

Mentality and Power Balances

The Development of Tenant's Attitudes on a Dutch Estate

Kitty Verrips

Verrips, Kitty 1988: *Mentality and Power Balances. The Development of Tenant's Attitudes on a Dutch Estate.* – *Ethnologia Europaea* XVIII: 59–71

In the recent past so called 'regional experts' described the inhabitants of Salland, a district in the eastern parts of the Netherlands, as conservative and suspicious. In this article this mentality of Sallanders is discussed in relationship with changing power balances in a community of farmer-tenants. With the replacement of various traditional divisions within the local community old characteristics were replaced by a new outlook on life. By making a connection between mentality and power balances via the process of socialization it becomes clear that the static conclusion of the regional experts can only perform a heuristic function and that the term mentality should be used as a dynamic concept.

Kitty Verrips, *Department of Sociology, Agricultural University, Hollandseweg 1, 6706 KN Wageningen, The Netherlands.*

Until the 1950s it was common for Dutch academics to make statements about the "attitude", "character", "ethos" or "mentality" of the inhabitants of Dutch cities and regions. The so-called regional experts of Salland, an area in the eastern parts of the Netherlands where I carried out research in 1977, also made such statements. I was struck by the remarkable similarity of their comments about the mentality of Sallanders in their writings:

"...a mentality of undecisiveness, a slowness, which is possibly partly the result of an inborn love of ease, but more likely a hereditary compulsion to slow, well-considered, internal deliberation ... One of the fundamental faults ... the lack of a feeling of honour, which enables him to remain hidden and secret as long as possible and to think more about himself than about the truth" (Ter Kuile 1938: 81, 84).

"He keeps things locked up in himself. He knows the pressure of life, a servitude of centuries washed over him, while they kept his family under pressure. He says, "'Joa, joa" (yes,

yes) and thinks to himself, "Why should I begin a discussion; you have your point of view and I have mine" (Waterink 1943: 22).

"He doesn't allow himself to be easily captured by new ideas. He must first wait and see. He can only accept something new when circumstances force him to or when he has discovered that something new offers a tangible and permanent advantage ... In addition there is his fatalism ... "That is the way it has to be" (Groenman en Schreuder 1949: 104).

Closedness, suspicion and attachment to tradition are characteristics that are repeatedly mentioned. Time and again the regional experts have described Sallanders, or in their terminology "the Sallander" as conservative, vacillating and fearful, secretive and suspicious.

Given this unanimity it is even more striking that I could find no trace of these characteristics among my informants during my research. Their accounts of the times before World War II, on the other hand, did contain

indications of the mental attitudes described by the regional experts. Obviously something had changed in the course of time.

In this contribution I shall try, on the basis of limited empirical data collected for another purpose, to reconstruct and explain the change in the mentality of the members of a small Salland community. In contrast to the regional experts, I do not regard mentality as something that once came into being and was then transmitted unchanged from generation to generation, but as something that has evolved in conjunction with other social developments. None of the regional experts appear to have asked themselves how the "Salland mentality" that they describe, fitted with or was a reflection of existing social relations. If they tried to provide an explanation that was more than a reference to Saxon origins, they usually referred to the feudal relations in the past, the "servitude of centuries", that apparently in some mysterious manner had penetrated the genetic make-up of Sallanders and provided every newborn child with the mentality of its ancestors.

What the regional experts also failed to make clear was just who these persons were whom they referred to as Sallanders. Did they mean large landowners who were responsible to no one, or perhaps young, recently married sharecroppers' sons living with their parents? Did they mean Protestants or Roman Catholics, farmers or labourers, inhabitants of small hamlets or city dwellers? The answers to these questions cannot be found in their writings. Moreover, they did not indicate who those persons were whom the Sallanders feared and to whom they displayed subservient and vacillating behaviour. Were they relatives, fellow community members, or outsiders? They were apparently unaware that they themselves occupied defined social positions and that what they maintained was a "general mental attitude", was the attitude of rural folk towards local notables and gentlemen from the city.

In order not to make the same mistake, I must first indicate which Sallanders this article discusses, where and how I gathered my material, and what I mean by mentality. The data that this discussion is based on was col-

lected in the Overijssel estate that I shall call Eeckeren.¹ Since 1973 the estate has been the property of "Eeckeren Estate Ltd.", and all shares of this company were owned by the Fenters family that had owned the estate for several generations. A small village church, a school, and several shops were located at the centre of their property. I lived there three months in order to question tenant farmers and other Eeckenaren about the present and past. The object of my research was to describe and explain the changing social relations on the estate, particularly those between landlord and tenant. This article therefore does not treat "the Sallander" or "the Eeckenaar". It focuses exclusively on Eeckenaar tenant farmers, their wives and their children.

