A Medieval Industry in Decline. The Leiden Drapery in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century

Hanno BRAND

With the recovery of Calais by the French troops in 1558 England lost its last economic foothold on the continent. At the same time this event marked the end of long-standing commercial relations between the English wool staplers and drapers of the Dutch city of Leiden. This was probably the final blow to the city’s already declining medieval drapery that for the production of its quality cloth had relied solely on the supply of fine English wool. Although efforts were made to establish a new staple at Bruges or Middelburg, all attempts failed; and Leiden’s medieval drapery industry soon vanished.

The recovery of Calais was only one of the many factors that contributed to the fall of an industry that for almost two centuries formed the main source of the city’s welfare. This article, which relies on the important work of Posthumus, the articles by Unger dealing with the Dutch grain trade and the brilliant book on the Antwerp market by Herman van der Wee, focuses on the causes of the decline of the Leiden drapery, and explains why efforts made by the city government to forestall the effects of the long crisis were bound to fail. It was therefore necessary to approach the problem on three interdependent levels: studying the local situation reveals the structure of the industry and its conservative tendencies that made an appropriate reaction to the crisis nearly impossible; the second level refers to the relationship with the surrounding countryside and the regional forces that undermined the city economy; lastly the development of international trade with the Baltic area and central and southern Germany shows why markets were lost, and could not be recovered.

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1 For help in preparing the English version of this article I am very much indebted to J. Ziegler. It is an extended version of the lecture presented at the colloquium.

1. Structure, regulation and production

Until the second half of the fourteenth century Leiden’s cloth industry can best be described as modest in size, non-specialized and orientated toward local and regional markets. The first signs of industrial expansion became visible around the middle of the century. In 1351 the city of Leiden was granted a privilege that prohibited all manufacture of cloth outside the city walls within a radius of three miles. Possibly this measure was due to an important change in production methods and industrial organisation. The most prosperous retail cloth merchants, who initially focused on trade, became industrial entrepreneurs, called drapers. Probably because of alterations in demand, especially in the Baltic area, they switched to the production of second quality cloth, the so-called "voorwollen lakens". These were of lesser quality than the luxury cloth made in the old drapery centers in Flanders, but proved to be enormously popular with the wealthy burghers in the Baltic area and later also in markets in central and southern Germany.

Leiden’s industrial ascent in the second half of the fourteenth century became possible because conditions were rather favourable to that specific branch of industry. As traditional Flemish drapery was disrupted by political and economic disturbances, demand in the Baltic increased, English wool production rose considerably and became more accessible through the staple of Calais. Although the Flemish drapery suffered heavily from competition from the rising English textile industry, it seemed that the Leiden drapery withstood this economic threat fairly well until about 1500. Even the debasements of the English pound sterling in 1464, which encouraged the export of English cloth, did not hinder Leiden’s industrial growth at the time.

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Initially, Leiden drapers used various kinds and qualities of wool, coming not only from England, but also from Scotland and the continent. At the very end of the fourteenth century drapers from Leiden started to visit the wool staple at Calais on a regular basis. There the finest English wools were purchased. This improvement in quality turned out to be decisive for the development of Leiden’s cloth industry. While in the second half of the fourteenth century only trade with Schonen seemed to have been of some importance, from 1396 on contacts with the Hansa, the Baltic ports and the transit markets in the Netherlands, as at Bruges, Bergen-op-Zoom, Antwerp, Kampen, Deventer and Amsterdam, were intensified. Also more and more consuming markets within the Netherlands were reached. Within a few decades the manufacture of the "voorwollen" cloth, made only of the finest English wool, turned out to be Leiden’s most important trademark until the second half of the sixteenth century. Throughout the whole period Leiden depended very much, and in the sixteenth century probably too much, on the delivery of woolens from Calais and sales in the Baltic area.

Although the commercial significance of "voorwollen" cloth is beyond doubt, it would be an exaggeration to say that the manufacturing process was wholly geared to that type of cloth. Throughout the fifteenth and greatest part of the sixteenth century various qualities of wool and cloth were to be found in the city. In fact, ordonnances on the drapery only concern the ranking of excellent or luxury cloth called "puiken", secondly the "voorwollen" cloth and finally the cloth made of wool of second and even third quality. Cloth made of materials of inferior quality as the so-called wool of the fourth or even fifth kind, were not reckoned as drapery products, nor was this the case with linen. Sources give no indication of the size of the production of these types of rough cloth, but it seems likely that these were only made in rather small quantities.

According to Posthumus the Leiden drapery was also known for its highly developed dyeing techniques in various colours, that were, according to local sources, unique in Holland and probably also for the rest of the Northern Netherlands. Even Kampener cloth was dyed in Leiden and a sixteenth century statement reveals that because of the dyeing in several colours, production costs were higher.

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6 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 239-242.

7 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis II, 1-2.

than in the surrounding cities. Those cities solely produced black cloth.\(^9\)

The success of the Leiden textile industry was closely linked with the preservation of the high quality of its products. In close cooperation with the drapers, the magistrate issued all kinds of statutes that in great detail regulated every step of the production process. The fabrication of "voorwollen" cloth was carefully separated from the manufacture of textiles of lesser qualities in order to prevent mingling inferior kinds of raw materials with fine English wool. The magistrate prescribed which quality of wool, dye and type of tools were to be used. Also production limits were set in order to prevent mass production that could lead to the deterioration of the quality of the textiles. The same regulation avoided detriment to the market, kept prices competitive and assured a reasonable income to the small drapers and labourers that depended on them. Trade in woollens, with the exception of a few years, was forbidden.\(^10\) In the eyes of the city government Leiden was to remain first and foremost an industrial center.

City officials, called "waardeins", carefully checked the various stages of the manufacturing process that took place within the city walls, like fulling, dyeing, weaving, shearing and stretching. Strict regulation and control was made possible through the putting-out system. Production was supervised by the draper, who personally purchased the raw material or charged other drapers to do so. After distribution of the wool and skins among the town's drapers, their employees manufactured the cloth in various stages. Production was carefully segmented and artisans were denied free access to the market. The finished product was marketed by the entrepreneur and shipped initially by the Hansa merchants but especially from the third quarter of the fifteenth century on to a growing extent by Dutch skippers, leaving from the fast growing harbour of Amsterdam.\(^11\)

\(^9\) POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 71 and notes 2,3 and 4, 110. IDEM, Bronnen II, 497-498.


