Social mobility and integration of Amsterdam Jews: the ethnic niche of the diamond industry, 1850-1940

Kok, J.

3

The History and Dynamics of the Amsterdam Diamond Industry and Union

"When the bosses give us the sack, we turn to Henri Polak.
If Henri we should ever lose, we'd be walking on worn-out shoes."
— Meyer Sluyser[1]

3.1 Introduction

The diamond industry was, by far, the most important industrial activity for Amsterdam Jews from the seventeenth until the twentieth century. While conditions and labour relations in the industry changed over time, from the eighteenth century onwards Jews became and remained the main producers. Throughout these centuries, fortunate actors in this industry were able to amass personal wealth and contributed generously to Jewish charities. Both employers, nearly all of Jewish descent, and workers, where the Jewish share ranged from 50 percent in the mid-eighteenth century up to 85 percent a century later, were predominantly Jewish. In this chapter, the history of the industry from the sixteenth century until 1940, with a particular focus on the post-1850 period, will be provided.[2] Understanding the changing nature of the industry's work, conditions, and composition will allow us to better analyse and contextualise workers' life course trends in subsequent chapters.

3.2 A Historical Background

3.2.1 *Origins: Pre-1800*

Diamonds were first discovered, mined, cut, polished, sold, and worn in India.[3] Trade with the Romans brought diamonds from the Golconda region to Europe. During the

[1] Meyer Sluyser, *Mr. Monday and Other Tales of Jewish Amsterdam*, trans. Mels Sluyser (Chandler, 2005), 57.
[2] For other overviews, see Samuel Senior Coronel, "De diamantwerkers te Amsterdam: eene sociale studie," *De Economist* 14.1 (1865): 73–106; Henri Polak, *De strijd der diamantbewerkers* (Amsterdam, 1896); Felix Leviticus, *Geillustreerde encyclopaedie der diamantnijverheid* (Haarlem, 1908); Henri Polak, *De invloed van den oorlog op de diamantindustrie* (Purmerend, 1917); Mozes Barents, *De Diamantslijperij Maatschappij te Amsterdam: 1845-1920* (Amsterdam, 1920); Cornelis van der Velde, *De A.N.D.B. Een overzicht van zijn ontstaan en ontwikkeling en beteekenis* (Amsterdam, 1925); Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*; Van Tijn, *Twintig jaren Amsterdam*; Van Tijn, "De Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkersbond"; Theo Van Tijn, "Geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse diamanthandel en -nijverheid, 1845-1897 I," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 87 (1974): 16–70; Theo van Tijn, "Geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse diamanthandel en -nijverheid, 1845-1897 II," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 87 (1974): 160–201; Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben…'"; Hofmeester, "Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing"; Hofmeester, *Een schitterende erfenis*; Hofmeester, "The Impact of the Diamond Industry"; Metz, *Diamantgracht*; Hofmeester, "The Amsterdam Diamond 'Marketplace' and the Jewish Experience."
[3] Karin Hofmeester, "Diamonds as Global Luxury Commodity," in *Luxury in Global Perspective: Objects and Practices, 1600-2000* (Cambridge, 2016), 56.

Middle Ages, Indian diamonds emerged in Venice through trade, which subsequently is believed to have become the main diamond cutting centre in the fourteenth century;[4] cutting being the act of shaping the diamonds facets.[5] Pioneering new and shorter sea routes to India, the Portuguese became the main diamond traders in the sixteenth century. In the fifteenth century, the important industrial city Bruges became the main diamond cutting centre.[6] With Portuguese merchants shipping diamonds to Antwerp, the main trading hub for their colonial goods, diamond production gradually shifted to Antwerp.[7] With the blockade of Antwerp's harbour in 1584 and the growing threat of the Spanish Inquisition, Sephardic Jews and *Conversos*—Jews forced to convert to Catholicism—increasingly migrated to Amsterdam, pushed by religious persecution and attracted by optimistic trading perspectives.[8] The Dutch East Indies Company later became an important player on the diamond trading scene in the beginning of the seventeenth century.[9]

In Amsterdam, the processing of diamonds was initially performed by Protestant assistants of Sephardic traders. In 1611, the first mention is made of a Jewish labourer in the trade; a Sephardic Jew in training with a Protestant instructor.[10] Early on, Jewish newcomers in the industry adopted the know-how from the Gentile workers who had arrived with their Sephardic employers. Subsequent generations then learned the trade's inner workings as production was centred around the household. Fathers worked together with their wives, sons, and daughters to produce the finished luxury product to be sold to European nobility and increasingly the *bourgeoisie* and elites across Europe. The Jewish share among the workers increased as Sephardic Jewish orphans, as well as Ashkenazi Jews arriving as early as 1630, were trained and hired as a form of charity.[11] Subsequently, the Ashkenazim became the main actor in the production of diamonds in eighteenth-century Amsterdam.

Until 1727, significant diamond extraction was only found in India and, to a much smaller extent, in Borneo.[12] The discovery of diamonds in the Minas Gerais district of Brazil shifted global hubs of diamond extraction and trade. Several times more abundant than diamond mines in Golconda, Brazil's mines now became the main global source of 'rough' (i.e. uncut) diamonds.[13] In Amsterdam this transformed the diamond industry from a small niche employing a mixture of Gentile and Jewish families to one that provided livelihoods for roughly 600 households. The degree to which these households were able to profit from the growing global rough diamond production was directly tied to the ability of merchants and traders to import the stones to Amsterdam. While Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam had strong ties with Brazil, obtaining the monopoly trading rights on Brazilian diamonds established in 1753 by the Portuguese crown

[4] Jack Ogden, *Diamonds: An Early History of the King of Gems* (New Haven, 2018), 82–83.
[5] According to Ogden, no direct evidence is available that diamond cutting took place in Venice. However, cut diamonds were mentioned at that time, and Venice was the most likely location for this to occur.
[6] Ibid., 108–9.
[7] Godehard Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade* (Westport, 1970), 73; Hofmeester, "Diamonds as Global Luxury Commodity."
[8] Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford, 1989).
[9] Hofmeester, "Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing," 27, 30.
[10] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 15.
[11] Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews*, 41; Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare among the Portuguese Jews in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Liverpool, 2012), 106; Metz, *Diamantgracht*, 31–32.
[12] Hofmeester, "Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing," 27–28.
[13] Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production*, 121.

proved a difficult task.[14] However, the Dutch consul in Lisbon was able to agree to such a monopoly, supported by the brothers Brettschneider, successful Dutch diamond traders, and the bank Hope and Co.[15] A continuous battle for monopoly rights to the Brazilian diamond production continued throughout the century.[16] However, as shown in Table 3.1, by the turn of the eighteenth century the production in Brazil was limited, leading to greater periods of unemployment in Amsterdam in between imports.

TABLE 3.1 Average annual production of Brazilian diamonds in carats (ct.), 1730-1822

Period	Annual production
1730-1740	20,000
1740-1772	52,000
1772-1806	26,800
1811-1822	12,000

Source: Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade* (1970): 121, 150-1.

Diamonds extracted from Brazil were of a lower quality than the ones that had been imported from India and Borneo.[17] An intensification of certain modifications was therefore needed to obtain optimal results. Jewish and Gentile households active in the diamond industry had, until then, focused on the cutting, which created the famous facets we still admire today; and polishing, smoothening the facets created by cutting. In earlier times in India, another act, that of sawing, was practiced.[18] Sawing was needed to make large diamonds more manageable but was no longer practiced for being too labour intensive. Brazilian diamonds, which had more fault lines, needed to be reduced in size by more skilled techniques.[19] Consequently, in the eighteenth century a small subset of skilled workers called cleavers emerged. Cleaving had already been discovered in the seventeenth century but had not been used as intensively before.[20] As the name indicates, these workers cleaved diamonds along their natural fault lines, reducing the imperfections and waste in diamonds.

A tax register in Amsterdam indicates that there were 32 diamond workers and 95 jewellers in 1742 who earned above the threshold to be taxed.[21] Based on their names and residential spread across Amsterdam, seven of these 32 workers were Jewish, suggesting that Gentile workers remained more prosperous in the industry than their Jewish

[14] Hofmeester, "Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing," 41–42.
[15] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 20.
[16] Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral*; Tijl Vanneste, *Blood, Sweat and Earth: The Struggle for Control over the World's Diamonds Throughout History* (London, 2021).
[17] Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews*, 40.
[18] Ogden, *Diamonds*, 125.
[19] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 21; Ogden, *Diamonds*, 325–26.
[20] Ogden, *Diamonds*, 124–25.
[21] W. F. H. Oldewelt, ed., Kohier van de personeele quotisatie te Amsterdam over het jaar 1742. Deel I: inleiding en registers (Register of personnel assessments in Amsterdam for the year 1742. Part I: introduction and registers), Amsterdam: Genootschap Amstelodamum, 1945, unpaginated. Note: the workers are mentioned as *diamantslijpers* (diamond polishers), but this term was used as an umbrella term for all workers, including cleavers, in the eighteenth century.

counterparts.[22] Only the Jewish polisher David de Zousa earned in the same range as the top-earning Gentile workers; however, he had 14 children to feed with his estimated 800 guilders per year income.[23] Nonetheless, Gentile families that had worked in the industry since its inception were increasingly disillusioned by Jewish competition and demanded change. In 1748, several representatives of 'Gentile diamond polishers, cutters, and cleavers' in Amsterdam approached the city council with a request to establish a guild in the diamond industry.[24] In recent years, they argued, the industry has worsened due to "foreigners, for a large part from the Jewish Nation," who did not maintain proper working conditions.[25] The "starvation wages" and conditions that Jewish diamond workers were willing to work for—"like swines, with 10 to 12 in a cage"— put the 300 Gentile diamond workers' households at risk of poverty.[26] While a number of guilds excluded Jews from working in industrial activities, the diamond industry was one of few that had not yet established a guild. The city council ruled in favour of the Jewish households and against a guild; proclaiming that "the Jews founded this trade in our city."[27]

Although this Jewish victory was followed by half a century of growth in the industry,[28] the end of the century brought it to ruins. Decreasing rough diamond production from Indian and Brazilian deposits, combined with a weakening of Dutch international trading relationships, had already diminished livelihoods in the Amsterdam diamond industry. The French Period (1795-1813) in the Dutch Republic was rumoured to have brought the industry to a complete standstill.[29] These rumours, although demonstrably false—Heertje also rejects them[30]—do highlight the rapid decline of the industry. Nor did these rumours foresee the explosive changes that were to happen in the industry over the next century.

3.2.2 *Early Industrialisation: 1800-1870*

While the production of diamonds never disappeared from Amsterdam, the number of workers dropped precipitously. In 1748 the industry had been home to roughly 600 families; in 1808 circa 200 families remained.[31] Predominantly Gentile workers, faced with fewer occupational barriers and less societal prejudice, changed to new careers wherever possible. When the Amsterdam municipal government counted workplaces for diamond production in 1820, a total of 49 home-workplaces were located; 42 of which in the *Jewish Quarter*, a neighbourhood where nearly all Jews and only a limited number of Gentiles lived.[32] Compared with the equal split suggested by the guild appeal in 1748,

[22] Daniël Metz and Karin Hofmeester, "Amsterdam diamantstad. Een nieuwe industrie," in *Een schitterende erfenis: 125 jaar nalatenschap van de Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond*, ed. Karin Hofmeester (Zutphen, 2020), 17.
[23] Kohier van de personeele quotisatie te Amsterdam over het jaar 1742; David de Zousa #3902, 340 guilders rent, 800 guilders income, 14 children.
[24] Amsterdam City Archive, *Archief Schout en Schepenen*, 5061#694, pp. 249-256.
[25] Idem.
[26] Idem.
[27] Hofmeester, "The Amsterdam Diamond 'Marketplace' and the Jewish Experience," 59–61.
[28] Van der Velde, *De A.N.D.B.*, 2. Van der Velde estimates the number of persons dependent on the industry at 3000, including non-employed dependents.
[29] Idem.
[30] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 24.
[31] Metz and Hofmeester, "Amsterdam diamantstad," 17–18.
[32] Metz, *Diamantgracht*, 33.

it is clear that the disastrous times in the diamond industry strengthened the Jewish niche characteristics of this occupational group.

The count of workplaces took place right before a major transformation in the industry. The diamond industry had been a fairly common cottage industry, one of many in Amsterdam, with production taking place at home. It became one of the first industries in Amsterdam to industrialise in 1822, when affluent Jewish jeweller Joseph Machiel Posno (1784-1865) established a horse-powered factory on *Roeterseiland*, a backstreet of the Jewish Quarter.[33] In this factory, horses replaced the labour of *mill spinsters*, women who powered diamond polishers' tools.[34] While women had always been a part of the production process of diamonds, either as mill spinsters, cutters,[35] or assisting their fathers and brothers, industrialisation in the nineteenth century increasingly implicated the departure of women from the polishing industry. With more horse-powered diamond factories opening in 1824, 1828, and 1840, female mill spinsters were unable to compete with their equine competitors, which were able to power the tools of between 10 and 20 men simultaneously.[36] However, despite providing immediate economic gains, the horses also introduced a number of logistical problems. Horses were relatively costly, required food and board even during the regular periods of downtime in the industry, and worsened hygienic conditions in the workplace.[37] Nonetheless, by 1855 the number of horse-powered factories in the Amsterdam diamond industry had increased to 9, providing 400 powered polisher mills at its peak.[38]

Diamantslijperij Maatschappij and Bahía hausse

The 1840s welcomed two milestones in the history of the diamond industry. First, a patent for the use of steam power in diamond factories was granted to one of the horse-powered factory owners. Soon after, the factory was sold to veteran jewellers Marchand and the d'Israel Rosen brothers.[39] Second, a large steam-powered factory, established and financed by a collective of 53 jewellers and other investors, opened in 1845.[40] A year prior, Jacob Joseph Posno's (1810-1882) diamond factory, which had been the first horse-powered diamond factory in Amsterdam, burned to the ground. To modernise and expand his production, Posno established an investment company to build a more impressive factory. Together with business partner Jonas Ephraïm Dresden (1793-unk.), who would be the vice president, and 51 other jewellers and manufacturers, the *Diamantslijperij Maatschappij* was born. The company merged several factories, including the one owned by Marchand, who would act as the secretary of the new company, and the d'Israel Rosen brothers, providing the *Maatschappij* with patent rights to using steam power in their future factory.