When I discuss the mentality of these people I mean their behavioural dispositions in relation to their social surroundings, that is their inclination or propensity to behave in a certain manner to other people.² These dispositions are based upon the knowledge that they have acquired, upon the way they have learned to categorize and evaluate their social environment. This knowledge and evaluation applies especially to four problem fields, four questions upon which every child, whatever society it grows up in, always receives an answer: "Whose is what?" (property), "Who does what for whom?" (division of labour), "Who belongs together with whom?" (solidarity), and "Who is superior to whom?" (hierarchy).³ The answers to these questions form the basis of the propensity people develop to behave in a certain way toward others.

If we give this meaning to the concept of mentality, then we can further distinguish three aspects. In the first place mentalities refer to social relations. Whether behavioural dispositions in certain situations can in fact be translated into actual behaviour is dependent on other factors. Secondly, they refer not only to social relations, but are an intrinsic part of the figurations that people form with each other and the positions that they occupy therein. When changes in these figurations occur, the answers to the above four questions will also change, resulting in a shift in mentality. In short, a certain mentality is a function of

a certain figuration. Finally, mentalities have functions for people who together form a figuration. Through the acquisition of behavioural dispositions they are able to systematize their social environment and to display the "appropriate" behaviour towards others. In this way mentalities can contribute to the continuation of social relations.

If we wish to give these briefly sketched points of view a concrete content then it is important to know which answers to the four central questions have been given: What were Eeckeren children told about property, division of labour, solidarity, and hierarchy? Briefly, the answers were as follows: land and farms were the property of a "lord", a large landowner. Their parents lived on his tenancies and they had to work for them. The parents and children were Roman Catholic and acknowledged the authority of the parish priest. The owner of the estate, parents and parish priest were all superiors. Inferiors were the farm labourers who had no access to tenancies.

In the first section of this article I shall examine these four power balances (landowner/tenant, parents/children, parish priest/parishioners, farmers/labourers) in the period before the second World War. After that, in the second part, I shall set out changes in these and their consequences for the mentality of Eeckenaar tenants and their families.

I.

Landowners and tenants

In the 1920s and 1930s the relations of the tenants towards the Fenters were characterized by fear, uncertainty, and servility. The landowners owned not only the land but also the houses and barns, which increased the tenants' dependence. The amount of land outside the estate that could be reclaimed for agricultural purposes was rapidly dwindling. This meant that Eeckeren farmers' sons who wanted to follow in their fathers' footsteps, were dependent upon the goodwill of the Fenters. They consequently did their best not to say or do anything that might displease the landowners. It was better to be silent and obedient than to come with initiatives that might be

misinterpreted. Only by never opposing the owners could Eeckenaren exert moral pressure to maintain their hold over the means of production and to safeguard the enterprises for their children.

This docility applied not only to matters of farming but permeated other areas of life. It was the custom in the 1930s for farmers' sons to present their brides to the landlord and his wife. In 1977 farmers and their wives maintained that they would have married even though the Fenters had not approved of their choice, although formerly the consequences of such a step would have been considerable. It would probably have meant that the sons would not have been allowed to succeed their fathers as tenants. The influence of the landowners also used to be evident in less important areas. Children even used to be sent to pick flowers for 'madam':

"She wasn't an easy lady. As children we always went to look for snowdrops in the park near the castle. We would have to bring these to her ... Well, snowdrops grew in front of the castle, but we were not allowed to touch those. She sat by the window there. If we could not find enough flowers and still went and picked those in front of the house, well then we really got it."

Children experienced how their fathers would stand with cap in hand when the landlord spoke to them; they learned that poaching was absolutely forbidden because 'sir' was against it. They heard him threaten, "I'll send you off", when things didn't please him. In short, from their earliest childhood it was brought home to them that it was best to be obedient, because otherwise ...

The unequal power balances between landowners and tenants which produced this submissive behaviour was based not only on the fact that the former were the owners of the means of production, but also on their greater knowledge, which they could use as a power resource. For example, they were able to avoid implementing measures government took in the 1930s to protect tenants. Even if they were aware of these various new rules, Eeckenaren

did not have the necessary expert knowledge required to understand them fully. Moreover, they had the feeling that even if they were to try and put into practice their newly acquired rights, the Fenters would always win. Moreover, they were not inclined to do so because the landowners were not interested in making the estate more profitable by increasing rents. The farmers knew that the rents were low. Opposition to the Fenters might result in an increase that they would rather not risk. For these reasons there were no open protests against the poor maintenance of the farms and the damage caused by game.

