Household Budgets and Historical Living Standards: Towards Global Comparisons

jemeente ROTTERDAM.	Nº. 2:	0. 27. Gezin 5 personen.		
teenhouwer.		Man 30	in 36, vrouw 39, 3 kinderen 18, 14 en 11 jaar.	
UITGAVEN		Percent	INKOMSTEN	
I Brood	188.85	15,68	Man Juni 1910	
II Melk f 37.99 Boter en Margarine , 39.65			Augustus , 62.—	
Eieren , 0.72			September 60.— October 71.—	
Kaas , 11.15 ,	89.51	7,43	November 56.—	
III Suiker f 40.028			December , 70.—	
Kruidenierswaren 85.42			Januari 1911 56.— Februari 56.—	
Koffie 19.90 ^s			Maart 63.—	
Thee , 10.14 , 1	155.49	12,08	April , 80.—	
IV Aardappelen f 53.43			Mei 64.—	
Groenten 34.70 ⁸	300		Totaal f 779.50	
Grutterswaren 5.75			Vrouw	
Fruit , 7.66 , 1	101.541	9,26	Kinderen , 220.50	
V Vleesch / 115.95		_	f1000.—	
Vet 0.88			The state of the s	
Visch 7.30 , 1	124.134	10,31		
VI Kleeding f 103.90		54,76	Bijzonderheden.	
Schoeisel 34.29 . 1	138.19	11,48	Diversen:	
			School- en lesgeld / 29.35	
VII Brandstof f 9.55 Verlichting , 37.76 .	47.31	3,93	Voor huisdieren en voer , 17.64 Spoorgeld 3.25	
		1,39	Haishoudelijke artikelen . 6.15	
VIII Wasch- en Poetsart. f 16.69 .	16.69		Vermaak 7.83	
IX Huishuur f 163 1	163.—	13,54		
			Het te kort wordt aangevuld uit	
X Bier			een kapitaaltje.	
Tabak en Sigaren.				
XI Contributies f 18.02 Fondsgelden , 72.12	90.14	7,49		
	11 22	0.97		
Au Delasting / Alse	11.72			
XIII Diversen	77.58	6,44		
	204.16	100,-		



WORKSHOP AT THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL HISTORY, AMSTERDAM 12 FEBRUARY 2016

Measuring historical living standards

In broad lines, 3 approaches:

- 1) GDP per capita (e.g. Kuznets; Maddison; Van Zanden e.a.)
- 2) Real wage approach (e.g. Phelps Brown; Allen e.a.; Frankema & Van Waijenburg)
- 3) Anthropometric history (e.g. Komlos; Baten e.a.;Carson)





Advantages

- 1) Historical projection of present-day measures
- 2) Geographical comparability
- 3) Links up to grand historical explanations for global inequality





Increasingly: global comparisons

E.g. Maddison project

http://www.ggdc.net/maddison/maddison-project/home.htm

Maddison Project



Historical prices and wages/Clio-infra

https://www.clio-infra.eu/





Reconstructing Global Inequality



Disadvantages

- 1) GDP: Highly aggregate level (nation state)
- 2) GDP & Real wages: Not much scope for analyzing distribution effects
- 3) Real wage approach: issues of representativeness (esp. for non-monetized economies)
- 4) Anthropometric evidence: issues of representativeness/ scattered material





Household budgets as an alternative?

- > Allow for social stratification
- ➤ Note *actual* expenditure and income, the latter often from different sources (i.e. not only male wages)
- Allows for an integration of labour relations and households' consumption ('industrious revolution')
- > Available for many different regions from end of the 19th century.

However...





Household budgets as an alternative?

- Very different quality of information (comparability)
- Surveys often structured according to specific aims of contemporary administrators
- > Reliability and representativeness?
- ➤ As of yet, not much *comparative* work





Aim of this workshop

- ➤ Inventory of different projects using household budgets for reconstructing historical living standards in comparative perspective (e.g. Gazeley & Newell; Vecchi; Boter & Van Nederveen Meerkerk)
- Discuss opportunities and limitations of this source
- Discuss different methodologies used
- Achieve future collaboration/data sharing



Some issues to discuss...

- ➤ Representativeness of budget studies for living standards (esp. until 1930s → random sampling? Who has conducted study, with which purpose? Longitudinal analysis difficult → Arroyo Abad: "spotty coverage" data)
- ➤ How to measure the value of subsistence agriculture? (esp. in 'Global South') Market prices? Farmgate prices? Caloric value?
- ➤ Comparability of HH budgets on a global scale? (already issue within-countries!)
- Can we join forces? Standardization and future cooperation? What role can Clio-infra portal play?