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Evidence from southern Sweden, 1570-1860

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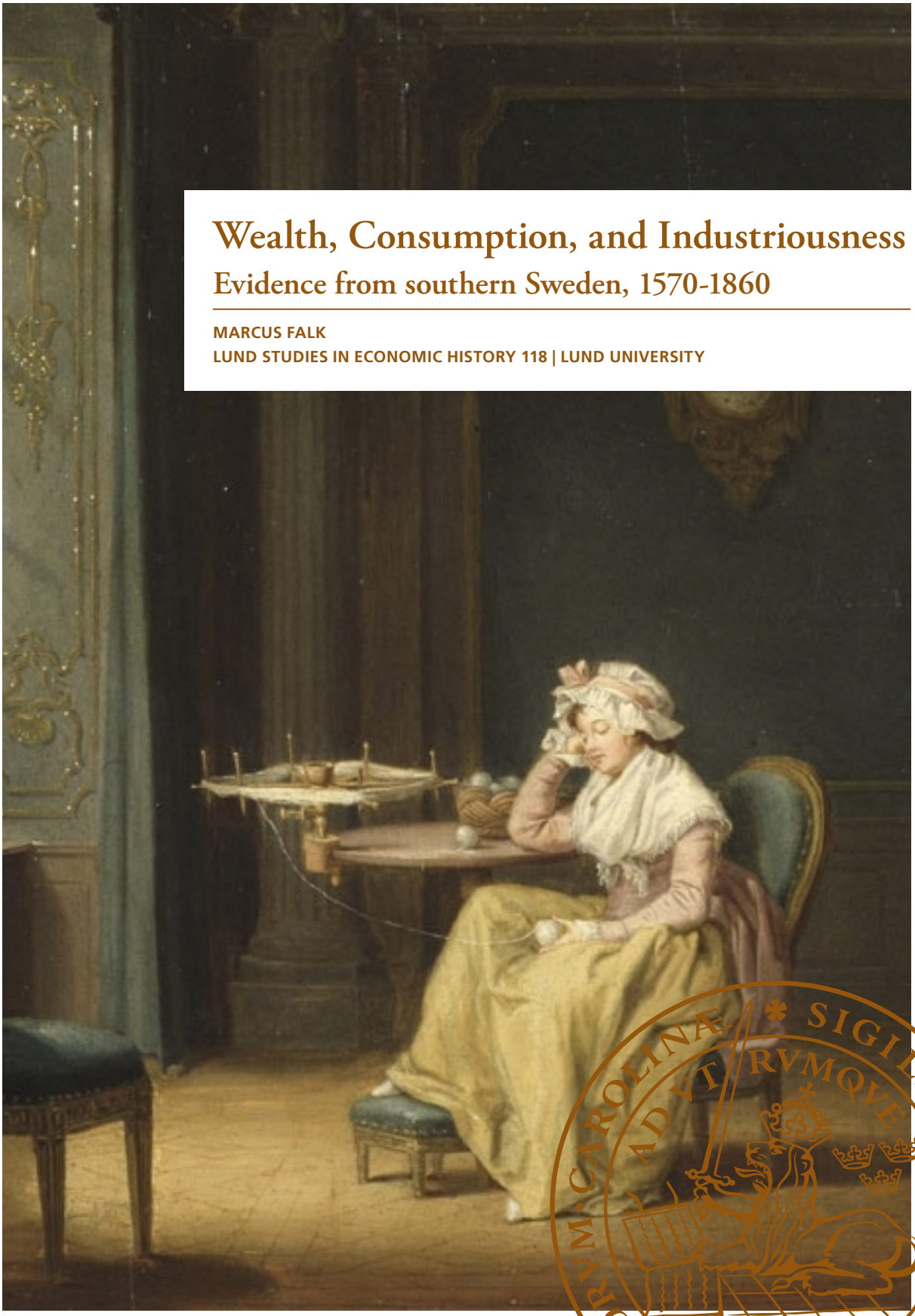

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Evidence from southern Sweden, 1570-1860

Marcus Falk

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Doctoral dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the School of Economics and Management at Lund University to be publicly defended on the 16th of May at 10.15 in EC3:211, Department of Economic History.

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Abstract:

This dissertation utilizes a new dataset on the belongings of early modern households, gathered from southern Sweden, to map the development of wealth and material living standards over the course of the early modern period. Together, the four papers making up the main part of the dissertation depicts a significantly more economically dynamic early modern period – especially eighteenth century – than have been often assumed. The south-Swedish household, no matter their socio-economic position, greatly improved their material standards over the early modern period; they diversified their stock of household objects and furniture, acquired larger and more varied wardrobes, and greatly expanded their range of cooking and eating options through more cook- and dinnerware. In the towns, the bulk of these improvements are visible for virtually everyone already from the mid-eighteenth century, while their penetration into the countryside proved slower; though clear and significant improvements are visible there as well from the mid-eighteenth century onward, a majority of the rural population would not enjoy most of these improvements before the nineteenth century.

While merchants, as well as most peasants, saw their political and economic position improve over the eighteenth century through the reforms of the Age of Liberty, the quickly growing and proletarianizing group of urban and rural labourers instead faced continuously higher cost of living. In the face of this economic uncertainty rural peasants and labourers alike increased their labour output. They did so mainly through a diversification of household production, mostly proto-industrial textile work, which allowed them to greatly increase the labour intensity of women and children. Apart from simply providing an extra source of income to counteract the increased costs of living, this diversification would also have connected these rural households to urban merchants, and through them wider trade networks through which they could acquire the manufactured goods which made up the backbone of material improvements of the period.

Though not a definite proof, the findings presented in the dissertation give tentative support of the presence of an industrious revolution in early modern Sweden. However, unlike as presented by de Vries in his original theory, this is not an industrious revolution driven by consumer demand for novel colonial goods, such as tea, coffee, and sugar. Instead, the industriousness of the Swedish households appears to have been driven by the interaction between the increased cost of living – necessitating an increased labour output to survive – and a decrease in the cost of the manufactured goods of the consumer revolution, which allowed for a large-scale shift in consumption strategies.

Key words: Economic History, History, Early Modern, Sweden, Europe, Industrious Revolution, Consumption History, Rural History, Urban History

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MADE IN SWEDEN

To Peder, for a lifetime of encouragement

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Acknowledgement

This dissertation is about how pre-industrial people created more physically comfortable lives for themselves; about the new goods they acquired, the consumer habits they adopted, and how even the poor proletarianized workers – despite constantly decreasing wages and increasing costs of living – managed to consume their way to a more comfortable physical surrounding. While of course there are a plethora of large-scale shifts in social and economic structures leading up to the industrial revolution that can be used to explain this, the very short answer is that they did not do it alone. Only by massive cooperative undertakings, both on a societal level and within the individual household, could these material improvements be achieved; by people working together, helping each other, and complementing each other.

It might be a bit cliché of me, but writing a dissertation has been similar in so far as I could never have done it by myself. While my name alone might grace the cover of this book, in no way could it have been made without the help and support from my supervisors, my colleagues, a full support structure of friends and family outside of academia, and all the other amazing historians in the field that I have had the pleasure and privilege to read and meet during these past five years. Nothing could have prepared me, starting the PhD, for just how many fantastic people from all across the world I would get the chance to meet along the way. Neither could it prepare me for how many opportunities for being part of, and contributing to, the greater academic community I would be given.

I want to extend an especially heartfelt thank you to my two supervisors, Erik Bengtsson and Mats Olsson for your invaluable help and guidance. This dissertation would not be even close to what it is without your assistance, support, and experience. I am sure that it is not exactly what you had in mind when you submitted the research proposal that became my PhD-position, but I appreciate the opportunity to take this project and make it my own. And that you supported me whole-heartedly every step of the way, no matter how ill-advised those steps might have been. I also want to thank Anders Larsson, for your invaluable work as research assistant helping me sample literally thousands of probate records over the course of the project. That this dissertation includes two accepted papers is a testament to the value of all your support and work, as I could never have achieved that only by myself.

These past almost five years have been some of the best of my life, and that is in no small part due to my amazing colleagues at the economic history department. Uprooting oneself and moving city is difficult in the best of times; doing so in the middle of a raging global pandemic, as was the case in the autumn of 2020 when I started the PhD, is certainly not doing so in the best of times. You all helped make the transition so much easier, made a poor new graduate student who had never set

their foot in Lund before feel welcome and like they belonged here, and have given me friends for life. I will not take up space here to name all of you individually, but I trust that you know who you are, and know that I am extremely grateful and very happy to have met all of you.

Finally, I want to take some space to extend an extra special, very heartfelt thank you to my main supervisor Erik. You, more than anyone else, have had to endure my ignorance and naivety these past few years, and you have patiently guided me through this entire process. I apologise for the, surely, no small source of frustration my complete lack of prior knowledge about anything regarding the field of economics must have proved to you. I started this PhD a cultural historian, my only real qualification for the project an ability to fluently read eighteenth-century German fraktur handwriting; with my head filled with post-modern frameworks and methods of analysis. While I do graduate as an economic historian, I must admit that I still remain a cultural historian at heart, but now also armed with the quantitative tools and methods of economic history.

That is, of course, not to say that I do not emerge from this PhD with a completely new understanding and appreciation for economic history, both as an academic field and for its importance in the wider society. Throughout all my years of studying history prior to the PhD, I laboured under the misconception that economic history was little more than regular history but with numbers: only concerned with financial markets, capital flows, and statistics about the industrial revolutions. While I, admittedly, am no closer at figuring out exactly what is included within the term *economic history*, these years have made me realise that it is a much wider field than I ever before gave it credit for. It is, of course, all that, but also so much more: it is the history of work and consumption, of daily survival and common life; the everyday trudge of waking up, labouring to put food on the table and clothes on ones back; the process of raising a family and building a life; and everything in between and beyond that affects the practical, everyday life of the common people of history. In this modern age where information is instant and notions of an idealised past is used as ideological bludgeons, good knowledge of economic history – as well as history in general – is probably more important than ever. I am ever so grateful and proud for being able to do my part in this.

Lund, 2 April 2025

1.Introduction

When I was young, a single man, | And after youthful follies ran. | Though little given to care and thought, | Yet, so it was, a ewe I bought; | And other sheep from her I raised, | As healthy sheep as you might see, | And then I married, and was rich | As I could wish to be; | Of sheep I numbered a full score, | And every year increas'd my store.

Year after year my stock it grew, | And from this one, this single ewe, | Full fifty comely sheep I raised, | As sweet a flock as ever grazed! | Upon the mountain did they feed; | They throve, and we at home did thrive. | --This lusty lamb of all my store | Is all that is alive; | And now I care not if we die, | And perish all of poverty.

William Wordsworth, *The Last of the Flock* stanza 3 & 4

1.1. Motivations and aims

In recent decades, a strand of historical research has emerged that stresses the economic dynamism and development in the centuries that preceded the industrial revolution (cf. Weatherill 1988; Shammas 1990; Van Zanden 2002; Overton et al. 2004; de Vries 2008; Blondé & Van Damme 2019; Bengtsson & Svensson 2020). Rather than the so-called early modern period, c. 1500-1800, as previously held simply being a protracted period of economic stagnation and mass poverty, the evidence instead suggests long-term gradual improvements in material living standards despite low to no real economic growth and even decreasing real wages. Despite important contributions, this is a process we still need significantly more research on to properly understand (Ryckbosch 2015). Especially, we need to map and analyse the material conditions of the early modern individual: what they owned, what their possibilities for work and reproduction was, and how this developed over the course of the early modern period.

Unfortunately, before the advent of wide-spread literacy – especially writing – and low-cost ink and paper, the available sources describing daily life for the common individual are rare. Historical contemporary descriptions of the lives and thoughts of the well-educated and wealthy elite – royals, nobility, merchants, and priests –

are exceedingly common among the historical sources; in the form of large collections of letters, diaries of daily life, autobiographical travel literature, and treatises on everything from ethics and religion to politics, economics, and agriculture. In comparison the lives of the poor, the common peasants or the simple craftsman, often must be reassembled from a variety of sources; court records, employment rolls, probate documents, state reports, and the aforementioned travel literature – none of them either intended for this particular use or compiled solely by or for the sake of the people they depict (Broberg, Wikander, & Åmark 1993; Ogilvie 2003; Ågren 2017; Nilsson, Hansson, & Svensson 2020).

Picture 1. The silver, copper objects, and grain belonging to the wife Benta Andersdotter (d. 1700), in Vellinge parish (Oxie häradsrätt (M) FII:1 (1690-1720) Bild 56 / sid 99). The inventory not only presents the goods present in the household, but presente them in itemised and individually valued lists which allows for detailed analysis of household possessions.

This study takes one of these many disparate sources depicting the material circumstances of the more common individual – the probate record – and from it reconstructs the material conditions and some of the survival strategies in southern Sweden during the late seventeenth to the mid nineteenth centuries. The probate record was an official document, common throughout Europe, which was drafted

shortly after the death of a head of household in order to facilitate the division of the estate (van der Woude & Shuurman (eds.) 1980; Arkell, Evans, & Goose (eds.) 2000; Jónsson 2016). While the record could take several forms, such as wills and testaments, the most common form was the inventory, an excerpt of which can be seen in picture 1:[1] the lists of all the physical – and often economic – possessions belonging to the deceased at the time of their death, such as furniture, tools, cattle, and debt claims. There is a long tradition, both in Sweden and abroad, of utilising probate inventories to study consumption, wealth, and production patterns (e.g. Hanson Jones 1982; Weatherill 1988; Shammas 1990; Ahlberger 1996; Ulväng 2021), though in a European perspective the Swedish inventories are often exceptionally detailed and extensive.

Especially after the publication of Jan de Vries' influential articles, and finally book, on the theory of the *Industrious Revolution* (1993, 1994, 2008) has a large corpus of research emerged specifically interested in the interplay between consumption, trade, and household production which can be gleaned from these inventories (e.g. Overton et al. 2004; McCants 2008; Muldrew 2011; Hutchison 2014; Bovenkerk & Fertig 2022; Congost, Ros, & Saguer 2023; Mas-Ferrer 2023a). With his theory, de Vries (2008) attempts to solve the apparent paradox of increasing material living standards despite increasing costs of living during the early modern period. He proposes that households in northwestern Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries counteracted decreasing wages through an increase in market-oriented labour allocation. Driven by demand for novel consumer goods that was introduced during the period, households worked longer years and allocated more of their available labour – mainly that of women and children – to market-oriented wage work and production.

The theory – especially consumer demand as the proposed driver – has been critiqued for not being widely applicable outside of the highly urbanised and bourgeoise Low Countries (Overton et al 2004; Ogilvie 2010; Hutchison 2014; Béaur 2021). However, de Vries appears to have been more correct in his assessment that the labouring poor during the period were forced to greatly increase their labour output to attain even subsistence-minimum (Gary & Olsson 2020; Horrell, Humphries, & Weisdorf 2021), much less increase their consumption. Historian Craig Muldrew (2011: 207), in his study of the inventories of English labourers, further states that it is specifically during such a period of falling real wages, increasing rents, and accelerating proletarianization that it is possible to see in the inventories the beginning of a marked increase in the quality of the material

[1] Due to the inventory being the most common, and most widely used, of the documents, the terms *probate record* and *probate inventory* will be used interchangeably throughout the dissertation to denote the complete probate document – i.e. the inventory and the preamble including information on the deceased and individuals present when drafting it.

living standards.[2] It seems clear – and possibly should be obvious – that there during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries existed a correlation between an increasing industriousness and increased household consumption. The actual mechanisms of this correlation, however, are still to be properly identified.

The aim of the project has been to study the household economy and material living standards in southern Sweden during the early modern period. With a special focus on worker and peasant households, it will investigate the development of household productive capacity[3] and consumption patterns in southern Sweden during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Through these, hopefully, this study can contribute to the creation of a better picture of the economic development of the early modern period, more accurate to the experiences of those that lived through it than a story of constant poverty and economic decline. Furthermore, by using probate records – the same type of source used by de Vries himself for the Low Countries – from southern Sweden the industrious revolution theory can be empirically tested to see how well it applies to a peripheral and less economically progressive part of Europe. For this purpose, the Swedish case is close to optimal; firmly situated on the European periphery and with excellent source material from the eighteenth century with which to investigate the mechanisms behind an increased industriousness.

1.2. Research questions

Four overarching research questions have influenced direction of the dissertation and the papers that make it up. To analyse the development of household goods over the period, as well as the possible interaction between household production strategies and household consumption, the first three papers are organised around two main – and mainly empirically focused – research questions.

[2] Unlike the regular uses of the term living standards, which includes the level of an individual's health and nourishment, *material living standards* only includes the quality and comfort of the physical surroundings of an individual. This includes the quality of housing, clothes, furniture, and everyday goods. The focus on specifically material standards stems from the restrictions of the source material, which due to its nature only includes information on the physical possessions of the deceased, and nothing about their health, nutritional intake, and general well-being.

[3] *Productive capacity* is defined as the extent of options and limits for within-household production, as defined by the goods, tools, and capital owned by the household and present in the probate inventory. It is specifically a measure of the forms of production that could take place within the confines of the household – rather than work done for others using other people's tools – and makes no difference between production with the aim of self-subsistence and that for sale on the market.

1. How did the household composition of productive goods develop over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

A central aspect of the theory of increased industriousness is an intensification of market-oriented household labour. One of the main ways of measuring this proposed intensification, and whether it was achieved through specialisation – as assumed by classical economic thinkers such as Adam Smith – or diversification[4], is to look at the productive goods owned by the households. These include objects such as farming equipment and spinning wheels, as well as assets such as cattle and horses. By looking at the household composition of these goods as well as differences between socio-economic groups, it is possible to identify sourced of income that were possible for the household, reconstruct its production strategies, and map how these developed over time.

2. How did the household composition of consumer goods develop over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

To analyse the development of material living standards, as well as the second part of the industrious revolution theory – that of increased household consumption – the composition of consumer goods in the inventories has been investigated. To analyse this, a wide and comprehensive list of non-consumable consumer goods – i.e. not food and fuel, which otherwise are not visible in the inventories – was selected. By finding what consumer items are acquired by these households, and how this composition differs between socio-economic groups and changes over time, it is possible to identify shifts in consumer behaviour, map the development of material living standards, and connect these to the economic development of the period and the shifts in production strategies.

Both these two questions are investigated and discussed in the first three papers of the dissertation – question 1 in Paper I and 2 in Papers II & III. As can be seen in the flowchart of the structure of the dissertation, presented in figure 1, they both make up the basis for the study in paper IV and constitutes the main empirical foundation for the theoretical discussion in the kappa. Apart from these, a third question was posed regarding the institutional and practical framework within

[4] Diversification will be primarily measured through the evidence of *pluriactivity* – participation by household members in multiple productive and income-generating activities. Instead of pluriactivity some historians use the term *by-employment*, and both of these terms are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

which these households – especially on the countryside – had to act when striving to improve their material conditions.

3. What was the impact of markets and their institutional framework on household access to consumption goods?

Just because households increased their labour productivity and their income, it does not necessarily mean that they could automatically access the new consumer goods introduced during the period. Very few – if any – of the new manufactured consumer goods of the period could be produced locally, and households were dependent on both regional and inter-regional markets to acquire these objects. However, both practical and institutional restrictions would have interfered in the interactions between the – especially rural – household and the market: the distance between the home and the closest market town would have entailed an added cost, and the good would in many cases even have needed to be transported to this town from elsewhere, due to a lack of local producers. While touched upon throughout the dissertation, this question is mainly discussed in Paper IV.