According to Posthumus regulations in Leiden were stricter than in most other textile centers. But because of its very high quality standards, Leiden cloth withstood competition from many other traditional cloth centers in the Netherlands, Germany and England, although the latter proved to be the strongest one in the sixteenth century. As will become clear later on, it is therefore almost ironic to say that the carefully balanced policy of the magistrate that supported the commercial success of Leiden’s industry in the fifteenth century, turned out to be one of the elements that caused its downfall in the next.

2. Finances, wool supply and trade

Comparing graph one and table one, concerning the production figures of "voorwollen" cloth between 1470 and 1573 and the immigration figures between 1450 and 1574, it will become clear that especially for the period 1480-1530 the trends do not match. While immigration is slackening from the 1480’s on, production figures are at their highest level between 1480 and 1530, reaching their peak in the second decade of the sixteenth century. The production of "voor­wollen" cloth from 1520 onward did not diminish gradually, but declined in phases. Quite sudden setbacks occurred in 1521-22, 1530-1532, 1542-1544 and probably if not easily detectable around 1548. From then on the last phase of decline began, reinforced by the already mentioned loss of Calais in 1558. It therefore took some time before the Leiden medieval drapery died out. The severity of the economic depression is only to a limited extent reflected by the demographic trend. It shows a rather sharp decline between 1530 and 1539 and negative evolution continues after that, but immigration figures do not fall as

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12 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 124-127.


14 See for the production figures also HOWELL, Women, 185-188 (Appendix I).

15 HOWELL, Women, 185-188 showed that production figures were at the thirth quarter of the 15th Century probably as high as in the 1530’s.

sharply as those concerning cloth production. 17

Although the significance of this comparison is limited, it reveals nevertheless that a rise in production and consumption does not automatically imply an increase in employment, resulting in a growing attraction to "foreign" labourers to move to Leiden. In fact between 1480 and ca. 1500 quite the opposite was the case. The magistrate issued various statutes in order to prevent drapers and labourers from leaving the city. Furthermore sources indicate that between 1494 and 1514 the number of looms and fuller's workshops diminished considerably. 18

On the other hand, the third quarter of the fifteenth century is generally considered the heyday of Leiden's drapery. Despite the fact that production figures were considerably lower at that time than during the period of 1476-1530, economic conditions were favourable. 19 The local economy profited from a relative stable mint policy and healthy situation in the city finances. Tapping important taxes, such as those on wool imports and cloth export, which in turn would affect the profits of the entrepreneurs and salaries of the artisans, was therefore not necessary. Also the absence of all kinds of calamities such as war, blockades of trading routes, disease and famine benefited economic growth. 20 This resulted in a unprecedented demographic boom. Although immigration figures were as high during the preceding decades, the growth of the city's population was no longer affected by the regular outbreak of epidemics, neutralizing the effects of

17 The high figure for the decade 1540-1550 is due to the forced immigration of inhabitants in the surrounding countryside in 1542. POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 375. See also JANSMA, Het economisch overwicht, 49.


19 See HOWELL, Women, production and patriarchy, 186-187. BRAND, Crisis, beleid en differentiatie, 60. Between 1450 and 1476 an estimated average maximum production of 18.676 per year and 14.085 pieces minimum. Between 1476 and 1497 an average production of 21.746.5 and between 1497 and 1530 24.519 pieces per year was reached.

the enormous flood of new inhabitants between 1360 and 1440.21

The trend as shown in graph one suggests a rise in demand of "drapery cloth" and probably an improvement of trading conditions until about 1520. It is not necessarily an indication of the town's welfare, nor does it adequately reflect the entrepreneurial climate and working conditions within the city walls at the end of the fifteenth century and the very first years of the sixteenth. This period deserves some attention because, despite the growth of production, some phenomena causing the downfall of the Leiden drapery after 1520 were already visible at this time.

During the last quarter of the fifteenth century crisis struck the Dutch economy. As Noordegraaf indicated in his book on the supposed welfare of the county of Holland, prices of primary goods were high. War and party strife crippled a number of economic activities. Reports made up by officials of the central government in 1494 mention widespread poverty and unemployment. In the first years of the 1490's many cities in the Netherlands found themselves on the verge of bankruptcy.22

In Leiden the financial and economic conditions were as bad as elsewhere.23 The war with France, especially in the first years of the 1490's, made access to the staple in Calais almost impossible. In an attempt to ensure the import of English wool, the city took the financial risk of making the hazardous trip to the staple. But because of its weak financial position the city proved to be incapable of paying the English staplers. As a result, relations with Calais, always the


Achilles heel of the city’s economy and welfare, deteriorated. However, it did not result, as Posthumus thought, in a serious decline of import of English woollens, which in his opinion was the main cause of the city’s depressed economic situation. First and foremost it was the pitiful financial situation of the town that prevented economic growth, not only in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, but also during most of the first half of the sixteenth. The many civic rents that the town magistrate had issued in the 1480’s in order to balance the city budget, became an enormous burden in the following years. Payments had to be made every year and therefore much of the city’s income was spent in that way. Debts to the hundreds of buyers of civic rents and to the staplers at Calais were enormous. As an immediate solution the magistrate decided to tap incomes from the main source of the city’s welfare. Taxes on the import of wool and export of finished cloth were raised considerably. Furthermore, because the prices for primary goods had risen, salaries of the artisans had to be adapted to the new living standards. All those extra costs were forced to be carried by the drapers, who were, however, not able to increase their profits because competition from English textiles had risen. Bad relations with the staple resulted in delivery problems, not so much in quantity as in quality of the wool. Since quality was the most important trademark of the Leiden drapery, it undermined the competitive position of the drapers on the international markets. The remark made by Leiden officials in 1494 that the drapery had lost much of its vigour by then, should be seen as a sign of the worsened entrepreneurial working conditions within the city, on the one hand, and the increasing competition with the English textile industry, on the other. Despite the forced reorganisation of city finances by governmental officials during the period 1498-1510, Leiden’s financial problems were fundamentally not solved. The burden of the costs of the civic rents remained

24 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 196-197. BLOK, Geschiedenis II, 222-223.

