

Joris van den Tol

Limiting risks in the Dutch processing industry, 1600-1800

1. Introduction

As an entrepreneur in the early modern processing industry there were profound risks and uncertainties that threatened business operations. Natural variance was high, and control, measurability, and predictability were low (Allen 2012). Arguably the most profound uncertainty might include a war destroying production facilities, a sovereign prosecuting your religious group forcing you to seek safer haven abroad, or a variety of natural disasters. More endogenous risks include competition from others. In the early modern Dutch Republic, the processing industry of colonial commodities (at the time termed *trafficq industry*) looked at political support in their attempt to remedy risks and uncertainties stemming from both exogenous political instability and endogenous market competition. This paper studies petitions presented to city, regional, and national political bodies to understand how and why and *trafficq industry* sought political support to protect themselves from uncertainty and risks. The decentralized political structure of the Dutch Republic means that it is important to study industry on all these political levels to get a full grasp of the influence of *trafficq industry*.

Studying the ways in which *trafficq industry* attempted to shield itself from risk and uncertainty is important because unlike most industries these industries were not bound by guild regulations, control, and protection. This means that it indirectly contributes to the debate on the efficiency of guilds for economic activity (Epstein 2008; Ogilvie 2008). If non-guild industries can obtain similar privileges as guilds, like monopoly rents and state support, this shows that an important reason guilds existed might not have necessarily exclusively been economic. Moreover, the processing industry presents a paradox as it quadrupled in economic size between 1600 and 1800, while the rest of the Dutch economy stagnated or shrunk (De Vries and van der Woude 1997, 499). Furthermore, compared to merchants, capital, or raw materials, industry was far less mobile, making it more vulnerable to risk and uncertainty. Finally, it offers an opportunity to include the Dutch hinterland (*landgewesten*) as a nodal point of the first era of globalization; an area of the country that is often overlooked in favour of Holland and Zeeland. This is particularly striking as this economic entanglement of the Dutch hinterland industry and for example the slave trade was emphasized by contemporary regents:

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[Trade to the West Indies and Africa] not only benefits the provinces of Holland and Zeeland through the annual circulation of capital amounting to many millions but also spreads its advantages throughout the entire Republic. This occurs either through the trade of agricultural and livestock products, manufactures, and *traffiq*, or by providing sustenance to thousands of households through the construction and repair of ships with all their necessities. This trade is capable of significant growth and equitable benefits for the state in general, and particularly for commerce and industry.¹

In the economic history of the Dutch Republic, there is quite a good grasp of the lobby for economic support by the primary sector (fishing and agriculture) (Post 2024). For example, after 1775 the herring fisheries received a subsidy of 500 guilders each time they went out to sea (van Zanden and van Riel 2000; Bochove 2004). The argument was that otherwise they could not stay competitive in comparison to Scottish herring fleets. The herring fishers themselves, however, proposed to support the demand side by mandating poor houses to buy a guaranteed quantity of herring. Like the primary sector, the influence of the tertiary sector (services and trade) for state support has been well documented (van den Tol 2020; Prak 2006). For merchants specifically, it has even been argued that they completely dominated various political bodies in order to dictate policies favourable to merchants (Glete 2002; ‘t Hart 1993; Adams 2005). For the secondary sector (industry) surprisingly less is known – apart from the grasp of this sector on city legislative bodies. For the processing industry in particular it is important to know how they influenced economic policy as they arguably added more value to the economic goods than transportation did.

