Regional Variations in Swedish Farming Household Structure, 1890-1907

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Introduction

As European states implement austerity measures and adjust for an aging population, it becomes increasingly important to provide demographic-based family histories, in order to understand and communicate the development of the social policies to other academic disciplines. Prior hypotheses describing the normative family structure in terms of Northwest Europe are not sufficient when comparing the contemporary arguments made during the period leading up to Sweden's National Pension Act of 1913. Sweden's topography, ecology and subsequent cultural histories vary within its borders, especially between the lowland regions with a historical manor system and the later colonized highlands. My study provides a demographic context, based on elderly living in farming, one-generational family households, meanwhile explores any correlations between retirement contracts, elderly poverty, and ecology-economic factors which may have influenced a high-level of regional clustering.

Background and Literature

In 1913, the Swedish parliament easily passed a principally universal coverage pension act, taking its first steps towards what became the "Nordic Welfare Model". In preparation for this bill, statistician Hugo Burström and scientist and actuary Anders Lindstedt, unleased a full coverage economic survey in 1907 aimed to document the conditions of all individuals

over 60. Using this data, Burström argued that the elderly security based on household tradition was failing. He attributed this failure to the new industrial form, which increased mobility, broke up the binding personal relationships between employee and employer, and also severely disturbed the landowner's traditional ability to draw on natural provisions connected with the land as protection against his or his household's sickness and old age (Burström 1912, p. 514).

As that pension act neared the century mark, Per Gunnar Edebalk and Mats Olsson (2010), revisited the motivations for the passage of the act and found that "both contemporary debaters and modern researchers had underestimated the vitality of the traditional rural security systems" (393). They conclude that, "the traditional rural social security systems, founded on family, property and employment, were more vital than we have been led to believe" (397). Throughout Europe, the traditional family household has been an enigma for scholars. Following the results of the Cambridge group's *Household and Family in Past Time* (HFPT), a century of family studies from Frederick Le Play in 19th century continental Europe to those calling for a National Social Security Act in the United States all strangely failed to recognize true households tradition (Wall 2009, Eliot 1961). The family-type tradition in Northwest Europe was nuclear and for elderly moving into the children households as "nuclear reincorporation." (Kertzer 1995)

Peter Laslett's (1972) stigmatization of scholars who found traditions of stem-family Northwestern Europe in which he called them ideological dreamers of the "Classical family of Western Nostagia" (p. 8), was especially puzzling for those researching in areas with strong traditions of household retirement contracts (Fauve-Chamoux and Ochiai 2009). Sweden is an area with a long tradition of such contracts (Winberg 1981, Kjellman 1984, Olov Aberg

and Johan Öster 1995, Dribe and Lundh 2005). The rhetoric chosen by such respected scholar while asserting the nuclear reincorporation family model on Northwestern Europe has not proven to be healthy for the development of family history (Puschmann & Solli 2014). However, the dismantling of Le Play-based paradigm did not bring an end to addressing stem-family in Western Europe. Some historical demographers, especially those focusing specifically on the household structure of the elderly, have found evidence of family household structures which do not fit into the Cambridge groups conclusions. These scholars have opted for "Economic Development" approach as a better tool to address the variation found in space and time. (Berkner 1972, Berkner 1975, Ruggles 2010, Jåstad 2011) But the size and quality of data required to successfully implement the theory in space and time, reveals the gulf that exists between the current literature consisting of sporadic micro-studies and the aggregated leveling of macro-analysis. Steve Ruggles (2012) considered the only way to move forward on the topic, is through multi-level analysis which provides simultaneous histories of communities, using micro-data (p. 424).

Sweden is one of the Northwest European countries in which the literature reflects both high levels of stem-families (Winberg 1977, Todd 1990, Fusé 2009) and high levels of nuclear families in studies done on 18th and 19th centuries parishes (Lundh1995, Rosén 2004) . In the case of David Gaunt (1977) study of five parishes, variations in the family structural form were found within the central region of Sweden. This led Gaunt to propose that family structure was likely dependent not just on the size of individual farms (Berkner 1972, Todd 1976, Dribe 2000), but also the dependence on the regional variation of economies. In his short study, he found that the parishes in regions with large farm landholdings mirrored Laslett's England but in mining-farming and mixed-farming, the structure "was similar to the myths which Laslett has attacked," this lead Gaunt to rephrases Laslett's (1965) title for

Sweden, “the many Sweden’s we lost” (Gaunt 1977, p. 208). However, Christer Lundh found that Gaunt had placed too many variables in play, making it impossible to know if the variety of household structures were “due differences in property rights (freehold vs tenancy) or due to different cultural and demographic patterns in different regions” (Lundh 1995, p. 46), reinforcing the need for a multi-level analysis.