25 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 200-201, 421-45 Appendix V.

26 BRAND, Crisis, beleid en differentiatie, 60-65. BLOK, Geschiedenis II, 225-226. See for deteriorating living conditions especially for weavers and fullers during the first half of the sixteenth century POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 308, 344-346 and NOORDEGRAAF, Hollands welvaren, 85-87.

27 FRUIN, Enqueste ende informatie, 167-169. Also NOORDEGRAAF, Hollands welvaren, 33-34, 77-78 and DOWNER, De financiële situatie, 10.

28 HAMAKER, De stad Leiden in staat van faillissement, 185-189. BLOK, Geschiedenis II, 137-138. There is no adequate study of the financial situation in the sixteenth century. A good effort was made, however, in a graduate thesis by
much too high and prompted the sovereign to provide special arrangements. Up to about 1570 Maximilian, Charles V and his successor Philip II granted the city an extension of payment on several occasions. It probably prevented the city's bankruptcy but it did not provide the financial manoeuvring space needed to give the drapery a new impetus for cheaper production or a new direction. According to statements made in 1514 and a drapers' complaint from 1526 taxes were much higher than in most other cities and forced up the prices of their products. In 1531 drapers calculated in front of the magistrate that they paid on an average 93 Carolus guilders more in taxes than their colleagues in surrounding cities did. Only in 1545 did the magistrate agree to abolish the high tax on wool imports in order to prevent further deterioration of the industry.

England pursued a protective policy in order to promote its own textile industry. Export of wool from England was taxed and, in evergrowing quantities, was kept for its own rapidly expanding industry. It not only led to a scarcity of raw materials at the staple, but wool became also very expensive, which again undermined the traditional draperies in the Netherlands. Prices of high quality cloth rose, while from 1506 on relatively cheap English cloth flooded markets in the Netherlands. This was due particularly to the treaty between England and the Netherlands, known as the "Intercursus Malus". Import conditions for English products became quite favourable, because water tolls had to be payed only once. English merchant adventurers were allowed to sell their cloth themselves. Circumventing middle men allowed them to lower the prices of their textiles. Within a very short time Leiden lost its home market to the English. Even in the city itself


32 JANSEN, Welvaart in wording, 294. BLOK, Geschiedenis II, 223-224. VAN DER WEE, Growth of the Antwerp market, 123.
the inhabitants favoured English textiles. Prices payed for a piece of finished English cloth in about 1530 were as high as that for the fine English wool needed for the production of one piece of Leiden cloth.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite several negative trends, production of Leiden cloth increased until 1520. This is partially explained by the positive developments in trading relations with the Baltic region. Trade in Leiden textiles followed the course of grain commerce with the Baltic. Although it is unknown how many pieces of cloth were transported to the area it is clear that the ships leaving Amsterdam and elsewhere for Baltic grain were at the same time transporting Leiden and other types of cloth to the Baltic ports.\textsuperscript{34} Initially the Hansa monopolised trade in grains and Dutch cloth, using the skippers from Amsterdam and other harbours merely as transporters. From the end of the fourteenth century on, competition between the Amsterdam port and the Hansa merchants intensified. At the cost of war with the Wendic cities between 1437 and 1441, skippers succeeded in circumventing the Hansa, becoming the major traders in grain from Prussia, Livonia and probably Russia in the course of the second half of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{35}

Relations with the Hansa and with Lübeck in particular remained quite hostile. The Hansa insisted on maintaining the monopoly on the cloth trade through the staple of Bruges, while Lübeck tried to safeguard her position as grain staple in the Baltic.\textsuperscript{36} Nevertheless, during a meeting in 1474 in Utrecht the Hansa was forced to concede. The Utrecht treaty was a commercial victory for the Dutch because it prescribed free trade in the Baltic area. In 1499 a new attempt by the Hansa to enforce the staple privilege upon the merchants from Dutch cities as Leiden, Amsterdam, Hoorn, The Hague and Kampen failed. From that moment trade through the Sound was dominated by Dutch skippers. The port of Amsterdam proved to be the most important transit market for Baltic grain and probably also for cloth destined for the ports along the coasts of the Baltic.\textsuperscript{37} This proved to be very much to the advantage of the Leiden drapers who were liberated from

\textsuperscript{33} POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 254-255. IBIDEM, Bronnen II, 366.

\textsuperscript{34} UNGER, De Hollandse graanhandel, 253-255 and note 5. K. SPADING, Holland und die Hanse im 15. Jahrhundert (Weimar 1973) 153-160.

\textsuperscript{35} UNGER, De Hollandse graanhandel, 256-258. SPADING, Holland und die Hanse, 15-69.

\textsuperscript{36} UNGER, De Hollandse graanhandel, 259-260.

\textsuperscript{37} JANSEN, Welvaart in wording, 196-197, 299-300. UNGER, De Hollandse graanhandel, 260-264. POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 247-249. SPADING, Holland und die Hanse, 87-93.
monopoly of the Hansa merchants which had diminished their profits for a long time. These developments helped to forestall English competition for several years. As Dutch skippers were to discover some a decades later, however, the hostile attitude of Lübeck remained a threat to Dutch commercial ambitions.

3. The loss of consuming markets

The overvaluation of silver in the Netherlands during the last decades of the fifteenth century posed an enormous attraction to English merchants and Southgerman trading firms and merchants. Famous firms, such that of the Fuggers, were established in Antwerp and a growing number of German merchants visited the Brabantine markets. Commercial contacts between German merchants and English cloth traders especially flourished. According to Munro this was due to the fact that Bruges lost its cloth staple position "because of their adamant refusal to trade" in English cloth, which was welcomed by Antwerp. This trend coincided with a set back in woollen cloth production in many German cities and, according to Kellenbenz, a revival of cloth trade. In the first quarter of the 16th century merchants at the Brabant markets were not only interested in the maritime routes to southern Europe, but also in the continental routes through central and southern Germany. As a result sales of English, Dutch, Flemish and Brabantine cloth in central and southern Germany and even further east increased. As mentioned above Leiden drapers sold their products on the Brabantine markets of Bergen-op-Zoom and Antwerp, which linked them to other German markets.

