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Workshop "Assets Management of Households in Europe, 1300-1800"

To navigate the family economy during a lifetime

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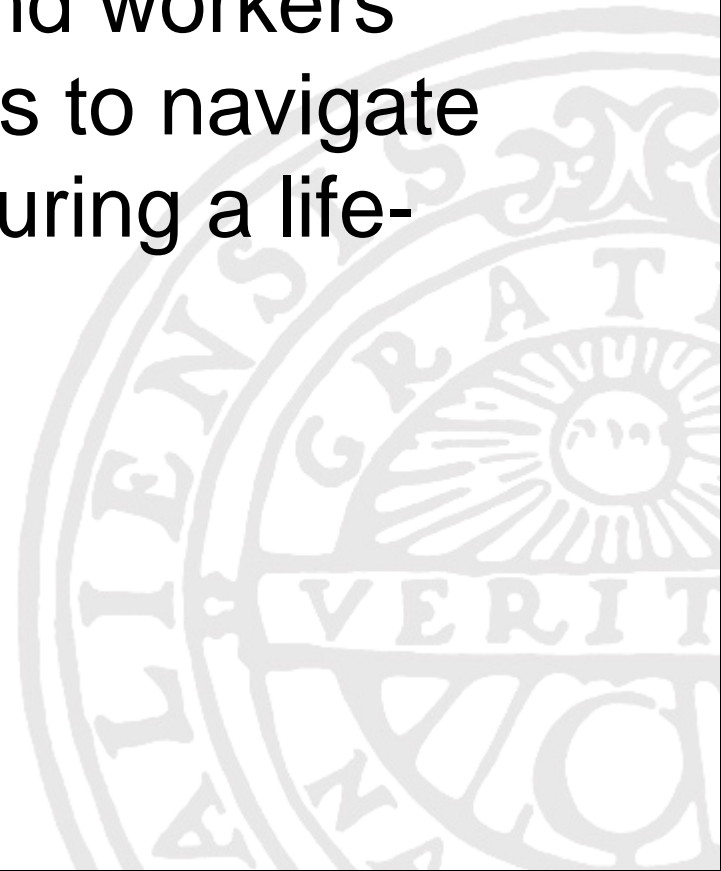




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Aim

Study how artisans and workers used assets and debts to navigate the family economy during a life-time.





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Two squeezes during a lifetime

- "Early adulthood squeeze" and "retirement squeeze"
- Breadwinner 30 and 50 years old (DiMatteo)





Children and family economy

- Children's earnings very important for worker family incomes when the parents aged (Haines 1979, Larsson 1989, Gratton 1996)
- The number of working children, especially boys, important (Early 1982, Robinson 1993)
- Cohabitation between parents and adult children (Alter 1996, Pérez-Fuentes Hernández & Pareja Alonso 1997, Högman 1999)
- In old age development of wealth was more positive for married than unmarried (Alter 1996)