Data and Methods

The study consists of three datasets which are analyzed and visualized at the bailiff administrative boundary. The first dataset is the 1890 and 1900 Swedish Census which is complete-count micro-data representing 4,843,782 and 5,200,111 person records (North Atlantic Population Project and the Swedish National Archives). The census variables are reclassified into individuals over 60 years old in farming one-generational household as a percent of individuals over 60 living on farms, both totals are aggregated at the parish/commune (n=2543), hundred (n=361) and bailiff administrative level (n=119). The second dataset is from Elderly Insurance Committee (Ålderdomsförsäkringskommittéen 1912) which provides the analysis with individuals over 60 years old in rural household retirement contracts and those receiving rural public assistance collected in 1907 as a percent of total 60 year olds, which was published at the bailiff administrative level. The survey was sent to all registered elderly over 60 year old and returned 373,172 individuals with 6.7% deemed unusable. Additionally, the data presented with assumption that wives to have the same as the husband. Doubling the husband’s data reduces the national average those over 60 in household pension contracts from 11.23% to 10% of the total population. The final dataset comes from the Emigration Commission (Emigrationsutredning 1910) which the study with variables representing ecological economy variables such as national grain and land ownership data from 1902 and 1905, published at the hundred administrative level.

The graph below provides an aggregated national context for agriculture, non-agriculture and age for those living in one-generational households (Appendix: Graph I). Based on the graph and the arguments made by the Elderly Insurance Committee, if there is a traditional stem-like family structures or such a family is absent, then individuals 60 year and older and living on farms should provide the best dependent variable to test the two hypothesis. Using this reclassification, the influences of local and regional industry and urbanization should be minimized. From the graph we also see that larger cohorts from 60-70 years old in a regional area vs. a larger cohort of those 70 and older could impact the percent which were living with or without a child. The study relies on the implications of the cluster analysis using two censuses to show that any changes which did occur, had no influence the regional character. The spatial clustering uses Anselin Moran I cluster/ outliers analysis. Associations between dependent census data and independent Elderly Insurance Committee and Emigration Commission data are analyzed using a simple Pearson correlation.

Findings

Sweden's elderly living in farming and one-generation family households were clustered in high and low percentage regions (Appendix: Map I). As expected, household retirement contracts were negatively correlated with one-generational family households (Appendix: Table 1, Map 2b). However, a cluster of bailiffs along the Southwestern border of Norway had both low percentages of one-generational family households and low participation in household retirement contracts. The Swedish aggregate data did not support the nuclear hardship hypothesis with the possible exception of the previous mentioned bailiff cluster. One-generational family household were, in fact, correlated with higher levels of poverty among those over 60 year old (Appendix: Table 1, Map 2c). The ecology hypothesis, when