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38 VAN DER WEE, *Growth of the Antwerp market*, 104-105, 131-133.


Their cloth was traded in Frankfurt, Strasbourg, Göttingen and Emmerich. The boom of the Antwerp market at the beginning of the sixteenth century, combined with improved trading conditions in the Baltic, resulted in a rise of sold quantities and postponed the decline of the Leiden drapery for a number of years.

A combination of several wars, famine and a mint policy that severely damaged commercial interests further halted the growth of the Antwerp market between 1520 and ca. 1535. War with France broke out four times within the period 1521-1541 while large areas of the Low Countries suffered from assaults by the troops from Guelders. Bad harvests in the Baltic area caused famine in the Netherlands. Grain prices rose sharply and affected the purchasing power of unskilled and skilled workers. Of course those events left their mark on the Leiden drapery. Already in the early 1520 Leideners complained that commercial activities had come to a standstill which negatively affected the level of prices and profit margins.

Trade with the Baltic was interrupted by war with Denmark, resulting in a temporary blockade of the Sound. These problems were caused by the dynastic interests of Charles V, who, in 1523, allowed his brother-in-law Christian II, king of Denmark, to take refuge in Holland. He was forced to resign by Frederick I, who immediately chose sides with Lübeck who in turn grasped the opportunity to attack the Dutch Sound trade. When in 1531 Christian II decided to recover his kingdom with the support of his brother-in-law, hostilities led to a second blockade of the Sound in 1531. The damaging results of the interruption of the Baltic trade are mirrored in the graph concerning the production figures of the Leiden drapery.

Another blow to the economy in the Netherlands was the outbreak of the Peasants War in Germany and the disruptions of the Reformation. Trade along the continental routes diminished, which resulted in the decline of the Brabantine markets as at Bergen-op-Zoom and ’s-Hertogenbosch. Commercial contacts via the continental route would never again achieve their former level because of the threat of civil war in Germany, culminating in the Schmalkalden War in 1546.

42 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 250-251.
43 VAN DER WEE, Growth of the Antwerp market, 143, 150. NOORDEGRAAF, Hollands welvaren, 82-83.
44 NOORDEGRAAF, Hollands welvaren, 83-84.
45 VAN DER WEE, Growth of the Antwerp market, 144. UNGER, De Hollandse graanhandel, 265-267. JANSEN, Welvaart in wording, 322.
46 VAN DER WEE, Growth of the Antwerp market, 164-166.
The grain trade with the Baltic, on which transport of textiles heavily relied, suffered from the regular levy of the so called "congie-geld". This tax, which can best be translated as "allowance fee", was levied from 1505 by the central government. After a number of bad harvests which frequently resulted in grain shortages and famine, all export of imported or produced grain in the Netherlands were forbidden. These prohibitions were regularly issued, which posed a threat to the continuity of trade with the Baltic.\textsuperscript{47} An exception was made for those traders who were prepared to pay an extra export tax, the "congie-geld". Although the government hoped that by levying the tax a complete interruption of the grain-trade could be prevented, it soon became an obstacle to free trade in general. During a hearing before the Great Council at Mechelen in 1546 concerning the abolishment of the "congie-geld", merchants from Amsterdam made clear that since transit of grain was taxed, merchants from the Baltic avoided the Amsterdam harbour and sailed directly to England where they sold grain and bought all kinds of products like cloth, wool, lead and pewter which were also available in Holland. Thus, not only was the function of Amsterdam as a transit market for grain threatened, but also the consumption of Dutch industrial products, such as textiles, declined. "And once merchants changed their routes", the Amsterdam delegation stated, "it is very hard to get them back the way one would like to". Finally the case was won by the Amsterdam merchants in 1548 and Holland was exempted from the "congie-geld".\textsuperscript{48}

Commercial interests in general were affected by the revaluation policy of the Habsburg emperor in 1526-27. The negative effects of that policy were intensified by devaluations in the surrounding countries which reinforced their market positions.\textsuperscript{49} The consequences were immediately felt in many cities in the Netherlands. In several places riots broke out and in Leiden, sixty drapers failed within one year and left the city. In their track a large numbers of labourers followed. For the same reasons the production of quality cloth collapsed in Mechelen.

\textsuperscript{47} Prohibitions were issued in 1501, 1505, 1520-1521, 1527, 1532, 1535, 1538, 1542, 1545, 1551, 1553-1556, 1562, 1565 and 1571. UNGER, \textit{De Hollandse graanhandel}, 477-484.

\textsuperscript{48} UNGER, \textit{De Hollandse graanhandel}, 384-386. The statement in Dutch as cited by Unger runs as: \textit{"als de coopman andere wegen gewoon wordt soe en kan men hem nyet weder gecrygen als men wilt"}.

\textsuperscript{49} VAN DER WEE, \textit{Growth of the Antwerp market}, 184. NOORDEGRAAF, \textit{Hollands welvaren}, 84.
shortly after 1530. 50

Conditions in Leiden worsened rapidly. A dramatic outcry from the burgomaster Willem van Oijen in 1530 made it clear that poverty was widespread. Departures from the city were enormous. Many unskilled workers and artisans were forced to steal because payments lagged behind grain prices; yet charity foundations could no longer support the poor. 51 New blockades of the Sound caused by war with Denmark and Lübeck in 1536-1538 and 1542-1544 undermined Leiden's position on the Baltic once again. The peace of Speyer in 1544, which turned out to be the definite end of Lübeck's trading ambitions in the area stimulated the Dutch Sound trade. 52 Within a few years Amsterdam was to become the most important transit market to the North. The blossoming of Amsterdam and the second boom of Antwerp market did not lead, however, to a revival of the Leiden drapery. 53

