

Modelling the Future

Occupational and Marital Choices of an Early Modern Antwerp Family Facing Crisis

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Abstract

In the early modern period, the city of Antwerp faced serious economic challenges. At least some of its resident families looked for new opportunities in other occupational sectors. To this end, they had various (intermingled) mechanisms at their disposal, such as apprenticeships, marital alliances, neighbourhood ties, cultural affiliations, applying for public offices, etc. While current research mostly examines these tactics separately, this article will use an integrated approach for one well-documented family, the Boons.

Keywords: apprenticeship, family networks, human capital, marital alliances, social mobility

1 Introduction

In recent years, the merits of the concept of ‘strategy’ have been questioned, as it is often impossible to speak in terms of a conscious and long-term planning process underlying behaviour of individuals, let alone families, in the past.¹ Some of the critics have therefore suggested to use the

¹ P.P. Viazzo and K.A. Lynch, ‘Anthropology, family history, and the concept of strategy’, *International Review of Social History* (further *IRSH*) 47 (2002) 423-452; T. Engelen, ‘Labour strategies of families: a critical assessment of an appealing concept’, *IRSH* 47 (2002) 453-464; J. Kok, ‘The challenge of strategy: a comment’, *IRSH* 47 (2002) 465-485; C. Dolan, ‘Anachronisms or failures? Family strategies in the sixteenth century, as drawn from collective biographies of solicitors in Aix-en-Provence’, *Journal of Family History* 33/3 (2008) 291-303; J. Marttila, ‘Beyond the family and the household: occupational family networks’, *Journal of Family History* 35/2 (2010) 128-146, 129-130.

less pretentious term of 'tactics' to indicate short-term adaptations to changing circumstances.² Nevertheless, the strategy concept still has some value, but as Jan Kok rightfully points out, 'studies that broaden our knowledge of families' adaptations are sorely needed'.³ Accordingly, this article wants to focus on the multi-layered reaction of the wealthy Antwerp Boon family to the changing economic lay-out of the Scheldt city in the early modern period.⁴

Especially on a family level, strategies are extremely complex, as tensions might have existed between the relatives and individual preferences may have conflicted with the interests of the family or the will of the *pater familias*.⁵ Since Philippe Ariès published his much discussed and much criticized book *L'enfant et la vie familiale* on the absence of a concept of childhood before the seventeenth century, historians' assessment of parenting has alternated between condemnations and a less deprecatory position, with some even suggesting continuity in caring.⁶ Recent perspectives involve the view of reciprocity, according to which parents invest (in both material and emotional ways) in their offspring, but also receive something in return (in terms of assistance or prestige).⁷ The merit of such an approach is the focus on both economic and cultural elements when analysing the interaction between generations.

Nonetheless, much current historiographical research on family life tends to overlook the multi-dimensional nature of motives. Some authors focus on the role of marriages and kinship ties,⁸ others on schooling and

2 Viazzo and Lynch, 'Anthropology', 451; Kok, 'The challenge', 465.

3 Kok, 'The challenge', 485.

4 K. Degryse, 'De Antwerpse fortuinen: kapitaalaccumulatie, -investering en -rendement te Antwerpen in de 18^{de} eeuw', *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* 88/1-4 (2005) 24: family fortune between 250.000 and 600.000 guilders.

5 Viazzo and Lynch, 'Anthropology', 451-452; Engelen, 'Labour strategies', 463; Kok, 'The challenge', 466; K. Hareven, 'The history of the family and the complexity of social change', *The American Historical Review* 96/1 (1991) 95-124, 117-119.

6 J. Humphries, *Childhood and child labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge 2010) 32 and 128; for an overview by B.J. Roberts: <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Gr-Im/History-of-Childhood.html>; R. Dekker, *Uit de schaduw in 't grote licht: kinderen in egodocumenten van de Gouden Eeuw tot de Romantiek* (Amsterdam 1995) 11-13; L.A. Pollock, *Forgotten children: parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge 1983).

7 I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal bonding: parents and their offspring in early modern England', *Journal of Family History* 25/3 (2000) 291-312.

8 Classic studies are M. Mitterauer and R. Sieder, *The European family: patriarchy to partnership from the Middle Ages to the present* (Oxford 1982); J. Goody, *The development of the family and marriage in Europe* (Cambridge 1983).

training and the impact of birth planning and birth order,⁹ still others on occupational mobility and the role of the guilds.¹⁰ All these approaches have merits, but they often miss a great deal of the complexity of strategies. Research has shown for example that a focus on direct occupational continuity (from father to son) is to be complemented by the passing-on and exercising of the same trade by 'in-laws' (through marital alliances with members of the same profession, or even of related occupations).¹¹ Or else, while economic historians recently focus on the alleged inversely proportional relationship between the number of children and the quality of their education and training,¹² empirical studies tend to generate mixed results and to overlook the distribution of educational investments between offspring based on aptitudes and interests.¹³

Most authors rightfully believe that romantic love was given little consideration in marriage and that the choice of a spouse was in the first place determined by the family's business interests and the continuation of the lineage.¹⁴ But all too often exclusive primacy is now given to economic motives, notwithstanding the fact that decisions may not all be rational in an economic sense.¹⁵ Besides marriage alliances and occupational continuity, cohesion within the kinship network was, for instance, also created

9 G. Becker, 'An economic analysis of fertility', in: *Demographic and economic change in developed countries* (Chicago 1960) 209-240; M. Klemp and J. Weisdorf, *The child quantity-quality trade-off during the Industrial Revolution in England* (working paper University of Copenhagen 2011); M. Klemp, C. Minns, P. Wallis and J. Weisdorf, 'Picking winners? The effect of birth order and migration on parental human capital investments in pre-modern England', *European Review of Economic History* 17/2 (2013) 210-232.

10 E.g., G. Crossick and H.-G. Haupt, *The petite bourgeoisie in Europe 1780-1914: enterprise, family and independence* (London 1998) 88; B. De Munck, *Technologies of learning: apprenticeship in Antwerp guilds from the 15th century to the end of the ancient régime* (Turnhout 2007), chapter 3 and 4 (with additional references).

11 S. Cerutti, *La ville et les métiers: naissance d'un langage corporatif (Turin, 17^e-18^e siècle)* (Paris 1990) 100; S. Cavallo, *Artisans of the body in early modern Italy: identities, families and masculinities* (Manchester/New York 2007) 112-121; E. Burm and B. De Munck, 'Het broodje gebakken? Huwelijksstrategieën en partnerkeuze van de bakkers(kinderen) te Brussel in de overgang van het Ancien Régime naar de negentiende eeuw', *Stadsgeschiedenis* 5/2 (2010) 148-168, 167.

12 Becker, 'An economic analysis', 209-240; Klemp and Weisdorf, *The child quantity-quality trade-off*.

13 Klemp, Minns, Wallis and Weisdorf, 'Picking winners?', 210-232.

14 Burm and De Munck, 'Het broodje gebakken?', 168; Mitterauer and Sieder, *The European family*, 122; P.G. Hoftijzer, 'De houding van de Moretussen en de van Ravelingens tegenover het Plantijnse erfgoed', in: M. de Schepper and F. de Nave (eds.), *Ex officina Plantiniana Moretorum: studies over het drukkersgeslacht Moretus* (Antwerp 1996) 41-58, 42; S.L. Kaplan, *Le meilleur pain du monde: les boulangers de Paris au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris 1996) 325 and 359.

15 Kok, 'The challenge', 473.

through neighbourhood ties and associational affiliations.¹⁶ Nor can abstraction be made of the historical context. Mutual exchanges between parents and their offspring cannot be adequately understood when leaving out broader demographic, cultural and economic structures.¹⁷ Hence the need for an integrated approach with due attention to contextualisation.

