

Lasts Generations of Stem Family: Evolution of Household Structure in Baix Llobregat from Mid 19th to Mid 20th Century.

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the reproduction, adaptation, and change of household composition practices of 5 municipalities in the Baix Llobregat region in Catalonia between mid-19th and mid-20th centuries. This work is the first one documenting the process of change of the stem family system, which was widely spread in pre-industrial northern and central Europe (Hajnal, 1982; Laslett, 1983; Murdock, 1967; Play, 1871; Reher, 1998; Todd, 1995, 1985, 2011). In Catalonia it is reported to have started consolidating in the 10th century (To Figueras, 1993), and beginning its fall in the second half of the 19th century (Ferrer i Alòs, 2005).

This family arrangement prioritized the preservation of the family lineage, selecting among the sons an heir (by primogeniture) to take the headship of the household after the decease of the previous head. This system gives a census picture of a high prevalence of multigenerational households (married couples, a married heir with his wife and his children, and the other adult siblings if they were unmarried), the only newly formed nuclear households are composed by brothers of the heirs that must emancipate if they marry.

Using census data linked at the individual level across the studied period (BALL demographic database (Pujadas-Mora et al., 2022, 2019)), we describe a clearer image of how this form of family arrangement prevailed till the first half of the 20th century. We use Sequence Analysis to provide a visual representation of the household structure across the lifetime of the individuals of the municipalities, and event history analysis to study the transitions of heirs and his siblings out of the traditional model. The results show that the fall of the Stem family not only took place later than the literature pointed out but also that it was a slow adaptative process rather than abrupt.

Introduction:

The literature of European pre-industrial family systems has identified several household/family types across Europe¹, and Catalonia (as other regions in central and northern Europe) has been categorized as an area of the “Stem” family type. This “Stem” family is characterized by a rule of primogeniture for inheritance (only the first male born inherits the family property) and a multigenerational household in which the heir remains living in the parental house after his marriage (also the siblings of the heir live in the household until they marry if they do so). Below (Figure 1) we can see the map of family systems in the pre-industrial Europe as provided by Duranton et al. (2009) following the work of Emanuel Todd (1995). The areas with the predominant stem family are marked in blue. As we can see, this model of family organization was the most common in Western Europe.

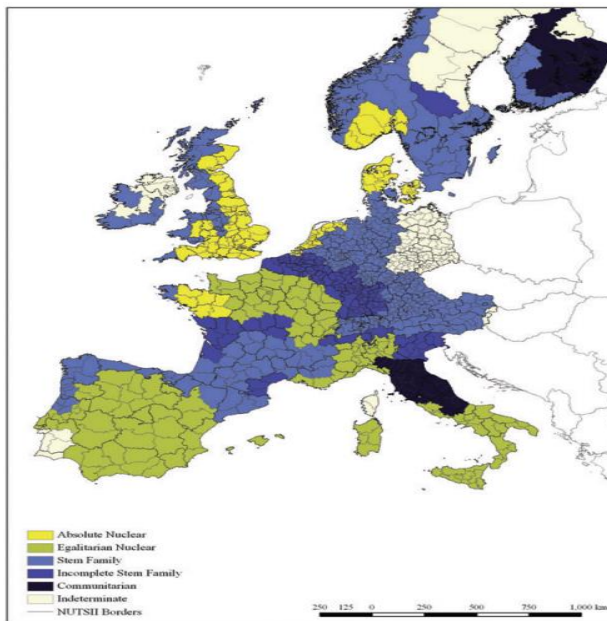
Whereas households of the regions with the old stem family look different today (mostly nuclear households with a very small prevalence of multigenerational living arrangements², and an inheritance

¹ We can find a broad literature describing the differences of family organization across European regions in the pre-industrial period (Banfield, 1967; Bott, 1957; Hajnal, 1982; Laslett, 1983; Murdock, 1967; Play, 1871; Reher, 1998; Todd, 1995, 1985). Todd describes 4 main family systems from the combination of two dimensions: 1) extended (more than two generation living in the same household) versus nuclear households (two generations living in the same household, emancipation from the parental home to form a new family unit when the children marry); 2) egalitarian versus inegalitarian inheritance systems (inegalitarian if there was only one heir, egalitarian if there was an equal partition between siblings). Nuclear inegalitarian (absolute), Nuclear egalitarian, Stem (extended inegalitarian), and Communitarian (Extended egalitarian).

² Most European countries show lower than 5% of multigenerational households (Iacovou and Skew, 2011) Three-generational households were between 4% & 3% in 2007 in Catalonia, and has now decreased below 2,5%. Data from INE, consulted at IEC (<https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=ed&n=2646&by=mun> - https://www.ine.es/prensa/ech_2020.pdf).

that corrects for the inequality of the will centered on a single heir³), no studies have followed the trajectory from the traditional Stem family system to the current patterns⁴.

Figure 1. The four Historical Family Systems as described by Todd.



