

Migration networks and the early socialistic movement in Amsterdam, a case study

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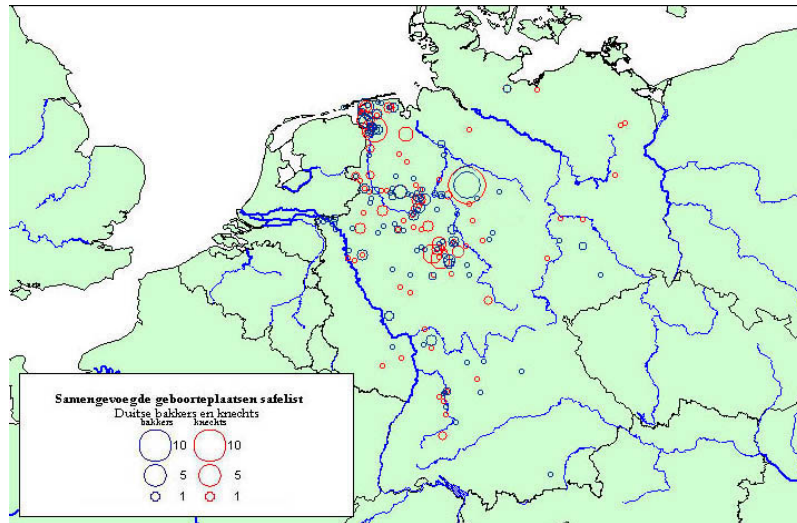
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Within the larger view of migration in nineteenth century's Europe, my thesis deals with Germans migrating to Amsterdam in the period 1849-1853. This was the period immediately after the revolutionary year 1848. Amsterdam, in this period, was part of a European network of cities where revolutionary, early-communistic ideas circulated. They were carried mainly by skilled German handworkers servants (*handwerkersgesellen*) since they had a very old tradition of leaving their homelands for a shorter or longer time to get experience in their craft working abroad. In this way my subject combines a closer look at migration patterns with a piece of history of ideas or political history.

The core question of my thesis is related to earlier research about the history of the socialistic movement in Amsterdam by the Dutch historian Dennis Bos. He describes how a network of communists in Amsterdam was organized and how they facilitated migration for their like-minded, especially German handworkers. Migration networks played an important role in the early socialistic movement. His research, however, raises further questions that he leaves unanswered. Bos' investigation took the socialistic movement as a starting point, but *what role did the socialistic movement and their networks play in an international European migration network that spread out from a German homeland to several European capitals, including Amsterdam?* In the broader view of migration networks, there were more incentives and possibilities to migrate. The number of handworkers migrating within the network of the communistic movement, and what part of the bulk of German handworkers migrating to Amsterdam they constituted, are questions that remains unanswered.

It may be clear that information about migration networks can only be found in very detailed sources. The municipal archives of Amsterdam constitute such a source. The system of registering in the Netherlands was very structured and detailed. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, the movements of every citizen were dynamically recorded (*Bevolkingsregister/Population Register*). Strangers needed visa, to be obtained by the police and migrants with at least the intention to stay for a longer time were added to the municipal register. These registers remain well-preserved and can be found and consulted in the municipal archives. Parts of the register, especially the above-mentioned period between 1848 and 1853 are now digitally accessible. This allows systematic quantitative research about migration patterns. The register recorded not only the name of the immigrant, his birth date, place of birth, religion and the date of his arrival, but also his address in Amsterdam and the same details for his host. In this way we can trace where migrants came from, and with whom they lived (what circuit they accessed) in Amsterdam.

Previous research, using the possibilities of the municipal registers was conducted by Marlou Schrover in Utrecht and by Leo Lucassen and others in Rotterdam. Amsterdam remains a fairly unexplored field. I personally already conducted a small research in these archives concerning especially the migration patterns of German bakers and bakery servants. The figure below shows one of the results of the research: their respective German places of birth:



The aim of my thesis-research is to open up original sources that have rarely been used before and that can give us a good idea about the migration patterns in the nineteenth century between the German states and Amsterdam. The research will focus on a well-defined group of German tailors and shoemakers and their servants (*gesellen*), as these two professions were disproportionately often to be found in the early communistic movement in Amsterdam. The municipal registers allow on the one hand conducting systematic quantitative research for this group that should determine their place in the bulk of migrants moving to Amsterdam in the nineteenth century. More qualitative research on the other hand is possible, taking German clubs and associations in Amsterdam as its starting point to show what the place of the communistic movement was in the whole of factors and facilitators of workers migration.

1848, the year of the revolution and the middle of the nineteenth century in general are a very interesting period of transit, as is our own time in many ways. A true understanding of this period is impossible without a good understanding of migration. And finally a better understanding of its importance and historical parallels can change our vision today on migration issues.