Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW)
KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN

The Impact of the Diamond Industry and the Diamond Workers' Union on Jewish Life in Amsterdam, 1894–1920

Hofmeester, Karin

published in
Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies
2020

DOI (link to publisher)
10.1353/sho.2020.0042

document version
Version created as part of publication process; publisher's layout; not normally made publicly available

document license
CC BY-NC

Link to publication in KNAW Research Portal

citation for published version (APA)
Hofmeester, K. (2020). The Impact of the Diamond Industry and the Diamond Workers' Union on Jewish Life in Amsterdam, 1894–1920. *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, *38*(3), 46-69. https://doi.org/10.1353/sho.2020.0042

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the KNAW public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the KNAW public portal.

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:
pure@knaw.nl

Download date: 04. July. 2025

25 YEARS
PROJECT MUSE

The Impact of the Diamond Industry and the Diamond Workers' Union on Jewish Life in Amsterdam, 1894–1920

Karin Hofmeester

Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies, Volume 38, Number 3, Winter 2020, pp. 46-69 (Article)

Published by Purdue University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/sho.2020.0042*

For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/776101

[Access provided at 23 Dec 2020 11:29 GMT from Tel Aviv University]

Article

The Impact of the Diamond Industry and the Diamond Workers' Union on Jewish Life in Amsterdam, 1894–1920

Karin Hofmeester

ABSTRACT

By the late nineteenth century, Amsterdam had the largest diamond industry in the world, employing some 29 percent of all Jewish working men and 10 percent of all Jewish working women. Their economic activities in this field were closely connected to the social, cultural, familial, and political sphere. In many ways the Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond (the General Dutch Diamond Workers' Union, or ANDB) formed the direct link between these different spheres. The union brought together men and women (including married women), Jews and non-Jews, working in various professions, under different payment systems and working conditions, developing standard wages equal for all. While the primary goal was economic, the outcome had at least as many social and cultural consequences, including a change in social relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish workers as well as a growing number of women, who continued working after marriage. The case study of the ANDB in Amsterdam allows for a broad interpretation of 'economy' in Jewish history.

Keywords: diamond industry, trade union impact, Jewish economy, gender, family relations, group identity, prestige

An anonymous contributor to the popular Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* observed in early November 1894, that "[o]ne can safely say that the well-being of our city largely depends on the condition of the diamond industry."[1] Commenting on the massive labor strike organized in Amsterdam, he added that "the enormous procession of diamond workers along our canals and streets should genuinely convince anyone who may have doubted this fact."[2] In the days following the outbreak of the strike, thousands of men and women, Jews and non-Jews, assembled behind the Rijksmuseum, the city's largest museum. Conditions were ripe for conflict. After a long depression, the industry had started to recover and, as a result, workers demanded a share of the profit.

The diamond industry had formed an important sector of the Amsterdam economy since the late sixteenth century. The discovery of large diamond deposits in South Africa in the 1870s, boosting supplies to unprecedented levels, further increased its centrality. The South African finds went hand in hand with a growing Western demand for finished stones, making the manufacturing of diamonds in Amsterdam a globally recognized luxury industry.[3] By the late nineteenth century, the city had by far the largest diamond industry in the world. Some 5.4 percent of the total male working population and 1.5 percent of the total female working population found a job in the industry. For the Jewish working population, these percentages were considerably higher: 29 percent of all working men and 10 percent of all working women earned a living in the business.[4] The centrality of the diamond therefore mattered to the Amsterdam Jewish community.

To fully understand the significance to Amsterdam Jewish life, it is useful to consider the insights of scholars who have contributed to the so-called economic turn in Jewish history.[5] In his introduction to the volume *The Economy in Jewish History*, Gideon Reuveni states that "the economic turn" has encouraged historians to consider the role of Jews in producing, trading, and consuming goods, as well as the political, religious, cultural, and familial implications. Taking a much broader perspective on what constitutes "economy," Reuveni suggests that economic

patterns and behavior can be fundamental to group identity. From this perspective, the economic turn can teach us a great deal about the relationship between Jews, culture, and economy.[6] The present article adds the social sphere to this discussion by examining economic activities in the diamond industry on the one hand, and behavioral patterns in the sociopolitical, cultural, and familial sphere on the other. The Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond (General Dutch Diamond Workers' Union, or ANDB), a focal point here, formed the direct link formed a direct link between the two.

During the tumultuous strike, the desire to establish a well-organized labor union intensified. Eager to continue production, most employers quickly gave in to demands and agreed to pay higher compensation per stone. During the negotiations, representatives of the organizing committee decided to strike while the iron was hot. Eleven days after laying down their tools and stopping the mills, they founded the ANDB, the first modern Dutch trade union. To build up a healthy strike fund and a professional administration, union members paid high membership dues. In return, they would receive increased wages, as well as benefits during strikes, lockouts, unemployment, disease, and pregnancy. The ANDB was the first union in Europe to introduce the eight-hour workday in 1911, one year after the introduction of a one-week holiday. Furthermore, the ANDB strove to educate and "elevate" its members, offering extensive cultural and educational programs.

To reach its goals, the ANDB developed strategies to organize, unify, and discipline diamond workers, to establish wage policies, and to regulate the labor market. These activities may appear merely economic in motivation, but analyzing the consequences of new union policies suggests that they affected social relations between Jews and non-Jews, and shaped gender and family relations. Improved and stabilized socioeconomic conditions, combined with the ANDB's cultural and educational outreach, altered diamond workers' group identity and status. To define the impact on Jewish workers in particular, we will first look at the role of Jews and of Jewishness in the industry.

