised but nonetheless rooted in a specific time and place.

This conflict between the aim of establishing intensive agriculture based on the European pattern on the one hand, and the reality of American circumstances on the other explains the eventual decline of the agricultural societies. They reached their highest point in 1820–25, with the rapid spread of county societies, of which in 1819 Elkanah Watson estimated there were at least 100 in the country. County societies had a stronger practical impact and received financial support from the states, especially from Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania.¹⁹ However, having been launched in a period of rising prices, they passed through a phase of rapid decline in which farmers saw their expectations fade, especially when state support was slowly reduced during the transition from a self-sufficient economy towards a commercialised agriculture. Nonetheless, on a local level the agricultural societies of certain areas did bring about improvements, and their agricultural and livestock competitions and fairs helped to democratise, educate and disseminate knowledge even when this did not keep step with the profound changes that occurred to American agriculture between 1790 and 1830, four decades characterised by westward migration. Moving West was the best option for cultivators who preferred to seek out new land rather than embrace the revolutionary methods that the reformers encouraged, but which remained the prerogative of rich landowners.

However, American agricultural societies were not, on the whole, part of a state programme, even if they were part of a national strategy. From 1776 the Continental Congress had appealed for the formation of a 'society for the improvement of agriculture, arts, manufactures, and commerce' in each colony, hoping that there would be coordination between them.²⁰ The war had made it impossible to put this into

¹⁸ See Manuela Albertone, 'The French Moment of the American National Identity. St. John de Crèvecoeur's Agrarian Myth', *History of European Ideas* 32, n. 1 (March 2006), 28–57.

¹⁹ See Bidwell and Falconer, *History of Agriculture*.

²⁰ *Journal of Continental Congress IV*, cited in Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 738.

practice, though some hopes were partially realised after 1787 with the creation of a national market.

The experiences of agricultural societies therefore offer an interesting viewpoint from which to study the ties between intellectual elites and government. Considered from the perspective of the relationship between states and central power, they represented local realities in the national context, and had become increasingly widespread with the birth of the county societies at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Jefferson was a staunch defender of the agricultural societies' autonomy: in 1811, he put forward a plan for their organisation, outlining its function, aims and structure in detail: 'In a country, of whose interests agriculture forms the basis, wherein the sum of productions is limited by the quantity of the labor it possesses, and not of its lands, a more judicious employment of that labor would be a clear addition of gain to individuals as well as to the nation, now lost by a want of skill and information in its direction.'²¹

However, the plan, which was developed for the society of Albemarle in Virginia, was intended to offer a model at national level. This called for the creation of a central society in each state that would act as the point of contact and reference for the county organisations. The governing structure would be limited to facilitating this contact and would not direct the actions of individual societies.²²

Jefferson had already made clear his position in a letter to John Sinclair in 1803: 'Our Agricultural Society has at length formed itself. Like our America Philosophical Society, it is voluntary, and unconnected with the public.'²³ Using his authority as President, he had also expressed his opposition in a letter to Robert Livingston in 1801:

I have on several occasions been led to think on some means of uniting the state agricultural societies into a central society: and lately it has been pressed from England with a view to a cooperation

²¹ Thomas Jefferson, 'Scheme for a System of Agricultural Societies, March 1811', in Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings*, ed. A. Lipscomb and A. Bergh (Washington: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 20 vols., 1903–1904), vol. XVII, 405.

²² 'The annual meeting of the legislature at that place, the individuals of which would most frequently be members of their county societies, would give opportunities of informal conferences which might promote a general and useful understanding among all societies.' Jefferson, 'Scheme for a System of Agricultural Societies', 405.

²³ Jefferson to John Sinclair, 30 June 1803, quoted in Loher, *The Influence of English Agriculture*, 7.

with their board of agriculture. You know some have proposed to Congress to incorporate such a society. I am against that, because I think Congress cannot find in all the enumerated powers any one which authorizes the act, much less the giving the public money to that use.²⁴

Shortly before the end of his second term, he came to see that the true nature of agricultural societies was their cosmopolitan dimension. To this end he continued his contacts with the societies of Paris and London, of which he was a member, his commitment to sending seeds of Virginian May wheat to England, and saw to the arrival in America of perennial chicory, which was introduced to England from France by Arthur Young, and then sent to Washington by the London agricultural society:

I mention these things, to show the nature of the correspondence which is carried on between societies instituted for the benevolent purpose of communicating to all parts of the world whatever useful is discovered in any one of them. These societies are always in peace, however their nations may be at war. Like the republic of letters, they form a great fraternity spreading over the whole earth, and their correspondence is never interrupted by any civilized nation.²⁵

The Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture

The first agricultural society, whose activities reverberated beyond America and left a mark in the wider political and cultural realities of the country, was the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, situated in the centre of the most important area for grain production before 1800. Philadelphia, the city where it was based, was the capital of American culture, its most cosmopolitan city, and the one with the strongest French presence, even before the first wave of emigration that followed the revolt of San Domingo. It was home to a Republican intellectual elite of various religious persuasions though it had a strong Quaker tradition. Philadelphia had also been the capital

²⁴ Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, 16 February 1801, in Jefferson, *The Writings*, ed. A. Lipscomb and A. Bergh (1903), vol. VII, 492–3.

²⁵ Jefferson to John Hollins, 19 February 1809, in Jefferson, *The Writings*, ed. A. Lipscomb and A. Bergh (1904), vol. XII, 253.

of the new nation at the start of the Revolution and between 1790 and 1800.²⁶

From its birth on 11 February 1785 the Philadelphia Society's membership was distinguished by its international outlook and progressive republicanism. Of its twenty-three founder members, four (Clymer, Morris, Rush and Wilson) had signed the Declaration of Independence, four were members of the Convention that drafted the United States Constitution, and two (Logan and Morris) were members of the Senate. Washington and Franklin took part from the outset and in 1791 John Vaughan, who was a correspondent with Du Pont de Nemours, became treasurer.²⁷

The penetration of French economic thought occurred through both the institutional channels and because of forceful figures like Franklin and George Logan. In 1789 Abbot Tessier, of the *Académie des Sciences* and the *Académie de Médecine* in Paris, made a number of enquiries to the Philadelphia Agricultural Society – via the mediation of François de Marbois, secretary of the French delegation to Philadelphia – on the state of agriculture in the United States. The positive results of this encouraged the society to continue this type of agronomic investigation, until: 'not only the wishes of our agricultural friends in France will be gratified, but the state of agriculture amongst ourselves may be greatly improved'.²⁸ The idea that patriotism implied the improvement of agriculture remained a constant in society at that time, as this was deemed to be the basis of the country's liberty and independence; another constant was the notion that the instruments for encouraging

²⁶ See Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press 1976).

