Proto-industries arose in almost every part of Europe in the two or three centuries before industrialization, and research on them encompasses almost every aspect of early modern European life. The chapters in this book discuss proto-industries from the Mediterranean to the North Sea and the Baltic, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Oder and the Danube. They also reveal a multiplicity of perspectives on proto-industry. Some chapters, such as those on France, Sweden and Flanders, orient themselves around the hypotheses of Franklin Mendels; others, such as those on Bohemia, Austria, Switzerland, Germany and England, focus on the theories of Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm; while those on Ireland, Spain and Italy have simply chosen to discuss 'proto-industries' in these countries without systematic confrontation with one or another of the explanatory frameworks originally advanced along with the term 'proto-industrialization' in the 1970s.

Even under the rubric 'proto-industry', the various chapters encompass a number of different kinds of industrial production, reflecting the continuing debate about defining and circumscribing proto-industry (see Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm 1993: 217ff). Clarkson's chapter on Ireland criticizes the growing tendency to categorize all possible forms of pre-industrial manufacturing as proto-industries, and urges that a distinction be drawn between export-oriented proto-industries and locally oriented crafts. However, Magnusson's chapter on Sweden and Belfanti's chapter on northern Italy view rural location and freedom from guilds as more important than strict export orientation in defining a proto-industry. Thomson's chapter on Spain and Cerman's chapter on Austria, by contrast, also consider those industries which were urban, guild-dominated or centralized into manufactories – as long as they were export oriented. The various textile branches occupy centre-stage in the chapters on most countries, which reflects their overwhelming importance in early modern European industry, but the different technical demands of different branches of textiles, metal production and mining emerge from most contributions, and the
mining and metal trades are discussed in detail in the chapters on Bohemia and Austria.

A wide variety of aspects of the original proto-industrialization theories are emphasized by the different chapters. Schlumbohm's conceptual chapter discusses the methodological and chronological dimensions of the theory, while Ogilvie's explores the neglected framework of social institutions. In the chapters on Italy, Ireland, France, Sweden and Spain, questions of economic development, and in particular the transition to factory industrialization, are at centre-stage. The chapter on Flanders concentrates on demographic change and standards of living. The chapters on England, Austria, Bohemia, Switzerland and Germany widen the focus not only to demography and agriculture, but also to questions of social history such as changes in gender roles, consumption behaviour, everyday life, social structure, the family economy, and family structures.

Research on European proto-industrialization thus covers an enormous geographical and thematic range, and its findings have become central to understanding many aspects of economy and society in early modern Europe. What general conclusions emerge from the array of case-studies surveyed in the present volume?

It is acknowledged by the original theorists that the demographic predictions of the original theory are not generally borne out by empirical findings (Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm 1993: 219ff.). The country studies in the present volume confirm the variety, rather than the uniformity, of demographic responses to proto-industrialization. The predicted fall in age at marriage, rise in fertility, and rapid population growth are confirmed only for Catalonia and Bohemia, and for scattered regions of Austria, Switzerland, Germany and Italy. Fertility, nuptiality and population growth actually decreased in Flanders as proto-industrialization progressed. A very wide variety of demographic responses to proto-industries can be observed across England, Sweden, Austria, Italy, Switzerland and Germany.

Even where demographic behaviour changed, the cause could be agricultural expansion rather than proto-industry, as in parts of England, Ireland and Germany. Proto-industrial population growth was also capable of "going into reverse", as Hudson points out for England. Mendels' "ratchet mechanism" - whereby proto-industrial nuptiality and fertility increased in good years and did not decrease in bad years - has proved difficult to replicate. In the only duplication hitherto of Mendels' statistical model, Pfister, working on the Zürich highland, found that a shift in relative prices in favour of the proto-industrial sector increased birth and marriage rates, but only in certain time-periods, certain stages of production, and certain institutional contexts. Moreover, birth and marriage rates declined with falling relative prices just as strongly as they expanded with rising ones - Pfister ascribes Mendels' ratchet mechanism to faults in his statistical analysis (Pfister 1989a). French and German research, too, shows proto-industrial producers adjusting nuptiality and fertility to economic fluctuations. Swiss research suggests that rapid population growth in many proto-industrial regions was due to better nutrition and falling mortality, rather than rising nuptiality and fertility. Indeed, Pfister identifies three distinct models of proto-industrial demographic behaviour, all observed in early modern Switzerland; he argues that the relative marginal productivity of domestic labour and household capital are the main explanatory variables behind these differences (Pfister 1992b: 222 and passim). German findings suggest an even greater variety of demographic patterns, because demographic behaviour was affected by the ways in which social institutions constrained economic and social decisions in the specific region, as well as by the technological and organizational demands of the specific proto-industry. Similarly, the evidence from both England and Germany suggests that the position of women was not consistently affected by proto-industrial occupation, but rather depended on the organization of society and the economy in the particular proto-industrial region.

