

The Integrated Peasant Economy as a Concept in Progress

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Introduction

By addressing problems in the thematic area stretching between peasant subsistence and economic development, our questions are deeply rooted in the economic, agrarian, social, and rural historiography. Within rural history research there has been a shift towards the dynamic aspects in peasant economy and society, combined with a growing relevance of comparative approaches. On the other hand there is a remarkable tradition in addressing the questions regarding the self-sustainability of peasants, the small dimension of holdings, peasant market relations and income integration. In many European regions the holdings were not sufficient enough to provide the necessary means of subsistence to peasant households. This is well known in upland areas in particular, although not limited to them, where the population engaged in a wide range of activities in order to gain more income. The basic assumption here is that different income sources were part of a comprehensive economic strategy, in which peasants counted on and exploited the opportunities of access to alternative activities, and that the peasant economy based on income integration is to be regarded as a whole, as a system.

A basic effort we made was to render agency to the peasant, to recognise the peasants a role of active actors in rural history, and perhaps not only rural. The main goal was to develop and test a conceptualisation of peasant economy that would allow a step forward from terminology and models with a more or less restricted applicability, enabling at the same time a better comparability among regions and cases as well as through time. The starting point was represented by the acknowledgement, indeed well present in scholarship but more rarely brought to its interpretative consequences, that in several areas peasant populations did not live simply on subsistence agriculture but showed rather diversified and complex income patterns. The proposed term to define this is “integrated peasant economy,” a concept emerged from the conjunction between Slovenian and Italian historiographies, which was then confronted with the Swedish scholarly experience. But the very beginning had indeed

been in Slovenia, as I am going to present in the first part, followed by a first definition of the integrated peasant economy, which will then be put in comparison with some other interpretations, models, and terms. In the last part the actual state of the integrated peasant economy concept will be sketched, as it developed through the confrontation and comparison among the authors and their case studies presented in this volume.¹

1. Long-run characters and trends in the peasant economy in Slovenia

One of the most prominent features in the economic history of the Slovenian countryside is the widespread phenomenon of “peasant trade” and, more generally, the integration of agricultural income sources with non-agricultural ones, and of on-farm activities with off-farm ones. We may observe a great diffusion and a large variety of activities in which peasants were involved, even compared with much larger Alpine and western European areas (Table 1.4). In the Early Modern Slovenian provinces peasant farms were mostly small, due to the process of fragmentation and creation of new units. Given also the unfavourable conditions for agriculture on the Alpine, Subalpine and karstic terrain that cover a great part of the central and western Slovenian area, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of the peasant population could not make their living from agriculture alone. In fact, both contemporary sources and historiographical literature show that the Slovenian peasant population intensively resorted to non-agricultural activities and sources of income. Already J.W. Valvasor in his monumental description of the Duchy of Carniola (1689) mentioned the peasants’ need to obtain incomes from outside their farms as one of the striking economic and social characteristics of the region. According to Ferdo Gestrin (1991), as early as 1552 the provincial estates of the Duchy claimed that in Carniola and the Karst (central and south-western Slovenia) in particular the peasants could not remain on their farms if they were not active in trade and transport activities. In proving the importance that non-agricultural income had for the peasant population, it is also relevant to recall his observation that demands and complaints regarding trade and transport were a constant in all the major peasant uprisings in the Slovenian lands (Gestrin 1973a; also Grafenauer 1973, 27–29). This feature is acknowledged also in a recent general history of Slovenia: “The specificity of the peasants in the Slovene area was more in the fact that they – as carriers and cart drivers, but also as middlemen-traders and craftsmen – combined their work on the farms with non-agricultural economy” (Štih, Simoniti 2010, 154).

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There are numerous cases and descriptions regarding different typologies of non-agricultural activities, although for the Early Modern period the historiography concentrated in particular on the so called “peasant trade” (*kmečka trgovina*).² Jože Šorn pointed out that “such trading was a general European phenomenon, but within the Alpine Habsburg lands it was the peasant trading in Carniola to be famous for its width and depth.” He added that the intensity of peasant trading was stronger in the western half of Slovenian regions due to the opportunities offered by the proximity of Adriatic port towns (Šorn 1984, 40, 43). The outstanding peasants’ role in transport has been put in relation to the prevailing Early-Modern communication methods in the area. Sergij Vilfan pointed out how a great deal of the trade within and throughout the Slovenian lands ran along the north-east – south-west axis (from the central-eastern European inland to the Adriatic coast and Italian regions), while the waterways headed in somehow the opposite direction (from Slovenia the rivers flow towards the Black Sea, that is to the south-east). For this reason the cheapest means of transport was not available and transport had to be carried out on horseback, and the consequent “relatively high share of transport costs did not favour the involvement of merchants with goods of low specific value” (grain, salt, etc.). This is how “economic opportunities were given for the peasants to engage” in transport and trade, “since they could work with a relatively low investment of money, while a great deal of the final price was represented by costs of transport, that is exactly by their own input” in the whole process. “That’s why they could be satisfied with a lower profit” from the sale of goods (Vilfan 1978, 79).

A periodisation and typological definition of the different activities comprised under the term “peasant trade” was proposed by Gestrin for the centuries between the late Middle and the Early Modern Ages. He distinguished two phases, connecting each of them to the developments in the manorial economy, the first one coinciding with the dissolution of the medieval demesne economy between the 13th and 14th centuries (referring to it as “the first commercialisation level of the manor”), while he found that the second, stronger development phase of “peasant trade” corresponded with the feudal landlords’ rent crisis between the 15th and 16th centuries (“the second commercialisation level of the manor”). In this second phase he pointed out a specificity of the Slovenian regions, consisting in landlords perceiving rents composed of a good share of money, as an alternative way to increase their land rent income in the Early Modern period. In fact the nobility of Carniola backed the peasants when their trade was challenged, since “peasant trade” was where the peasants obtained the money to pay the dues to their landlords. Peasants were further directed to the market by the raising of state taxes, in order to be able to pay them (Gestrin 1973a, 45-46, 1973b, 74-75, 1991, 224–226, 235; see also Panjek 2011) (for the typologies, see Table 1.1).

We owe another periodisation and systemisation of the relations between the agrarian and the non-agrarian peasant income, in this case extended to secondary sector activities, to Bogo Grafenauer (1970, 627–628). He identified the “basic foundation of peasant trade” in the exchange in kind of inland grain for sea-salt on the Adriatic coast dating back to the 13th century. Later on, “peasant trade” included a large range of goods, therefore arising protests from urban merchants through the Early Modern centuries. Later still, in the 18th century,

² For a wider selection of examples see the contributions of Ines Beguš and Katja Hrobat Virloget to this book.

“along with the development of sea-ports, peasant trade grew into cart transport” (*prevozništvo*). “The second connection” of the peasant economy “with the non-agrarian activities was the horseback transport [*tovorništvo*] of goods for the ironworks.” The third one was, in his view, the inclusion of the “village population” in proto-industrial production networks “organized by big tradesmen” (*založništvo*, domestic or putting-out system, *Kauf* or *Verlagssystem*).