This is therefore an article on early modern political economy, or more specifically, the origins of economic policies and the role of these policies for economic development. The argument that states and other polities influence economic performance is pushed hardest by academics belonging to the school of New Institutional Economics. The core of their argument is that political systems that lower transaction costs (e.g., by securing property rights and credibly committing to enforce institutions) drive economic growth. For the early modern period the seminal article making this argument is by the economists Douglass North and Barry Weingast (1989) who argue that the British Glorious Revolution led to more secure property rights because, in contrast to the Crown, Parliament credibly committed to respecting those rights. Historians have pushed back to this argument, for example demonstrating how political changes occurred before 1688, yet it has remained popular with economists. The most relevant criticism in the context of this article is put forward by Anne Murphy (2012) who has demonstrated that Parliament’s «credible

¹ «dat dezelve niet alleen vrugtbaar is voor de Provinciën van Holland en Zeeland, door de jaarlyksche circulatie van een Capitaal op veele millioenen begroot, maar dat dezelfs voordeelen zig verspreiden door de geheele Republicq, het zy door vertier van Producten van den Landbouw en Vee-Weydery, Fabriquen en Trafiquen, het zy door de Kost te bezorgen aan duizende Huisgezinnen door den aanbouw en reparatie van Schepen met alle haare benodigtheeden; dat dezelve Handel vatbaar is voor een merkelyken toewas en evenreedige voordeelen voor den Staat in het gemeen, en inzonderheid voor de Commercie en Industrie», Nationaal Archief (NL-HaNA), 1.01.02, inv. nr. 3850, Resoluties Staten Generaal, 19 May 1788.

commitment» was demanded in the public sphere rather than imposed or instigated top-down, or spontaneously occurring after 1688. In the context of political economy, or economic policies, this means that there is a difference between what *philosophes* thought, and what economic practitioners demanded. As one publicist wrote in 1697 «a fault too usual among men of letters» resulted from «reading without practice».² Constructing economic policies from the bottom up, that is to say, from the practitioners to the policy makers, aids more to our understanding of the origins, implementation, and longevity political economies than studying the writings from the men of letters (Hoppit 2017).

Petitions were the primary vehicle for economic practitioners to influence the political economy. Although petitioning was not formalized as a legal right until the constitution of 1798, cities, provinces, chartered companies, and the States General received thousands of petitions in the centuries before then (Oddens 2017). While the majority of petitions was related to individual permissions or privileges, such as the permission to leave a job or to receive assistance in the care for a family member, a substantial amount concerned requests for changes in laws or regulations (Vermeesch 2015). The historian Henk van Nierop (2000; 1997) estimates that in early modern Amsterdam about 40% of the bylaws and ordinances were the result of a petition. Petitions could be submitted by individuals, groups, and organizations (van den Tol 2020; Waddell and Peacy 2024; Huzzey et al. 2024; Prak 2013). Petitioners often used rhetorical strategies in an attempt to enhance the significance of their request, for example by claiming the broad economic benefit far outweighing their private privilege (Janse et al. 2024).

What is known about the relationship between practitioners' petitions and political economy is largely based around the interests of merchants (Zahedieh 1999). For Britain, Perry Gauci (2001, 212-14) has demonstrated the declining number of merchants petitioning on mercantile issues, as well as the eagerness of manufacturers to align their interests with overseas trade. Hugo Bromley (2023), studying the textile industry, has shown how local economic interests and the rhetoric of domestic employment became a corner stone of shaping England's political economy. Authorities in France were just as much inured to petitions seeking to influence economic policy, yet in France petitions and projects stemming from 'ordinary citizens' were much more disdained and consequently policy influence stemmed from local coordinated and mediated initiatives (Kaplan 2015, 121-25; Charles 2004, 4; Cross 2023, 119-20). While France and Britain were characterised by a thriving culture of printed publications by 'learned' men on political economy, a similar culture was entirely absent in Dutch (Weststeijn 2011; Erikson 2022). Therefore, understanding the political economy of the Dutch Republic and in particular the role of economic practitioners in shaping this, requires a study of petitions.