Originally it was argued that proto-industrialization led to impoverishment for its participants. However, the chapters in this book show that although some proto-industries saw falling living standards, others saw rising ones. Living standards appear to have been dependent upon the features of the particular proto-industry in question, and the fluctuations it went through, rather than the fact that it was a proto-industry. In the Po valley, proto-industry shielded peasants from falling incomes, and in Tuscany it protected them for a long time from the consequences of worsening shareholding contracts. Proto-industrialization unambiguously led to prosperity for rural producers in eighteenth-century Flanders, northern France and Catalonia. Most Swiss proto-industrial regions had lower mortality than average because of better and more varied nutrition. Where proto-industrial workers did see falling incomes, it was often because of a general downturn of the whole economy, as in nineteenth-century Flanders and northern France after 1789.

As Deyon concludes, 'the impoverishment of households has not been proved for all the very diverse models and all the successive phases of proto-industrialization'. Indeed, if we assume - as contemporary records suggest - that to marry and form a family was viewed as more desirable than lifelong celibacy by most people in early modern Europe, then wherever proto-industry was associated with earlier or more universal
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Proto-industrialization in early modern Europe is supposed to have been associated with the commercialization of agriculture in neighboring regions and subsistence by-employed farming in the proto-industrial region itself (Mendels 1972; Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm 1981). However, as Schlumbohm acknowledges in his chapter in this book, the bifurcation into regions of commercial agriculture and of proto-industry was ‘merely a special case of a considerably more complex situation’. In Catalonia, proto-industry did not stimulate agricultural commercialization, but rather the survival of small-scale subsistence farming. In Switzerland, the system of complementary regions of commercial agriculture and proto-industry was more complex and segmented than the ideal-typical model, and Pfister identifies at least three sub-patterns. In Italy and in Germany, proto-industry arose alongside a wide variety of forms of farming, including feudal agriculture, cottager systems, peasant smallholdings and large commercial farms. In most parts of Europe, there were some proto-industries with little or no integration between agricultural activity and....
industrial work, while in others by-employment in agriculture, whether as labourer, cottager or small landowner, remained the norm. Food and raw material supplies came sometimes from neighbouring regions, sometimes from the proto-industrial region itself and sometimes from even further afield.

Nor was proto-industrialization always associated with the breakdown of feudalism, as was originally postulated (Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm 1981). Spanish historians argue that proto-industry sustained low-productivity agriculture, thereby serving 'as a prop to the survival of feudalism'. As Myška and Ogilvie point out, in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia important proto-industries developed and lasted for centuries, despite the so-called 'second serfdom' and increasing involvement of the feudal nobility in non-agrarian economic activities. Myška shows the many ways in which feudal lords affected proto-industry directly, precisely through exploiting their monopoly rights over their peasants' labour. Feudalism was abolished only in the later eighteenth or early nineteenth century, and then because of state initiatives, not proto-industrialization. Feudalism was thus completely consistent with proto-industrialization, and was not broken down by it.

A central theme in almost all the country studies in this book is industrial organization: the form of production (craft, domestic industry, 'proto-factory'); the system of marketing (Kaufsystem, Verlagssystem, manufactury); and the division of labour (within or between households, by sex and age within the household, between full-time and by-employed producers). The dominance of the putting-out system in the original theories - even though consciously adopted as a correction to earlier studies - can hardly be justified, judging from the multiplicity of forms portrayed in the chapters of this book. The multiplicity of production forms arose partly from the variety of different branches of proto-industry, and partly from the variety of social and institutional contexts, which placed different technical and organizational constraints on producers. In some circumstances, different production forms could co-exist in one and the same industrial region. Similarly, the dominance of the 'family economy' in the original theories has been complicated by the emergence of various kinds of division of labour between households, sexes, age groups, and full-time industrial producers and those who worked part time in agriculture, labouring, peddling, trading in raw materials or other rural by-employments. Although the family was generally the unit of proto-industrial production, this was by no means always the case; and the organization of work within proto-industrial families varied widely.