[33] Barents, *De Diamantslijperij Maatschappij*, 16–17; Metz, *Diamantgracht*, 33–36.
[34] Myriam Everard, "Verandering en continuïteit in de arbeid van vrouwen. Keetvrouwen en molendraaisters in het huiselijkheidsideaal, 1750-1900," *TSEG-The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 2.3 (2005): 81–102.
[35] Hofmeester, "The Amsterdam Diamond 'Marketplace' and the Jewish Experience," 53–54.
[36] *Jaarverslag 1918-1921*, 2. The factories are located in the Valckenierstraat, the Weesperstraat, the Zwanenburgerstraat, and the Rapenburgerstraat, all by Jewish entrepreneurs in the Jewish Quarter.
[37] Barents, *De Diamantslijperij Maatschappij*, 16–17; Metz, *Diamantgracht*, 36.
[38] Everard, "Verandering en continuïteit in de arbeid van vrouwen."
[39] Barents, *De Diamantslijperij Maatschappij*, 17.
[40] Nederlandsche staatscourant 09-04-1845, "*Naamloze vennootschappen*."

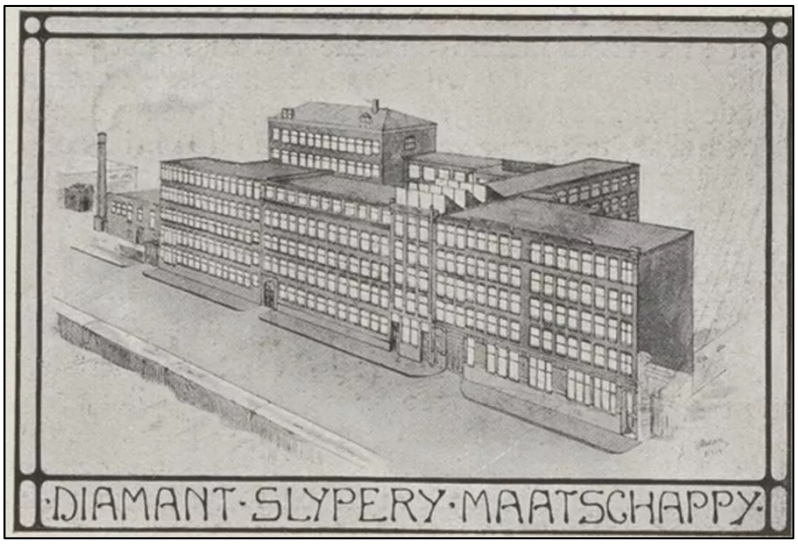
While not all of the city's jewellers joined the *Maatschappij*, the collective of 53 investors provide an important glimpse in the ethno-religious distribution of employers in the industry at the mid-way point of the nineteenth century. The founding record states the names and addresses of all jewellers involved. Hofmeester and Metz summarise the information provided on this record: other than jewellers, merchants, and rentiers, seven diamond workers are found on the list, all Jewish.[41] Jacob Joseph Posno owned the largest share of stocks; together with his family members he owned 128, of which 70 belonged to him. Most others owned a single or a handful of stocks, valued at 1000 guilders each, several times higher than the annual income of skilled workers in Amsterdam. Moreover, 46 of the 53 investors were Jewish. Gentile investors included four members of the De Voys' family, two from the family Cocx, and the merchant Wijnand Kluijtenaar. Together they owned a mere 12 stocks. The *Diamantslijperij Maatschappij*, one of the largest factories in the city, was thus a more or less completely Jewish establishment.

Until 1870, there would be only one significant competitor to the *Maatschappij*: Mozes Elias Coster (1791-1848), a Jewish diamond cutter who started his own firm in 1840.[42] Coster's business model differed starkly from the *Maatschappij*'s operations. The latter provided a large number of steam-powered mills to be rented to jewellers who sublet them to their workers at a day rate. Coster, instead, had a permanent set of employees working in his factory. Despite these differences, both workplaces were home to pioneering movements in the labour movement. The changing geography of the work of most of the industry's workers away from the home and into the factories led to growing collaborative pleas for improved working conditions.[43] Directors of the *Maatschappij* started the *Diamantslijpersfonds* (Diamond Polishers' Fund), aimed at providing for diamond workers' families in case of injuries or worse. Since eligibility was set after a minimum of five years of employment, the workers started their own fund in 1848. Coster's workers soon followed suit.

The developments of growing industrialisation and collective action happened concurrently with an expansion of the global rough diamond supply. In the Bahía region of Brazil, new diamond discoveries led to another growth spurt in the Amsterdam diamond industry. Between 1845 and 1870, the Bahía mines provided an average of 200,000 carats of diamonds.[44] This newfound supply led to a greater demand for diamond workers in Amsterdam, who were now able to have more stability in their work. The industry subsequently grew by 50 percent, from roughly 1000 workers in 1848 to nearly 1500 in 1859.[45] However, while these developments combined for greater prosperity among diamond workers and their employers, contemporary public health specialist Samuel Senior Coronel reported that the shift from cottage industry to factory work had been immensely detrimental to the health of the diamond workers.[46] This was especially true among polishers and setters, the lowest-paid workers. In his surveys of three diamond factories, Coronel finds high rates of tuberculosis and eye-related

[41] Metz and Hofmeester, "Amsterdam diamantstad," 20–21.
[42] Barents, *De Diamantslijperij Maatschappij*, 19.
[43] Dirk Hudig, *De vakbeweging in Nederland, 1866-1878* (Amsterdam, 1904), 221.
[44] Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production*, 121.
[45] Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant*, 14–15.
[46] Samuel Senior Coronel, "De diamantwerkers te Amsterdam: eene hygiënische studie," *Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* 8 (1864): 633–50.

Illustration 3.1 The *Diamantslijperij Maatschappij* ca. 1920. *Source*: Barents, *De Diamantslijperij Maatschappij te Amsterdam* (1920), 106.



injuries.[47] The impact of these developments, i.e. the expansion and growing industrialisation, on overall wellbeing, both economic and health-wise, is therefore unclear.

Tumultuous 1850s and 60s

Successes in the industry, fuelled by steam-powered factories and a renewed supply of rough diamonds, were soon followed by more turbulent times. In 1851, during the World Exhibition in Paris, Amsterdam won a prize for the outstanding quality of its diamond industry. However, since 1853, the supply of diamonds from Brazil started diminishing.[48] The Crimean War (1853-1856) followed by a bank run in the United States (1857) and the Indian Rebellion (1857), which affected investors' willingness to spend and reduced Indian production of rough diamonds, lead to great instability in the global market for diamonds. Around this time, also, Coster starts training women as cutters, who could be employed for lower wages.[49] Times were so unstable that Posno, the leading diamond merchant in Amsterdam, filed for bankruptcy in 1864. Increasingly, workers feared a relocation of the diamond industry to Paris, where diamonds could be produced more affordably. The *Diamantslijpers Vereeniging* ('Diamond Polishers' Society') was established with, as their main aim, to improve the working conditions for diamond workers, especially those seriously considering migrating to France.[50] Although the shift to Paris did not conclude, the 1860s, ending with the American Civil War (1861-1865), Prussian-Austrian War (1865), and the French-German War (1870-1871), was nonetheless a time of great instability and frequent unemployment for the workers. The

[47] Ibid., 642–43.
[48] Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant*, 10.
[49] Metz, *Diamantgracht*, 39.
[50] As explained in a brochure published in 1869 regarding the situation in the diamond industry and the organisation's achievements; ARCH00210 #39, "Diamantslijpers-Vereeniging te Amsterdam."

Algemeen Handelsblad, a leading financial newspaper, regularly published requests to financially support the city's diamond workers.[51]

3.2.3 *Kaapse Tijd and Aftermath: 1870-1887*

Although rumours about diamonds being discovered in South Africa had started spreading corners since 1866, at the start of 1870 the future conditions in the Amsterdam diamond industry look dire. France and Prussia were still at war, lowering demands for luxury diamonds, and the supply of rough diamonds from India and Brazil had largely disappeared. Until South African diamonds finally arrived in Amsterdam in the winter of 1870, the true size of the supply remained unknown. Reports by the *Algemeen Handelsblad* were mixed. In July, it reported that "[t]he diamonds… sparkled more than ever in the eyes of the Cape, or preferably, free state residents;"[52] two months later, it wrote about the confusion surrounding the size of the supply; and in October, the German-France War reportedly led to a decline in 'diamond fever.'[53] However, less than two weeks later, the tone of the reports changed drastically: "[r]egarding the news of diamonds, it is as *sparkling* as can be" the newspaper wrote when it reported on a ship carrying 15,000 carats of diamonds to London, an amount equal to an annual supply in the recent past.[54] In the following years, the South African diamonds created a scramble for jewellers to find workers to cleave, cut, and polish. After the conclusion of the American Civil War, economic conditions in the U.S. prospered, and the end of the French-Prussian War re-established peace in Europe. Employers had vacancies for roughly 2000 workers, but at most 1100 were still active in Amsterdam.[55] The immense bargaining power in the hands of the workers allowed them to push wages up to astronomical heights. The quality of the manufactured diamonds dropped concurrently, with the stereotypical motto "as long as it sparkles."[56] Barents estimates the wages of diamond polishers at 150 to 200 guilders per week;[57] cleavers are said to have earned upwards of 1000 guilders.[58] In contrast, typographers, another group of skilled workers with early collective action, earned roughly six guilders per week.[59] Workers who had left the diamond industry in the uncertain 1860s returned to the industry, fathers brought in their sons, and thousands of workers entered the industry as new entrants. Inevitably, the inflow of such quantities of workers returned the balance in the bargaining position between workers and employers. Wages fell in 1873 and again in 1876 (by 30%), and by the 1880s wages had returned to their pre-Cape Time levels. To supplement their waning incomes, the recruitment of apprentices became a profitable business, since the prospect of high wages induced parents to pay hundreds of guilders to have their children trained in the industry.

[51] For example, Algemeen Handelsblad 23-04-1868, *Binnenland*.
[52] Algemeen Handelsblad, 01-07-1870.
[53] Algemeen Handelsblad, 14-10-1870.
[54] Algemeen Handelsblad, 25-10-1870. Compare with Table 2.1.
[55] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 32.
[56] Saskia Coenen Snyder, "'As Long as It Sparkles!': The Diamond Industry in Nineteenth-Century Amsterdam," *Jewish Social Studies* 22.2 (2017): 48.
[57] Barents, *De Diamantslijperij Maatschappij*, 57.
[58] Polak, *De strijd der diamantbewerkers*, 12.
[59] Hudig, *De vakbeweging in Nederland*, 5.

One way we can visualise the growth in the number of workers during this time is to look at the changing number of conscripts, 19 or 20 years old, who were listed as working in the diamond industry at the time of their medical check-up.[60] This data on the occupation of Amsterdam conscripts has been collected from 1830 to 1900. For a longer timespan, we can also include grooms at the time of their marriage. All marriages in Amsterdam are available between 1811 and 1932. Panel A of Figure 3.1 presents the changing shares of conscripts and grooms that worked in the diamond industry. Outside of the Bahía hausse, roughly 1845-1855, between one and two percent of conscripts and grooms worked in the diamond industry before 1870. This rapidly increased from 2 percent in 1872 up to 15 percent of conscripts and 10 percent of grooms in 1891. When the industry reached its full capacity, the share of conscripts and grooms working in the diamond industry continued to fall to less than 2 percent in the 1930s. These declines signify a reduction in the number of newcomers, suggesting that the workers in the industry were getting older on average. Among the grooms, differences between Jews and Gentiles were already reported in Chapter 2. There we saw that both Jews and Gentiles saw large increases in the share of grooms that worked in the diamond industry at the time of their marriage, but the share was much higher for Jews. The comparison between conscripts, who were on average aged 19, and grooms, aged 18 to 39, suggests that not all 19-year-olds who joined the diamond industry were still in this occupation by the time they married.[61]

Panel B of Figure 3.1 shows the number of diamond polishing factories and, within those factories, the number of polishing mills (multiplied by 100). In 1871, Amsterdam counted three diamond polishing factories with roughly 1000 mills. By 1890, this had grown to nearly 70 factories and over 7000 mills. Separate factories were established for—and by—Jews and Gentiles, with Gentile factories being smaller on average.[62]

The landscape of the diamond industry in Amsterdam changed completely due to the *Cape Time* boom. For 30 years, the industry had only known two main workplaces: the *Diamantslijperij Maatschappij* and Coster's factory. The exuberant wages earned during this time not only allowed workers to bargain with their employers, but some even started working for themselves. "The workers nowadays work for themselves and bring a sensitive competition to the merchants" wrote the Chamber of Commerce in 1873.[63] In the same year the *Slijpersvereeniging* collectively bought land to build the Amsterdam Diamond Polishing Factory (*Amsterdamsche Diamantslijperij*), which opened on 16 February 1873.[64] Although this factory only offered workspaces to the members of the *Slijpersvereeniging*, it marked the end of the oligopoly of the *Diamantslijperij Maatschappij* and Coster on the production capacities. New factories sprouted like mushrooms, both in the Jewish side of town—to the east and southeast of the city centre—and elsewhere in the city. Successful workers became merchants, traders, and factory owners,

[60] Following the methodology of Knotter, *Economische transformatie*.

[61] The marriage certificates, being recorded further away from occupational choices in one's early adolescence, should illustrate a longer period of relatively high shares of diamond workers beyond the mid-1890s. However, the share of diamond workers among grooms falls roughly as quickly as the same share among conscripts. This leads us to believe that a considerable number of conscripts left this career prior to their marriage.

[62] Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant*, 42.

[63] Ibid., 23.

[64] Soon after, the *Slijpersvereeniging* could no longer afford the building. They sold the factory to Bottenheim, who became one of the most important employers in the industry.