Table 2 indicates the pace at which Leiden's competitive capacities deteriorated between 1535 and 1541. The Leiden drapery even proved incapable of competing with the Ghent and Mechelen prices. While prices for a piece of Leiden cloth measuring 16 ells, rose almost 70%, those of Mechelen and Ghent cloth of 30 ells length remained quite stable. Yet these textile centers were definitely rivalled by the English industry that reinforced its position after what Van der Wee calls "the storm of debasements" in the early 1540's. 54 Cheap English cloth easily surpassed the products of all the traditional drapery centers in the Netherlands. By then the Leiden drapery had already lost its inland markets to the English. According to a council resolution from 1543 almost all cloth produced in Leyden was meant for export, but already in 1548 there were complaints that consumption of Leiden cloth had deteriorated, because of the shift in demands in the Hansa cities. 55


51 POSTHUMUS, Bronnen II, 361.

52 UNGER, De Hollandse graanhandel, 267-268. JANSEN, Welvaart in wording, 322-323.

53 VAN DER WEE, Growth of the Antwerp market, 143.

54 VAN DER WEE, Growth of the Antwerp market, 184-185.

Nevertheless the English mint policy merely postponed the downfall of the English traditional drapery. Demand for high quality cloth in general steadily diminished until becoming nearly non-existent in the course of the 1560’s.

4. Undermining forces in town and countryside

In Leiden the crisis had further side effects that damaged the city’s economy. The pitiful state of Leiden’s finances has already been mentioned and needs no further attention here. Obviously it only reinforced the economic depression at a time when production diminished and wool prices, salaries and taxes remained high. Shortly after 1520, the price of cloth, which according to the drapers was already unprofitable, was forced down by the activities of the so-called "fockers". The "fockers" secretly tried to conclude contracts with small drapers, who could not postpone selling their products. By offering a guaranteed sale on the Amsterdam market, they forced many drapers to accept lower prices. Their activities damaged the market and caused much trouble to those drapers who were in fact forced to accept the new prices.

Another disturbing effect was caused by the wage demands of fullers, weavers and dyers. Especially at times when there were grain shortages and blockades of the Sound, their living conditions became difficult. Strikes broke out among the weavers in 1537 and 1545 and protests were heard from different groups of labourers in 1522, 1525 and 1533. Fullers demanding higher salaries in 1528 argued that the prices of grain, which were between 10 to 20 groten for a "achtendeel" in the last century, now had risen to more than 20 groten. However, the limit was not yet reached. Between 1540 and 1550 prices had risen to 40 and sometimes even 50 groten.

Labourers proved conscious of the insufficient linkage of price levels and wages. In 1541 master fullers and their employees pointed out that the cost of living had risen more than 50% in the last sixty years but that salary adjustments had not been made accordingly. In fact, quite the opposite was the case. Textile workers argued that wages lagged behind the inflation rate to such an extent that their purchasing power had diminished with 20% within forty years, exclusive of

56 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 258.

57 UNGER, De Hollandse graanhandel, 255-256.

58 NOORDEGRAAF, Hollands welvaren, 127.

59 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 344, 434-440 Appendix VIII.
rises in prices of primary goods and production means.\textsuperscript{60} Noordegraaf's calculations concerning the development of the purchasing power of masons and their masters in Leiden between 1480 and 1569 confirm these statements. A clear negative trend occurred between 1480 and 1490 and from 1500 on. Problems must have been enormous during the second decade of the sixteenth century and especially in 1521, 1525 and 1528. Despite a number of severe fluctuations between 1540 and 1570, average purchasing power stabilized but on a much lower level than was the case in about 1500.\textsuperscript{61} Probably forced by bad economic and financial prospects drapers and magistrates were not inclined to permit basic raises. Only in 1526, 1528 and 1544 were the salaries of fullers raised because of increasing inflation, rising prices and diminished industrial activity.\textsuperscript{62} The constant presence, especially in bad times, of quite large amounts of inland woollens within the city walls was a constant threat to maintaining the high quality of "voorwollen" cloth. Since the prices of English wool continued to rise, many drapers were inclined to mix these woollens with inferior materials. This affected the quality of the Leiden cloth, which made it even harder to sell and caused distrust among the buyers, whom could easily find a cheaper alternative. All kinds of inland woollens were smuggled into town, while English wool was brought to the countryside in order to avoid taxes and high salaries.\textsuperscript{63}

The fact that many drapers chose to leave town when conditions worsened was already of grave concern to the magistrate by the end of the fifteenth century. Several attempts to prevent this failed, however.\textsuperscript{64} Because drapers stood at the head of the putting-out system and all manufacturers depended on deliveries by the entrepreneurs, the desertion of one draper caused unemployment for many textile workers. Furthermore, the desertion of skilled artisans also threatened the

\textsuperscript{60} POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis, 308, 344-347, 350-251. IBIDEM, Bronnen II, 496-498.

\textsuperscript{61} See for the development of employment and purchasing power in the Northern-Netherlands NOORDEGRAAF, Hollands welvaren, 89-94, 127-130, 147-150 and specifically for Leiden 102-103, 194-195.

\textsuperscript{62} See POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 324-328. According to Noordegraaf salary adaptations took place as a result of rising costs of living from 1540 on. NOORDEGRAAF, Holland welvaren, 86.

\textsuperscript{63} POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 138-139. GAL. SA.I inv. 424 Register op de buitenneringen fo. 55-56, 85.

\textsuperscript{64} POSTHUMUS, Bronnen II, 45, 138-140. IBIDEM, Geschiedenis I, 358-360, 406.
potential of the economy to recover. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, cities encountered severe competition from the countryside in all kinds of industrial activities. Because taxes and salaries were high in town, industries that, at least in the eyes of townsmen should be performed within the city walls, were now found in the tax free areas on the countryside. While unemployment increased in the city, many workers found an alternative income in rural industries.  

Rural inhabitants proved to be cheap labourers and thus posed a threat to employment in the city, especially when citizens had to cope with crisis. Explanations of this phenomenon can be found, as Van Zanden suggested, in the specific proto-capitalistic structure of the Dutch countryside. The combination of rural and industrial activities provided the peasant with a flexibility not found among urban workers. At those times when employment was threatened, citizens were confronted with losing their income entirely and saw no other solution than to leave the city. The peasant, however, was capable of concentrating on rural activities or at least of finding a basic income, even when entrepreneurs minimized production. When conditions improved, the rural population, which was obliged to perform agricultural functions, proved to be a cheap and easy attainable working force. Entrepreneurs, like the Leiden drapers, frequently made use of proto-capitalistic farmers, because, in addition to the reasons cited above, their low payments could be used to pressure the city not to increase salaries.

