

The crofter is a woman: Gender division of labour in rural semi-landless households, Sweden 1850–1900*

by Carolina Uppenberg and Malin Nilsson

Abstract

This paper contributes to the empirical question of the labour organization and gender division of labour in a semi-landless rural group during the second half of the nineteenth century, a period characterized by developing agrarian capitalism. Thereby, we also add to the broader question of the role of gender division of labour in economic transformation. Through a triangulation of sources – crofters' contracts, work lists and ethnographic questionnaires, we found that men performed a much higher number of corvée days per year compared to women. Moreover, we found that many core agricultural tasks were done by both men and women. The labour organization, on the other hand, was clearly gendered – the role as a crofter in the sense of doing corvée labour for a landowner was primarily a male experience, while the role as a crofter in the sense of working one's own small plot of land was to a larger extent a female experience.

Gender division of labour affects economic development.¹ As recently argued by Jane Whittle, the structural transformation from an economy dominated by the primary sector to an economy based on the secondary and tertiary sector – one of the definitions of the major economic change of industrialization – cannot be understood without further empirical knowledge about gender division of labour.² More specifically, what tasks women did and how labour was organized in gendered ways inside and outside of households are in need of further empirical evidence, which we provide in this study.

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¹ M. R. Hunt & A. Shepard, 'Introduction: Producing change', in C. Macleod, A. Shepard & M. Ågren (eds), *The whole economy. Work and gender in early modern Europe* (2023).

² J. Whittle, 'Putting women back into the early modern economy: Work, occupations, and economic development', *EcHR* 77 (2024).

The question of how industrialization affected women's work opportunities has been debated for at least a century, starting with the works by Alice Clark and Ivy Pinchbeck, and has continued to be a prominent aspect of gender history with studies on how work tasks, cultural values, economic change, and power relations have intertwined to create the positions of women and men in different historical settings.³ To our knowledge, the English countryside has been most thoroughly studied, while the later industrialized countries, Sweden included, have been covered much less.⁴ Swedish studies touching upon gender division of labour in nineteenth-century rural households often adopt a functionalist gender division of work, i.e., that the farming population needed a spouse in order to manage the daily chores.⁵ Although it has been acknowledged that it was the characteristics of using the whole household that made the croft system such a flexible institution which grew

³ A. Clark, *Working life of women in the seveneenth century* (1982 [1919]); L. Pinchbeck, *Women workers and the industrial revolution, 1750–1850* (1969 [1930]). Some of the early pioneering studies include: L. A. Tilly & J. W. Scott, *Women, work and family* (1978); M. C. Howell, *Women, production, and patriarchy in late medieval cities* (1986); J. M. Bennett, 'History that stands still: Women's work in the European past', *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988); S. O. Rose, 'Proto-industry, women's work and the household economy in the transition to industrial capitalism', *J. Family Hist.* 13 (1988). For Sweden, see U. Wikander, *Kvinnors och mäns arbeten: Gustavsberg 1880–1980: Genusarbetsdelning och arbetets degradering vid en porslinsfabrik* (1988) and L. Sommestad, 'Gendering work, interpreting gender: The masculinization of dairy work in Sweden, 1850–1950', *Hist. Workshop J.* 37 (1994). More recent studies include: K. Honeyman & J. Goodman, 'Women's work, gender conflict, and labour markets in Europe, 1500–1900', *EcHR* 44 (1991); L. Helsen, 'The persistent workforce: Female day labour on capitalist farms in eighteenth-century Flanders', *Rural Hist.* 34 (2023); M. Pathanassiou, 'Rural labour, gender and social hierarchies: Peasants' wives and female rural servants in the Austrian Alps during the late 19th and the early decades of the 20th centuries', *O Kosmos Tis Ergassias (The world of labour)* 2 (2015); C. Sarasúa, 'Women's work and structural change: Occupational structure in eighteenth-century Spain', *EcHR* 72 (2019). For a recent literature survey and suggestion of new questions, see Y. Merouani & F. Perrin, 'Gender and the long-run development process. A survey of the literature', *European Rev. Econ. Hist.* 26 (2022).