We thus see that the landowners were able to compel obedience through their property, the manner that they exploited this, and their knowledge. Their tenants perpetuated this power balance through their attitude, which they also taught their children. In addition to the socio-economic difference, there was also a large cultural divide between owner and tenant.⁴ The Fenters spoke differently, dressed differently and led a very different life than the farmers. This difference strengthened the tenants' feeling of inferiority and their docile attitude towards the landowners.

The unequal power balances, and the behavioural dispositions towards the landowners that were related to this, also influenced the opinions Eeckenaren had of each other. Partly as a result of this, children of tenants were taught a second important distinction: that between parents and children.

Parents and children

The manner in which children were supposed to behave towards their parents – submissive and docile – was related to the way succession to the farm was regulated. At first sight it appeared that it was rather arbitrary during the 1920s and 1930s. Sometimes younger sons left the family enterprise, and at other times the oldest would move away. Sometimes all sons left the farm and a son-in-law would take over the tenancy. This arbitrariness was related to the fact that upon marriage the successors always moved in with their parents (-in-law). When the oldest son reached a marriage-

able age there were often too many young children at home to make it possible for him to marry in.⁵ A son could do one of two things. He could postpone his marriage or could try to find work elsewhere. If he chose the latter, one of his younger brothers or a brother-in-law would be successor. If he chose the former, he would remain a farm hand for a number of years, until the younger children had left and he could marry in.

Marrying in had consequences for the relations between parents and children. The living coresidence of two (and usually quite rapidly three) generations on one farmstead was often a source of conflict and tension. A farmer's wife:

"If I could relive my life I would do it differently. I first had to wait until my husband could move into the farm of his father. My father-in-law continued to live for another seventeen years and my mother-in-law for more than thirty years. She remained the boss at home. She organized everything and prepared the food. I was really only good for working in the fields. All my life I had to play the maid."

An old farmer and his wife usually continued to run the farm until they died, while their son and their daughter-in-law (or daughter and son-in-law) worked for them.

The relation between a mother and daughter-in-law was apparently charged with frustration, not the least because the mother, if she was much younger, continued to live longer than the father. The mother-in-law, who firmly controlled the strings to the household purse, interfered with the upbringing of the children, regulated the work on the farm and decided what would be eaten. This severely affected the lives of many Eeckeren farmer's wives.

The older generation wanted to keep everything as it was and to continue to farm in the manner they were used to; children had to resign themselves to that. Because of the rules of succession various changes were very slow in reaching the Eeckeren farms. It was better for the younger generation to forget the new ideas they learned in farming courses and pa-

tiently to wait and see what father and mother would decide. Parents were always right and one owed them obedience. In that respect they resembled the landowners.

The relations between parents and children not only resembled those between owners and tenants, they were closely related to them. No matter how severe the tensions within the household were, they could barely discuss them, and certainly not with outsiders. If the owner of the estate were to hear of such conflict, he might well decide to lease the tenancy to another.⁶ A farmer's son:

"We had to hide a great deal. Quarrels didn't come out in the open, but they sometimes certainly existed. I can still remember clearly that there were problems between my mother and grandmother, but others didn't notice it."

Conflicts had to be hidden because there was no solution to them. Parents as well as in-marriage children were completely dependent on the enterprise that they worked together. Children could derive no rights from the fact that they had worked for years on the farm. Parents were the official tenants of the Fenters, thus the only alternative that the younger generation had if the conflicts became intolerable was to leave the farm. It was not easy to make a living elsewhere, while the abandonment of aged parents by the potential successor was regarded as shameful:

"I used to have a very difficult time. Thirteen people lived at home, because we married in at the parents of my husband and we rapidly had many children. Yes, that's what you used to do. Parents had to be cared for and helped ... you were expected to help your parents to the end."

When older Eeckenaar tenants and their wives look back on their lives, it is apparent from their stories that most were far from happy in the three-generation households. But there were no alternatives. For those who wished to marry and farm it was the only solution. Living together was especially difficult because people not only occupied the same housing, they also worked together in the same enter-

prise. This created hierarchical work relations between parents and children which were manifested in other areas. I was told about fathers who thrashed full-grown sons in public because they had been caught playing billiards while they were supposed to be sitting in church; about the choice of marriage partner decided by parents:

"There was not much love involved in that. They just said: look, there's a girl from a good farm, and then it usually took place."

Everything that was opposed to the opinions of the parents was condemned and forbidden. The children were continually reminded that disobedience meant "to be shamed in public" and might very well result in the loss of the tenancy.

Then finally, when after a long and patient wait, a couple could begin to farm independently, there were problems about the children. Did they behave themselves in accordance with the Fenters' wishes? Did they not bring dishonour upon the family by marrying beneath their position, or by poaching a hare? Through these parental problems children were socialized to be obedient and not to stray from the well-trodden paths. Just as with relations between landowner and tenant, this case shows that unequal power balances resulted in learning certain behavioural dispositions which, in their turn, contributed to the persistence of unequal power balances. The relation between landowners and tenants and between parents and children linked to an education in which silence, submissiveness and obedience were stressed and handed down.