JEWS AND JEWISHNESS IN THE INDUSTRY

Ethnic group identity is probably the best term to describe "Jewishness" in the Amsterdam diamond industry. Lapidaries typically worked for Jewish employers, many of whom were members of their own family. Most polishers worked in so-called *Jodenfabrieken*, Jewish factories that rented out mills from Sunday to Friday and that were closed on Saturday. Located in or near the old Jewish neighborhood, or in newly developed districts in the eastern and southern parts of the city, diamond factories emerged wherever Jews settled. Non-Jewish workers rented mills in *Christenfabrieken*, Christian factories, open from Monday to Saturday and located in the western part of town. A handful of mixed factories existed as well.[7] To heighten their expertise, Jewish diamond workers specialized in certain professions in the industry, typically preparing larger stones. These characteristics (quantified below) led to a distinct Jewish group identity, enriched by a professional pride that was shared by Jews in the business. "It was an incredible honor," wrote one Jewish lapidary, "to become a diamond worker. [W]e all had that. [We] sucked it in with mother's milk, from generation to generation."[8] *The* profession, or *het vak* in local parlance, had been a Jewish trade for centuries, its professional jargon interlaced with Yiddish and Hebrew terms.[9] Even though conjectural crises, unemployment, and poverty proliferated in this luxury industry, during boom periods incomes could be quite high and many Jewish parents envisioned a future career in the industry for their sons and daughters: "Entering 'het vak' meant progress."[10]

Nearly every professional group in the industry—cleavers, cutters, polishers, setters, and others—had formed trade-based associations before the ANDB, but these had become dormant. Differences in working conditions, labor relations, skills, and status widened the gap between employees of different ranks, divisions equally extant among Jewish and non-Jewish workers. Such trade characteristics affected social relations, both inside and outside the Jewish community.[11] Lack of unity had marked the industry's pre-1890 years.

Strict hierarchies and practices complicated matters. Employers in the industry were called *jewelers*; they typically purchased rough stones that

were subsequently cut and polished by lapidaries. In some cases, diamond workers acted as *baas* or boss and subcontracted the work to hired hands known as assistants. Sometimes diamond workers were independent producers, purchasing and cutting small batches of rough on their own. Cleavers cut the diamonds—the first stage in the process—giving them their basic shape. They stood at the top of the pyramid, followed by cutters, who in turn were divided into brilliant cutters and rose cutters. Brilliant cutters commanded greater respect and earned higher salaries than rose cutters as their work required a high level of expertise. They added more facets to enhance the stone's refractory qualities and sparkle. Master polishers and their assistants continued the manufacturing process, polishing diamonds on a horizontally rotating lathe, attached to a steam-driven mill. After mounting the diamond in a dop (a small copper holder), setters—another subdivision—fixed the stone with solder to enable polishing on all sides. In addition to job specialization, Jewish and non-Jewish workers differed in the day of rest and levels of compensation.

The ANDB's extensive membership records provide insight into the occupational division between Jews and non-Jews. The cards include a worker's name, date of birth, address(es), and details about trade union membership. To determine Jewish descent, the combination of first and last names was used, and in case of doubt, population registers were checked which specified religious affiliation. A membership card sample from 1898 to 1913, collected by Dutch sociologists Peter Tammes and Bert Schijf, reveals that 68.5 percent of all ANDB members were Jewish. Among men—81 percent of all members—the percentage of Jews was 62 percent. Of the 19 percent women members, 81 percent were Jewish.[12] Cards also specify units within the trade union, indicating professional specialty. The data provide clear evidence of Jewish overrepresentation in cutting—both brilliants and roses—as well as in cleaving (see Table 1).

The cards do not show differences in compensation between various groups of diamond workers. Following the heyday of the industry during the 1870s, prices dropped, especially after 1880. Wages plummeted to maintain profit margins. Jewish workers processing large stones continued to receive hourly wages during this period, known as the fixed-rate

Table 1. Sample of ANDB members subdivided by sections, 1898–1913.

ANDB section	Jewish		Non-Jewish		Total	
	absolute	percentage	absolute	percentage	absolute	percentage
1: brilliant polishers masters	35	48	38	52	73	9
2: brilliant polishers assistants	206	67	101	33	307	37
3: brilliant setters	36	47	40	53	76	9
4: brilliant cutters	90	83	18	17	108	13
5: rose polishers	56	67	27	33	83	10
6: rose setters	24	60	16	40	40	5
7: rose cutters	75	91	7	9	82	10
8: cleaved stone workers	5	38	8	62	13	2
9: cleavers	34	92	3	8	37	5
10: indepen-dent producers	1	100	0	0	1	0
Total					**820**	

system. Non-Jewish workers specializing in smaller diamonds saw prices drop even more sharply. However, they received negotiated rates for each batch, minus production costs. Bosses deducted expenses related to hiring mills, setters' wages, and a fixed "bosses fee" from the income of non-Jewish polishers, a practice called *eigen-kosten werkers* or "pay your-own-costs system." Jewish polishers earned a higher hourly wage; however, at a time when public demand for small stones was greater than large ones, they were more likely to face unemployment. These marked divisions in occupational status and methods of compensation posed a challenge for the ANDB in its nascent state.