⁴ N. Verdon, *Rural women workers in nineteenth-century England: Gender, work and wages* (2012) laments the lack of studies in rural women's work and regards Pinchbeck's 1930 book as a 'major piece of analysis' (p. 23). For the Swedish context one of the most

important work in agrarian history, the five volumes of *Det svenska jordbrukets historia* [History of Swedish agriculture] devotes only a few pages to women's work, lamenting the lack of empirical sources and studies on the subject, see C.-J. Gadd, *Den agrara revolutionen: 1700–1870. Det svenska jordbrukets historia Bd. 3.* (2000), pp. 55–8; M. Morell, *Jordbruket i industrisamhället, 1870–1945. Det svenska jordbrukets historia, Bd. 4.* (2001), pp. 48–53, 310–20; J. Myrdal, *Jordbruket under feodalismen 1000–1700. Det svenska jordbrukets historia, Bd. 2* (1999), pp. 309–13. More important as a point of departure is the project *Gender and Work* at Uppsala University, focusing on specific tasks that men and women did in order to make a living, regardless of setting (urban/rural), see M. Ågren (ed.), *Making a living, making a difference: Gender and work in early modern European society* (2017). Their results work as a recurring background to our results. However, their studies do not provide details regarding the specific tasks in agriculture that men and women did, but rather use broader categories, see M. Ågren, 'Introduction: Making a living, making a difference', in Ågren (ed.), *Making a living* and J. Lindström, R. Fiebranz, & G. Rydén, 'The diversity of work', in Ågren (ed.), *Making a living*.

⁵ C.-J. Gadd, 'The agricultural revolution in Sweden 1700–1870', in J. Myrdal & M. Morell (eds), *The agrarian history of Sweden. From 4000 BC to AD 2000* (2011), pp. 129–30; M. Dribe, *Leaving home in a peasant society: Economic fluctuations, household dynamics and youth migration in southern Sweden, 1829–1866* (2000); C. Lundh & M. Olsson (eds), *Statarliv – i myt och verklighet* (2008). An exception to the functionalistic view is presented by I. A. Flygare, *Generation och kontinuitet: Familjejordbruket i två svenska slättbygder under 1900-talet* (1999), who studies the gender division of labour on Swedish farms during the twentieth century. See especially pp. 180–227 for her study of the early twentieth century and findings that resemble ours.

dramatically during the nineteenth century, no study has shown an interest in the labour of crofters' wives.⁶

Studies on England have focused on the participation of women in the rural labour force, but less attention has been paid to the internal division of labour within households.⁷ Although studies on women's wages have considerably increased our understanding about women's labour, they do not, as pointed out for example by Whittle, tell us about the possibilities women had to participate in the paid labour market, nor about what they did when not working for wages.⁸ Among those trying to establish a connection between the gender division of labour in agriculture, technology, and economic change is Keith Snell, whose argument that a decline in women's employment came with the more pronounced use of the scythe has been influential, although nuanced by others.⁹ Joyce Burnette combines the questions in an account book based study, which showed decreasing demand for female labour due to a structural change in agriculture that resulted in fewer cows and more sheep. This led to less work in haymaking, which was previously a seasonal peak in demand for female labour.¹⁰ Pamela Sharpe has compiled research on which tasks men and women did on a large number of English farms, and she discusses the question of whether women compensated for men or complemented men's work, and our paper adds to this question.¹¹ A recent Swedish study illuminates how the shift from the primary to the secondary and tertiary sector was characterized by an increasing feminization of agricultural work.¹² There is a renewed interest in the field of women's work with the implementation of new methods, not the least the possibilities of creating databases of incidental information of work tasks inspired by time-use studies. Not only have these works shown how women's contribution to the economy and to structural transformation has been underestimated, but also how this

⁶ The croft system as a flexible institution, see Morell, *Jordbruket i industrisamhället*, pp. 69–70. Other Nordic countries present more developed research about crofters, although seldom with a gender perspective, see for example the overview of the rich research on Norwegian crofters in N. O. Østrem, *En kort introduksjon til husmannsvesenet* (2022), who points to the almost total lack of research on female crofters, pp. 148–49, and literature review in C. Uppenberg, 'Contracted coercion: Land, labour and gender in the Swedish crofter institution', *Scandinavian J. Hist.* 48 (2023), pp. 595–97. An exception is an important study by A. Tranberg, "Ledighed taales ikke". Plassfamilien på gardsarbeid', *Historisk tidsskrift Norge* 69 (1990) who has focused on gender division of labour among Norwegian crofters.