The importance of other forms of production than the putting-out system, to some extent as supplements to it, emerges from most of the country studies in the book. For proto-industrial textile production in Bohemia and Austria, for silk processing in Italy and for cotton production in Catalonia, manufactories played an important role. That guilded industrial production is not necessarily incompatible with export-oriented rural domestic industry is shown by the textile industries in Castile, the linen and scythe-making industries in Austria, many textile and metal proto-industries in German territories and various forms of 'guild purchase' in Germany, Austria and Bohemia. Through merchants, guilded industrial producers could become just as integrated into the putting-out system as rural domestic workers were. Where this was the case, there no longer seems to be a clear demarcation between different groups of producers, and upon occasion - as is shown in the chapters on France, Spain and Germany - there could be co-operation between rural domestic industries and guild-organized finishing industries in towns. The widespread survival and new formation of guilds in rural proto-industries blurs the distinction between these and guilded export industries in the late medieval period. However, this does not necessarily mean that industrial production for local needs should be integrated into the concepts of proto-industrialization (Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm 1993: 226ff).

Even the Kaufsystem (artisanal system) and Verlagssystem (putting-out system) which are the main focus of the original theories turn out to have varied a great deal, and did not always show a progression from one to the other. In most proto-industrial regions of Sweden, for example, producers were able to retain control over the production process and the market by maintaining the artisanal system. The same is true for France, where case-studies have sought to clarify the transition mechanisms between artisanal and putting-out system. Similarly, in Catalonia, despite the involvement of merchant capital, merchants did not become more closely involved in the production process. For the wool industry in the West Riding of Yorkshire, Hudson explains the expansion of the putting-out system in the production of worsteds and the maintenance of an artisanal system operated by rural craftsmen in the production of woollens, in terms of differences in landownership and social structure. In the Black Forest of Württemberg, both artisanal system and putting-out system survived side by side among rural worsted weavers in the same communities over more than two centuries, sustained by the fine balance of institutional privileges between rural guilds and merchant companies.

Finally, almost all contributions show that the division of labour within proto-industrial households depended on the sort of industry it
was, the social groups which participated in production (whether they were peasants or sub-peasants), the structure of full-time industrial work and by-employsments, and social and institutional factors (cf. Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm 1993). As Pfister points out on the basis of Swiss evidence, the family was not always the unit of proto-industrial production, but rather different family members carried out different forms of wage work as individuals; this had far-reaching effects on demographic behaviour and family structure.

The original theories assumed that proto-industrialization both required, and furthered, the replacement of ‘traditional’ social institutions with markets. However, the contribution by Ogilvie points out that urban privileges, guilds, merchant companies, village communities and seigneurial institutions remained important in many cases of European proto-industrialization, and this is amply borne out by the country studies in this volume.

Towns retained a variety of legal privileges to regulate proto-industries to a late date, except in England, Ireland and Flanders. In Italy, proto-industries could arise only in ‘institutional enclaves’ where urban privileges were neutralized. In other cases, urban privileges did not prevent the rise of proto-industries, but did shape their growth: in Castile and Catalonia throughout the eighteenth century, in Saxony, Westphalia, Württemberg and many other German regions until after 1800, and in Sweden until about 1820. Even in Switzerland, where urban powers declined during the seventeenth century, towns retained inspection rights and ensured customs privileges and monopolies for merchants; Zürich actually increased its controls over rural entrepreneurs after 1670, and these constraints contributed to delaying mechanization in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Partly because of the survival of urban privileges, but partly too because they obtained support from the growing early modern state, merchant groups enjoyed legal privileges in many proto-industries: the ‘special corporate organizations’ formed by merchants in many Swiss proto-industries; the ‘franquicias’ necessary to operate in the Catalan cotton proto-industry; the privileged manufactories characteristic of Austrian proto-industries; the urban inspection offices in the Westphalian linen proto-industries; the obligation to sell through urban merchant guilds in Saxon proto-industries; the monopoly and monopsony privileges of proto-industrial merchant companies in the Rhineland and Württemberg; and even the powers of the ‘Blackwell Hall factors’ in the southern English textile proto-industries.