By means of a thorough analysis of various and very distinct sources (including accounts of guardians, probate inventories, business and family archives from the Chamber of Insolvent Estates, wills, litigations, etc.) regarding the wealthy Antwerp Boon family and their close relatives, this article wants 1° to illustrate the need for a multi-layered and integrated approach including various (intermingled) tactics (marital alliances, training paths, and socio-cultural affiliations) and various perspectives (economic as well as socio-cultural), and 2° ask for more attention for the historical context. It is common knowledge that the city of Antwerp, one of the sixteenth-century centres of world trade, experienced profound transformations in the course of the early modern period. Although Antwerp recovered rather quickly from the late sixteenth-century war crisis, the times definitely changed during the 1640s, resulting in an economic regression at the turn of the century.¹⁸ How the city's inhabitants were affected by and responded to the shift from a European metropolis to a mere regional service centre, however, remains unclear. After all, external constraints, such as stagnation and, even more so, regression, invite people to adapt their preferences.

The focus on no more than one case enables me to follow the Boon family over several generations and to analyse the decisions of the different family members thoroughly and in an integrated way, including economic as well as non-economic motives.¹⁹ To overcome the mere descriptive, I will intensively contextualize their choices. Each one of the following paragraphs represents a new stage in the Boons' family history: the move from the water-based guild milieu, over the luxury trades, to the academic world and public life, a successful and almost model-like adaptation process to the challenges and opportunities of the Antwerp context. The fifth and

16 Cavallo, *Artisans*, 117; B. Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage in het zeventiende-eeuwse Antwerpen* (Amsterdam 2008) 38 and 51; Burm and De Munck, 'Het broodje gebakken?', 168; K.A. Lynch, *Individuals, families, and communities in Europe, 1200-1800: the urban foundations of Western society* (Cambridge 2003).

17 Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal bonding', 305.

18 R. Baetens, *De nazomer van Antwerpens welvaart: de diaspora en het handelshuis De Grootte tijdens de eerste helft der 17^{de} eeuw* (Brussels 1976) 51-52.

19 Kok, 'The challenge', 482; Hareven, 'The history', 115-117.

final chapter (before the conclusions) will take a closer look at the impact of occupational changes on residential and associational bonds and vice versa. For a better understanding of the sometimes complex kinship ties, a detailed family tree is included in appendix to this article.

2 Once a fishmonger, always a fishmonger?

On 16 July 1579, the day of his death, fishmonger and ship owner Cornelis Boon had been married four times and had fathered four children.²⁰ Shortly afterwards, his daughter Anna died as well.²¹ As to the further life of the surviving children (Elisabeth, Michiel and Adriaan), extant sources of the Antwerp Orphan Chamber, a civil court charged with supervising the inheritance management of legal guardians, allow for a partial reconstruction.²²

Eldest son Michiel Boon (°1561/2) inherited his father's fish bench, which made him part of the minority (ten percent) of Antwerp fishmongers who took over the bench from a relative.²³ Royal tax payments, guild contributions, and the purchase of a fish knife and of a table to put in front of the fish bench, indicate that he effectively performed this profession.²⁴ Apparently, he was quite successful at his job, as his fish bench yielded 184 carolus guilders in 1584, while his total expenses were limited to just over 121 guilders.²⁵ Over 27 years of age, Michiel married Anna Sammels, with whom he might have become acquainted during his stay with his half-sister Elisabeth and her husband Kerstiaan Sammels.²⁶ The

20 City Archives Antwerp (further CAA), WK#16, n°38 F°673r-688r, probate inventory of Cornelis Boon.

21 She died somewhere between 1579 and 1584. CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584).

22 R. Boumans, *Het Antwerps stadsbestuur voor en tijdens de Franse overheersing: bijdrage tot de ontwikkelingsgeschiedenis van de stedelijke bestuursinstellingen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden* (Bruges 1965), 148-149; F. Prims, *Antwerpiensia 1936: Losse bijdragen tot de Antwerpsche geschiedenis* (Antwerp 1937), 139-140; CAA, PK#1453; P. Godding, 'Le contrôle des tutelles par le Magistrat urbain dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux', in: *Het openbaar initiatief van de gemeenten in België: historische grondslagen (ancien régime)* (Brussels 1984) 557-568.

23 CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584); B. Willems, *Leven op de pof: krediet bij de Antwerpse middenstand in de achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 2009) 141.

24 CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584); CAA, WK#103, n°42, account children Cornelis Boon (22 August 1589); Willems, *Leven*, 140-141.

25 CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584).

26 J. Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', *Antwerps Archievenblad* 5 (1930) 5-11; CAA, WK#103, n°42, account children Cornelis Boon (22 August 1589).

involvement of romantic love cannot be excluded, but the marriage in any case helped to consolidate his grip on the fish trade. Similar to the Boon family, the Sammelses were engaged in the fish trade, selling herring and stockfish.²⁷ Moreover, members of both families (including Guillaume Sammels, his son Hendrick Sammels and Michiel Boon) and Michiel's master Alexander Bouwens (a brother-in-law of Hendrick Sammels) made an additional income by collecting taxes on the sale of oxen and other livestock.²⁸ The work was rather poorly paid according to contemporary sources and might have offered little attraction in that perspective.²⁹ Its charm was probably more in the professional connections and social status involved. Clearly, the death of both his parents did not prevent Michiel Boon from successfully integrating in the urban society.

The same holds true for his younger brother, Adriaan. As Michiel Boon inherited his father's business, last-born Adriaan had to make a living otherwise. Ownership of a fish bench was an important prerequisite for being a fish master and difficult to obtain without the necessary financial assets.³⁰ However, Cornelis did not want to favour his eldest son, which suggests that his investment in his children went beyond adherence to kin and lineage.³¹ Both Adriaan and his sister Anna were compensated with 300 guilders each and an interest of 37 guilders and 10 pennies a year.³² Adriaan seems to have been trained as a sail maker. He boarded for some time (June 1583 - June 1584) with sail maker Peter Diericxsen. And when he returned from Spain and fell ill in Middelburg (probably in 1585), Ghysbrecht 'the sail maker' lodged and looked after him, indicating that they were already acquainted or that Adriaan had good connections within sail maker circles. Adriaan's many journeys (to Spain, Middelburg, Hamburg, Dunkirk, Calais) suggest that he operated as an international merchant.³³ Clearly, as with the Italian 'artisans of the body' studied by Sandra Cavallo, within Antwerp families too, there existed a tendency to form kinship relations within a restricted range of occupations.³⁴ In this case, not the

27 CAA, WK#319, n°5 f°267r-304v, probate inventory of Cornelia Sammels (11 September 1607), f° 274v article 24.

28 CAA, 7#5201; CAA, 7#11798; CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584).

29 CAA, 7#11798.

30 Willems, *Leven*, 141-142.

31 Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal bonding', 293.

32 CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584).

33 CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584); CAA, WK#103, n°42, account children Cornelis Boon (22 August 1589).

34 Cavallo, *Artisans*, 71 and 75.

'body' but 'water' was the common denominator. Adriaan was probably called in to assist his brother Michiel in the family business. As Adriaan travelled to and fro a lot, he could have operated as an informant for Michiel. Acquainted with people in Middelburg, he might have had access to a trade network within one of the most important commercial port cities in the Netherlands at the time.³⁵



Illustration 1. "De oude vismarkt te Antwerpen" by Adriaan van Utrecht, Maarten Peypjn, Frans Snijders and Jan Boeckhorst. Beeldbank van de Musea Stad Antwerpen, RH.S.004

Photo: © Lowie De Peuter

The union of Michiel Boon and Anna Sammels turned out to be very fertile. They raised (at least) seven children.³⁶ In contrast to the alleged guild tradition, eldest son Christiaan Boon (°1596) did not become a fishmonger like his father.³⁷ Little is known about him, but he seems to have operated as a merchant and in any case knew how to read, write and count (as he

35 K. Heyning, 'Naar Antwerpen en weer terug: Zeeuwse kooplieden en de Antwerpse luxenijverheid in de zeventiende eeuw', in: J. Parmentier (ed.), *Noord-Zuid in Oost-Indisch perspectief* (Zutphen 2005) 43-58.

36 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11; CAA, WK#741, f°11-78v, account children Adriaen Ballincx, f°9v article 10; CAA, IB#2275, accounts of guardian Christiaan Boon; G. Van Hemeldonck, *Het Grootwerk*, Jan Gillis I.