These three questions – outlining both the empirical foundation of household production and consumption as well as the institutional and practical framework within which this consumption could occur – are intended to provide the pieces necessary to answer the fourth, more theoretically focused research question.

4. What is the relevance of the industrious revolution theory for the economic development in Sweden during the early modern period?

Are the mechanisms of an Industrious Revolution driven by the demand for novel consumer goods applicable to the early modern Swedish experience? If not, then if we accept the argument by Gary & Olsson (2020) about an increase in labour output during the eighteenth century, how can we understand the connection between the co-occurrent increases in both household production and consumption during the period? While not the sole determiner for the dissertation, this more theoretical research question remains in the background and suffuse it in its entirety; from the main framing and the formulation of the preceding questions, to the selection of material and timeframe.

Though all of them touches upon different aspects of the Industrious revolution theory, none of the papers has the space or the scope to discuss it in full: household production and the intensification of labour is discussed in Paper I; household consumption of goods, adoption of new consumer patterns, and the development of

material living standards, as well as some discussion on how these correlate to the aforementioned development in household production on the countryside is discussed in Paper II, and in the towns in Paper III; lasty the impact of markets and market access is discussed in Paper IV. Instead, the concluding theoretical discussion of the industrious revolution, is the dissertation itself – especially chapter 7 of the Kappa.

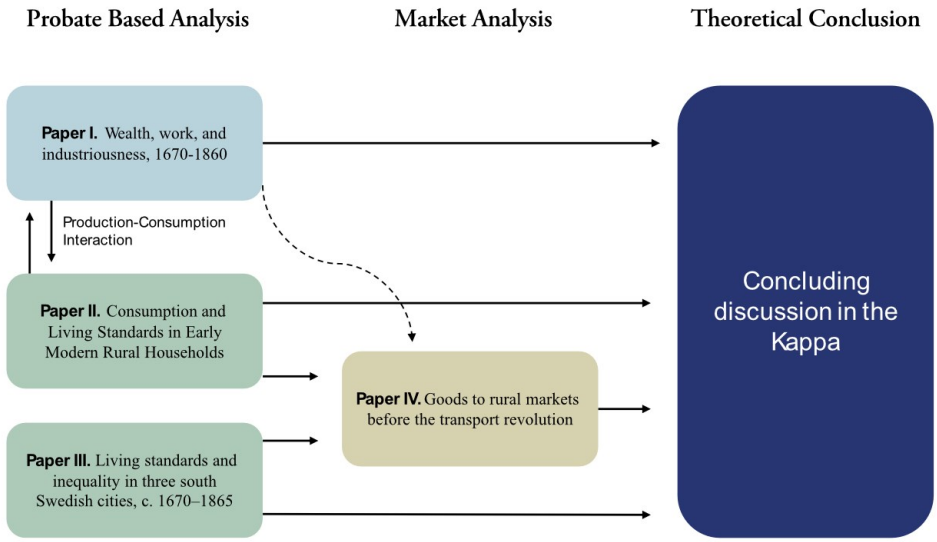


Figure 1. How the different papers fit together within the dissertation.

1.3. Contribution

The dissertation makes several contributions. First, to the available data on household ownership of goods during the early modern period. Second, to the knowledge of, and debates on, early modern household reproduction, material living standards, and economic growth. In section 6 is presented summaries of the individual papers of the dissertation, as well as their main conclusions and contributions, while section 7 presents a more in-depth discussion and synthesis of the major contributions of the dissertation as a whole – especially how it contributes to our possible understanding and interpretation of the industrious revolution theory.

1.3.1. Contributions to data

One of the bigger contributions I make with this dissertation is the large-scale, general sampling of Swedish probate records and creation of a unified database spanning almost 200 years – or 300 years, as is the case for Malmö. This long-run dataset allows us to study the development of material living standards throughout the latter half of the early modern period; or almost the whole, as in the case for Malmö specifically. Especially the sampling of the earliest pre-1734 probate records represent a major contribution, as this dissertation is the first time these has been sampled in any large scale and placed in a comparable context with later inventories.

The data collected in the database is detailed enough to track the developments of household wealth and composition of goods – both productive goods and consumer goods – over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and even back to the late sixteenth century in the case for the town of Malmö. The entire dataset, both for the rural and urban probate records, has been made freely available as a digital dataset, accessible through the Lund Economic History department's webpage.[5] Hopefully, the availability of the data can both inspire future research using it, as well as similar projects for other parts of Sweden.

Paper IV, with its analysis of sea-bound trade data to the towns of Scania and Halland, furthermore calls into question the reliance of trade flows data as a measurement – or even proxy – of economic development and household consumption. Trade flows are often used to measure market integration, exchange between regions, and even the regional consumption based on the inflow of imported goods (Braudel 1986; Rönnbäck 2010; Crucini & Smith 2014; Bateman 2016; Edvinsson & Tarek Gad 2018). However, as shown in the paper significant improvements in material living standards can be achieved even without any real development in trade flows. This means that other aspects of trade must be considered if one wants to identify the possible connection between trade and living standards. Moreover, the paper also calls in question the usefulness of the Sound Toll Register, especially for analysing trade to regions immediately surrounding the toll as the results show a significant omission of ships passing through the toll to Malmö during the eighteenth century.

1.3.2. Contributions to literature and debates

The dissertation contributes to the literature on early modern household consumption and reproduction – for Sweden in particular, but also for the European periphery more general – by providing a detailed depiction of the development of both household production strategies and consumption behaviour over the

[5] https://www.lusem.lu.se/organisation/department-economic-history/research-department-economic-history/databases-department-economic-history/economic-history-data

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The results of the dissertation help to further problematize the problems with taking the current national statistics of early modern Sweden at face value, such as the estimations of GDP per capita, grain production, and to some extent even real wage series (Edvinsson 2009; Edvinsson 2013; Schön & Krantz 2015; Gary 2018).[6] Contrary to these trends, which all seemingly depict a stagnant eighteenth-century economy, the probate inventories for both towns and countryside instead suggest a highly dynamic eighteenth-century economy, with significant improvements in both household wealth and the material quality of households during the period.

An eighteenth-century improvement in the material quality of homes has previously been assumed for the peasant and merchant groups; while the increased affluence of the merchants is well-backed (Müller 1998; Andersson 2009; Brown 2020), for the peasants it has mainly been deduced from frozen land rents and the improved political position of the peasant estate during the first years of the age of liberty (Gadd 2000). Though the development for the peasant group is seemingly backed up by probate studies for the second half of the eighteenth century, no earlier reference point has so far been available to compare with (Ahlberger 1996; Hallén 2009; Ulväng 2021). However, the new – more encompassing and longer-spanning – analyses of the material conditions of both town and countryside from as early as the late sixteenth century reveal that the merchants and landowning peasants were not the only groups that benefited from the economic and political reforms during the period. The whole population improved their material circumstances, including the significantly poorer labourers despite the very low real wages and their economically precarious situation. These improvements were furthermore mostly centred around increased comfort, rather than improvements in productive capacity or consumption of either traditional status markers – such as silver – or new colonial goods; the focus on many earlier studies.

Regarding the *Industrious Revolution*, the study professes support for the interpretation proposed by Craig Muldrew (2011). Much like in late seventeenth-century England, Sweden during the mid-eighteenth century appears to see a concurrent development of both increased industriousness – as exemplified by the diversification of household production – and an increased material quality of homes. While this increase in quality of homes is line with the development of the consumer revolution, on the Swedish countryside this happens without an increase in consumption of colonial goods, which is usually assumed in regard to the theory.

I propose a revision of the theory which moves the discussion away from the focus on consumption of colonial goods and back to the question of the allocation of time within the household – an aspect of de Vries' original presentation of the theory that

[6] See also Bengtsson & Svensson 2020 for another discussion on the shortcomings of the Swedish historical GDP series.

appears to have been largely omitted in much recent research. Furthermore, I argue we should put focus on the interaction between household production and consumption inherent in the theory, rather than the causal effect of one upon the other; treating them as co-current and mutually reinforcing powers.

1.4. Limitations

Naturally, this dissertation, with its dependence on probate records, has several limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. Most of these are highlighted in section 3 when the data is discussed, while the individual papers each outline some of the more specific limitations for each sub-study. There are however a few overarching limitations that are worth mentioning already here.

One major limitation of probate records as an historical source is the fact that they only record stocks of goods, rather than flows. They are an invaluable source for the composition of household goods at a single, very particular point in the timespan of the household life-cycle – namely the very end after the death of either spouse (Malanima & Pinchera 2012). This source can ultimately tell nothing about the daily consumption of a household – the food that was consumed, the fuel and candles that were burnt, the thread and old textiles used to patch clothes, and the mass of dinnerware that broke and had to be replaced (Bedell 2000). All these daily – or, more probably, weekly or monthly – purchases can only be inferred and assumed from the presence of other goods in the household – such as teakettles, breadbaskets, and candlesticks. There is furthermore no way for the modern historian reading through a probate inventory to know when, where, and how any one particular item ended up in a household; whether made by hand by the owner, inherited from parents, or purchased at an auction in a neighbouring village.

Another major limitation hail from the active choice of excerpting, rather than transcribing, the inventories. Decided due to it being the significantly cheaper and more efficient option – as we sought quantity in sampling to build a database large enough to support quantitative analysis – the consequence is a relative limitation in the possibilities for analysis, compared to with fully transcribed inventories. While the selection of what to sample from every inventory was made as broad and encompassing as possible – and we have indeed sampled data, such as debts, credits, and presence of musical and scientific instruments which ultimately was not used for any of the papers – there are still many things missing from the sampling.

2. Historical Context: Early modern production and consumption

This dissertation situates itself between two different, yet closely connected, fields of historical research. On the one hand the field of history focused on production and economic development, and on the other consumption and the so-called world of goods. The former field is concerned with how people worked and survived; how both individuals and households organized their daily lives and allocated often scarce resources in order to maintain – and hopefully exceed – a minimum living standard necessary for daily survival (e.g. see: Hufton 1974; Vardi 1999; Gadd 2000; Ågren 2017; Horrell, Hufton, & Weisdorf 2022;). The latter is focused on the objects, goods – both material and consumable – and services which individuals and households spent their available accumulated surplus on in order to raise living standards above the bare minimum necessary for survival (e.g. see: McKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb 1982; Shammas 1990; Brewer & Porter 1993; Ahlberger 1996; Roche 2000; Crowley 2001; McCants 2008). Research and theories spanning the gap between these two fields are by no means new, and can be traced all the way back to the economic theories of Adam Smith (Blondé & Van Damme 2019); the recently most influential one, that of the *Industrious Revolution*, will be discussed in the next section.

2.1 The early modern agrarian economy

The early modern economy was an agrarian economy, highly dependent on the produce derived from land for everything from food and fuel to textiles and building materials. It was also throughout Europe largely rural, with the lion share of the population living in villages and farms on the countryside (Epstein 2001); in Sweden, still in the 1860s more than 70% of the population were in one way or another dependent on agriculture as their main income – be it farming, forestry, fishing, or seasonal harvest work (Morell 2001). Due to the seasonal nature of agricultural production creating natural production bottlenecks, its dependence on weather and soil quality, as well as the complexity of balancing field areal and sustaining stocks of cattle for pulling the plough and providing fertilizer, it was

furthermore long difficult to effectively increase agricultural production (Gadd 1983; Wiking-Faria 2009; Olsson & Svensson 2010).

As can be seen in table 1, though the economically progressive core regions of England and the Low Countries managed to early achieve at least a modicum of economic growth – mainly through a combination of early agricultural reforms, a focus on trade, and the presence of an early and large proto-industrial[7] textile industry (Allen 1992; Prak 2023) – most of Europe saw an economic stagnation throughout most of the early modern period. While recurring wars during the sixteenth and seventeenth century repressed growth, rapid population growth during the eighteenth century saw rapidly increasing costs of agricultural production and decreasing real wages (Allen & Weisdorf 2011; Malanima & Pinchera 2012; Gary 2018).

Table 1. GDP per capita (2011$) for selected European countries.

Year	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Poland	Spain	Sweden	United Kingdom
1601	1571	1456	2543	3791	1027	1288	1436	1671
1651	1612	1562	2396	3988	909	1053	1398	1527
1701	1776	1581	2469	3746	991	1247	2043	2613
1751	1753	1785	2485	4046	1095	1282	1506	2627
1801	1580	1781	2515	4111	-	1352	1353	3351
1851	2499	2244	2543	3834	1038	1718	1682	4477

Sources: Ridolfi & Nuvolari 2021 for France; Pfister 2022 for Germany; Chilosi & Ciccarelli 2023 for Italy; Smiths, Horlings, & Van Zanden 2000, Van Zanden & van Leeuwen 2012 for Netherlands; Malinowski & Van Zanden 2017 for Poland; Álvarez-Nogal & Prados de la Escosure 2013, Prados de la Escosura 2017 for Spain; Schön & Krantz 2015 for Sweden. Broadberry et al 2015 for United Kingdom.

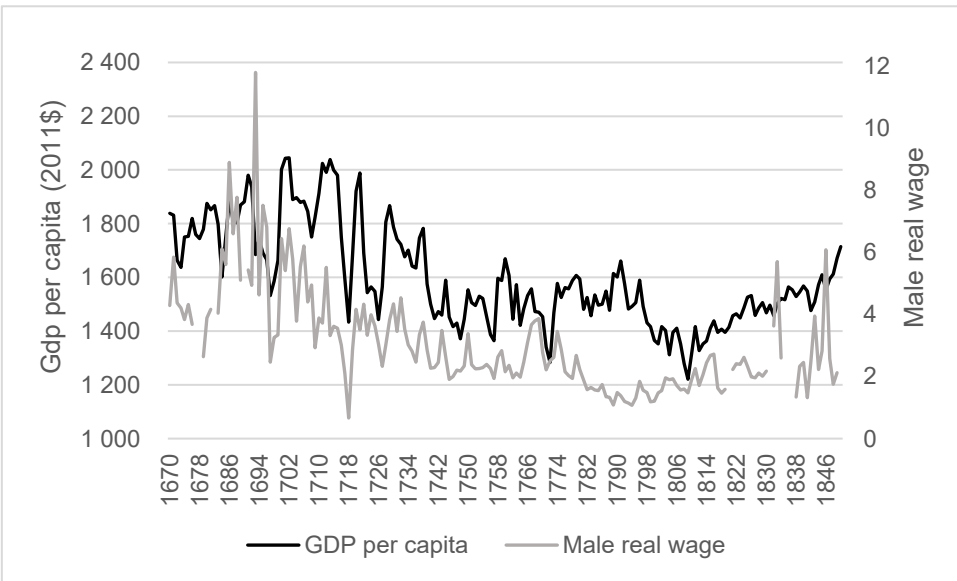
Throughout Europe the smallest economic unit, as well as the locus of both reproduction and consumption was the household (Overton et al. 2004; de Vries 2008; Ågren 2017). This unit, which functioned as the smallest tax unit and to a large extent functioned as the blueprint of society (Pihl 2011), was in northern and western Europe characterized by the so-called European Marriage Pattern: with a low level of complexity, with a focus on the nuclear family and dependent servants; a high age at first marriage, in southern Sweden as high as 34,3 years for men and 29,1 for women (Lundh 1997); and a high level of neo-locality, the practice of creating new households rather than moving into, and expanding, an existing one (Hajnal 1965).

Sweden during the early modern period, and especially going into the eighteenth century, was by most historical economic accounts a stagnant economy. The rapid

[7] *Proto-industry* is the established term for the small-scale rural industrialisation that can be identified in the century leading up to the industrial revolution. It was mainly driven by market-oriented and mostly hand-powered rural production in especially textile production.

population growth that followed the end of empire and long period of semi-constant wars in 1718 easily outpaced the low economic growth of the period, and – as can be seen in figure 2 – both measured of GDP per capita and real wages during the period suggests a significant drop in the wealth and living standards of the population (Schön & Krantz 2015; Gary 2018). The agricultural output as well remained fairly stagnant – mostly in line with population growth – throughout most of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Not until the end of the eighteenth century could output be increased through a combination of institutional and technological improvements of the agricultural practices. First with the introduction of the potato, agricultural reforms leading to more unified peasant lands, and the adoption of iron ploughs could a higher agricultural production be achieved. The improvements were aided by the spread of iron axled wagons which increased the transport opportunities and better allowed surplus regions to sell their produce (Gadd 1983; Hallén 2003; Bergenfeldt 2014). Combined with institutional reforms after 1780, which abolished internal tolls and restrictions on grain exports, this led to a significant improvement in agricultural output (Gadd 2000; Edvinsson 2009; Olsson & Svensson 2010).

Figure 2. GDP per capita (2011$) and male daily real wages in Sweden, 1670-1850



Note: Real wage is calculated as nominal wage deflated by cost of living; number of annual consumption baskets that could be purchased. Source: Schön & Krantz 2015 for GDP, Gary 2018 for real wages.

However, the general economic stagnation of the period did not affect everyone evenly. The kingdom-wide tax reforms of the late seventeenth century – intended to

better fund a standing army and the state administration – in practice led to frozen land rents for the next century. In the face of otherwise increasing inflation, this greatly reduced the tax burden for peasants on crown and tax lands.[8] Together with the empowering of the peasant estate during the first part of the so-called *Age of Liberty,* this allowed these peasants to greatly improve their economic position; it freed up a previously unavailable income surplus which they could use to both invest in further productive capital and to improve their material conditions (Gadd 2000, 2011). Peasants on noble land, however, of which parts of the sampled regions boasts a remarkably high share, had little opportunity to take advantage of the improved economic conditions. Furthermore, the fast growing share of landless and semi-landless households, being relegated to the crofts at the village outskirts or street-houses (*gatehus*) at the centre, saw their economic circumstances quickly deteriorate as real wages dropped in the face of a continuously increasing cost of living and progressing proletarianization of the rural poor (Hanssen 1952; Persson 2002; Lindström J. 2008; Bengtsson & Olsson 2020). As such, any developments over the eighteenth century cannot implicitly be assumed to be universal for the entire rural population, or even just for the peasant population, prompting the need for a wider and more comprehensive study.

While the rural economy of Sweden was highly characterised by agriculture and access to land, the harsh climate and generally poor soils of much of Sweden greatly limited the agricultural capacity in many regions. In the highly fertile regions of especially southern Scania and Mälardalen in central Sweden, agricultural output could be kept high, and most households could rely on farmwork for their reproduction; elsewhere, households had to complement their agricultural production with handicraft, forestry, or a greater share of husbandry (Campbell 1928; Hanssen 1952; Gadd 1983; Bohman 2010). As the population increase accelerated during the early eighteenth century, the share of landless and semi-landless households increased drastically. These households, often significantly smaller than regular peasant households, were as the term implies either completely without land or limited to only a small plot or vegetable garden for personal consumption. Instead, they were often dependent on wage work – often seasonal agricultural labour – for their reproduction (Lindström J. 2017, 2018; Bengtsson & Olsson 2020).

[8] Land in Sweden was after the reformation divided into three main types, based on ownership and tax status: Noble land, which was – initially – owned exclusively by the nobility, tax exempt, and either rented to peasants or run by the noble themselves as a part of their domains; Crown land, owned by the king – and by extension the state – and rented to peasants; and Tax land, owned by the peasants themselves in exchange for paying land tax to the crown. Except for a greater right to possession for peasants on tax land there was little practical differences between peasants on Crown and Tax land regarding rents, taxes, and rights. Peasants on Noble land, however. paid significantly higher rents – often in the form of corvée (forced) labour – had no inherent right to the land they worked, and was politically represented by their noble landlord rather than by themselves (Gadd 2000; Myrdal 1999).