The interpretation saying that “only such an economic development of the village from the 15th century onwards explains the population structure as well as the formation of tiny rural holdings” (Grafenauer 1970, 627–628), is in line with our integrated peasant economy concept, in the part it stresses the role of peasant initiative in influencing the market oriented activities: the increasing social stratification in the villages and the growing number of small holdings was more of a consequence of the existing market-derived income opportunities (peasants could afford to live on small holdings because of other income sources) than the other way around (peasants had to engage in other activities because their farms were too small).

We may understand the protests of urban merchants and the repeated prohibition acts as confirmation of the existence and perhaps even of the liveliness of peasant trade in the long run. While dating back to the late Middle Ages, such protests brought about a series of legal prohibitions of peasant trade in Carniola throughout the Early Modern period (1552, 1568, 1602, 1661, 1691, 1725), but all of them were soon followed by relaxations. The last of the latter in 1737 regulated the merchandise admitted for peasant trade, limiting it to “anything the peasant produced by himself” and listing as much as forty possible articles of this kind! Proceeding into the 18th century, mercantilist and physiocratic measures of the modernising Habsburg state helped inaugurate a phase of economic growth that brought new and wider opportunities for the peasants’ market-related activities (Šorn 1984, 40–43).

In fact, as already mentioned, the market-oriented peasants’ agency in Slovenian lands was not limited to transport related activities in the tertiary sector, but they were active in the industrial field as well. Although this was the case in the 16th and 17th centuries, too, a phase of more significant growth in peasant industrial production was detected in the second half of the 18th century, just like in peasant trade. For the latter period, Šorn cautiously estimated that 29% of the traded industrial production in the duchy of Carniola originated from peasants. This figure does not comprise the peasant’s self-consumed production, which is positive for our research on market oriented activities. On the other hand it does not take into account the large quicksilver mine in Idrija,³ whose production if included would have resulted in a lower share of “peasant production” (Table 1.3). It may also be recalled that many of the mine-workers in Idrija derived from peasant households and combined their work in the mine with the cultivation of small plots of land (Valentinitsch 1981). Šorn’s stressing the fact that his figures are an estimate based on his own in-depth research experience, “because despite the

³ The reason is that it represented an administrative island directly ruled by the financial chamber of the state. In spite of being correct in a strict historical sense, such choice appears less reasonable when our goal is to understand the regional economy as a whole, not least because the Idrija mine had an impact on economic opportunities also outside its administrative territory.

examined archival documentation we have not yet detected material data that would help rounding the picture up to probability,” by making such a statement in a work full of figures and specifically dedicated to the “beginnings of industry,” is tell-tale about how hard the job of quantifying phenomena in Slovenian rural history is (Table 1.3). The reason is only partly to seek in the ability and approach of historians, since the sources play a relevant role: even in collecting data and categorising industry and crafts, in the second half of the 18th century the authors of state surveys managed to apply differing criteria in different regions, thus producing not really comparable figures for Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Gorica county, and Trieste (Šorn 1984, 74–75).

Table 1.1: Types, characters, and chronology of peasant trade in Slovenian scholarship, based on F. Gestrin, B. Grafenauer, and J. Šorn

I. Expansive phase: mid-13th – mid-14th century	II. Expansive phase: mid-15th – end-16th century	III. Expansive phase: mid – late 18th century
1. With own products	4. With goods of professional (urban) merchants	7. Cart-transport
2. On behalf of tradesmen	5. With goods of other peasants	
3. For <i>corvées</i> service	6. Smuggling	
<i>Short distance, on borough and town markets.</i>	<i>Longer distance, interregional and international (also by sea); to local ironworks.</i>	<i>Export through sea-ports; economic policy measures.</i>

Note: The types and characters of peasant trade in each phase are present in the later phases, too.

Source: See text.

Table 1.2: Yearly volume of peasant trade in Slovenian lands between the early 14th and the early 17th centuries, as estimated by F. Gestrin

Period	Yearly peasant trade	Population	Estimated area
Early 14 th century	110,000 <i>tovor</i> (18,500 <i>tons</i>)	90,000 peasant households	24,000 km ²
Late 15 th century	400,000 <i>tovor</i> (67,200 <i>tons</i>)	120,000 peasant households	
16 th and early 17 th centuries	550,000 <i>tovor</i> (92,400 <i>tons</i>)	800,000 people in total	

Source and conversion: See text and footnotes 4 and 5.

Table 3: Shares of industrial production for the market in Carniola 1760–1775, as estimated by J. Šorn (without the Idrija quicksilver mine and plant)

Form of production	Share of gross domestic product (%)
Peasant production (partly included in proto-industrial networks)	29

Craft (including rural craftsmen and proto-industrial networks)	25
Centralised plants in light industry	25
Centralised plants in heavy industry (mines and iron works)	21
Total	100

Source: Šorn 1984, 62–63.

So we proceed by estimations. We owe to Gestrin, again, a “first attempt” of “quantifying peasant trade in the late Middle Ages and the 16th century” or, more precisely, “an attempt to present a method for the calculation, or better for an approximate estimation of the volume of peasant trade.” He proposed that in the 16th and “partly” in the first half of the 17th centuries peasant trade in Slovenian lands reached “up to” 550,000 *tovor* per year, “and more” (Gestrin 1978, 169, 177). To get an idea, that would mean nearly 100,000 tons (Table 1.2),⁴ on an area of about 24,000 km² (Early Modern Slovenian “ethnic territory”) with an estimated population of up to 800,000.⁵ Gestrin asserted, “without exaggeration and with all certainty,” that such quantity exceeded the volume traded by professional urban merchants in the 16th century, but also that peasant trade and transport strongly influenced the whole economic and social dynamics in Slovenia. “They brought to the peasant a not really small source of incomes, having a positive effect on the development of the market economy and on the enlargement of the market on the Slovenian territory, as well as raising its economic strength” (Gestrin 1991, 288). In other words we may say that in his opinion peasant trade and transport had positive macroeconomic effects, especially in the 16th century (Table 1.2). We have already seen how in the secondary sector too, peasant industrial production may be expressed in macroeconomic terms, at least towards the end of the 18th century (Table 1.3). Considering that about 30% of the industrial production derived from peasants and about 50% of the traded goods were handled by peasants (since they traded volumes comparable to urban merchants), we might conclude that market oriented peasant activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors in Early Modern Slovenia reached macroeconomic dimensions and impact.