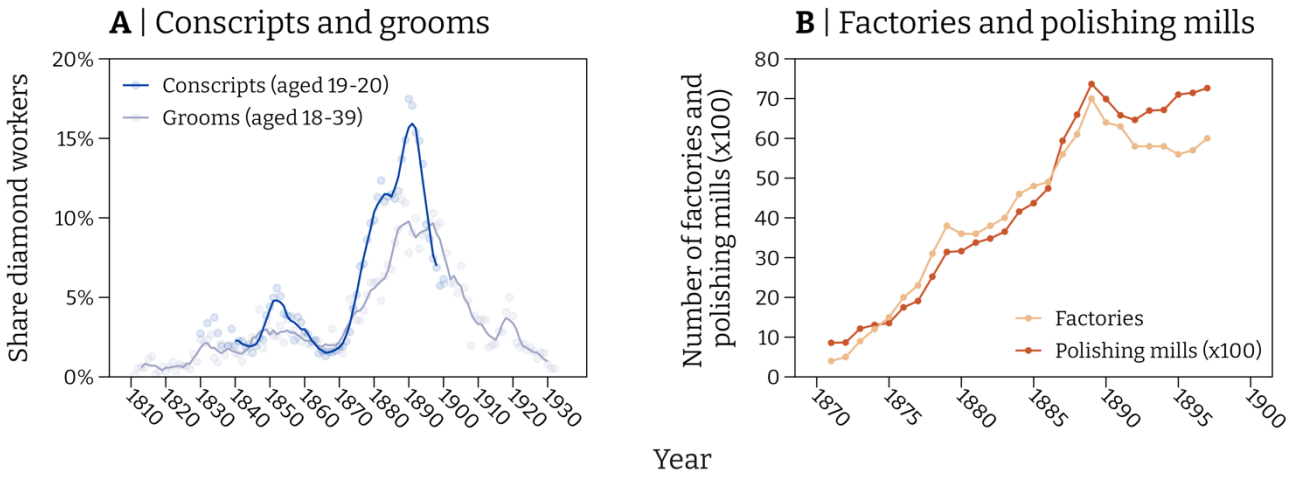


FIGURE 3.1 The share of all Amsterdam conscripts (1830-1900) and grooms (1811-1932) that worked in the diamond industry (panel A); the number of factories and polishing mills (1871-1897) in Amsterdam (panel B).
Source: author's calculations using LINKS "Cleaned Civil Registry" 2022 release; Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant 1845-1897* (1976); Knotter, *Economische transformatie en stedelijke arbeidsmarkt* (1991).
Note: Panel A is based on 153,067 conscript records and 320,157 marriage certificates.

evidenced by increasing memberships of the 'Central Diamond Traders' Union' (*Centraal Diamant-Handelsbond*), which grew to nearly 1000 members in the late 1880s.[65] By 1885, the 'old generation' of employers had practically been replaced by the 'new' generation of employers. Among them were the Boas brothers, the first jewellers to construct their own factory in Amsterdam in 1879. Their factory was the largest in the city—as well as the largest diamond factory globally—home to 357 polishing mills.

Although this self-employment by workers led to upward mobility, the greater competition of *eigenwerkmakers* ('own-work-makers') also pushed down wages and stimulated downward and horizontal social mobility of many earlier employers. This older generation of diamond traders was frequently forced to do business in other products. The growing rates of self-employment also set the stage for impending crises: Amsterdam's diamond centre became a landscape of jewellers and traders with little capital to their names who, in the near future, would struggle to compete with the more capital-intensive traders in competing centres abroad. The most significant profits were booked in London and Paris by diamond wholesalers and middlemen.[66] A partial displacement to Antwerp was already seen in the 1880s as a result of this weakening position of employers and traders in Amsterdam.[67]

3.2.4 *Crises in the industry and growing labour actions: 1888-1894*

The late 1880s were characterised by another expansion, namely in *chips*. These were small 'splinters' of diamonds which would previously have been turned to powder to polish diamonds but were now increasingly produced into tiny brilliants. While the

[65] Ibid., 25.
[66] Ibid., 26.
[67] Ibid., 27.

economic downturn led to much unemployment among workers producing larger diamonds,[68] *chips* workers had steady employment in the crisis years of 1887 and 1888. As Jews had cornered the market for larger diamonds, known as 'grof,' *chips* workers were predominantly Gentiles. Moreover, since factories remained still either Jewish or Gentile—mixed factories become more common later, in the early twentieth century—we see a growth in the number of Gentile factories during this time. In 1889 Amsterdam counted more Gentile factories, closed on Sundays, than Jewish factories, closed on Saturdays, despite over two-thirds of diamond workers being Jewish. The simultaneous displacement to Antwerp, where jewellers could afford larger stones, meant that Amsterdam temporarily became more specialised in smaller stones, including *chips* and roses, while Antwerp concentrated on larger rocks.[69] Within Amsterdam, Jewish traders and jewellers were able to obtain the best diamonds. In response, Gentile jewellers introduced an 'own-cost-system,' where workers received a fixed price for the finished stone after deducting the labour costs of setters and journeymen, mill rental, *boort*, lighting, and a profit margin for the jewellers.[70] Gentile employers often gained poor reputations for milking their workers for all they were worth.[71]

In the 1880s we not only see a great expansion in the share of Gentile men, but also among women, particularly Jewish women. The share of women in the industry had been growing gradually since the 1850s, when Coster started training women as cutters, but saw an acceleration in the 1880s. Rose-cutting was the first specialisation to 'feminise'; later brilliant-cutting saw more female workers too. Nearly all of these women worked from home, for lower wages despite long workdays.[72] Unsurprisingly, the growing share of female cutters, who were paid less for their work, caused the wages of male cutters to fall. Female cutters profited from training young girls, as indicated by the occupational census of 1889, which counts a much larger share of women among diamond cutters under the age of 18.[73] Women also worked as cleavers. Although Van Tijn doubted whether this was true,[74] evidence from marriages and newspaper adverts support it.[75]

With a continuously growing workforce, including a growing share of women, wages continued to fall. When interviewed for the Labour Survey of 1889, diamond workers' union pioneer Jos Loopuit (1864-1923) claimed that wages varied strongly by the skill of the worker.[76] Skilled workers, he alleged, earned much more than the average labourer in the city. Nonetheless, for a majority of the industry's workers, wages had fallen to near-subsistence levels in the late 1880s. Increasingly, polishers' and setters' apprentices stopped having to pay *leergeld*, apprenticeship fees, for their apprenticeships. Instead, they paid with discounted labour at the end of the contract to repay their instructors.

[68] Economic instability always affected producers of the larger, more expensive diamonds more.
[69] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 146; Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant*, 27; Historically, Antwerp cutters had specialised in smaller stones. Hofmeester, "Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing," 39.
[70] Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant*, 45–46.
[71] Ibid., 46.
[72] De diamanthuisindustrie te Amsterdam (1914), 13-17.
[73] *Beroepentelling* 1889.
[74] Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant*, 47.
[75] For instance, Betje Jessurum Lobo (1862-1940) was listed as a diamond cleaver when she married the diamond polisher Benjamin Lobo (1855-1914) in 1879. Noord-Hollands Archief, 358.6#603.
[76] Jacques Giele, ed., *De arbeidsenquête van 1887. Deel 1: Amsterdam* (Nijmegen, 1981), 149–51.

In the decades before the ANDB was established, diamond workers' reputation worsened. *Parvenus* from the Cape Time were considered loud, uncultured, untrained. In those days, persons worked for 12 hours per day with no time for lunch; they did not even wash their hands before eating.[77] "The majority of my colleagues are an unruly bunch," stated Loopuit in the interview, "people who do not want to hear about any improvement whatsoever."[78] Herman Kuijper referred to the Amsterdam diamond workers, to which he belonged as a future co-founder of the ANDB, as "the dumbest workers in Amsterdam."[79]

The Labour Survey also raised the point of theft, usually done by exchanging larger diamonds received from the employer with slightly smaller diamonds. By doing this continuously, a worker could end up with a single large and expensive diamond. According to Herman Kuijper the trade in stolen diamonds engaged hundreds of merchants.[80] However, Kuijper and others attested this was due to very low wages paid, and not poor moral characters of the workers, who had little choice but to steal.

The late 1880s and early 1890s were a period of fluctuating profitability in the industry. A shift occurred when the De Beers Diamond Consortium was established in 1888. This consortium established a near monopoly on South African diamonds, controlling over 80 percent of the rough diamond trade. Amsterdam actors were hopeful that this would lead to a stabilization of diamond extraction, exports, and prices. However, only a year after its founding, De Beers reduced extraction by 40 percent to raise prices. It succeeded, doubling prices for rough diamonds leading to catastrophic consequences for Amsterdam jewellers and diamond workers. The capital-weak Dutch employers could not afford to purchase additional supplies, leading to widespread unemployment in Amsterdam when inventories dwindled.[81] In 1890, a large fundraiser to support diamond workers raised 30,000 guilders. [82] However, despite global instability, including another bank run in the U.S. in 1893, Amsterdam diamond workers were able to ask for a wage raise for the first time since 1873 in May of 1894. What can explain this drastic change? According to Van Tijn, the years leading up to 1894 were "a cleansing," as the least skilled or connected diamond workers could only rarely find work, but also a period of "proletarisation," as conditions worsened even for the most skilled workers.[83] As conditions worsened, workers were more desperate to reestablish their former wages when the situation was ripe for negotiations.

This period of proletarisation reinvigorated interest for labour associations. When the number of factories was limited to Coster and the Diamantslijperij Maatschappij, collective action was more easily organised. While the 1860s saw the creation of more interventionary organisations, such as the ones for each specialisation, these gained little influence with the astronomical increases in wages during the *Cape Time.* In the 1880s, new attempts emerged, particularly among skilled Gentile workers who were early adapters to the Socialist movement. In 1888, Jan van Zutphen, co-founder of the

[77] Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant*, 57.
[78] Giele, *De arbeidsenquête van 1887. Deel 1: Amsterdam*, 151.
[79] *Enquête gehouden door de Staatscommissie benoemd krachtens de wet van 19 januari 1890. Staatsblad 1, derde afdeeling* (Amsterdam), 78.
[80] Ibid., 75.
[81] Van Tijn, *Amsterdam en diamant*, 71.
[82] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben…,'" 45–46.
[83] Van Tijn, "De Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkersbond," 415–16.

future ANDB, and Cornelis van der Velde, future board member and historian of the ANDB, founded the *Sociaal-Democratische Diamantbewerkersvereeniging* ('Social Democratic Diamond Workers' Association'), a small subsection of the *Sociaal-Democratische Bond* ('Social Democratic Union').[84] To encourage Jewish workers—who had not yet become strong adherents of Social Democracy—the name was soon changed to the *Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkers-Vereeniging* (NDV; 'Dutch Diamond Workers' Association') and Bernard Wins, a Jewish diamond worker, was chosen as its president. Free membership to any unemployed diamond worker to attend a meeting enticed 1200 diamond workers to join.[85] However, they were unable to maintain the momentum, leaving only 200 diamond workers to remain members by 1890. Yet this organization would become the training ground for the ANDB as several future leaders, including the co-founders Jan van Zutphen, Herman Kuijper, and Henri Polak, met here to discuss their plans for the future.

3.3 Specialisations[86]

A clear trend towards specialisation in the diamond industry took place throughout the eighteenth century.[87] While individual specifications were less common in earlier times, by the nineteenth century they were clearly defined and professionalised. Apprentices were trained with clear professional specialisations in mind. Apart from advancing to higher positions through entrepreneurship, such as becoming a *commissionair* or trader in diamonds, workers remained within their specialisation for their entire careers; that is, if employment opportunities allowed for it. Thus, unlike certain other professions where occupational ladders stimulated career advancements,[88] no such upward pathways existed for diamond workers. Instead, apprenticeships were lengthy, ranging from 18 months up to five years, and fortunate workers continued in their specialisation their entire lives. Within and between these specialisations, a distinct hierarchy was present that was reflected by social status and wages and noted by both contemporaries and historians.[89] Regrettably, not all differences are visible in our data, especially those occurring within specialisations. Transparency regarding these invisible differences therefore becomes all the more important in order to understand the positions that individual diamond workers were in.