Given the relevance of this system in Europe, being the most common family organization on northern and central Europe (Todd, 2011), knowing more about how it changed into nowadays pattern can help us to better define the cultural patterns behind this historical organization. Having a better image of the patterns of adaptation and change of this family structure would be key in the studies of cultural legacies of family systems, first because faming these types of studies require a more precise knowledge of how historical these practices are (and thus, a more precise delimitation of the moment of change is needed besides the industrialization as shock); and second because know how it changed can help in the theoretical definitions of hypotheses and expectations for studying current outcomes.

The lack of availability of historical data to conduct a longitudinal analysis on the period of change was the main limit for getting to know the nuances of the change, but recent work as the one carried by the coauthor Joana Pujadas Mora and her team makes this possible. The Baix Llobregat database (Pujadas-Mora et al., 2022, 2019) is an excellent resource to study the adaptation of this family type to industrialization and with so getting closer to identify the ways in which the legacies of this medieval family structure operate.

A model of reproduction and change of the Stem family

According to the literature on the history of the Catalan family organization⁵, the Stem family seems to have been consolidated in Catalonia from the 10th and 12th centuries (To Figueras, 1993), and started its fall during the second half of the 19th century.

In order to address the mechanisms of change, first we need to attend to the basic reproduction of this system of primogeniture and multigenerational living arrangement. The first born son will live in

³ When there is no written will, is divided in equal parts among the children, but in case of a written will, the system still enables for an unequal redistribution. It includes a “legitimate” partition of a fourth of the inheritance, which ensures an equal distribution among the siblings of 25% of the goods of their parents, but also enables for the selection of an “heir” that can inherit the remaining 75% plus the correspondent partition of the legitimate fourth.

⁴ We count with the literature on the demographic transition that address the changes at the population level, rather than to the household level. And also literature on social evolution with the works of Spencer (1975) or Goode (1970) that addressed the expected changes in household and family organization according to the optimal for the new industrial society.

⁵ (Alos, 2005; Fargas Peñarrocha, 2009; Peñarrocha, 2001)

the household of his parents, as well as his wife and children, and he will become head of the household when his parents pass away. The same will happen to his first-born son and his first grandson. The Second-born (also refereeing to all the heir's brothers), if married⁶, will move to form a new household (counting with fewer resources than his brother), his own nuclear family, and start a new circle following the same model with his first-born son.

The period studied coincides with the industrialization of the region and with the beginning of the demographic transition, which are strong societal changes that the institution of family had to adapt to. Population growth, rural exodus, urbanization, expansion of education, and the rise of the cost of the dote in the marriage market were some of the factors that affected the old social structures, making hard to preserve the stability of the old models.

To analyze the reproduction and change of the Stem family system, we examine the development of household formation patterns over the generations, and in particular compare heirs to his siblings across generations.

A first look at the literature points towards the second-borns⁷ sons as the origin of the change. Alos (2005) states that the second-borns were getting fewer alternatives to make a living in the new society and made use of the improved legal system and started to claim for their “legitimate”⁸ portion of inheritance. But, we can't ignore the possible drive of the first born too, the literature also refers to the investment of the families in education, typically on the first-born, which led to the mobility of those profiles from the rural to urban places.

Research questions:

- How has the Stem family system evolved in Catalonia during the 19th and 20 centuries?
 - Were “second-borns” less likely to form a new Stem family after they had married and formed a nuclear household, or did their first-born sons leave the household to form a nuclear family of his own?
 - Were the “first-borns” more likely to break the cycle if they left home to get education?

Hypotheses of change:

1. The change is driven by the second-borns, who were in a worse-off situation and counting with better legal resources, started breaking the Stem family system. We should see fewer multigenerational households formed by the second-born.
2. The change is driven by the emancipation of the first-born population who left the family home to pursue education and stayed in the cities to pursue their careers. We should see fewer less heads of the parental household among the first-born, or more nuclear households formed by the first-born.

Data and Methods:

We count with census data linked at individual level on 5 municipalities of the Catalan region of Baix Llobregat between 1828-1970 using the BALL dataset (Pujadas-Mora et al., 2022, 2019). Table 1 below shows the years with available data for each municipality. Image 1 the geographical location of the municipalities.

⁶ “If married” asses to the fact that in the medieval times the destinies for the non-heirs did not often include the option of marriage. Parents would arrange the marriage of their daughters to other families first-borns, to ensure that they will have a property and welfare; and marry their first-borns to a woman who will move into the parental house. In the case of the second born sons, they could either stay in the household unmarried and work at the family farm or choose a life as a priest or in the military. Similar for the daughters that they could not find a good marriage for, either stay at the family house unmarried or choose a religious path. (Amengual-Bibiloni and Pujadas-Mora, 2020; Chacón and Bestard, 2017; Sheehan, 2019)

⁷ In plural referring to all the sons born after the first one. It links to the Spanish term “segundones”.

⁸ Legal term that has its origins in the roman legal system (Aloy, 2017)

In each municipality individuals have been linked across time providing information about their household composition, marital status and kinship relation towards the head of the household.

Table 1. Summary of the census data by year and municipality.