⁷ See for example P. Sharpe, 'The female labour market in English agriculture during the industrial revolution: Expansion or contraction?', *AgHR* 47 (1999) and reviewed literature; a call for more studies on households by J. Humphries, T. De Moor, & J. Zuijderduijn, 'Introduction', *European Rev. Econ. Hist.* 17 (2013); and a thorough discussion about the preindustrial household by J. Whittle, 'A critique of

approaches to "domestic work": Women, work and the pre-industrial economy', *Past & Present* 243 (2019).

⁸ Whittle, 'Putting women back'; A. de Pleijt & J. L. van Zanden, 'Two worlds of female labour: Gender wage inequality in western Europe, 1300–1800', *EcHR* 74 (2021); J. Humphries & J. Weisdorf, 'The wages of women in England, 1260–1850' *JeCH* 75 (2015).

⁹ K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: Social change and agrarian England, 1660–1900* (1985), pp. 15–66. See also Verdon, *Rural women workers*, pp. 24–30 and cited literature; H. V. Speechley, *Female and child agricultural day labourers in Somerset, c.1685–1870* (1999); J. Whittle & H. Sandvik, 'Agriculture', in Macleod *et al.* (eds), *The whole economy*.

¹⁰ J. Burnette, 'Labourers at the Oakes: Changes in the demand for female day-laborers at a farm near Sheffield during the Agricultural Revolution', *JECH* 59 (1999).

¹¹ Sharpe, 'The female labour market', pp. 167–72.

¹² J. Lindström & M. Ågren, 'Women's work and the occupational structure in late nineteenth-century Sweden', *International Rev. Social Hist.* first view (2023).

undervaluation has given a faulty understanding of the gendered work organization of the economy at large.¹³ However, many researchers point to the same lacunae: the lack of detailed information on married women's work in agriculture, especially when it took place outside of the paid labour market, and the need to understand women's contribution in relation to the labour organization.¹⁴

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of developing agrarian capitalism in Sweden, characterized by parallel labour relations with wage labour gaining ground also in agriculture, but most large manors still heavily dependent on feudal labour services provided by crofters and tenant farmers.¹⁵ To understand this process and what the gendered labour organization of the rural, semi-landless inhabitants looked like, the lack of knowledge about married women's work patterns in manorial agriculture is a great obstacle. We contribute to remedying this through an analysis of the gendered labour organization among the largest group of semi-landless rural inhabitants in Sweden, called crofters (Sw: *torpare*).¹⁶ The research question is: in which way were labour organization and work tasks structured in terms of gender within the crofter households and between the crofters' households and the estates? We provide here the first mapping of the work pattern among Swedish crofters from a gender perspective. Moreover, the novelty of our approach is that we study the household labour organization at two levels simultaneously: within the crofter household and between the crofter household and the estate.

The focus on crofters is motivated by the fact that they, more than any other group, embodied the tensions of the emerging agrarian capitalism through their parallel labour organization combining corvée labour, subsistence work and wage labour. They were also the largest group among the growing strata not owning or controlling land. Sweden was still heavily characterized by agriculture at the end of the nineteenth century, with 67 per cent of the population engaged in the sector in 1880.¹⁷ The nineteenth century was characterized by proletarianization among the rural population. In the mid-eighteenth century, landed peasant farmers constituted about 80 per cent of the rural population, while by 1850 they made up just over 50 per cent. The period also saw a rapid population increase, so in real numbers there were about 50,000 landless households in the mid-eighteenth century. A hundred years later, this number reached almost 200,000, out of which crofters were slightly

¹³ Pioneered by S. C. Ogilvie, *A bitter living: Women, markets, and social capital in early modern Germany* (2003) and also developed by Ågren (eds), *Making a living*, and J. Whittle & M. Hailwood, 'The gender division of labour in early modern England', *EcHR* 73 (2020).