5. Surviving strategies

In their stimulating article on the emergence of small commodity production in early modern urban economies, Duplessis and Howell paid a certain amount of attention to the economic policy of the Leiden magistrate in the sixteenth century. The authors were quite right in stating that the magistrate did not pursue a policy that provided for structural change in the Leiden drapery. No attempts were made to encourage the establishment of new industries as was the case in Cologne, which after the collapse of the cloth industry remained a sheering and

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dyeing center and also developed a highly profitable silk industry. In Aachen woollen cloth manufacture was replaced by a metallurgical industry. In fact, until the fall of Calais, Leiden’s magistrate carefully protected the traditional drapery. In 1529, for example, the establishment of a bonnet industry was denied on the argument that it might use the woollens intended for "voorwollen" cloth. Only in 1558 did the magistrate allow an experiment with the production of coarse cloth. It turned out to be successful and when the final decline of the medieval drapery became apparent special statutes on the organisation of the new industry were issued. Only growing investments in brewing from about 1540 on show that entrepreneurs, who were probably shocked by the effects of the English debasement policy, had started to lose confidence. But the Leiden brewery had always been quite modestly scaled and could hardly compensate for the enormous loss of jobs and income caused by the crisis in the Leiden drapery. In the long term, the diminishing purchasing power also had its negative effects on beer consumption, which according to Aerts and Unger declined in the course of the sixteenth century.

In fact, arguments like those probably tempted the magistrate to continue its conservative policy. No other industry, even that of the light drapery, could easily compensate for the large scale unemployment caused by abandoning the production of high quality cloth. Nevertheless it is inexplicable why the magistrate refused to combine the new and light drapery. Probably it was part of the policy to maintain high quality standards, that would be threatened if the production of

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68 In 1565 Philip II allowed the city the establishment of two leathermarkets each year. Apparently because of the declination of the drapery inhabitants of the city had turned to the tannery. POSTHUMUS, Bronnen II, 637.

69 KELLENBENZ, Wolltuchproduktion, 282. HOWELL, Women, production and patriarchy, 101-102. DUPLESSIS, HOWELL, Reconsidering, 60.

70 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 113-114.

71 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 180-181. DUPLESSIS, HOWELL, Reconsidering, 60.

72 DUPLESSIS, HOWELL, Reconsidering, 52-53.

all kinds of rough cloth, made of inferior wool, was allowed. The smuggling experience already showed this to be a genuine threat.

Without interference from governments the market was able to overcome only relatively minor fluctuations. But for the recovery of a seriously disrupted economy, an enormous financial and innovative incentive was needed. Leiden simply lacked the means to encourage the emergence of alternative industrial activities. With the lack of financial resources there was no room for large scale investments to establish new industries. Furthermore, especially during the period 1520-1545, economic prospects for the new drapery were equally bad. Wars and the central governmental currency policy as well as that of the surrounding countries, disturbed the growth of the Antwerp market and affected all industrial sectors.74

This does not mean, however, that no measures were taken. But, as indicated earlier, they had no structural impact and were blocked by conservative production methods. The refusal to use Spanish wool on a comparatively large scale for quite a long time is probably the best example of this political incapacity.75 At the end of the fifteenth century when relations with the English staplers grew too tense Leiden drapers made sporadic use of Spanish wool. Convinced by the drapers’ arguments that the quality of the finished product had not previously been affected by the Spanish wool and because English wool was hardly available at the Staple of Calais, the town magistrate in 1522 permitted the purchase of Spanish wool in limited quantities.76 Entrepreneurs were allowed to buy the quantities needed to reach full production if Spanish wool were mingled with English raw materials. Instead of by-passing the staple of Calais, Leiden drapers used their contacts with the Spanish merchants to pressure trading conditions that would force down the prices of English wool. Negotiations with the English

74 VAN DER WEE, The growth of the Antwerp market, 145.

75 Even an offer made by the central government in 1534 to establish favourable trading conditions with Spanish traders, after complaints concerning the scarcity of English raw materials because of the closure of the Staple and blockades of the Sund, was turned down by the Leiden council. POSTHUMUS, Bronnen II, 382 note 2.

76 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 77-78, 206, 213-215. IBIDEM, Bronnen II, 316-317, 345, 351. BLOK, Geschiedenis II, 225-226. Nevertheless, especially fullers had complaints concerning the lesser quality of the Spanish wool. It was harder to comb, less fine than the English material and the fulling procedure took much more time.
merchants at Calais continued until about 1530.\(^77\)

During the blockade of the Sound in 1531-1532 and the closure of the Staple in 1533, dependence on English cloth suddenly became clear again. In fact the English benefited from every blockade of the Sound for Dutch traders. The only way for the Leiden drapers to withstand growing competition was to preserve the quality of its products. To do so, Spanish wool had to be abandoned in favour of English staple wool. Entrepreneurs from Leiden had to accept a rather disadvantageous trading contract with the English staplers in 1536, and consequently had to sustain a prolonged rise of the prices of both wool and "voorwollen" cloth.\(^78\)

Even during the crisis of 1548, when almost no raw material was available at Calais, Leiden drapers were not permitted to buy Spanish wool. The town magistrate forced them to wait until the prices of English woollens became more acceptable. This decision is even more striking considering the remark made in the council resolutions of that same year that the export of Leiden cloth to the Baltic had seriously diminished because production costs in Amsterdam and Gouda, cities where the use of Spanish woollens was permitted, were much lower.\(^79\)

Due to the scarcity of high quality English woollens at Calais the wool staplers were able to play both cities relying on these materials off against each other. To halt the upward spiral of prices Haarlem and Leiden drapers made arrangements concerning the quantities and qualities available for each city and promised to inform each other of the delivery conditions at Calais.\(^80\) Modifications to the agreement were made in 1548, 1551 and 1554. After the capture of Calais in 1558, Haarlem and Leiden turned to Bruges in order to buy English fleece and woollens, but with little success.\(^81\)