What we have in between, that is from the beginning of the 17th to the mid-18th century, as far as economic movements in general and the peasant economy dynamics in particular are concerned, represents probably the main knowledge gap in Slovenian modern economic history (Gestrin 1982, 207). There is, anyway, a general interpretative convergence among Slovenian and Austrian scholars, that can be summed up as follows: on the so called “Ljubljana road” (*Laibacher Strasse*), connecting the Hungarian Pannonian plain with the Adriatic sea and northern Italy through the Slovenian lands of Habsburg Austria, after the 16th century expansive phase signs of a commercial slowdown may be registered between the end of that century and the beginning of the 17th.⁶ Such periodisation of economic dynamics fairly coincides with the turning point from growth to “crisis” (or at least “stagnation”) in the Italian

⁴ For the conversion of the *tovor* (German *Saum*) we use here the weight of 1 Vienna *Saum* = 168 kg (Panjek 2002, 16).

⁵ Such estimation (Gestrin 1991, 13) is confirmed by a more recent calculation, in which on 20,000 km² (today’s Slovenia) a population of 662,000 was estimated – if referred to 20,000 km² Gestrin’s figure would in fact be nearly the same, that is up to 675,000 people (Makarovič 2003, 390–391).

⁶ Pickl 1971, 1977, and 1983; Valentinitich 1973, 1975, and 1989; Hassinger 1987; Gestrin 1991 and in different earlier works; a synthesis in Panjek 2002, 139–143.

economic area, which was an expression of the general shift in economic centrality from the Mediterranean to north-western Europe and involved the neighbouring Venetian Republic as well (Romano 1992, Malanima 1998, Tenenti 1961). At the local level, during the 17th century seemingly contradictory evidence may be detected, since in western Slovenian lands bordering the Republic of Venice, the persistence of lively peasant traffic may be observed along with an increased pressure on natural resources (peasant reclamations of commons and woods, examples of intensive exploitation of grasslands and woodlands) that might resemble an opposite, ‘back to agriculture’ trend.⁷ As we have mentioned, a steadier economic growth is registered again only in the 18th century.

Based on the regression of industrial activities, Žarko Lazarević recently wrote of two periods of discontinuity in which a “deindustrialisation” and “reagrarisation” process took place in the Slovenian lands, that is in the 17th and then again in the 19th century. Perhaps even more relevant is his stressing the fact that being a small economy, with a consequently insufficient domestic demand to support an internally driven development, the secondary and tertiary sectors in Slovenia stood “in tight correlation with the extent of external demand and other exogenous factors” – and in the Early Modern period the driving foreign market was represented by Italian states (Lazarević 2015, 12–36), whose economic movement in that period has already been roughly sketched. By connecting this observation with the above mentioned macroeconomic effects of peasant activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors, we might then speak of an ‘export-led peasant economy’ in pre-industrial Slovenia.

2. The first definition of the integrated peasant economy

As we have seen, the words used in Slovenian historiography to write about the peasant activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors are “peasant trade,” “peasant production,” “non-agrarian activities,” and “commercialisation,” to which “complementary activities” (meaning complementary to agriculture) has to be added. Apart from “commercialisation,” used by Gestrin in particular (but not referring to peasants only), it’s possible to notice that this way the peasant economy is not regarded as a whole, nor as a specific object of research.⁸

Precisely this is one of the main efforts we have attempted in this book, that is to put the peasant economy at the centre of attention and investigate its inherent economic rationality, and to do so by trying to assume a point of view from its inside, to look at things from the perspective of the peasant households, communities, and peasant economy as a whole. This is, of course, far from being the first attempt in this direction in international historical scholarship, but still it has some originality in it – it strives to take in to consideration the three economic sectors altogether and consider them as equal ingredients of a whole, while questioning the prevailing assumption that the peasant household economy

⁷ Panjek 2002, 2015b, 85–117, and 2015c, 59–106.; see also Panjek, Beguš 2014.

⁸ Grafenauer 1970 is one of the exceptions.

aimed at subsistence and survival only, as well as that the recourse to activities different from on-farm agriculture was out of need only.

For a first check of the extent to which the peasant economy in Slovenia integrated different income sources, I drafted a scheme including the activities that brought an increase and differentiation in income, in comparison to the sole ‘basic’ agricultural production meant for self-consumption (Panjek 2015a). The purpose of this scheme was to enable a first comparison of the Slovenian situation in the pre-industrial period with the wider Alpine and western European reality. In order to do so, I summed up the activities referred to by Gauro Coppola when discussing the “integrated economy” of the population in the Italian (southern) Alps, with those mentioned by Jan de Vries in addressing rural “industriousness” in western Europe (Coppola 1991, de Vries 2008, 71–121, 169). The activities are grouped by economic sector, and the resulting list is checked based on historical evidence from western Slovenia (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4: Economic activities providing income to peasants: Western Europe, Italian Alps and (Early Modern) western Slovenia compared

Sector	Activity	Western Slovenia
PRIMARY	Agricultural specialisation	rare
	Intensification of cultivation (no fallow, mixed-cropping, ...)	✓
	Wage day-labour in agriculture	✓
	Extension/intensification of breeding	✓
	Intensification of forest exploitation (through primary sector activities, but also secondary and tertiary)	✓
	Extension of cultivated land (reclamation of commons and woods)	✓
SECONDARY	Transformation of primary resources/products (e.g. wine, cheese, meat products; charcoal, lime)	✓
	Rural crafts	✓
	Domestic, putting-out system (proto-industry)	✓
	“Centred” industries (manufactures, mining, ...)	✓
	Migrant/mobile craftsmen (e.g. bricklayers, ...)	?
	Wage labour in the industrial sector	✓
TERTIARY	Services in the field of long and medium distance trade	✓
	Transport of other people’s products and goods on short to medium distance	✓
	Trafficking with own products and goods on short to medium distance	✓
	Peddling	✓
	Smuggling	✓

Already with a first look at Table 1.4 it is possible to acknowledge that most of the activities mentioned at a western European and southern Alpine level, were present in the western Slovenian area as well (which belongs to the southern Alpine and Pre-alpine area, too). This does not imply stating that all of the mentioned activities were evenly spread throughout the western Slovenian lands, since local peculiarities, specificities and also specialisations existed. Their presence, combination and role could moreover vary in time, at the local level as well in the whole area, not least as a response to the wider economic conjuncture or change. The single typologies should also be referred to different social strata within the rural population. Nevertheless it is reasonable to affirm that in the western Slovenian area, being a much smaller region compared to the Southern Alps and Western Europe, a vast majority of different extra-agrarian activities was present among the peasant population. This means that their diversity, diffusion and density were comparatively very high.

What prompted the Slovenian peasants toward what appears to have been a general orientation towards the market? Their involvement in a mixture of industrial, commercial and transport activities was undoubtedly a necessity: for the majority of peasants the acquisition of extra-agricultural income represented a strategy whereby they could both achieve a level of subsistence and be able to pay their feudal, provincial, ecclesiastical and state rents and dues. But the fact that it was a necessity does not yet necessarily mean it was a passively-accepted solution, nor that it simply represented a way out of need.

At this point we must consider the fact that a large part of the peasant holdings was small. The peasant society in pre-industrial Slovenia was quite stratified and, most of all, at latest since the 16th century there was a growing part of the peasant households which did not dispose of much land, so that in the Early Modern centuries a growing majority of the holdings was not large enough to grant the households a living from their own land only. In fact, we may observe an increase in the foundation of agriculturally self-insufficient households, both as cottagers with little or no land as well as through the progressive fragmentation of the older and larger farm units.