Studying risk specifically is important because it offers a new avenue of the role of government institutions in economic development. While authority's «credible commitment» to protecting property has provided new insights, studying their commitment to shield entrepreneurs from risk and uncertainty will offer new insights in the economic development of the Dutch Republic. Limiting risk and uncertainty

² *An Answer to a Late Tract, Entitled, An Essay on the East-India Trade* (London, 1697).

evidently lowered transaction costs. That entrepreneurs or capitalists offset risks to the state is not a new phenomenon or insight per se, but this article offers a fresh perspective by focusing on the processing industry of colonial commodities. Their interests were often different from the interests of merchants. Within Europe the Dutch Republic stood out for its comparatively open borders and relatively free trade. Championing the carrying trade, and making use of the entrepot system, meant that goods could relatively cheaply be imported to main ports and re-exported in smaller quantities in assembled cargoes to smaller markets all over Europe (Israel 1990; Lesger 1993). Most colonial commodities, however, did not arrive from the colonies in a form that was ready for market. Sugar arrived in a wet and dirty style that required refining, cotton was not yet spun into yarn, tobacco came in big roles, and Brazilwood needed to be ground before it was ready to be used. Whether the processing happened in the Dutch Republic or in other European countries mattered less for merchants but made a big difference for the industry. Limiting risks for the processing industry through for example export duties on unprocessed materials was one solution, but guaranteed purchasing of processed commodities (e.g., through an orphanage) could potentially be another.

2. Urban policies

In October 1685, the Edict of Fontainebleau revoked the Edict of Nantes which had up until that point granted French protestants the right to practice their religion without state persecution. Subsequently, many of these Huguenots fled to the Dutch Republic, some of whom ended up in the city of Nijmegen – a garrison town on the border with the German lands. In January 1686, these Huguenots in Nijmegen presented a petition to the city council requesting permission to set up a broadcloth industry (*laken*) in the city. Although the city had had broadcloth producers in the past, there were at that moment no existing broadcloth producers in the city. The city council responded very positively to the request from the French protestants, offering them free housing and workspaces in a former monastery. Moreover, the city council promised to pay for the repairs of the roof «and to protect the entrepreneurs from unexpected incidents».³ Other infant industry protection included an interest-free loan, tax benefits, a city-wide monopoly for eight years, and sixty orphaned boys and girls to produce the manufactures free of charge (*om niet*; literally for nothing) during a period of four years.⁴ Setting up a new industry involved many risks, and the entrepreneurs succeeded in convincing the city to limit some risks and to even absorb some exogenous risks like damage to the factory.

Another example shows how the city of Nijmegen protected the interests of its inhabitants to avoid competition from outsiders or newcomers. While in this instance these were peddlers rather than industry, it shows the control vested interests could have over formal institutions in the city. In June 1628, the Englishman Thomas

³ «ende de ondernemers ontlast van onverwachte voorvallen», Regionaal Archief Nijmegen (NL-NmRAN), 1 Stadsbestuur Nijmegen 1196-1810, inv.nr. 329 'Stukken totten Raadt, 1686', scan 6.

⁴ Regionaal Archief Nijmegen (NL-NmRAN), 1 Stadsbestuur Nijmegen 1196-1810, inv.nr. 329 'Stukken totten Raadt, 1686', scan 6-8.

Peters petitioned for burgher rights to be able to sell tobacco in the city.⁵ Six months later, in November 1628, the pedlar guild (*kramersgilde*) petitioned the city council for an ordinance outlawing the sale of tobacco by «outside tobacco sellers» (*vreemde tobaccoverkoopers*) without burgher rights or guild membership.⁶ As tobacco consumption rapidly increased in popularity, more people in the city were spending their money on consumer goods not controlled by the guild. This could potentially come at the expense of purchases of other goods, exposing the guild to endogenous risks. The guild offset this risk by requesting control over the sale of tobacco, effectively forming a tobacco cartel and eliminating competition. This is a form of regulatory capture by the guild, which did not increase economic activity as a whole, but did increase the guild's share of the economy. Moreover, this aligns with Sheilagh Ogilvie's view that guilds did not encourage innovation through monopoly rents, but shows that guilds attempt to stifle competition and to protect their share of the economic pie at any costs (Ogilvie 2004).