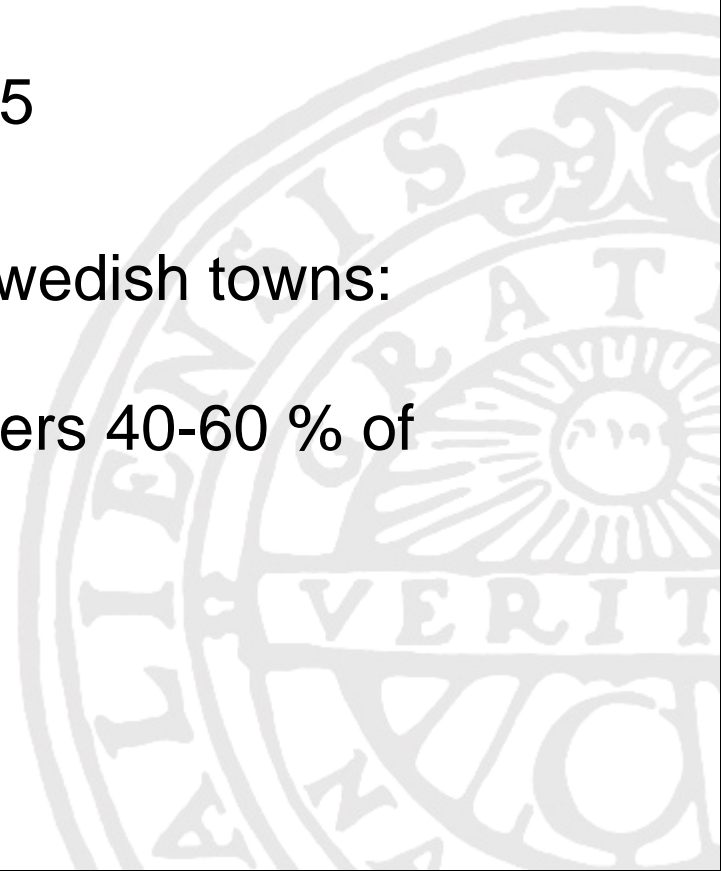
Research questions

- What impact did family size and socio-economic position have on the duration and depth of the life cycle squeezes in the beginning of the 19th century?
- Is it likely that children's incomes were important for family wealth?
- Did children continue to help their parents economically during and after the retirement squeeze?
- Were there differences between artisans and workers in these respects?



Methods and sources

- Quantitative methods
- Cross-sectional analysis
- Probate inventories, 1820-25
- Artisans and workers in 3 Swedish towns:
Eskilstuna, Falun, Uppsala
(Artisans 10-20 % and workers 40-60 % of
male population)





Results: Two periods of economic stress (squeezes)

- Artisans respectively 35-40 and 65-70 years old
- Workers respectively 40-45 and 60-65 years old
- Early adulthood squeeze: debts increased more than assets
- Retirement squeeze: assets decreased quickly



Results: Artisans

- Early adulthood squeeze: mostly a consequence of starting a business, not of having children
- Children 11-20 years, especially boys, => more wealth
- Retirement squeeze: adult boys (left home) => less wealth



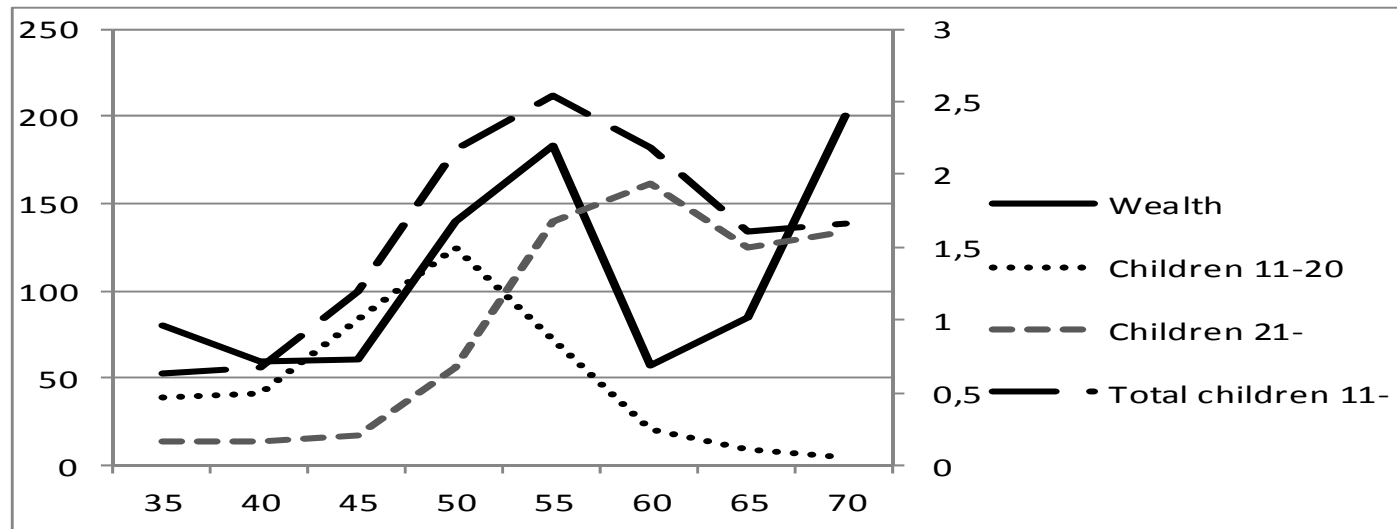
Result: Workers

- Early adulthood squeeze: mostly a consequence of having children



Results: Workers

Figure 1 Wealth (left axis), number of children 11-20 years and number of children 21- years and total number of children 11- years (right axis). Workers, rdr rgs



- Family wealth peaked in the 50s – so did the number of children older than 10 years
- Retirement squeeze less deep for families with adult children



Conclusion

- Artisans and workers: different opportunities in life
- Having a business - important for the development of artisans' wealth
- Having children – important for the development of workers' wealth
- Debts and children's incomes - easier to navigate the family economy during a lifetime (both groups).