¹⁴ Whittle & Sandvik, 'Agriculture'.

¹⁵ For a theoretical discussion about this kind of labour organization, see H. Bernstein, *Class dynamics of agrarian change* (2010).

¹⁶ We use the term crofter for the distinct, well-defined and established Swedish term *torpare*. Crofters in the Scottish settings, in the crofting counties, share the situation with their Swedish counterparts concerning

the specific regulations and the relation to the land. An important difference is the demand for day labouring as rent for the Swedish crofters, while Scottish crofters did day labouring for wages. For the Swedish crofter institution, see Gadd, 'The agricultural revolution', pp. 141–3; Uppenberg, 'Contracted coercion'. For the Scottish crofters, see J. Hunter, *The making of the crofting community* (1976); K. Stewart, *Crofts and crofting* (2005), pp. 1–13.

¹⁷ N. Wohlin, *Den jordbruksidkande befolkningen i Sverige 1751–1900: Statistisk-demografisk studie på grundval af de svenska yrkesräkningarna* (1909), Table A.

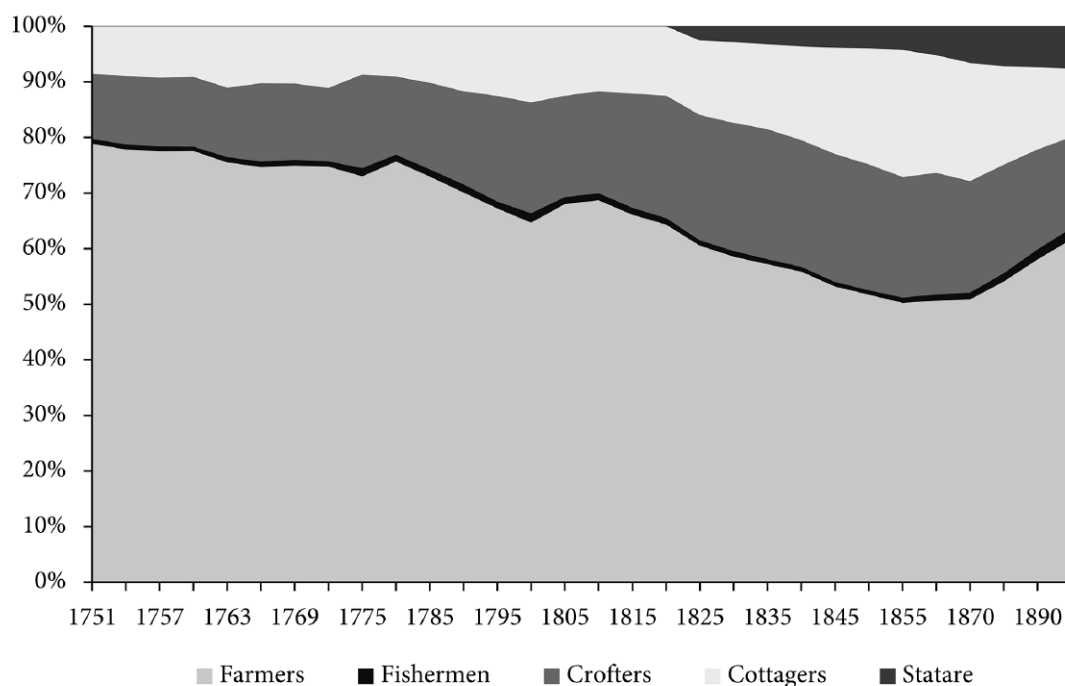


FIGURE 1. Composition of households in the countryside in Sweden 1751–1900.

Source: Wohlin 1909 tabell H. 'Mankönets af den jordbruksidkande befolkningens sammansättning hela riket.' p. 26. We use these male household heads as proxy for households, however, this leaves out a significant number of female-headed households. For the crofters, this does not affect the numbers, as they were almost universally married.

more than half of this group, reaching 100,000 households at its peak in 1860.¹⁸ This means that the experience of being part of the landless poor was widespread, and that crofters were the most numerous part of this group, followed by the poorer cottagers (*backstugusittare*) and lodgers (*inhysesjon*).