Something very similar happened by the guild of gold- and silversmiths, another industry that relied on colonial slave labour for its unrefined commodities.⁷ In 1692 this guild petitioned the city council to exclude «jews, outsiders, vagrants, or similar kind» from guild membership. This effectively limited the competition in this industry and protected the economic activities of the guild members.⁸ A few days later the city published an ordinance referring to the guild's petition to prohibit the aforementioned group from participating in the gold- and silver manufacturing industry, and from joining the guild.⁹

In sixteenth-century Amsterdam, a public-private partnership was formed for a new industry to grate Brazilwood. In a powdered form, this wood was used as a dye in the cloth industry. Relying on the forced labour of male convicts, this so-called *Rasphuis* dominated this industry for centuries. While there is substantial literature on this punitive institution as an innovation in the treatment of criminals, its economic dimensions remain mostly underexplored, even though financial benefits were certainly more important for the private investors than the moral ones. To protect the private investments in the *Rasphuis*, the city provided a monopoly within the city walls in 1599. However, only three years later, in 1602, the *Rasphuis* was threatened by economic competition from outside the city walls. Not far outside Amsterdam, in the Zaan area, the rural landscape was dominated by windmills that were mostly used to saw wood for the shipping industry. One of the millers, Pieter Jansz, realized that he could also use a windmill to grind Brazilwood to a powder; an industrial solution that was more economic than free convict labour. In a response, those interested in the *Rasphuis* petitioned the States of Holland for a monopoly in the entire province.

⁵ NL-NmRAN, 1 Stadsbestuur Nijmegen 1196-1810, inv.nr. 94 'Raadtsignaat, 1627-1629', 125v.

⁶ NL-NmRAN, 1 Stadsbestuur Nijmegen 1196-1810, inv.nr. 94 'Raadtsignaat, 1627-1629', 159.

⁷ An estimated 71% to 89,5% of the global gold and silver production in the seventeenth- and eighteenth century came from Potosí, (Barragán and Zagalsky 2023, 2–3)

⁸ «jooden, uijtdraggers, lopers, of andere gelijke soorten», NL-NmRAN, 1 Stadsbestuur Nijmegen 1196-1810, inv.nr. 121 'Raadtsignaat, 1692-1693', 24v.

⁹ NL-NmRAN, 1 Stadsbestuur Nijmegen 1196-1810, inv.nr. 518 'Keuren, ordonnantiën en publicatiën, 1688-1692', 115-115v.

The provincial States accommodated their request to some extent by banning milled grating, but left open the option for other cities in Holland to also use gang labour for processing Brazilwood (Aten 1995, 263). Over the course of the seventeenth century, other cities in Holland, especially Leiden and Rotterdam, followed Amsterdam's example to erect houses of correction (*tuchthuis*) to grind Brazilwood. This contributed to a prohibition on the import of grated Brazilwood from places outside Holland (Hallema 1935, 125-35).

Fig. 1. Men in the Rasphuis in Amsterdam grating wood for its dyeing qualities (Anonymous, 1665)



Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Objectnr: RP-P-1921-827.

Nevertheless, cities outside Holland, like Deventer, Kampen, and Arnhem, also followed with public-private partnerships in the form of grating houses for men to grate colonial wood for its dyeing qualities or spinning houses for women to spin

cotton and wool.¹⁰ Private investors in these correctional facilities relied on the city governments for its workforce. In a time of ‘limited supply’ of labour, the cities of Nijmegen, Tiel and Zaltbommel expanded the potential workforce. People who received a fine for a second time, but who had not yet been able to pay the first fine, would be forced to pay of their debts in the forced workhouses. While these groups would have previously not qualified for forced labour, expanding the potential workforce aided the entrepreneurs and shielded industry from labour supply risks. Moreover, the city councils hoped that «those who do not possess any goods» and «who knew they had nothing to lose», would be deterred from breaking city ordinances.¹¹