OVERCOMING RACIAL DIVIDES

At the 1895 International Diamond Workers Congress, representatives of the ANDB, in collaboration with the Belgian diamond workers' union, developed a policy to eliminate wage differences in the industry. They aimed to establish an international standard wage based on average rates, guaranteeing a decent living for every lapidary. According to ANDB administrators, this meant a standard weekly salary of 24 guilders for diamond workers in Amsterdam. The policy did not promise equal wages to all, irrespective of performance and skill. Rather, its purpose was to establish a norm for negotiations with jewelers. Following the proclamation of this new policy, Amsterdam workers organized strikes in September, primarily because those paid for piecework earned less than this average rate. At the time demand for polished ware was high, prompting many bosses to once again give into labor demands. But numerous members of the ANDB continued to object to the policy. Tensions between Jewish and non-Jewish diamond workers mounted, even though the primary objective of the weekly standard wage had been the avoidance of such conflicts.

Skirmishes broke out during a meeting convened by brilliant polishers masters and assistants.[13] Former strike leader and future secretary of the ANDB, Jan van Zutphen, explained that the rate adjustments meant assessing surcharges above the wages of the lowest paid (i.e., largely non-Jewish) workers who "paid for their own costs." On the other hand, fixed-rate workers earning more than the average rate (predominantly Jewish polishers) would have to take pay cuts. The first announcement enraged master polishers, while the second instigated major indignation among Jewish polishers. In the ensuing uproar, both groups accused ANDB officials of unilaterally imposing regulations. Non-Jewish workers hurled antisemitic slurs, causing the meeting to be suspended. In response to the tumultuous meeting, the Executive Board of the ANDB resigned en masse. Less than a year after its establishment, the ANDB was without leadership. The board explained that stepping down resulted from the general lack of commitment and unity, and from shock over antisemitic sentiments expressed at the meeting. "We cannot remain idle

bystanders, as our union is deeply divided, or rather as the union turns into a hotbed of racial hatred," declared Henri Polak, the Jewish chairman of the ANDB.[14]

The board's announcement to step down reverberated throughout the industry. Factory workers responded to the union leadership resignation by organizing large-scale strikes. Negotiations finally persuaded board members to reverse their decision, but only after being guaranteed the authority to set reasonable wage rates. They pushed for a two-hour lunch break, effective immediately. Within eight days all polishing factories in Amsterdam were to be unionized, employing only organized diamond workers. Moreover, all lapidaries would be required to contribute one guilder a week in contributions. Shaken, the diamond workers agreed to the demands. Employers in the industry, however, did not submit so easily. They established the Algemene Juweliers Vereniging (AJV or General Jewellers' Association), an organization that operated as a united front, locking out all diamond workers and closing factories. The ANDB board then proclaimed a general strike, demanding that all factories be unionized.

During the strike, diamond workers overcame professional and ethnic-religious divisions between Jews and non-Jews by forming a common front that prevailed for five weeks, despite meager strike funds. Eventually, the ANDB reached a compromise, one that virtually excluded non-union workers from factories. Other changes included the introduction of a two-hour lunch break and the reduction of the working week from 72 to 60 hours. Establishing an average weekly wage of 24 Dutch guilders as standard in negotiations would take longer, but at least the AJV no longer resisted its principle. The biggest gain proved to be the new unity born among diamond workers. Not all issues between Jews and non-Jews, fixed rate and own-cost workers, masters and assistants were resolved during the conflict, but the powerful actions by administrators had made it crystal clear that race-based hatred was unacceptable. Only unity and solidarity led to success. The closed-shop system introduced after the strike meant that only unionized works could find factory employment, adding to the ANDB's power and success. The union added

roughly 1,500 new members in 1895, increasing membership to 8,000.[15] Some sections of the industry remained unorganized, though, especially cleavers, who felt their privileged position did not require unionization. Rose cutters, too, were unaffiliated.

EQUAL WAGES AND WORKING WOMEN

The diamond industry was an important employer for women, especially Jewish women. Some 95 percent of all rose cutters were women, as were 64 percent of all brilliant cutters. Since 80 percent of all female diamond workers were Jewish, the majority of the cutters must have been Jewish too.[16] Unlike other trade unions in the Netherlands, the ANDB administration did not oppose the idea of women—including married women—working for wages outside the home.[17] Even though women often received lower wages and were seen as competitors, the ANDB policy was to organize rather than exclude them from the labor market. The solution to the "problem" was not, in Polak's words, "to chase women from the trade but to demand equal pay for equal work," quite a progressive stance for its time.[18] Yet it proved challenging to organize female lapidaries; rose cutters often worked from home and were hard to reach. Tucked away in attics and basements, they did not meet many fellow workers or trade union organizers. They were easily intimidated by bosses, and on top of that rose cutters often trained apprentices for a fee, an unregulated type of schooling that happened in other branches of the industry as well, but that was difficult to control in the home industry. A growing number of young women willing or forced to work for low wages rendered the problem insurmountable.

In December 1895, sisters Betje and Sophie Lazarus, both rose cutters, attended a public ANDB meeting where attendees discussed various solutions to the problem, including the cessation of unlimited training of new apprentices and the introduction of a minimum wage, equal for men and women. During the meeting Betje posed a question, causing a stir. "An ordinary girl," she remembered, "a rose cutter no less, dared to say something during a public meeting."[19] The board immediately called

Betje and Sophie to its headquarters, inviting them to organize rose cutters. A second meeting followed in June 1896, after which the Roosjes Snijdsters en Snijders Vereeniging (RSSV or Rose Cutters' Association) was established with Betje Lazarus as president and Sophie Lazarus as secretary.