Is it reasonable to think that through several centuries the peasants drove the system towards their own economic ruin without taking any measure, such as adjusting the age of marriage and the inheritance pattern? Or we might more reasonably suppose that, on the contrary, the multiplication of households beyond the level of subsistence provided by land indicates that the rural population counted on and exploited the possibility of access to alternative activities? This means that the economic rationality behind the fragmentation of farm units laid in the expectation and opportunities offered by market oriented activities. In this respect, the existence of (although small) local towns, boroughs (*Märkte*) and industrial centres, the proximity of the (comparatively strong economies and wide markets) of northern Italian states and first of all the Republic of Venice, as well as the existence of consolidated long-distance commercial flows connecting them with central-eastern European regions

precisely through the Slovenian territory, represented a sort of promise of employment for the peasant population.

This means that at a system level, non-agricultural and, more in general, market related income sources represented an element in a more complex and comprehensive economic strategy. Peasants counted on and actively, systematically used the possibility of access to other activities. This possibility was evidently one of the aspects taken into consideration in household planning: had it not been so, we would not have encountered so many agriculturally self-insufficient units. A variety of non-agricultural income sources allowed the rural society to structurally overcome environmental, technological, and other possible constraints – and this supports the interpretation that non-agricultural and market oriented activities were not necessarily in a subordinated role in relation to self-consumption agriculture. Is it then (economically) correct to speak of “additional” activities in such circumstances? Is it acceptable to think of such “additional” activities simply as a measure to overcome momentary or conjunctural insufficiencies of agricultural subsistence? My answer is negative. That is why I find it reasonable to make a fundamental shift in the perspective, from the interpretation that market oriented and non-agricultural activities were undertaken because holdings were too small and agricultural income consequently insufficient, to the acknowledgment that holdings were small because peasants had different income sources.

The relevance of the question is not least given by the fact that similar circumstances were not exclusive of pre-industrial rural Slovenia. In many regions of Europe the holdings were not sufficient to provide the necessary means of subsistence to the peasant households. This is a well-known and widespread characteristic in many upland areas in particular, where the population engaged in different activities apart from agriculture and animal husbandry in order to gain more income.

In fact, the system we have so far observed is very much in line with the “overall characteristics of the Early Modern Alpine economy” that Gauro Coppola named “integrated economy” – although only in the title of an (enlightening though synthetic) article in which he put it in relation with the “scarcity of resources” – such “integrated economy” ensured “economic equilibrium” also when facing “transformations” (Coppola 1991, 203). His basic premise is that considering the character and conditions in agriculture, “at a macro level, related to the total number of the population,” the Alpine area suffered from a “chronic alimentary deficit, especially of grain.” Coppola suggests that if such a “system stands,” “it means that the income integrations from other activities and sectors are of much greater importance than the cultivation of the fields alone.” In the Alpine economy there was a “complex balance,” in which the density of single activities could vary in space and time. “The organic complementarity of the production sectors, the safeguard and the integration of the resources, the processes of substitution of the more fragile and weakened portions of the whole” have, as a result, “a system that is able to ensure proportionate processes of income formation” and make “adjustments to the changes in market conditions.” In the Alpine and Subalpine economy “the forms of integration acquire primary support functions, granting the solidity of the context” (Coppola 1991, 213–214, 221–222). Apart from the transparent similarities with the Slovenian case, an important accent in Coppola’s reading is that the

Alpine “integrated economy” maintained a higher level of population by keeping a balance between many different income sources, a balance that was flexible enough not only to adjust to changes in market conditions, but even to wider changes in the ratio between population number and available (natural and market) sources of income. Activities could be adopted or abandoned, increased or decreased, and their relative importance in the peasant household’s income structure could change in time (and space, of course). But in any case did “the income integrations from other activities and sectors” maintain their fundamental role.

“Integrated peasant economy” is the concept being proposed here for such a reality. It is an economy in which peasant populations and households made their living by combining self-consumption agriculture with market oriented activities. In fact, even agricultural activities may have been (at least partly) market oriented. The second characteristic is that agriculture did not necessarily represent its basis, nor were the market oriented activities simply supplementary. This means that agricultural production aimed at self-consumption was not necessarily the basis of the peasant household economy, and that market activities represented a basically equal income source. Of fundamental importance is the third character distinguishing the “integrated peasant economy,” that represents also the reason why we named this system “integrated” – the fact that it integrated activities and income sources from all three economic sectors together, the primary, secondary and tertiary. This means we are not simply coping with peasants who consumed their own produce and additionally did some industry in winter months (although they fit in the concept, too), or engaged in some additional activity in bad harvest years, but with peasant households that systematically used the plough (or shovel only), engaged in crafts and hit the roads, their income sources ranging from working as day labourers in agriculture to illegal trafficking, passing through industrial and transport activities. Lastly, something that is perhaps more of a consequence than a character, but it nevertheless constitutes a distinctive characteristic of the “integrated peasant economy”: it enabled rural societies to overcome natural and technical limits, and to significantly raise the carrying-capacity of the environment they lived in, since it allowed sustaining a population beyond the level that would have been possible based solely on agricultural land and the self-consumption of its produce. We may well add a feature stressed by Coppola, that is the flexibility of the system, meaning that single activities could be adopted, increased, decreased or abandoned, while their role in the peasant household’s income structure could change through time and space. On this basis, a first list of features characterising the integrated peasant economy was sketched (Panjek 2015, 203–204):

1. Peasants combine agriculture and market oriented activities to make their living.
2. Market oriented activities represent an equal income source compared to subsistence agriculture.
3. The adopted activities and income sources belong to the three economic sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary).
4. The system is dynamic and flexible, adapts to changes in the availability of income sources and the market conditions, in the population and in family structure.

5. The carrying capacity of the environment is increased beyond the level of the population possibly based on agricultural land alone.

3. Facing the peasant family economy, proto-industry, pluriactivity, industriousness, and the survival commercial economy

At this point we may compare this first definition with some other models and interpretations of the peasant economy. In the economic historical research there is a remarkable tradition in addressing the theme of self-sustainability of peasants. In his questioning the relationship between self-consumption and market Maurice Aymard distinguished three different interpretations: the recourse to the market to the minimum possible extent in Chayanov, the direct response of farms to market demands in Labrousse, and the impasse of growth as a consequence of the reaching of the maximum possible ratio between population and production as a result of technical inertia in Le Roy Ladurie (Aymard 1983). If compared to Chayanov, Labrousse and Le Roy Ladurie, the solution adopted by the peasant population in Slovenia, but also in the Italian Alps as we have just seen from Coppola, appears to be still a different one: the systematic recourse to various, multi-sectoral activities external to the farms in a flexible combination and a tight connection to the market. Chayanov's "family economy" model was also put at the base of another comprehensive theory, strongly involving peasant non-agrarian activity – that is "proto-industry" (Medick 1981, 41–44). These are good enough reasons to go briefly back to these classics.