Priests and parishioners

We find a similar emphasis in the behaviour of priests in Eeckeren and in the Roman Catholic teaching they preached on the estate. Eeckeren was, and is still today, a Roman Catholic island in a Protestant sea. As early as the nineteenth century the Fenters denied access to tenancies for those who held other beliefs and they financed the construction of a church and presbytery. In the church villagers were

enjoined to be obedient: to the word of God and to the parish priest. Eeckenaren obeyed their spiritual leader, when he told them to spend a few days a year in retreat or forbade certain marriages.

"There used to be a priest who didn't want distant cousins to marry each other. This was forbidden by the church, he said. He kept on about until the couple gave it up."

Farmers' wives tried to obey him when he came and told them that since the youngest child was a year old it was time for another, and were unhappy when they did not succeed.

"In those days there was a priest who used to hold a family mass a week after Epiphany, in which he praised women with ten, twelve children. I was always angry about that. I myself had only three and that certainly wasn't on purpose. In those days we didn't know about all these modern things, did we?"

Although I know very little of the exact nature of the preaching during the 1920s and 1930s I think it is clear that the faithful were not urged to resist the landowners – who attended mass each Sunday, in their own chapel, hidden from their fellow parishioners – or their parents. Quite to the contrary; "Thou shalt not covet", and "Honour thy father and thy mother" were repeatedly stressed to the parishioners. The hierarchical relations between landowners and tenants, between parents and children and between priests and laymen strengthened and reflected each other. Eeckenaren were constantly being shown a behavioural model which severely punished disobedience. It could lead to conflict with their parents, to loss of the chance to lease a farm, to expulsion from the church and being gossiped about and looked down upon by fellow villagers.

The conservatism that local historians noted as one of the characteristics of the Salland mentality can be linked to this without difficulty. It is not actually a real conservatism, because they were like "that", but it was a

behavioural disposition, related to a position in a figuration. The same applies to the fear and uncommunicativeness noted by local historians. Who wouldn't be fearful in a situation where a landowner could remove a tenant from his farm without further ado; who wouldn't be closed if all conflicts had to be hidden? The observation, that the position in a figuration, the power resources to which he or she has access, and the concomitant room to manoeuvre is of fundamental influence on the mentality a person develops are once again evident if we examine the distinction Eeckeren tenants make between farmers and labourers.

Farmers and labourers

Every tenant's child in Eeckeren was taught that labourers and their children were dirty, that you should have nothing to do with them, that they were inferior.

"You could see the difference between farmers and labourers in their clothes. That was evident at school. Farmers children were neatly dressed and only played with each other. Labourers children wore what they could grab together and were full of lice and fleas. You looked down on them, you didn't play with them."

This discriminating stereotype applied especially to the families of the so-called day-labourers, crofters who lived in the vicinity of the estate and who hired themselves for a modest daily wage to the Fenters to work in the forest. These people threatened the position of the tenants who in actuality were also landless. If their tenancies were terminated they would have to work as labourers, while a labourer who obtained the favour of the Fenters could become a tenant.

Given these minimal differences in landownership, farmers emphasized other differences between them and labourers. The tenants regarded themselves as more or less the equals of the landowning farmers in the neighbourhood. It is for this reason that they expressed differ-

ences in status in terms of the amount of cattle owned, something in which they were clearly superior to labourers and certainly not inferior to the owners.

The distinction between farmers and labourers was not only expressed in avoiding the company of the latter, but also in explicit marriage prohibitions:

"As a large farmer you could better not marry someone from a farm that had only three or four cows. A labourer's daughter was, of course, out of the question. A girl like that would have no idea what was expected of her".

Young men who were eager to marry had to control themselves and avoid labourers (and their daughters).

We see in the attitude of tenants towards labourers a very different behavioural disposition than towards estate-owners. Had not local notables and academics, but farm labourers become regional experts, then presumably very different information would have reached us about the mentality of Salland farmers. It was only towards children of day-labourers that tenants' children didn't have to behave submissively: they didn't have to be afraid of offending them. They only had to control themselves to the extent that no marriages were forced to take place. It is evident from the facts that there were no "shotgun" marriages on the estate, and that there were also no unmarried mothers living there, that those who continued to live in Eeckeren were obedient to their parents in this respect.

Just as the relations between landowners and tenants and between parents and children were also unequal, so were those between farmers and labourers. In this last relationship, however, power chances were distributed differently. This gave rise to a totally different behavioural disposition. On the one hand we clearly see among tenants characteristics that have been regarded as typically Salland: servility, conservatism, closedness and fear; but on the other hand they did not display these characteristics in their relations with the day-

labourers. Here they felt that they were their superiors.⁷

II.