In July of that year, Betje Lazarus published a manifesto, pressing her female rose cutter colleagues to organize and fight for better working conditions, including higher wages. Her arguments reflect her views of working women and their role in family and society. As wages for men were too low to support a family, women had to contribute to family income. Women often presumed, added Lazarus, that they would only work for wages until they got married. She called attention to the reality that some people never married, and that even married women had to take care of themselves at some point in life. She often heard women and girls express hesitance to attend trade union meetings because it was considered improper, a response Lazarus deemed nonsensical. Assuring readers that nothing had ever happened to her, she insisted "that a woman is a human being too, just like a man, [and that] she is not predestined to tolerate everything and just obey." [20] In fact, she continued, "a woman has to raise her head proudly and show a man she is worthy of having an equal position in society. We have to stop working for lower wages."[21]

Despite Lazarus's proclamation and her numerous pleas to attend meetings, only a few women came. They showed more interest for non-political events. When the RSSV established a cultural and educational club for female cutters (both brilliant and rose cutters), numerous women and girls signed up for writing classes, lectures, and excursions.[22] Over time the so-called *Ontwikkelingsclub* (Self-Cultivation Club) stimulated many female cutters to join the trade union. A turning point came in 1900, when the RSVV demanded minimum wage rates for the cutting of stones of various qualities and sizes—rates equal for men and women. In August, during a long general strike for minimum wage in the entire industry, many rose cutters joined. Employers accepted workers' demands a month later. By June of the following year, the RSSV fared better than ever before: more than half of all rose cutters were organized.[23]

The ANDB's "equal pay for equal work" policy, as well as its inclusion of married women, allowed female diamond workers to keep their jobs after marriage. An analysis of 20,729 membership cards reveals that some 3,900 members were women. Forty-seven percent had a maiden name and the name of a husband, so they married during their time of membership.[24] Only 7 percent reported a voluntary termination of union membership because they stopped working (other reasons could be unemployment, failure to pay contributions, or acceptance of another job). On occasion women explicitly stated marriage as the reason for leaving the union. More than 40 percent of all female diamond workers, however, continued working after getting married. We have no comparable data on other trades or labor unions, but this percentage appears quite high, suggesting that Betje Lazarus' recognition of female lapidaries as independent income providers was a reality for women in the ANDB. How this shaped gender roles and the identity of Jewish diamond workers is a topic for future research.

LABOR MARKET REGULATION IN A FAMILY BUSINESS

The diamond industry was a family business. Many diamond workers trained their children and family members at early age. To contain the fast-growing number of workers used as cheap labor and to limit unemployment during conjectural crises, the ANDB board decided in November 1897, that all trainees should be older than fourteen. Consequently, seven hundred youngsters had to cease training. The measure produced instant protests. Children following in their parents' professional footstep was common in other trades, but given the diamond industry's significance to the Amsterdam economy and to the Jewish community as a whole, the ban on apprenticeships caused shock waves. One parent inquired "whether an organization can, for any purpose, remove a father from his guardianship," while a mother pleaded that "her husband had left her with four little children, the oldest [of whom] was over thirteen years old and provided the family income. Could he please stay at the factory?"[25] The first letter intimates the obviousness that fathers would train their children in *het vak*, while the

second letter shows the importance of child labor to a poor family's income. The union board was relentless. Age-appropriate trainees would have to pass a medical test and prove their skills to obtain an official diploma.

Until 1904 the ANDB admitted no new apprentices. Jewelers united in the AJV, demanding that more diamond workers be trained, maintained that tight labor markets stagnated the industry. The ANDB disagreed, prompting the AJV to close up shop and lock out all employees. This drastic lockdown lasted for four months, exhausting strike funds to compensate unemployed workers. An advertisement in the *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad*—the most widely read orthodox Jewish weekly—provides a glimpse of its impact. Though the newspaper avoided trade union politics "because it is not fitting for a religious newspaper to choose sides in [these] matters," it published an ad for affected diamond workers.[26] The firm M. Schatz & Co. offered lapidaries six "giant lock-out cigars" for ten cents when customers showed their ANDB membership booklet.[27] Eventually the ANDB gave in. In exchange for higher wages and a nine-hour working day, the union allowed 500 apprentices to be trained immediately. In the years to come, the positions of workers who had deceased, become disabled, or had left the industry permanently could be replaced with up to 150 trainees annually.

In 1904, 450 apprentices started their training. The ANDB administration registered all new trainees on individual cards, collecting information about the trainee, his or her training, and family ties. They include the names of parents working in the industry and provided information about fathers, but also on occasion mothers, requesting apprenticeships for their children. Typically only children of diamond workers (and a restricted number of AJV offspring) could apply for apprenticeships, fortifying the familial foundations of the diamond business. Cards also mention the trainees' brothers and sisters employed in the industry, granting further insight into family relations—data we lack for other professions.