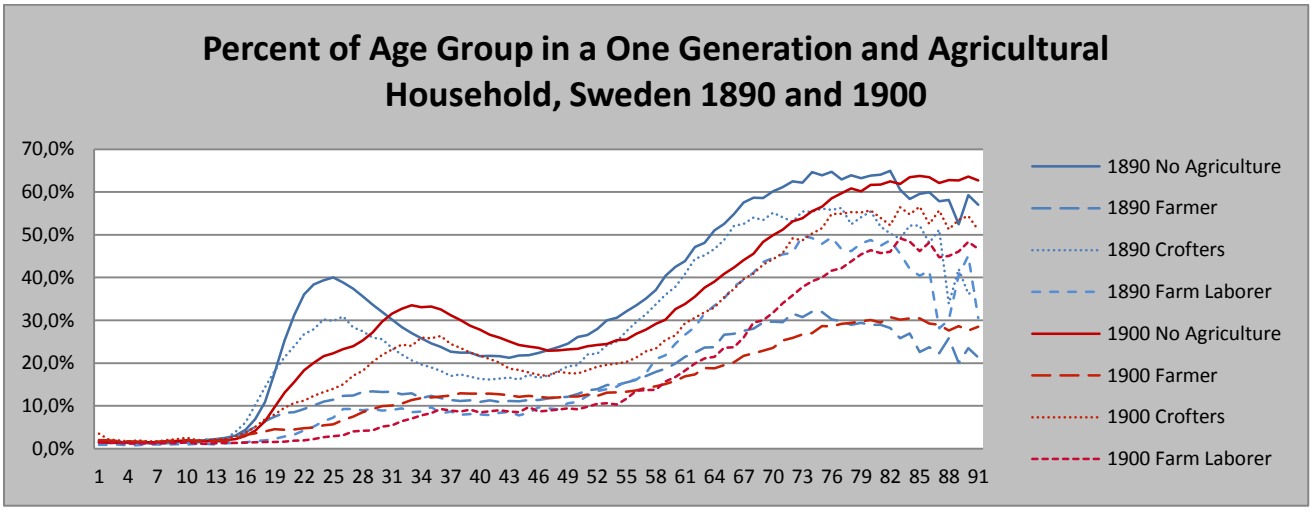
represented by wheat as a percentage of total grain production and average size owned farmland over 20 hectares, is supported at both the hundred and bailiff aggregated administrative levels (Appendix: Table 1 and 2, Map 2d and 2e). This provides support to David Gaunt's hypothesis which purposed that specialized farming and large land holdings; reduced the opportunities for young couples to own land, their elders to transfer land to an offspring, and diminished work opportunities during the winter months. These regions would have had significantly fewer elderly who were in a position to provide steady work for children or transfer property to a child. Within these regions the "Economic Development" theory is called into question due to an ecological-economic structure which did not change over time. Likewise, regions at the higher elevations and on the Baltic island of Gotland, the "nuclear hardship theory" does not appear to be applicable considering 70-80% of those in farming households lived in multigenerational households. Finally, the region along the southern border with Norway in which has very few elderly were in formal retirement contracts, there existed high elderly public assistance, and low levels of elderly living in one-generational households is more confusing. This region was considered to have never had a tradition of household retirement contracts (Wohlin 1910) and will require more research to understand how it relates to the two main theories. While this paper does not address temporal changes, the results of these ecological, economic, and cultural implications, give reason to extend analyzing the farm size and ownership data from the micro-studies context (Berkner 1972, Todd 1976, Gaunt 1977, Dribe 2000) to the regional level which have ownership traditions dating back to the early-modern period (Carlsson 1973, Nordin 2009 37, Mogren 2000 165-170, Brink 1994 127).

Continued Research

Displaying Sweden's regional context encourages such questions as; if, when, and where changes occurred over time. An example is the impact of urban and industrial areas on household structure in nearby rural parishes. Likewise, knowing the contexts provides the opportunity to see which regions experienced changes over time. The results provide a persuasive argument that family-type variation existed in Sweden in 1900. From this regional context, further longitudinal micro-studies of local elderly households can be chosen, paying mind to cultural landscapes. Such micro-studies can focus on individual linkage to analyze relationships of family structure with migration and personal savings, two other claims made by the Elderly Insurance Committee in 1912.