3. Provincial policies

The second political level where the *trafficq industry* could seek political support to limit their exposure to risk was that of the province. The composition of the provincial assembly differed per province, but was usually a combination of delegates from city burgomasters and rural members of the nobility. In 1725, Aleijda Italiaender from the town of Nijkerk petitioned the provincial Diet of Gelderland. Together with her late husband, Mordechai, and «further domestics» she had moved to Gelderland in 1707 and had opened a tobacco spinnery in Nijkerk.¹² Recently, an ordinance from Holland had led to severe economic disadvantage for her business. While she does not specify what had happened exactly, more information becomes available from a collective petition from the manufacturers (*fabriqueurs*) «in the tobacco spinning industry in this province» to the provincial Diet of Gelderland.¹³ Without any tangible result on her petition from 1725, Aleijda had seemingly rallied the rest of the tobacco industry in Gelderland. The petitioners explain how they had recently opened a new «Tobacco Factory» (*Tabacx Fabrijeq*), but they now found themselves confronted by new duties imposed by the province of Holland on «transitory trade». This meant that unprocessed colonial tobacco arriving in harbours in Holland (e.g., Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Enkhuizen) would be subject to export duties when transported to another province. The provincial Diet took this seriously and responded that it would threaten the Hollanders; if these trade barriers would not be removed, they would be forced to counter with «measures to protect their inhabitants».¹⁴

¹⁰ (van Velden and Wieringa 2023, 19); Collectie Overijssel, Deventer (NL-DvCO) 0003.1 Staten van Overijssel, inv. nr. 317, scan 91.

¹¹ «die geen goederen besittende (...) so veel te stouter worden (...) niets hebben te verliezen», Gelders Archief (NL-AhGldA), 0124 Hof van Gelre en Zutphen, inv.nr. 1478 ‘Landsdagrecessen 1710-1713’, scan 295-296.

¹² NL-AhGldA, 0012 Gelderse Rekenkamer, inv. nr. 0S22 ‘Landdagrecessen, 1724-1731’, fo. 320-321.

¹³ «Fabriqueurs in the tabacksspinnerijen binnen dese provincie», NL-AhGldA, 0012 Gelderse Rekenkamer, inv. nr. 0S22 ‘Landdagrecessen, 1724-1731’, fo. 628.

¹⁴ «sodaenige mesures te nemen, waar door derselver ingesetenen geprotegeert en tegens soodaene beswaar gedeckt worden», NL-AhGldA, 0012 Gelderse Rekenkamer, inv. nr. 0S22 ‘Landdagrecessen, 1724-1731’, fo. 630.

A delegation from Gelderland did indeed take this up with the provincial States of Holland, referring to a similar situation in 1694 when export duties on transitory tobacco were also reversed after complaints from Gelderland.¹⁵ After repeated insistences to receive a response, the States of Holland finally responded in March 1728 that they «could not find sufficient reason» to remove this trade barrier. Their main argument was that they wanted to avoid Holland's industry relocating to Gelderland to seek benefits.¹⁶ This was no irrational fear, yet the Holland export duty on unprocessed tobacco was insufficient to remedy this. This becomes apparent in a pamphlet that claimed that between 1720 and 1750 tobacco spinneries in Rotterdam had declined in number from 30 to 10. This industry had moved to Amersfoort (Utrecht province), Nijkerk, and Arnhem (Gelderland) (Hovy 1966, 551-52). At least in some part Gelderland accommodated its industry by partially removing the export duties on processed tobacco – this was intended to offset Holland's duties on unprocessed tobacco.¹⁷ It should be noted, however, that at least some of Gelderland's tobacco industry relied on tobacco produced in the Dutch Republic, rather than colonial tobacco (Roessingh 1976). Nevertheless, this example of the tobacco industry shows how industry sought protection at the provincial level from political risks – or regulatory instability – in other provinces.