A sociologist who, following a questionnaire survey in 1964, thought that he could conclude:

"that in a society where in the recent past there has been a degree of feudalization, this can still be observed in the mentality of the population ..."

and that

"... the tenants of the Eeckeren estate display a mentality that differs from the attitude of the landowning farmers and is not the same as the more businesslike relation between tenants and landlord in modern times" (Broecx 1964: 5, 9).

was called to account by furious farmers and obliged to withdraw his remarks. The tenants no longer wished to be regarded as obedient dependents of a large landowner but as businesslike modern cattle breeders.

How can we explain this clear change in mentality? What were the changes in the social relations on the estate that they were linked to? In order to answer these questions we must take up the thread of the first section of this article and turn to the four power balances noted above. This time, however, not as static oppositions but as changing social relations.

Landowners and tenants

In the years following the second World War Eeckenaren continued to think in terms of the opposition between large landowner and tenant, but its importance began to change. In the first place the sum paid for the tenancy declined to a small percentage of the total cost of the enterprise. This made the annual payment of the sum, an event during which the unequal power balances were expressed, a much less important occasion. This development is related both to the organization and rational-

ization of the enterprise, whereby farmers continually increased their investment, as well as to growing government controls which kept the rent, compared to the value of the land, artificially low. These government controls also protected unsure tenancies. New laws guaranteed tenure to the tenant and conveyance of the enterprise to the successor. The agent:

"It is almost impossible to terminate a contract. To do it as owner you would have to cultivate the land yourself and of course the Fenters can't do that. In addition, everything has to go before a judge. That's much too involved for us."

Tenants no longer have to be submissive in order to obtain or keep a tenancy.

In the second place the increasing use of long, inheritable leases on houses and farming buildings (the farmers paid for new buildings themselves) protected tenants. They made use of this increased room for manoeuvre and demanded their contractual and legal rights. For example, they dared to engage in dispute with the agent and fight their case to the highest level. These changes in power balances and mentality were also noticeable in daily life. The landowner and his wife no longer called, when there was a birth, sickness or death. Mrs. Fenters:

"I have no social obligations in the village. They don't need me here. If I were to receive a birth announcement I would go there, but mostly they don't send cards to us."

The paternalistic concern of the landowner for the lot of "his" tenants has disappeared completely. The farmers were no longer interested and had nothing more to gain from it. They preferred to settle their affairs by calling on the agent during his office hours. Even the traditional lighting of the Easter fire, one of the last ritual tasks of the landowner, was taken over clandestinely by the village youth in 1977. A tenant:

"People used to be much more submissive.

They stood with cap in hand: Yes, Sir, no Sir. They don't have the power they once had when they could simply kick you off your farm. People still take their hat off, but nowadays it's simply courtesy."

Children who grew up on the estate in the 1970s were no longer brought up to obey the landowners. Independence and personal initiative were more highly valued. This was not only related to the changes in power balances between tenants and landowners, but also to the shift in the relation between parents and children.

Parents and children

During the first decade after the second World War many newly married couples still moved in with their parents, but this soon came to an end. This development was related to the introduction in 1957 of the Old Age Law. After that date tenants over 65 were guaranteed a permanent income. Although it wasn't very much, older Eeckenaren could survive on it by growing vegetables and potatoes. Moreover, the 1958 Rent Law stipulated that the children of tenants did not have to wait until the death of their father to take over the enterprise. Henceforth it became possible to do so when the latter reached 65. Consequently, most farmers during the 1960s and 1970s passed their enterprise on to their successor when they reached that age. They went to live in small houses that were built on the farm property, or left for old age homes.

The three-generation household disintegrated as soon as it was no longer necessary for the parents to continue working in the enterprise in order to support themselves. During my research there were only two households on the estate consisting of three generations. Both cases involved a widow and a married son, his wife and children. They had been living together before 1960. In 1977 older Eeckenaren spoke jealously of newly married couples who no longer, as in the past, had to care for their parents:

"Nowadays they build all these old age apart-

ments and houses and so on. Now no one is ashamed anymore if their parents move there."

The departure of aged parents was accompanied by a change in the household sphere. Increasing mechanization also made it possible for young mothers to give more attention to their children and henceforth they could avoid conflicts with the grandparents about their upbringing. At the same time the schooling of the children was considered of increasing importance. During his research Broecx was able to note the following remark of the farmer from the parish:

"Children should not be taken away from the enterprise since schooling is just a way to keep the children from working. It is easier to teach children not to work than to instruct them how to work" (1964: 18).