Furthermore, trading houses were established in order to promote the sale of Leiden cloth. The establishment of a so-called "cantoor" in Amsterdam in 1530 was directed against the practices of the "fockers". By means of a working capital of about 20,000 guilders, the products of drapers with limited financial capacity, who were inclined to make use of the "services" of the fockers, could be offered to traders on the Amsterdam market for a more reasonable price. This initiative proved succesful. Within a few years more capital was needed and the selling

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\(^{77}\) POSTHUMUS, *Geschiedenis*, 207-208.


prices were rising slightly. At the request of eighty drapers a trading house specializing in black cloth opened its doors in Antwerp in 1552. Six "office masters", appointed by the magistrate from the ranks of the drapers, were responsible for selling the cloth. One of them was a permanent representative at the Antwerp market. 82

Through trading houses like these important contacts could be established with merchants from different countries. In the course of the 1530's when the Baltic markets favoured English products, the demand for Leiden cloth in France and southern Europe increased, probably as a result of the intensification of trade in salt and grain with France, Portugal and Spain. Also, the increasing popularity of Spanish wool in the Northern Netherlands must have been an impetus to trade relations with the mediterranean. 83 Sources indicate that in 1535 the French, Spaniards and Italians were interested in buying Leiden cloth. In 1551 the magistrate, accepting the risk for this undertaking, attempted to promote local textiles by sending six packages of cloth of twenty four pieces each to southern Europe. The outbreak of war with France, however, threatened the project. Nevertheless, in 1556 a council resolution pointed out that merchants from Leiden frequently visited Spain and stressed the fact that the emperor supported their activities. 84 The quantities of cloth transported to France and the mediterranean were, despite these efforts, rather small and could not compensate for the lost market shares in the Baltic and Germany. According to the usually trustworthy figures produced by the Italian Guicciardini in his detailed "Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi" about 14,000 pieces of cloth from the Netherlands were transported to the Iberian Peninsula about the middle of the sixteenth century. Only a small proportion, for example 1327 pieces in 1552-1553, originated from Leiden. 85 The town magistrate was seriously concerned about employment. While a policy was already pursued in the late fifteenth century, it was maintained in the next. 86

82 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 258-260.
83 JANSEN, Welvaart in wording, 303. UNGER, De Hollandsche graanhandel, 353.
86 See HOWELL, Women, production and patriarchy, 62-64.
Because many textile workers would become unemployed, in 1526 the magistrate tried to stop the vast emigration of entrepreneurs by forbidding them to practice their profession outside the city’s territory. Already in 1486 combsters, spinsters, weavers, fullers, dyers and sheerers were threatened with lifetime banishment if they planned to move to those places where, since 1480, English wool was used for manufacturing cloth. With some modifications the same regulation was issued again in 1541. 87 With this kind of protective legislation the magistrate not only tried to secure employment within the city but also wanted to safeguard the quality of its drapery products. The refusal to apply the fulling mill, as was the case in traditional textile centers in Flanders and Brabant, should be seen in this context. 88 The success of measures like these was limited however. As has already been shown, the developments of 1526 forced many drapers and workers to leave town. Also in 1545 large groups of textile workers emigrated. 89 Efforts made by the town government to prevent the introduction of the spinning wheel in the second quarter of the sixteenth century failed, despite the conviction that it affected the quality of the threads. De Boer assumed that using one spinning wheel caused between five and eight spinsters to be unemployed. 90

The city took great pains and invested a lot of money in order to counter industrial activities in the countryside, for these activities harmed not only the drapery, but also many other sectors and deprived the city of tax revenues. Despite the privilege of 1351 that forbade all manufacture of cloth within a radius of three miles from the city walls, a rural textile cloth industry producing rough cloth made of inferior woollens and linens had arisen. Not much was done to discourage further development of these activities during the fifteenth century. The town magistrate was mainly focused on preventing tax free consumption of elementary goods outside the city walls. Thus the rural area submitted to the urban tax regulations was widened to 200 rods in 1451 and to 500 rods in 1494. Rural industries of course did not vanish but moved and continued production just

87 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 358-359 and note 2.


89 POSTHUMUS, Geschiedenis I, 359-360.

outside the taxed area.\textsuperscript{91}

In the sixteenth century policies changed. The magistrate tried to check rural industrial competition by issuing an ordonnance that forbade all citizens from performing any profession that would provide them with an income within a radius of 400 rods. Inhabitants of the same area were not allowed to take jobs in the city.\textsuperscript{92} Because of continuing warfare and the unfavourable currency policy in 1526, economic pressure on Dutch urban economies increased and forced several cities to close their ranks in their struggle against competitive rural crafts. Initially attempts to suppress a wide range of trades in the countryside failed, but in 1531 the so-called "order op de buitenneringen" or "charter on the outer crafts" was issued. The charter forbade the establishment and practice of weaving, tanning, masonry, and carpentry of large scale projects-activities that were regarded as typical urban industries - in an area of 500 rods from the city walls. Setting up new bakeries, taverns and breweries within a radius of 600 rods was no longer allowed. The demands of the cities were only partially fulfilled because important trades, such as the already existing drapery, breweries and shipyards, were permitted to continue production.\textsuperscript{93} Because no real limits were placed on the production capacities of rural textile industries, Leiden made special efforts to banish all activities related to the production of textiles in the surrounding seigneuries. In 1540 a charter confirming the prohibition against the manufacture of textiles as well as the other trades within 500 rods from the city gates was granted. Limitations on the number of trades were set. Only those established before 1514 were allowed to continue production; trades set up between 1514 and 1531 were bound to disappear but financial compensation was offered, which was not the case with those that began after 1531.\textsuperscript{94} One should bear in mind, according to Posthumus, that this policy resulted mainly from fear of the negative effects that low prices of rural textiles had on urban products. Since rural textile

\textsuperscript{91} JANSMA, \textit{Het economisch overwicht}, 49-50.