Some 7,700 apprentices were registered between 1904 and 1946. Almost half (50 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls) had at least one brother or sister in the industry.[28] At first glance there seems to be no

difference between Jewish and non-Jewish apprentices with siblings, but a closer look reveals that in the first years, the number of Jewish apprentices with brothers and sisters was higher than 50 percent. The diamond industry was a family affair for Jews and non-Jews alike, and evidence suggests an increase in non-Jewish family participation over time. Between 1904 to 1907, employers apprenticed only boys, most likely because parents first and foremost desired for sons to be trained in the business. But girls entered the profession in growing numbers. If we compare the percentages of Jewish apprentices with the share of Jewish members from the 1898–1913 membership card sample, we see a slight decrease from 68.5 to 67 percent of Jewish representation, although this seemed to have been caused by lower representation rates of girls rather than boys.[29] Since the share of young Jewish females in total did not alter, the shift was most likely caused by growing numbers of non-Jewish apprentices.[30]

Comparing 1898–1913 ANDB membership cards with apprenticeship data suggests several changes in occupational divisions between Jews and non-Jews. Provided that 14 percent of apprenticeship cards do not specify professional specialty, overrepresentation in cutting and cleaving appeared to have declined. The number of Jewish brilliant cutters dropped from 83 to 68 percent, while Jewish rose cutters lowered from 91 to 73 percent. Eighty percent of cleavers, down from 93, were Jewish. The number of Jews in polishing, however, multiplied, similar to diamond sawing, a process mechanized in the twentieth century.

Data analysis of the complete collection of membership cards will provide further evidence to these provisional conclusions and offer more nuanced explanations of the ANDB's impact on breaking down barriers between the different groups of workers.

GROUP IDENTITY AND PRESTIGE

Collective actions organized by the ANDB and its members eventually led to higher wages and—more importantly—to stable incomes. Strict labor market regulations created robust salaries and reduced unemployment. In times of crisis members received unemployment benefits.

ANDB success, however, went far beyond improving labor conditions. In addition to obtaining professional dignity, ANDB members shared union pride. They publicly admired its accomplishments and the international prestige of its leaders, many of whom were politically active, encouraging members to do the same. They became avid participants in the union's educational and cultural work. Every week diamond workers received the newspaper *Weekblad*, filled with articles on the industry and its powerful labor union. The weekly also featured pieces on music, history, interior decoration—with a focus on sober furniture—proper spelling, and nature. Henri Polak, in particular, preached that diamond workers should use their newly acquired spare time to educate themselves. A 1904 monthly special entitled *Het Jonge Leven* (Young Life) presented new apprentices with instructions on how to play chess and select respectable books. In 1900, the famous Dutch architect H. P. Berlage designed the ANDB building, featuring an imposing staircase and exterior walls resembling a fortress. Its beautiful interior contained a library for union members to borrow books—public libraries did not yet exist—and spacious rooms for courses and lectures.

At times the ANDB's cultural and educational committee complained that courses and lectures did not attract the desired number of people, and that instead of reading "proper" literature, members preferred pulp fiction.[31] However the children of the diamond workers, maturing in the presence of the ANDB, recalled the significance of the library, the atmosphere in the building, the concerts, and the cultural programs. They referred to themselves as "the second generation," granted the opportunity to profit fully from the union's emancipatory work.[32]

Stable incomes and educational initiatives also affected housing conditions and choice of neighborhood. The 1898–1913 sample analyzed by Schijf and Tammes reveals that ANDB members initially lived in the old Jewish neighborhood, in newly constructed districts in the eastern part of the city (in neighborhoods called Transvaal- and Oosterparkbuurt), or in southern areas (De Pijp). Housing conditions in the Jewish neighborhood varied from street to street, but generally speaking it was overcrowded and houses lacked proper sanitation. By 1915, eastern and southern districts

proved more popular among ANDB members. Comparing Jewish diamond workers to larger Jewish populations in Amsterdam, we see that in 1906, 27 percent of all Jews in Amsterdam were concentrated in the old Jewish neighborhood, but only 16 percent of ANDB members. By 1915, this percentage had dropped to 11 percent. In 1930, 16 percent of all Jews in Amsterdam lived in the Jewish neighborhood versus 6 percent of Jewish ANDB members: a direct consequence of socioeconomic mobility and trade unionism.[33]

Popular opinion often associated diamond workers with lavish behavior occasionally exhibited during the boom period of the 1870s, when sudden prosperity caused some to splurge on luxuries. Critics decried successful lapidaries visiting bars and brothels, drinking champagne, and consuming lapwings' eggs, a delicacy in Holland.[34] Even though many workers spent their money more wisely, including by sending their children to good schools, the popular image of diamond workers living irresponsibly stuck. By the early twentieth century, however, this perception had changed. Stable incomes and cultural investments made by the ANDB changed their public image. Advertisements and articles in the *Nieuw Israelitisch Weekblad* reflected this new prestige. For example, one firm selling coats directed its advertisement particularly at "gentlemen doctors, civil servants and diamond workers," suggesting they occupied the same class.[35] Personal ads, too, included references to lapidaries as suitable "bourgeois" marriage partners.[36] It is important to note that these advertisements and articles are from 1904 onward, when the ANDB had fought its major battles and could rely on negotiating with employers. Polak reached his objective to transform the workers into well-respected, cultured citizens.