37 De Munck, *Technologies*, 188 and 212.

kept many orphan accounts).³⁸ There is a fair chance he traded in wood, as his wife was the widow of a wood merchant and remarriages with near relations of the first spouse were common in order to maintain an already existing network of relations.³⁹ Moreover, wood was of course important to the construction of fishing vessels and therefore crucial to the fish business of the Boon family. But why not let one of the younger sons look after the trading, as Cornelis Boon did with Adriaan Boon one generation earlier? Did father Michiel Boon I maybe consider such a career superior to his own job, or more valuable to the family firm? Or did one of his younger sons feel more for the fish business, like in the printer's milieu of the *Officina Plantiniana*?⁴⁰

Whatever the case may be, second-born Michiel Boon II (c.1606) followed in the occupational footsteps of his father and became a fishmonger as well. Second choice or not, Michiel junior's career turned out to be very successful as he was in charge of a large fish company, specialized in herring, and ended up as a dean of the guild.⁴¹ But here too, marriage mattered. From a professional point of view, his alliance with the daughter of a shipmaster-merchant, Joanna Danys, fits perfectly. A shared business interest seems to have motivated the wedding. Michiel acted in partnership with his father-in-law for the sale of salt, important for the pickling of fish.⁴² Establishing business associations with relatives was not at all unusual.⁴³ Through personal affiliations and especially by means of a marriage, merchants lowered the risks of payment default and other problems regarding the delivery of products.⁴⁴ After all, it all ran in the family. In contrast to what one might expect, the guild elite was not bound by endogamy. Simona Cerutti already noted that in Turin at the beginning of the

38 CAA, N#161, probate inventory Maria Galle (6 March 1692); E. Duverger, *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen uit de zeventiende eeuw: 1690-1699* (Brussels 2002) 170-171.

39 A. Fauve-Chamoux, 'Marriage, widowhood, and divorce', in: D.I. Kertzer and M. Barbagli (eds.), *The history of the European family: family life in early modern times 1500-1789* (New Haven/London 2001) 221-256, 236; Burm and De Munck, 'Het broodje gebakken?', 162-165.

40 L. Voet, 'Het geslacht Moretus en de Plantijnse drukkerij', in: M. de Schepper and F. de Nave (eds.), *Ex officina Plantiniana Moretorum: studies over het drukkersgeslacht Moretus* (Antwerp 1996) 9-32, 15.

41 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5; CAA, LZ10, inventory "De insolvente boedelskamer 15^{de} eeuw – ca. 1830", 146.

42 CAA, IB#2280, marriage inventory of Gerard Danys, article 56.

43 Cavallo, *Artisans*, 120.

44 Timmermans, *Patronen*, 50.

eighteenth century, alliances between tailors and silk merchants or cloth traders were far more popular than intra-craft relationships.⁴⁵ Something similar seems to apply to seventeenth-century Antwerp.

After Joanna died in 1640, Michiel remarried with Anna Wellens, daughter of cloth seller Anna De Ram.⁴⁶ Jan De Ram, a relative of Anna, was a well-known merchant-alderman. He had been church warden of the cathedral and head of the prestigious Praise to Our Lady guild, and was known for his leading role within a group of Antwerp benefactors. An association with such a big name might have served Michiel's personal prestige and offered prospects of a political career.⁴⁷ Once again, 'guild loyalty' (in the possible form of an intra-guild marriage) came second to commercial and political aspirations. When Michiel Boon died in 1654, his widow Anna Wellens remarried with Jan Melyn, dean of the shipmasters.⁴⁸ Apparently, the cloth trading Wellens family wanted to invest in overseas connections by affiliating themselves with people in water-based trades. In addition, an association with the dean of the shipmasters – having a seat in some of the city board councils – made it possible to influence (economically important) political decisions at a local level and might even have supported political aspirations.⁴⁹

In fact, Michiel Boon was not the only one to marry a Wellens. His younger⁵⁰ brother Guilliam was joined in matrimony with Anna's (only surviving) full sister Catharina. From their mother, the Wellens sisters received 6000 guilders each as a dowry and both collected 600 guilders for clothes. Anna De Ram explicitly stated in her will of 1653 that her other (unmarried) children would receive the same amounts of money as a pre-legate.⁵¹ Not unlike Cornelis Boon, Anna De Ram did not want to

45 S. Cerutti, 'Group strategies and trade strategies: the Turin tailors' guild in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', in: S. Woolf (ed.), *Domestic strategies: work and family in France and Italy 1600-1800* (Cambridge 1991) 102-147, 122-125.

46 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 7; CAA, 7#9979, will of Anna De Ram (4 October 1653).

47 Timmermans, *Patronen*, 129 and 50.

48 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 7; F.H. Mertens and K.L. Torfs, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen sedert de stichting der stad tot onze tyden V* (Antwerp 1975-1977), 479.

49 Timmermans, *Patronen*, 83.

50 When his mother died in 1634, he still needed a guardian, in contrast to his brothers, indicating that he was still a minor and his brothers were not. Moreover, he died in 1679, long after his brothers Christiaan and Michiel.

51 CAA, 7#9979, will of Anna De Ram (4 October 1653).

favour one of her children. Also very similarly, she appointed her eldest son Cornelis Van Bergen as her occupational heir, leaving him the shop etc.⁵² From Guiliam Boon's perspective, being the head of the prestigious cloth dressers, a marital alliance with the cloth-trading Wellenses and their half-blood Van Bergen brothers and sister made perfect sense.⁵³

In short, marrying sons and daughters off to other well-off (relatives of) members of the same guild or of related trades (in this specific case all water-based or cloth-related) was a frequently used way of creating commercially interesting alliances among a craft guild elite with a nose for business. Moreover, if one son (usually the firstborn, sometimes the second one) was to take over the already established family business (often on the explicit request of his father or mother), parents, who were clearly not solely concerned for transmission in the male kin line, made sure their other children received some sort of compensation (mostly expressed in monetary terms).⁵⁴ The latter could then be trained in related crafts or trades, adding their newly acquired skills and network contacts to the family's. Hence one needs to consider these complementarities when studying household behaviour. Of course, it is hard to imagine that everything ran always as smoothly as it did with the Boons. An egalitarian approach to inheritance may have failed to eradicate sibling rivalry over the family resources.⁵⁵ What if a brother(-in-law) decided to work on his own account and started a competing business? Were there any precautions taken during the training trajectories of younger siblings, or exclusivity contracts drawn up, such as within the Dutch Blussé publishing house?⁵⁶ Another matter of interest is why firstborn sons apparently not always inherited the family business. Did parents perhaps consider their children's talents and interests as seems to have been the case among the middling sorts in pre-modern England?⁵⁷

52 CAA, 7#9979, will of Anna De Ram (4 October 1653); CAA, 7#9964, probate inventory of Anna De Ram, first profit chapter article 7; CAA, 7#12888, order prohibiting Joanna Van Bergen the continuation of her brother Cornelis Van Bergen's cloth trade (14 January 1679).

53 F.H. Mertens and K.L. Torfs, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen sedert de stichting der stad tot onze tyden V* (Antwerp 1975-1977) 479;

http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_ver025193901_01/_ver025193901_01_0002.php.

54 Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal bonding', 293.

55 Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal bonding', 304.

56 A. Baggerman, *Publishing policies and family strategies: the fortunes of a Dutch publishing house in the 18th and early 19th centuries* (Leiden/Boston 2014) 388-389.

57 Klemp, Minns, Wallis and Weisdorf, 'Picking winners?', 210-232.

3 Trading luxuries is booming business

To be sure, families did not stay in the same business forever. They were forced to adapt their tactics whenever economic conditions changed. In the course of the seventeenth century, the city of Antwerp experienced some profound changes. In the wake of the crisis in the last decades of the sixteenth century, the luxury industries first profited from the great interest in art to decorate churches and chapels, under impulse of the Counter Reformation. Merchants came to realize that trading expensive, up-market luxury products was a way to overcome the relatively high wages, transaction costs and taxes. The fact that they could rely on their emigrated relatives and affiliates abroad, was an additional advantage.⁵⁸ In the fourth decade of the seventeenth century, the sale and production of luxuries for the local market started sputtering. As fortunes could still be made in trading with the Iberian Peninsula, various Antwerp firms converted to this kind of commercial activities in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁵⁹ So did the Boons. The next generation of this well-off Antwerp family and their close relatives would focus more on luxury branches and increasingly so on the international trade with Spain. The first steps in this direction were taken by Diorina Boon. On the tenth of January 1636, she married Joannes Gillis, member of the gold and silver-smiths' guild and agate cutter. Not only the sons of the happy couple, but also their nephews, Michiel Ballinckx, Gerard Boon, Peter Melyn and Cornelis Boon, jumped on the train of the luxury crafts and trades.