²⁷ See Simon Baatz, *'Venerate the Plough': A History of the Philadelphia Society for promoting Agriculture, 1785–1985* (Philadelphia: PSPA 1985).

²⁸ *American Museum or Universal Magazine* V (April 1789), 374–82. In the same period, the journal published other pieces in favour of agricultural improvements as a means to amend the post-war economy ('An Address to the public, from the South Carolina Society for promoting and improving agriculture and other rural concerns', *American Museum or Universal Magazine* (January 1789), 41–2). The publication also propagated the idea that only agriculture was fundamentally productive: 'Mechanic arts may be justly considered, as the offspring of that plenty, which agriculture begets' ('Whether it be most beneficial to the United States, to promote agriculture, or to encourage the mechanic arts and manufactures? From a discourse pronounced by John Morgan, M.D.F.R.S., at a meeting of the Shandean Society of New Bern, North Carolina, march 15, 1789', *American Museum or Universal Magazine* (July 1789), 72).

agriculture consisted of 'genius, learning, patriotism, wealth and power'.²⁹

The double binomial – agriculture-patriotism and agriculture-science – was taken as the guideline of this society: 'Husbandry has been practised, from the earliest times more as an art than a science ... The combination of science with practice is relatively, of modern discovery and development.'³⁰ However, the idea of agriculture and democracy, of agriculture and political radicalism, did not achieve universal consensus, in particular after the adoption of the Constitution in 1787, which led many members to assume more conservative positions in relation to the new order. The exception was George Logan, the only authentic American physiocrat and one of the ideologists of the American agrarian democracy who, with Jefferson, orchestrated the Republican campaign against Hamilton's Federalists.³¹ Logan's presence in the agricultural societies and his activities show how valuable the societies were in influencing government policy.

Logan's agronomic activities were guided by English practice and French theory. Having been raised in Quaker Philadelphia and being an anti-aristocrat by nature, he gained a passion for agriculture from his father, who was an agricultural experimenter in touch with Jared Eliot. In line with Quaker tradition he went to Edinburgh to complete his medical studies, and met Franklin in Paris, who introduced him to physiocracy and the haunts of radical French intellectuals. After returning home in 1780, the beginning of his political career kept pace with his work as an agronomist and landowner. His work transformed his estate in Stenton into a laboratory for agricultural change, and was carried out in the knowledge that the English methods, which inspired

²⁹ *Memoirs of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture* (Philadelphia: Johnson and Warner 1811), vol. II, VI–VII; 'it would evidence an increase of a spirit of patriotism, in this diffusing a knowledge of the art, by which the great body of our citizens, in this agricultural country, not only gain a plentiful subsistence, but contribute to that of others', *Memoirs of the Philadelphia Society*, vol. III, (1814), III.

³⁰ 'A Discourse on agriculture, by Richard Peters, president at the request of the Society' *Memoirs of the Philadelphia Society* IV (1818), IX; the author's reference points were Montesquieu, who 'has, with truth, observed, that "countries are not cultivated in proportion of their fertility, but to their liberty"', and Sully who had defined 'both tillage and pasturage ... the two breasts of the state', *Memoirs of the Philadelphia Society* IV (1818), XIII, XXI.

³¹ See Manuela Albertone, 'George Logan: un physiocrate américain', in *La diffusion internationale de la physiocratie (XVIIIe–XIXe)*, eds. B. Delmas, Th. Demals and Ph. Steiner (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble 1995), 421–39.

him through Young's *Annals of Agriculture*, could not be transplanted without being adapted to American conditions.³²

Physiocracy gave him a theoretical setting both for his plans for technical innovation and for his belief in the relationship between economics and politics, agriculture and republic, which was the foundation of the Republican ideology and of the political project that they proposed as an alternative to that of the Federalists.³³

Logan shared all the principles of physiocracy: the idea that only agriculture was truly productive; the need for a capitalist, commercialised agriculture led by powerful landowners capable of large-scale investments (the physiocratic *avances* which he called 'primitive expenses', 'instrumental expenses' and 'annual expenses'); the necessity of having a single land tax; freedom of commerce; and the struggle against public credit and the financial power of the banks.³⁴

The interests of farmers – 'the most valuable class of citizens' – fitted into a natural order, in which the harmony of Quakerism was reconciled with the physical order of the physiocrats and the scientific evidence of their economic theory: 'The motto of the French economists, "Faire le bien c'est le recevoir" is as applicable to nations as to individuals.' It also constituted the means by which to escape 'this dark system of British

³² See Frederick B. Tolles, 'George Logan, Agrarian Democrat. A Survey of His Writings', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* LXXV, n. 1 (January 1951), 260–78; Frederick B. Tolles, 'George Logan and the Agricultural Revolution', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* XCV (1951), 589–96; Frederick B. Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia* (New York: Oxford University Press 1953).

³³ In her memoirs, his wife, Deborah, recounted that after his election to the state legislature in 1785, Logan began to read 'such authors as he thought had thrown most light upon political science' and among them 'French works of Turgot, and, I think, Du Trone and Rivière. He read Necker, but saw vanity and ambition strongly linked with his good qualities' and 'The Wealth of Nations, which he justly appreciated without approving of all the author has advanced', *Memoir of Dr. George Logan of Stenton, by his widow Deborah Norris Logan* (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania 1899), 46.

³⁴ 'As all the private and public wealth of a country arises from the land, the revenue necessary for the support of government can only be derived from the proprietors and farmers ... A direct tax, being confined to a just proportion of the net produce of your farms, can never be oppressive, whilst an indirect tax, preying upon the gross produce of your farms, will destroy the means of future cultivation.' (George Logan, *Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States: Shewing the Necessity of Confining the Public Revenue to a Fixed Proportion of the Net Produce of the Land; and the Bad Policy and Injustice of Every Species of Indirect Taxation and Commercial Regulations* (Oswald: 1791), 20–2, 25–6).

finances'. So wrote Logan in 1792 in the *Five Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry*,³⁵ a work he wrote in response to the *Report on Manufactures* in which Hamilton had attacked, against Jefferson and the Republicans, the idea 'that agriculture is not only the most productive, but the only productive, species of industry', as well as the principle of 'net surplus' and the claim that the 'classes of artificers' did not produce wealth.³⁶

Defined as 'a dogmatic Physiocrat',³⁷ Logan succeeded in linking physiocratic language to American political radicalism. He was among the founder members of the Philadelphia Society and it was through him that the ideology of Jeffersonian democracy entered the agricultural societies with force. His Quaker radicalism soon led him to be dissatisfied with the conservative turn in the society after 1787. The rupture occurred in 1790, the year that coincided with Jefferson's return to America, the beginning of the clash between Republicans and Federalists in the name of the farmer-republic binomial, and the beginning of the French Revolution.