In 1919, friend and foe congratulated the ANDB on its twenty-fifth anniversary, highlighting its social and cultural significance. Jos Loopuit, former ANDB administrator and, since 1905, member of the Amsterdam municipal council for the social democratic party (SDAP), stated in the daily newspaper *De Telegraaf* that the union's primary accomplishments pertained to the "social development and progress, the education and culture [that] it had brought to large parts of the people."[37] Social

advancement in the diamond industry, maintained Loopuit, and the decent living it provided to so many, could almost completely be ascribed to the ANDB.[38] An anonymous contributor to the *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* added that "[w]hat we admire most in the union is its enormous moral success. That today's diamond worker is a man strong enough to handle wealth during times of prosperity, and to withstand times of crisis, can largely be attributed to the union."[39] Clearly, the author failed take notice of women in the industry. He did not, however, neglect to add that prosperous diamond workers should donate to Jewish philanthropic organizations during the festivities. Increased income brought status and prestige, allowing entry into middle-class culture, a process that a *Bildung*-conscious ANDB accelerated.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of twenty-five years the ANDB had changed the face of the Amsterdam diamond industry. The union operated as part of a global commodity chain dependent on the supply of rough diamonds from South Africa, the monopolized distribution of uncut stones in London, consumer demand in the United States, and competition from manufacturing centers elsewhere. Particularly in Antwerp, its southern neighbor, the diamond industry grew quickly in the twentieth century. In this interconnected economy, the ANDB developed a powerful position. It brought together Dutch diamond workers—men and women, Jews and non-Jews—working in various professions, factories, attics, basements, and neighborhoods for different wages, under different payment systems and working conditions, often eyeing each other as competitors rather than colleagues. They shared one common disadvantage: instability of income and socioeconomic position. In their weekly publications, the ANDB explained to its readers that these were the characteristics of a luxury industry, vowing to realize reforms. Improving the unstable economic position of diamond workers required the development of wage policies and labor market regulations, all of which deeply affected social relations. When, in 1895, the ANDB—in cooperation with union workers in Antwerp—developed a

policy for an average weekly wage, religious and ethnic divisions came to the fore. Economic "objections" toward Others mixed with antisemitism; prejudice against non-Jewish diamond workers surfaced. In a dramatic move, the board stepped down and stood firm, showing its power toward employees and employers alike. It proved an important step in breaking down barriers between different labor groups. While the primary goal was economic, the outcome had social and cultural consequences, affecting relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish workers.

ANDB wage policies also raised awareness of equal pay for equal work. Women—including married women—deserved the same wages as men and equal representation in the union. Female rose cutters played an important role in introducing equal pay for women, leading to a large number of women who kept their jobs after marriage. Since the majority of the female diamond workers were Jewish, this must have shaped gender and family roles in the Amsterdam Jewish community—a topic in need of research. It is clear that women transmitted skills from one generation to another. Mothers actively applied for apprenticeships for their sons and daughters, even though fathers appeared to have done so more often. Strict trainee policies imposed by the ANDB, designed to reduce the number of workers, to keep wages stable and unemployment low, incited widespread protest. Angry and desperate letters signaled the importance of incomes earned by young people in the industry, children even, contributing to low-income households. *Het vak* was central to the Jewish community. Still, the ANDB stood firm on its apprenticeship policy. Its effectiveness became clear seven years later, when workers reversed their positions and protested the union's proposal to loosen the reins and allow limited apprenticeships.

The 1904 registration of new trainees illustrates that family relations were important to non-Jewish families as well. Over time, typically Jewish professions in diamond manufacturing became less Jewish, probably due to changes in the industry, but certainly also because the ANDB deliberately imposed policies to tear down walls between various labor groups. Economic and union measures modified relations between Jews and non-Jews, as well as gender roles and family relations.

Finally, from its inception, the ANDB pursued noneconomic goals and programs. Aspiring to uplift and educate, it encouraged diamond workers to spend their hard-won spare time reading, listening to music, attending classes, exploring nature, and becoming politically active. Union leadership publicly denounced bars, brothels, and cheap theater, encouraging its flock to change patterns of consumption. The ANDB propagated hygiene and proper grammar. Even the orthodox *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad*—usually a fierce opponent of the union—admitted that the organization had a positive effect on diamond workers' behavior. They exhibited a new sense of self-respect and professional pride, sentiments instilled by effective union culture.

When the Amsterdam industry declined in the 1920s as a result of post-World War I market fluctuations and competition from Antwerp, the ANDB suffered too. Unemployment rates skyrocketed and incomes dropped, pushing many into different professions. For those who held on, making a living became increasingly difficult. Those who left, however, above all their children, were better situated to find positions outside of the diamond business precisely because the ANDB had offered professional and educational opportunities previously inaccessible to workers. The diamond industry and its union continued to impact Jewish families, even after Amsterdam ceased to be the primary setting of international diamond manufacturing.

NOTES

1. "De loonsbeweging der diamantbewerkers," *De Telegraaf* (November 10, 1894).
2. "De loonsbeweging der diamantbewerkers," *De Telegraaf* (November 10, 1894).
3. For a contemporary view on the position of the Amsterdam diamond industry in the global diamond commodity chain, see Loopuit, "Het vijf-en-twintig-jarig bestaan van den A.N.D.B.," *De Telegraaf* (November 13, 1919). For more recent observations, see Coenen Snyder, "'As long as it sparkles,'" *Jewish Social Studies* 22, no. 2 (2017): 38–73; Hofmeester, "Shifting Trajectories," *Journal of Global History* 8, no. 1 (2013): 25–49.
4. Van Zanten, "Eenige demografische gegevens," *Mensch en Maatschappij* 2 (1926): 9. These numbers are for 1906. There is little reason to believe that these percentages were radically different in the 1890s.