\textsuperscript{92} POSTHUMUS, \textit{Geschiedenis I}, 132-133.


workers only produced rough cloth, real competition was not to be expected.\textsuperscript{95}

The effects of the charter once again were limited because producers were inclined to move outside the 500 rods area. To prevent that the Leiden magistrate struck a deal with the lord of Leiderdorp, who in exchange for a considerable amount of money promised to prevent any textile manufacture in his area. The lord of Zoeterwoude, very conscious of the loss of income from taxes, refused to give in. After his death in 1545 the magistrate decided to buy the seigneurie for 5,000 Carolus guilders.\textsuperscript{96} The city benefited only one year from this arrangement and was forced to sell that territory for a considerably lower price in 1546. Nevertheless, the same agreement that was reached with Leiderdorp was signed with the new lord of Zoeterwoude in 1547. But considering the desolate state of the Leiden drapery the magistrate had gained only a Phyrrus victory. The decline of the medieval drapery was could not be stopped and production figures fell back to less than 1,000 pieces in 1573. Only after the siege of Leiden in 1574 was the new drapery industry introduced, thereby bringing unprecedented welfare to the citizens during the following century.

\textsuperscript{95} POSTHUMUS, \textit{Een zestiende eeuwse enquête}, 22.

\textsuperscript{96} JANSMA, \textit{Het economisch overwicht}, 52. POSTHUMUS, \textit{Geschiedenis I}, 144-145.
Table 1: Immigration figures 1450-1574

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<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>273(^{97})</td>
<td>71(^{98})</td>
<td>188(^{99})</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>148</td>
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\(^{98}\) No indications available for 1490, 1492-1495.

\(^{99}\) No indications available for 1501.

\(^{100}\) No indications available for 1573.
Table 2: Prices of fine woollen cloth of Ghent, Malines and Leyde and of Hondschoote says in pound groot flemish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>GHENT Dickedinnen</th>
<th>GHENT Helleman trauwen</th>
<th>MALINES Blackroos</th>
<th>LEYDE Pair half cloth</th>
<th>HOND-SCHOOTE Single say</th>
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<td>16.00</td>
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<td>14.25</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>5.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>1537</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>8.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>1538</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>8.87</td>
<td>0.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>1539</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>6.33</td>
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<tr>
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<td>17.00</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>1541</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>0.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>1542</td>
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<td>1545</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>11.50</td>
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clothproduction 1470-1573
based on approximate income strikerye

Howell, Women, 185-188 Appendix 1
Discussion following the paper delivered by Hanno Brand

Howell wondered what kind of sources immigration figures were based on. Brand: The main source was formed by the Poorterboeken or Citizenship registration. Howell: Is it possible to equate immigration figures with citizenship registration? Brand: Hard to answer because the number of workers present in the city fluctuated very much. For example, with regard to the fullers in the early 16th century it is known that their number could fluctuate up to about 400 workers each year. Another aspect concerns emigration figures, about which no information is available. It is only clear that many drapers and workers left the city. Exact figures of the population of Leiden are only available for 1498 and 1581. In that period population numbers fell from 14,000 to 12,000 inhabitants. It means that despite the supposed severe crisis in the Leiden drapery, there must have been some attraction of new inhabitants to the city. De Boer: It is possible to confront immigration figures with the evolution of roofing subsidies granted by the town to new inhabitants or people who could not afford restoring their houses. The trend is that most subsidies were granted up to about 1480. After that grants gradually fell back, which matches the decline of immigration figures from the last decennia of the fifteenth century on. De Boer raises the problem of the continuing rise of cloth production until 1520, despite the late fifteenth century economic crisis. Brand points out that cloth trade with Southern and Central Germany, as well to the Baltic area expanded in the same period. However, it is difficult to explain why production figures kept on rising while at the same time the number of looms and fullershops gradually declined. Maybe concentration of labour or more equal distribution of labour throughout the year made this possible.

De Boer pleads for a more general approach to cloth production, not only in town as such but also with regard to the whole region; i.e. Holland. In that sense it is important to figure out to what extent rural labour affected the total cloth production and to what extent the rural labour force was put to work within the city walls.

Chorley wants to know if the figures produced here actually do represent the total cloth production in Leiden itself. De Boer makes clear that information is scattered and production figures only reveal the numbers of cloth ordered by the Leiden drapers. He suggests that the production figures reflect both the production in town as well as in the countryside and emphasizes the growing importance of rural productivity. Brand suggests that concerning the number of fullers and looms available in the city, a full production level was never reached. It means that room for growth of the cloth production in town itself existed.

Soly is amazed by the tremendous rise of price levels of Leiden cloth in the 16th century. Why the sudden rise and how come that prices in Leiden did exceed those in Malines and Ghent? His second question concerns the supposed superior quality of dyeing techniques in Leiden. Brand states that sources do indicate that
dyeing techniques in Leiden were well developed and that surrounding cities depended on the delivery of dyed products from Leiden. The fact that efforts to imitate Leiden cloth, especially in Bruges, failed reflects the high quality standards in Leiden itself. The high standards are possibly also reflected in the fact that all kinds of efforts to imitate the Leiden cloth, especially in Bruges, failed. Concerning the rise of prices of Leiden cloth Brand points out that first of all relations with the staple of Calais deteriorated and affected the prices of English wool. Since the drapers were only capable to use Spanish wool for rather a short time, they were not able to push prices of English wool down. At the export side, the blockades of the Sound and the war with Denmark damaged the Dutch trade and especially, because of the fierce English competition, that of cloth. Thirdly, wages of fullers increased gradually and must have affected prices as well.

Morsa remarks that compared to the total amount of labourers working in Leiden production figures per head were extremely low. In Courtrai figures were even lower. Stabel reacts by stating that these figures only relate to the production of quality cloth. Morsa replies that the total production of cloth can be estimated by multiplying the number of quality textiles with 2 or 3. Nevertheless productivity remains rather poor. Chorley states that a production level of about 60 pieces per year per head was not bad at all. A similar level was reached in the 18th century. Taken into account that several workers were involved in the production of one piece, real productivity must have been much higher. Prevenier adds that for the low level of productivity several explanations can be offered, such as part time work, fraude on levying taxes on finished cloth etc.

Holbach adds that the blossoming of the Leiden cloth industry and the downfall of the Hansa from the 1470's on coincides with the appearance of Dutch traders on the German markets. In that context Brand remarks that although the Hansa complains about the undermining activities of Leiden traders in Germany, the city council of Leiden denies the existence of a traders companionship.