George Logan: agricultural societies and political radicalism

On 4 August 1788 Logan founded the Philadelphia County Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufactures, which he intended to be an agricultural society that was profoundly different from the French and English models.³⁸ Formed exclusively of farmers, it subordinated cosmopolitan aims to the political project of transforming agricultural societies into centres of democratic participation, where farmers organised themselves on a national scale to defend their rights and coordinated their efforts through correspondence committees, modelled on the patriotic committees active during the Revolution.³⁹ Logan had wanted to instil the same political spirit in the Philadelphia Society. 'Could the Philadelphia Society', he wrote in an address delivered to it in 1791, 'instituted for the laudable purpose of promoting

³⁵ George Logan, 'Five Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States: Containing Some Observations on the Dangerous Scheme of Governor Duer and Mr. Secretary Hamilton to Establish National Manufactories', *American Museum* XII (1792), 213, 215.

³⁶ Alexander Hamilton, 'Report on Manufactures', in *The Works*, vol. III, ed. H. Cabot Lodge (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons 1885–6), 294–300.

³⁷ See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1950), 277.

³⁸ 'Constitution of the Philadelphia County Society for the promotion of agriculture and domestic manufactures', *American Museum* V (February 1789), 161–3.

³⁹ *National Gazette* (20 February 1792).

Agriculture, influence the government of the United States, to establish a free, unlimited and unrestricted commerce, it would tend more to improve the Agriculture of our country, than all the premiums on their gift.⁴⁰

A group that had inherited Franklin's democratic spirit formed around Logan and his model estate in Stenton. There was Franklin's grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache,⁴¹ the director of the *General Adviser*, Jefferson, the astronomer David Rittenhouse and the doctor James Hutchinson. These men represented the most progressive groups in America and were supporters of the French Revolution.

Logan's commitment to agronomy, which went with his political radicalism, met resistance from the Philadelphia Society. In 1791 it rejected his plan for crop rotation, which he presented to the society in December 1790 as a solution to a question it had raised in 1785. His solution was based on the summary of all his experiments and while the model of rotation was the English one (it was 'agreeable to the English mode of farming,' he said), the theoretical system – which for him was fundamental, 'agriculture like other sciences, cannot be improved by accident' – was manifestly physiocratic and a justification of the desirability of coming to an agreement with wealthy landowners who could guarantee large-scale investments, what he called the 'primitive, instrumental, annual expenses'. The relationship between agriculture and government nevertheless remained strong because although the responsibility for technical improvements depended on private owners, 'the final success, of rendering the soil the most productive possible, depends on the government of the country'. The new era of freedom under way in France, where the centrality of agriculture was wholeheartedly recognised, acted as a consistent source of inspiration.⁴²

⁴⁰ 'To the Philadelphia Society for promoting Agriculture', *Independent Gazetteer and Agricultural Repository* (5 March 1791). He stated that 'the industrious husbandman ploughs his fields with pleasure and alacrity, well knowing that after giving to the government a fixed and certain proportion of the net produce of his farm, he will be protected in the full enjoyment of the remainder', which could not happen under the pressure of the direct taxes that damaged agriculture, a threat he was aware of.

⁴¹ About Franklin and Benny Bache, Jeffery Alan Smith, *Franklin and Bache: Envisioning the Enlightened Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990).

⁴² Published first in 1791 in the *Columbian Magazine* and in 1792 in the *National Gazette*, the work was published as a pamphlet in 1797 with the title *Fourteen Agricultural Experiments, to ascertain the best rotation of crops: addressed to the Philadelphia Agricultural Society* (Philadelphia: Bailey 1797).

After the Philadelphia Society, whose political motivations were clear, rejected his plan, Logan became convinced that there was a national plot to use the Constitution to favour merchants and financial speculators to the detriment of farmers. Thus from 1790 his language became more incendiary, serving the political campaign he orchestrated with Jefferson, making him one of the most determined theorists of agrarian democracy. The Philadelphia County Society became a democratic verification of his proposals.

Five weeks after Hamilton presented the *Report on Public Credit*, Logan gave the Philadelphia County Society a preview of the basic arguments contained in his *Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States: Showing the Necessity of Confining the Public Revenue to a Fixed Proportion of the Net Produce of the Land; and the Bad Policy and Injustice of Every Species of Indirect Taxation and Commercial Regulations*.⁴³ He opposed the banks, finance, public credit and mercantile interests, arguing that the net product of agriculture would serve as the basis for the fiscal system of an agrarian economy.⁴⁴ Locke, Smith and the physiocrats, to whom Franklin had introduced him, provided the theoretical support of what was the first clear expression of the philosophy of Jeffersonianism. Hamilton responded with the *Report on Manufactures* and Logan and the Republicans then replied with *Five Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States: Containing Some Observations on the Dangerous Scheme of Governor Duer and Mr. Secretary Hamilton to Establish National Manufactories*. This work opened with a passage from the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and turned the conflict between Republicans and Federalists, between an agrarian model and a manufacturing one, also into a clash between physiocrats and their opponents. The struggle that physiocratic authors had waged against corporatism and the divided interests of France under the Ancien Régime offered points of debate that were still valid in the new American state: 'All partial regulations tend to create separate interests in society, and therefore occasion jealousy and dissention among citizens, whose true interest consists in being united.' French thought had thus succeeded in establishing the 'principles of civil society': 'The prodigious advantages which France has already derived from these

⁴³ Logan's letter to the Philadelphia County Society was published in the *Independent Gazetteer* on 20 February and 6 March 1790.