Crofters in the manorial economy studied here did not own their land but formed their own households on the land of a landowner, and paid rent – mostly in-kind, with corvée labour being most important.¹⁹ Crofters had access to a small plot of land for their own use and, often, some livestock. The rent was both for the right to stay in the crofter's house with a family, and for access to land. Contracts were to be drawn up between the parties, but in practice, the terms were stated largely by the landowner.²⁰ While the crofter had agricultural work to do at home, the scale was not enough to sustain – or employ – a whole family. Bengtsson and Svensson, studying Swedish crofters' standard of living based on probate inventories for the period 1750–1900, described the overall development of crofters' living standards during this

¹⁸ Myrdal & Morell (eds), *The agrarian history of Sweden*, p. 286.

¹⁹ For crofts on peasant farmers' land, the situation

regarding land ownership could be different. However, the vast majority of crofters were manorial crofters and it is this group that is studied here.

period as 'proletarianization without pauperization'.²¹ Crofters were almost always married, although widows and widowers could be found in the contracts for shorter periods of time. The different labour relations and the inherent gendered organization of labour make the crofter's household well-suited for studying the consequences of the gender division of labour in the household for economic development. Compared to other groups in the semi-landless and landless strata, manorial crofters' work is better documented since their relation to the landowner was formalized in contracts.

Broadly speaking, three Swedish regions where there are plains allowing for large-scale agriculture, and where substantial parts of the land were owned by large landowners, had what we call here the manorial economy: the southernmost province *Skåne*, the south-western province *Västergötland* and the Lake Mälaren valley.²² The Mälaren valley had an earlier and more profound use of *statare* (married servants in husbandry), while the other two regions had more crofters and tenant farmers. For these reasons, we have selected to study estates located in the two regions *Skåne* and *Västergötland*.

Contrary to the common approach of comparing different estates, or focusing on only one estate, we choose here to gather the same kind of sources from many estates, in order to find a pattern for our specific question of the gender division of labour and work organization in the crofter institution.²³ The estates differ regarding for example their production orientation, degree of mechanization and not the least regarding the proportion of labour done by crofters. At the Blomberg estate, a large proportion of the workdays was done by crofters but also by other day labourers, and farmhands employed for the year were slightly more important than married servants (*statare*), which can be seen in Figure 5. At the Koberg estate by the end of the nineteenth century, about ten *statare* families were employed and 400 tenant farmers and crofters had active contracts with the estate.²⁴ Dufeke in the southernmost province, showed one of the early examples of large scale evictions of tenant farmers and crofters, to be substituted with day labourers.²⁵ However, the design of this study is not to compare different estates and explain the gender division of labour in the light of these differences, but rather the other way around: to gather different sources regarding gender division of labour at the estates and in the crofter households, which can be used to understand the different estates. Gender division of labour is a productive aspect of the manorial economy, not just the outcome of different production orientations.

²⁰ Uppenberg, 'Contracted coercion'.

²¹ E. Bengtsson & P. Svensson, 'The living standards of the labouring classes in Sweden, 1750–1900: Evidence from rural probate inventories', *AgHR* 70 (2022), pp. 59–64, quote p. 63.

²² Gadd, 'The agricultural revolution', pp. 121–23; Gadd, *Den agrara revolutionen*, p. 95.

²³ L. Nyström, *Potatisriket: Stora Bjurum 1857–1917: Jorden, makten, samhället* (2003); Burnette, 'Labourers

at the Oakes'.

²⁴ C. F. Jonsson, *Minnen och hägkomster från min verksamhetstid på Koberg, dels hämtade ur äldre tillgängligare källor, dels själv upplevda och dels berättade av med förhållandena fullt förtrogna personer, dock nu nästan alla bortgångna ur tiden* (1943), pp. 41, 47.

²⁵ M. Olsson, *Storgodsdrift: Godsekonomi och arbetsorganisation i Skåne från dansk tid till mitten av 1800-talet* (2002), pp. 132–42, 303–10.

TABLE 1. Number of crofter contracts per estate.