Comparing Chayanov's writing with its interpretations it's possible to notice a tendency to simplify and reduce his peasant economy to a closed economy with very limited market relations. It is certainly true that he wrote about the peasant "natural economy" within the feudal system and dedicated significantly more space to the inherent logics of the peasant family economy within agricultural production only. Nevertheless the overall impression may be that his work is more actual than it might seem, its somehow simplified reception resembling that of Braudel's statements about the Alps (Mathieu 2016). Although this may of course not be the place for a wider discussion, it still makes sense to mention some of the most apparent divergences and similarities between his Russian case and the integrated peasant economy. As first I would point out that one of the basic Chayanov's assumptions, that the peasant families did not make use of paid labour, does not fit the realities we are discussing, since the work as wage day-labourers on larger peasant farms was relatively widespread, representing one of the many possible income sources for small peasants, while peasants owning larger holdings apart from using daily wage labour could employ more stable farmhands and maids too. On the other hand we must recognise that the market is well present in Chayanov's peasant economy. Let's quote just a couple of examples. In the "Theory of non-capitalist economic systems," "the peasant or artisan running his own business without paid labour receives as a result of a year's work an amount of produce which, after being exchanged on the market, forms the gross product of his economic unit" (Chayanov 1966, 5). In "The basic principles of peasant farm organisation," when discussing early 20th century

Russian cases he becomes even clearer by writing about the “summed family income and not [...] only] that part which its agricultural incomes constitute.”

The family throws its unutilised labour into crafts, trades, and other extra-agricultural livelihoods. The whole of its summed agricultural, crafts, and trades income is counterposed to its demands, and the drudgery of acquiring it leads to an equilibrium with the degree of satisfaction of these personal demands. [...] Thus, the peasant family hastens to meet a shortfall in agriculture incomes by income from crafts and trades. [...] Because the family’s agricultural undertaking and crafts and trades activity are connected by a single system of the basic equilibrium of economic factors, they cannot be reviewed independently of one another. This compels us to change somewhat the morphological scheme of the peasant farm [...] by including the process of work in crafts and trades (Chayanov 1966, 101–102).

In one case he was even able to quantify the time dedicated to agriculture, crafts and trade by peasant families, noting how to the latter activities more time was dedicated by peasants with a smaller amount of land (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5: Percentage of the working time spent in agriculture, crafts, and trades by farm-size in the Vologda uezd (northern Russia, early 20th century)

Sown area in each field per farm (<i>desyatinas</i> = 1.1 ha)	Percentage of working year spent on:	
	Agriculture	Crafts and trades
0.0-0.0	10.3	41.9
0.1-1.0	21.7	22.8
1.1-2.0	23.0	21.9
2.1-3.0	26.9	19.8
3.1-6.0	28.1	13.7
6.1-10.0	41.6	11.1

Source: Chayanov 1966, 101 and 272.

Clear and important similarities with the integrated peasant economy may be identified both in the asserted existence of income integration from activities belonging to all three economic sectors (primary, secondary, and tertiary), as well as in the need to understand such income sources as part of a “single system” to be considered as a whole and not separately. Based on this we may notice how the basic features of the integrated peasant economy are applicable to the Russian case too, at least at the beginning of the 20th century. At the same time a major difference may be spotted in Chayanov’s opinion that the peasant family recurring to non-agricultural income sources when facing “a shortfall in agriculture incomes” and by using its “unutilised labour” for crafts and trades. On the contrary, in the integrated peasant economy we consider such income sources as structural and fundamental. Another possible difference may be noted in the fact that Chayanov argues how the peasant family was not interested in pursuing income growth when “family’s demands” were “more completely” satisfied (Chayanov 1966, 8). In fact, in Slovenia as well as in other cases presented in this volume, we may spot cases of peasant households increasing their wellbeing

and even wealth in connection with multi-sectoral activities external to the farms and in relation to the market – that is through the integrated peasant economy.

It is now possible to make a brief comparative comment on proto-industrialisation, as well. Perhaps we may first notice how, in spite of strongly based on Chayanov's model of peasant family economy, in this case only secondary sector activities were taken into consideration, while Chayanov recognised the presence of all three sectors in peasant economy. The concept of proto-industry itself does not appear suitable to comprise the whole range of extra-agrarian income sources among the peasants in the southern Alpine area (Slovenia, Italy), for different reasons. First of all, as we have seen, we are not dealing with activities that belong to the industrial (secondary) sector alone. Moreover, we are not talking about activities filling seasonal times of relative under-employment of the work force in the traditional agricultural system – this might, of course, have been the case too, but mainly we have peasant households who engage in other activities because that was their way to make a living, given that they did not possess enough land to cover all of their needs, and that makes quite a difference. Finally, we are not discussing a form of organisation of production that would have (necessarily) led the way to industrialisation or modern economic development – although we'll come back to this question. This said, the work in proto-industrial forms of production organisation (domestic and putting-out system, *Kauf-* and *Verlagssystem*) itself is not in contradiction with the integrated peasant economy and is included among the possible income sources within the system (see Table 1.4).

Another step in time will help us come to an even closer understanding of the integrated economy concept. A widely used term to describe peasant income integration patterns is “pluriactivity,” and in Italian scholarship – yet again – we may find in depth and convincing discussions of this theme, as well as by French scholars. The term dates back to the 80s of the 20th century. It originated in French historiography with its use by Philippe Lacombe in 1981 (Villani 1989, 13) and at the end of that decade Jean-Luc Mayaud would already affirm that “by now there is no more need to demonstrate the existence of pluriactivity in the agricultural families of the past centuries” (Mayaud 1989, 23).

Pasquale Villani's and Luciano Cafagna's criticism towards “proto-industrialisation” and their stressing the differences brought by research on pluriactivity instead, closely resemble what we mentioned above, as well as the very perspective of the integrated peasant economy in placing the peasant economy at the centre of observation.

The point of view [of proto-industry] remained essentially that of the formation of an industrial basis. The problems of rural society were addressed, when they were, only incidentally [...]. In any case it limited to considering only the relationship toward secondary activities. Pluriactivity, instead, starts exactly from the analysis of rural society and widens to considering the whole spectre of jobs and professions that in a varied way and at different occasions and times were and are practiced by the inhabitants of rural areas (Villani 1989, 14).

The viewpoint of research on pluriactivity wants to be wider than that of research on proto-industrialisation. Its goal is not to identify the factors of development/decline of

industrialisation, but the understanding of the ways of survival and of the opportunities of inclusion of agrarian family units facing social change. The results of such research may well give a 'return' as far as a better knowledge of the whole industrialisation process is concerned, but they are not directly and purposely connected with such knowledge (Cafagna 1989, 79).