Guilds, too, were widespread in European proto-industries until the end of the eighteenth century, except in England, Ireland and Flanders. Guilds retained important economic influence over rural proto-industries in Switzerland until the early seventeenth century, in France and Westphalia until the late seventeenth century, in Bohemia and Saxony until the early eighteenth century, in Austria, Catalonia and parts of the Rhineland until the later eighteenth century, and in Sweden and Württemberg into the nineteenth century. In Castile and many parts of northern Italy, guilds excluded proto-industry altogether – even from the countryside. Long political struggles were required before the guilds could be weakened in proto-industries in Catalonia and many parts of Germany. In Austria, many parts of Germany and some parts of Bohemia, ‘regional’ guilds were formed which included rural as well as urban producers; exclusively rural proto-industrial guilds were formed in Germany and Italy. Many proto-industrial guilds were not simply survivals from the medieval period, but were specially formed in response to the challenges and pressures of proto-industrialization, including the desire on the part of producers to defend themselves against privileged merchants, and the desire on the part of the growing early modern state to tax and regulate the emerging proto-industrial sector.

Peasant communities and seigneurial institutions also helped to shape many proto-industries. In Austria and many parts of southern Germany, they regulated settlement and marriage until the later eighteenth century, preventing proto-industrial population explosion or proletarianization. In Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, the strengthening of feudal institutions after c. 1650 influenced almost every aspect of proto-industrialization. Sharecropping institutions shaped several Italian proto-industries, and in Lombardy the powers of sharecropping landlords became greater, rather than weakening, as the silk proto-industry expanded. Even in England, ‘both the location and longevity of proto-industry’ was influenced by agrarian institutions. The ‘ruralization’ of export industries in early modern Europe did not necessarily mean their emancipation from institutional regulation and the growth of markets; it often simply meant exchanging one set of non-market regulatory institutions for another.

It is often argued that proto-industrialization led to changes in popular culture and mentalities, but there is wide debate about what these changes were. The original theories argued that although proto-industrial producers gradually adopted cultural practices no longer rooted in the agrarian society, at the same time they maintained some basic economic attitudes – subsistence orientation and willingness to engage in ‘self-exploitation’ – which are believed by some to be characteristic of ‘peasant’ and ‘traditional’ cultures. By contrast, the
proto-industrial merchants and putters-out are supposed to have adopted a profit-oriented and capitalistic 'market' mentality. The interaction between 'self-exploitation' on the part of the producers and profit maximization on the part of the merchants was a central element in the growth process which the proto-industrial system was supposed to have unleashed in early modern Europe (Kriedt, Medick and Schlumbohm 1981: 50–4).

The contributions in this volume, however, show a wide variety of cultural practices and attitudes among both rural producers and merchants. Rural proto-industrial producers manifested both 'traditional' and 'market-oriented' attitudes. Thus, Hudson argues that the 'industrious revolution' in England involved new market-oriented mentalities among the proto-industrial producers. However, sometimes 'market-oriented' mentalities were clearly already in existence, as in parts of England where proto-industry was 'a vigorous response to additional opportunities for profit'. In other cases, proto-industrial workers retained a strong orientation toward the land: in the Po valley of Italy, in Flanders, in northern France and in parts of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Finally, proto-industrial workers as far afield as England, Germany and Italy resisted new techniques and factory industrialization.

However, orientation to landholding or resistance to new techniques need not be seen as characteristic of 'traditional' rather than 'market' mentalities. Lombard peasants became involved in the silk proto-industry in order to diversify production and market risks, which is quite consistent with 'capitalist' economic rationality. Proto-industrial producers did not resist innovations because of inherent conservatism, but because these threatened their livelihoods: as the rural ribbon makers of Lusatia show, proto-industrial producers were ready enough to adopt new techniques which would benefit them. Similarly, the 'traditional mentalities' which are supposed to have lain behind Mendels' demographic 'ratchet mechanism', whereby proto-industrial workers increased their marriage rate in good years and did not decrease it in bad years, have failed to materialize for other regions; increasingly it appears that proto-industrial producers adjusted their demographic behaviour to livelihood expectations.

Nor was it always the case that the proto-industrial merchants were oriented toward commerce and capitalist profits (as, indeed, had already been partly acknowledged in Kriedt, Medick and Schlumbohm 1981: 107ff, 141ff). In parts of France, for instance, proto-industrial merchants were oriented toward landownership and noble status; in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, many proto-industrial 'entrepreneurs' were feudal nobles; and in many parts of Europe, the merchants themselves were organized into guild-like companies which resisted innovations and opposed entrepreneurial profit seeking. Even where proto-industry may have been associated with the growth of new economic and social attitudes, it did not always contribute to the diffusion of new mentalities to the society more generally, as is shown by the failure of 'the social values associated with the rise and development of modern capitalism' to diffuse from Catalonia to other parts of Spain.