Early modern Sweden was an exceedingly agrarian society with only around 10% of the population living in towns still in the mid-nineteenth century – around half of which had fewer than 1500 inhabitants (Sandberg 2001:30). Despite many of these towns being little more than glorified villages by wider European standards,[9] towns in early modern Sweden were a legal distinction that allowed the inhabitants several rights and privileges not afforded to the rural populace; most importantly the rights to practice craft and to trade, both with other cities and with the surrounding countryside (Sandberg 2001).

Just as the distinction between town and countryside was important in both contemporary legislation and economic thought, so was the distinction in privileges given to different towns (Sovelius 1759). A series of trade ordinances enacted between 1617 and 1634 legally divided Swedish towns between a few select Staple towns (*stapelstad*) – or import towns – and a larger number of Uptowns (*uppstad*). Whereas the merchants of the former had the right to accept foreign ships and trade freely both domestically and with foreign ports, those of the latter only had the right to trade with the peasant on the surrounding countryside – and later, after some intense complaining to the king, also other domestic towns (Thomasson 1858).[10] Enacted with the hope of incentivising the growth of certain towns – especially Stockholm – in practice this gave the staple towns and its merchants the exclusive right to foreign trade, making the limited number of staple towns into natural middle-points for the distribution of new goods. Since many towns formerly belonging to Denmark were allowed to keep their staple town status after annexed in 1658, the area analysed for this dissertation contained five towns with this right, including both Malmö and Ystad which has been sampled for the study – Falkenberg lost the staple town privilege in 1660 – shortly after the annexation by Sweden – and did not regain it again until 1866, just a few years before the system was abolished (Thomasson 1858; Annerstedt 1995). The trade advantage held by these towns, and the benefits they provided to the surrounding countryside in regard to access to goods and trade opportunities were a well-understood truth in contemporary thought (Sovelius 1759), and both burghers and peasants frequently – yet often in vain – petitioned the crown for staple right (Thomasson 1858). However, legal reforms in the mid-1770s eased many of these restrictions on trade, and most of them were then abolished in the early nineteenth century to be replaced by a special toll-tax right, which ushered in a period of free-er – but not yet free – trade (Stråle 1884; Heckscher 1949; Magnusson 2000).

[9] For example the town of Falkenberg corresponds well in size to the village of Neckarhausen studied by Warren Sabean (1990).

[10] The division was based on the medieval practice of Staple Right, which obliged merchants travelling through towns to sell their goods to the merchants there which they themselves then had the right to either sell to local buyers or re-export further (Thomasson 1858).

2.2 Pluriactivity and early modern labour

The generally low agricultural output, the continuously decreasing real wages, the lack of savings institutions and reliable safety networks, as well as the high reliance on unstable weather meant that a large part of the early modern population lived precariously close to the sustenance levels. Many households and individuals, in order to survive, had to resort to a hodgepodge of survival strategies such as combining limited agricultural production with seasonal wage labour, household textile production, odd jobs for neighbours, or – for the poorest – begging and theft. Olwen H. Hufton (1974) in her study of the poor in eighteenth century France termed this *An Economy of Makeshifts*, and stressed the importance that mutual support networks had for the survival and reproduction of these poorest households living on the fringes of society. Though she was mainly interested in the destitute, rather than the peasant and labouring population as a whole, also the great masses of both urban and rural labourers of the period were highly dependent on a high degree of pluriactivity for their survival.

Recent research on long-term development of real wages and income strategies in both England and Sweden has highlighted the increasing difficulty for the early modern labouring household in achieving a base sustenance level on male labour alone (Allen & Weisdorf 2011; Muldrew 2011; Lilja & Bäcklund 2013a, 2013b; Gary 2018; Gary & Olsson 2020; Horrell, Humphries, & Weisdorf 2022). Due to the decreasing real wages during the period, not only the male head was forced to increase their productivity to sustain a household, but the whole family would have had to contribute through household production and odd jobs. This was especially true for those households who, beyond mere sustenance, also wished to achieve a more respectable consumption level of a greater degree of cleanliness, comfort, and outward presentation of respectability (de Vries 2008; Gary 2018; Humphries 2024).

For the Swedish context, the Gender and Work project at Uppsala University has done invaluable work to highlight the universal and all-encompassing nature of early modern labour. By looking at the wide range of possible work that both men, women, and children undertook during the early modern period, the researchers on the project have highlighted the ubiquitousness of work in daily life during the period, as well as the varied and often idiosyncratic ways in which individuals and households made a living. Both men and women worked, with the work of especially women and children often necessary for the survival of the household as a single income was seldom enough to support a household during the period; the gender divide in work were often fluent or non-existent, and the types of work done by men and women often overlapped – be it working the fields, tending the animals, digging ditches, or working construction (Lindström, Fiebranz, & Rydén 2017; Ågren 2017; Gary 2018). Furthermore, the type of renumeration for work was diverse and often indirect; in a society lacking money and formalized labour

markets, individuals would often work in exchange for food, goods of different kinds such as shoes and clothes, credit which could be exchanged at a future – often undetermined – date, or even the promise of future help as a part of intricate – and often vital – social communities or mutual support structures existing both in towns and on the countryside (Ågren 2017; Lindström & Mispeleare 2015; Lindström, Fiebranz, & Rydén 2017; Lindström et al 2017).

The level of specialisation within the agricultural economy was low, and even in the towns there were a very low level of occupational specialisation, with households instead relying on a diverse range of income opportunities (Isacson 1979; Sandström 1996; Gadd 2000; Lindström 2008; Lindström, Fiebranz, Rydén 2017; Ågren 2017). Most people, in order to survive, were often forced to find several alternative modes of income to complement the income from agriculture or craft. For those who failed, poor relief was often inadequate to support a family, forcing poor households to beg or to give up their children as servants and workers. Even households where the male was employed by the state – such as soldiers and low-level administrators – were often forced to rely on alternative forms of income for their reproduction, as the state were often unable to properly pay their employees (Engberg 2005; Lennersand et al 2017; Lindberg, Jacobsson, & Ling 2017).

The Gender and Work project showcases the ubiquitousness and breadth of possible work during the post-medieval and early modern period – and problematizes previously established beliefs about especially the work of women and children. However, due to their reliance on incidental reporting of work in especially court and administrative documents they capture mostly work that happens in public, rather than within the confines of the home. For example, the Gender and Work database, which contain over 42 000 observations, includes only circa 230 instances of someone spinning wool or flax, nine of people knitting, and three of someone lathing, while it has 1076 of someone stealing (GaW online database, accessed 2024-09-12).[11] All of these are forms of work we know from other sources were both common and important sources of income in Sweden during the period (Johansson 2001; Bengtsson & Svensson 2020).

Overton et al (2004) in their study of probate records from the English countryside find evidence of an increased diversification of household production over the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, both for self-consumption – as a way to increase savings by making the household less dependent on markets – and for commercial sale. They especially find a correlation between household consumption and the presence of tools signifying significant degrees of market-oriented by-employment. Keibek and Shaw-Taylor (2013), however, in their own

[11] The Gender and Work project are acknowledging this limit, and are at the time of writing including projects specifically looking at probate inventories (https://www.uu.se/forskning/gender-and-work/forskning/resultat-och-delprojekt/metod--och-begreppsutveckling, accessed 2024-11-15)

investigation of rural pluriactivity on the English countryside conclude that the assumptions about rural, market-oriented by-employments during the early modern period are exaggerated; in reality, they argue, it became less common and likely disappeared completely among the poorer parts of the population over the eighteenth century. They argue that, especially English, historians only can claim a consistently high level of by-employment on the countryside due to the dual facts that households with by-employments are wealthier and thus more likely to be probated, and because English probate records generally dry up as a viable source exactly during the period of English history when the practice of rural by-employment is being abandoned.

The critique of Keibek and Shaw-Taylor (2013) is pertinent to keep in mind, especially the remark that the poorest – always under-represented in the sources – would have been unlikely to have owned the tools necessary for most by-employment. One major limit of their study, however, is the insistence of only counting individual male by-employment (ibid: 250). As already stated, the household – rather than the individual – was the unit of production during the early modern period. The expansion of household production through by-employment during the period would to a large part have been through the reallocation of female and child labour, rather than necessarily through a diversification of male labour (Overton et al. 2005; de Vries 2008; Ågren 2017; Horrell, Humphries, & Weisdorf 2022). As such, the decision to completely ignore female pluriactivity leads Keibek and Shaw-Taylor (2013: 255) to completely disregard the presence of spinning wheels.

For the Swedish peasants, especially those living less fertile regions, the sale of handicraft – often made during the long winter months – was central to the survival of the households. Especially as population increase over the eighteenth century led to an increasing share of the rural landless and semi-landless across the country, which further eroded the viability of agricultural production as the sole source of income (Campbell 1928; Hanssen 1952; Isacson 1979; Johansson 2001; Bengtsson & Svensson 2020). Especially spinning and similar textile production would have been important as supplementary modes of income for rural households during the period, as the market for yarn and textiles expanded greatly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a mainly female labour, spinning allowed the household to increase the labour output of women and children, and greatly increased household access to cash and credit (Gullickson 1986; Vardi 1999; Johansson 2001; Lindström et al. 2017).

Throughout Europe, the eighteenth-century increased demand for manufactured goods – especially textiles – following the population increase of the period opened up new opportunities for the rural population. Participation in this emergent proto-industrial production allowed these households to increase their production, spread out work across the year, and divest from their reliance on land and – important for the quickly growing share of landless and semi-landless – seasonal agricultural

employment (Berg 1985; Dribe & van de Putte 2012; Gullickson 1986; Johansson 2001). In especially rural regions with easy access to nearby towns, and by extension larger inter-regional market, the increase in proto-industrial production for sale on the market allowed large swathes of the peasant population, especially women, to free themselves from the traditional constraints of land. In many places this led to a complete reorganization of rural society: the availability of household reproduction through cottage industry rather than land allowed individuals to form households at younger ages – or even alone – without the previously necessary security of access to land feed a family. Furthermore, the increased reliance on market production further sped up the monetization of rural society, and reduced the previous focus on self-sufficiency common in traditional peasant societies in favour of acquiring goods on the market (Berg 1985; Gullickson 1986; Vardi 1999; Ogilvie 2003).

It is important to remember, however, that this divestment from the land and increase in both proto-industrial production and by-employments were not necessarily all positive for the rural population, nor solely led to an increase in wealth or living standards (Berg 1985; Gullickson 1986). While by-employment and a diversification of incomes for some was a way of taking advantage of the economic opportunities that presented themselves in the very lowly specialized early modern economy, for many it was central to the survival strategy of the household (Lindström J., Fiebranz, & Rydén 2017). Diversification into crafts for sale and cottage industry was for many landless and semi-landless throughout both Europe and the colonies across the seas a necessity to survive in the face of decreasing real wages and increased cost of living. Often, it did little less but allowed these households to keep up with the economic development of the period and momentarily checked the rising inequality that came with the progressing proletarianization (Bengtsson & Svensson 2020; Gary & Olsson 2020; Green Carr & Menard 1999; Horrell, Humphries, & Weisdorf 2020).

2.3 Early modern consumption and development of consumer markets

Emerging out of the medieval period, consumption in Europe was closely tied to the maintenance and presentation of social status, as well as reproduction of societal hierarchies. As exemplified by sumptuary legislation dating back to at least the Middle Ages, social status and ones' position within the social hierarchy was demonstrated through the presentation of conspicuous and expensive consumption; jewellery and ornaments of precious metals, clothes with excessive amounts of expensive fabrics, and large quantities of expensive and imported foodstuffs (Andersson G. 2006, 2009; Burke 1993; Jervis 2017; Knutsson & Hodacs 2021). Apart from the consumption of everyday life – food, clothes, tools, and cooking

ware – consumption as a concept was mainly associated with the acquisition of luxury goods, the main carriers of status throughout the ages. As mainly the purview of the nobility, due to the often-exorbitant costs associated with them, consumption was often criticized as wasteful and immoral by both religious and burgher thinkers of the period. Not until the publication and subsequent virality of Bernard Mandeville's famous *Fable of the Bees* in 1723 did this change, and the debate shifted to the possible advantages of – especially, but not exclusively – luxury consumption for the economic development of society (Blondé & van Damme 2019; Roche 2000; Runefelt 2004).

While it is fruitless to attempt to date the 'birth' of the modern consumer society (Blondé & van Damme 2019), a shift in consumer behaviour started to emerge in Europe more clearly during the seventeenth century. Originating among the urban genteel classes of Paris, London, and the highly urbanised Low Countries, it spread both outward geographically, and downwards socio-economically over the following century. This shift, popularly known as the *Consumer Revolution* among historians of the period, entailed the introduction of a completely new set of goods and consumer habits into the homes of the early modern household, more focused around comfort and sociability than status through the trappings of conspicuousness (Ahlberger 1996; Béaur 2021; Crowley 2001; McKendrick, Brewer, & Porter 1982; Roche 2000; Stobart & Rothery 2016). Made possible by the expansion of inter-continental trade – especially the large-scale import of tea, coffee, and cotton from Asia and the Americas – and technical advancements in pottery and furniture-making, this consumer revolution saw the popularisation of tea- and coffee-drinking as a stable of daily life, the introduction of specialized furniture such as the chaise longue, tea-table and cupboard, and the gradual and wide-spread adoption of porcelain and glazed earthenware as a replacement for similar objects of wood and pewter (Becket & Smith 2000; McCants 2008; Shammas 1990; Weatherill 1988).

Among the emerging urban bourgeoisie and rural gentility of the period the ultimate expression of the developments of the consumer revolution was the *social visit*. This practice of informal socialising in the home became a hallmark of culture and social status among the genteel classes during the eighteenth and throughout most of the nineteenth century. To enact properly it necessitated the acquisition of a plethora of consumer objects; chief of which was those related to the serving and drinking of colonial hot drinks (Weatherill 1988; Crowley 2001; Andersson G. 2009; Vickery 2009; Runefelt 2015; Stobart & Rothery 2016). Not only did this include the kettles and cups for brewing and serving tea and coffee, but a world of objects and furniture related to the entertainment, comfort, and impressing on of guests: specialised tea- and gaming-tables to socialise around, cushioned chairs and sofas for comfortable seating, and pieces of art and clocks as the physical trappings of a cultured education and lifestyle (McKendrick, Brewer, & Porter 1982; Roche 2000).

The consumer revolution brought with it more changes than simply a re-prioritising of social life from the public to the private sphere. The idea of comfort changed

during the early modern period, from a medieval understanding as a lack of personal, physical discomfort – feeling well, being healthy, and being warm, as opposed to un-well, un-healthy, and cold – to the more modern sense of physical and mental comfortability and well-being; as something actively present and positive, rather than simply the absence of something negative (Crowley 2001:45ff). This change in the definition of comfort brought with it changes in consumption towards better bedding and dinnerware, improved heating and insulation, a new standard of furniture, and access to clean water (Roche 2000; Crowley 2001; Brown 2020). Unlike the practice of the social visit, these changes to the idea of personal and domestic comfort were not restricted to the burgher upper classes, but was pursued both in towns and on the countryside by any household with the means to do so; the consequence of which was a drastic restructuring of the home.

A combination of the expansion of intercontinental trade, a raise in average labour productivity through an increase in market-oriented labour-time, an expanding second-hand market due to population increase, and minor technical improvements – especially in printing and colouring of textiles, pottery, and glazing – during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to the gradual and continuous decrease in cost of manufactured goods relative to food (Weatherill 1988; Murhem, Ulväng & Lilja 2010; Malaina & Pinchera 2012; Mas-Ferrer 2020). As the cost of these secondary goods decreased, two things happened: first, the traditional systems of status based on consumption and access to goods started to deteriorate in the face of earlier status-bearing goods becoming more widely available, such as silks and cotton garments, valuable metals such as pewter and silver, pieces of art, porcelain, and colonial goods (Runefeldt 2015); and secondly, the decreasing material costs of production spawned a thriving market of cheap and fashion-sensitive populuxe goods.[12] This in turn introduced a new way for the affluent and cultured to present status through consumption and heralding the start of the current era of disposable and breakable fast-fashion (Fairchilds 1993; de Vries 2008.)

These new fast fashion populuxe goods were available solely through the market and the rapidly expanding urban retail sector of artisans, travelling peddlers, and shops. While wealth remained the strongest explaining factor whether a household would own any one particular consumer goods throughout the period (Shammas 1990), the presence of pawn shops and a flourishing second-hand market for goods greatly contributed to smooth out consumption over time by decreasing purchasing costs and allowing households to acquire a surplus of consumer goods during economically better periods (Murhem, Ulväng & Lilja 2010; Malanima & Pinchera 2012; Mas-Ferrer 2020). As long as furniture, silverware, and clothing represented assets with intrinsic value they could be used as alternative currency through pawning or re-sale – an option that, however, decreased in viability as the eighteenth

[12] A portmanteau of *popular* and *luxury*, denoting cheap versions of more expensive luxury goods – often of significantly lower quality – for popular mass consumption.

and nineteenth centuries progressed and fashion and design increased in value (Blondé & Van Damme 2019).

After the expansion of urban retailing made shopping a viable way to acquire goods and commodities – as well as making it a fashionable past-time for the wealthy gentility – shop density continued to increase in European towns even despite stagnating economic growth (Blondé & Van Damme 2019; Hellsing & Ilmakunnas 2023). Indeed, during the period shops and travelling pedlars started to replace the earlier tradition of markets, temporary fairs, and urban guild-controlled direct sales in many parts of Europe, making access to these retailers a significant new factor for whether households could acquire goods or not (Shammas 1990; Roche 2000; de Vries 2008; Ronsijn 2013). But while shops started to spring up in every small town and larger village in England and the Low Countries – with travelling pedlars serving those further out on the countryside – the case remained very different for Sweden.

Swedish legislation throughout the early modern period formally restricted all form of trade and retailing to towns and the temporal markets held at special holidays, such as Michaelmas. Peasants were legally forbidden from practicing crafts for sale outside of towns – though royal exceptions could be made for cobblers and tailors in regions without easy access to a town[13] – and similarly merchants were not allowed to travel outside the towns to sell their wares, practically restricting all legal trade and retailing to towns bearing town privileges (Sandberg 2001). However, due to the low level of urbanisation during the period and the often agrarian nature of the small towns the reality was likely more complex than the legal system suggests. Not the least indicated by the many parliamentary debates during the mid-eighteenth century on the question, which in 1776 resulted in a special dispensation for peasants from the so-called *Sjuhäradsbygden* in western Sweden to both trade and peddle their own handicrafts outside the town limits – a right they famously utilised far outside their own parishes (Lundqvist 2008; Brismarck & Lundqvist 2010). Restrictions on rural peddling were not abolished until 1846, and town privileges were repealed in 1864, ending the last legal restriction to retailing.

[13] There are several petitions sent to the Governor (*Landshövding*) of Örebro County from rural craftsmen in the early eighteenth century, asking for dispensation to practice their craft or to be excused from being counted as unemployed vagrants – and thus be drafted into the military – because they were practicing craftsmen. For example parish cobbler Lars Larsson, who in 1715 petitioned the governor of Örebro County to be allowed to practice his craft in Sköllersta parish: https://sok.riksarkivet.se/bildvisning/40000317_00288#?c=&m=&s=&cv=287&xywh=2820%2C597%2C2244%2C3800 (2024-08-29)

For more information, see *Supplikregister* in Digitala Forskarsalen, *https://sok.riksarkivet.se/amnesomrade?infosida=amnesomrade-suppliker* (2024-04-19).