There is another fundamental similarity between the concepts of integrated peasant economy and pluriactivity, although perhaps more so in the way it was understood by Italian scholars contrary to the French colleagues: “The very definition of pluriactivity in the rigorous French acceptance of a *second, necessarily extra-agricultural activity* appeared in some cases insufficient to account for the ‘multi-professionality’ or the precariousness of labour among the inhabitants of Italian rural areas.” In discussing the Italian reality in the 18th and 19th centuries, Cafagna was particularly firm in sustaining that peasant “integration choices” encompassed also primary sector activities, like those related to silk production, and that they had to be considered as cases of pluriactivity, too: in doing so he included short term sharecropping tenancies as fitting into the system. In his opinion discussing this would be “pedantic,” since they “surely are an ‘addition’ of activity and income” (Cafagna 1989, 80–81). This opinion is shared by Giovanni Federico as well, who – while addressing different Italian regions in different periods of the 20th century – proposed “four elements of consideration” on pluriactivity, which closely recall some of the features of, and theses on the integrated peasant economy, as follows (here we quote three of them only).

a) The work outside the farm is not necessarily a residual activity for the idle times of agriculture. It's possible, instead, that at a certain moment it turns out to be more remunerative [...].

b) The family's working power is in principle undividable based on the kind of occupation. That's why – contrary to the definition of pluriactivity by Hubscher⁹ – it includes agricultural work (both from pure wage and from owned capital). [...]

c) The existence of “exceeding” manpower in respect of the “necessities” of the farm, often called upon (especially in an overpopulated land like Italy) as a cause of pluriactivity, depends in the first place on the choices regarding cultivation and technics (the “survival tactic” of the family). They were not given ‘a priori’: it was possible to change them in order to adjust labour demand and offer – if considered as appropriate. [Very short, short or medium-long term] changes were possible. The persistence of a disproportion in the long run is therefore as well the result of economic choices determined from market conditions and from the availability of alternative employment opportunities (Federico 1989, 90–91).

Similarities with the integrated peasant economy may be spotted, at least partially, also in Federico's distinction of possible income sources. He could also propose a quantification of their contribution to the whole family income in 20th century Italy (different regions and periods, before WWI, interwar period, and after WWII, Table 1.6). The result of his

⁹ Ronald Hubscher elaborated the 'French' definition of pluriactivity, Villani 1989.

econometric analysis led to the conclusion that “the recourse to external sources was greater, the smaller, the more specialised and less profitable the farm was, and the higher the demographic load on land was” (Federico 1989, 98).

Table 1.6. “Forms of pluriactivity” and their contribution to the total family income (181 cases, 20th-century Italy)

Income sources	Average percentage of the total family income
Agricultural work with the use of farm capital (like animals)	7.20
Gathering, hunting, fishing	1.35
Tertiary activities: transport	6.80
Tertiary activities: crafts (shoe-making, barbering, bricklaying etc.)	19.95
Emigration: temporary and definitive	25.08
Manufacturing activities: ‘modern’ (factory, mainly women)	39.46
Manufacturing activities: ‘proto-industrial’ (textile)	8.74
Manufacturing activities: diverse (charcoal production, mill management, rural crafts, road-keeping)	21.54

Source: Federico 1989, 94–96.

Anyway, the main assonances with the integrated peasant economy are to be identified in his stressing how peasant income integration was not necessarily and simply a way to exploit seasonal under-employment in agriculture, as well as in his underlining the fact that peasants made active economic choices that attained also the population-resources ratio. This means that a holding too small to give work to all the hands and feed all the mouths may well be understood as the consequence of a choice made based on existing income opportunities. The theme of peasant agency (making choices and acting them out) is closely related to the question of whether the peasant economy in general, and the integrated peasant economy in particular was directed only towards reaching subsistence and granting survival to the household, or perhaps it allowed something more, too, as in the integrated peasant economy hypothesis. We may find a confirmation of the latter in Cafagna’s opinion that the “subjective aims, the inspirative strategies” of pluriactivity may be twofold: given by “defensive necessities” (in relation to the survival possibilities or to the living standard of the family) or by “aspirations of change/improvement.” The peasant decision may well take place in a “strategic perspective of acquiring property [...], a pluriactivity choice for ‘independence,’ as Hubscher would say” (Cafagna 1989, 79, 81).

French historians dedicated their attention to the issue of the social and economic goals of the pluriactive peasant. Ronald Hubscher expressed the opinion that besides admitting the existence of a “penury or subsistence pluriactivity” (*pluriactivite de penurie ou de subsistence*), “it is necessary to question other destinations of capital [earned through pluriactivity], which point to concerns of social mobility” (Hubscher 1988, 9). This opinion resisted further research tests in France, considering that also Jean-Luc Mayaud a decade later stated that “peasant pluriactivity is not only a pluriactivity out of necessity.” From the point of view of “the poorest wanting to rise, the recourse to pluriactivity appears a possible, if not a

necessary route to the maintenance and improvement of the small peasant farms” (Mayaud 1999, 233–235).

Without masking the reality of pluriactivity as a ‘solution for marginalised farmers’, one should not neglect that it is an ‘art de vivre’ and discloses itself as structurally linked to the peasant farm. Revealed in the long term, pluriactivity finds its place both during the idle periods of agricultural work and within the family’s division of tasks, fixed or variable, temporary or permanent. It is extremely flexible and adaptable in both the short and the long term. Various typologies have thus been drawn up, taking into account the more or less strong constraints of agricultural activity, of the rhythms of work in the various crafts, in proto-industry or industry, but also of the opportunities offered by surrounding society. No limit has the list of examples of pluriactivity, in the last century, which don’t spare any rural area [of France]” (Mayaud 1999, 236–237).

The similarity with the integrated peasant economy is impressive, although it’s important to notice at this point how French historians in particular write about pluriactivity in the 19th and 20th centuries. Gilbert Garrier and Yves Rinaudo distinguished between “closed forms of pluriactivity,” practiced within the narrow space of a single hamlet or village and “contributing to the collective autarchy of the community,” and “open forms of pluriactivity” with a projection outside of the village, its products entering a commercial circuit and virtually always being subject to a cash payment” (Garrier, Goujon, Rinaudo 1988, 234). While “closed pluriactivity” covers all the professions necessary to the life in the village community, the “open pluriactivity is extroverted,” it has an “openly commercial vocation” and a necessarily “extra-village dimension,” “it participates fully to a market economy,” “requires a certain specialisation” and is “linked to forms of proto-industrialisation, it evolves with time and modernises if necessary” (Rinaudo 1987, 284). The integrated peasant economy is undoubtedly an open and extroverted economy, although it does not exclude from its possible components also forms of activity within the community and income sources originated in the same village (making the mention distinction much less relevant). In fact, one more parallel with the integrated peasant economy is represented by the connection of the peasant economy to the wider economy and external world that it implies: “Through pluriactivity rural areas open themselves to the market, they undergo national if not international economic impulses which the countless peasant weavers, metallurgists or miners cannot escape” (Hubscher 1988, 9).