The careers of Michiel Ballinckx and Gerard Boon show that education was key to such a sector switch. On 25 August 1638, Michiel Ballinckx, nearly aged thirteen, only son of late Anna Boon and late carpenter Adriaan Ballinckx,⁶⁰ was apprenticed by his uncle and legal guardian Christiaan Boon, to his uncle Joannes Gillis, master goldsmith and dean of the guild of gold and silversmiths,⁶¹ to learn his trade for seven years and

58 Timmermans, *Patronen*, 40; Baetens, *De nazomer*, 111; A. Thijs, 'De nijverheid', in: *Antwerpen in de XVIIde eeuw* (Antwerp 1989) 131-151, 134; H. Van Der Wee and J. Materné, 'De Antwerpse wereldmarkt tijdens de 16de en 17de eeuw', in: J. Van der Stock (ed.), *Antwerpen, verhaal van een metropool, 16de-17de eeuw* (Ghent 1993) 19-31, 26-27.

59 Timmermans, *Patronen*, 44; B. Blondé, *Een economie met verschillende snelheden: ongelijkheden in de opbouw en de ontwikkeling van het Brabantse stedelijke netwerk (ca. 1750-ca. 1790)* (Brussels 1999) 102; Van Der Wee and Materné, 'De Antwerpse wereldmarkt', 29; Degryse, 'De Antwerpse fortuinen', 28-29.

60 Duverger, *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen: 1618-1626* (Brussels 2002) 436-439; CAA, N#3379, probate inventory of Adriaan Ballinckx (21 November 1625).

61 Van Hemeldonck, *Het Grootwerk*, Jan Gillis I.

to provide him (free of charge) with all the necessities.⁶² In November of that same year, Michiel was officially registered.⁶³ During his apprenticeship, in 1643, a fee was paid to schoolmaster Johannes van Epegem, who taught him how to count for three months.⁶⁴ Upon finishing his training in 1645, he went to live with a certain Thomas Mertens. After a stay of about two years, Michiel started working in Brussels. In September 1647, he returned home and boarded again with his uncle Johannes Gillis, who promised to pay him six guilders a month and to feed him for free. In January 1649, Michiel was living in Lille with merchant Anthoine Duravel.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, we do not know what became of him after his journey to Lille, nor whether and whom he married. He just seems to have disappeared off the radar, perhaps he even died.

As indicated above, Michiel Ballinckx's late father Adriaan was an important carpenter,⁶⁶ whose marriage with a member of a large fishmonger family in need of ships and trading in wood, such as the Boons, might have come in handy. To my knowledge, Adriaan's son Michiel was the first male heir who was employed outside the carpentry business. Occupational continuity was quite common among carpenters.⁶⁷ Michiel's seemingly odd 'choice' might have been influenced by his two 'artistic' relatives (his paternal uncle by marriage, painter Gaspard Goossens, and his maternal uncle by marriage, silversmith Johannes Gillis), next to the economic tidings in favour of the production and sale of luxuries. Trades in which such a high degree of skill and instruction were required did not have a high incidence of professional continuity from father to son.⁶⁸ Although Michiel converted himself to the luxury industries, his sister, Anna Ballinckx, did not. Instead, she married the dean of the shipmasters, Gijsbrecht De Vrije, implying that the water-based trades had not yet lost face and that the remaining carpenters among the Ballinckxes were probably still looking for related trades to unite with. Nevertheless, luxury production and later on international luxury trade was bound to gain importance within the Boon

62 CAA, IB#2275, accounts of guardian Christiaan Boon.

63 CAA, WK#741, f°1r-78v, account children Adriaen Ballinckx, f°63v.

64 CAA, IB#2275, accounts of guardian Christiaan Boon.

65 CAA, IB#2275, accounts of guardian Christiaan Boon.

66 Duverger, *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen: 1618-1626* (Brussels 2002) 436-439; CAA, N#3379, probate inventory of Adriaan Ballinckx (21 November 1625).

67 E.J. Shephard, 'Social and geographic mobility of the eighteenth-century guild artisan: an analysis of guild receptions in Dijon, 1700-90', in: S.L. Kaplan and C.J. Koeppe (eds.), *Work in France: representations, meaning, organization, and practice* (Ithaca/London 1986) 97-130, 124.

68 Shephard, 'Social and geographic mobility', 124.

family. The reconversion would be completed by Gerard Boon, son of fishmonger Michiel Boon and Michiel Ballinckx's cousin.

Gerard (c.1639/1640) was the first in several generations to substitute diamonds for fish. Jacques Hellaerts, sailor and fishmonger, bought the fish bench that once belonged to Gerard's great grandfather Cornelis Boon.⁶⁹ Aged fifteen, Gerard was apprenticed for four years to master diamond cutter Franchois Gruls in order to learn how to cut and polish diamonds.⁷⁰ Right from the start, however, the ultimate objective seems to have been situated beyond the artisan's workshop, in international trade more specifically. Already in 1654 (circa ten months before he started his apprenticeship), Gerard went to the boarding school of the Jesuits. This boarding house was quite unique in the Southern Low Countries and was particularly popular among the wealthy bourgeoisie.⁷¹ Gerard's college attendance probably symbolized his family's aspirations for upward social mobility, as was the case among wealthy French merchants.⁷² Gerard (aged fifteen) quit school when he started his apprenticeship in 1655, but soon received private classes in counting and calculating from the famous schoolmaster, rhetorician and playwright Guiliam Ogier.⁷³ Gerard's guardians clearly attached great importance to the quality of his education. In 1656, Gerard learned how to dance, an important prerequisite for upper-class youngsters.⁷⁴ Early in 1660, he took a French class for a month, probably with a view to his voyage to Paris later that same year.⁷⁵ Already in the middle of the sixteenth century language courses and stays abroad were essential parts of a merchant's training.⁷⁶ As Gerard could not find a job in Paris, he travelled to Rouen.⁷⁷

69 CAA, IB#2280, account Gerard Boon (25 May 1662) and accounts of guardian Christiaan Boon.

70 CAA, IB#2275, f°50r, apprentice contract Gerard Boon (8 February 1655).

71 H. Callewier, 'Antwerpen, Jezuietencollege en -convict', in: E. Put and M. D'Hoker (eds.), *Latijnse scholen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (16^{de}-18^{de} eeuw): repertorium en archiefjgids Vlaanderen en Brussel* (Brussels 2007) 85-97, 87-88; Baetens, *De nazomer*, 293.

72 A. Lespagnol, 'Modèles éducatifs et stratégies familiales dans le milieu négociant malouin aux 17^e et 18^e siècles : les ambiguïtés d'une mutation', in: F. Angiolini and D. Roche (eds.), *Cultures et formations négociantes dans l'Europe moderne* (Paris 1995) 257-274, 269.

73 D. Schlugleit, *Geschiedenis van het Antwerpsche diamantslijpersambacht (1582-1797)* (Antwerp 1935) 78 (note 1); http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/brano38biog01_01/brano38biog01_01_3010.php; CAA, IB#2280, account Gerard Boon (25 May 1662); M. Sabbe, 'Willem Ogier, schoolmeester van Balthasar Moretus IV', *De gulden passer* 7 (1929) 100.

74 Baetens, *De nazomer*, 285.

75 CAA, IB#2280, account Gerard Boon (25 May 1662).

76 Baetens, *De nazomer*, 295-296; J. Puttevils, *The ascent of merchants from the Southern Low Countries: from Antwerp to Europe, 1480-1585* (PhD dissertation Universiteit Antwerpen 2012) 159.