3. Theoretical Framework: Industriousness and the impact of early modern markets

The dissertation makes heavy use of, and is in discussion with, current theories about the industrious revolution in particular, and early modern markets and market developments in general. The *Industrious Revolution* theory, developed by economic historian Jan de Vries in a series of articles and collected in his influential book of the same name (1993; 1994; 2008), is arguably the most influential recent attempt to provide a form of synthesis between the two fields of historical production and consumption. It seeks to present a unified theory of how they interacted before the advent of industrialization to contribute to economic growth, and has spawned a large collection of further articles and books assessing the connection between production and consumption before the advent of industrialization (for examples apart from the present dissertation, see: Gary & Olsson 2020; Hutchison 2014; Muldrew 2011; Overton et al 2004).

3.1 The Industrious Revolution

Relying on Becker's (1965) theory of the allocation of time, de Vries (2008) presents household consumption as the ultimate consumption of *basic commodities*, or so-called Z-commodities. These Z-commodities, which can better be described as the end-state of consumption – i.e. the goal of consumption – rather than as any particular types of goods, is achieved (produced) through the combination of market goods (x) and time (T), and can be presented through the following formula.

$$Z_i = f_i(x_i, T_i) \qquad (1)$$

The most important part of this equation is time (T). Since market goods are acquired mainly through labour, there is a high level of 'substitutability' between time and market goods. Furthermore, as the consumption unit – in the early modern context the household – only has a limited amount of time, the household will allocate this across three main categories, which can be presented through formula

(2): Labour dedicated to acquisition of market goods (T_w), labour retained within the household to transform market goods into Z-Commodities (T_c), and leisure time (T_r), during which to consume these commodities.

$$T = T_c + T_w + T_r \quad (2)$$

According to de Vries (2008), the introduction of a new consumption culture during the late seventeenth century focused on comfort and replicability – rather than an older consumption culture of ostentatious presentations of wealth – led to a general re-interpretation of Z-commodities and a subsequent surge in demand for consumer goods only available through the market. Spurred by the introduction of cheap, easily replaceable fashion items and novel consumables – such as cheap earthenware and porcelain, printed calico, and colonial hot drinks such as tea and coffee – this incentivised households to reallocate productive resources – i.e. time – away from within-household production (T_c) and leisure (T_r) towards market-oriented labour (T_w). The process of increasing productivity through this market-oriented labour was two-fold: Through increased specialisation and a shift in household interaction with the market from a way of supplementing household production to the basis of the household economy, and; through an increase in general working time, both through a sacrifice of leisure and through a real lengthening of the working year through the systematic abolishment of many – or as in the case for protestant countries all – saint's days.

This reallocation of household productive capacity to market-oriented labour – especially the general increase in working time – according to the theory sufficiently counteracted the decreasing real wages during the period to not only sustain earlier levels of consumption standards, but also allowed households to increase their consumption by acquiring these new fast-fashion goods that were being introduced to the market. The consequence is a sort of industrious ratchet effect: As workers get used to a higher standard of living and consumption regime that – as incomes stagnate and food prices increase – only becomes feasible through an increased labour allocation, they will accept higher labour burdens rather than a reduction in standards (de Vries 2008: 115). This process then subsequently drives the industrious revolution, and – by extension – lays the groundwork for the subsequent industrial revolution.

Since publication, the theory has inspired a new wave of research about the early modern household economy, the allocation of its productive resources, the organization of work and structure of the working year, and how these production-side developments corelate to contemporary changes in household consumer behaviour and the introduction of new goods to the household. However, the theory is not without critique as its focus on market specialization driven by demand for –

especially – colonial goods appear to be little applicable on regions outside the urban Low Countries.[14]

One of the earlier – and harshest – critiques of the theory was economic historian Sheilagh Ogilvie (2003, 2010), who raised the issue of the undue focus on the English and Low Country miracle economies by the proponents of the Industrious and Consumer Revolutions. These regions, with their uniquely market-oriented institutions are poor representatives for the everyday realities of most of the early modern European population, such as southern Germany were Ogilvie argues that "institutionalized 'social capital' thus restricted the incentive and capacity – particularly of women and lower-status males – to allocate more time to market work, and thus to power an Industrious Revolution on the Dutch or English model" (2010:321). These more peripheral regions, she argues, due to their institutional restrictions failed to materialize the type of demand-driven economic growth characterized by the industrious revolution prior to the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century.

Similarly, Rosenband (2016), based on his research of the eighteenth-century French and English papermaking industries, challenges the universality of the theory. Rather than increasing their market-participation and labour intensity during the period, he argues that papermaking workers and their families were engaged in wage-labour – and toiled long hours doing so – already by the early seventeenth century. For this industry, he argues, it was the absence of an industrious revolution that led to technological shifts and industrialisation, rather than any increase in the – already significant – demand.

Most of the critique of the industrious revolution, however, are not as harsh: Though most historians reject the claim of an industrious revolution driven by a demand for new consumer goods, they do agree that a – general – increase in industriousness appears to have occurred during the period. Throughout Europe, labourers – both urban and rural – during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries increased their labour intensity – through an increase in working time and the labour input of women and children – and their market-oriented labour. However, instead of specialisation, these household more often diversified their incomes through an increase in pluri-activity; they did more wage work for neighbours and strangers, and they acquired tools to partake in proto-industrial production which was less seasonably bound than traditional agricultural work. While this increased industriousness did allow labourers to exchange an older consumption regime of leisure with one of increased consumption, it remained contested, with increased consumer-demand a secondary effect rather than a driving force for change (Hatcher 1998). Instead, this industriousness was driven by the harsh economic realities of

[14] The theory as presented by de Vries does, however, seem to be accepted as pretty well applicable to the urban and economically progressive Low Countries (van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008; Ryckbosch 2015).

the period, as a necessary reaction in order to survive and sustain previous standards of consumption in the face of economic hardship and decreasing real wages (Allen & Weisdorf 2011; Dribe & van de Putte 2012; Gary & Olsson 2020; Horrell, Humphries, & Weisdorf 2021; Malanima & Pinchera 2012; Muldrew 2011; Overton et al. 2004).

However, as Rosenband (2016:237f) discusses at the end of his critique of the theory, it even if the theory of the industrious revolution as initially presented by de Vries does not hold up to close and universal historical scrutiny, it is immensely useful as a call for new creative research and reconsiderations of previously established truths. Indeed, despite the critique levelled at it, it does seem to be undeniable that household consumption and material living standards did increase across Europe during the eighteenth century – and even earlier in rural England and the Low Countries. Thus, even though the causality between increased industriousness and increased consumption outside of the urban and progressive Low Countries during the period might not have been as de Vries first imagined it, the general trend that is instead presented – a concurrent development of a more market-oriented household production and household consumption towards more diversified homes focused on comfortable and fashionable consumption – does appear to be applicable throughout most of eighteenth century Europe (Bovenkerk & Fertig 2022; Hutchison 2014; Mas-Ferrer 2020; Overton et al. 2004; Ronsijn 2013; Van de Sompele 2021).

3.2. Markets and market development

One of the central arguments in de Vries' theory is that households increased their share of labour and production allocated to the market in order to acquire cash – or credit – with which they could acquire goods only available through the market. For them to be able to do so, there must have existed both a labour market big enough to meet the demand for wage work, and a market for goods developed and well-connected enough to carry the coveted novel consumer goods.[15] In this section, I will further discuss the impact of the market, market development during the early modern period, and how the early modern household would have interacted with the market.

Though self-sufficiency was likely the goal for most early modern rural producers, since at least the medieval period that goal had been far out of reach for almost everyone but the largest rural estates (Heckscher 1936; Isacson 1979; Weatherill

[15] Markets in this dissertation are understood as social arenas of exchange – either of goods, such as the grain market, or of services, such as the labour market. As such, they are subjected to the same institutional restrictions as society as a whole, and largely follows the same social norms and regulations.

1988; Vardi 1993; Warde 2006; Lindström 2008; Ronsijn 2013; Ågren 2017). Instead, households had to rely on local markets to supply them with those goods which they could not produce themselves, be they textiles, tools, dinnerware, furniture, or even food, as the case for households with little or no access to land. This reliance on markets to acquire base necessities allowed households to increase their productivity through specialisation, either in crafts through the acquisition of artisanal skills or in agricultural production through the acquisition of ever larger landholdings. Due to the issue of matching service to buyer, specialisation generally requires a relatively high level of population density, resulting in an accumulation of these specialists – artisans and merchants – in towns (Smith 1776; Braudel 1986). Ever since the publication of Smith's influential *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, there has been a tradition of viewing specialised markets as the drivers of economic development (Bateman 2016), though this has come under challenge stressing more diverse as well as institutional explanations (Braudel 1986).

Throughout the early modern period, access to the market and the transfer of goods was organised mainly through urban merchants, as these possessed the necessary equipment – mainly ships – and connections – both personal and professional – to facilitate the transfer of goods between regions (Braudel 1986; Marczinek, Maurer, & Rauch 2022). Through the expansion of trade networks and intensification of colonial trade, these merchants facilitated a decrease in price and increase in the circulation of goods during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which likely contributed to the increase in material standards over the period (Smith 1776; Béaur 2021). While urban consumers due to their geographical proximity would have had direct access to these merchants, only some rural consumers enjoyed unmediated access to urban markets; for most this access was handled by a local middleman, most commonly a large landowner or priest (Hanssen 1952; Ronsijn 2013).

Due to the agglomeration of merchants into towns, these would have functioned as nodes for local distribution of consumer goods and practices. Goods and novel consumer practices – such as drinking of tea or new fashions in clothing and furniture – would be imported first to the town by local merchants, and from there spread to the surrounding countryside through the interaction between urban and rural consumers (van Koolbergen 1983; Béaur 2021; Servais 2014). However, it is important to recognize that this process of diffusion was more dependent on access to merchants than any particular virtue inherent to the towns themselves, as exemplified by the low impact that towns had in early modern Chesapeake where rural planters had direct, unmediated access to foreign merchants (Green Carr & Walsh 1994).

For rural smallholders and landless labourers – often less diversified in their household production than large landholders – mediated market access through larger producers could often be used to shield the household from market fluctuations. Most importantly volatile grain prices, which during years of bad harvests would increase at a significantly higher rate than daily cash wages. Even in

relatively cash-rich societies of the period, most of the rural locally restricted market exchange – that between large landholders and their dependents – would have been either in kind – in the form of food – or in the form of credit (Ronsijn 2013; Lindström & Mispelaere 2015, 2016). Through such in-kind and credit contracts, these labourers could transfer the worst risks of the markets to the larger producers and guarantee themselves at least existence minimum; no matter the current price or availability of grain the large landholder still required wage labour to tend the fields.

More economically diversified households would have had less need for mediated market access, as they instead shielded themselves from market fluctuations through multiple different contact points by combining agricultural production with seasonal wage work and textile production (Gullickson 1986; Warde 2006). Indeed, contrary to the virtues of specialisation espoused by economic thinkers like Adam Smith, this redundancy inherent in diversification likely better allowed these early modern households to secure a stable wealth surplus that could be invested in better living standards (Keibek & Shaw-Taylor 2013; Van de Sompele 2021).

A majority of – especially rural – producers throughout Europe would likely have pursued a risk-averse production strategy; full market reliance would have been uncommon, and mostly pursued if deemed secure. Even large agricultural producers would consistently choose to first cover their own subsistence needs – including that of paying their dependents for wage work – before dedicating any surplus to the market (Gullickson 1986; Vardi 1993; Ronsijn 2013).

Lastly, for households seeking to improve their material conditions through manufactured goods it is important to remember that for every non-consumable good there existed during the early modern period not one market, but two: one for new manufactures and one for second-hand versions of the same good, available at significantly reduced prices (Roche 2000; McCants 2007; Murhem, Ulväng, & Lilja 2010; Stobart & Van Damme 2010; Mas-Ferrer 2023b). Through the secondary market – either pawnbrokers, common in England and on the continent, or auctions, its probably most common form – even poorer households could acquire novel consumers goods and partake of certain fashionable consumption otherwise not affordable to them. Though second-hand often entailed poorer quality, or even damaged goods, there are plenty of evidence that suggests that this was preferable to the alternative of not having these goods at all. As such partaking in the second-hand market was common throughout the early modern populace, no matter socio-economic status (McCants 2008; Murhem, Ulväng, & Lilja 2010; Stobart & Van Damme 2010).

4.Data

This dissertation is based almost exclusively on data from 3250 Swedish probate records, collected and compiled into the *South-Sweden Probate Inventory Database, 1570-1860*, which have been made publicly available through the economic history department webpage. The probate records were complemented using parish registers – especially the death books – to identify the age at death as well as correcting the data on occupational title. For the last paper in the dissertation, "Goods to rural markets: the effect of markets on household access to goods in southern Sweden during the late eighteenth century", the probate inventories were also supplemented with data on inter-regional trade flows – represented by ships per year arriving in the different towns in Scania and Halland – taken from the sound toll registers online and the Malmö harbour toll books. For 1751 and 1792 I had access to full transcriptions of the toll books for domestic ships arriving in Malmö, collected and organized by Anna Missiaia and Patrick Svensson and graciously shared with me for the paper.

This section will firstly discuss the probate inventories, some common source criticism issues regarding the inventories as a historical source material, and how they were sampled for the two databases. Following this a short discussion on the parish registers which were used to complement the inventories, and then a longer section on some of the unique issues related to the pre-1734 inventories. Lastly it ends with a discussion on the data on ship movements used for the last paper, and especially the potential issues identified with the sound toll registers.

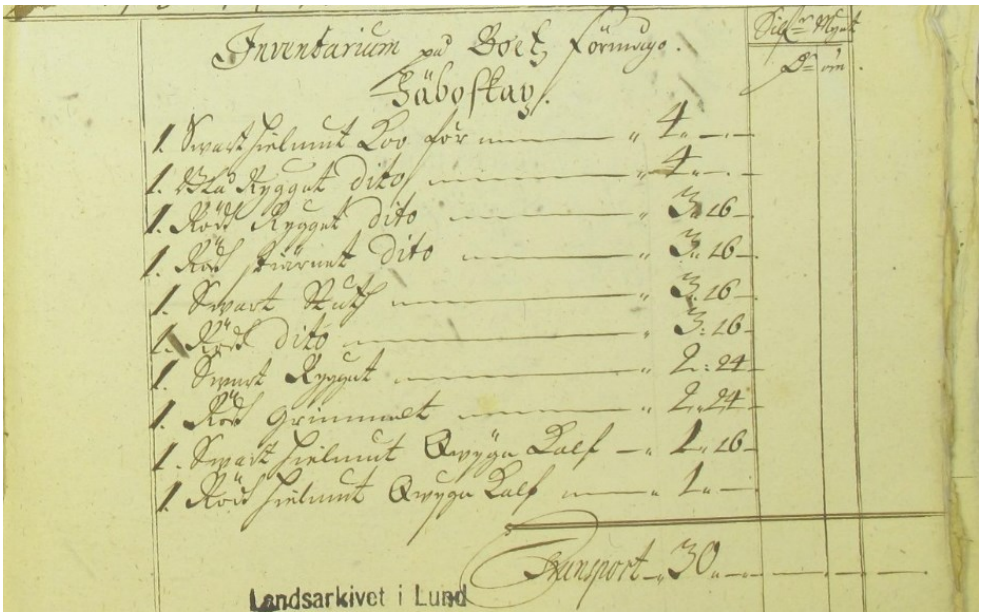
4.1. Probate inventories

The new law of 1734 made it mandatory to draw up a probate inventory of the household belongings after the death of either spouse.[16] According to the law, these inventories were to include all movable and immovable possessions, as well as both in- and outgoing debts, to facilitate a smooth division of the estate and guarantee payment to credit. In the towns, the role of assessor of the estate was undertaken by a town notary; on the countryside this was instead done by the local *nämndemän*

[16] *Sveriges Rikes Lag, Gillad och antagen på Riksdagen åhr 1734. Ärfde Balken, chapter IX, §1.*

(trustees) elected from and by the local peasants at the district courts (Lindgren 2002; *Sveriges Rikes Lag 1734*). However, even if the law came into effect already in 1734, it took until mid-century before the practice becomes common enough that we have surviving records in any substantial numbers – and even further until a majority of all deceased got an inventory compiled after death (Gadd 1983; Kuuse 1974; Lindgren 2002; Markkanen 1978).

Probate inventories are a veritable goldmine for information on historical household wealth and consumption, and oftentimes the only way to ascertain the ownership and spread of certain goods and objects. However, they are – as is the case of all historical sources – far from a perfect source material. From a source critical standpoint, probate records have three main issues: the issue of representability, the fact that the inventories by definition represent a snapshot of the end of the lifecycle of the household, and the issue of possible omissions.



Picture 2. The Cattle belonging to Per Larsson in Göstorp, Veine parish, 1699. Apart from the individual valuation, the colouration, whether male or female, as well as age of the cattle is provided in order to differentiate between animals during evaluation and division.

Since the inventory is a record of household possessions and wealth whose purpose is to facilitate the division of the estate between heirs, drawing one up should mainly have been in the interest of more affluent households in possession of enough wealth

and possessions to make the procedure of drawing up an inventory worth the time and expense. Poor households would not have been incentivised to draw up inventories after the death of a spouse – simply because there was nothing worthwhile to divide – and as such more affluent and well-to-do households should be overrepresented among the records (Gadd 1983; Keibek & Shaw-Taylor 2013; Lindert 1981). Furthermore, as probate records by design is drawn up only after death, it should furthermore overrepresent an older subsection of society (Di Matteo 1997; Lindgren 2002); barring sudden injury or illness, death tends to mainly affect the more elderly.

Neither of these problems are insurmountable, if the aim is to achieve a representative sample. If either the age or wealth distribution of the sampled society is known beforehand, then the results can effectively be weighed to – at least to an extent – counteract the source bias. This method, among others suggested by Peter H. Lindert (1981) already in the eighties, has been used in previous research to good success, for example by Lindgren (2002) who age-adjusted the credit values to analyse the late nineteenth-century credit marker, and by Bengtsson, Olsson, & Svensson (2022) who weighed the probated wealth against social tables for early eighteenth-century Stockholm to analyse the economic inequality of the town. However, the method is most useful when the goal of the study is to identify a distribution of something across society, usually wealth. For identifying the presence of goods or consumption practices – the purpose of the studies that are part of this dissertation – the issue becomes less to balance the results to synthesize a better representation, than to identify the extent of the misrepresentation in the material, and temper the analysis to match.

Unlike in many other parts of Europe – or indeed the world, since historical probate inventories can be found also in the Ottoman empire, as well as in feudal Japan – probate records were after the 1734 law reform universally mandatory in Sweden. However, as mentioned this does not mean that the surviving material is perfectly representative; it is for example well known among historians utilising probate records that there is a conspicuous absence in the sources of the destitute, who left no inheritable wealth to record, divide, or sell to pay any potential creditors (Gadd 1983; Kuuse 1974; Lindert 1981; Lindgren 2002; Osberg & Siddiq 1988). While the probate inventory did function as the basis for a part of the municipal tax collection as well as the medium through which assets were valued to pay outstanding debts, the assessors and notaries responsible for the process were usual practical people that understood that the process in some cases were pointless. Furthermore, as the presence of a probate inventory would relieve heirs of the responsibility to pay the debts of their parents – given that debtors were paid before the division and the heirs relieved themselves of the right of inheritance – heirs could

– and often did – request exception from probate on the ground that the estate lacked assets (Jónsson 2016; Lindgren 2002; *Sveriges Rikes Lag 1734*).[17]

It is a much-debated issue that the frequency of probation in Sweden before the late eighteenth century – or even early nineteenth century in some places – was extremely poor. In one of the more extreme examples, Isacson (1979: 211) in his study of By parish in central Sweden found a probation rate of only 1,6% for the period 1740-60, which has increased to only 8,5% in 1790-1820. However, not every region has so few surviving inventories, but rather it seems like the probate frequency in many parts of Sweden around 1750 were around 20-25% (Gadd 1983; Kuuse 1974). As can be seen in table 2 for the late eighteenth century this region too appears to boast a similar probate frequency, between 20 and 35%, which increases to 45-68% in the mid-nineteenth century, with significant regional differences.