After reviewing the main and relatively numerous convergences between integrated peasant economy and pluriactivity, some of the major points of divergence shall also not be passed over in silence. We may well start from the internal debate between Italian and French scholars on the very meaning of pluriactivity. While French scholars meant that “it’s possible to speak of pluriactivity only when a *first* occupation or activity in agriculture would be joined by another one in the *secondary or tertiary sector*,” Italian historians found that employments in the same agricultural sector, mostly seasonal, should be considered as part of the picture, along with wine or oil manufacturing, to give some examples, and that therefore a firm distinction between agricultural and extra-agricultural activities in defining pluriactivity

appeared “too rigid.”¹⁰ In fact, in the definition proposal by Garrier and colleagues not only any agricultural activity carried out within the farm, even if it was market oriented, but also those “exercised out of the holdings and, most often, out of the region” are excluded from the concept (Garrier, Goujon, Rinaudo 1988, 233). Such a “rigid” example of understanding pluriactivity, excluding agricultural income sources, is most explicit in Yves Rinaudo.

The small peasant who engages as agricultural labourer by his more fortunate neighbour or goes to work for the season to a greater distance will not be considered. For sure he accumulates several types of income (as owner, as labourer...). But all of them are of agricultural origin and above all he remains technically, socially and culturally within the agricultural world. In reality he offers an example of internal adjustment of this world and not a modality of its adaptation to the encompassing society (Rinaudo 1987, 284).

At this point it goes nearly without saying that such a position is not only discordant with the “Italian” understanding of pluriactivity, but even more so with the integrated peasant economy concept, which includes also the options of income integration in the primary sector, not least because we regard the peasant economy as a whole. It’s consequently not surprising that Rinaudo and colleagues have a narrower range of fields in which pluriactive peasants could be active, but even considering this their “first orientation grid by sectors and products” is quite parsimonious, since it lists only “textiles, iron and metals, timber, extractive activities (marl, quarries, mines etc...), transport activities, other” (Garrier, Goujon, Rinaudo 1988, 233–234). In the integrated peasant economy we also do not look at non-agricultural activities simply as a second activity, as it prevails in the original French definition of pluriactivity, and allow for more complex combinations of a number of different marketed income sources. So far we have also not classified the possible combinations into (sub) categories, or followed the example of speaking of more “pluriactivities” (Garrier, Hubscher 1988, Cafagna 1989).

As Renato Sansa has suggested, the integrated peasant economy might overcome the divergences between the Italian and the French conception of pluriactivity.¹¹ I think one of the advantages of the integrated peasant economy is precisely its capability to encompass the whole economy of a peasant household, including its different possible income sources and activity changes. Distinguishing among different possible combinations or pairs of activities may in fact be a way to lose out of sight the fundamental acknowledgement that income integration in peasant economy constitutes one system only, despite its (different) forms of appearance. Nevertheless the distinction between activity combinations as “forms of pluriactivity” represents one of the possible paths to a comparative approach, as Luigi Lorenzetti has recently shown in the example of two Alpine valleys in Italy and Switzerland between the last decades of the 19th and first of the 20th centuries (Lorenzetti 2012/3).

This brings us to an interesting divergence between the two concepts, related to the somehow different time-frame in which they are applied. While ‘Italian school’ pluriactivity research focuses mainly on the 18th and 19th century, with possible projections into the 20th,

¹⁰ Villani 1989, 16–17; crucial words are stressed in italics by Villani himself.

¹¹ See the contribution by Renato Sansa in this volume.

‘French school’ pluriactivity is more focused on the latter two centuries, with Yves Rinaudo even deeming that, “omnipresent, peasants’ ‘pluri-activity’ functioned as a formula for adaptation to the modern world (from 1830 to 1950).” Indeed also a different scenario was possible: peasants remaining attached to old and declining activities would decrease in number, while others would find in new activities “the means to last without changing.” (Rinaudo 1987, 296–297). Continuing on the same interpretative line, Mayaux identifies in pluriactivity the reason why small peasant farms in France endured the 19th century, notwithstanding the expectation that they should have been condemned to join the proletariat and give way to big capitalistic farms. That’s also the reason why he claims that “the acknowledgement of pluriactivity by rural historians is one of the important acquisitions in recent historiography,” making it possible to speak of an “agro-industrial” space and economy (Mayaud 1999, 232).

Recognising the versatility of the small-scale rural farm, one can understand its resistance, its maintenance, its reproduction and, overall, its triumph. Being pluri-active, it is confronted with the risks of the market in which it is inserted. More exposed than the alimentary tenure, it is nevertheless better equipped to face the surrounding economy. It draws its strength from a high level of flexibility and strong reconversion capacities: depending on market opportunities, ‘extra work’ can temporarily become the main activity or disappear in anticipation of better times (Mayaud 1999, 242).

Although this interpretation is perfectly in line with the integrated peasant economy concept, as we have seen and still will notice, at the same time there is a difference to be pointed at. In fact, the integrated peasant economy was designed to fit the pre-industrial period and it proved to be applicable since the late Middle-Ages and through the Early Modern centuries, while within our research the period of modern economic development and industrialisation was seen as a challenge to the system, too. The difference is that French historians consider pluriactivity a way to adapt to conditions brought on by modernity, while we see the integrated peasant economy as pre-existent and the 19th (and 20th) centuries as one of the ages in which it existed and persisted, proving itself as an adequate conceptual tool for analysing not only pre-industrial societies, but rural areas within modernising and industrialising economies as well. Let’s just incidentally notice how the aforementioned discussions among French and Italian pluriactivity researchers implicitly shows how income integration practices were present among peasants in a much wider area than the southern Alpine and mountain areas of Slovenia and Italy, which we have so far mainly addressed.

Recent rural historiography stresses how the Early-Modern and modern European peasant population showed a remarkable degree of economic activity and initiative, defining it as “agency,” for example in a southern German case (Sreenivasan 2004), and “industriousness” in north-western Europe (De Vries 2008). This means the peasant households represented not only observers who would passively adapt to external conditions and pressures, but were an active player in the wider sphere of production and consumption. With the organisation of work and relationships within the family they helped shape the social and economic processes and changes in which they were involved not only as producers but also as consumers. Because of the rather high variety of activities in which the Slovenian,

Italian, and other European peasants engaged in, we may perhaps say that in doing so they as well showed a remarkable degree of economic “agency” and even “industriousness.” Although “industriousness” implies a growing orientation towards consumer goods, by sustaining this I do not necessarily mean that in the Early Modern Slovenian or southern Alpine rural society in general (including Italy) there was a significant orientation towards acquiring consumer goods or satisfying modern consumer needs,¹² but more simply that this term may be applied to such economies too. What I think may be noticed in a wider rural economic landscape than western Europe alone, where the concept of “industriousness” was conceived, is that “households shifted from market contact (sale of goods to supplement household production) to market orientation (sale of goods and labour as the basis of the household economy)” (De Vries 2008, 82). The latter was, for example, the case of an increasing portion of the Slovenian and Italian Alpine and Subalpine peasant population throughout the Early Modern centuries, but the same applies to different cases presented in this volume too, ranging from the Mediterranean to Scandinavia.