77 CAA, IB#2280, account Gerard Boon (25 May 1662).

In 1662, he used his stay abroad as an example of his great experience to substantiate his request for 100 Flemish pounds (i.e. 600 guilders), necessary – according to him – to become a master diamond cutter.⁷⁸ This suggests that starting a business from scratch was quite an undertaking – although it was not impossible. Around 1671, aged only thirty-one, Gerard Boon was even elected head of the nation of diamond cutters.⁷⁹

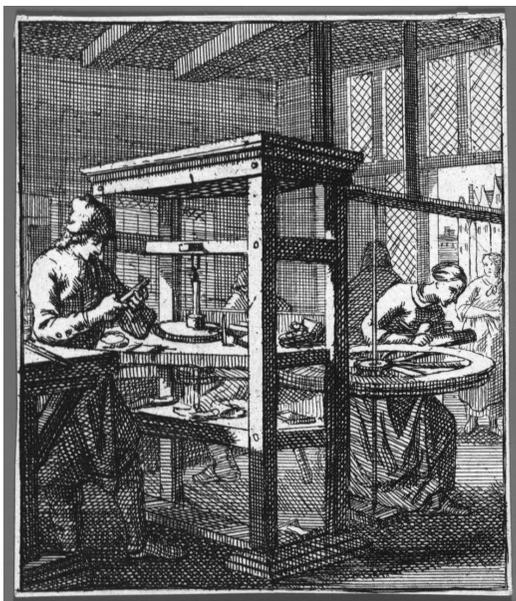


Illustration 2. "De diamantslyper" by Jan Luyken (1694)

Source: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv.nr. A 46180

Why spend so much time (four years) and money (350 guilders) on an apprenticeship if one wanted to engage in commerce, not industrial production?⁸⁰ The fact that Gerard was first trained within a guild context, was not at all uncommon. Jeroen Puttevils already noted that many sixteenth-century jewellery tradesmen were first under instruction with the guild of gold and silversmiths (the nation of diamond and ruby cutters did not come into existence until 1582,⁸¹ after which this guild might have

78 CAA, IB#2275, request Gerard Boon (15 March 1662).

79 Schlugleit, *Geschiedenis*, 79.

80 CAA, IB#2275, F°50r, apprentice contract Gerard Boon (8 February 1655).

81 Schlugleit, *Geschiedenis*, 9-12.

become a valid alternative) to obtain valuable product knowledge.⁸² Gerard's education really paid off when he started a long distance trading business in diamonds and diamond jewellery, with the help of his half-brother Michiel and his nephews Pablo and Guillermo as associates in Cádiz. He also sent diamonds to Paris, Germany and Lisbon.⁸³ His training abroad and the business relationships he acquired in France might have advanced his further career, but Gerard did not limit his activities to the cities where he was trained.⁸⁴ His diamond trade business contacts were the most important merchants of that time: Adriaan Vermeiren, the widow Potteau and Gilliam Potteau, Jan Gansacker, the widow de Pret, Alonso Palma Carillo and Peter Godyn.⁸⁵

However, Gerard not only traded in diamonds, but also in paintings, among other things. This may have had something to do with his wife Maria Galle. She was the granddaughter of Catharina Moretus and daughter of Joannes Galle, a famous engraver and art dealer.⁸⁶ In 1677, Gerard sent 941 prints to Balthasar Janssens in Brussels, among which many art of his father-in-law and 235 maps.⁸⁷ While the detailed product knowledge merchants obtained through a craft-based apprenticeship may have been useful, they were not limited to this branch nor product.⁸⁸ Marital alliances could be mobilized to broaden the scope of the business, as well as to serve political aspirations. After the death of Maria Galle's motherly grandfather Peter Macquereel, her grandmother Jacoba Librechts remarried with Guiliam De Crayer, former almoner (a time-consuming and expensive public office, but interesting with an eye on social or political aspirations), merchant and church warden of the Church of Our Lady.⁸⁹ Gerard Boon's alliance with a relative of such an important business man and public figure, might have been a way to broaden his political opportunities as

82 Puttevijs, *The ascent*, 163-164.

83 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11.

84 Puttevijs, *The ascent*, 170.

85 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11.

86 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11; M. Sellinck, *Philips Galle (1537-1612): engraver and print publisher in Haarlem and Antwerp II notes/appendices* (PhD dissertation Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 1997) 219.

87 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11.

88 Puttevijs, *The ascent*, 189.

89 Timmermans, *Patronen*, 52; P. Verheyen, *Lof-sprake ofte vlaemsche oratie tot lof van de heeren aelmoesseniers der stad Antwerpen* (Antwerp 1758) 28; Duverger, *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen: 1690-1699* (Brussels 2002) 170-171; Sellinck, *Philips Galle*, 219.

well as his business's scope. The fact that he was elected quarter master around 1676 supports the claim that politics appealed to him.⁹⁰

It would seem, then, that changing sectors turned out to be a great success for the Boons. However, not every training trajectory went flawless, as the case of Peter Melyn, Gerard Boon's stepbrother, illustrates.⁹¹ Like Gerard, Peter Melyn was engaged in the diamond trade. He appears to have been trained by Gerard's business associate and famous Antwerp jeweller, Peter Godyn. To improve his French, he travelled to Paris in 1668, but he experienced many difficulties in finding a job. Stubbornly, he declined a job offer from his former master Godyn and refused to inform his not so understanding parents, instead he turned to his stepbrother Gerard for help. Eventually, unemployment forced Peter to leave Paris and head for London late in September 1671. Clearly, a career switch was not without risks (which parents might not have envisaged beforehand). The lack of a well-evolved network might lower one's chance of finding employment. Moreover, the differences between parents' own trade and the one of their children, causing a complete lack of understanding, might have come to stand between them at one point or another.

Not only the Boons and their close relatives, but probably many other Antwerp families searched for ways to overcome economic decline or stagnation in certain sectors and to profit from growth in others. The reconstructed family history demonstrates the importance of the economic conjuncture on occupational choices. When a family decided to engage in the international trade in luxuries, this seems to have resulted in a growing interest in formal schooling, especially language and counting classes. Nevertheless, parents (or guardians) considered it worthwhile to still have their sons apprenticed within a craft guild. Although this might have been partly because of tradition, product knowledge in all likelihood was an enormous asset for a merchant. In the seventeenth century, marriages remained important ways to gain access to new networks – perhaps even more so as knowledge on other types of products was needed or as one wanted to engage in politics. In periods of crisis, one might expect schooling to gain in importance compared to on-the-job-training or working at an early age. An in-depth study of the next Boon generation, living and working in the second half of the seventeenth century, will shed additional light on this.

90 CAA, IB#2282, "Balthasar Janssens".

91 CAA, IB#2282, "Peeter Melyn".

4 Loosening guild ties?

Although the information on the next Boon generation is scarce, we can observe yet another stage in the family lifecycle, e.g., leaving the craft guild ties and orientating towards politics (aldermanship), living off one's investments, religious service and higher education (schooling instead of vocational training). The difficulties experienced in 1670-1685 by the trade in art and jewellery between Antwerp and Spain (Sevilla, Cádiz), caused by a change in demand (towards cheaper products) and growing international competition (especially in fake jewellery), might have been an important reason to consider such a switch.⁹² Moreover, as nobility and clergy increased their power in the course of the seventeenth century, the attractiveness of their status grew. In their ambition to attain such station, merchants acquired lands and castles, married within established families, aspired aldermanship, sent their sons to university and retired from active business.⁹³

Various of these elements can be noticed for the Boon family as well. In 1693, Cornelis Boon, probably Gerard Boon's cousin⁹⁴ who operated as a merchant in the Spanish trade, married Magdalena Vinck, sister of lawyer and alderman Henrick Vinck. The Vincks were one of the richest and most influential families of their time. Was this perhaps the reason why in that same year Cornelis Boon was elected almoner?⁹⁵ Vinck and Boon's only daughter Maria married in 1721 with Jacques Schenaerts, merchant and important shareholder of the Ostend Company. Widowed, she was living off her own means in 1755. This side of the Boon family clearly aspired a noble title (which they would, for the record, never acquire).⁹⁶

Up to a certain degree these mechanisms are well-known, but what impact did the economic contraction have on choices related to schooling

92 J. Everaert, 'Een "noble besogne" in verval: de kwijnende trafik in kunst en edelstenen tussen Vlaanderen en Spanje (1650-1685)', in: H. Soly and R. Vermeir (eds.), *Beleid en bestuur in de oude Nederlanden: liber amicorum prof. Dr. M. Baelde* (Ghent 1993) 183-188, 187-188; K. Degryse and J. Everaert, 'De handel', in: *Antwerpen in de XVIIde eeuw* (Antwerp 1989) 111-129, 118.