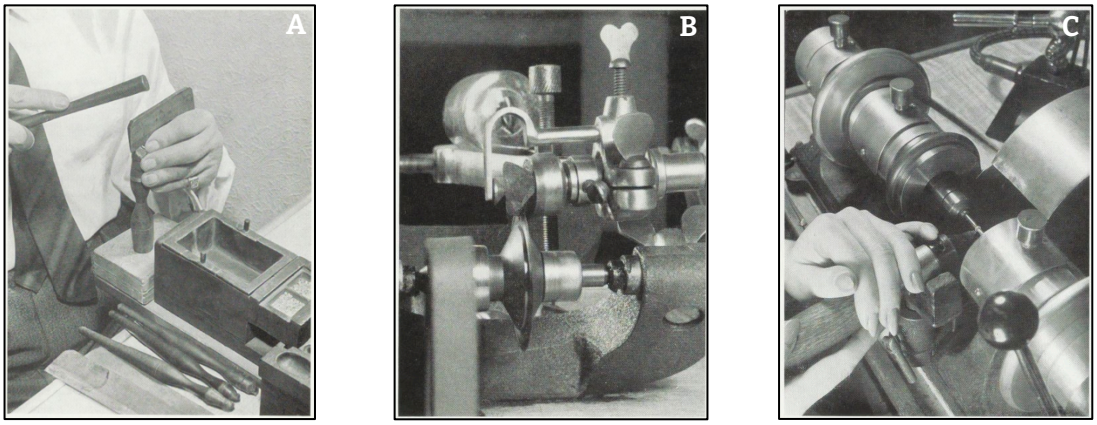
3.3.1 *Cleavers*

The workers in closest contact with the jewellers were the cleavers. They worked in close physical proximity to the jewellers, from whom they were the first to receive the unprocessed diamonds. Due to their expertise, cleavers worked most independently among the diamond workers. Cleavers were tasked with downsizing diamonds, cleaving them along natural fault lines in order to reduce the number of imperfections—such as

[84] Metz and Hofmeester, "Amsterdam diamantstad," 31.
[85] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 45–46.
[86] I present a brief overview of the different specialisations in the diamond industry. For a more technical discussion, see Eddy Vleeschdrager, *Hardness 10* (Antwerp, 1998). For historical descriptions, see Hofmeester, "Shifting Trajectories of Diamond Processing"; and Ogden, *Diamonds*.
[87] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 12–13.
[88] Andrew Miles and Mike Savage, "Constructing the Modern Career, 1840-1940," in *Origins of the Modern Career*, ed. David Mitch, John Brown, and Marco van Leeuwen (Aldershot, 2004), 79–100.
[89] Coronel, "De diamantwerkers te Amsterdam," 1865; Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 60–62.

inclusions, comparable to birthmarks—and shape the ideal size for the intended type of cut of the diamond. Recognising these fault lines required intensive training and patience; as one mistake could ruin a valuable diamond, these workers also dealt with the highest risks. Cleavers therefore started by inspecting the diamonds thoroughly. Once fault lines and imperfections were identified, an incision was made using a sharp edge of another rough diamond, indicating where it needed to be cleaved. The diamond was then split using a blunt blade and significant force, as illustrated in panel A of Illustration 3.2. An extreme example of the duress these workers could be under is exemplified by Joseph Asscher (1886-1976), in his time the most esteemed diamond worker in the world, who was tasked with cleaving the Cullinan, the largest rough diamond ever discovered at 3106 carats, purchased as a gift for King Edward VII for £1,800,000.[90] It took months to prepare for the actual cleaving and rumours state that when Asscher delivered the first strike to cleave the diamond, the knife shattered. Believing he ruined the diamond, Asscher "fell to the floor in a faint."[91]

ILLUSTRATION 3.2 Examples of specialisations in the Van Moppes factory, ca. 1930.
Source: Emeis Jr., *A. van Moppes & Zoon, Amsterdam-Holland, 1809-1959* (1959): 24-5.
Note: tools used during (*a*) cleaving, (*b*) sawing, and (*c*) mechanical cutting.



From the eighteenth century, when this specialisation was introduced, until the 1930s, cleavers were the elite among the diamond workers. Numerically they made up the smallest group, excepting 'cleaved stone workers,' discussed later on. Practicing their professions in workplaces provided by jewellers, often above the latter's offices, they had the most elite networks and earned the highest wages. These workplaces tended to have better lighting, were less crowded, and did not suffer from the same poor air quality as the polishing factories.[92] Heertje referred to them as the "aristocrats" of the industry, based on their social background, the way they dressed, and their better working conditions.[93] Sluyser believed that this made them feel superior to the rest of the workers, creating anonymity from other diamond workers: "[y]ou cleavers do not really form the *elite,* only the *Isra-elite*!"[94] The slow entry of cleavers into the union may

[90] Vleeschdrager, *Hardness 10*, 14.
[91] Glenn Klein, *Faceting History: Cutting Diamonds and Colored Stones* (Bloomington, 2005), 67.
[92] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 27.
[93] Ibid., 60.
[94] Sluyser, *Mr. Monday and Other Tales of Jewish Amsterdam*, 27.

attest to this feeling of superiority. Due to the limited number of positions for cleavers, personal connections were a nigh requirement for entry, virtually closing the rank for non-Jews. However, their relative 'elite' position in comparison to the rest of the industry's workers declined after 1920. Sawyers, making use of machines to accomplish similar tasks in less time and requiring less skill, introduced steep competition to the diamond aristocrats. Many cleavers migrated to Antwerp in the 1920s and 1930s in the hope of finding work there. Amsterdam cleavers were in high demand due to the greater quality and expertise of diamond craftsmanship in Amsterdam. Eva de Vries (1883-1941), one of the few female cleavers, was one of them, moving to Antwerp in 1921 and in 1928 to work for her brother Jules, a diamond trader.[95] While Eva was able to successfully continue working in Antwerp through her family connections and migration, many other cleavers were less fortunate. By the eve of World War II, cleavers no longer out-earned the rest of the industry.

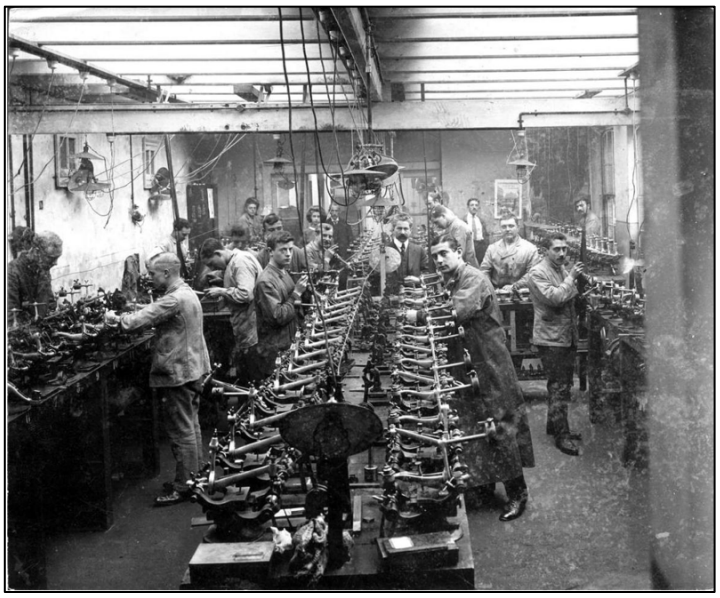
3.3.2 *Sawyers*

While the art of sawing had been developed and introduced during the Renaissance,[96] in Amsterdam it had not been in use until the late nineteenth century. Similar to cleavers, sawyers sectioned stones into two or more parts. However, in practice the two specialisations were not at all alike. Cleavers used a small number of tools, relying on skill, experience, and technique to obtain desired results in one swift movement. Sawing originally involved cementing diamonds in small wooden blocks, fixed to a table, after which a division was created in the diamond. Sawing for days on end, large diamonds could take up to 10 months to complete.[97] In the twentieth century, sawyers instead depended on new inventions, particularly the sawing machine, which facilitated the work and was many times more efficient. Moreover, sawyers often split parts of the diamond that would otherwise be used as *boort*, i.e. diamond powder,[98] a required ingredient in most of the diamond manufacturing processes, whereas cleavers more often created two suitable diamonds out of one.[99] Sawyers worked in new, long work-places, such as seen in Illustration 3.3, often containing hundreds of sawing machines. Experienced sawyers could operate between 10 and 30 machines, depending on the size of the diamonds and the skill of the worker. Compared with cleaving, sawing required little skill, and thus sawyer apprenticeships rarely lasted more than two years. This specialisation allowed new families to enter the diamond industry without competing with workers from families with generations of experience.

The main instrument of the sawing machine was a thin vertical disc, seen in panel B of Illustration 3.2. This disk was covered in oil and *boort* which allowed diamonds to be modified. Rather than make a sketch in the diamond using another diamond, sawyers used ink to indicate the placement of the splitting. Spinning at 4500 to 5000 rounds per minute, the disc could split a diamond, which was suspended above it and subsequently lowered onto the disc, in less than a day.[100] After inspecting whether the diamond was correctly placed on the disc, the sawyer moved on to the next machine. The number of

[95] FelixArchief, *Vreemdelingendossiers*, 968#10373 and 481#91349, "Eva de Vries."
[96] Ogden, *Diamonds*, 124.
[97] Ibid., 125.
[98] Vleeschdrager, *Hardness 10*, 113.
[99] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 44–45.
[100] Ibid., 46.

ILLUSTRATION 3.3 Diamond sawyers in sawing factory 'Zeldenrust,' 1911.
Source: Spaarnestad Photo, Het Leven, SFA001004222.
Note: the Zeldenrust factory counted 180 machines.



machines operated varied significantly. A survey of diamond sawing factories in 1909 shows that apprentices and new sawyers generally operated up to five machines, the average worker operated between 12 and 18, and the most skilled workers worked with 30.[101] Only 10 of 113 sawyers surveyed had been diamond workers before, retraining themselves into a new specialisation, while the rest had come from other occupations or started sawing as their first job. Sawyers that had been diamond workers in the past, mostly brilliant polishers, were over-represented among the most efficient sawyers. Nonetheless, the high share of sawyers that had previously worked in another occupation, often already in industry—fitters (Dutch: *bankwerkers*) being by far the most common—but also as office clerks, photographers, and commercial travellers, shows that this specialisation allowed for occupational mobility and an entry into the diamond industry for outsiders. The relative novelty of sawing factories also allowed new factory owners to emerge, although over the years existing manufacturers increasingly built their own sawing factories.

3.3.3 *Cutters*

After a diamond was cleaved or sawed, it was passed along to cutters, responsible for cutting off rough edges and creating the pre-form of facets in the diamonds. Cutters generally worked in the same workplaces as the cleavers, although with the introduction of more modern factories in the twentieth century, some cutters started to work in workplaces within factories as well. Illustration 3.4 depicts cleavers and cutters working side by side in a general *atelier* provided by jewellers at the start of the twentieth century. By rubbing two diamonds together, cutters were able to create the shape and desired

[101] See ANDB archive, ARCH00210 #5133, "Gegevens zagers."

number of facets in the diamonds. In this process, residual diamond powder or *boort* is created that is reused in the sawing and polishing stages.[102]

Cutters held high positions in the industry. When Henri Polak, future president of the ANDB, needed to contribute to the household income at the age of 13, he preferred the company of the more civilised cutters over the "black-smeared, shouting and screaming polishers" he had seen when visiting his diamond-polishing father's factory.[103] Not working in the loud and dirty factory halls was not only met with higher societal esteem, but also delivered a significant health premium, allowing cleavers and cutters to have longer careers on paper. While all cutters in mid-nineteenth century Amsterdam had been male,[104] by the twentieth century a large majority of cutters were women. Approximately 95 percent of rose cutters and 80 percent of brilliant cutters were female,[105] while only comprising about 20 percent of the members. Women had historically been active as cutters already in the seventeenth century,[106] but largely lost this position with the formalisation of factory work. Female cutters were reintroduced in the 1860s, when Coster's firm started training women in this specialisation.[107] With smaller hands, women were deemed more efficient in this skilled and diligent work. Women could also be paid lower wages, as most women's incomes were seen as a supplement to their husband's or parents' incomes. The ANDB put a stop to this, enforcing equal wages for equal work at the start of the twentieth century due to the continuous efforts of sisters Sophie and Betje Lazarus.[108]

Many women employed as cutters worked from home, continuing the cottage industrial work that had started disappearing from the industry since industrialisation. A 1910 survey on the activities of diamond workers employed from home, containing 477 interviewees, included 169 brilliant cutters (among which 29 men) and 192 rose cutters (1 man).[109] The 343 female cutters were evenly split into married and unmarried, indicating that marital status was not a main driver of home-based work nor a reason to stop working. Nearly all these women started working between the ages of 12 and 15, while a small minority started at 11 or younger or 16 or older. According to the survey, some of these women continued to work in this industry and remained members of the union only to allow entry for their children in the future.[110] More pressing of a reason was their high earnings potential. It is not uncommon, the report states, that their husbands earned less than them and are not especially incentivised to find better work.[111] When asked for the reason for their employment, both brilliant and rose cutters most frequently responded insufficient income of their husbands, to save for worse financial times, or to take care of their (extended) family. Many of these women also had small

[102] Vleeschdrager, *Hardness 10*, 113.
[103] Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1993, 21.
[104] Based on the population register of Amsterdam, 1851-1853.
[105] For a discussion of rose and brilliant cuts, see Section 3.6.
[106] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 23.
[107] According to Alex Daniels. See "De diamant en de diamantbewerking," *Eigen haard,* 1875, 419.
[108] Ulla Jansz, "Betje Lazarus (1870-1933)," in *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*, 2017; Margreet Schrevel, "Een stem in het kapittel. Diamantbewerkers organiseren zich," in *Een schitterende erfenis. 125 jaar nalatenschap van de Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond*, ed. Karin Hofmeester (Zutphen, 2020), 35–56. For life stories of these sisters, go to https://diamantbewerkers.nl/en/levensverhalen/betje-sophie-lazarus.
[109] Rapport over huisindustrie uit 1914. Hoofdstuk 10, De diamanthuisindustrie te Amsterdam.
[110] Ibid., 9.
[111] Idem.

ILLUSTRATION 3.4 Cleavers' and cutters' work-space
Anonymous, drawing ca. 1901-1903
Source: Koninklijke Verzamelingen, The Hague.

children, showing that women could work *and* have families. In about a third of cases, the family made use of a maid, less costly than the incomes of female cutters. Unlike men, who worked fulltime nearly all the time, women more often worked fewer hours, potentially explained by the gendered demands of parenting. Consequently, male cutters earned more on average than female cutters, and unmarried women, who worked longer hours on average compared to married women, earned higher wages than their married counterparts. Per hour, women earned less (ca. 0.50 guilders) than men (0.60 guilders), suggesting that men were slightly more productive on average.

3.3.4 *Polishers and setters*

The majority of the workers were polishers. Together with the diamond setters (or adjusters, Dutch: *diamantverstellers*) they made the last modifications to the diamonds before they were sent out for their respective purposes. Polishers smoothened facets, created by cutters, to allow more light to enter the stones and for them to be placed in jewelry or machinery.[112] Large discs or scaifs, spinning horizontally at 2200 to 3000 rounds per minute, were their main tool.[113] Diamonds were fastened in lead cups (*doppen*) using solder and attached to copper rods. Next, a combination of oil and *boort* (diamond powder) were spread on the disc. Polishers then pushed the diamonds on the disc, using specialised pliers weighted down with lead or iron to add pressure, until a facet was smoothened. After each facet was polished, the diamond setter took the rod, placed the cup in a hot oven to melt the solder, and rotated the diamond to centre the next facet. Speed and remuneration varied by worker, as skilled polishers could operate multiple tongs simultaneously.

[112] Vleeschdrager, *Hardness 10*, 229.
[113] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 48, 206.