Region	Estate	Number of contracts
Scania	Dufeke	12
	Knutstorp	179
South-western Sweden	Ryholm	26
	Torpa	46
	Blomberg	18
	Koberg	226
Total		507

Source: Scania (in the Swedish National Archives in Lund (*Landsarkivet i Lund*), subsequently LLA); Knutstorp godsarkiv SE/LLA/31031 C:1:1–5; private estate archive: Dufeke godsarkiv, Axelvold; south-western Sweden (all in the Swedish National Archives in Gothenburg (*Landsarkivet i Göteborg*), subsequently GLA); Ryholms gårds arkiv, GLA/C0111:1 F1:1–3; Torpa gårdsarkiv, SE/GLA/10942 FII:4, FIII:1–4; Blombergs säteris arkiv, SE/GLA/10976/ F1:1; Kobergs fideikommiss, GLA/C0163:1, FII: 6–10.

I

The sources for this study are of three kinds: **contracts** between estate owners and crofter households; **work lists** detailing work tasks in different ways; and ethnographic **questionnaires**.²⁶ These are presented in turns below.

We analysed in total 507 crofter contracts from six different estates (Table 1).²⁷ As seen in Map 1, the estates studied in south-western Sweden are quite dispersed, while the Scanian estates are located in the north-west of Skåne.

As we see in Table 1, the number of contracts found varied greatly between the different dwellings. This does not equal the number of crofters on the estates but is dependent on what has been left in the archives.

The crofter contracts were one- to four-page documents specifying the name of the croft and the crofter as well as the duration of the contract. The contracts were nearly always signed by the male crofter. Many were pre-printed with the specifics filled in by hand. The contracts stated the number of corvée days to be performed. These days were always gendered, specifying men's days and women's days, and sometimes also when these days were to be performed during the year. The contracts also specified a number of additional tasks to be carried out and if the crofters had to make other payments in cash or in kind for the croft (Table 5). It is not possible to declare without any doubt that the days specified in the

²⁶ We use the general term 'work lists' for all kinds of sources that somehow give information about work tasks and/or number of workdays done by different groups. They have different titles in the archives, for example *dagsverksjournaler* or *avräkningsböcker*.

²⁷ Contracts from the Scanian estates have kindly been made available to us by Mats Olsson. Olsson, *Storgodsdrift*, analysed the manorial economy and the

labour organization of the estates in southern Sweden. For details regarding the estates analysed in this paper, see especially pp. 96–121, 132–42. We used the contracts collected by Olsson in a new way, since we were interested in gender division of labour in the crofter households; Olsson was interested in the economy and labour organization of the estates, where tenant farmers were the most important workforce of all.



MAP 1. Southern Sweden with the estates studied.

contracts were actually performed as stated.²⁸ However, both the information in the lists of performed labour in the archives, as well as the fact that the contracts were carefully specified for each and every crofter, point to a situation where the demands in the contracts mirrored the real workload. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that the work tasks at the croft, such as work in the fields and taking care of the livestock, as well as all the reproductive chores to keep a home for the crofter household, were not part of the contracts. In the analysis, we incorporate this discussion.

Another methodological issue for the number of *corvée* days is the so-called ‘extra days’ that landowners were allowed to demand, often unlimited in number. At the end of the contracts, we find phrasings that potentially thwart the results of this study, i.e., that the landowner was in a position to demand unregulated extra workdays, paid in cash by the day. When possible,

²⁸ See Olsson, *Storgodsdrift*, pp. 18, 22 for a short discussion on this.

we handled this by comparing work lists of performed labour and contracts and found that it did not alter our results. Moreover, the occurrence of extra days for crofters, or the question of whether each day was actually performed, did not substantially alter the *relationship* between male and female crofters' days, which is the focus of this study.

The work lists are the documentation made by the landowner over the number of days used for different purposes, sometimes also specifying which individual worker or what group of workers (crofters, servants, tenant farmers etc.) that contributed. We found work lists in five estate archives with varying degrees of exactness. Unfortunately, we were only able to categorize the *corvée* days according to gender, task, and type of household for Blomberg. In the Råda estate archive, we were able to categorize work lists according to gender and task but not type of worker. Råda most likely had crofters, but we were not able to find contracts. These present us with the most valuable information on gender division of labour, since they list what work was actually done and – in the best cases – by whom. Therefore, we put quite some effort into analysing these in detail. However, in the discussion about work tasks, we have taken into account information regarding gender division of labour from all of the five estate archives. It is important to note that these lists were not necessarily compiled to cover all work done at the estates, but more often to get an overview of the distribution of workdays for different chores and/or to see how the *corvée* days had been used. Thus, some tasks that must have been performed are not visible in the lists.