5. One could argue that this economic turn started with Jonathan Israel's *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, followed by Derek Penslar's *Shylock's Children*. The University of Pennsylvania's Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies devoted its fellowship year 2008–2009 to the topic of "Jews, Commerce, and Culture," producing an impressive list of publications: Francesca Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*; Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes*; Eli Lederhendler, *Jewish Immigrants*; Jonathan Karp, *Politics of Jewish Commerce*; Rebecca Kobrin and Adam Teller, *Purchasing Power.*
6. Reuveni, "Prolegomena to an Economic Turn in Jewish History," *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship Between Ethnicity and Economic Life* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 1.
7. Van Tijn, "Geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse diamanthandel-en nijverheid, 1845–1897," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 87 (1974): 54.
8. Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1978), 50.
9. Leviticus, *Encyclopaedie der Diamantnijverheid* (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1908).
10. Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering*, 48.
11. A detailed description of the diamond industry appears in Van Tijn, "Geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse diamanthandel"; Salvador Bloemgarten, *Henri Polak: Sociaal-Democraat 1868–1943* (Den Haag: SDU, 1993), 81–90; Hofmeester, *Jewish Workers and the Labour Movement. A Comparative Study of Amsterdam, London and Paris 1870–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 33–35.
12. Schijf and Tammes, "Verbondenheid en lidmaatschapsduur. De leden van de Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkersbond (ANDB) in de eerste decennia van zijn bestaan, 1898–1913," *Mens & Maatschappij* no. 3 (2013): 300–23.
13. Hofmeester, *Jewish Workers*, 60–62.
14. Polak, "Bij het scheiden," *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamantbewerkersbond* (September 27, 1895).
15. Bloemgarten, *Henri Polak*, 126.
16. These data are part of the membership card sample made by Schijf and Tammes. I am grateful they were willing to share their data.
17. Outshoorn, "Loondruksters of medestrijdsters? Vrouwen en vakbeweging in Nederland 1890–1920," *Te elfder ure* 22, no. 3 (1975): 727–29; 733.

18. "Algemeene Antwerpsche Diamantbewerkersvereeniging," *Internationaal Congres voor Diamanthewerkers, Gehouden op 2 & 3 Juni 1894. Verslag* (Antwerpen: P. J. Casie, 1984), 22–23.
19. De Beer-Lazarus, "600 vrouwen," *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamanthewerkersbond* (November 18, 1904).
20. Lazarus, "Manifest. Aan alle Roosjessnijdsters- en Snijders te Amsterdam," *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamanthewerkersbond* (July 31, 1996).
21. Lazarus, "Manifest. Aan alle Roosjessnijdsters- en Snijders te Amsterdam," *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamanthewerkersbond* (July 31, 1996).
22. Lazarus, "Verslag over de jaren 1897-98-99 van den toestand en de verrichtingen der Roosjessnijdsters- en Snijders Vereeniging," *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamanthewerkersbond* (December 15, 1899).
23. Jansz, "De Roosjessnijdsters- en snijdersvereniging 1896–1902," *Het geheugen van de vakbeweging,* https://www.vakbondshistorie.nl/dossiers/de-roosjessnijdsters-en-snijdersvereniging-1896-1902.
24. The data on these cards were entered by volunteers in a "Vele Handen" project. The data and the cards are presented at https://diamantbewerkers.nl, a KNAW research fund project "*Tegen de Stroom in*," that will use this dataset, started in September 2019. Gender and religious background still have to be added to this dataset. Based on the sample's gender division (19 percent women) in the apprentice ship cards we departed from 19 percent women in the total membership dataset.
25. Schrevel, "Stem in het kapittel," *Een schitterende erfenis. 125 jaar nalatenschap van de Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2019), 42.
26. "Een enkel woord ter opheldering."
27. *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* (March 4, 1904).
28. Schijf, "Leerlingen van de ANDB," 73.
29. Schijf, "Leerlingen van de ANDB," 63.
30. The "Tegen de Stroom in" project will look at Jewish social mobility in Amsterdam and shed light on the occupational structure of Jewish women after leaving the diamond industry. The only current data available on Jewish occupational structures dates to 1930 and concerns the Netherlands as a whole. At that time the diamond industry had already shifted to Antwerp and was no longer an important economic sector in Amsterdam. These data

show an increase of women working in the textile and tobacco industries as well as in white-collar professions. Kruijt, "Het Jodendom in de Nederlandse samenleving," *Anti-Semitisme en Jodendom. Een bundel studies over een actueel thema*, edited by H. J. Pos (Arnhem: Van Loghum Slaterus' Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1939), 212.

31. Schrevel, "Stem in het kapittel," 50.
32. Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering*, 156 and 161.
33. Schijf, "Leerlingen van de ANDB," 60–61.
34. Heertje, *Diamanthewerkers*, 37–39; Schrevel, "Stem in het kapittel," 38–39.
35. *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* (November 4, 1910).
36. *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* (February 10, 1905).
37. Loopuit, "Vijf-en-twintig-jarig bestaan."
38. Loopuit, "Vijf-en-twintig-jarig bestaan."
39. "Diamantstad in feestdos."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Algemeene Antwerpsche Diamantbewerkersvereeniging." *Internationaal congres voor diamanthewerkers. Gehouden op 2 & 3 Juni 1894. Verslag.* Antwerpen: P. J. Casie, 1984. http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH00210.6101.