Illustration 3.5 shows the polishing hall of factory *De Overtoom*, operating in Amsterdam since 1888. On the right we see large windows which allowed an abundance of light to enter the hall. In the middle, mills powered by steam-power, later electricity, spun the polishers' discs. Historically, these mills were attached with large leather belts, creating additional hazards.[114] In these factories, polishers and setters suffered most from unhealthy working conditions.[115] Poor ventilation in the factories increased risks of developing tuberculosis, while small diamond particles, pushed into the air through the polishing process, worsened respiratory conditions if inhaled. Polishing also required good eyesight, which could be ruined when directly impacted by tiny diamond projectiles.[116] It was not uncommon that polishers had to retire early due to worsening eyesight. Setters additionally suffered from lead poisoning from the continuous heating up and cooling down of lead cups and, due to a lack of breaks, eating lunch with unwashed hands.[117]

Next to the polishers were the setters, positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy. Although these workers were, on average, rather skilled, they themselves did not modify the diamonds directly. Instead, they assisted polishers, often three or four simultaneously, in the polishing process. Skilled setters could additionally help in planning the polishers' work, marking the required polishing techniques in the solder. To polish all 58 facets of a brilliant-cut diamond, a setter needs to 'set' the diamond at least 18 times. The heat and fumes involved in setting made it dangerous and unhealthy work. After a diamond was retrieved from the oven, it was placed in a pool of water to cool down. To assist multiple polishers at the same time, who each worked on multiple diamonds per day, setters' work was often done in a hurry. Skilful setters could therefore earn relatively high wages depending on the number of polishers they assisted. They were, however, clearly below the polishers in the hierarchy. Setters were frequently the bud of polishers' jokes. For instance, according to Sluyser some polishers called setters their "fart catchers,"[118] since they were seated back-to-back, as illustrated on the left of Illustration 3.5.

Technical innovations in the twentieth century hit setters the hardest. The 'mechanical cup' (*mechanische dop*), invented in 1904, was able to tighten and loosen diamonds in cups more easily and without using solder. Polishers could operate these mechanical cups autonomously, saving on time, labour costs, and solder. Despite these benefits, the mechanical cup was not introduced widely in the Netherlands, where the historical usage of setters continued. In Germany and France, where polishers had historically done their own setting, and in Antwerp, where relatively small diamonds were produced, the mechanical cup was introduced earlier and implemented more widely.[119]

[114] In 1853, a 15-year-old girl got stuck in the machinery and soon after died from the injuries. Algemeen Handelsblad 07-11-1853.
[115] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 251–52.
[116] Coronel, "De diamantwerkers te Amsterdam," 1864, 638.
[117] Ibid., 640-41.
[118] Sluyser, *Mr. Monday and Other Tales of Jewish Amsterdam*, 28.
[119] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 51.

ILLUSTRATION 3.5 Diamond polishing factory 'De Overtoom,' 1917.
Source: Spaarnestad, Het Leven, SFA022809151.

3.3.5 *Cleaved stone workers*

The union counted one more group that is often overlooked in the literature. So-called cleaved stone workers (*kapbewerkers*) specialised in pieces of diamonds that were removed during the cleaving process. Although Heertje's dissertation is rather detailed regarding the industry and its various specialisations, he only makes one brief mention of this group.[120] Similarly, the exhaustive publication on the diamond manufacturing process by Vleeschdrager makes little mention of this group.[121] In practice, only few workers specialised in this category; less than one percent of apprentices became cleaved stone workers and no more were added after 1911.

3.3.6 *Diamond cuts*

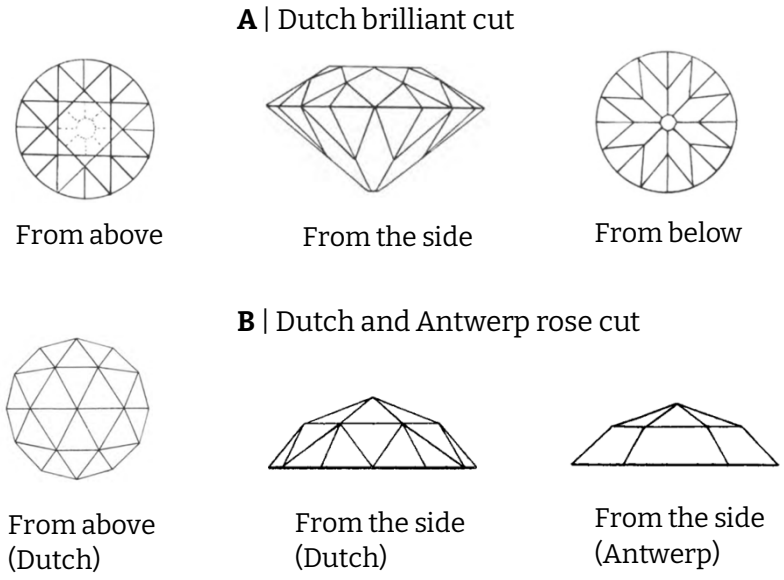
While sawyers and cleavers worked with rough diamonds, the rest of the workers were specialised in specific cuts. In Amsterdam, two main cuts were produced: brilliant and rose cuts. Brilliants, shown in panel A of Illustration 3.6, were larger diamonds cut to have a pointy bottom, maximising the amount of light that could enter and return through the diamond, allowing the diamond to sparkle more. Brilliants consisted of two pyramid-like shapes that meet at the middle (*rondist*) and counted 58 facets; 32 in the top half (known as *crown* or *tableside*), 24 in the bottom half (*kollet*-side), one for the top of the brilliant (*table*) and one for the bottom (*kollet*). The majority of the Amsterdam diamond industry specialised in brilliant cuts.

The rose cut was the older cut of the two, being developed in 15th century India; brilliants were developed in 17th century Italy.[122] Cleaving a rough diamond often

[120] Ibid., 47.
[121] Vleeschdrager, *Hardness 10*.
[122] Ogden, *Diamonds*, 164, 170.

created a flat surface, which was used for the bottom of roses. Roses were generally produced from diamonds deemed too flat or small to create a brilliant, which were made from larger and higher-quality diamonds.[123] Due to their flat bottom, Dutch roses only counted 28 facets, making it easier to produce than the larger and more complicated brilliants. Cutters, polishers, and setters were split in brilliant and rose-specialists; the former were, on average, more skilled and received higher wages. Among cutters, women came to dominate the rose-branch earlier than the brilliant-branch.

ILLUSTRATION 3.6 Diamond cuts by angle and view with Antwerp rose-cut as comparison. *Source*: Leviticus, *Geïllustreerde encyclopaedie der diamantnijverheid* (1908): 85, 174, 328.



Brilliant cuts were the same in Antwerp and Amsterdam, but rose cuts differed between the two cities. Antwerp roses were less complicated than the Dutch roses, containing only 12 facets.[124] The difference between the cities' cuts is characteristic for the differences in quality between the two places. Amsterdam diamonds were produced from larger and higher-quality diamonds and required more skill to produce, while Antwerp specialised in smaller diamonds for a larger market.

A third category should be mentioned when describing the Amsterdam diamond industry's composition. Since the 1870s, a large number of Gentiles entered the industry by specialising in *chips*, small residual 'splinters' that were cleaved from rough diamonds.[125] Chips had irregular sizes and shapes, making them hard to work with, while also being less profitable due to their small sizes. In the past, chips were not considered worthy of production, instead being turned into *boort*. From the Cape Time onwards, chips were primarily produced by Gentiles employed by chips' jewellers in separate factories and produced into either brilliants or roses. These predominantly Gentile workers were paid by their production, whereas the rest, mostly Jewish, workers more

[123] Vleeschdrager, *Hardness 10*, 145.
[124] Ibid., 342; Ogden, *Diamonds*, 160.
[125] Leviticus, *Geillustreerde encyclopaedie der diamantnijverheid*, 101.

commonly received fixed hourly wages. Chips workers received lower wages on average, but generally enjoyed more stable employment resulting from working on smaller diamonds, which were less affected by global economic instability. When the industry-wide strike that led to the union in 1894 began, it started in a Gentile chips factory under the lead of Jan van Zutphen, a specialist in chips.[126]

3.3.7 *Hierarchy in the industry*

Based on this overview, a clear hierarchy can be constructed supported with temporally spread wage estimations. This hierarchy, divided by the share of Jewish and female apprentices, are presented in Table 3.2. Cleavers, who made up the most elite members of the diamond industry, was the specialisation with the highest percentage of Jewish workers. The smallest group of workers outside of the cleaved stone workers, the predominantly Jewish cleavers had been able to bar most Gentiles from their profession. Remarkable is the over-representation of female apprentices in this group. While stereotypically cutting had become known as a woman's job—which, looking at the shares of women among cutters, was largely true—cleaving was another specialisation where women had some opportunities. In line with the share of Jews, 90 percent of female cleavers were Jewish, compared with 88 percent of male cleavers. Outside of the top three positions in the hierarchy, which took place in small-scale *ateliers* above jewellers' offices or in separate rooms of the modern factories, virtually no women worked in other sections. Whether women should be barred from factories or discouraged from working in the industry altogether—for moral or hygienic reasons—was a continuous discussion in the first decades of the union's existence.[127]

TABLE 3.2 The position in the hierarchy, share of Jews, and share of women per specialisation among apprentices, 1904-1940.

Rank	Specialisation	Pct. Jews	Pct. women	Apprentices
1	Cleavers	88.2	30.4	102
2	Brilliant cutters	70.8	83.3	750
3	Rose cutters	75.4	97.4	532
4	Sawyers	70.5	3.2	339
5	Brilliant polishers	66.6	1.0	3346
6	Rose polisher	78.4	5.8	616
7	Cleaved stone workers	50.0	0.0	56
8	Brilliant setters	30.8	4.9	610
9	Rose setters	48.2	5.9	255
Total		65.2	19.0	6606

Source: author's calculations using "ANDB Apprentice Cards," release 2019.
Note: numbers are limited to apprentices where a valid specialisation, religion, and gender could be deduced. 833 apprenticeship cards did not report the section of the apprentice; for 231 religion could not be deduced; 27 had insufficient information to distinguish gender.

[126] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 73.
[127] See, for instance, *Weekblad* 28-12-1917, "Vrouwenarbeid na de oorlog," regarding the future of women's work after the war.

Jews made up two-thirds of the apprentices but less than half of all setters and less than a third of brilliant setters. While it is possible that this was the result of a growing need for setters in the Gentile diamond factories, specialised in *chips*, it may also reflect a growing cooperation between Jewish polishers and Gentile setters. One suggestion for the latter is a letter from Maurits del Valle (1872-1942), a long-term Jewish member of the union, published in the *Weekblad* in 1932. Maurits remarked on the growing share of Gentile workers in Jewish factories in the previous 20 years, and a noticeable lack of the reverse.[128] Nonetheless, a clear division remained, where Jews and women occupied the highest positions in the industry, predominantly working outside of the factories, while Gentile men worked in the lowest positions more frequently.

3.4 ANDB and her members: 1894-1919

On November 11, 1894, the industry-wide strike started by Gentile polishers and coopted by Jewish workers had successfully come to an end. Using their combined numbers, the diamonds workers continued their joint efforts and started the *Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkersbond* (ANDB; 'General Dutch Diamond Workers' Union') on the 18th of November 1894. Immediately, the union counted over 6000 members, a number that grew up to 10,000 by the end of the century. The board of the union consisted of three of the strike leaders: the Jewish Henri Polak as president, the Gentile Jan van Zutphen as vice-president, and the Gentile Herman Kuijper as secretary. The board members were instated full-time in 1895, receiving a weekly wage of 24 guilders and making the ANDB the first modern union in the Netherlands.[129] Although Jewish and Gentile workers stood side-by-side during the strike and were both represented in the new union's board, one of the first problems the union had to overcome was the lack of solidarity between the two groups.[130] Jews earned more, even after years of falling wages, and had maintained the highest positions in the industry, leading to envy from Gentile workers.[131] One form in which this was presented to the world were antisemitic slurs towards the Jewish members, including even the president Polak.[132] Less than a year after the strike, Henri Polak and the other board members resigned from their positions, quickly followed by a plea from the members for them to be reinstated.[133] Polak faced much less antisemitism and more cooperation after this act, although ethno-religious tensions never completely disappeared from the union.[134]

In 1895, in response to growing demands by diamond workers, a collective of jewellers and factory owners establish the *Algemeene Juweliersvereniging* (AJV; 'General Jewellers' Association'), an organisation to represent the employers in their negotiations with the workers.[135] In the decades to follow, the ANDB and AJV would continuously clash about working conditions and limits to entry for new workers. The AJV lobbied for lower minimum wages and more apprentices, which would lower the production costs for the employers, while the ANDB mainly aimed for higher wages, shorter workdays, and fewer

[128] Maurits del Valle, *Weekblad* 23-12-1932, "Joodsche en Christen werklieden."
[129] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 80.
[130] Schrevel, "Een stem in het kapittel," 40.
[131] Hofmeester, "The Amsterdam Diamond 'Marketplace' and the Jewish Experience," 64–65.
[132] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 76.
[133] Schrevel, "Een stem in het kapittel," 41.
[134] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 101–2.
[135] Ibid., 76.

apprentices. Their first major showdown occurred in 1897, when the ANDB demanded a complete stop from accepting new apprentices. This was a remarkable step, since fathers and uncles had trained their sons and other family members as diamond workers for centuries, and was met with complaints from union's own members.[136] However, the *Leerlingbesluit* ('Apprentices' Decision') had to avoid an overcrowding of the industry, which now counted in excess of 10,000 workers. Apprentices under the age of 14, 700 out of 1600 total apprentices, were directly sent away, while older apprentices had to pass health examinations, primarily focused on their eyes, and obtain diplomas more formally.[137] Until 1904, no new apprentices were accepted, although some 'clandestine' apprentices did sneak into the industry. The union retaliated harshly against members accepting such unauthorised apprentices. The weekly paper called out each rule-breaker by name and address and harassed clandestine apprentices, workers, and their families at home and on the streets. Benima tells the story of one of her interviewees' sister—an educated woman working at Leo Hirsch's office, a co-founder of Jewish-owned fashion house *Maison Hirsch & Cie*—who secretly trained to become a brilliant cutter without becoming a member of the union.[138] When the union found out, her father was told to evict her from his house, since ANDB members were not allowed to co-reside with clandestine workers. Her father, Maurits, refused and was subsequently kicked out of the union. To continue earning a living, Maurits started producing diamonds in his attic, arousing further ire among union leadership. Soon after, union enforcers patrolled around his house—as happened to other rule-breakers and clandestine workers—and used violence in case of retaliation. Harassment by the organisation forced defiant workers like Maurits and others to decide between joining the union or finding other forms of gainful employment.