Table 2. Probate Frequency in sampled parishes, aggregated on district level

	1780				1859/1860			
	Dead Over 10	All married Dead	Nr probated[a]	Probation rate	Dead Over 10	Dead Over 25	Nr probated[a]	Probation rate
Halland	188	153	53	28-35%	237	202	138	58-68%
Kristianstad	227	164	50	22-30%	334	293	183	55-62%
Malmöhus	380	249	73	19-29%	981	833	446	45-54%

a. Total number of probated individuals for 1860 include every individual with a probate record in the archived volue, rather than just those sampled for the study.

Note: Due to lack of mortality data for 1860, mortality for 1859 and probation frequency for 1860 has been used. Only calculated on sampled parishes for which both probated individuals and mortality data exists. Nobles are excluded from the 1859 mortality data, as these are not included in the probate data. Source: Tabellverket på Nätet, Umeå Universitet; Probate inventories collected from twelve district.

Unfortunately, we lack good and accessible mortality data for the earliest of the analysed periods, 1670-1720. Based on the very high share of probated rural priests – 6,4% of probated households – compared to their otherwise very low share of the total population – about 1% – it should be safe to assume that the probate frequency was both low and skewed in favour for more affluent households during this earlier period. However, 82% of probated individuals from the same period can with some certainty be assumed to have been peasants, based on a combination of recorded

[17] A good example for this is the sampled probate inventory of former Landwehr Emanuel Fredrik Henning, who died in Ystad in 1867 with a probated gross wealth of zero. According to his inventory, as submitted by his son, he left "no estate but his worn out clothes, of so poor condition as to be of no value whatsoever" ("*icke efterlemnat annan qvarlåtenskap än sine utslitne dagliga gångkläder, som woro af så dålig beskaffenhet, att de icke kunde åsättas något värde*."). Ystads rådhusrätt och magistrat (M) FII:52 (1860-1870) Bild 6080 (AID: v160250.b6080, NAD: SE/LLA/10214)

titles and the composition of the household goods. Furthermore, the very wide range of wealth levels for these earliest inventoried peasant households – spanning from 15 daler silver, roughly the cost of three cows, to over a thousand daler silver for the wealthiest of the peasants – suggests that individuals would not necessarily be excluded from having an inventory solely based on being poor, even before probate inventories becoming legally mandatory.

Surviving inventories are throughout Europe generally biased in which groups are represented, skewing greatly in favour for more capital-strong groups – be it economic, cultural, or social. Across Europe, labourers and the landless are, even when taking their relatively lower wealth-levels into account, greatly underrepresented – though this decreases drastically over the nineteenth century – while priests and merchants are severely overrepresented (Gadd 1983; Isacson 1979; Lindert 1981; Muldrew 2011; Overton et al. 2004). This skewed representation together with the very low probate frequency prior to the nineteenth century leads to a relatively low number of inventories belonging to, so to speak, common people. However, paraphrasing Muldrew's (2011: 13) argument for his study of English labourers: given the sheer number of inventories which has survived, the absolute number of inventories is still large enough to provide a statistically significant sample.

Table 3. Representativity of the Sample on the countryside, 1780-85

		Priests	Peasants	Commoners of rank	Rural labourers	Retirees
Halland	Tabellverket	0,4%	56,7%	0,4%	32,6%	10,0%
	Probate records	1,0%	63,0%	1,5%	22,0%	12,5%
	Congruity	2,8	1,1	3,9	0,7	1,2
Kristianstad	Tabellverket	0,6%	49,1%	0,6%	41,6%	8,1%
	Probate records	0,5%	56,6%	4,2%	37,7%	0,9%
	Congruity	0,8	1,2	6,6	0,9	0,1
Malmöhus	Tabellverket	0,6%	41,5%	0,9%	52,4%	4,5%
	Probate records	0,9%	63,8%	2,6%	30,6%	2,2%
	Congruity	1,4	1,5	2,9	0,6	0,5

Note: Only calculated on sampled parishes for which both probated individuals and mortality data exists.
Source: Tabellverket på Nätet, Umeå Universitet; Probate inventories collected from twelve district.

When looking more closely at the comparison between the probate records and the socio-economic composition of society, as noted in the censuses, we can

furthermore see that the discrepancy in southern Sweden is far less severe than could be expected. Unfortunately, of the three analysed periods the 1780s census is the only one for which this comparison is possible due to the later period lacking a clear distinction between landed peasants and rural labourers. In table 3, the composition of the rural population as presented by contemporary censuses was compared with the composition of inventoried households; a congruity of 1 denotes a perfect match between the two sources, while a value higher than 1 indicates that the group is overrepresented in the probate material. As can be seen, the peasant and labouring groups are generally well represented in most of the analysed region, with a slightly more significant discrepancy in the Malmöhus parishes. Commoners of rank – so called *ofrälse ståndpersoner* – on the other hand greatly are overrepresented, as should be expected due to their generally higher levels of capital. What is more interesting is the large under-representation of retirees.

Despite its many shortcomings regarding the level of representation, the Swedish probate material still appears to be mostly comparable to – and in some extent better than – similar material from other regions in Europe (Bovenkerk & Fertig 2022; Mas-Ferrer 2023b; Overton et al 2004), apart from the fact that they in Sweden become significantly more bountiful during the period when they in England start to disappear (Keibek & Shaw-Taylor 2013). The ample presence of households from every social and economic group suggests that factors other than just household wealth appears to have been important for whether any individual inventory is available today; whether the inventory was successfully submitted to a court archive (Isacson 1979), or whether said archive or collection has survived to the modern day.[18] Similarly, the age at death-distribution among the probated individuals in southern Sweden does not appear to skew as old as most historians seem to assume – at least not before the mid nineteenth century. Surprisingly, there appear to be more in favour of the probated individuals being of a somewhat lower average age at death than the population as a whole – if you exclude infant and early child mortality and only count individuals who survived to the age of 15[19] – than for the opposite; the average age at death for the individuals in the dataset is about 54, while for the population as a whole during the same period is between 55 – for men – and 58 – for women (SCB 1999).

[18] A good example is the Halmstad town probate inventories from before 1820, which were lost when the town hall burned down in 1880. Similarly is the missing inventory of Sören Sörensson, mayor of Falkenberg between 1730 and his death at some point in the 1750s, who at his death was one of the wealthiest individuals in the town; the inventory of his wife, who died about a decade later, is present.

[19] The extremely high share of infant – as well as early life – mortality prior to the middle of the twentieth century skews the age at death-statistics to such an extent as to make it mostly useless. Instead, historians of the period prior to the twentieth-century decrease in childhood mortality should calculate average age at death either only on individuals who reached adulthood – about 15 for the early modern period – or those who survived early childhood – about 5.

Another issue with probate inventories as sources for household consumption is the fact that they, by the nature of the medium and the circumstances of how they are drawn up, represent only a snapshot at the end of the life of the individual. The inventories can only be used to measure stocks of goods – i.e. the sum total of belongings at a single point in time – rather than flows – i.e. the everyday reality of consumption, gifting, breaking and replacing of items that occurs over a lifetime (Bedell 2000; Malanima & Pinchero 2012). As such, while historians can utilise the goods recorded in the probate inventory to present general trends of consumption – such as finding porcelain significantly more common at the end of the eighteenth century than at the beginning of it – we cannot draw any specific conclusions on how these household acquired these – whether consumed on the market for full price, second-hand through auctions, or inherited from deceased parents. While it is easy to interpret the rising stocks of consumer goods found in the eighteenth-century probate records – during a period of otherwise decreasing real wages and rising grain prices – as a sign of industriousness, since the objects in probate inventories are non-perishables, it is just as likely that these goods were simply acquired during good years of momentary surplus (Malanima & Pinchero 2012). Similarly, decreasing costs of manufactured goods during the eighteenth century combined with greater access to second-hand markets might have depreciated prices enough to make these widely affordable despite the poor economy of the labouring classes, even without an increase in industriousness during the period (Mas-Ferrer 2020).

The last main issue with probate inventories is the case of omissions. While the inventory, technically, is supposed to be a complete inventory of the possessions of the individual, the reality is that we as historians can never know whether this is the case or not, due to several different limiting factors. Firstly the assessors, as well as the heirs, would mainly have been interested in items of value, meaning that objects that were damaged, broken, or just generally of limited or no monetary value – such as knitting needles, footstools, the so-called "bed bugs board" (*lusbräda*)[20], and even chickens – would be missing from the inventory (Adamson 2009).

Secondly, in regions where the probated estate were the subject of a percentage tax – such as in Sweden, post 1734 – there exists an incentive for households to circumvent the official post-death inventories and division by gifting away objects before death, in which case they no longer belongs to the household of the deceased and thus will not be recorded, valued, and taxed. These types of inter vivos transfers would have been most common among the wealthier households – who would have been liable to higher taxes – and would have mostly encompassed smaller high-value objects – such as jewellery, clothes, and books – which would have been easy to inconspicuously remove from the household prior to death (Bringéus 1974;

[20] A small wooden board perforated with small holes meant to trap bed bugs travelling between the bed and the wall. Examples can be found in several museums throughout Sweden, usually dated to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: https://digitaltmuseum.se/011023665653/lusbrada

Lindert 1981). There are signs in the Swedish probate records that assessors were aware of this problem, and might have taken some steps to counteract – or at least include – this; several inventories include notes such as "gifted to the children before death" next to the recorded clothes, sometimes even with a value that would be included in the household total.

Furthermore, objects belonging solely to other individuals than the deceased would not be included in the inventory. While the probate inventory in general is a record of the *household* possessions owned by the household as a social and economic unit, some items appear to have been strictly personal. This would mostly only include clothes and jewellery, which explains why the inventories clothes always explicitly belongs to the deceased and very seldomly their spouse. Other personal items might have been included in this category, such as books, pieces of art, watches, and tobacco accessories. Children's toys would likely also have been personal belongings, which would explain their almost complete and conspicuous absence within probate inventories, since children would not be probated (Adamson 2009). Apart from this it is likely that some property – most notably the household pets – might not have been considered as anyone's possessions, since these too are – as a rule – never found in inventories.

These issues are by no means unsurmountable, and apart from the aforementioned checking so that the collected sample does not suffer any severe age bias we took several different countermeasures when gathering and analysing the data to get around these source issues. The first of these is the scale of the sample; even if some of the sampled inventories might not be perfectly representative of a contemporary household – such as missing objects gifted away before death, or belonging to considerably younger or older individuals – the large number of sampled households should average out all these discrepancies. Similarly, the wide geographical spread should help counteract any geographically specific issues, such as biased or inexperienced assessors – at least on the countryside where these were elected on the district level.

Secondly, the articles that are a part of this dissertation is mainly focusing on what is found in the inventories, and treating this as a lower limit base for assumptions – assuming that individuals consciously embellishing their upcoming inventory by purchasing status objects shortly before death is an uncommon occurrence.[21] Similarly, the stock versus flow-issue is acknowledged by only analysing the inventories as presentations of a stock of goods at several distinct points in time, with the focus instead being on the development of these stocks between these

[21] This issue is raised by Bringéus (1977:10f), who retells anecdotes of elderly individuals acquiring large quantities of linen and silver goods shortly before their death with the express purpose that their probate inventory – and by extension their legacy – would look better when submitted to the courts. No sampled inventory shows signs of this custom, which should express itself by an uncommonly large collection of objects in silver, gold, or pewter in relation to household wealth.

points. That these objects are present in the inventory means that the household at some point in the past acquired it; whether through inheritance or purchase – either first or second hand – is not as important as the implication of households owning a specific object that was uncommon – or even completely absent – among households in the area just 60 years prior. As such, focus is shifted from the inventory as a source of individual household consumption to a source of societal consumption patterns.

Lastly the papers in the dissertation acknowledges that the source material is biased in favour for more affluent households, and structures the analysis to compensate. The division of the sampled households into wealth groups – common in studies of historical consumption using probate inventories (Blondé & Van Damme 2010; Ulväng 2021) – is both a way of acknowledging that wealth has a major impact on consumption (Shammas 1990), and a way to identify and isolate the poorer households that otherwise would be lost in the average. The absolute destitute unfortunately remains out of reach; to analyse the possessions – however meagre, – daily consumption, and daily work of this group a whole other type of source in necessary.

4.1.1. Complementary data

Since the probate records do not record the age at death of the probated individuals, this data had to be collected from elsewhere. To do so, the sampled individuals were linked to the parish death books, using the available information on name, place of living, date of death, and surviving family members – spouse and possible children – presented in the preamble to the inventory. For the rural probate records, this meant going through the parish books from around 160 different parish church archives – a feat only made possible through these being accessible digitally through Arkiv Digital.[22] As the urban probate records, unlike the rural ones, does not record the church (parish) that the deceased belonged to, linking these individuals – at least those for Malmö which had three churches,[23] and Ystad which had two – also necessitated identifying which of the town parishes the deceased belonged to, but was helped by the higher number of occupational titles which helped differentiate people of similar names.

[22] I am very thankful to my co-supervisor, Mats Olsson, who, due to an oversight on my own part, undertook the arduous and time-consuming task of linking the lion share of the sampled rural population to the parish registers.

[23] One of these churches in Malmö was the garrison church, which only served the town soldiers and officers. Both the other two lacked proper geographical or social boundaries within the town – apart from Caroli town parish originally being the local German church – and thus there were no clear demarcation of who might belong to which church.

In some cases, it was furthermore found that the title of deceased differed between the probate records and the parish books; either that the probate record lacked a proper occupational title, or that the parish death book presented a more detailed title – such as adding the prefix "former" to craftsmen in the town. In these cases, the title presented in the parish register took precedence; the priest – who would have been responsible for filling out the parish registers – would most likely have been more familiar with the deceased. As such he would have been more likely to record the correct information than the assessors who usually would have been strangers – on the countryside likely not even from the same parish – and thus reliant on the information of the surviving spouse or children, who might have wanted to embellish the status of the deceased for the official court record.

4.1.2. Probate records from before 1734

As previously mentioned, one of the greatest contributions of the dissertation and research project it is connected to is the broad and large-scale sampling of pre-1734 probate inventories. These particular probate inventories, however, presents different problems than those from later periods. Before the enactment of the law making probate inventories legally mandatory in 1734, drawing up a probate inventory after death was a local custom – possibly mandated by local town laws – subject to local traditions and the necessities of the relatives, rather than a standardized legal process.

The south-Swedish regions that belonged to Denmark prior to the peace of Roskilde in 1658 appears to have had a significantly older and more established tradition of probate records than the rest of the country, due to the medieval legal tradition of Denmark (Bringéus 1977; Jónsson 2016). While this means that this region has a significant number of inventories from far earlier than most of the rest of Sweden, it also means that they are not as standardized as they will later become; with only local custom based on the local inheritance law – which did not mandate written probates (Jónsson 2016) – to back up their use, it is unfortunately unclear how representative these documents are. Though it is difficult to draw definite conclusions based simply on the surviving material – especially with the lack of written complementary material such as guidelines to assessors – there are some general trends in the pre-1734 inventories – especially the obligatory preambles – as well as the inheritance laws of the time that can give us some hints to their practice.

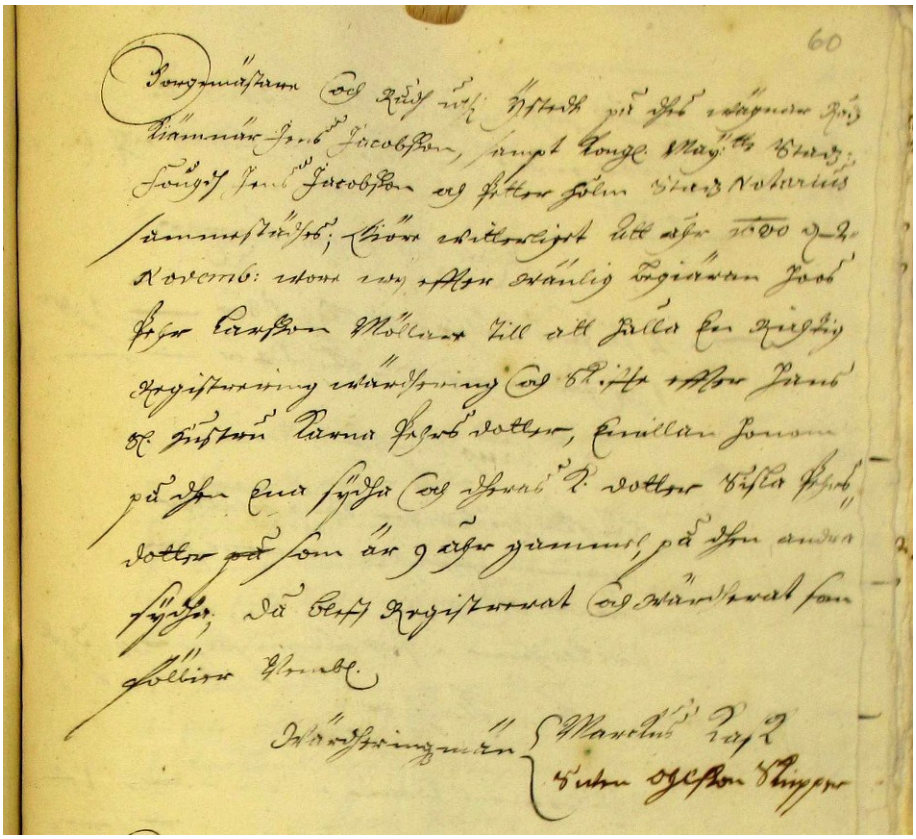
While Danish inheritance laws from the medieval period and later did not mandate the drawing up of an inventory, the law was written as to protect the right of heirs – especially minors put under guardianship – as well as guarantee the payment of debts. Furthermore, in those instances when inventories were drawn up, the Danish law prioritized inventories after deceased men rather than women as a way to enforce the undivided partition of the male property to his heirs un-altered by the

widow. Unlike what became mandated in Sweden later – as well as in Denmark in 1664, six years after the sampled regions were given over to Sweden – in no cases were the relatives of the deceased obligated to register any written documentation with the local authorities for future reference (Jónsson 2016). Thus, every single surviving probate inventory from before 1734 must have been an active decision on the part of the surviving relatives.

The decision to draw up a probate inventory would have been affected by several different factors. It is likely that it would have been incentivized in cases where the estate would have been contested between several heirs, or when the estate had significant amount of debt and there was significant risk for the courts to become involved. In these cases – as they became later – a written inventory would have acted as a legal document that could support the claims of the inheritors – whether the claim concerned the practical division of the estate or the proper payment of creditors (Jónsson 2016). According to the later legislation of 1734 – which likely was a formalization of earlier practices – heirs who waived their right to the estate would be freed from the obligations of its debts, and since debtors commonly were paid from the estate before it was divided a written probate inventory could protect the heirs from the debts of their parents should these supersede the value of the estate.