93 H. Soly, 'Sociale relaties in Antwerpen tijdens de 16^{de} en de 17^{de} eeuw', in: *Antwerpen, verhaal van een metropool, 16de-17de eeuw* (Ghent 1993) 37-47, 43; Baetens, *De nazomer*, 305 and 312.

94 Cornelis Boon was a well-known merchant who traded with Spain. He is sometimes claimed to be Gerard Boon's son (Degryse, 'De Antwerpse fortuinen', bijlage I), but – as no contemporary source mentions him as a son of Gerard Boon (CAA, WK#1265, F#154; CAA, IB#2273, F#1) – it seems more likely that he was in fact the son of Guilliam Boon and thus Gerard's cousin (Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 7).

95 Verheyen, *Lof-sprake*, 29. It is, however, not entirely certain that it is the same Cornelis Boon.

96 Degryse, 'De Antwerpse fortuinen', bijlage I.

and training? As mentioned above: Gerard Boon married Maria Galle. They had five children, of whom two died soon after they were born.⁹⁷ Their eldest (and only surviving) daughter Maria Theresia became a nun. Although she might have been truthfully religiously inspired, entering a convent may also have been a way to protect the inheritance of her siblings, a common practice among Antwerp merchants.⁹⁸ In 1692, Maria Theresia's seventeen-year-old brother Franciscus received some French and counting classes. In contrast to his father, he did not travel to France to practice his language skills and to gain experience, but to Amsterdam. Before Franciscus moved to this commercial hub in the Northern Netherlands, he spent about a year with spice merchant Daniel De Licht at the Blindestraat, suggesting that Franciscus probably did not trade in jewellery but in spices.⁹⁹ As by the mid-seventeenth century the Dutch had cornered the spice market, it made far more sense to visit Amsterdam instead of Paris.¹⁰⁰

(At least) between the age of fifteen and seventeen, youngster Jacobus Hendericus went to school.¹⁰¹ He boarded at the Holy Trinity College in Leuven, a secondary Latin school which depended from the university's Faculty of Arts and which was observed to be the best preparation to higher education.¹⁰² It is unclear if Jacobus Hendericus ever went to the university after he finished his schooling at the College.¹⁰³ It was rather exceptional for merchants to attend university,¹⁰⁴ but it seems unlikely that his guardians would send him to this prestigious school in Leuven and teach him Latin without thinking of further education.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, he too received French and counting classes, so maybe he still ended up in a mercantile environment after all.¹⁰⁶ It points at least to a growing aware-

97 CAA, IB#2273, f^o1.

98 Baetens, *De nazomer*, 302.

99 CAA, WK#1265, f^o154r-189v, account children Gerard Boon (26 March 1695); Degryse, 'De Antwerpse fortuinen', bijlage I.

100 W.J. Bernstein, *A splendid exchange: how trade shaped the world* (New York 2008) 234.

101 CAA, WK#1265, f^o154r-189v, account children Gerard Boon (26 March 1695); A. Schillings, *Matricule de l'université de Louvain*, VII (Brussels 1963).

102 A. Wauters, *Bibliotheken van de colleges en de pedagogieën aan de oude Universiteit Leuven (vijftiende – achttiende eeuw)* (MA thesis K.U. Leuven 1989); *De Universiteit te Leuven 1425-1985* (Leuven 1988).

103 L. Van Buyten, 'Universitaire vorming van Brabantse stedelijke mandatarissen en functionarissen, 17^{de}-18^{de} eeuw, Antwerpen-Leuven-Diest', in: *Verslag vijfde colloquium: De Brabantse stad* ('s-Hertogenbosch 1978) 135-144, 138.

104 Puttevils, *The ascent*, 159.

105 CAA, IB#2284, "school fees".

106 CAA, WK#1265, f^o154r-189v, account children Gerard Boon (26 March 1695).

ness of other job opportunities among affluent merchants in search of social mobility, and it hints at an ever greater dilemma for these families regarding education. Classical schooling offered youngsters the necessary baggage to move in learned circles and the higher echelons of society, but it failed utterly when it came to instruction in modern languages, commercial knowledge and arithmetic.¹⁰⁷

In this specific case, only the younger son, Jacobus, was sent to school, as firstborn Franciscus had to take over the family business (albeit perhaps trading spices instead of jewellery). Probably to prevent any inheritance difficulties, the boys' sister, Maria Theresia, was sent to the convent. The position of a child in a family thus had a serious impact on the way he (or she) was educated. Did a family's enrichment and upward social mobility perhaps negatively affect the inclination to allow for a child's aptitude and interests in its training path? And did in the course of the eighteenth century higher education grow more attractive to firstborns as well, as seems to have been the case in France and the Northern Netherlands?¹⁰⁸

5 Multiple identities

The most difficult factors to account for in research on household behaviour have a cultural nature. Economic historians often reduce conduct to rational choices made by actors answering to changing challenges and opportunities. But how, for example, are emotional ties to be taken into account? One way of doing it, is to look into the residence patterns and the associational life of the Boons, which suggests that there was indeed more to their behaviour than mere economic interests.

At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Boon family was closely tied to the river Scheldt. They were not only engaged in professions linked up with it, but also lived in near proximity of the water. Cornelis Boon, for instance, owned two houses, one called The Elephant in the Spirinckstraat (close to the fortress) and the one in which he died, on *de Guldenberch* (also known as Kraaiwijk, just outside the fortress, between the Saucierstraat and the Sint-Pietersvliet).¹⁰⁹ The place of residence of fishmongers was regulated, so it comes as no

107 Lespagnol, 'Modèles', 269 ; A. Baggerman, *Publishing policies and family strategies: the fortunes of a Dutch publishing house in the 18th and early 19th centuries* (Leiden/Boston 2014) 33.

108 Baggerman, *Publishing policies*, 378 ; Lespagnol, 'Modèles', 262.

109 CAA, WK#16, n°38 f°673r-688r, probate inventory of Cornelis Boon, f°684r and 685r.

surprise that many of them lived in near proximity of the Fish Mountain, near the fish market, in the Kuipersstraat, the Schipstraat, the Werf and the Sint-Pietersvliet.¹¹⁰ According to the population census of 1796, 87 percent of the fishmongers and their servants lived in this district.¹¹¹ Cornelis' connection to this neighbourhood, however, went beyond the obligatory, since he also collected a rent on a house in Kraaiwijk called The Three Gulls, situated in the Saucierstraat (where originally the herring salters lived).¹¹² His children inherited this rent after his death.¹¹³

It is unclear where Cornelis' firstborn son, Michiel Boon, resided, but as he was engaged in the fish trade as well, he probably lived in the same neighbourhood. Moreover, Michiel's guild master, Alexander Bouwens, and his wife Cornelia Sammels owned The Shield of France in the Mattestraat (located in the Steen fortress).¹¹⁴ It was one of the main streets at the time, as many noble and wealthy families lived there.¹¹⁵ Besides, another relative of both the Bouwenses and the Boons, Janneken Borsbeeck, died in her house in the same street in 1639.¹¹⁶

The next generation of the Boon family, was still tied to this harbour neighbourhood. Firstborn Christiaan Boon seems to have owned *het roosterken* in the Mattestraat.¹¹⁷ At the end of his life, he lived on the Sint-Pietersvliet and regularly went for a drink to the inn Hemelrijck, near St Walburga's church, where one day he got caught in a quarrel between his nephew-in-law Ghijsbrecht De Vrije and jeweller David van Berghe.¹¹⁸ Christiaan's brother, Michiel Boon II, probably lived in the same area, as he bequeathed several chapels within St Walburga's church and paid for thirty masses to be held there in his remembrance.¹¹⁹ Michiel's father-in-law (Gerard Danijs) owned a rent on a house (The Three Roses) in the Mattes-

110 L. Van Aert, 'Buurtwinkels en winkelstraten: de evolutie van het Antwerpse winkelbedrijf in de nieuwe tijd', *Stadsgeschiedenis* 4/1 (2009) 20-44, 32-33.