In 1977 such pronouncements were unthinkable. Every tenant was concerned to see that his children had the highest possible education. The school principal:

"In the last ten years the community has been changing rapidly. Children get much more education and the parents are also more interested in it. Each year two or three children in fact go to the VWO and last year we even had five. Both boys and girls, that makes no difference. If a child can do the work, it can go. The others go to MAVO, the LTS, the agricultural school, or a form of craft instruction. Many girls continue later with an INAS training or something like it. They train in various parts of the country and see a lot, while formerly they hardly ever left the village. Those are some of the things that are happening here." (Translator's note: VWO (Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs) trains for university matriculation, MAVO (Middelbaar Algemeen Vormend Onderwijs), a lower level general education, and LTS (Lagere Technische School) provides vocational training.)

The interest in education also increased because the prospects in agriculture were far from rosy. More education seemed to guaran-

tee tenant children a better future, and at the same time the increasing presence of non-farmers on the estate had a stimulating effect.

Both the change in household composition and the greater emphasis on education and diplomas changed the way in which children were brought up. Submissiveness was no longer taught; independence was emphasized. Very young children were even brought to a play group in a neighbouring village because "it was better for the child". Courses dealing with modern insight in child care and education, organized by the Association of Rural Women, were crowded.

In the 1970s parents were no longer seen as authorities that had to be obeyed in all things, but as people with whom you could discuss what you had learned at school and with whom you could quarrel without arousing criticism from the entire community or jeopardizing the possibility of obtaining a tenancy. Even the parish priest no longer preached "Honour thy father and thy mother" as categorically and invited young people to parish evenings where, together with older Eeckerenaren, they discussed such problems as "mixed marriages", "our Catholic education", and so forth.

Priests and parishioners

Just as the relation between landowner and tenants changed, so also did that between Eeckeren priests and their parishioners. This was related not only to the shifts that had taken place in the other power balances but also to changes in Roman Catholic doctrine and the way in which this was interpreted by the various priests. It was striking, for example, that in 1977 many older women disapprovingly recounted how priests at the time had tried through moral pressure to increase the number of their children, even though they had been obedient:

"They wouldn't dare to do that now. People would say: See that you get one yourself.

When the new priest came a few years ago. I said to him: I hope you're not one of those you-have-room-for-another-one."

In spite of the fact that any artificial means of birth control was still officially prohibited by the church, all women had managed to reduce the number of births in the past ten years. The drop in the birthrate in the parish of Eeckeren was in fact more rapid and abrupt than elsewhere in the Netherlands.⁸ Within forty years Eeckeren, once a community where a large family was the general norm, had become one with extremely small families.

As judged by Vatican rules, it appeared that Eeckenaren no longer obeyed the church. Statements such as the following, made by an elderly woman, would seem to support this:

"The pope does not know what is happening in the world. He is old and enclosed by monastery walls. He doesn't understand what kind of problems people can have."

It must be remembered, however, that within the Dutch church there were also priests who proclaimed views that diverged from the official teaching, and that in the 1960s and 1970s Eeckeren had several of these progressive priests. They didn't preach the ideology of obedience the way their predecessors had in the 1920s and '30s but stressed the personal responsibility of the faithful. They organized oecumenical services, established a parish council and brought the faithful together to discuss social problems. Moreover, they encouraged the Eeckenaar's first hesitant steps on the path of disobedience to the Fenters. They tried to close the Fenters' private chapel and, when they didn't succeed in that, they encouraged the villagers to sit there when the church was full. They also busied themselves with the development plan, badly needed new buildings on the estate, and so on.

It is difficult to judge whether the power balance between priests and parishioners has shifted. The church and church attendance have remained important to the inhabitants of the estate; the opinions that the priests advocated were accepted. One could thus argue that the Roman Catholic clergy still controlled the means of orientation and thus on the basis of this power resource influenced the beha-

viour of the villagers. The opinions, the values that they preached, however, were totally different from those presented in church before the second World War. These new ideas fitted much better with the subsequently altered social relations on the estate.

Farmers and labourers

The increase in the numbers of non-farmers able to come and live on the estate, thanks to the construction of single family houses, was accompanied by a decrease in status differences. Labourers who moved into these houses during the 1960s and '70s were not day labourers, but persons who worked in the new Eeckeren enterprises or commuted to neighbouring towns. Their income was not less than that of the farmers. That was a valid reason for the latter to cease looking down upon them. Moreover, these workers were not strangers, but the children of tenants or otherwise related to them in some way. For that reason they were viewed as equals. By the 1970s marriages between farmer's and labourer's children had become quite usual in Eeckeren. A tenant:

"Yes, that's something very recent. In my time my sister was going out with a labourer, after having ended a relation with a farmer's son, in fact the only son of an owner. My father thought that terrible – he was one of the old guard – but she persisted and married him. My father later came to accept it because everybody began to do it. Employees, as labourers are called nowadays, often earn more than we farmers. Nowadays you can hardly be proud of being a farmer anymore."