A last question, common to all the contributions in this volume, concerns the transition from proto-industrialization to industrialization or de-industrialization. The studies in this volume show that this development was highly dependent on factors specific to the particular region. Moreover - and this is a finding not dealt with thoroughly in the debate hitherto - proto-industrial production forms often survived for a long time in co-existence with the factory system, both supplementing and resisting it.

As Jürgen Schlumbohm rightly points out, a major service performed by the theories of proto-industrialization was to have conceived the industrial revolution as a regional phenomenon, and to have explored the ways in which earlier proto-industrialization may have contributed to the regional sources of industrialization, whether directly through creating a regional industrial 'tradition' or 'path-dependency', or indirectly through its social and demographic consequences. However, as Deyon points out, subsequent research has now shown conclusively that proto-industrialization was only one of the possible paths toward the industrial revolution.

Even research on 'failed' transitions to industrialization in proto-industrial regions, however, has proved very illuminating, for it has generated a much more detailed analysis of the factors lying behind industrial continuity and discontinuity, and behind economic expansion and stagnation more widely. Deyon, Hudson and Ogilvie all trace industrial discontinuities - i.e. de-industrialization - back to social and institutional factors. These include both the institutional legacy of proto-industrialization, which could constitute a structural obstacle to industrialization, and direct resistance by proto-industrial producers to new techniques, new work practices or factory employment. For Hudson and Magnusson, geographical factors (such as transport connections or raw material supplies) which helped determine the location of proto-industry, constituted a further bundle of causes for industrialization or de-industrialization. According to Magnusson and Cerman, state liberalization of trade, industry and agriculture could also be decisive. But it must also be pointed out that discontinuities
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between proto-industrialization and later industrialization depended a
great deal on the particular industry and its position relative to rival
producers and competing sectors. Moreover, mechanization and con-
centration of production in an industry in one region could lead to the
de-industrialization of other regions.

The role of international economic trends in this transition process is
still not fully illuminated, although it is referred to in passing in most
studies of continental Europe. The repeal of the Continental Blockade
in 1815 and the influx of higher-quality English yarn threw early
attempts at mechanized spinning in many parts of Europe into a severe
crisis, or led to the final disappearance of proto-industrial domestic
spinning, insofar as this had not already taken place. But even temporary
discontinuities between proto-industrial and industrial textile produc-
tion in Austria, Bohemia, France and many German territories can be
traced back to this source (cf. Crouzet 1964: 572ff).

Several of the chapters in this volume point out the survival of proto-
industrial production as a supplement or an alternative to factories, long
into the nineteenth or even the twentieth century. The conditions for
this survival were created by the very gradual rate of mechanization of
particular branches of production. The sources of this gradualism in
mechanization resided partly in technical difficulties in mechanization
using particular raw materials, partly in the fact that proto-industry often
still remained competitive in terms of costs, and partly in the only very
gradual dissolution of various political, social and institutional obstacles
to adopting new production practices. The fact that weaving was often
mechanized decades or generations later than spinning – even though
the technology was available in both processes – is well known. Less well
known, by contrast, is the intentional maintenance of putting-out
production alongside centralized factory production as a cushion for
fluctuations in demand. Based on such observations, Pierre Deyon
concludes that the industrial revolution did not displace the proto-
industrial system in France, but rather ‘encompassed, integrated, and
further developed it’.

Theories of proto-industrialization have therefore not only brought
about a re-evaluation of pre-factory industrial production in its own
right, rather than as simply a precursor to the factory system (Mosser
1981: 382ff). They have also shed new light on the causes of the gradual
and variegated nature of factory industrialization itself. The original
theories of proto-industrialization stressed that the origins of capitalism
and industrialization were to be found in the early modern period.
Subsequent research on proto-industry, however, has also found that
many features of early modern European societies and economies
survived long into capitalism and industrialization. Indeed, this may be
seen as the central conclusion of a change in historical perspectives
which has been under way for some time. This new perspective
emphasizes long-term continuities in the economic and social develop-
ment of Europe between the medieval period and the nineteenth
century, and in so doing opens up promising new avenues of approach
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