3.4.1 *The* Beschavingsoffensief *of the ANDB*

The ANDB not only used their immense power on the industry to keep their members in line, but also to increase diamond workers' material conditions. Additionally, the union and its leaders made it a primary aim to 'uplift' and 'civilise' the workers.[139] This was recorded in its statutes from the start and was envisioned through various avenues.[140] Physically, it was seen in the construction of their headquarters, nicknamed *De Burcht* ('The Fortress'). The union additionally offered courses, organised seminars, established clubs for sports and arts, opened a library when public libraries had not yet become commonplace—or had even started in the Netherlands—and provided a weekly newspaper which informed members about the conditions of the diamond industry and trade around the world, but also propagandised better ways of living and offered (translated) fiction. The impact of this *beschavingsoffensief* ('civilising offense') has often been noted by contemporaries and historians. [141] For instance, on the 25-year

[136] Henri Polak advised against such complaints: "those among us who, given the circumstances, still protest against the *leerlingbesluit*, are nothing than the worst enemies of themselves, their colleagues, and the apprentices." *Weekblad* ANDB 23-09-1898, "Dreigende gevaren."
[137] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 89–90.
[138] Tamarah Benima, *Kippesoep was ondenkbaar zonder saffraan. Joods leven in Nederland vóór 1940* (The Hague, 1983), 12–14.
[139] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 110.
[140] Ibid., 72.
[141] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 151.

anniversary of the ANDB in 1919, the Amsterdam city government praised Henri Polak directly for his prolific efforts to improve the material, mental, and intellectual wellbeing of Amsterdam's working classes:

> "If someone says Henri Polak in the Netherlands, then that means: organisation. It also means development, capabilities, and science. It has never been your goal to strive [only] for higher wages and shorter workdays, it was a means to an end: to reach 'civilisation.'"[142]

Some have remarked that the uplifting influence the union had on its workers had a greater impact on Jewish than Gentile workers.[143] How this affected the integration of Jewish workers and the differences in social mobility patterns between the groups will be one of the main topics in the chapters to come. Here, I will provide a detailed account of the opportunities available to the workers.

De Burcht

After the union was founded, board meetings were organised in small rooms above local cafes (panels A and B of Illustration 3.7). After some successful years, however, the union decided to invest in their own headquarters. In 1898, the union purchased a plot of land for 26,000 guilders in the Plantagebuurt, a neighbourhood of Amsterdam that had historically been used for community gardens but had opened up for (upscale) residential housing in the 1860s. The union hired famous architect Hendrik Berlage (1856-1934) to design and build their headquarters. After two years of construction, building concluded in July 1900 and *De Burcht* (panel D) opened its doors for union members. The building is impressive in its own right, but especially so considering no union in the Netherlands had owned their own office space before. The fortress-like facade and imposing stairs acted as symbols for the elevation and the power of the workers;[144] many diamond workers have, in their memories, remarked about the stature of the building and these characteristics.[145] The interior of the building was no less remarkable.[146] Stately wall paintings by leading artist Richard Roland Holst depicting the ideal combination of work, sleep, and learning; poetic writings by leading Socialist thinker Henriette Roland Holst; stained glass windows; and, since 1919, an imposing chandelier purchased and gifted by the members of the union.[147] The large expenses for the building, which opened at the time of an economic crisis in the industry, led to complaints about the financial decision-making early on.[148] Yet, today it remains a testament to the lasting influence the union had on its workers, their families, and Amsterdam as a whole. In the words of Sluyser, who grew up in the diamond workers' milieu as the son of a Jewish diamond worker:

[142] Ibid., 172.
[143] De Jong Edz., *Van ruw tot geslepen*, 733; Kleerekoper, "Het joodse proletariaat," 220; Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1993, 645.
[144] De Jong Edz., *Van ruw tot geslepen*, 743.
[145] Meyer Sluyser, *Als de dag van gisteren…* (Utrecht, 1958), 147–48; Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam*, 153, 154.
[146] Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1993, 326, 494.
[147] Schrevel, "Een stem in het kapittel," 46. The lamp is depicted on the cover of Hofmeester, *Een schitterende erfenis*.
[148] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 98; Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam*, 150–51.

"The city was proud of Berlage's creation. But for the members of the union, *De Burcht* was a Temple."[149]

ILLUSTRATION 3.7 Clippings from Henri Polak's picture book
Source: ARCH00210, #8011.

A | ANDB office
Nov. 1894 – April 1895

B | ANDB office
April 1895 – August 1900

C | Union meeting in
Paleis voor Volksvlijt
('Palace for Industry')

D | ANDB headquarters
August 1900 onwards

The library

Besides its emancipatory outward beauty, another considerable benefit for the workers was housed inside *De Burcht.* Since November 1895, a development club *Kennis is Macht* ('Knowledge is Power') formed among union members with the goal to initiate a library for diamond workers. This was highly unusual since, at this time, public libraries did not yet exist in the Netherlands. Small-scale initiatives were started by union factions, most notably the brilliant polishers, and these libraries merged and became open to all members in the main library in the *De Burcht* in 1902. Beyond the ever-growing quantity of books, a particular emphasis was placed on the quality of the books: the library's catalogue was co-established by a long list of professors, doctorates, and authors and Socialist works and non-fiction were especially promoted.[150] Particular favourites were plays by Herman Heijermans and Victor Hugo, consistently ranking as the most-read

[149] Sluyser, *Als de dag van gisteren…*, 146.
[150] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 152.

authors.[151] The non-fiction included many topics, including virtually all works published globally on diamond production.[152] The library showcased extensive activity from its inception. In 1900, it counted seven committee members, lent out 8000 books, and was home to the *Snijdsters-Ontwikkelingsclub* ('Female Cutters' Development Club'), which motivated female diamond workers to join the union.[153] The number of readers and books read increased steadily over the year. In 1906, over 16,000 books were lent; a year later nearly 22,000; and in 1908 close to 40,000. This steep increase was the result of a crisis and unemployment, suggesting that periods of downtime encouraged workers to apply oneself to literature to pass the time. Thus, thousands of workers, among which many women—who were always equally or over-represented among the readers[154]—made great use of the library over the years. The impressive numbers presented by the union, however, undercount actual readership, since children and other family members frequently read the works borrowed by their diamond worker relative.[155]

Besides the availability of the books, the power of ANDB's library was spread by the persons who worked in it. The administrators "did their work out of love for the *belles-lettres* and sciences" and "knew the catalogue by heart," praised Sluyser.[156] The introduction to the catalogue was written by Michel van Campen—a diamond worker turned librarian, editor of ANDB weekly *Het Jonge Leven* ('Young Life'), and literary critic. In the catalogue, Van Campen added hundreds of notes describing certain authors and their works.[157] Like Polak, he contributed immensely to the 'civilisation' of the diamond workers and the working classes at large.[158] Thanks to the efforts of people like Henri Polak and Michel van Campen, "those people awakened… and started reading."[159] They not only made use of the ANDB's library, were also inspired to start their own, as was true for Jacques Presser's and Meyer Sluyser's fathers. For some, this was an immense change from the past. Joop Voet tells of his father, future ANDB administrator and president Herman Isidore Voet, that there had been a "hiatus" in his life after finishing primary school and commencing work in a diamond factory.[160] "He did not read, he did not write, until he came in touch with the ANDB… The ANDB pushed people to continue developing themselves."[161] The immense impact of the library as a cultural and intellectual institution was not lost on Henri Polak; the first suggestion he made as president of the newly-established federation of trade unions in 1905 was to start a library.[162]

[151] *Verslag van de verrichtingen der Commissie voor het Maatschappelijk Werk over het jaar 1915,* 88-93.
[152] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 152.
[153] Schrevel, "Een stem in het kapittel," 47.
[154] Based on statistics published in annual reports of the ANDB between 1901 and 1923. For instance, in 1907 women made up 25 percent of the 679 subscribed readers, and in 1914 they were 20 percent of the 1423 readers of the main library. In contrast, women made up roughly 19 percent of all ANDB members.
[155] Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam*, 155–56.
[156] Sluyser, *Als de dag van gisteren…*, 139–41.
[157] Ibid., 141.
[158] He was also credited with discovering author Maurits Dekker. In Dekker's biography, David de Jong (1898-1963), himself the son of a Jewish diamond worker, wrote about Michel's societal contributions. David De Jong, *Maurits Dekker. Zijn persoon en zijn werk* (Leiden, 1946), 32–33; See also De Jong Edz., *Van ruw tot geslepen*, 736.
[159] Philo Bregstein, *Gesprekken met Jacques Presser* (Amsterdam, 1972), 12.
[160] Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam*, 152–53.
[161] Idem.
[162] De Jong Edz., *Van ruw tot geslepen*, 735.

Weekblad van den ANDB

The ANDB further spread the love for the written word through their periodical. From the start, the ANDB shared information regarding the different types of ANDB board meetings and news from global diamond trade and production centres with their members through the *Weekblad van den ANDB* ('ANDB Weekly'). In 1895, the weekly already had a circulation of 7000.[163] The header of the newsletter was designed by Berlage by special request from Henri Polak.[164] Henri Polak combined his presidency with the role of editor uninterrupted from 1895 until 1940. In the weeklies, Polak used his oratory prowess to connect with the members in a language everyone could understand.[165] By allowing them to also publish their life events—birth, marriages, and bereavement—the *Weekblad* read like a family paper.[166] Also important were the letters by members published by the weekly commonly with a response from Polak or another board member.[167] Early on, Polak included translated English fiction and published these as feuilletons in part.[168] Later, these were replaced by more practical and non-fiction articles to the benefit of the workers, such as "the hygiene of the eye" by a medical professional to deal with the common eye problems among diamond workers.[169] Polak also asked others to contribute with notable examples including Henriëtte van der Meij, who frequently wrote about the plight of women and their role in industrial labour and society,[170] and David Vieijra, a diamond worker with an affinity for archival work who expounded on the industry's history.

However, Polak also used the newsletter to put the workers in their place when he felt it was needed. Those fined or expelled for breaking union rules were publicly announced in the weeklies. When members showed little interest in the activities or events of the union, the editor could be ruthless in his denouncing words, describing them as "unworthy and ridiculous *parvenus*."[171] He was also clear in his attempts to civilise the workers through his articles, educating them grammar, the dangers of alcoholism, the best types of furniture, and most frequently the need for Social Democracy.[172] In later years he also became more vocal about the value of education, the arts and sciences; especially in *Het Jonge Leven* ('Young Life'), a second weekly introduced in 1910 aimed at more adolescent diamond workers who had not witnessed the union's successes so personally.[173] This publication was also read more outside of the diamond workers' circle.[174]

The library, weeklies, and all other educational activities—of which there were too many to list—led to the moral and intellectual uplifting of the workers. They transformed the diamond workers, who had been known as "the rotting cabbage at the

[163] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 72.
[164] Idem.
[165] Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam*, 150–51.
[166] Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1993, 109.
[167] Ibid., 110.
[168] Idem.
[169] Ibid., 110-11.
[170] For instance Henriëtte van der Meij's series on female labour in Germany published between 31-01-1908 and 05-06-1908 and labour force participation of married women published on 07-10-1910 and 14-10-1910.
[171] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 156.
[172] Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1993, 111, 114, 507.
[173] Ibid., 317, 499–502; Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 111.
[174] Kleerekoper, "Het joodse proletariaat," 219.

greengrocer," to a union of workers worthy of envy and respect which, according to Henri Polak, "was thanks only due to the civilising, uplifting power of the organisation."[175] Even in the worst of times, the union always ensured that cultural and intellectual development activities were the last categories to face budget cuts.[176] Personal stories attest that diamond worker's children reaped the benefits of this.[177] Salomon Mok, a clear example of this intergenerational progress—a lawyer and alderman born in a Jewish diamond worker's family—speaks for all his peers who, like him, was able to gain an education thanks to the union's efforts to keep wages liveable and motivated a generation of workers to invest in themselves and their offspring.[178]

While the above discussion evidences the emancipatory impact of the union on the workers and their families, so far little is known regarding the impact on their children's life outcomes.[179] This will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 8, whereas changes in the lives of the diamond workers themselves are examined in Chapters 5 through 7. Below we will continue with our discussion of changing conditions in the diamond industry.

3.4.2 *Fluctuating employment until World War I*

In his dissertation, Heertje refers to the years 1894 up to 1904 as the 'romantic period.'[180] In these early years, the union booked many successes: unionising the workers, setting minimum wages, providing them with unemployment benefits, opening their headquarters, and avoid destabilisation of the industry by banning additional apprentices. Although crises did not disappear, such as the one caused by the Third Boer War (1899-1902), generally these years are considered among the best for the diamond workers. In fact, after the war in South Africa ended and employment in Amsterdam was at full capacity in 1903, the AJV demanded to introduce new apprentices to the industry. The ANDB board and members are opposed to this; employment is steady and wages are increasing. In Antwerp, where the same discussion is taking place between employees and employers, the latter hold the opinion that they alone can decide the number of apprentices. When Belgian employers place a number of apprentices in their factories, the Belgian workers strike, quickly followed by the solidary members in Amsterdam .[181] In Belgium, the smaller ADB with lower contribution payments has less bargaining power than the Amsterdam ANDB. Consequently, the ANDB has to financially support the strike in Belgium too. In Amsterdam, solidarity and financial support is asked from workers in other industries, which allows the strike to continue for a considerable length. The strike in Antwerp ended in June of 1904, with workers accepting conditions to introduce 300 apprentices in trade for a 9.5-hour workday immediately and a nine-hour working day starting in 1905. In Amsterdam, the compromise is similar: 500 apprentices for 9.5-hour workday, higher wages, and an unbiased committee to select and place the apprentices. This makes the diamond workers in Amsterdam and Antwerp

[175] Henri Polak, *Weekblad* 23-11-1900, "Uit den goeden ouden tijd."
[176] De Jong Edz., *Van ruw tot geslepen*, 739.
[177] For more personal stories regarding the impact of the diamond industry and the union, see Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam*, 48–58, 149–63.
[178] Salomon Mok, *Weekblad* 16-11-1934, "Een woord van dank."
[179] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 225–26; De Jong Edz., *Van ruw tot geslepen*, 742.
[180] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 79.
[181] Ibid., 105; Martine Vermandere and Karin Hofmeester, "Internationale solidariteit uit zelfbehoud. Antwerpen onttroont Amsterdam," in *Een schitterende erfenis. 125 jaar nalatenschap van de Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond*, ed. Karin Hofmeester (Zutphen, 2020), 84–86.

the first workers in Europe to attain an official nine-hour workday. Their working conditions, including the high wages, unemployment benefits, and their library, make the Amsterdam diamond workers among the most envied in Europe.