111 J. De Belder, *Elementen van sociale identificatie van de Antwerpse bevolking op het einde van de XVIIIde eeuw: een kwantitatieve studie I* (Gent 1974) 229 and 279-281; J. De Belder, *Elementen van sociale identificatie van de Antwerpse bevolking op het einde van de XVIIIde eeuw: een kwantitatieve studie II* (Gent 1974) 350.

112 CAA, WK#16, n°38 f°673r-688r, probate inventory of Cornelis Boon, f°679v; R. Vande Weghe, *Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse straatnamen* (Antwerp 1977) 405.

113 CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584).

114 CAA, WK#319, probate inventory of Cornelia Sammels.

115 <https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/dibe/geheel/837; users.skynet.be/bk159961/mini/Antwerpse%62oburcht/mattestr.htm>.

116 CAA, WK#714, n°11 f°249r.

117 CAA, WK#741, f°1r-78v, account children Adriaen Ballincx, f°14.

118 CAA, 7#5126.

119 CAA, N#1324, approbation will Michiel Boon and Anna Wellens (20 January 1654).

traat, inherited by Gerard Boon.¹²⁰ The Saucierstraat also was a recurrent place of residence. Another one of Michiel Boon I's children, Cornelia (wife of Hans Bouwens), lived there in the house The Yellow Gate.¹²¹ In 1636, the streets at the waterfront and others, such as the Stooftstraat, made up a real shopping district next to the river. According to Laura Van Aert, this centre almost completely disappeared in the course of the eighteenth century.¹²² However, we might expect some changes in residence already as the focus of the Boon family shifted from fish towards luxury products.

While Cornelis Boon, his children and even his grandchildren and all of their relatives and social acquaintances lived near the waterfront (Fig. 1, F), the next generations looked for other places to live. (At least) between 1662 and 1665, jeweler Gerard Boon lodged with Peter Bael, silver polisher at the Old Bourse (Fig. 1, 1).¹²³ He then moved to the *Kerssnuiter* at the Church of Our Lady (Fig. 1, 2).¹²⁴ In a biographical introduction to his daybook, Gerard mentions three of his four firstborn children to be baptized in this cathedral.¹²⁵ On the first of December 1668, his half-sister Anna came to live with Gerard and his family.¹²⁶ In 1676, Gerard bought a house called the Harpsichord in the Jodenstraat (Fig. 1, 3) (near the Huidevetterstraat (Fig. 1, 4), where his father-in-law lived and which was a popular place of residence among financiers and magistrates, and close to the Beddenstraat (Fig. 1, 5), where his sister-in-law, Isabelle Galle, resided).¹²⁷ Later that same year, he moved again towards the water, albeit further removed from the fish market, towards a big house in the Kloosterstraat (Fig. 1, 6).¹²⁸ In contrast to his siblings, Jacobus Hendericus, Gerard's lastborn, was baptized in the parish church of Saint Andrew.¹²⁹ In 1676 Gerard became quarter master near St Michael's church in the Kloosterstraat.¹³⁰ Every two years, quarter masters were recruited from the ranks of the rentiers, merchants, clerks and small or

120 CAA, IB#2280, account Gerard Boon (25 May 1662).

121 CAA, IB#2275, accounts of guardian Christiaan Boon.

122 Van Aert, 'Buurtwinkels', 25-26.

123 CAA, IB#2282, "Gillis Nijs".

124 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11.

125 CAA, IB#2273, f°1.

126 CAA, IB#2273, f°1.

127 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11; Degryse, 'De Antwerpse fortuinen', bijlage I.

128 Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11; CAA, IB-SUPL#90, receipt (19 February 1677).

129 CAA, IB#2273, f°1.

130 CAA, IB#2282, "Balthasar Janssens"; CAA, IB#2282, "Balthasar Janssens"; Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11; Vande Weghe, *Geschiedenis*, 2264.

middle-sized entrepreneurs. It was a time-consuming social engagement. Besides performing administrative tasks, such as recording censuses and dressing up lists of tax payers, they seated together with the craft guilds as a fourth member in the Broad Council. It could mean the start of a political career for people whose families did not already belong to the city's political elite, as the quarter masters listed possible candidates for aldermanship.¹³¹

Clearly, already in the second half of the seventeenth century the houses at the waterfront decreased in significance.¹³² Moreover, as the Boons engaged in the international luxury trades and swarmed around Europe, locality probably no longer reflected the strong social ties which existed between them. None of Gerard's half-brothers were living in their Antwerp hometown. In 1679, Frans Boon was boarding with the widow Verstraeten in Lokeren (between Antwerp and Ghent). As already mentioned before, his other half-brother, Michiel Boon, was working in the family business as an agent in Cádiz. As geographical distance affected the extent of assistance between family members, Gerard Boon and his household might have counted more on his family-in-law for direct support.¹³³

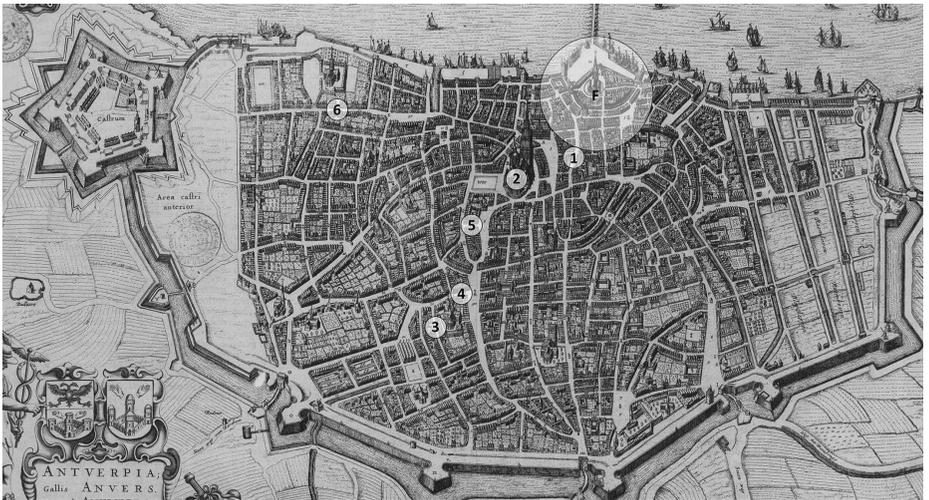


Figure 1. Informative map, based on the Antwerp city map indicating the fishmongers' residences (F), the Old Bourse (1), the Church of Our Lady (2), the Jodenstraat (3), the Huidevetterstraat (4), the Beddenstraat (5), and the Kloosterstraat (6)

Source: Blaeu, 1649, City Archives Antwerp, 12#4125_recto

131 Timmermans, *Patronen*, 324, 314 and 52.

132 Van Aert, 'Buurtwinkels', 25-26.

133 Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal bonding', 300.

Besides their locality, occupation and political aspirations (through their presence as deans of the main craft guilds, as quarter masters in the Broad Council or as almoners and church wardens), the Boon family and their close relatives or acquaintances also shared a common cultural identity. Many of them were members or even leading figures in the Antwerp shooting guilds (especially the Old Bowmen's guild). In contrast to the members of the civil guard, they were recruited by co-option, preferably among the wealthy.¹³⁴ All sons of Michiel Boon I (∞ Anna Sammels), i.e. Christiaan, Michiel and Guiliam, were members of the Old Bowmen's guild. Christiaan and Michiel even made it to dean.¹³⁵ Their father, Michiel Boon I, was probably involved in the urban militias as well, as he received two pounds of gun powder and other (materials for) weaponry in 1584.¹³⁶ One might wonder about the impact of these cultural associations on creating future marriage bonds. (Possible) relatives of both of Michiel Boon II's wives were respectively a member (Gerard Danijs) and dean (grain merchant Lauwerijs Wellens, 1597-1646) of the same shooting guild. In 1660, Christiaan Boon was acquainted with a certain mister Vinck, former dean of the Old Bowmen's guild. Surely, it cannot be a coincidence that Spain merchant Cornelis Boon later marries a girl with the same surname.¹³⁷ Sharing a way of life, having the same social code and being part of the same associations (which created a context for informal contacts), might have resulted in feelings of recognition and unity, which could lead to marriages.¹³⁸ In the end, distinguishing between economic calculation and emotional preference may come close to impossible.