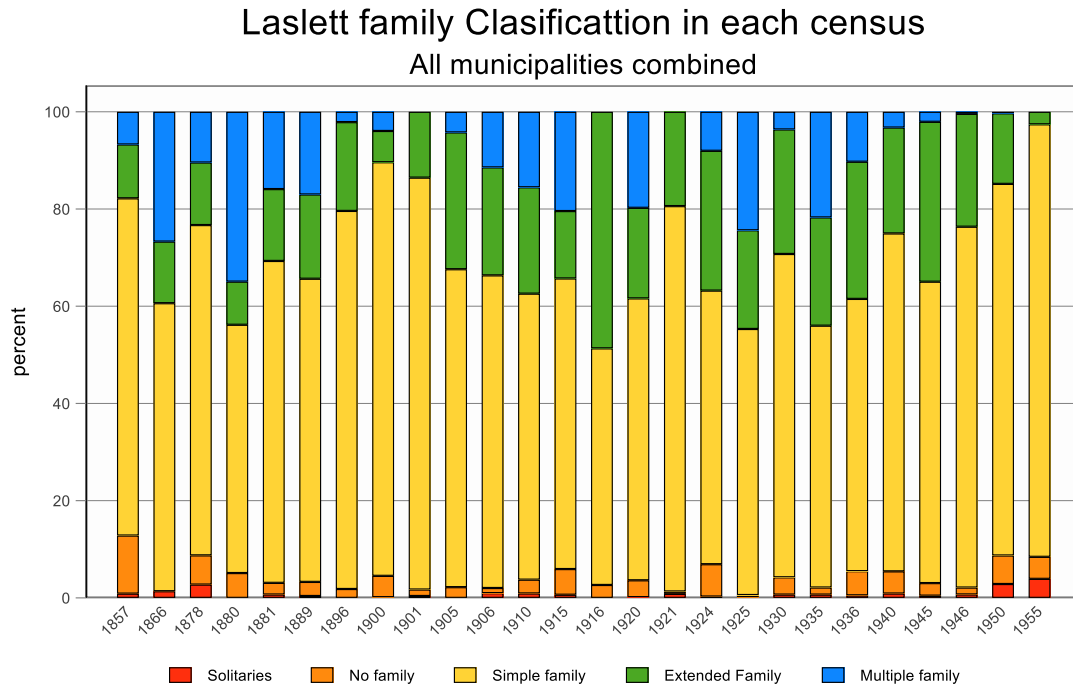
CENSUS YEAR:	COLLBA TÓ	CASTELVI DE ROSANES	SANTA COLOMA	SANT FELIU	SANT VICENT DELS HORTS	TOT AL
1857	0	0	0	2,471	0	2,471
1866	0	357	0	0	0	357
1878	0	0	0	2,747	0	2,747
1880	791	0	0	0	0	791
1881	0	0	0	3,002	0	3,002
1889	812	0	0	3,118	0	3,930
1896	686	0	0	0	0	686
1900	703	0	0	0	0	703
1901	0	0	542	0	0	542
1905	665	0	0	0	0	665
1906	0	0	0	3,606	0	3,606
1910	808	0	0	3,807	0	4,615
1915	0	0	0	4,329	0	4,329
1916	796	0	0	0	0	796
1920	560	0	0	4,352	0	4,912
1921	0	0	0	0	2,097	2,097
1924	745	283	1,132	5,569	0	7,729
1925	0	0	0	0	1,985	1,985
1930	531	279	0	6,383	2,950	10,143
1935	0	0	0	0	3,129	3,129
1936	525	273	1,311	7,020	0	9,129
1940	474	281	1,218	6,720	2,980	11,673
1945	425	242	1,167	0	0	1,834
1946	0	0	0	0	3,014	3,014
1950	418	268	1,222	0	3,323	5,231
1955	0	0	0	0	3,717	3,717
TOTAL	8,939	1,983	6,592	59,036	23,195	99,745



Image 1. Map of Spain, Catalonia, and the region of Baix Llobregat. (Source:(Pujades-More et al., 2019, p. 31))

An easy way of having a first image of the data is plotting the household classification of each year using the Laslett's (1974) classification of households. Graph 1 shows the change in the family structure over time. It is interesting to see the fluctuation over time of the decrease and increase of nuclear households. One explanation to this pattern may be linked to the adaptation to the economic fluctuations, as Le Bris and Tallec (2020) suggest. What is clear is that the process of nuclearization does not follow a linear path. If we would not know that the data of the last decades highlight the low prevalence of multiple households, we could even expect another wave of increase of extended and multiple families.

Graph 1. Laslett Household classification by year.



The methods selected for the study of the evolution of household structure is Sequence Analysis, we will analyze the individual sequences of household structure across the life course of the individuals in our sample, to analyze when the individuals experience the nuclear (simple) household living arrangement. The idea is to identify which of the nuclear households that appear in the Graph 1 are households that belong to the Stem system. This means that the life course of the household is in a phase in between the third the generation. Also to identify if the sequences are different depending of the order of birth of the sons of the sample.

The second part of the analysis is focused on testing the hypotheses, for doing so we conduct event history analysis, which enable us to test which generation started the change, and if it was by the hand of the heirs or their brothers.

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