⁴⁴ Before being published as a pamphlet by Eleazer Oswald in 1791, the *Letters* had appeared on 13 March, 24 April, 8 May, 14 August 1790 and 8 January 1791 in the *Independent Gazetteer*.

inquiries ... should have some influence on the measures of the general government of the United States, which are tending, in an alarming degree, to undermine the liberties of our country.⁴⁵

Throughout the 1790s Logan's contributions gave voice to the positions taken up by the Republican Party and were in harmony with Jefferson, whose role as Secretary of State required him to act with greater reserve. His statements in favour of domestic manufacturing as a means of avoiding dependency on English products were such that they led to his becoming a founder and first president of the Germantown Society for Promoting Domestic Manufactures.⁴⁶ The *Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States, Containing Some Observations on Funding and Bank Systems*, published in May 1793 against public credit were much the same, and were directly inspired by Jefferson's principle that every generation had the right to be free from the commitments made by preceding ones. This principle was at the heart of revolutionary democratic ideologies.⁴⁷

Logan's American radicalism was linked to the radicalism of revolutionary France. In 1793 he became a member of the *Société française des amis de la liberté et de l'égalité* in Philadelphia, which was inspired by the Jacobin Club and in which few Americans took part. Stenton became

⁴⁵ George Logan, 'Five Letters', 161–2, 213. Even the critical references to Colbert lead back to physiocratic discussions: 'When Colbert demands of an old experienced merchant, what steps his master should take to encourage commerce, the answer was – let us alone. The citizens of the United States engaged in agriculture, in manufactures, in mechanics, and ever in the cod fishery, may with justice and propriety give a similar answer to congress' (Logan, 'Five Letters', 167).

⁴⁶ See Logan's article against monopolies and capitalist interests: 'At a meeting of the Germantown society for promoting domestic manufactures, on Monday the 13th of August 1792', *American Museum* XII, part II (July to December 1792), 22–3.

⁴⁷ 'The earth and the fruits thereof belong to the living, by the gift of God ... The dead have neither power nor right over the earth, nor property thereon.' (George Logan, *Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States*, 9–10). Logan took up Jefferson's idea that 'the earth belongs to the living', which Jefferson had put forward when reflecting on French public debt while in Paris in 1789 and even used Buffon's schema to calculate the advent of a new generation every 19 years. On the physiocratic structure of Jefferson's ideas, which is central to his conviction that every generation should have the right to revise the Constitution, see Manuela Albertone, 'Condorcet, Jefferson et l'Amérique', 187–200; Manuela Albertone, 'Thomas Jefferson and French Economic Thought: a Mutual Exchange', in *Rethinking the Atlantic World. Europe and America in the Age of Democratic Revolutions*, eds. M. Albertone and A. De Francesco (London, Palgrave Macmillan 2009), 123–46.

one of the outposts of the French Revolution in America and its visitors included: James Monroe; Jean de Marsillac, a French Quaker who had tried to start a school of agriculture in France; Napper Tandy, head of the United Irishmen who was organising the revolt in Ireland; and Kosciuszko. In January 1794 Logan was welcomed by the Democratic Society of Philadelphia, the centre of opposition to Federalism.

His agrarianism helped to further radicalise his political positions. On 12 May 1798 he spoke at the Society of the Sons of Saint Tammary, a meeting place for Republicans and Irish immigrants, where he incited the workers and artisans to unite with the farmers in the name of the liberty and equality brought about by the French and American revolutions, in order to guard against the danger of a return to monarchy. He saw this union occurring within the context of a social hierarchy, of a physical and religious order, founded upon the farmer, outside of which there could be only chaos.⁴⁸

As a convinced supporter of physiocratic pacifism, Logan worked to avert the 1798 Quasi-War between France and America and in this unstable international situation he hardened his convictions of the need for self-sufficiency in the American economy.⁴⁹ The need for local coordination of agricultural interests remained central to his economic and political outlook. In 1800 he presented a new plan for the establishment of a society for the promotion of agriculture, the arts and manufacture, and expressed the hope that more would be founded and that there would be cooperation between them. Agriculture and patriotism remained synonymous and America exemplified an alternative to European economic models:

Still less are we desiderous of introducing in this happy Country, that baneful system of European Management which dooms the human

⁴⁸ When men 'destroy the natural order of things, in the moral or physical world, confusion and distress must be the consequence' (George Logan, *An Address on the Natural and Social Order of the World, as intended to produce universal good; delivered before the Tammary Society, at their anniversary on 12th of May 1798* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin Bache date unknown), 11).

⁴⁹ 'Le docteur Logan vous dira qu'il a trouvé en France de bons et zélés amis de l'Amérique et vous ne serez pas surpris que j'aie été du nombre, ainsi que mon fils. Vous m'avez vu pendant votre Ambassade lutter en faveur de votre Patrie, et pour les principes de libéralité, d'amitié sincère entre les deux nations, contre tous les préjugés fiscaux et mercantiles qu'avait alors notre gouvernement' (Du Pont de Nemours to Jefferson, Paris, 27 August 1798, in *The Correspondance of Jefferson and Du Pont de Nemours*, ed. G. Chinard (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press 1931), 6). On matters relating to Logan's unofficial diplomatic initiative in France, see Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia*.

Faculties to be smothered, and Man to be converted into a Machine. We want not that unfeeling plan of Manufacturing Policy, which has debilitated the Bodies, and debased the Minds, of so large a Class of People as the Manufactures of Europe.⁵⁰

Logan's work within agricultural societies remained constant. In 1803 he became vice-president, alongside James Madison, of the American Board of Agriculture, which was modelled on its English equivalent to coordinate agricultural societies at national level. However, his hopes were dashed as the new organisation failed to make any impact on the realities faced by American farmers.

In 1802 he abandoned politics and his role as Senator and returned to being a farmer. He supported Du Pont de Nemours and Robert Livingston's plans to introduce the merino sheep to America and was one of the founders of the Merino Society of the Middle States of North America. He considered this to be both a wise economic move as well as a patriotic one, since it reinforced the autonomy of the American economy.

In 1818, as he neared the end of his life, he returned as vice-president to the Philadelphia Society, from which he had distanced himself, and found it had gained new vigour. Faced with the Tariff of 1816 and the revival of the Bank of the United States, he used this position to reaffirm his belief in the centrality of the farmer and the Republican value of agriculture, a science which was 'reducible to fixed, unalterable principles', once more denouncing the persistence, despite the efforts of the agricultural societies, of mistakes and ignorance which were 'attributable to banking and manufacturing establishments, under the protection of government, absorbing a portion of capital that might be employed to greater advantage in agricultural improvements.'⁵¹

Thomas Jefferson: between local commitment and national policy

Agriculture in the Southern states developed after the Revolution and it was this period that saw the birth of the first agricultural societies,

⁵⁰ George Logan, *A Letter to the Citizens of Pennsylvania, on the necessity of promoting Agriculture, Manufactures, and the useful Arts* (Philadelphia: Patterson and Cochran 1800).