Since contemporary praxis encouraged inventories as a way to guard the possessions of minors against the miss-use by guardians and widows, and only estates of certain values would have been contested in court, it can be assumed that surviving inventories from this period are biased to represent a relatively more affluent and economically active part of the population. Testing this hypothesis is more difficult, though.

Unfortunately, due to an absence of surviving complementary sources for this first period the attempt to link the probated individuals to parish death books only successfully identified the age at death for 16% of the sampled rural and 34% of urban individuals, which means that the potential age bias for these probates is difficult to ascertain. Based on the 80 individuals for who age at death is known, both the mean and median age at death is 49,5 years. While this does suggest no clear old-age bias, the sample is too small to be properly representative. However, since one of the main rationales behind drawing up a written inventory during the period was to protect the inheritance of minor children the inventory preamble consistently includes information on the heirs of the deceased – with special emphasis on the presence of minors under guardianship, including information of the age of these children, such as in picture 3. Thus, while we often don't have the age of the deceased we do have information on whether they had children under the age of around 18-20 – the most common cut-off point for when age stopped being noted down for children – or lower.



Picture 3. The preamble for the inventory of the wife Karna Persdotter (d. 1680) in Ystad, including information on the name and title of her husband, the name and age of their daughter (Sissa Persdotter, aged 9), the date that the inventory was made, and the name of the assessors.

We coded a relative household age based on the preamble describing all children as being minors (defined as 18 years or younger based on the cut-off point for when children's ages stop being recorded), being of both legal age and minors, of only legal age, or the household having no children. Using this information it was possible to roughly determine the position of the household in the household life cycle. Based on the average age at first marriage – and subsequent first child within a year afterwards – in Scania during the period being 34,3 years for men and 29,1 for women (Lundh 1997), heads of household with all children being minors should be – on average – between 30 and 55 years old. Even with an approximate five-year margin of error in either direction – and assuming that the first child survived to adult age – this should place this group pretty firmly in the young- to peak-family household life cycle stages – as identified by Horrell, Humphries, and Weisdorf

(2021)[24] for England during the early modern period – during which time the household generally is the most active.

The individuals for whom we have an established age at death can be used to check the validity to this hypothesis. While the average age at first marriage decreases in Sweden over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it does so very gradually – with only about four years – until after the breakthrough of industrialization and acceleration of urban migration after around 1860 (Lundh 1997). Furthermore, the evidence of a clear presence of life-cycle squeezes in early nineteenth century Swedish towns presented by Lilja and Bäcklund (2013) suggests both a similar situation in Sweden as is England, and a stability of the household life-cycle over the early modern period that should allow us to safely extrapolate the general trends we can identify backwards onto the pre-1734 period.

Table 4. Age distribution for household age categories

	no children	minors	minors and legal age	all legal age	total
20-30	86	105	0	0	191
31-40	65	259	8	2	334
41-50	91	240	82	7	420
51-60	101	111	152	87	451
61+	148	48	158	450	804
Total	491	763	401	545	2200

Source: Probate inventories collected from twelve district and three town archives, church and parish records collected from 167 parish archives, collected into a unified database.

As can be seen in Table 4, it does seem like a general trend that individuals whose children are all legal minors are indeed significantly younger than those with at least one adult child, placing the absolute majority of them safely within either the young or peak household life-cycle stages. As should be expected the age at death then continuously increase with the age of the children; in households with all children being over the age of 18 – i.e. at the point where their ages are usually no longer recorded in the preamble – the absolute majority of probated individuals are aged 61 years or older, putting them firmly in the post-family and old age life-cycle stages.

[24] Horrell, Humphries, & Weisdorf (2021) defined the different household life-cycle stages for England, for which they divided the life of an individual into six distinct life-cycle staged: youth between ages 15 to 25, the young family stage from 25 to 35, peak family stage from 35 to 45, old family stage from 45 to 55, post-family stage from 55-65, and finally old age from 65 until death. Since the mean age at first marriage was significantly lower in England than in Sweden – around 26 in England contra 32 in Sweden, if no difference is made for gender (Hajnal 1965; Lundh 1997; Goldstone 2010) – all of these spans, apart from the start of youth, can safely be increased by 5 years when applied to Swedish circumstances.

Based on this division on household age based on the relative age of the children of the deceased, presented in table 5, we can determine that there does not appear to exist any unique source bias concerning the age of the deceased for the first period. The remarkably similar distribution – with an especially large share of relatively younger households with only minor children – suggests that no major shifts in the probate practices occurred over the eighteenth century, apart from them becoming mandatory and thus more common.

Table 5. Household age distribution

	-1720		1780s		1860s	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
All minors	337	40%	386	39%	373	31%
Minors and legal age	146	17%	195	20%	213	17%
All legal age	182	22%	201	20%	366	30%
No children	181	21%	207	21%	270	22%

Source: Probate inventories collected from twelve district and three town archives, church and parish records collected from 167 parish archives, collected into a unified database.

While this likely over-representation of a younger strata of the population appears to confirm that the probate records are somewhat biased to more economically active households, this over-representation does not appear as severe as could be expected. Whether they are biased towards more affluent households, however, is harder to ascertain. Surviving tax records from the late seventeenth century are generally scarce, and probate inventories are one of the main ways to calculate household wealth and wealth inequality during the early modern period. As such, the necessary comparison against which to measure a potential wealth bias is largely missing. The safest assumption in this case – based on our knowledge of the custom of probate inventories prior to 1734 – is that there should exist a wealth bias for this period, with a generally wealthier section of the populace more likely to have a surviving inventory.

This potential bias needs to be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions for the eighteenth-century development, least we risk overstating developments such as the decrease in cattle ownership or households becoming poorer. The impact differs rather significantly depending on what is analysed, however. A good example is the analysis of rural household consumption in paper II: contrary to the common assumption of wealth bias making results less reliable, the identified trend of increased household consumption among poorer households is only reinforced if the first pre-1734 period indeed includes a generally wealthier sample to compare the late eighteenth century with.

4.2. Sound toll Registers

For the fourth paper in the dissertation, the probate data was complemented with data from the Sound Toll Registers on ships passing through the *Öresund* on their way to cities in Scania or Halland. The entire Sound toll Registers has been digitized and made available online through the work of the *University of Groningen* and *Tresoar, Frisian Historical and Literary Centre at Leeuwarden*, through the Sound Toll Registers Online Database.[25]

The Sound Toll Registers are the records left after the Sound Toll, a tax levied by the Danish crown on – ostensibly - all ships passing between the Atlantic Ocean and the Baltic Sea through the *Öresund*, from 1429 and until it was abolished through international pressure in 1857. These tax officials were located in Helsingør (*Elsinore*) and levied the toll through the threat of the cannons at the fortress that guarded the town, which could sink any ships that attempted to pass by without paying. Even after Denmark lost control of the other side of the sound – with the loss of Scania to Sweden after the peace at Roskilde – in 1658, they manage to keep sole control of the toll; in part due to concessions to Swedish traders in the form of a lower toll cost (Gøbel 2010).

From at least the seventeenth century and forward, the toll constituted a significant part of the income of the Danish crown. For every ship that passed through the sound, the Danish toll officials in Helsingør would record the name and origin of the captain, both ports of departure and destination, as well as cargo of the ship. In order to defer the captains to trick the toll officials – i.e. by undervalue or omit some of the cargo – the Danish crown enforced the right of these notaries to purchase the entire cargo for the given resale value. Among historians of world trade, these registers appear to be a generally well-regarded source for measuring trade – it is held that the increase in passages through the sound toll mirrors the general increase in world trade during the period (Gøbel 2010; cf. Rönnbäck 2010; Gallagher 2016; Veluwenkamp & Scheltjens [eds.] 2018). Other historians, however, raise concerns about the quality of the registers, especially regarding levels of omission, and stress that they should be used with caution (Dow 1964; Pounds 1979; Charles & Daudin 2018)

Though this data is only used for part of the paper, it raises some important concerns about this source. For a more extensive discussion on the identified problems with the sound toll registers, I will refer to the paper itself; in short, it seems likely that there are nigh insurmountable levels of omissions in the registers – especially regarding trade in the immediate vicinity of the toll – prior to the toll reform of 1842. For example, for Malmö the registers only seem to capture 2% of domestic trade originating from north of the sound toll in 1742, and 47% in 1792. Though

[25] The Sound Toll Registers Online Database can be accessed via www.soundtoll.nl (2025-02-18)

comparisons with more detailed city-level data from Malmö seems to confirm that the Sound Toll Registers still can be used to identify general trends, historians should be wary of trying to use the source for any detailed studies. Especially of the regions immediately surrounding the toll, such as southern Sweden or northern Germany.

5. Methodology

5.1 The rural sample

As a first step of the project, my supervisors Erik Bengtsson and Mats Olsson inventoried all district (*häradsrätt*) and town (*rådhusrätt*) court archives in Sweden to identify significant collections of pre-1734 rural probate records to sample. While surviving inventories from this period exist in district archives all throughout Sweden, three main geographical clusters with a substantial number of inventories were identified as possible research regions: a large cluster of districts in southern Sweden, going from around Malmö and up through Scania to the districts around Halmstad; a smaller cluster located around the town of Kalmar in Småland; and one encompassing all of Gotland in the Baltic Sea.[26] Ultimately, the larger size of the south-Swedish cluster, as well as the presence of several towns also with large collections of pre-1734 probate inventories within or close by decided in favour of focusing the study of southern Sweden in particular; the selected districts and towns can be seen in Figure 3. That all of the chosen districts are located in previously Danish territory in southern Sweden – ceded to Sweden with the peace at Roskilde in 1658 – has two further advantages for the study: Firstly, the common tradition of probating inherited from the Danish administration of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries assured that the records from all these regions would conform to the same base standard regarding both structure and valuation – for example all probate records in the chosen areas before the monetary reform in 1775 are valued in *Daler Silvermynt*, unlike those found further north which are often instead valued in *Daler Kopparmynt*; and secondly, by choosing a single, more or less continuous region we could make sure to minimize – but of course not remove – the impact of different regional trade connections, since all of these three areas had significant economic integration already from early on in the period (Hanssen 1952: 228f; Wiking-Faria 2009: 55f).

[26] I am very grateful to my both supervisors for this preparatory work.

Studies in Swedish agrarian history traditionally divide and classify the countryside into three distinct regional types; Plain land (*slättbygd*), Forest land (*skogsbygd*), and intermediate 'Shrub' land (*risbygd*), originating from the seminal ethnographic study of Åke Campbell (1928) and based on how geographical preconditions would create distinct regional economies and building cultures. As can be seen in table 6, all three of the region types are represented among the analysed regions, albeit with a slight overrepresentation of shrub regions as that is the most common type found in Halland. In general, the plains regions are found among the south and southwestern plains of Scania, while the inland is more forested. For the actual analysis households were classified as living in a specific type of region on parish basis – rather than district – since the districts are not always geographically uniform.

Table 6. Regional composition of the Rural Production and Consumption 1670-1865 Database

Country	District	Number of inventories			Region type
		1670-1720	1780-85	1860-65	
Halland		198	200	200	
	Halmstad	107	147	148	Shrub
	Tönnersjö	57	36	35	Shrub
	Hök	34	17	17	Shrub
Malmöhus		135	228	228	
	Oxie	59	64	64	Plains
	Skytts	30	28	28	Plains
	Frosta	8	35	35	Shrub/Plain
	Vemmenhög	24	34	34	Shrub/Plain
	Rönneberga	6	34	34	Shrub/Plain
	Bara	8	33	33	Plains
Kristianstad		150	212	318	
	Norra Åsbo	48	35	35	Forest
	Södra Åsbo	47	66	111	Shrub
	Östra Göinge	30	50	61	Forest
	Bjäre	25	61	111	Shrub
Total		483	640	746	

Sources: Probate inventories collected from twelve district archives, collected into a unified database. Note: Type of area classified based on Rosenberg (1882-1883a & b), Campbell (1928), and Bohman (2010).

The plains region of southwestern Scania in contemporary Malmöhus county – including the sampled districts surrounding Malmö – is one of the most fertile regions in the entirety of Sweden (Bohman 2010). Densely populated, the area was highly cultivated already by the seventeenth century and would be leading in the adoption of the innovations of the agricultural revolution of the early nineteenth

century during which period it would quickly become the breadbasket of Sweden (Olsson & Svensson 2010). Further north of this fertile area the geography becomes more diverse and forested, as the plains regions give way to first shrubland and then the forests of northern Scania. These regions are more economically diverse than the highly agricultural plains, with a greater focus on husbandry, transport work, and handicraft. During the latter half of the eighteenth century this region underwent rapid land reclamation, which greatly expanded available farmland and allowed for a significant population increase (Campbell 1928; Hanssen 1952). In the northern-most analysed districts in Halland county, there was also a particularly high share of noble-owned land which furthermore entailed a relatively higher rent-burden for the rural population. In this area a large part of the population were forced to compensate their meagre agricultural income with seasonal migratory wage labour in the more fertile Scania to the south, or export of household textile production to the proto-industrial region of *Sjuhäradsbygden* further to the north (Hanssen 1952; Johansson 2001; Wiking-Faria 2009). The geographical extent of the analysed area can be seen in figure 3.

An issue that arises when trying to extrapolate generally applicable patterns of historical development from studies on a single, or even a few, regions is the question of representativeness: if the analysed regions are so unique, is it possible to generalise the development found there to Sweden – not to say Europe – more broadly? Though it is likely correct that the Oxie peasants – with their excellent soil quality and close proximity to an urban market – had very different economic preconditions and possibilities than a peasant in the mountainous *Bergslagen* region of central Sweden – whose income was mostly derived from their participation in rural proto-industrial iron production – the same can be said for every single region in Sweden. Wiking-Faria (2009: 51) raises a salient point when he asks whether there actually exists something like a "normal" region. He follows this question with a quote from historian Christer Winberg stressing that if every region is unique, then it becomes the historian's task "to identify the general features in the multitude of unique details."[27]

[27] Quote of Christer Winberg, taken from Wiking-Faria (2009: 51) and translated by me, original: "att försöka se generella drag i myllret av unika detaljer".

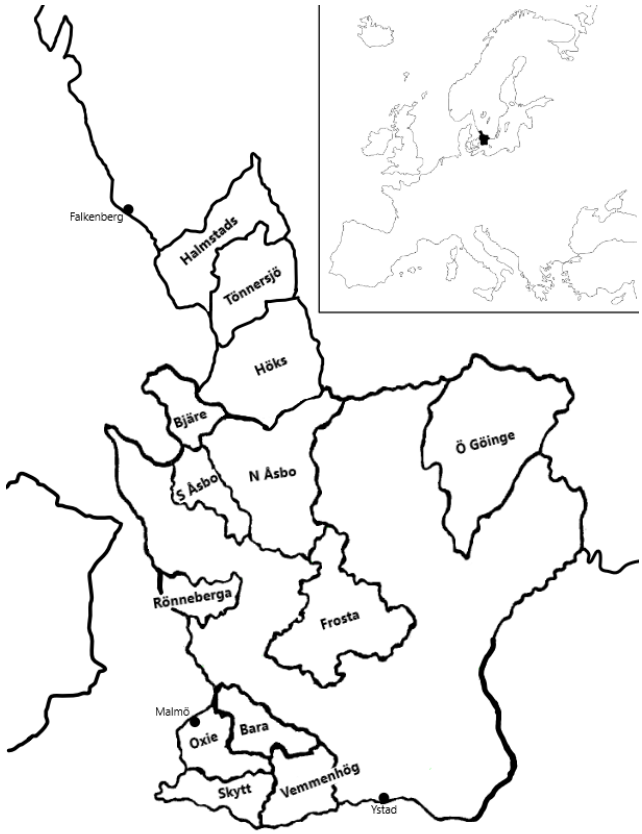


Figure 3. The analysed areas. Source: Author.

These general features and common patterns of development have indeed been the focus for the study. As can be seen clearly in papers I and II later in this dissertation, despite their starkly different geographical and economic preconditions the general development pattern is remarkably similar across the different regions. Indeed, as further noted by Wiking-Faria (2009: 51-52), the differences between the regions are in this case likely beneficial as they further accentuate the commonalities and shared historical development when it comes to, for example, the adoption of new consumer behaviours, or the diversification of household production into proto-industrial spinning and weaving.

5.2 The urban sample

The three towns of Malmö, Ystad, and Falkenberg were selected for the study. The towns all have the advantage of boasting a significant number of pre-1734 probate records; or at least relatively significant, as the case of Falkenberg. Furthermore, the countryside surrounding the towns all have plenty of surviving probate records from before 1734 as well, making possible a comparison between town and countryside.[28] The towns also represent a good spread of sizes and wealth; as can be seen in table 7, the towns range in size from medium – within a Swedish perspective – to very small. Just as is the case for the countryside, these differences in size and wealth between the sampled town should accentuate the similarities and allow for the identification of the uniquely urban early modern characteristics.

Table 7. Town population size in Swedish comparison

	1580s/1610s	1690s	1770s	1800	1860
Stockholm	8 000	55 000	68 800	75 517	112 391
Göteborg	1 300	4 800	11 000	12 804	37 043
Malmö	3 800	5 700	4 800	3 962	18 919
Gävle	1 500	1 800	3 800	5 410	10 975
Ystad	1 300	1 800	2 400	2 460	5 324
Arboga	1 600	2 000	1 600	1 412	2 882
Simrishamn	200	500	600	664	1 415
Falkenberg	300	400	600	668	1 131

Note. Source is Lilja (1994), Appendix for the first three dates and SCB (1967), Table 12 for 1800 and 1860. SCB's city-level data begins in 1800.

All three of the towns have medieval origins, and thus well predate the Swedish annexation of the region in 1658 (*Svensk uppslagsbok* 1931). Malmö was long the second town in the Danish kingdom, and expanded during the sixteenth century on the back of herring fishing and trade with Lübeck and the Hansa (Tomner 1977; Olsson 2023); though it stagnated under Swedish rule, the expansion of the harbour in 1775 as well as the agrarian revolution together with a lifting of the restrictions on grain exports led to a second period of growth in the nineteenth century (Olsson & Svensson 2010). Ystad and Falkenberg, on the other hand, were significantly smaller with a more steady population growth over the period. Due to good harbours, they functioned as regional market towns, with especially Ystad for a

[28] Halmstad – as the county seat of residence – would have been preferable as a choice to Falkenberg – the smallest and arguably poorest town in the county. However, the Halmstad town hall burned down in 1880, which destroyed the town archive and with it nearly all documents – including the probate records – from before 1820.

period during the early eighteenth century being probably the most important port in Scania (Kraft & Bjurling 1956). However, whereas both Malmö and Ystad retained their staple rights after the Swedish annexation, and thus remained important ports for foreign trade, Falkenberg lost them already in 1660. Though it retained town privileges, it was outside of its immediate hinterland relatively insignificant during the rest of the early modern; described by the nineteenth-century cartographer Carl af Forsell (1824:33) as "the poorest town in the county", it housed in the 1730s only five merchants and 27 craftsmen (Bexell 1929).

Due in part to the old custom of drawing up probate records in Denmark, and in part due to the relative importance of the town within the Danish kingdom, Malmö furthermore has a significant number of preserved probate records going back to the early 1500s. A selection of these – almost every available inventory from between 1570 and 1599 – were sampled as a corollary part of the project,[29] and initial results of this can be found in paper III in this dissertation. Issues of comparability with the later records made it difficult to fully incorporate these inventories into the broader analysis of consumption and living standards: at the end of the sixteenth century, it appears as if the custom of drawing up probate records might not have been completely developed yet. The records in the volumes include a combination of actual, recognisable probate records, protocols detailing only the division of the estate, and so-called sealing protocols – an initial list of the contents of the home drawn up shortly after death to be valued and divided at a future point. Consequently, not all of the sixteenth century records includes a proper and complete inventory and valuations of the household assets.