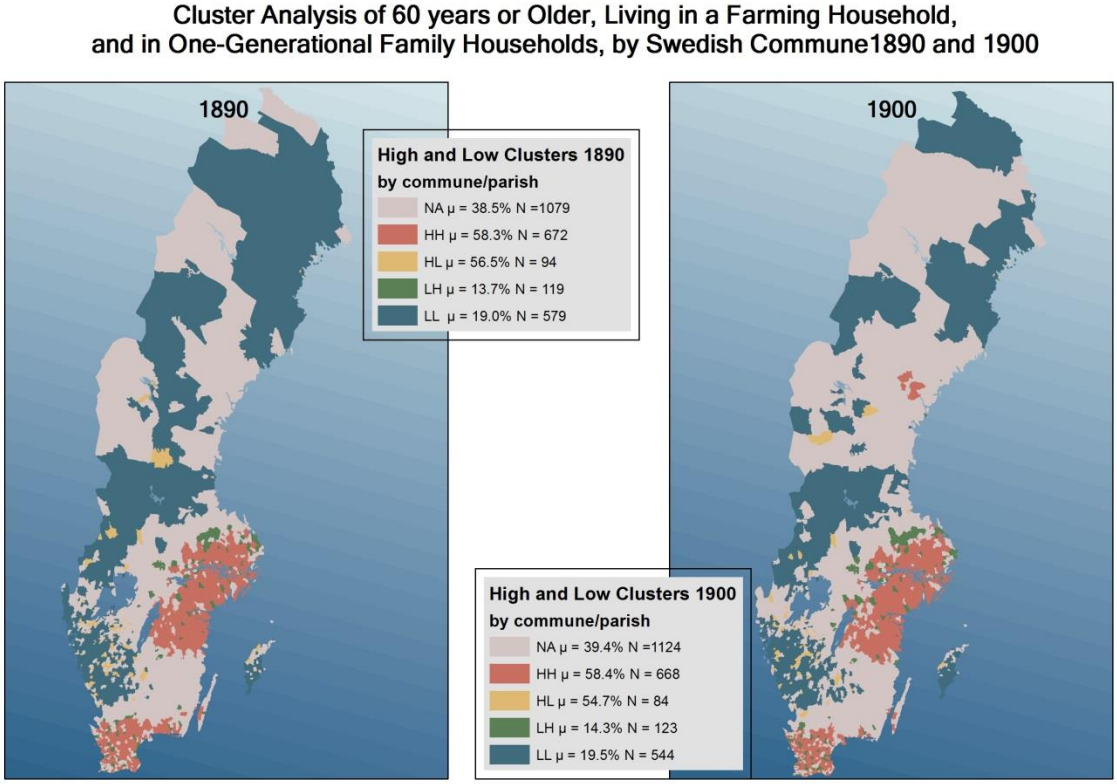
Appendix

Graph I.



Source: The Swedish National Archives, Umeå University, and the Minnesota Population Center. *National Sample of the 1890 Census of Sweden and National Sample of the 1900 Census of Sweden, Version 2.0.* Minneapolis: Minnesota Population Center [distributor], 2011*)*

Map I



Source: The Swedish National Archives, Umeå University, and the Minnesota Population Center. *National Sample of the 1890 Census of Sweden and National Sample of the 1900 Census of Sweden, Version 2.0.* Minneapolis: Minnesota Population Center [distributor], 2011*)*

Table I: Hypothesis correlations by bailiff

		60uf1ghh	60uprchhrc	60upubas	PercWheat	Prcover20
% 60 and older in farming one-generational household	Pearson Correlation	1	-,488**	,283**	,644**	,712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,002	,000	,000
	N	119	119	119	119	119
% 60 and older in a rural household retirement contract	Pearson Correlation	-,488**	1	-,364**	-,439**	-,503**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000	,000
	N	119	119	119	119	119
% rural 60 and older recieving public assistance	Pearson Correlation	,283**	-,364**	1	,066	,307**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,002	,000		,473	,001
	N	119	119	119	119	119
% wheat prodution of total grains	Pearson Correlation	,644**	-,439**	,066	1	,723**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,473		,000
	N	119	119	119	119	119
% landowners owning land over 20 hectares	Pearson Correlation	,712**	-,503**	,307**	,723**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,001	,000	
	N	119	119	119	119	119

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: The Swedish National Archives, Umeå University, and the Minnesota Population Center. National Sample of the 1890 Census of Sweden and National Sample of the 1900 Census of Sweden, Version 2.0. Minneapolis: Minnesota Population Center [distributor], 2011)
Burström, Hugo. 1912. ”Statistiska utredningar,” Ålderdomsförsäkringskommittén. Stockholm.
Sundbärg, Gustav. 1910. ”Ekonomisk-Statistisk Beskrivning öfver Sveriges Olika Landsdelar,” Emigrationsutredningen. Stockholm.