⁵¹ Logan, *An Address on the Errors of Husbandry in the United States* (Philadelphia: 1818), cited in Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia*, 315.

which in turn boosted its modernisation. In 1785 the South Carolina Agricultural Society was created in Charleston, with Washington as president and Jefferson as vice-president. This was followed in 1787 by the creation of the Kentucky Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge.⁵² The creation of new societies was later given a strong impulse by the shift towards isolationism that preceded the 1812 War, marking the decline of the English agronomic model.

Jefferson's efforts, which led to the constitution on 5 May 1817 of the Albemarle Agricultural Society at Charlottesville, the most active society in the South and among the most important in America, took place against this backdrop. Jefferson was President of the United States for two terms, and his presence and activities were testimony to the political value of the progress made in agriculture and the circulation of knowledge about it.

'There is certainly a much greater abundance of material for Agricultural societies than Philosophical', Jefferson wrote in 1801 in a letter to Robert Livingston.⁵³ For Jefferson, agriculture as a science was always central to his economic and political thought, a personal passion and the foundation of his radicalism and of his national identity. His work within agricultural societies was a substantiation and implementation of Jeffersonianism, understood as the social expression of an economic-political relationship. This was fundamental to Republican patriotism and to a project for democracy, based on local and decentralised participation, with the social figure of the farmer at its centre.

As a young landowner, Jefferson had followed the example of other Southern farmers, thus exhausting the land he owned in the Virginian counties of Albemarle, Bedford and Campbell with the uninterrupted cultivation of tobacco and grain. When he became aware of his mistakes, he began an experimental programme of improvements based on crop rotation and the use of compost and artificial fertilisers and he also became an agricultural experimenter himself.⁵⁴ From 1774 he scrupulously recorded his experiments in the *Farm Book*, was interested in discovering new species of plants, which he annotated in the *Garden Book*, and he established viticulture on his estate at Monticello, for

⁵² Gray, *History of Agriculture* II, 779ff.

⁵³ Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, 16 February 1801, in Jefferson, *The Writings*, ed. P. L. Ford (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893–9), vol. VII, 493.

⁵⁴ See A. C. Miller, 'Jefferson as an Agriculturist', *Agricultural History* XVI (1942), 65–78; *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, ed. E. Morris Betts (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society 1953).

which he was indebted to Filippo Mazzei. Writing about the exchange of seeds and plants he wrote: 'One service of this kind rendered to a nation is worth more to them than all the victories of the most splendid pages of their history.'⁵⁵ He was among the first to import merino sheep and introduced to America threshing machines which he had had sent over from Scotland. The new iron plough, which he devised himself, was intended to introduce improvements and to achieve greater efficiency in agriculture. In addition, he introduced Piedmontese rice to South Carolina and Georgia, having arranged to have it illegally exported from the Savoyard state,⁵⁶ and attempted, unsuccessfully, to transplant olive trees in South Carolina, sending for 500 plants from Aix-en-Provence.

With regards to agrarian ideology, whose theory was rooted in a particular interest in the social and political dimension of French economic thought from physiocracy to Jean-Baptiste Say and Destutt de Tracy, Jefferson considered the diffusion of knowledge of agricultural science to be among the prime objectives on an economic and political level, as well as a means of consolidating Republican cohesion. During the first phases of the Revolution, Jefferson's efforts in Virginia to abolish the entail and the custom of primogeniture had been aimed at encouraging an increase in the number of farmers and smallholdings, in the belief of the importance of creating a social fabric based on economically vibrant and politically independent farmers.

After he had completed his two terms as President of the United States, his return to more direct local activism, which involved the creation of the agricultural society of Albemarle, coincided with his project of founding the University of Virginia. He requested the collaboration of Du Pont de Nemours in this, and worked to bring about a professorship of agricultural science in order to turn farming into a specialised profession:

In every College and University, a professorship of agriculture, and the class of its students, might be honored as the first. Young men closing their academical education with this, as the crown of all other sciences, fascinated with its solid charms, and at a time when they are to choose an occupation, instead of crowding the other

⁵⁵ Jefferson to Mr. Giroud, 22 May 1797, in Jefferson, *The Writings* ed. A. Lipscomb and A. Bergh (1903), vol. VIII, 387.

⁵⁶ Jefferson to William Drayton, 30 July 1787, in Jefferson, *The Papers*, ed. P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1950), vol. XI, 645–6.

classes, would return to the farms of their fathers, their own, or those of other, and replenish and invigorate a calling, now languishing under contempt and oppression.⁵⁷

‘Attached to agriculture by inclination as well as by a conviction that it is the most useful of the occupation of man, my course of life has not permitted me to add to its theories the lessons of practice.’⁵⁸ For Jefferson agriculture was not only a political and economic matter, but also remained at the heart of his theoretical reflection, which was nourished by reading physiocratic authors and French post-physiocratic economic thought. Throughout his life there were many instances in which this is evident, and he always remained faithful to the principle that ‘to the labor of the husbandman a vast addition is made by the spontaneous energies of the earth on which it is employed: for one grain of wheat committed to the earth, she renders twenty, thirty, and even fifty fold, whereas to the labor of the manufacturer nothing is added’.⁵⁹

Thus in the context of a pragmatic mentality, which always ran alongside an interest in economic theory, he was able to return to more practical activities in the later years of his life. Alongside his rich collection of physiocratic texts, Jefferson’s library contained the memoirs and transactions of several agricultural societies.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Jefferson to David Williams, 14 November 1803, in Jefferson, *The Writings*, ed., A. Lipscomb and A. Bergh (1903), vol. IX, 429–30. On Du Pont de Nemours and his project at the University of Virginia, see Manuela Albertone, ‘Du Pont de Nemours et l’instruction publique pendant la Révolution. De la science économique à la formation du citoyen’, in ‘Les Physiocrates et la Révolution française’, *Revue française d’Histoire des Idées Politiques*, n. 20 (2004), 353–71.

⁵⁸ Jefferson to Augustin-François Silvestre, Secrétaire de la société D’agriculture de Paris, Washington, May 29, 1807, in Jefferson, *The Writings*, eds. A. Lipscomb and A. Bergh (1904), vol. XI, 212–13.

⁵⁹ Jefferson to Benjamin Austin, 9 January 1816, in Jefferson, *The Writings*, ed. D. Peterson (New York: The Library of America 1984), 1370. On Jefferson and physiocracy, see Albertone, *Thomas Jefferson and the French Economic Thought*. On his interest for French post-physiocratic thought, in particular Jean-Baptiste Say and Destutt de Tracy, as an alternative to the English model, see Manuela Albertone, ‘Un cas de circulation des idées économiques: Th. Jefferson, P.-S. Du Pont de Nemours, J.-B. Say, A.-L.-Cl. Destutt de Tracy. Continuité et discontinuité de la pensée économique française et de sa réception aux Etats-Unis’, in *Jean-Baptiste Say: Influences, critiques et postérité*, ed. A. Tiran (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010), 23–67.