Table 8. Composition of the Urban Production and Consumption 1570-1860s database

	1570-1599	1670-1720	1780s	1860s
Malmö	144	203	201	200
Ystad	-	157	108	201
Falkenberg	-	44	43	80
Total	144	404	352	481

Source: Probate inventories collected from three town archives, collected into a unified database.

The composition of the urban sample can be seen in table 8; due to the very small size of Falkenberg, this town is significantly less represented than the other two towns. However, despite the sample period for the towns during the 1780s and

[29] We are very grateful to Ebbe Kocks stiftelse for supplying funding for the sampling of the sixteenth century probate records, within the project *Levnadsstandard i skånska städer ca 1540-1800*, and to Anders Larsson for undertaking the practical and arduous task of sampling.

1860s being a decade – unlike the five years decided upon for the countryside – not even the significantly bigger Ystad could provide the wished-for 200 probate inventories for the 1780s.

5.3 Periodization and sample size

After settling for the areas to study, the next step was to delineate the periodization from which to sample the probate records, as well as the size of the collected sample. Since the goal of the project was to study long-term developments up until the cusp of industrialisation in the 1860s, it was decided to split the research period into three different samples – roughly evenly spaced across the full period. From the initial survey of the available probate records we knew roughly the number of individual probates we could expect to sample in the different regions up until they became mandatory in 1734.

Based on these expectations it was decided to place the first cut-off point in 1720; according to the initial survey this should have allowed us to collect circa 200 probates from (almost) every region and town, and historically it coincides with the end of Swedish Empire with the death of Charles XII in 1718 and the start of the so-called Age of Liberty. This first period, starting in the 1670s from when we have the earliest surviving probate records on the south-Swedish countryside, is by far the longest of the three analysed periods, spanning fifty years rather than five. Unlike the other two periods the imperial period is one of semi-constant warfare – at least some of which took place on the Scanian countryside – and high levels of taxation and state centralisation (Magnusson 2000). While it can – justifiably – be argued that this makes it a poor comparison with the latter periods, it is also the case that just as there are no "normal" regions, there are no "normal" periods of time. Furthermore, this period – to some extent because of the state of semi-constant warfare – better represent the standard in Sweden before the Age of Liberty, which makes the development over the preceding period even more interesting to cover.

The second period was set in the 1780s, shortly after the royal coup of 1772 and the re-institution of absolute monarchic rule. For this later period, five years proved more than enough a time-span to sample 200 probate records per rural region, matching the original geographical distribution from the first period as closely as possible. The whole decade was sampled for the urban sample, due to the much smaller population to sample. The timing of this second period allows for an analysis of the development during the preceding Age of Liberty and the economic and political improvements for especially the peasant class during these decades (Magnusson 2000; Gadd 2011); the original plan was to set the starting date for this period in 1775, but unfortunately that would coincide with a monetary reform of the

same year which – was decided – would unnecessarily complicate the sampling process.[30] The 1780s further roughly corresponds to when the agricultural revolution in southern Sweden – which began mid-century – starts accelerating, leading to the emergence of modern economic growth in the region (Olsson & Svensson 2010).

The last period was set in the 1860s; though as the sampling process saw us start at the beginning of the period and work forward, the absolute majority of all records hail from the first few years of the period. This period is situated just before the breakthrough of industrialisation in Sweden, and allows for the analysis of the impact of the agricultural and transport revolutions during the first half of the nineteenth century (Olsson & Svensson 2010; Bergenfeldt 2014). Once again the original starting date for this period was set for five year prior in 1855, but here too that would coincide with a monetary reform of the same year.[31] The reason for stopping specifically in the 1860s is due to this being just at the cusp of industrialisation in Sweden, which due to its fundamentally different systems of both consumption and reproduction makes it poorly comparable with the previous periods (cf. Muldrew 2011, who makes this argument for stopping his analysis for England around 1800).

The idea behind the three study-periods is that since probate inventories are the sum total of a lifetime acquisition of household goods, they better represent the decades preceding them than the year they are drawn up. A big enough dataset from two selected points in time the records not only provide information on the state of household ownership of goods during the period which they are recorded , but more importantly the comparison between the sets reveals the development in the intervening timespan. A good example is the ownership of objects related to the drinking of colonial drinks, such as tea and coffee:[32] while completely absent during the early eighteenth century in both towns and on the countryside, we can see a sharp increase in the towns over the eighteenth century, and that the countryside catches up in this consumption over the nineteenth century. Apart from the simple conclusions that the median urban household could consume colonial hot drinks in

[30] This monetary reform saw the shift from the older bi-metallic coin standard to a single silver-standard – as well as a shift from a base 32 to a base 48 system of denomination – and included a devaluation of the old coins by 1/6 (Jörberg 1972). As it turned out, the switch over appears to have taken time and still in the 1780s there were a – limited – number of probate records still valued in the old coinage.

[31] This reform saw the switch from the old base 1/48/576 system of conversion to the decimal 1/100; unlike the 1775 reform it did not include any devaluation of the coinage, and the transition in the probate records appears to have been remarkably quick with only a handful of the 1860s inventories valued in the old coinage (Jörberg 1972).

[32] Hot chocolate is technically also included in this group, though only a single household in the entire sample owned a utensil for drinking chocolate; merchant Johan Söderling in Falkenberg who owned half a dozen porcelain cocoa cups without saucers.

their home during the late eighteenth century, while almost no one on the countryside could, the periodization also allows us to reconstruct a – very – rough timeline of the introduction of colonial hot drinks to the south-Swedish households; how it was introduced to the coastal towns during the mid-eighteenth century, but apparently failed to spread into the countryside until some point after 1800 – after which it instead spread rapidly among the rural population.

5.4 Sampling method

Individual probate records were generally added to the collected volumes in the order they were submitted to the courts. In the towns this would occur continuously throughout the year as people died and their estates were assessed by the town notary, while on the countryside this would occur during the thrice yearly court sessions. Thus, due to the lack of any inherent ordering in the volumes other than chronological, and with the assumption that the time of year at which any individual died should have been relatively unbiased, a randomised sampling method was deemed unnecessary. Instead, as long as the inventories conformed to basic criteria for legibility and comparability, every single inventory was sampled from the beginning of the volume continuing until the previously determined number of inventories had been sampled. Due to the relatively low share of probated individuals, this often meant that whole years' worth of inventories was sampled, which further reduced the need for a conscious sampling method. Only in some of the more densely populated districts in Malmöhus during the 1860s period did this sampling process mean that less than a full years of inventories was sampled, due to the nineteenth century population increase.

Unlike many similar studies on household consumption and production utilizing probate inventories which fully transcribes the inventories sampled (see Overton et al. 2004; McCants 2008; Bovenkerk & Fertig 2021; Mas-Ferrer 2023a), the focus on quantity mixed with the restrictions of time and funding inherent in a doctoral thesis necessitated a more limited and selective sampling. This type of sampling is, of course, by no means novel, but is rather common in Swedish historical research. It has, however, more often been used in more directed studies of more specific aspects of household consumption, rather than the more extensive scope of this dissertation – such as books, colonial goods, cotton textiles, new clothing patterns, or elite status consumption (Bringéus 1977; Ahlberger 1996; Andersson G. 2009; Andersson E. I. 2017; Ulväng 2021).

A select, yet extensive, list of goods was selected for special focus to be sampled from the individual inventories. These goods were selected because they were deemed to best represent the two aspects we sought to analyse for the study – household productive capacity, and developments in household consumption

patterns. Prior to the start of the sampling process similar studies – especially those of Shammas (1990), Overton et al. (2004), McCants (2008), and de Vries (2008) – were consulted for inspiration of which specific goods to select for sampling; in part to identify the objects best representative of the consumer revolution that is introduced throughout Europe in the eighteenth century, and partly to make the results comparative in an international context of similar research.

The goods indicative of the productive capacity of the household was defined as any good that could be used to create more value to contribute to the reproduction of the household. These include agricultural and fishing tools, spinning wheels and looms, tools for processing wool and flax, tools for distilling alcohol, carpentry supplies and similar tools for the maintenance of the farm and its buildings, as well as all the cattle. In this category was also included goods and produce possibly for sale, such as stored grain – including grain still on the field – as well as indetermined batches of textiles or (un-)treated wool and linen not recorded among the household textiles. The productive goods were the most straight-forward to sample, and for this part we sampled every single object that we deemed would fit the criteria; for all of these we sampled both the number of individual objects – when possible – as well as the recorded value of these objects. The main exception to this rule was the general tools; the oftentimes long and extensive list of hammers, drills, saws, files, and axes of different shapes, sizes, and uses were deemed too time-consuming to differentiate and count individually. Instead, they were clumped together under the category of "tools" and only recorded with their total value. Similarly, the agricultural tools were deemed to diverse to count individually. For these, the total value was recorded along with whether the household 1) only owned scythes, sickles, and hoes which would indicate a limited agricultural capacity with a focus on pasture, a vegetable garden, and participation in the harvest; or 2) whether they owned harrows, ploughs, or similar heavy farming implements that would have required animals or similar non-human power to operate, indicating they either had field of their own or participated in the sowing.

For the goods analysed for household consumption, a more restricted selection was necessary. After consulting the previous – mainly international – research on the topic, a selection of goods were picked that were all deemed indicative of both the more traditional consumption patterns present in the region at the start of the period – such as objects of valuable metals, those related to spices, the consumption of tobacco, and clothes and textiles – as well as those consumer goods that we could expect to find with the advent of the consumer revolution and increasing access to colonial trade during the eighteenth century – such as colonial hot drinks, porcelain, specialized furniture, clocks and watches, art, and scientific equipment. Porcelain in contemporary records was defined as glazed and fired pottery, and included both pieces imported from China – always specified as "Oriental" in the inventories – as

well as of European origin.[33] For these we also gathered information on the presence of common alternatives, such as earthenware and glass.

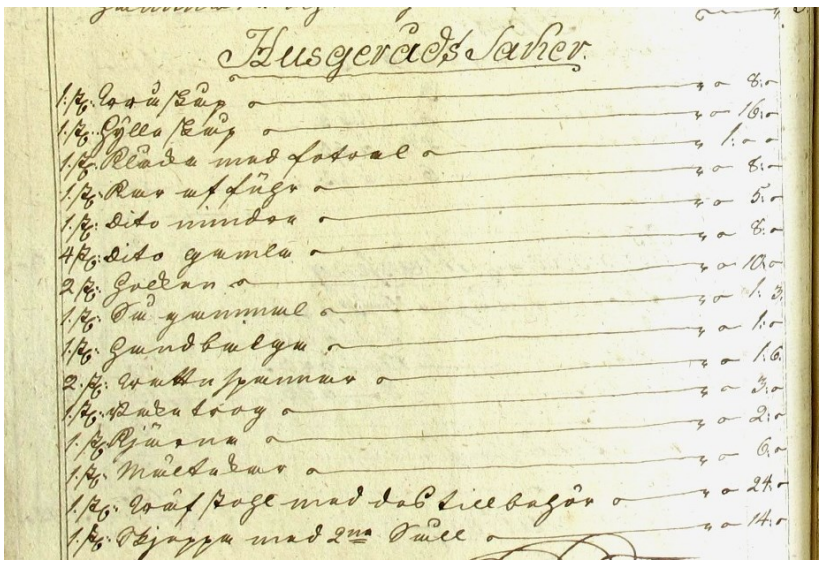
Ultimately, the list of goods included in the sample represents a wide variety of different objects, with similarly varied ways in which the contemporary assessors recorded these goods within the structure of the inventory; either all of them together under their own specific heading, such as silver objects, pewter objects, bedlinen, and everyday clothes; often grouped together with similar objects but not always, such as porcelain earthenware, and glass; or spread out under a larger, widely encompassing heading such as furniture – and sometimes clocks – under "wooden belongings" (*träbohag*), in which they sometimes – but not always – would be listed by room. Because of this variety, different types of objects and goods were recorded in different ways, at the level of detail which were decided to both be the most feasible for an efficient data collection, and which would contribute the most to the analysis.

Three different recording categories were used when setting up the databases, often in different combinations: Whether a good was present or not in the inventory, how many of an individual good was present in the inventory, and the total value of all goods of a single type or group present in the inventory. The first of these options – sometimes substituted with only the total value, as a value over zero obviously indicates a presence within the inventory – were mainly used either when counting individual items were deemed unfeasible or not possible. This includes the drinking of colonial goods which is proxied by the presence of cups and kettles; pewter objects and clothes, which in the case of more affluent households can be counted in several dozens of individual items recorded in different odd quantities; as well as goods where data on individual number of objects not contributing enough to the analysis to be worth the extra time, such as objects of gold and silver, or individual pillows and blankets.

Some of the decisions for data-gathering were decided by the structure of the inventory itself, such as the division of household textiles between bedlinen, linen, and bench cushions. As the assessors summed up all the individually valued objects per category – before adding these together for the total sum of the estate – it was early on determined that mostly using the same structure as the contemporary assessors would save time. It is for similar reasons that no difference was done

[33] Porcelain not specified as being "oriental" was determined to be of general European origin, though this was not always specified in the inventory itself. Non-oriental porcelain found in the south-Swedish inventories are seldomly specified with a country of origin, but would have been imported from a few different places of origin: Stockholm, were the Rörstrand porcelain factory started production in 1726; the Netherlands, in which case it is very likely – and in a few cases even specified – to be delft-ware; Saxony, likely from the factories in Meissen, which is mentioned in at least one inventory; or England, in which case it is never specified more directly from where the porcelain hailed.

between animals of different ages,[34] and why goats and sheep, as well as geese and chickens, are grouped together – though the last one does not really matter as chickens are very conspicuously absent in the inventories. For many of the possessions – most notably those defined as productive goods – both individual number of objects/animals as well as total value was noted down. This was mostly made possible by the fact that animals in the inventory already were grouped and valued by category; for many of these, such as the fishing tools and "other textile production" – i.e. not spinning wheels or looms – a list of the individual items were also included, though this proved to have little impact on the analysis.


Husgeråds Saker.

Picture 4. An excerpt of some of the household goods belonging to the household of Nilla Persdotter (d. 1785), wife of a tenant farmer on noble land in Mickedal, Vapnö Parish, 1785. The excerpt well exemplifies the detailed nature of Swedish early modern probate records, with their itemized and individually valued lists of objects. A remarkable aspect of them are the very low value of many of the items included, such as the 2 water buckets ("2 st. wattuspannar", 6th item from the bottom up), together valued at only 1 *skilling* and 6 *runstycken* (half a skilling).

[34] This unfortunately has the consequence that the common way to calculate the so-called Cattle Equivalent (CE) units (*Nötkreatursenheter, or NE*) – a way to normalise animal productivity commonly used by Swedish agrarian historians (see Gadd 1983; Linde 2012) – becomes impossible, as it gives different weighted values to young and old horses and cattle. Instead, a simplified conversion rate was utilised in the papers for which this is relevant: 1 horse = 1,5 CE, 1 cattle = 1 CE, 1 pig = 0,25 CE, 1 sheep or goat = 0,1 CE.

6. Summaries of the papers

Paper I: Wealth, work, and industriousness, 1670–1860: Evidence from rural Swedish probates

Co-authored with Erik Bengtsson and Mats Olsson

The first paper of the dissertation focuses on the productive capacity of the rural population in southern Sweden and how this develops over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Economic development prior to industrialisation in the nineteenth century remains one of the great debates in European economic history. While GDP per capita and real wage series for most of Europe – and very much so for Sweden – would suggest stagnant economic growth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, earlier research suggests several reasons why we should expect a much more dynamic early modern rural Swedish economy than that suggested by aggregate data: increased agricultural output through the introduction of new crop rotations, animal-breeding, and new, more efficient tools, as well as improvements of wagons (Bergenfeldt, Olsson, & Svensson 2013; Gadd 2000; Morell, 2022; Olsson & Svensson 2010). Jan de Vries' (2008) industrious revolution theory further proposes a process of increased intensification of household labour during this period with a focus on market-oriented production and wage work.

The paper utilizes a new dataset of almost 1900 probate records from the south-Swedish countryside to investigate the development of rural households' productive capacity over the span of about two hundred years, from the late seventeenth century to the 1860s. It analyses how the composition of tools and productive equipment held by these households – such as farming tools, wagons, tools for fishing and hunting, brewing supplies, spinning wheels, and looms – develop over the period and correlate this to the development of household wealth. By further breaking up the sample between peasants and rural labourers, we can identify the different productive strategies employed by the landed and unlanded populations, as well as map the development for the continuously growing and increasingly proletarianized labouring population.

The results stress the level of importance which the diversification of household incomes, especially into household textile production, appears to have had during the eighteenth century. It has long been known that the rapid population increase during the eighteenth century led to a massive increase in the share of the landless

and semi-landless in the countryside, who would have had to complement their meagre self-sustenance production with seasonal wage labour and sale of handicraft. However, the paper finds that the whole of the rural population – landless, semi-landless, and peasants alike – appears to have turned to household textile production as a complementary income during the period.

Furthermore, unlike what is often suggested by the traditional division of Swedish geographical regions, with field regions specialising in agriculture producing a grain surplus exchanged for fuel and manufactured goods from grain-deficit forest regions, this general diversification of the household economy was not restricted only to the less fertile and traditionally more proto-industrial regions in the north of the analysed area. Peasants in the significantly more fertile and wealthier agricultural field regions in the south, where they feasibly could have sustained themselves on agriculture alone, acquired spinning wheels and looms in equal numbers to their northern, more proto-industrial contemporaries during the eighteenth century. It is not until the nineteenth century – after the institutional reforms and agrarian reforms of the decades around 1800 – that we can see the appearance of clearly specialised farmers in the probate inventories, with agricultural production – tools, horses, and cattle – accumulated mostly in the hands of a few exceedingly wealthy peasants on the countryside.

For the writing of this paper, I was responsible for structuring, handling part of, and overseeing the data collection; cleaning and structuring the gathered data for analysis; as well as creating the tables and the first draft of the overall analysis. My co-authors then helped refine and develop the paper, as well as provided the econometric calculations of inequality found in the appendix.

Paper II: Consumption and Living Standards in Early Modern Rural Households: Probate Evidence from Southern Sweden, c. 1680-1860

The second paper shifts the focus away from the productive capacity of rural households to their consumption behaviour and living standards, and how these develop over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though it is well known in Swedish history writing that the period following the fall of empire in 1718 would have been one of relative prosperity for the peasant group – at least those peasants on crown and tax land – due to a "drop in real terms in taxes and rents" (Gadd 2011:144), it is less clear how this prosperity was transformed into material improvements, as well as whether it was restricted to the landed peasant group or general across the countryside.

While some historians posit that this prosperity would have been used by these peasants to invest in ways to increase their productive capacity – through the acquisition of more land, more animals, and better tools – as well as to accumulate traditional symbols of status such as silver goods and similar valuable objects, probate studies for the latter half of the eighteenth century instead suggest an increase in the material standards of rural homes. By utilizing rural probate records, this paper analyses the actual material development of these households over the eighteenth century, as well as the difference between the landed peasants and the semi-landless and landless rural labourers, who would not have benefited in the same way from the increased prosperity of the first decades of the age of liberty.