Notwithstanding Gerard Boon's importance, there seems to be no reference of him taking part in the shooting guild, nor of his brothers. Maybe bonding through such associations became increasingly difficult with having his family dispersed all over Europe? Or perhaps membership of cultural associations was increasingly replaced by political activism? Gerard Boon did however know how to handle a gun. In 1659, he received a *snaphaan* (a gun). Maybe he bought it to defend himself on his journeys, but it might as well have come in handy within the urban militias...

134 R. Boumans, 'De getalsterkte van Katholieken en Protestanten te Antwerpen in 1585', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 30/3-4 (1952) 741-798, note 2 on page 744.

135 CAA, IB#2275, "liquidatie van monss[ieur]r Michiel Boon salighe"; Denucé, 'De Insolvente Boedelskamer: XXXIII Familie Boon', 5-11.

136 CAA, WK#54, n°7, account children Cornelis Boon (5 September 1584).

137 CAA, 7#5126.

138 Timmermans, *Patronen*, 38 and 51.

6 Conclusions: modelling the family

The history of the Boon family shows that at least two things are important when studying family strategies in the past. First of all, it is necessary to integrate as much information about the different family members as possible. What was their place in the family unit, who did they marry, where were they trained, where did they live, where did they meet, etc.? Exactly because of the important role of in-laws in occupational reproduction, one should also integrate information on related families. Looking at the complementarity of training paths and marital alliances can be very revealing with an eye on the question of individual agency.

Secondly, the socio-economic context in which these families lived and operated deserves our utmost attention. How did economic transformations impact on existing traditions and choices? As the Boons were confronted with a changing urban economy, the family and their close kin needed to adapt. In doing so, they seem to have followed a specified trajectory, suggesting that there was little room for individual agency and deviant behaviour. We could distinguish at least three stages as Antwerp transformed from an important international port city in the sixteenth century, over a centre for the production of luxuries and trade with Spain, towards a regional service centre at the end of the seventeenth century: 1) the craft guild roots: a phase in which a craft guild elite started to commercialize, looking for ways to expand its (fishmongers') imperium, 2) the transition: a phase in which a sector switch (at first towards the production and secondly towards the international trading of luxuries) came into existence, and 3) the retreat: a phase of scholarisation, living of one's rents, politicisation, etc., in which the craft guild ties were loosened. As their fortunes increased and the international trade started sputtering, affluent merchants started looking for ways to consolidate their recently obtained power and wealth by means of academic schooling, public and political offices and marital alliances with important names – which in the end may have made parents less inclined to consider their children's talents and interests when mapping out their careers.

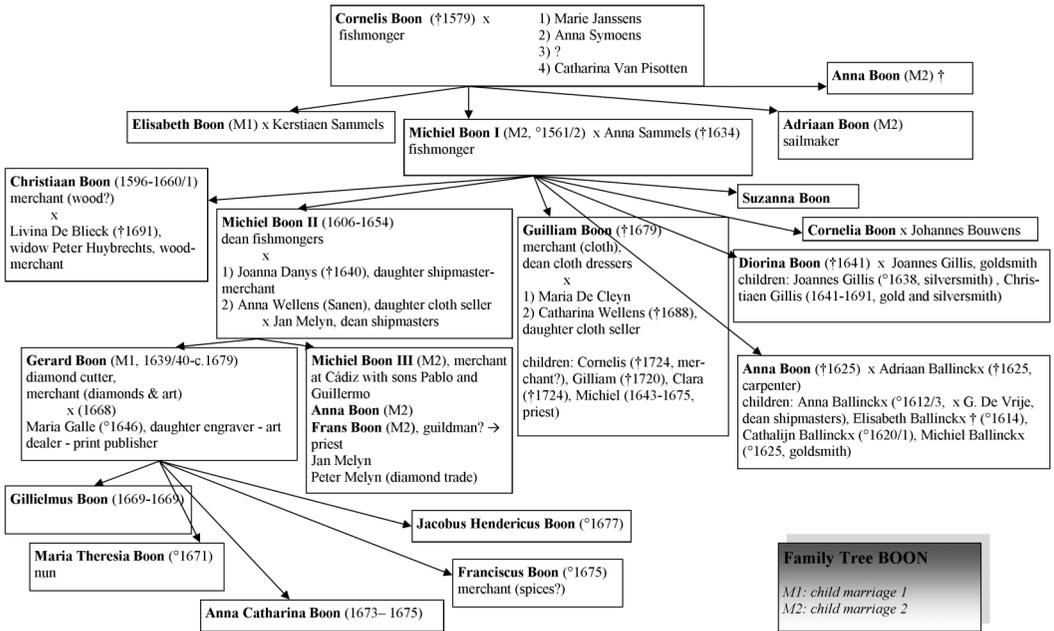
Although the results of this research can by no means simply be generalized, at least some families responded quickly and with a high degree of flexibility to new economic challenges and constraints. They made great use of a varied set of tactics, among which expanding their own scope to related fields of action through marriages and apprenticeships were most frequently used. Living in the same neighbourhood and taking part in the same cultural associations (or the complete lack thereof) might have influ-

enced the range of tactics a family could rely on, also with an eye on the education or the training (e.g. cheaper apprentice contracts) of children and marriage (in favour of the family business) of youngsters. Of course, this is a success-story model and other sorts of families might have operated along very different lines. A further quantitative analysis of a series of guardians' accounts might shed more light on various types of trajectories in different types of socio-economic contexts. Examining causal relationships between on the one hand, investments in training and education and, on the other, variables such as the availability and price of capital, the number of children, gender, age, prices and expenses for food, lodging, clothing, health, etc. may enhance our knowledge on 'how families modelled their future' in the early modern period.

About the author

Annelies De Bie (PhD student, UAntwerp) started her history studies at the University of Antwerp in 2005. After finishing her master's dissertation on interdependency chains between Antwerp gold and silversmiths (c. 1648 – c. 1748), she collaborated on a research project regarding investments in technical knowledge in Antwerp's early modern diamond sector. In October 2012, she was appointed PhD fellow of the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO). Her current research, which draws on serial accounts of legal guardians, focuses on how (much) early modern households in the Southern Netherlands invested in their children's education.
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Appendix



Labour Time, Guild Time?

*Working Hours in the Cloth Industry of Medieval Flanders and Artois (Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries)*¹

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Abstract

From their very early history, even before the craft guilds came of age, regulation of labour time was ubiquitous in most Flemish and Artesian cloth manufacturing cities. Nearly everywhere the working day was decided by the urban authorities and announced by bells; the working year was divided in working days and Sundays/religious festive days. Regulation, however, was refined and intensified in the course of the second half of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century when craft guilds pushed away the traditional relations between merchant-entrepreneurs and textile workers and replaced them with the late medieval small artisanal workshops. Labour time regulation was also clearly more developed in export-oriented cities: rules were stricter and the requirements of flexible workshops that could adapt to changing demand cycles necessitated more complex systems of regulation. Hence, labour time was not evenly organised across the different production stages. Cloth weavers have always been at the heart of regulation, while also cloth finishing and fulling were targeted. It is time-rate wages of journeymen weavers and subcontracting masters that set the standard for the intensification of labour time regulation once the guilds stepped in. Small-scale entrepreneurs needed to control more firmly the various production stages and adapt the scope of the enterprise to changing demand. Their mere economic survival depended, therefore, on the flexibility of labour markets. Once they gained access to political power, therefore, regulating labour time certainly became one of their main tools to control the organisation of labour.

Keywords: labour, time regulation, guilds, cloth industry, middle ages

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