⁶⁰ *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. E. Millicent Sowerby (Washington: The Library of Congress, 1952), vol. I, nn. 216, 768, 769, 772, 774, 1195, 1264, vol. III, nn. 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2377, 2432, 2433, 2436, 3551, 3617.

The 1811 plan for a system of agricultural societies and his work to create the society of Abemarle in 1817 provide concrete evidence of his persistent interest in the centrality of agriculture, at a time when – still stimulated by French post-physiocratic thought – he had made the idea that there was a need for equilibrium between economic activities and the need for manufacturing development of in the United States his own. Faced with the 1816 Tariff and the revival of the Bank of the United States, his direct involvement in the agricultural societies took on a political significance, just as it did for Logan.

This was the spirit that brought the Agricultural Society of Albemarle into being, whose members included Joseph C. Cabell, who worked alongside Jefferson to found the University of Virginia,⁶¹ Edmund Ruffin, one of the biggest American agricultural experimenters and editor of the *Farmer's Register*, and James Madison, who was its first president.

In his inaugural lecture Madison offered a synthesis of the themes and objectives of American agricultural societies, namely the primacy of agriculture and the societies' educational value: 'The faculty of cultivating the earth, and of rearing animals, by which food is increased beyond the spontaneous supplies of nature, belongs to man alone.'⁶² He drew a picture of the history of mankind, which placed agriculture at the apex of civilisation and anything that hindered the penetration of new techniques was thus considered an obstacle to the progress of the entire American economy: 'whilst all are sensible that agriculture is the basis of population and prosperity, it cannot be denied that the study and practice of its true principles have hitherto been too generally neglected in the United States'. In comparison to the colonial period, the imperative of change was now felt even more strongly because while the past had been characterised by the low cost of land and the high cost of labour: 'labor is now comparatively cheaper and land dearer.'⁶³ In relation to the exhaustion of lands, Madison's talk took up the various points of the programme put in place by Jefferson, namely the 'rotation of crops,' 'calendars of work', 'farm buildings and conveniences, enclosures, roads, fuel, timber', 'manures, plaister, green dressings, fallows, and other means of ameliorating the soil'.⁶⁴

⁶¹ See *Early History of the University of Virginia, as contained in the letters of Thomas Jefferson and Joseph C. Cabell* (Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph 1856).

⁶² James Madison, *Address to the Agricultural Society of Abemarle Virginia*, in James Madison, *Letters and other writings*, 4 vols. (New York: R. Worlington 1884), vol. III, 64.

⁶³ Madison, *Address to the Agricultural Society of Abemarle*, 76–7.

⁶⁴ Jefferson, *Scheme for a System of Agricultural Societies*, 406–7.

Jefferson's name continued to be quoted as an indisputable authority in all agrarian discussions. In 1819 the Agricultural Society of Prince George's County mentioned 'a maxim often attributed to Mr. Jefferson, but justly belonging to the French economists before his time, namely, that every person should be left to pursue his own business, in his own way'.⁶⁵ In this way Jefferson and his agrarian ideology facilitated the spread of French economic culture, as well as influencing the views of others indirectly and in ways of which they were unaware.

In 1820, James Garnett, President of the Virginia Agricultural Society of Fredericksburg, denouncing the violation of the 'true republican principles' which had been caused by the increase in duty on foreign goods, used an exquisitely physiocratic argument to point out how, in the final analysis, this fell only on 'agriculturists', who constituted the majority of the population. He also described how a policy of protective tariffs contradicted the principles of political economy, which maintained that 'according to the natural progress of society in every country favourably situated for agriculture, the class of Manufactures is the last to spring up'.⁶⁶ This intervention quoted passages from Thomas Cooper, in which he spoke of 'tillers of the earth, the fountain head of all wealth, of all power, and of all prosperity' and made reference to Franklin and his battle against protectionism.⁶⁷

In 1821 a report presented to the congress of the United Agricultural Societies of Virginia underlined the close link between agriculture and republic, and referred to precise series of data to demonstrate the damage inflicted by a policy that favoured manufacturing and therefore benefited one class to the detriment of another: 'it thus produces the inequality, which is the bane of republics; for it is in fact the influence of the few, or, in other words, aristocracy'.⁶⁸

From the beginning of the 1820s, John Skinner's *American Farmer*, which contained these statements, made itself the voice of American agricultural societies and Jefferson and John Taylor were its indisputable authorities. In 1820 the journal published a letter from Jefferson,

⁶⁵ 'Address of the vice-president of the Agricultural Society of Prince George's County', *American Farmer* 1, n. 16 (Friday 16 July, 1919), 121.

⁶⁶ 'Remonstrance of the Virginia Agricultural Society of Fredericksburg read in Congress, January 3 1820', *American Farmer*, n. 42 (January 14, 1820), 333.

⁶⁷ See Thomas Cooper, 'Political Arithmetic', in Thomas Cooper, *The Emporium of arts and sciences*, I (Philadelphia: 1813), n. 1, June, 178.

⁶⁸ 'Congressional Report of the Committee on Agriculture, on the Memorial of the Delegates of the United Agricultural Societies of sundry counties in the State of Virginia, February, 2, 1821', *American Farmer* II, n. 50 (March 9, 1821), 394.

in which he argued that the agricultures of countries such as France and Italy ought to be used as examples, because in comparison to England their geography and climate were more similar to those of the United States:

There is probably no better husbandry known at present, than that of England. But that is, for the climate and productions of England. Their books lay for us a foundation of good general principles; but we ought, for their application, to look more than we have done into the practices of countries, and climates, more homogeneous with our own. I speak as a Southern man. The Agriculture of France and Italy is good, and has been better at this time.⁶⁹

This was followed by a list of authors and works for a library of agronomy, which included Fabbroni and Lastri, Duhamel, De Serres and Rozier, alongside Arthur Young, Tull and John Taylor's *Arator*.

