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'The (working) poor in Stockholm 1740: A spatial analysis'

This paper examines the social structure and economic geography of early modern Stockholm at a granular level, using a poll-tax register which records the source of income and support for all city residents – not just those who pay taxes or report an income.

Existing studies of pre-industrial inequality suffer from a paucity of data on different social groups and often lack detail on occupations for the lower social strata. Lower-earning individuals are lumped into groups such as 'workers' and women are usually overlooked. Even more problematic, those who are outside the paid labor market are often invisible. The 1740 poll-tax register for Stockholm, the main source for this paper, provides much more detail. One of the most unusual aspects of this source is that it, in addition to name and age, records the means of support for household members, regardless of the forms this took. In addition to detailed occupational descriptors, it also gives a string of text describing how household members were supporting themselves; both market and non-market means of support are described, including begging and poor relief. Thus, we find examples such as: "Sailor's widow Kierstin Andersdotter, 63 years old, is supported by her kin" and: "Soldier of the royal guard's widow Anna Modig, 60 years old, begging with one child."

Here we can highlight the plethora of ways that individuals at the lower end of the social spectrum made a living: What did life, labor, and household division look like for those who were most struggling to get by? What differentiated them from the median household, and from those best off?

We are also able to account for the role played by women in the social composition of the city, a group which is all too often neglected due to the lack of sources on women's employment. Given the prevalence of women's work at the time, their inclusion in tabulations of the social structure will make an enormous difference in filling in some of these gaps and strengthening our understanding of early modern urban life.

The geographical detail provide in the poll-tax register strengthens our analysis of urban inequality and social and economic classes by mapping individuals' occupations and living quarters. How did the city shape class and (in)equality and what was the relation to economic activities? Linkages to tax records in previous decades also strengthen the analysis.