Although their working conditions were improving, recurrent instability, caused by economic crises and political conflicts around the world, increased scepticism about the future of lapidary employment in Amsterdam. In the 1910 annual review of the union, the board writes:

> "During all of 1910 employment was frequent; unemployment was of little meaning, and some branches were exceptionally lively. [...]. Yet nobody felt especially cheerful in these 12 months. People almost continuously had the indefinable feeling that something threatening was lurking."[182]

The Knickerbocker Crisis in the United States (1907-1908), Xinhai Revolution in China (1911), Russo-Persian War (1911), Italo-Turkish War (1911-1912), and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) all contributed to this continuous feeling of a lurking threat. Nonetheless, significant victories were attained amidst these global crises. In 1910, the union announced the introduction of the first unpaid vacation week. They also achieved the first eight-hour working day in Europe in 1911, a feat that is abundantly celebrated in factories across the city.[183] Well-attended concerts in Artis, the *Paleis voor Volksvlijt* and the *Concertgebouw* mark the peaks of the celebrations. This period, therefore, was characterised by both ups and downs; a strengthening of the workers' labour conditions with worsening future prospects.

The First World War destabilised the global diamond trade. This led to a complete standstill in the Amsterdam diamond industry. Thanks to state assistance, diamond workers received unemployment benefits without immediately burning through their union treasury.[184] While the Netherlands was able to remain neutral, Belgium was invaded in 1914. As Belgian workers were mobilised to protect their country, the Amsterdam diamond industry was able to continue production in 1915. Demand was created in the United States through war profits.[185] Many Belgian refugees sought refuge in the Netherlands. Flemish Belgians fled to Amsterdam, while 'foreign Belgians'—predominantly Austrian, German, and Russian Jews—settled in Scheveningen.[186] There, Belgian employers paid workers wages under subsistence level.

After the war ended, the Antwerp diamond centre extended great effort to get their dispersed workers and traders back. During this recovery period, the Amsterdam diamond centre thrived. In 1919, one year after the war ended, the diamond centre in Amsterdam celebrated stable employment and the 25-year anniversary of the ANDB. While the industry in Antwerp was still recovering from the war, the Amsterdam industry was able to run at capacity.[187] The year is therefore characterised by festivities by the then nearly 11,000 grateful members of the union during a two-week celebration. To celebrate the ANDB's anniversary, members re-enacted the 1894 strike, and

[182] *Jaarverslag 1910*, 1.
[183] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 142.
[184] Ibid., 161.
[185] Ibid., 162.
[186] Vermandere and Hofmeester, "Internationale solidariteit uit zelfbehoud," 92.
[187] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 170.

presented the board with a lamp, created by the award-winning designer Jan Eisenloeffel,[188] for the headquarters.[189] In the decades to come, the industry would not see another year as good as this one.

3.5 A Rapid Decline: 1920-1940

The triumphant year of 1919, which marked the 25th anniversary of the ANDB and a golden year in terms of employment, was followed by a catastrophic 1920. The disastrous conditions started as a slowdown in the winter of 1919, but by 1920, "[the] setback grew into a formidable crisis at a frightening speed, one that would last longer and would be larger than any other the current-day workers have ever known."[190] In the first weeks of the year, an average of 2000 (out of 11,000) were unemployed per week. This number grew steadily, surpassing 6000 in April. Prices for rough diamonds were increasing, the result of the De Beers company's limiting of diamond extraction, simultaneous with a decline in demand for polished demands, dampening profit margins of employers at the cost of the workers.[191] This crisis, attenuated by various factors, marked the end of Amsterdam's 300-year reign as the premier diamond production centre, making place for Antwerp to overtake them. Why was Antwerp, which faced the same global economic fluctuations, able to achieve dominancy?

While Amsterdam and Antwerp both faced the same price policies of the De Beers company, the latter was able to recover much more easily. The growing power of the Antwerp centre as a result became the main reason for the downfall of the Amsterdam diamond industry. Initially, the resurgence of the diamond industry in Antwerp had been of little consequence to Amsterdam. Since the discovery of diamonds in South Africa, Antwerp's centre had grown gradually. In 1895, the ANDB assisted their Belgian colleagues in establishing the ADB, the Belgian equivalent of the ANDB, in hopes to standardise work conditions and remuneration across borders, thereby eliminating international wage competition. One of the main reasons for the demise of Amsterdam's diamond industry, as a result of the resurgence of Antwerp's diamond centre, was the relative strength in these two unions. In Amsterdam, the union was strong and booked many victories in improving the living and working conditions of their members. In Antwerp, the union was weaker and unable to prevent workers from working below minimum wages. Consequently, the ANDB was unable to compete with the low wages offered in Antwerp.

In Amsterdam, diamond workers were predominantly Jewish and native Dutch. In Antwerp and surrounding areas, workers consisted of three groups: Dutch and Flemish diamond workers with a history in the industry, Eastern European Jews that moved to Belgium since 1881, and Belgian farmers in the Antwerp countryside. While the first group generally joined the ADB, the other two groups hardly unionised or did so in their own organisations. The Jews and countryside workers worked long hours on average for low wages and were unable to be stopped by the union. With weaker control of the union

[188] Jan Eisenloeffel (1876-1957) was an Amsterdam-born goldsmith and designer. In 1900 his designs won a gold medal at the 1900 Paris Exposition.
[189] Displayed on the cover of Hofmeester, *Een schitterende erfenis*.
[190] *Jaarverslag 1918-1921*, 2.
[191] Esther Göbel and Daniël Metz, "Diamantjoden. Teloorgang van de industrie en de Bond," in *125 jaar nalatenschap van de Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond*, ed. Karin Hofmeester (Zutphen, 2020), 105.

on the apprenticeship system, Belgian diamonds were generally of worse quality. Antwerp had already specialised in the production of smaller diamonds.[192] They were enabled in avoiding wage policies by a wide electricity network, introduced in the early-1920s, which created opportunities for such a decentralised industry. Farmers with seasonal unemployment were able to redesign their barns into small diamond polishing workplaces. Furthermore, whereas Amsterdam traders and jewellers depended on diamonds from the De Beers Syndicate, the more capital-intensive Belgian traders—supported by Belgian banks—were also able to obtain diamonds at more affordable prices by buying in larger quantities and were additionally aided through buying directly from diamond mines in Congo.[193]

On top of this, living conditions were generally more expensive in Amsterdam. The devaluation of the Belgian franc and lower tax rate made the average living costs in Antwerp much lower than in Amsterdam. As a result, production in Antwerp could always be performed more profitably—and workers accepted lower wages—even if minimum wages were lower in Antwerp than in Amsterdam. Thus, when the AJV enforced lower wages in 1920, so did the ADB, creating the same employment situation with worse pay for all workers. Only the quality and historical significance of Amsterdam, which still was the main producer of larger and higher-quality diamonds, allowed it to continue production in the 1920s. However, demand for diamonds increasingly shifted, or was limited, to smaller and cheaper diamonds, especially after the *Great Depression*, which lowered trust in minerals and jewels as an investment or saving device.

The crisis in the 1920s led to a stark reduction in the number of workers and members in the Amsterdam diamond industry and union. The union counted over 10,000 members in 1919, which dropped below 6000 by 1924. As Figure 3.2 illustrates, members from all sections of the union left at more or less the same speed, although cutters appeared to leave at quicker rates than setters. Sawyers were somewhat of an exception in the overall trend. While they saw a steep decline between 1919 and 1922, the sawyers recovered earlier; by 1926, sawyers were more numerous than they had ever been. The shrinking share of cleavers suggests that sawyers increasingly replaced the work of cleavers.

One way Amsterdam diamond workers combatted the faltering employment opportunities in their own city was to migrate to Antwerp. While this migration had been common as a way to deal with temporary unemployment or as a means to move upward in the industry, it peaked in the 1920s despite increasing union bans on moves to Antwerp. Between 1919 and 1924, thousands of diamond workers migrated once or several times to Antwerp to deal with their unemployment.[194] As employment recovered in 1924 for the now much smaller group of workers in Amsterdam, migration to Antwerp fell. After 1930, migration to Antwerp was rarely used as a strategy. Figure 3.3 demonstrates that it was particularly cleavers and brilliant polishers that left for Antwerp. Employment opportunities for rose-cut workers had already been on the decline in Amsterdam before the 1920 crisis and would disappear almost entirely due to changes in the taste for diamonds.

[192] Eric Laureys, *Meesters van het Diamant* (Tielt, 2005), 70.
[193] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 179; Laureys, *Meesters van het Diamant*, 71.
[194] See the Figure in Chapter 6.4.

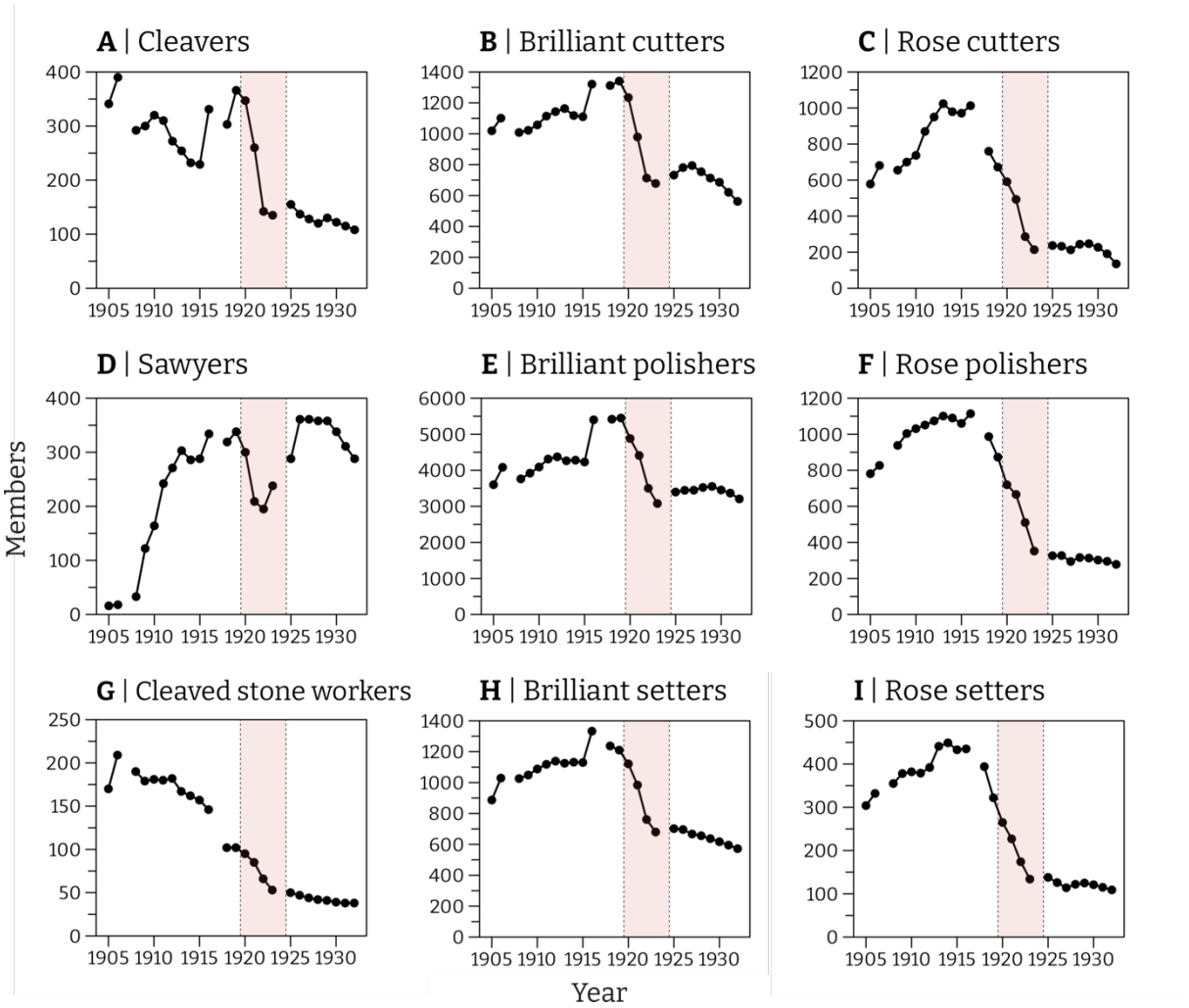


FIGURE 3.2 Members per specialisations at the start of each year, 1905-1932.
Source: annual reports ANDB and ANDB *Weekblad*.
Note: no counts available for 1907, 1917, and 1924.

However, moving to Antwerp was rarely a long-term solution. It entailed leaving behind one's family, friends, and overall support system. It also meant accepting worse working conditions for lower wages than one was used to. Moreover, Amsterdam diamond workers were rarely met with enthusiasm in Antwerp. While diamond workers, especially Jewish ones, were able to use their networks in Amsterdam, in Antwerp these networks had little impact. Jews in the Antwerp diamond industry were mostly of Eastern European descent and made up at most 30 percent of workers. They had their own organisations and mainly spoke Yiddish;[195] in Amsterdam, Jews had largely stopped speaking Yiddish since the mid-nineteenth century. As a result, the lacklustre employment opportunities combined with social isolation often meant that workers returned within a couple of months. Figure 3.4 shows the distribution of the number of months until return migration happened; over half of diamonds workers returned within half a year, although most frequently they returned within a month or two.