As is clear from this quotation, the farmer – labourer opposition still existed in the minds of tenants, but the value judgement that had been related to it in the past had been replaced by another. There was another behavioural disposition related to it which meant that labourers were no longer stigmatized and discriminated against.

The change in mentality of Eeckenaren consisted not only of a revaluation of the old oppo-

sitions as a result of changing power balances in the local community. Because of developments in the wider society of which the estate was part, a new opposition became increasingly important to tenants and their families.

We Eeckenaren and the others

Characteristic of the development of the villagers' attitude during the 1970s was the establishment of a new organization, Local Interest. It represented the interests of Eeckenaren at the municipal and the provincial level. This organization obtained a say in decisions of the agent, promoted the building of new houses for native Eeckenaren and in general increasingly provided information to the local population about local and regional developments. The organization came into existence because the inhabitants of the estate were increasingly confronted with the fact that the permission of favour of the Fenters was no longer sufficient to be allowed to rebuild farm houses or to build new stalls or houses. The landowners were also obliged to obey government departments, which, for example, had thought up a small-nucleus-policy which permanently controlled the future development of villages such as Eeckeren. Eeckenaren united in order to be able to apply pressure on the authorities who made the decisions important for the village community. Consultation with the agent, as the Fenters' representative, a say in his decisions and fighting together for the social and economic viability of the estate came to replace passively waiting for what the landowner would decide. Eeckeren tenants still formed one party in a power balance, but now together with the agent, labourers and shopkeepers. They had now become dependent upon the decisions of the municipal council of Bronnen (the municipality of which Eeckeren formed part) and the Provinciale Staten of Overijssel. This time, too, attitudes and behavioural dispositions were linked to the existence of a power balance. These new attitudes took the form of a new opposition: we Eeckenaren versus the other inhabitants of the municipality of Bronnen. This opposition was usually related di-

rectly to a completely different opposition: we Catholics versus them Protestants:

"When the new burgomaster was inaugurated he came here to Eeckeren and entered the community. All of Bronnen had been warned and decorated with flags, but we had so-called been 'forgotten'. Yes, the relation with Bronnen is so bad because it is Catholic here and not there.

There is an official in the municipality who is very much against Catholics, and that's a problem for us of course."

The common religion was being used to provide a new answer to the question "Who belongs together with whom". That this was a completely different answer than the one Eeckeren tenants had taught their children indicates to what extent the local figuration had changed. The same is evident from the behavioural dispositions that accompanied the new opposition. This time Eeckenaren showed no tendency in behaving to "the others" in a manner that could be regarded as "conservative", "suspicious", or "closed". They judged their power chances in the new power balance to be greater than in their former relations with the landlords, and tried during the 1970s actively to exert pressure by organizing press conferences, manipulating municipal councillors, putting together pamphlets for the provincial authorities, and presenting these with great publicity.

Conclusion

Viewing the developments in Eeckeren, it is evident that power balances, and with them also mentalities at the local level, began to change markedly when government began increasingly to regulate more aspects of social life.⁹ Because of this, the relevance of landownership as a power resource diminished, which in turn enabled ageing parents to leave the tenancy. The teaching of submissiveness, which for long had been the cornerstone of the process of socialization, was replaced by an emphasis on independence and, related to that, the desire to influence government decisions

that affected the village community. With the replacement of various traditional divisions within the local community the cleavage community-outside world became more important for Eeckenaren, and old behavioural dispositions were replaced by new ones. During my research I consequently found no trace among my informants of the much noted pre-Second World War fear and suspicion. Quite the contrary. They were prepared to help me with my research in the hope that they could use the results in their fight against the municipal and provincial authorities.

Does this now also mean that the work of the regional experts had better be forgotten? I don't think so. Their observations on the thoughts and behaviour of their regional compatriots can perform a very useful signalling function in the reconstruction of behavioural dispositions of certain social groups in the (recent) past. We should always ask ourselves, however, what positions they occupied in the society they described, what the power relations were, and what behaviour, given their own position, they could never have observed. Moreover, we must always realize that not only were mentalities once formed sociogenetically but they are continually being formed. Only then can we avoid the static conclusion that the regional experts proposed and use the term *mentality* as a dynamic concept.

It is much more difficult to avoid using the *mentality* concept as a stereotype for a large group of people. In this article I have tried to resolve the problem by not speaking about "the Sallander" but about Eeckeren tenants, their wives and their children. But in doing this I haven't done justice to the many differences in *mentality* that existed between them. For example, there are indications that women had a more rebellious attitude towards the landowners than men and that there were also *mentality* differences between large and small tenants. However, I wouldn't do justice to the similarities if I were to emphasize these differences to the extent that I no longer speak about the *mentality* of Eeckeren tenants and their families.¹⁰ It is precisely by making a connection between *mentality* and power balances via the process of socialization that we

can see that in a specific figuration the power chances of many people are more or less the same and it can therefore be made plausible that they also have a similar *mentality*.

