Lard, lice, and longevity: a comparative study of the standard of living in occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940-1945
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Foreword

It was perhaps a strange step for me, an aspiring medievalist, to apply for a position at the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation in 2001, and many people were surprised that my application was successful. In retrospect, I can only agree. I embarked on this project, the first book-length academic work of my life, with only a dim knowledge of the period which I was to study. Overcoming this problem would not have been possible without the support and help of the Institute's staff. Not only, moreover, did I find an environment that furthered my knowledge of the Second World War, I also found a friendly work environment, where I have come to feel very much at home. I am very happy that, after a year's absence, I will again be joining the Institute in 2007.

My task was not, however, to remain in the comfortable surroundings of the Institute's palazzo on the Herengracht, but to venture out into Europe, and do internationally comparative research. Moreover, I was to be trained to become a full-fledged economic historian. This training I found primarily in the Pothumus Institute, and its European counterpart, the ESTER network. I am much indebted to all those who attended our sessions, but especially to Herman de Jong, Jan Pieter Smits, Brigitte Widdershoven and Patrick O'Brien, who provided me with extensive advice and friendly encouragement. I also learned a great deal through the Economic History Society, the annual conferences of which were highly educational, and which organised the excellent Residential Training Course in Manchester, in the closing weeks of 2002. A final phase of my postgraduate education took place at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, where Deirdre McCloskey introduced a small group of graduate students to the mysteries of ethics, microeconomics and the work of Adam Smith. Those who were there will have no difficulty recognising the many instances where our discussions inspired me in writing.

I eventually decided on Denmark and the Netherlands as the two countries to be compared in this thesis. The fact that I did not speak or understand Danish proved less of a hindrance than I had initially feared. Annemiek Langen proved able, impressively, to teach me the basics of the language in a matter of weeks, and Danish hospitality did the rest. Throughout this project, I have met with great kindness and co-operation in Denmark. Claus Bundgård Christensen, Niels Wiium Olesen, Flemming Just, Mogens Rostgaard Nissen, Steen Andersen and the late
Henrik Nissen, are just some of the colleagues who helped me on my way. The archivist Svend Ahrensbach helped me to gain access to the closed archives of Copenhagen’s City Court and, spectacularly, to a separate room to study them in. Finally, I must express my gratitude to the inhabitants of Bofælleskab Stavnsbåndet who welcomed me in their midst in the dark winter months of 2003. I learned a great deal from them, both about Denmark, and about its remarkable language. That I first learned the Danish word *hygge* there, is ample evidence of the reception I received.

In spite of all my newly acquired linguistic skills and knowledge, my research did pose ever new problems. The demographic and epidemiological differences between the two countries, which I had initially thought of as barely significant, proved far more problematic than I had foreseen. Both in the interpretation of my data, and in the solving of the bewildering information that emerged from, I was kindly helped by many people. In 2004, both The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, and Anne Hardy at the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, kindly reviewed and criticised my findings. Sandy Cairncross, of the London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, helped me on my way in the study of hygiene. Tonny Terpstra of Utrecht University and Jeanne de Vries of Wageningen Agricultural University did their best to save me from all-too grave blunders in food science. The research group of the KNCV Tuberculosis Fund, and especially Nico Nagelkerke, Paul Eilers and Martien Borgdorff, provided me not only with essential data, but also with incisive criticism and extensive information. The amount of time people from entirely different disciplines were willing to sacrifice to a wandering and ever-bewildered historian was remarkable, and very much appreciated on my part.

At various times, elements of this project were critically assessed by Ben Wubs, Angela van Son and Gerard Trienekens. I am grateful for their efforts, and our discussions, which helped shape the arguments laid out below. Suzanne Lommers contributed a wealth of data and insight. She was a remarkable undergraduate, and I have no doubt that her PhD thesis will soon prove as astounding as her previous work. Two other historians, Hein Klemann and Hans Blom, also deserve special mention. As my supervisors, they worked hard as the primary guardians of the project, prevented many mistakes, corrected numerous errors and, importantly, always remained optimistic, even when I myself no longer was.
Of course, no-one lives research alone. In the process of preparing this thesis, I have received financial support from the The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, The Amsterdams Universiteits Fonds, and the Faculty of Arts of the University of Amsterdam. I have had the great opportunity of teaching at Utrecht University and the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. Likewise important, Fleming and Helle Grøn-Jenssen helped me to a house in Denmark (theirs, to be precise), and Boudien Israels kindly offered me living space in Abcoude in the first months of the project. Most of the past years, I have lived with great pleasure in the Woongroep Oude Rai, Amsterdam, whose various inhabitants I heartily thank for their company, tolerance, and support.