John Taylor: agricultural societies at the service of the doctrine of states

In the same issue of the *American Farmer* John Taylor also offered advice on the texts to include in a library of agriculture. He recommended the works of Young, who 'alone seems to me to occupy the station among agriculturists, which Bacon does among philosophers', alongside the memoirs of the Agricultural Society of Philadelphia, Tull, John Sinclair and his own *Arator*:

If the book called *Arator*, should awaken the rising generation to the great interest of our country, its defects will speedily be detected by the superior talents, which a just sense of the subject will bring into activity. Exertion is the mother of improvement, and to have been the cause of exciting one gentleman's determination to give efficacy to his talents is highly gratifying.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ 'Congressional Report of the Committee on Agriculture', vol. II (June 16, 1820), 93. The year after, the newspaper republished a letter from Jefferson from 1788, addressed to Agricultural Society of South Carolina, in which he talked of his observations on the cultivation of olives, capers and figs during a journey to France and Italy, vol. III (7 December 1821), 294-5).

⁷⁰ 'Congressional Report of the Committee on Agriculture', vol. II (June 16, 1820), 93.

The following year Taylor published, again in the *American Farmer* (which served as a mouthpiece for his campaigns) *A Letter on the Necessity of defending the Rights and Interests of Agriculture, addressed to the Delegation of the United Agricultural Societies of Virginia*, in which he pointed out, from a patriotic point of view, the need to coordinate agricultural societies: 'The agricultural interest is, therefore, in this country, a patriot from necessity, and an umpire of the public good of superior integrity to any other interest.'⁷¹ His whole argument fitted into a context of political urgency: he was against the banks, the financial and mercantile powers and the monopolies, all of which took precedence over agricultural interests; he was against the public debt that imposed new taxes and he set the Republican system against despotism.

Published in 1813, the *Arator*, which would be reprinted in eight editions, and which collated the views expressed by Taylor in his correspondence, his articles and public speeches as well as the results of his agricultural experiments, is considered to be the most influential and widely read book on agriculture in the southern states prior to the Civil War. Edmund Ruffin underlined how it 'opened the eyes of many in this part of the country to see that agriculture ought to be and did embrace more than simply cutting down trees, grubbing and ploughing land'.⁷²

'There is a spice of fanaticism in my nature upon two subjects, agriculture and republicanism, which all who set it in motion, are sure to suffer by.'⁷³ Like Jefferson, Franklin and Logan, John Taylor of Caroline County, Virginia, was also an agricultural experimenter and among the greatest American agrarians. He dealt with the impoverishment of southern land which had been exhausted by traditional farming methods.⁷⁴ He also fought for the introduction of crop rotation as an alternative to single-crop agriculture based on tobacco, and he favoured the use of fertilisers and supported the interests of large estates, which were the only ones able to guarantee the investment of capital required for modernisation.

⁷¹ 'Congressional Report of the Committee on Agriculture', vol. III (July 20, 1821), 131.

⁷² *Farmer's Register* II, 12–14.

⁷³ Taylor to Jefferson (March 5, 1795), cited in Craven, 'The agriculturists reformers', 305.

⁷⁴ See William D. Grampp, 'John Taylor: Economist of Southern Agrarianism', *The Southern Economic Journal* XI, n. 3 (January 1945), 255–68; Duncan MacLeod, 'The Political Economy of John Taylor of Caroline', *Journal of American Studies* XIV, n. 3 (December 1980), 387–405.

Taylor was also one of the ideologists of American agrarian democracy and an important interlocutor of Jefferson because of his outstanding ability as a theorist of the doctrine of the States and the interests of the South. This was despite later ending up taking refuge in the positions of the Old Republicans, like a 'prophet of secession',⁷⁵ when faced with the more balanced and conciliatory economic policies of the Jeffersonian presidencies.⁷⁶ Taylor's commitment to an agrarian economy and his work within the agricultural societies thus serve as an example when placed in the context of the vociferous calls for power to be exercised at a local level.

He was a member of the Philadelphia Society and of the Richmond Agricultural Society, becoming president of the latter in 1817, and was also president of the Virginia Agricultural Society and an associate correspondent with many others. He was active in the introduction of English techniques to the United States, but was nevertheless conscious of America's specific circumstances, which made clear 'the incongruity of English books upon Agriculture, with the climates, soils and habits of the United States. This incongruity, by drawing ridicule upon imitators, too often extinguishes a patriotic ardor, and checks instead of advancing improvements.'⁷⁷

The specific nature of America also related to its particular political context and the agriculture–republic relationship. The reduction in the fertility of American agriculture was not only due to a lack of improvements, but mainly to the protectionist measures of Hamilton's policies and the English model, in the name of which the encouragement of manufacture appeared to be a mere pretext for creating a 'monied interest, aristocracy or despot'.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Cfr. W. E. Dodd, 'John Taylor of Caroline, Prophet of Secession', *John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College* II (June 1908), 214–353.

⁷⁶ See Henry H. Simms, *Life of John Taylor: The Story of a Brilliant Leader in the Early Virginia State Rights School* (Richmond: W. Byrd 1932); Bernard Drell, 'John Taylor of Caroline and the preservation of an old social order', *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* XLVI, n. 4, (October 1938), 285–98; Dauer Manning, Hans Hammond, 'John Taylor: Democrat or Aristocrat?', *The Journal of Politics* VI, n. 4 (November 1944), 381–403; William C. Jr. Hill, *The Political Theory of John Taylor of Caroline* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1977). Taylor applauded Jefferson's arrival to the Presidency and carried on his support for the purchase of Louisiana, in the name of the relationship between agriculture and freedom (John Taylor, *A Defence of the Measures of the Administration of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington: H. Smith, 1804)).

⁷⁷ John Taylor, *Arator; being a series of agricultural essays, practical and political; in sixty one numbers*, (Georgetown: J. M. and J. B. Carter 1813), 4.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Arator*, 18–19 (in the 1813 edition).

Taylor began his campaigns against Hamilton and his economic policy at the beginning of the 1790s, with a series of incendiary pamphlets attacking the banks, the public debt, financial interests and fiscal politics.⁷⁹ He made use of the British country tradition as a political lexicon with which to oppose the Federalist plans which were made at the expense of the South. In 1794 he began to write, in response to *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* by John Adams, his *An Inquiry into the Principles and Policy of the Government of the United States*, which he completed in 1814. The key point of this work was that Americans differed from the English in that they did not conflate nation with government, and the book took up the positions he had expressed in the 1790s. His ideas, which did not undergo significant change in their defence of agriculture and the interests of the states, therefore still belong to the revolutionary, political and economic culture of the eighteenth century.⁸⁰ His agricultural work in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and his elaboration of the doctrine of the states thus call for a reassessment of the constructive phase of his thinking, as distinct from the attacks that he launched during the last decade of the eighteenth century.⁸¹

His work as a man of the South and a rich plantation owner – in an era in which the export of grains to Europe was collapsing, right up to his death in 1826 – linked to the conservation of the values of an agrarian society of powerful landowners, distinguishes him from Jefferson and Logan's radicalism. Viewed from any perspective, his belief in the unity of popular sovereignty, within which the decentralised exercise of state powers represented an alternative to the English tradition of the balance of powers, alongside his anti-statism, his fight against privilege and the rejection of a natural and moneyed aristocracy made him a theorist of American agrarian democracy.