Notes

With thanks to Cees Cruson and Jojada Verrips. Translation Jeremy Boissevain.

1. The place names Eeckeren and Bronnen and the family name Fenters are pseudonyms.
2. I utilize a limited definition of the concept of *mentality*. *Mentality* in principle also includes behavioural dispositions relevant to the natural environment and to one's own physical body and drives, both of which are closely interwoven with the behavioural dispositions relevant to the social surroundings. In this discussion I have limited myself to the last of these dispositions for two reasons. In the first place, the pronouncements of the regional experts concerning the Salland *mentality* refer primarily to social behaviour. Secondly, I have too little empirical data of the attitude of Eeckenaars towards the surrounding nature and themselves during the 1930s to be able to reconstruct their behavioural disposition towards these areas.
3. These four questions have been designated by Goudsblom as "universal aspects of social structure" (1977: 199) that focus attention on problem areas we may expect to encounter wherever people live together. As he indicates, this is not an exhaustive summary of all possible human social problems, but they do have important heuristic functions for the problems that will be treated in this article.
4. A cultural difference implies a difference in *mentality*, but it also means more. If we take *mentality* to mean behavioural dispositions, then cultures can be seen as complexes of acquired behavioural dispositions (with their concomitant knowledge and values), behaviour and the material consequences thereof.
5. The power balances between tenants and landowners also affected those between parents and children. As long as the Fenters did not rebuild or enlarge the farm houses so that two families with young children could be accommodated, the successor would have to postpone his marriage. Sometimes this lasted years.
6. Although the tenants were not owners of the land and farm buildings, there is evidence that the rules of succession indicate an inheritance system characterized as impartible inheritance in the anthropological literature (cf. Wolf 1966: 73-77). The authority structure that has been described for peasant households in areas with similar impartible inheritance resemble those in Eeckeren: "Toward younger children, a father

was likely to be affectionate and indulgent, but as they grew older and became economically relevant he became more demanding and dictatorial ... decision-making lay in his hand" (Cole 1973: 772, 773). Nonetheless, there are important differences. Peasant owners did not have to hide their conflicts from landowners. Successors were expected to dominate everyone: "It is small wonder then that this individual who was trained for a lifetime to be a tyrant, found it difficult to remain subordinate to his tyrant father" (Cole 1973: 773). In contrast: tenant children in Eeckeren were brought up to be submissive which made it easier for them to resign themselves to the decisions of others.

7. The socialization of *all* tenants' children, and thus not only the successors, into adults who felt themselves superior to labourers had consequences for those who had to leave the farm. These moved as far away as they could, to areas where they were not known, where the shame of having to work as a labourer was felt less heavily. At the same time they very often cut all links with Eeckeren. Older informants subsequently didn't know where family members lived who had not married into the area adjacent to the estate.
8. In the parish of Eeckeren the birthrate per thousand inhabitants in 1937 was still 25.6 while that in the Netherlands as a whole was 19.8. In 1975, however, the figures respectively were 10.0 and 13.0. That year the natural increase in the parish was in fact zero, while in the Netherlands as a whole it was still 4.7 per thousand.
9. In other words: the development of mentalities is

related to processes of integration. This means not only a shift of power balances at the local level that accompany this process, but also the development of mass media by which people become a part of ever expanding interrelationships, increasing knowledge and (possibly) change their values.

10. By exploring these differences further it would presumably be possible to distinguish individual mentalities or personal characteristics of various Eeckenaren. I would choose, however, to use the mentality concept in such a manner that not individual differences would be emphasized but precisely the "collective personality" of persons with a "collective biography". Only then can we make statements about the behavioural dispositions of entire categories of the population.

References

- Cole, John W. 1973: "Social Process in the Italian Alps". In: *American Anthropologist* 75: 765-785.
- Goudsblom, J. 1977: *Sociology in the Balance. A Critical Essay*. Oxford.
- Groenman, S.J. and H. Schreuder 1949: *Sociografie van Ommen*. 's-Gravenhage.
- Kuile, G.J. ter 1938: "De bewoners van Twente en Oost-Salland". In: P. J. Meertens en Anne de Vries (red.), *De Nederlandse volkskarakters*. Kampen.
- Waterink, J. 1943: "Het Nederlandse Volkskarakter". In: J. de Vries (red.), *Volk van Nederland*. Amsterdam.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1966. *Peasants*. Englewood Cliffs.