On the other hand, even in north-western Europe, the ‘home of industriousness,’ we may find regions in which survival has been interpreted as “the most important goal” of peasant economy, although it combined agriculture with market-oriented activities, excluding the possibility that peasants would have been able to represent a source of demand for commodity goods which could sustain economic development. This is the case of Erik Thoen’s “commercial-survival economy,” a term coined to define the peasant economy in inland Flanders. The analogy between the “commercial-survival economy,” the integrated peasant economy (and pluriactivity too) is substantial, starting from the basic fact that they are all intended to define an economy combining agriculture with market oriented inter-sectoral activities. What follows are the “features of the commercial-survival economy” in Flanders from the Middle-Ages to the 19th century (Thoen 2001, 111–112).

1. *The majority of holdings were very small family holdings, many of them smaller than the minimum required for subsistence [...] The long term trend [...] was for these subsistence holdings to become smaller.*
2. *Slowly changing property structures did not profoundly alter the system [...] lease holding (in the form of short-term leases of plots of land) became more significant than customary holding which was in decline.*
3. *Survival was the most important goal; large-scale commercial plans, investment and social mobility were, broadly speaking, impossible.*
4. *Typical labour structures:*
 - *Considerable labour input, considerable unemployment during much of the year, low labour productivity.*
 - *A survival strategy based on additional income distinct from the peasant holding [...] mostly in the form of] work for part of the year on larger farms [...] and on additional income from non-agricultural activities such as cottage industry.*

¹² Although such cases are documented, like in 18th century Tuscany, Malanima 1990, 135–163. For a recent critical comment on the industrious revolution and the “industriousness discourse” in historical scholarship, see Litvine 2014.

5. *Physical production structures: high intensification rate; mixed-farming system and the production of fodder crops; although self-sufficiency was the most important goal of the peasants [...] survival was only possible through (limited) production for the market in the shape of industrial crops and even a variety of foodstuffs.*
6. *Limited production for the market resulted in a limited, but increasing, dependence on the market [...] that] encouraged peasants to use more intensive production methods.*

Specific similarities and differences may of course be found depending on the region one would choose for comparison with the Flemish case, but our main interest here is the concept of “survival-commercial economy” itself. Analogous to the integrated peasant economy is the admission of market oriented agricultural production activities and wage labour on large farms (primary sector, agriculture related activities) as fitting sources of income, as well as the detection of a critical moment for the “balance” of the system, as Italian scholars often express,¹³ towards the middle of the 19th century. Both the commercial-survival economy and the integrated peasant economy are also deeply rooted in small-holding systems, although during our research we have encountered different cases in which larger peasant holdings were home to relevant income integration practices, also relying on their larger capital (e.g. animals to use or hire etc.). Shared is the intense work invested in (often patches of) land. Another common feature, that at the same time distinguishes them both from most part of pluriactivity research, is the long-run perspective stretching from the Middle-Ages to the 19th century at least, but we have seen how inter-sectoral income integration practices are detectable among European peasants in the 20th century as well. As differences we may note that the commercially oriented activities in the commercial-survival economy are mostly bounded to local urban market circuits and that no mentionable role is played by tertiary sector activities. On the other hand questions arise regarding the causal relationship between the (increasingly) small dimension of holdings and the availability of other income sources, the effect of short-term leases on the possibilities of income integration, as well as the role played by the increasing burdens and taxes on the fact that “these commercial peasants were increasingly pushed to the market to sell their products as well as to buy additional products for survival” (Thoen 2001, 127, 131, 135, 137, 145). But probably the most apparent divergence is that the commercial-survival economy is intended as aiming at survival only, “social promotion in this kind of rural society is a myth” (Thoen 2001, 145), while the integrated peasant economy allows the peasants the chance to increase their economic prosperity, improve their living standards and even the possibility of social promotion, although this was not necessarily the case.

One of the fundamental questions regarding peasant economy, addressed by classical as well as contemporary scholarship, is indeed its economic and social goal, so to say. Did the pre-industrial or Early Modern European peasants strive for subsistence and survival only, or perhaps for well-being, accumulation, increasing consumption, and profit too? And what was the role they played and the influence they had on economic growth and development, if any?¹⁴ Let us express these same questions more closely from our perspective: Did the

¹³ Coppola 1991, but also Bulgarelli, Mocarelli and Tedeschi in this volume.

¹⁴ A recent overview in Schuurman 2014.

integrated peasant economy result in wealth or poverty? Or perhaps it resulted in social sustainability, which is in guaranteeing a sustainable living standard to the majority of the local peasant population (that could be just another name for the “economic equilibrium” used by Italian scholars)? And, at last, how did the integrated peasant economy affect (modern) economic growth and development? We’re leaving these questions open at the moment but I wish to underline that we do not need the answers to be univocal in order to make the integrated peasant economy concept work. Our case studies may anyway be helpful in searching for answers.

4. The integrated peasant economy upgraded

Upgraded features of the integrated peasant economy

1. Peasants combine agriculture and market oriented activities to make their living and/or raise their living standard.
2. Market oriented activities represent an equal (may be minor or major) income source compared to subsistence agriculture.
3. The adopted activities and income sources belong to the three economic sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary).
4. The system is dynamic and flexible, adapts to changes in the availability of income sources and the market conditions, in the population and in family structure through time.
5. The carrying-capacity of the environment is increased beyond the level of population possible based on agricultural land alone.
6. Income sources deriving from the use of commons play a significant role (but not necessarily so).
7. The integrated peasant economy is connected to external demand and opportunities, and to exogenous factors.

Table 1.8 Upgraded integrated peasant economy checklist

Sector	Activity	Check
PRIMARY	Agricultural specialisation	
	Intensification of cultivation (no fallow, mixed-cropping, ...)	
	Wage day-labour in agriculture and longer-term farmhands at larger farms	
	Extension/intensification of animal husbandry	

	Intensification of forest exploitation (through primary sector activities, but also secondary and tertiary)	
	Extension of cultivated land (reclamation of commons and woods)	
	Quarries	
	Fishing	
SECONDARY	Transformation of primary resources/products (e.g. wine, cheese, meat products; charcoal, lime)	
	Rural crafts	
	Domestic, putting-out system (proto-industry)	
	Work in “centred” industries and plants (manufactures, mining, etc.)	
	Migrant/mobile craftsmen (e.g. bricklayers, etc.)	
TERTIARY	Wage labour in the industrial sector	
	Services in the field of long and medium distance trade (draught animal lease, fodder, lodging and food - inns, etc.)	
	Transport of other people’s products and goods on short to medium distance	
	Trafficking with own products and goods on short to medium distance	
	Peddling	
	Smuggling	
	Migrant/mobile workers (dock-workers, etc.)	
	Works of trust (estimation of land value, testimonies, etc.)	
	Tourism	

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