[195] Janiv Stamberger, "Dutch Jews and the Dutch Jewish Colony in Antwerp during the Heydays of Eastern European Jewish Immigration to Belgium, 1900-1940," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 47.2 (2021): 154.

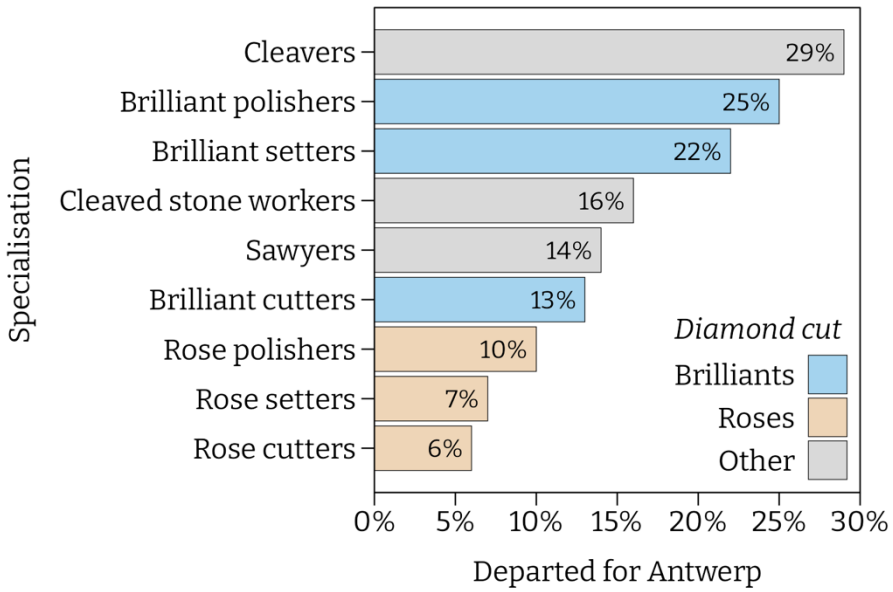


FIGURE 3.3 Share of workers departing for Antwerp per specialisation, 1898-1940.
Source: author's calculations using "ANDB Membership Cards," 2021 release.
Note: migration to Antwerp is measured during union memberships, not complete life courses, and should therefore be considered as lower-bound estimates of out-migration. For lifetime migration, see Figure 6.10.

In the 1930s, the diamond industry offered a decent existence only for a select few. By 1940, most diamond workers had left for greener pastures. In Chapter 4 we will discuss where their children ended up. In Chapter 6 we shall see how the diamond workers themselves moved on to new careers.

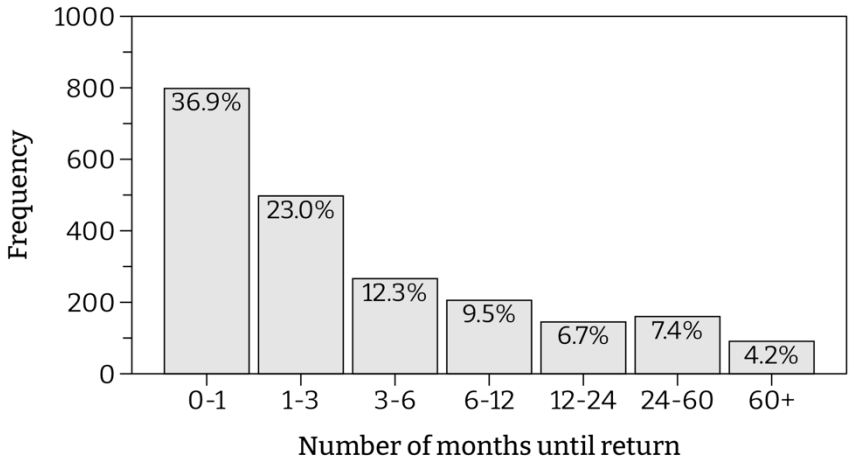


FIGURE 3.4 Months until return migration from Antwerp, 1898-1940
Source: author's calculations using "ANDB Membership Cards," release 2021.
Note: included are all ANDB members who migrated to Antwerp with a certificate granted by the union and a recorded return date; percentages inside the bars are relative frequencies based on 2163 return migrants.

3.6 What makes the diamond industry special?

This dissertation aims to study the social mobility and integration trajectories of Jewish diamond workers across different life domains, for both men and women, and examine how they navigated the conditions in the diamond industry and larger society to improve their chances of upward mobility. In this chapter overviewing the history of the diamond industry and the characteristics of its workers, we have found several aspects to the diamond industry that may have impacted their mobility trends in a way different from other industries or occupational groups. Before we turn to Part II of this dissertation, covering our in-depth analyses of mobility, let us take a moment here to summarise the unique characteristics of the diamond industry relevant for those analyses.

1. *The diamond industry was a historical Jewish economic niche.*

Although the diamond industry had been home to Jewish workers since the seventeenth century, and was dominated by Jewish traders since its arrival, the industry can be considered most Jewish between 1748, when the Amsterdam city council refused to allow a guild to operate in the industry, until 1870, when thousands of Gentile diamond workers joined the ranks of diamond workers. This century of near-complete domination allowed Jewish diamond workers to reinforce their positions at the top of the industry's hierarchy. Cleavers, the 'aristocrats' of the industry, was a rank of workers virtually closed to Gentiles. This group, earning the highest wages and with the strongest connections, were in the best position to achieve upward mobility in the future. The position of Gentile workers at the bottom rungs of the industry, over-represented among the setters and polishers, likely affected their mobility rates negatively. In the terminology of Charles Tilly,[196] this process of 'opportunity hoarding' was rather unique: in few cases was it the minority group of Jews, rather than the mainstream group of Gentiles, that was able to hoard opportunities within an industry. However, while the high concentration of Jews placed them in better positions for social mobility, it may also have hampered their integration into wider Dutch society, as it allowed them to remain isolated from the Gentiles population. After all, in the diamond factories both their employers and co-workers were nearly exclusively Jewish. This will be further discussed and tested in further chapters.

2. *The diamond industry was home to the strongest union in the country.*

Before the union was founded, the reputation of diamond workers was in shambles. Astronomically high wages during the *Cape Time* presented them with unfamiliar financial decisions. While some were able to save their earnings or invest it successfully, others lost all their money in poor housing investments, booze, and prostitutes.[197] The latter group, condescendingly referred to as *Capers*, became the stereotype for diamond workers, one that often would be referred to by board members of the union to reemphasise their own role in 'civilising' the workers:

> "What reputation we had then in all social circles, as well as labourers from other trades? *The diamond worker was an example of debauchery, wanton, vulgarity and frivolity.*

[196] Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality* (Berkeley, 1998), 153–54.
[197] Polak, *De strijd der diamantbewerkers*, 16–17.

> How our reputation has changed! … A diamond worker is no longer a beast in everyone's eyes; he has become a man, aware of his own self worth."[198]
>
> — Adolf Samson de Levita, 1899

> "The diamond workers used to be known as the *rotten cabbage* at the greengrocer. […]. Now nobody would think of speaking of the diamond workers in such a contemptuous manner… *thanks to the educative and uplifting power of the organisation*."[199]
>
> — Henri Polak, 1900

Even after the diamond industry collapsed and few workers remained in the industry, the board and members frequently referred to their past achievements. "We are proud that, despite all that we have lost, we still have our working hours" wrote David Kuijt in 1935.[200] To Selma Leydesdorff, historian of the Jewish working-class, the "educative and uplifting power" Henri Polak refers to was little more than a thin layer of paint: "[w]hat was once the proud culture of the diamond workers steadily degenerated into the lost glory of an increasingly rough group of hard-core unemployed."[201] But even Leydesdorff, who did not believe strongly in the lasting impact of the ANDB's civilising work, attests that "[a]t the most, there were differences in attitudes towards the education of the children and in the attempts to ensure that the children would get on in life."[202] While most of the prestige of the diamond industry and the union had dissipated in the 1920s, others, especially skilled workers in Amsterdam, continued to respect what the union had done for the labour movement as a whole. Political figures such as Henri Polak and Monne de Miranda, descendents from Jewish diamond worker families, continued to showcase the workers' achievements on a larger stage by being living examples.

Through its organisation, the ANDB aimed to uplift the workers and inspire their continued self-development. If nothing else, the messaging from the union and possibilities created by them increased the desire for further learning among workers and their offspring. On large murals in the board room of the union, periodically open to contemporary visitors, three persons are depicted, symbolising work, study, and sleep. Reductions in daily work hours allowed workers more time for self-improvement. The library that the union founded presented the workers and their children the unique opportunity to do so. "The library was not just there for lending out books," Meyer Sluyser, writer and son of a Jewish diamond worker, wrote, "but also to instruct in the fine arts and sciences."[203] When new union members first arrived at the library, the librarian would do his best to send him on a journey of self-discovery. Meyer, like many other sons and daughters of diamond workers,[204] read all the books that his father gathered. The ANDB's *Commissie voor Maatschappelijk Werk* ('Committee for Social Work') provided further opportunities, offering classes, study trips, and a plethora of clubs related to academics, art, and sports, which enabled workers to pursue their

[198] Adolf Samson de Levita, *Weekblad* 02-06-1899, "Onze toekomst."
[199] Henri Polak, *Weekblad* 23-11-1900, "Uit den goeden ouden tijd."
[200] David Kuijt, *Weekblad* 15-03-1935, "Ongelooflijk, maar waar gebleken."
[201] Leydesdorff, *We Lived with Dignity*, 61.
[202] Idem.
[203] Sluyser, *Mr. Monday and Other Tales of Jewish Amsterdam*, 58–59.
[204] Benima, *Kippesoep was ondenkbaar zonder saffraan*, 50–51.

interests. A significant share of workers, when faced with long bouts of unemployment, were able to turn these interests into careers.

The strong union also benefited women specifically. Women were able to join the industry, and through the efforts of pioneering women, the union also maintained equal wages for men and women in the twentieth century. As a result, working in the diamond industry became an especially attractive position for mainly Jewish women. The union administration provides uniquely informative overviews of women's careers, who otherwise are often left under-reported or ignored.

3. *Jewish diamond workers were often unemployed.*

Paradoxically—unemployment can hardly be described as a positive thing—the frequent periods of unemployment may have benefitted diamond workers, and their children, in the long run. During periods of unemployment, unemployment benefits provided diamond workers with time to spend. Many diamond workers turned to reading when unemployed, illustrated by rising activities at the union library during slumps. Additionally, their unstable employment regularly forced diamond workers to consider their own and their children's future. This was especially true for Jewish workers, who specialised in larger diamonds for higher wages but lower work stability. "For the former diamond workers, the crises and labour conditions in the diamond industry were a good bridge that brought them to other occupations" wrote Heertje about the effect of regular unemployment.[205] Increasingly, Henri Polak and the ANDB board advised young workers and parents to consider other employment opportunities alongside educating their children.[206] This shaped how the workers felt about the future. When Jules Schelvis, son of a Jewish diamond worker, informed his father he wanted to work in the printing industry in 1932, his father suggested that he continue his education first: skilled workers that had knowledge, good language skills, and a proper education beyond their job would have better future prospects.[207]

Summary

The diamond industry played a central role in the economic lives of Amsterdam Jews since the seventeenth century. Early on, it provided Jews with a trade when few others were open to them. During the *Cape Time* and subsequent years, thousands of Jews—and Gentiles—were able to move up the social ladder by forgoing their prior professions and entering the diamond industry. Many of their children thereafter followed them into the diamond industry in the 1880s and 1890s. For many women entering the industry, this career provided much better conditions than they could have obtained elsewhere; female breadwinners were not uncommon in the industry.

Since 1894, with the establishment of the union, working conditions improved significantly in the diamond industry, which affected several factors that could allow for increased future mobility.[208] Each of these factors may have pushed diamond workers to have greater career and intergenerational mobility. With more time and better resources

[205] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 225.
[206] Henri Polak, *Weekblad* 20-08-1920, "Het zoeken van werk in een ander bedrijf."
[207] Jules Schelvis, *Een jeugd in Amsterdam: herinneringen van een overlevende van Sobibor* (Amsterdam, 2011), 83.
[208] Hofmeester, "The Impact of the Diamond Industry," 63.

to invest in education, greater incentives to invest in self-improvement and educating themselves and their children, and more frequent occasions at which unemployment asked them the question of social mobility, Jewish diamond workers were likely more aware and pre-occupied with the future than Amsterdammers in other occupational groups. Stronger networks and positions within the industry, bound by both strong and weak ties commonly between co-ethnics,[209] provided more capital to be invested in these futures. Salomon Mok, son of a Jewish diamond worker, thanked the union in a personal letter in 1934 for providing his father, and other diamond workers like him, the possibility to send their children to university.[210] Political ties, particularly with the Socialist SDAP, created new opportunities for upward mobility as well as societal credibility. Thus, with the influence of the union, it is unsurprising that diamond workers were over-represented in several clubs and societies, including members of the Socialist political parties,[211] members of art club *Kunst aan het Volk* ('Art to the People'),[212] and chess players.[213] Compared to other Jewish workers, those with backgrounds in the diamond industry were in especially good positions to avoid downward mobility, obtain better societal positions, and offer their children a better future. The upcoming chapters will examine whether this indeed led to more social mobility and quicker integration.

[209] Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78.6 (1973): 1360–80.
[210] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 226–27.
[211] Van Horssen and Rietveld, "Socialisten in Amsterdam."
[212] Marc Adang, *Voor sociaal-democratie, smaakopvoeding en verheffing. De Amsterdamse vereniging Kunst aan het Volk, 1903-1928* (Amsterdam, 2008), 60.
[213] Eddy van Amerongen, *Nog slechts herinnering... Mijn vooroorlogs Joods Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 2002), 65–70.