

HISCO - Web-Based Information System on the History of Work

Uses of the Information System



Some uses can be realized in the current time span, others need moderated input by users of the information system, and refer to a longer time span.

Creating a World Historical Class Scheme

HISCO ensures a high degree of comparability between historical datasets during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also ensures a high degree of comparability between historical datasets, thus coded, and between the many contemporary datasets from the social sciences that are already coded in ISCO68 or ISCO88. Once HISCO is easily available, recoding of historical occupational codes into a class scheme, a status scale or a division into economic sectors also becomes much less time-consuming than it is at present. In fact it allows an individual researcher virtually complete freedom to regroup individual occupational titles from various countries and periods, coded in HISCO, into a stratification scheme of his or her own liking. HISCO may thus also serve as an instrument to code historical occupational titles into a preferred class scheme.

Indeed, we intend to make a World Historical Class Scheme. The aim of this work is to reduce the 1675 HISCO codes into a smaller sizeable and meaningful number of classes. The class scheme will be rooted in HISCO, thus assuring consistency over the historical datasets and comparability with current schemes (EGP, ESEC).

Intergenerational social mobility

Modernization theorists have long since claimed that underlying the observed historical and national variations in social mobility patterns, a historical drive can be witnessed towards an 'open society', that is an equalization of opportunity chances on the labour market. This assumed transformation from 'ascription to achievement' is of importance economically - raising productivity through an optimal allocation of labour- and socially - while diminishing class tensions; the result legitimizes polity in general and that of parliamentary democracies in general. Sociologists have engaged in this debate, formulated various theories and developed various measurement techniques. Their use of survey data has, however, restricted their research to the twentieth century, notwithstanding the fact that their theories in some measure deal with an earlier period in Western- Europe, the period of industrialization. A historical equivalent of the so called CASMIN-project (Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrialized Nations) of Erikson and Goldthorpe would use historical data from the

19 and early 20th centuries to contribute to the debate on ascription versus achievement. In this debate Erikson and Goldthorpe claim to witness no trend in relative mobility patterns, only a constant flux, while Ganzeboom, Treiman and Lijkx see a slow decrease in class barriers over time. International historical data coded in a comparable fashion using HISCO, would be able to scrutinize further such a slow decrease that, while powerful in the long run, needs a long time span to be measured accurately. For most members of the HISCO-group indeed, the overriding purpose of creating a HISCO is to engage in a Historical International Social Mobility Analysis (HISMA for short).

Careers

Issues currently of interest to historians in this field are perhaps best summarized by presenting the list of questions for a session on 'Making a career: individual work-life histories and labour market structures', organized as part of the XIII World Congress of the International Economic History Association, Buenos Aires, July 2002.

The session will consist of studies in which the unit of analysis is the career/work-life history of the individual worker. We expect to include studies using quantitative data sets with longitudinal information on workers and studies employing biographical and qualitative evidence on collections of workers. Among the issues we hope the studies will address are:

- a) patterns of occupational, task, and job tenure and turnover for individual workers.
- b) the steepness (or flatness) of age-earnings profiles in various settings.
- c) actors that have structured career/work-life experiences in various settings, including:
 - i) guild structures with apprentice-journeyman-master transitions
 - ii) professionalization
 - iii) rise of internal labour markets in modern corporations
 - iv) rise of bureaucratic meritocracies

For comparative answers to these questions an easily accessible HISCO is needed and other features of the information system are desirable, such as historical information on tasks and duties of the occupations, class-rankings and bibliography.

Applied use of class structures in demographic and other research

Creating and testing class structures can be a goal in itself for social historians or historical sociologists, but may also be of use to other researchers wishing to use classes in for example demographic research. Mortality, fertility and nuptiality in past societies are known to differ by social group and often demographic rates are calculated per social group. This is usually done with a variety of national class-schemes. HISCO allows a researcher to apply a class scheme on historical data in a way that is uniform for all countries under study. A class scheme based on HISCO allows researchers to avoid problems associated with 19th century classifications, often believed to be the product of 19th century cultural norms and amalgamating subgroups with quite different behaviour (see for example Szretzer on British fertility).