What united both provincial policies is that they responded to petitions from economic interests, but what differed between them is that Holland's policy tried to shield its industry from economic risks and Gelderland's policy tried to shield its industry from political uncertainty. While the causes were different the instrument were similar as in both cases the province adjusted the duties to shield its economic interests from risk and uncertainty.

4. National policies

In the 18th century, there was the general belief that the economy of the Dutch Republic was no longer competitive with other countries. As the regents put it: «(...) the causes are principally the absence of timely attention to the changes of the general trade of Europe, particularly the slowly increasing competition of industry in the surrounding nations.»¹⁸ In 1751, Stadtholder Willem IV had devised a plan in coordination with the province of Holland to revive the Dutch economy. An integral part of this plan was to allow raw colonial sugar to be imported duty free, and to allow the export of processed sugar to leave the country equally without paying export tax. The preferential position of the sugar processing industry in the trade policy stemmed

¹⁵ *Resolutiën Staten van Holland*, 13 January 1728.

¹⁶ *Resolutiën Staten van Holland*, 13 March 1728.

¹⁷ NL-AhGldA, 0124 Hof van Gelre en Zutphen, inv. nr. 1750 Stukken betreffende het bezwaar, door de Staten van Holland en West-friesland gelegd op de gesponnen tabak uit Gelderland en Utrecht, 1730.

¹⁸ «de oorzaken (...) voornamentlyk geleegeen zyn in het gebrek van tydiggen aandagt op de verandering van het gantsche handelweezen van Europa, en wel byzonderlyk op de langamerhand toeneemende concurrentie der industrie van andere omleggende Natien», NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 3863, 17 September 1795.

from a petition campaign by the sugar refiners. However, rather than operating at a provincial level, the «joint sugar refiners of the United Netherlands» successfully addressed themselves on a national political level to the States General.¹⁹ Building on their success from 1751, they expanded their preferential economic position in 1755 by requesting «a prohibition on the refining of sugar in the colonies».²⁰ This cemented colonial global economic dependency into legislation. A little over two weeks later, after consulting the colonial trading companies West India Company and Sociëteit van Suriname, the States General resolved to indeed prohibit sugar refining «on St. Eustatius and all other Dutch colonies».²¹ In large part as a result of this trade policy, the Dutch Republic imported eight times as much sugar from French colonies as it did from Dutch colonies (de Kok 2021, 48). In 1757, when the ordinances had to be renewed, the representatives of the provincial Diet in Gelderland let it be known that they did not merely accept, but that «they were content» to continue this piece of legislation.²² Evidently, this policy did not only support sugar industry in the sea provinces, and part of the increase in raw sugar imports ended up in refineries in cities in the Dutch hinterland.

Like the sugar refiners, the tobacco *fabricqueurs* also found their way to the States General. In March 1776, for example, those involved in the production of «smoke and chew tobacco, *rappé* and snuff (...) for all corners of the world», protested a reduction in the export duties on unprocessed tobacco.²³ This very much worried the tobacco producers, as especially the export of homegrown tobacco at this low tariff of two rather than five per cent, would «allow foreigners' factories to flourish» because «wages were higher» in the Dutch Republic than abroad.²⁴ Not only the processors were harmed by this off-shoring, but also «the labourers» (*arbeidsman*) they employed were losing their subsistence. Therefore, the producers requested a reinstatement of the export tariff on unprocessed domestic tobacco of five per cent. Similarly protesting a change in tariffs were the producers of all types of goods in the city of Eindhoven in the Kempenland Quarter in May 1778. The producers claimed that the new trade restrictions were felt particularly hard in the small cities like Eindhoven, «whose inhabitants cannot live of agriculture, but only in producing, processing, crafts, and trade».²⁵ Therefore, they requested to be exempt from paying the tax – as they had done in one form or another – since 1232.

¹⁹ «de gesaamentlijke Rafinadeurs der Suyckeren in de vereenighde Nederlanden», NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 3806, 16 October 1751.