Agriculture and republican freedom coincided in his vision of the nation as an entity both physical and moral, and in which the government ought to be subordinate to the economy. The political context in

⁷⁹ See among others, *A definition of Parties, or the Political Effects of the Paper System Considered* (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey 1794); *An Enquiry into the Principles and the Tendency of certain Public Measures*, (Philadelphia: Dobson 1794); *An Argument Respecting the Constitutionality of the Carriage Tax* (Richmond: A. Davis 1795).

⁸⁰ See Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a party ideology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1978).

⁸¹ After years of little historiographical interest in his person, the cited article by MacLeod revised the characterisation of John Taylor as an obstinate querelant.

which agricultural societies could operate was therefore important: 'The plough can have little success, until the laws are altered which obstruct it. Societies for improving the breed of sheep or the form of ploughs, will be as likely to produce a good system of agriculture, under depressing laws, as societies for improving the English form of government under their depressing system of corruption.'⁸²

Taylor's two main works, the *Arator* and the *Enquiry*, which made him famous, complemented one another: 'Arator is chiefly confined to agriculture, but it contains a few political observations. The Enquiry, to politics; but it labours to explain the true interest of the agricultural class. The affinity between the subjects caused them to be intermingled.'⁸³

Despite the fact that his later works were published in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Taylor did not fit in with the majority of American economic authors such as Daniel Raymond, McVickar, Thomas Cooper, George Tucker and Jacob Cardozo, whose ideas were stimulated by the publication in America of Ricardo's *Principles* in 1819. His was still the economic culture of a long eighteenth century. He read the physiocrats, which he used to criticise Smith and his fiscal theories that called for tax to be put on income rather than on land. While he could not be considered, like Logan, a follower of physiocracy, from which he differed on essential theoretical questions such as on the theory of value and land rent, Taylor came close to the physiocratic tradition, which reached him via the evolution of Jean-Baptiste Say's economic reflections (the American edition was published in 1821 after Jefferson had applied strong pressure), and through Malthus, and he shared the idea of land as the source of wealth.

In *Tyranny Unmasked*, written in 1822 as an attack on protectionist tariffs, he returned once more to his fundamental views, which had remained unchanged:

Intricate as the science of political economy has been rendered the artificers of exclusive privileges, it yet contains some principles undeniable, as to explode the whole mass of partial and perplexed calculations, used to conceal or evade them. Among these principles the most important is, that land is the only, or at least, the most permanent source of profit; and its successful cultivation the

⁸² John Taylor, *Arator; being a series of agricultural essays, practical and political; in sixty-four numbers* (Petersburg: 1818), 42.

⁸³ Taylor, *Arator*, IV (in the 1818 edition).

best encourager of all other occupations, and the best security for national prosperity.⁸⁴

Taylor shared certain criticisms of Malthus with Jefferson and many other Americans, who felt that his arguments had been modelled on European realities and therefore were not valid for America given its abundant land, but he did recognise the value of Malthus's work and called him 'the ablest of the English economists. He vindicated to a great extent the doctrines of Adam Smith.' Taylor also drew heavily from Malthus, whose thought was indebted to physiocracy, in order to oppose arguments against American taxation policies:

He observes, that the fertility of land, either natural or acquired, may be said to be the only source of permanently high returns of capital. In the earlier periods of history, monopolies of commerce and manufactures produced brilliant effects, but in modern Europe there is no possibility of large permanent returns being received from any other capitals, than those employed on land.⁸⁵

A development project based on agriculture and economic freedom was the way that the United States had to follow because of its unique qualities, and was an alternative to the English way: 'because a system is practicable in England, it does not follow that it is practicable here. That which is allowable for the ends of sustaining a monarchy or an aristocracy, may be tyrannical in a republic.'⁸⁶

Agricultural societies were thus at the heart of an economic and political project for the local practice of democracy and the realisation of the agrarian liberalism which exhibited the Republican ideology championed by an economic and intellectual elite. Taylor, with his practical commitment and his political philosophy, represented the interests of these in so far as they found expression in the South.

⁸⁴ John Taylor, *Tyranny Unmasked*, ed. F. Thornton Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1992), 157. This work was an answer to the measures taken in 1816 after the 1812 War, to protect nascent American industries from cheaper English goods.

⁸⁵ Taylor, *Tyranny Unmasked*, 160. See also G. J. Cady, 'The early American reaction to the theory of Malthus', *Journal of Political Economy* XXXIX (1931), 601–32; J. J. Spengler, 'Malthusianism in the Late Eighteenth Century America', *American Economic Review* XXV (1935), 697–707; D. R. McCoy, 'Jefferson and Madison on Malthus: Population Growth in Jeffersonian Political Economy', *The Virginia Magazine* LXXXVIII (July 1980), 259–76.

⁸⁶ McCoy, 'Jefferson and Madison on Malthus', 166.

In this way, during a period spanning almost half a century and with a national and international context of profound political and economic transformation, American agricultural societies drew strength from the European economic culture of the long eighteenth century. Modelling themselves on similar institutions that had arisen in various European countries, they were the answer to the need to support agricultural progress and the diffusion of knowledge, in the Enlightenment awareness that economics were a science, whose goal was the betterment of the material conditions of life.

Like other European economic societies, these responded to the context to which they belonged and which gave them their unique qualities. The dynamic between the states and national government produced revealing experiences of the relationship between local elites and central power. In the context of the creation of a joint market, the agricultural societies, notwithstanding their different situations, had similar characteristics in the North and South.

They came to assume strong political significance within the development projects that led Jefferson's Republicans to oppose Hamilton's Federalists. English agriculture and agrarian literature were essential reference points. At the same time, French economic culture, and physiocracy in particular, with its theoretic rigour and its agrarian model, contributed to a growing awareness of American national identity in opposition Great Britain. In the setting of eighteenth-century revolutionary events, which had given birth to a new state, the American agricultural societies epitomised a period of Republican consensus and the consolidating of the new national reality.

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