Labour markets and production processes

The information system helps to classify occupational activities in various regions in the past in economic sectors in a comparable fashion, rooted in HISCO but chosen by the researcher. This facilitates comparing distributions of the labour force over economic sectors. Differences in number of

historical occupational titles per HISCO-unit, minor or major group between countries are a token of differences in economic specialization. The same applies to differences in the mentioning of information on Product in the historical titles in various countries. In this respect the information system improves upon ISCO68 since it stores additional information on product in a special variable. As historical censuses and vital records to which many historical datasets relate, and certainly the HISCO datasets, distinguish between men and women, the information system presents a measure of information on gender segregation: which occupations were male only or typically female and how do regions differ in this respect? The introduction of new occupational terms, or the absence, or differences in nature and timing of introductions give clues to sources and spread of innovations in the production process. This is the more so, when HISCO is connected to occupational descriptions from encyclopedia and the like.

Labour relations

A few of the ways the information system allows the comparative study of labour relations in the past, have already been mentioned: via economic specialization, gender segregation, career-histories, the degree of occupational inheritance between father and son, and the degree of heterogamy between social groups. In addition, it may be mentioned that HISCO also has a variable STATUS and a variable TEMP that attains much of the information on labour relations often found in historical data but absent in ISCO68 or ISCO88. Such information refers to retirement - and thus in combination with information on age - on retirement ages per occupation, to hierarchical levels in artisanal workshops (master, journeyman, apprentice, learner, assistant), and to status information not tied to an occupation. The latter varies greatly between periods, and especially, between countries. Examples are 'gentlewomen, fundholder and landed proprietor', 'pauper, previously nurse', 'baron', 'slave', 'onbezoldigd rijksveldwachter', 'bourgeoise', 'bettelvoegt'. The information system with the moderated list service will stimulate comparative research on labour relations.

Marriage markets

Mate selection is of importance for the well being of the couples concerned, of interest to their parents, friends, and to society at large. It can influence the distribution of resources markedly. Both in the present and for generations to come, lineages of wealth, poverty, social support or animosity may be attenuated or strengthened. Via procreation - or its absence - mate selection is furthermore consequential for genetical composition and hence the future of the human species itself. For these reasons, it is not surprising that courtship and marriage have been prominently present on the research agenda's of demographers, ethnographers, historians and sociologists alike, and, of recent, on that of economists. But not for these reasons only. In the institutions of courtship and marriage are reflected the demographic facts of the epoch, the social norms and traditions of the age as well as the economic circumstances of the time. Using mostly qualitative material, Shorter has proposed that there has been a decisive shift in the Western World during industrialization from traditional, parental and communal, norms on mate selection to the blind forces of love and attraction. Men and women no longer married for reason but for love. Shorter's sexual revolution thesis is, however, best tested, as he himself advocates, by looking at the qualitative material in conjunction with historical homogamy tables, cross-classifying occupations of bridegrooms and their father-in-laws. For a comparative framework a HISCO is most desirable.

Cultural histories of work

When the information system not only contains linguistic information on occupations from the historical record, but also occupational descriptions from encyclopedia, and especially images on the world of work, a comparative cultural history of the world of work in past societies comes closer than ever. The images may not only reveal technical details on the production process and the locus of production, but also information on apparel, gestures, positions, emblemata, traditions of depicting work life etcetera. The information system with the moderated list service will stimulate cultural histories of work, mostly in the long run as the infrastructure becomes know, consulted and appended to. The same applies to the last topic:

A Geographical Information System of the history of work

The efforts by various, often national, agencies to create large historical databases, have now led to the situation that large regions, and even countries can be covered for a long timespan, as far as occupational information is concerned. This, in principle, allows to display and analyze various topics mentioned in a geographical information system. For countries such as France and the Netherlands one e.g. can envisage visual displays of the geographical location and changes over time in the occurrence of a certain occupation, a certain product or a particular labour relation over a century or more. In some cases, the historical records in principle allow one to follow a migrating individuals between places. This information is known to be present in some large historical datasets, both within and outside the HISCO-project. In principle it can be stored in a GIS.

An example from the HISCO Manual:

5-3 COOKS, WAITERS, BARTENDERS AND RELATED WORKERS

Workers in this minor group supervise and perform various kinds of work related to the preparation and cooking of meals and the serving of food and beverages. They may be employed in hotels or other commercial establishments, in institutions or in private households or on board ships or railway trains. They are classified in the unit groups listed below:

5-31 Cooks.

5-32 Waiters, Bartenders and Related Workers.

5-31 Cooks

Workers in this group prepare and cook foodstuffs in hotels, restaurants, other public eating places, aboard ships, on railway trains and in private households. Their functions include: planning meals, preparing and cooking foodstuffs; performing various other tasks related to the preparation and cooking of food.