The analysis reveals that the rural households indeed greatly improved their material conditions over the analysed period. The main development appears to have been centred around increased comfort and warmth, rather than either conspicuous consumption, increased productive capacity, or even demand for colonial goods, with both tea and coffee completely absent in the eighteenth-century inventories. Furthermore, while of course strongest among the wealthiest households, this improvement in material conditions is visible among the whole rural population – poor and rich, as well as landed and landless alike. While these improvements are most significant during the nineteenth century, a clear – albeit smaller – increase in household consumption is also visible during the eighteenth century. Over the course of the mid eighteenth century, the rural households not only acquired significantly more belongings than before, they also greatly diversified their stock of household goods; they acquired new types of furniture and cooking ware, exchanged their dinnerware with that of higher-quality and more fashionable materials, and greatly expanded their personal wardrobes.

The nineteenth-century improvements in the material standards of the rural home can likely to a large degree be attributed to the economic growth and burgeoning European-wide industrialisation of the period. However, the increased consumption during the eighteenth century – which lacked both these advantages – coincided with a diversification of rural household production into – especially – proto-industrial textile production. That many of the manufactured goods introduced during the period – especially non-pewter dinnerware – appear to be significantly more common in the more proto-industrial northern parts of the analysed region than in the significantly wealthier and more agricultural southern parts further suggests that there might exist a possible correlation between increased consumption and integration into inter-regional markets.

Paper III: Living standards and inequality in three south Swedish cities, c. 1570–1865

Co-authored with Erik Bengtsson and Mats Olsson.

The third paper moves the focus away from the countryside to the towns of southern Sweden, and analyses the development of urban material living standards and wealth over the early modern period. Utilising probate records from the three towns Malmö, Ystad, and Falkenberg, three towns of widely varying size and relative importance, it seeks to map the development of household wealth and material living standards over the early modern period, in order to question and problematise the usual picture of the Swedish pre-industrial town as general undynamic and unchanging. Due to the presence of sixteenth century inventories in the town of Malmö, it has for this study possible to go significantly further back in time than what was possible for the countryside.

The study of the material standards of these urban households can confirm that these towns, or at least Malmö, appears to have undergone a significant economic stagnation in the decades following their annexation into the Swedish empire. However, the material standards of all analysed socio-economic groups then seem to greatly improve over the eighteenth century. While this should be expected for the merchant group, since those were especially favoured by the mercantilist economic legislation of the eighteenth century Age of Liberty, it is more remarkable that this seem to be the main period of improvements of the material conditions also of the labouring group, given the overall U-shaped trend for relative wages during the century. Instead the material quality of the homes of labouring group appears to stagnate over the nineteenth century when real wages finally start to increase, during which the main improvements instead appears to have been a further diffusion of imported manufactured as well as colonial goods.

Contrasting what might be expected given the size of the analysed towns, the peripheral status of Sweden during the period, as well as the mostly negative development of GDP per capita, the inventories suggests a developing and dynamic eighteenth century urban economy. We find signs of a relatively high level of consumer power as well as integration into wider European markets, as evidenced by the high share of households owning objects related to the consumption of colonial goods; a share that is comparable to that found in the significantly wealthier and larger Venice and Gothenburg – the centre of Swedish colonial imports – although about half a century behind towns in the more centrally located Low Countries.

For the writing of this paper, I was responsible for structuring, handling part of, and overseeing the data collection; cleaning and structuring the gathered data for

analysis; as well as creating the tables and the first draft of the overall analysis, which my co-authors have then helped to refine and develop.

Paper IV: Goods to rural markets: the effect of markets on household access to goods in southern Sweden during the late eighteenth century

The fourth paper seeks to analyse the eighteenth-century market development. South-Swedish rural households greatly improved their material conditions during the course of the eighteenth century, and for the access to and acquisition of almost all the new consumer goods making up this improvement they were dependent on urban markets. Almost none of these goods were manufactured in the south-Swedish countryside, and combined with early modern Swedish legislation forbidding rural retailing (Lundqvist 2008; Sandberg 2001; Sovelius 1759), the main way for these households to acquire these goods would have been through urban markets. Thus, the new goods and consumer behaviours which emerged in the towns of the European centre reached southern Sweden first through the local towns connected to these by sea-bound trade routes, and after that to the countryside through these urban markets.

To ascertain in what way markets might have affected the material improvements identified over the eighteenth century, the paper studies market access and development in southern Sweden at two different levels. The first level is the inter-regional level, defined as that occurring between towns mainly through sea-bound trade; this trade has been measured using data on ships travelling to towns in southern Sweden taken from the sound toll registers online, as well as on ships travelling to Malmö, specifically using the Malmö harbour toll books. The second is the regional level, between countryside and town as well as – to a lesser extent – within the local countryside: the regional market has been analysed using probate evidence to ascertain the presence of selected consumer goods and the physical distance between household and market, as well as parish-level data of population numbers.

The main finding of the study on ship-bound inter-regional trade is that the general expansion of nautical trade during the period, both to Sweden specifically and across Europe in general, appears to not reach southern Sweden before the very end of the eighteenth century. Instead, the volume of ship-bound interregional trade to the region appears to remain steady during the eighteenth century, to virtually explode during the nineteenth century. This suggests that trade to the region as a whole – or at least the development of it – contributed little to the material improvements seen during the eighteenth century.

Looking at the regional markets appears to reveal that transport and transaction costs for imported manufactured goods were mostly irrelevant for the rural households. Instead, the evidence suggests that they could fairly easily acquire these goods no matter the distance from the closest urban market. Household consumption of these goods appears to rather have been determined more by regional consumption culture – such as peasants in agricultural regions being more traditional (Ahlberger 1996) – or by the presence of merchants with previously established networks for manufactured goods. These latter would have been the most common in areas characterized by early proto-industrialization and trade in rural handicraft, such as southern Halland or forested northeastern Scania – two areas with a particularly high share of households with manufactured goods.

7. Discussion, conclusion, and future work

In this dissertation I have strived to analyse the structure and development of the household economy and material living standards of the early modern Swedish households – what these households owned, what this says about the possibilities for household reproduction, and how they improved the material quality of their homes and lives over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It finds that, contrary what might be believed when looking at the eighteenth-century development of agricultural production, economic growth, and real wages for labourers (Edvinsson 2009; Edvinsson 2013; Schön & Krantz 2015; Gary 2018), this appears to economically have been a highly dynamic period, with clear improvements in the material living standards in both town and countryside. These improvements were furthermore not limited to only the land-owning peasants, or the merchants and artisans of the towns, but appears to have benefited even the urban labourers and rural landless and semi-landless populations.

When looking at the in-household material possibilities for household reproduction, the rural population appears to have diversified, rather than specialised, their production over the eighteenth century. This diversification, especially into textile production, would not only have allowed especially women and children to increase their labour allocation, but also to spread out household production more evenly throughout the year and made the household less reliant on land and agricultural production as the sole source of income. This would have led to an increase in the inflow of cash, but also increased household access to both small-sum credit against which they could possibly use the textile production as security (Vardi 1993; Muldrew 2011). This development towards a greater share of household textile production is furthermore not restricted only to the less fertile and traditionally more proto-industrial regions in the north of the analysed area, but is equally strong in the significantly more fertile and wealthier agricultural fields further to the south around Malmö. It is not until the nineteenth century, after the institutional reforms and agrarian reforms of the decades around 1800 (Gadd 1983; Gadd 2000; Morell 2001; Olsson & Svensson 2010), that we can see the appearance of clearly specialised farmers, with agricultural production – tools, horses, and cattle – accumulated in the hands of a few exceedingly wealthy peasants on the countryside.

Coinciding with these developments of household production was a clear and significant improvement in the quality of the material living standards, both in towns and on the countryside. Though the greatest improvements occurred during the nineteenth century – after the achievement of more significant economic growth and increased agricultural production – a smaller yet significant development also began at some point in the mid-eighteenth century. Compared to the conditions at the beginning of the century, the household by the end of the eighteenth century would have been warmer, would have had more household textiles and comfortable places to sit, had a larger and more diversified wardrobe, and be able to cook and serve a significantly more diverse diet. Even – or especially – when taking into consideration that the oldest sample likely is heavily biased in favour of more affluent households, the material quality of both the rural and the urban household improved greatly over the eighteenth century.

The developments in material living standards were far more rapid in the towns than on the countryside. By the 1780's the spread and adoption of new types of furniture, dinnerware of porcelain, and goods for the consumption of colonial drinks had in the towns reached high levels that were not matched on the countryside until some point mid-nineteenth century. The towns of southern Sweden appear to have been well-connected to the developments of the European core, with the urban population, the poorest as well as the more affluent, being quick to adopt the new consumer goods and behaviours introduced during the period. This mismatch in the pace of adoption between town and countryside is of note, as it does seem to confirm earlier findings and assumptions that the new goods and consumer patterns of the consumer revolution would be spread first between towns, and secondly from town to country (cf. van Koolbergen 1983; Weatherill 1988; Shammas 1990; Ahlberger 1997; Servais 2014; Ulväng 2021). However, it also suggests the presence – and potential development – of both regional and, specifically, rural consumption cultures during the period.

The main regional difference in rural consumption in the late eighteenth century appears to be between the highly arable field regions of southwestern Scania around Malmö – the wealthiest of the analysed regions – and the more mixed-economy regions further north traditionally more focused on handicraft and proto-industrial textile production. The latter, more northern, regions are in this regard somewhat more alike the urban regions, with a higher significantly share of porcelain and earthenware goods rather than the more traditional pewter more common among the southern field peasants; a difference that have completely disappeared eighty years later in the 1860s. As transport costs, despite poor roads during the eighteenth century, appear to have been negligible for the rural population, these differences must be based in other, more regionally determined, variables.

Lastly, though few articles interact with it directly, the actual presence of a consumer revolution in eighteenth century Sweden is a debated topic. While more socially and culturally focused historians often assume the presence of a consumer

revolution in Sweden during the period, as is the case elsewhere in Europe (Murhem et al. 2019; Brown 2020), historians of especially international trade questions this claim on the basis on the low real wages and very low amount of colonial goods – sugar, tea, and coffee – being imported into the country before the nineteenth century (Rönnbäck 2010; Edvinsson & Tarek Gad 2018). However, if one looks past colonial goods and instead consider the bigger cultural shift associated with the consumer revolution – the re-interpretation of comfort and focus on sociability rather than conspicuousness (Roche 2000; Crowley 2001) – then the development in household consumption that is observable both in towns and on the countryside very well correlates with those commonly associated with the consumer revolution.

7.1. The question of a Swedish "industrious revolution"

Regarding the question of whether or not Sweden during the eighteenth century – or possibly even earlier – underwent an industrious revolution, I am cautiously positive. However, not in the way as originally proposed by de Vries (2008). Based on the collected probate evidence, it does seem like at least rural households, in line with the theory of industriousness, increased their market-oriented labour during the eighteenth century; mainly through an increase in household textile production. Concurrently, we also see the beginning of clear improvements in the material quality of the homes and an increased consumption broadly in line with the consumption revolution – though on the countryside not a consumption of colonial goods. The question remains, however, whether this is an increase in industriousness driven by demand for new (and imported) consumer goods, as envisioned in the original presentation of the theory (de Vries 2008), by economic necessity, as suggested by some of the critics of the theory (cf. Overton et al 2004; Allen & Weisdorf 2011; Gary & Olsson 2020; Horrell, Humphries, & Weisdorf 2021), or even if the causal relation between increased production and consumption is in fact reversed, as Hutchison (2014) proposes for Norway.

Craig Muldrew (2011) in his study of English labourers argues that the improvements in the quality of homes occurred during a period "when food prices were going up more than wages; when rents were going up; when access to commons was falling; and when labourers' own farming activities were declining" (ibid: 207). This period, he further assesses, was also one of emerging industriousness in England, with increasing agricultural productivity and demand for labour. No matter the cause or causal direction, the processes of increased industriousness and consumption during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appear both simultaneous and connected. While an increased industriousness might not have started due to an increased demand for market-exclusive consumer goods, both the evidence from the Swedish probate records and research from elsewhere in Europe suggests that – once started – it contributed to these households later being

able to increase their consumption; when the economy turned and it again became possible to create a surplus with which to consume non-essentials (cf. Malanima & Pinchera 2012: 215). Those shifts in the allocation of production towards especially proto-industrial manufacture, that during years of stagnation and increasing costs of living allowed households to increase incomes and maintain earlier living standards, contributed during the momentary good years instead to greater purchasing power.

However, periods of decreasing real wages necessitating increasing labour output was by the late seventeenth century nothing new. Only that in the past every time the economy turned for the better, peasants and the labouring classes would have reverted to re-increase their leisure to earlier levels, rather than their consumption (Hatcher 1998). So, what changed? Well, if we return to the discussion of Z-commodities:

$$Z_i = f_i(x_i, T_i) \quad (1)$$

And the allocation of time within the household:

$$T = T_c + T_w + T_r \quad (2)$$

Since, as de Vries (2008: 26f) argues, the acquisition of market goods (x) is a function of time dedicated to their purchase ($x = T_w w$ = [*time dedicated to labour*] x [*wages*/*income*]), the whole function of the production and consumption of Z-commodities can be broken down into the allocation of time; time spent acquiring consumer goods (T_w), converting these goods to Z-commodities (T_c), and finally consuming these (T_r).

If we posit that the period that preceded the developments of the industrious revolution was one of relatively high wages and low cost of living, then the cost in labour and time of acquiring consumer goods would have been generally lower than that necessary to convert these into Z-commodities. In this earlier consumption regime households could afford to acquire – for the sake of equation – relatively inefficient consumer goods, since they had significantly more (free) time available to convert and enjoy the final Z-commodities. However, as real wages decreased and the cost of living increased, the internal relation in the allocation of time shifted and the time cost of acquiring consumer goods – i.e. time allocated to wage labour and production – would have increased relative to the other two. This general shift is visualised in equation (3).[35]

$$T_w < T_c + T_r \quad \rightarrow \quad T_w > T_c + T_r \quad (3)$$

[35] I remove the time dedicated to sleep in this thought experiment. While it remains one of the singularly largest time expenses, it fits poorly into any model of conscious time allocation.

As households got less time to convert these consumer goods and enjoy the final product, the earlier consumption strategies had to be revised and exchanged. In earlier centuries, households would seek to revert to an older consumption regime of high leisure; if a new regime was to emerge, it had to rely on more "efficient" consumer goods, which more easily could be transformed and be enjoyed fully in a shorter period of time. The answer came in the form of the novel consumer goods and behaviour of the consumer revolution: Finished manufactures such as earthenware and porcelain were quicker to acquire than home-made objects of wood; pots and pans allowed for more varied food that both were likely more gratifying that the older stews and porridges, and also could be cooked under a more intense period than the older stew over the fire; tea and coffee could be bought hot and gave instant satisfaction; and finally the new notions of fast fashion and the introduction of shopping as a concept gave the consumer items a secondary consumption trait that could be enjoyed during the process of acquiring them.

Thus, when the surplus time necessary for the older consumption regime became unavailable with the economic downturn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the old Z-commodities could be substituted with new and more efficient consumer goods. This is likely one explanation as to why we throughout Europe can see this long-term shift in consumption behaviour – and significant increase in material goods – among groups who would have been forced to increase their labour output, often starting during periods of general economic decline (Muldrew 2011; Bovenkerk & Fertig 2021; Mas-Ferrer 2023a). That the industrious revolution took off during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was likely aided by the fact that this decrease in surplus time coincided with a sharp decline in the cost of consumer goods more efficient for the pursue of leisure (Hatcher 1998). There were several reasons behind this decrease in cost, but some of them include limited technical breakthroughs in earthenware and porcelain production (Finlay 1998; de Vries & van der Woude 1997 **)**, a massive expansion of proto-industrial production of textiles (Berg 1985; Vardi 1993; Ogilvie 2003), increase in colonial trade (McCants 2008; Rönnbäck 2010), and population growth which helped open up secondary markets (Mas-Ferrer 2023b; McCants 2007; Murhem, Ulväng, & Lilja 2010; Roche 2000; Stobart & Van Damme 2010).

Across Europe households of all socio-economic strata appear to significantly increase their consumption of the goods of the consumer revolution during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially of new and fashionable populuxe goods (Shammas 1990; Weatherill 1988; McCants 2008: Blondé & van Damme 2010; Ryckbosch 2015; Bovenkerk & Fertig 2021; Mas-Ferrer 2023a). Due to the nature of the goods enabling this new consumption regime and the ways they could be accessed, this was initially an urban development and it took time for the consumption behaviours of town and countryside to fully converge. On the Swedish countryside during the late eighteenth century, this convergence appears the clearest in regions well-connected to proto-industrial trade networks. While the decrease in

wages and surplus time would have been universal, households in these better-connected regions would likely have had easier access to the new consumer goods allowing a relatively quicker adoption of the new consumption regime characteristic of the industrious revolution. The rapid marketization of the nineteenth century, however, quickly erased many of the regional differences that existed, as well as to a large extent properly converged the consumption behaviours of town and countryside.

7.2. Future work

So, what are the next steps from here? As is the nature of doctoral dissertations, this study has by no means been conclusive and there are several ways in which it can be expanded upon. Here, I will briefly discuss a few of those:

There are two logical next steps to expand the study for Sweden specifically. The first is to further expand the sample, to include more towns in southern Sweden such as Kristianstad and Varberg, and to include the other clusters of pre-1734 probate inventories around Kalmar and Gotland. Second is to look at the auction protocols that sometime accompany the inventories in the sources. These kinds of protocols have earlier been studied for a selection of Swedish towns and their hinterlands by Murhem, Ulväng, & Lilja (2010, 2013), but it would be interesting to analyse these more directly in the context of probate records and the information on household consumption they can provide. While it would entail a significant undertaking to identify these, since they often include information on buyer it would give invaluable further information not only about consumption strategies in general, but about the early modern second-hand market in particular.

Looking beyond Sweden, while I have tried to consistently and continuously locate the study within a broader, European context, it remains – for logical reasons – a specifically Swedish study: the source material used is restricted to southern Sweden and the conclusions are mainly contributions to Swedish historiography. A natural next step would be to expand the European comparison, optimally in cooperation with historians from other (semi-)peripheral European regions. Such an undertaking has probably never been more possible than now: the questions of industriousness and the dynamism of the early modern economy are resurgent across Europe, and has been the topic of several recently and soon-to-be published dissertations (see Van de Sompele 2021; Mas-Ferrer 2023b; Bovenkerk 2024; also the PhD-projects of Alberto Concina and Bas Spliet).

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Wealth, Consumption, and Industriousness

This dissertation utilizes a new dataset on the belongings of early modern households, gathered from southern Sweden, to map the development of wealth and material living standards over the course of the early modern period. Together, the four papers making up the main part of the dissertation depicts a significantly more economically dynamic early modern period – especially eighteenth century – than have been often assumed. These households, no matter their socio-economic position, greatly improved their material standards over the early modern period; they diversified their stock of household objects and furniture, acquired larger and more varied wardrobes, and greatly expanded their range of cooking and eating options through more cook- and dinnerware. At least on the countryside they did so through a diversification of incomes, especially through textile production. Not only did this allow them to complement income from other sources, such as agriculture, it likely connected them to wider market networks for manufactured goods. This allowed them to take advantage of the decreasing cost of these goods to greatly improve their material conditions, despite decreasing real wages and increased cost of living. The findings give tentative support to the presence of a Swedish early modern industrious revolution, albeit one driven by a combination of economic necessity and decreasing costs of manufactured goods, rather than a demand for novel colonial consumer objects.

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