Beer-Lazarus, B., de. "600 vrouwen." *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamantbewerkersbond* (November 18, 1904).

Bloemgarten, Salvador. *Henri Polak sociaal democraat 1868–1943*. Den Haag: SDU, 1993.

Bregstein, Philo, and Salvador Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1978.

Coenen Snyder, Saskia. "'As long as it sparkles!': The Diamond Industry in Nineteenth-Century Amsterdam." *Jewish Social Studies* 22, no. 2 (2017): 38–73.

"Diamantstad in feestdos." *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* (November 21, 1919).

"Een enkel woord ter opheldering." *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* (May 13, 1904).

Heertje, Henri. *De diamanthewerkers van Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: D. B. Centen's uitgevers-maatschappij, 1936.

Hofmeester, Karin. *Jewish Workers and the Labour Movement. A Comparative Study of Amsterdam, London and Paris 1870–1914*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

———. "Shifting trajectories of diamond processing: from India to Europe and back, from the fifteenth century to the twentieth." *Journal of Global History* 8, no. 1 (2013): 25–49.

Israel, Jonathan. *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998.

Jansz, Ulla. "De Roosjessnijdsters- en snijdersvereniging 1896–1902." Het geheugen van de vakbeweging. https://www.vakbondshistorie.nl/dossiers/de-roosjessnijdsters-en-snijdersvereniging-1896-1902.

Karp, Jonathan. *Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Thought and Emancipation in Europe, 1638–1848*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Kobrin, Rebecca, and Adam Teller. *Purchasing Power: The Economics of Modern Jewish History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

Kruijt, J. P. "Het Jodendom in de Nederlandse samenleving." In *Anti-Semitisme en Jodendom. Een bundel studies over een actueel thema*, edited by H. J. Pos, 190–227. Arnhem: Van Loghum Slaterus' Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1939.

Lazarus, B. "Manifest. Aan alle Roosjessnijdsters- en Snijders te Amsterdam." *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamantbewerkersbond* (July 31, 1996).

Lazarus, S. L. "Verslag over de jaren 1897-98-99 van den toestand en de verrichtingen der Roosjessnijdsters- en Snijders Vereeniging." *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamantbewerkersbond* (December 15, 1899).

Lederhendler, Eli. *Jewish Immigrants and American Capitalism, 1880–1920: From Caste to Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Leviticus, Felix. *Encyclopaedie der Diamantnijverheid*. Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1908. https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/levi010geil01_01.

Loopuit, Jos. "Het vijf-en-twintig-jarig bestaan van den A.N.D.B." *De Telegraaf* (November 13, 1919).

Outshoorn, Joyce. "Loondruksters of medestrijdsters? Vrouwen en vakbeweging in Nederland 1890–1920." *Te elfder ure* 22, no. 3 (1975): 722–45.

Penslar, Derk J. *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Polak, Henri. "Bij het scheiden." *Weekblad van den Algemeenen Nederlandschen Diamantbewerkersbond* (September 27, 1895).

Reuveni, Gideon. "Prolegomena to an Economic Turn in Jewish History." In *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship between Ethnicity*

and Economic Life, edited by Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev, 1–20. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011.

Schijf, Huibert. "De leerlingen van de ANDB. Een indrukwekkende administratie." In *Een schitterende erfenis. 125 jaar nalatenschap van de Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond*, edited by Karin Hofmeester, 57–77. Zutphen: WalburgPers, 2019.

———, and Peter Tammes. "Verbondenheid en lidmaatschapsduur. De leden van de Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkersbond (ANDB) in de eerste decennia van zijn bestaan, 1898–1913." *Mens & Maatschappij* 3 (2013): 300–23.

Schrevel, Margreet. "Een stem in het kapittel. Diamantbewerkers organiseren zich." In *Een* schitterende erfenis. 125 jaar nalatenschap van de Algemene Nederlandse *Diamantbewerkersbond*, edited by Karin Hofmeester, 35–55. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2019.

Stein, Sarah Abrevaya. *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Tijn, Th van. "Geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse diamanthandel-en nijverheid, 1845–1897." *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 87 (1974): 16–69 and 160–201.

Trivellato, Fransesca. *Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Zanten, J. H. van. "Eenige demografische gegevens over de Joden te Amsterdam." *Mensch en Maatschappij* 2 (1926): 1–24.

CONTRIBUTOR

Karin Hofmeester is research director at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam and professor of Jewish culture at Antwerp University. Her research interests are global labor history; the history of global commodities, especially diamonds; and modern Jewish (social) history, especially the history of Jewish emancipation. Her recent publications are "Diamonds from Mine to Finger: Doing Global Labour History by Way of a Luxury Commodity," in Marcel van der Linden (ed.) *The Global History of Work: Critical Readings. Vol. II: Work Sites* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 135–153; *Een Schitterende Erfenis. 125 jaar*

nalatenschap van de Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2018); "Knowledge, Technique, and Taste in Transit: Diamond Polishing in Europe, 1500–1800," in Michael Bycroft and Sven Dupré (eds.) *Gems in the Early Modern World Materials, Knowledge and Global Trade, 1450–1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 281–308; ed. with Marcel van der Linden, *Handbook Global History of Work* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017); ed. with Pim de Zwart, *Colonialism, Institutional Change and Shifts in Global Labour Relations* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017); ed. with Bernd Grewe, *Luxury in Global Perspective Objects and Practices, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).