5-31.00 Cook, Specialisation Unknown.

May perform any (but not all) of the occupational activities described in 5-31.20 to 5-31.90.

BE: Cuisinier

CA: Cuisinier

FR: Cuisinier

GE: Koch

NL: Kok

NO: Kok

SW: Kock

UK: Cook

5-31.20 Head Cook.

Plans meals and supervises and co-ordinates work of cooks and kitchen helpers in hotels, restaurants or other establishments and on railway trains.

CA: Chef-cuisinier, Contremaître-cuisinier

FR: Chef cuisinier, Chef de cuisine

5-31.30 Cook, Except Private Service.

Prepares all kinds of hot and cold meals, snacks, pastries, etc. for consumption in hotels, restaurants railway dining-cars, air planes, clubs, schools, cafeterias and other catering facilities.

CA: Cuisinier militaire

FR: Cuisinier d'hôtel

UK: Cook at inn, Pastry cook

5-31.40 Cook, Private Service.

Prepares and cooks meals in private households.

FR: Cuisinière en maison, Domestique cuisinière

NO: Kokkepige

UK: House servant cook, Servant cook

5-31.50 Ship's Cook.

Prepares and cooks meals on ships.

NO: Kok til sjøs, Skibskok

5-31.90 Other Cooks.

This group includes cooks not elsewhere classified, for example those who prepare special foods for diets; prepare, cook and serve food on camp sites for construction, mineral exploration, farm and other workers; perform various tasks in preparation of food such as cleaning and peeling vegetables.

BE: Employé cuisine

CA: Aide-cuisinier

FR: Aide de cuisine, Garçon cuisinier

SW: Kallskänka

UK: Cookmaid, Kitchenmaid, Scullery maid

5-32 Waiters, Bartenders and Related Workers

Workers in this unit group serve food and beverages in commercially operated dining and drinking places, clubs, institutions and canteens, on board ships and on railway trains. Their functions include:

serving food and beverages; advising on the choice of wines and serving them; serving alcoholic and other drinks at a bar; performing various other tasks relative to the foregoing.

Aircraft cabin attendant is classified in unit group 5-99.

5-32.10 Waiter, General.

Serves food and beverages in hotels, restaurants and other catering facilities.

BE: Garçon, Garçon de café, Garçon de table, Serveuse

CA: Employé de restaurant, Fille de table, Garçon de table, Serveuse de table

FR: Buffetière*, Fille de salle*, Garçon de café, Garçon de restaurant, Garçon de salle*, Garçon limonadier, Serveuse

GE: Kellner

NE: Kelner, Koffiehuisbediende

SW: Kypare

UK: Pot scourer, Servant waitress, Stillroom maid, Waiter

5-32.20 Head Waiter.

Takes charge of dining-room, restaurant or section thereof in hotels, restaurants, clubs, institutions and similar commercial establishments, on board ships and on railway trains, supervising and coordinating the work of employees engaged in providing services to diners.

BE: Maître d'hôtel

CA: Maître d'hôtel

FR: Maître d'hôtel

GE: Oberkellner

5-32.30 Waiter, Formal Service.

Serves food and beverages to guests in hotels, restaurants and clubs, working in a formal setting and paying special attention to established rules of service.

5-32.40 Wine Waiter.

Advises on the selection of wines and serves them in commercially operated dining and drinking places and in clubs and institutions.

FR: Caviste*, Caviste de restaurant, Sommelier

SW: Skänkmamsell

5-32.50 Bartender.

Serves alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks at a bar.

CA: Barmaid, Barman, Commis de bar

FR: Barman

NL: Barman

UK: Barmaid, Barman

5-32.90 Other Waiters, Bartenders and Related Workers.

This group includes waiters, bartenders and related workers not elsewhere classified, for example

those who arrange tables and chairs; show customers to seats; present hors-d'oeuvres and deserts to tables for selection by guests; remove used linen and dishes from tables; wash and dry glasses and clean bars.

CA: Commis de restaurant, Laveur de vaisselles, Préposée à la cafétéria

FR: Chasseur de restaurant, Demoiselle de bar, Laveur de vaisselles

GE: Gaststättengehilfin

NL: Cantinebediende

SW: Kaffekokerska

UK: Potman.

Source: HISCO: HISTORICAL INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS

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