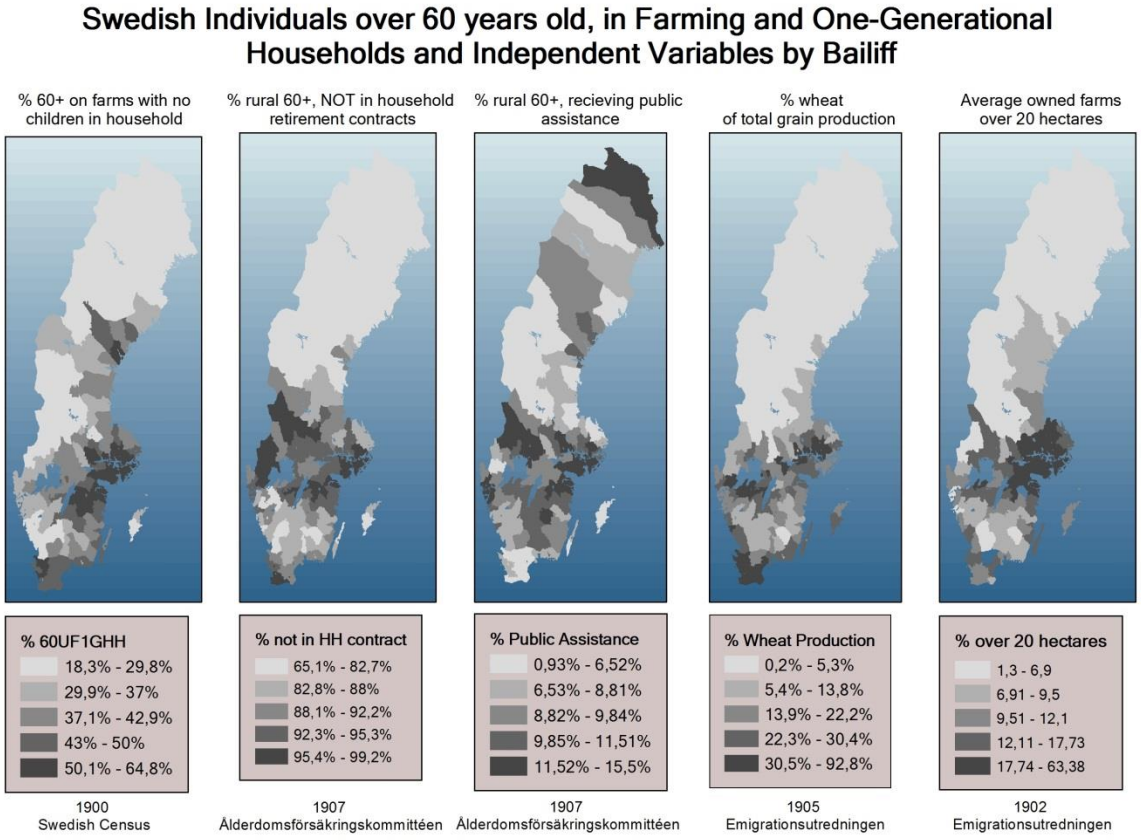
Table II. Hypothesis correlations by hundreds

		prcf1g60	prcf1g70
% 60 and older in farming one- generational household	Pearson Correlation	1	,806**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	361	360
% 70 and older in farming one- generational household	Pearson Correlation	,806**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	360	360
% landowners owning land over 20 hectares	Pearson Correlation	,642**	,419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	361	360
% wheat prodution of total grains	Pearson Correlation	,555**	,409**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	361	360

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: The Swedish National Archives, Umeå University, and the Minnesota Population Center. National Sample of the 1890 Census of Sweden and National Sample of the 1900 Census of Sweden, Version 2.0. Minneapolis: Minnesota Population Center [distributor], 2011)
Burström, Hugo. 1912. ”Statistiska utredningar,” Ålderdomsförsäkringskommittén. Stockholm.
Sundbärg, Gustav. 1910. ”Ekonomisk-Statistisk Beskrivning öfver Sveriges Olika Landsdelar,” Emigrationsutredningen. Stockholm.

Map II A-E



Source: The Swedish National Archives, Umeå University, and the Minnesota Population Center. National Sample of the 1890 Census of Sweden and National Sample of the 1900 Census of Sweden, Version 2.0. Minneapolis: Minnesota Population Center [distributor], 2011)
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