²⁰ NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 3810, 4 November 1755.

²¹ NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 3810, 20 November 1755.

²² «daaten welgevallen», NL-AhGldA, 0012 Gelderse Rekenkamer, inv.nr. 0S31 'Landdagrecessen 1757', fo 763.

²³ «fabricqueurs van rook- en kaauwtabak, rappé en snuyf, soo gekapt als gemaalen en gekorven tabak voor gewesten der wereld», NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 3831, 5 March 1776.

²⁴ «Buitenlanders (...) hunne Fabricquen te doen floreeren, en die der Supplianten doen te gronde gaan, om dat de Arbeidsloonen en kosten hier te Lande veel swaarder dan buiten 's Lands waaren», NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 3831, 5 March 1776.

²⁵ «daar uit voortvloeyende belemmering van Commercie en Fabricquen maar al te veel gevoelde, dog dat in het byzonder de kleine Steeden, welker Inwoonderen niet van den Landbouw, maar alleen van Fabricquen, Neeringen en Handteeringen en Commeree moesten bestaan, door de betaaling van

Changing tariff structure was one way for the States General to attempt to support the domestic industry, preventing offshoring was another. Joseph Gisbert de la Forest found this out the hard way. When the French-born silk *fabricqueur* petitioned the States General for a passport for him, his wife, and four children to relocate to Copenhagen in May 1756, his request was denied.²⁶

5. Conclusion

This article demonstrates that the political economy of global commodities like sugar, tobacco, cotton, or Brazilwood was not just affecting the diplomatic or national political arenas. Even at the regional or most local levels removed considerable distance from sea ports, the globalization of commodities was entangled with the political economy (see also Barragan and Zagalsky 2023, 4-5). Knowledge of processing commodities was mobile and so were the commodities themselves, but processing facilities were more firmly rooted in specific localities. As a result, the economic interests sought protection from risks and uncertainty at the local and regional levels alongside the national level and global processes surfaced at local levels. The arguments the economic interests drew on in their quest for support, regularly revolved around the employment depending on their industry.

For early modern entrepreneurs in the processing industry all political levels (local, provincial, national) offered opportunities to try and minimize risk and uncertainty. The solutions that these political bodies offered were primarily found in a form of protectionism. There was seemingly always a ‘them’ encroaching on their economic activity; at the city level threats came from the rural areas outside the city walls or religious minorities setting up shop in the city, at the provincial level threats came from other provinces, and at the national level the threats were foreign industries. A second form of support for *trafficking industry* came in the form of labour supply. Whether orphans or convicts, local governments were seemingly happy to offer forced labour in exchange for some education or rehabilitation. These policies succeeded in sheltering entrepreneurs from labour supply risks. It was not necessary to be firmly rooted in the local community to receive this kind of support, as the example of the French migrants in Nijmegen has demonstrated.

That economic interests not organized in guilds were able to mobilise political support for protection from risk and uncertainty invites a reconsideration of the role of guilds for economic development (Epstein 2008; Ogilvie 2008; Prak 2006; De Munck 2018). Likewise, these economic interests were not necessarily part of the merchant-regent class that dominated political bodies (Adams 2005). Yet, they were able to advance their interests – sometimes at the expense of merchant capitalist interests. This suggests that it was possibly considered an obligation for political authorities to support economic activity; a form of paternalism to protect the weaker members in society (Taylor 2023).

de inkomende en uitgaande Regten zoo als die thans gevordert worden, wel allermeest wierden gedrukt», NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 3848, 11 June 1787.

²⁶ NL-HaNA, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 3811, 28 May 1756.

This interpretation of a sort of paternal obligation for political authorities to explain why political bodies protected economic interests from risk and uncertainty helps to explain why none of the forms of support focused on the demand side, but all support focused on the industry itself. It was not about protecting economic systems or liberal ideologies, it was about limiting risk and uncertainty for weaker actors.

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