In order to triangulate the work lists, we used ethnographic questionnaires.²⁹ These were initiated by researchers at the ethnographic museum *Nordiska muséet* (Nordic museum) at the beginning of the twentieth century, initially for documenting what was understood as a disappearing popular culture in the countryside.³⁰ Answers were collected from old people, asking questions about what life was like in their youth. Unavoidably, there is a touch of romanticizing 'the old days'. However, many lists contain extremely detailed information, not least about specific work tasks. If a person answered that she started working as a maid when she had reached the age of 12, and that her task was to feed the cows in the morning, we treat it as a trustworthy statement, while responses like 'women took care of the livestock' are less useful in this respect. These questionnaires have previously also been used to extrapolate patterns to earlier time periods, or to refer to preindustrial patterns as such, which is questionable. Since they were often administered to people born in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, we argue that for the second half of the nineteenth century, which we study here, the statements made in the questionnaires are trustworthy, since people are speaking of their own lives and their own experiences, although in hindsight. Sometimes the person answering the questionnaires had been a crofter, but in general, the information in this source relates to small farms: freehold, tenant farmers as well as crofters. We assume that a gendered labour organization prevalent at small farms would be likely at crofts too, however necessarily adjusted to the *corvée* days.

²⁹ Discussed thoroughly by ethnographers N.-A. Bringéus, *Människan som kulturvarelse: En introduktion till etnologin* (1990), pp. 195–98; B. G. Nilsson, D. Waldetoft & C. Westergren (eds), *Frågelist berättarglädje: Om frågelistor som forskningsmetod och folklig genre* (2003), while historians have used them

either rather uncritically or not at all.

³⁰ However, ethnographic questionnaires are still used actively by researchers at the Nordic museum. A recent example is a questionnaire about people's experiences of living through the Covid-19 pandemic, see <https://minnen.se/tema/corona> (12 March 2024).

The questionnaires were arranged according to subjects and sent out over different years and to different people all over the country. We read answers from all questionnaires with titles suggesting that they would contain information about work tasks, and five of these were used since they contained many pieces of information regarding work. From these five lists, we analysed answers emanating from our regions of interest (Skåne and Västergötland), in total about 60 interviews from five questionnaires, each from half a page in length to up to 20 pages.³¹ Since the questionnaires we used were centred around the specific work tasks, rather than the gender division of labour, we have no reason to think that they reveal only conspicuous and unusual gendering, but rather the normal managing of specific tasks. We searched all statements regarding the gender division of labour as well as in the broadest sense agricultural work (including housework); in cases when there was information about who did the task, this was also noted. These statements were collected and then compiled in a small database and used for triangulation with the work tasks we found in the contracts and in the work lists.

To be able to discuss the crofters' gender divisions of labour within the household and on the estates we triangulated these three sources.³² The methodological justification of this is as follows: once we determined how the labour organization of the crofter household's obligations towards the landowner was gendered, we used the information on the gender division of labour (found in work lists and ethnographic questionnaires) to draw conclusions about what crofters' wives did both during their *corvée* days and during their time at the croft. Furthermore, we used a mixed methods approach, with quantitative and qualitative analyses supporting each other. Firstly, we counted the number of *corvée* days for men and women in the contracts, presented through descriptive statistics.

Secondly, we tested for a relationship between the *corvée* days for men and the *corvée* days for women using generalized linear models, with the *glm* function in R. As the number of *corvée* days for men was significantly right-skewed (Shapiro-Wilks test, $W=0.932$, $P<0.001$) the response variable was modelled as a Poisson distribution with a log link function. The final model included the number of *corvée* days for men as a response variable, the number of *corvée* days for women and year as continuous predictor variables, and estate as a categorical predictor variable. The significance of the main effects was tested using the Anova function in the R package *car*.³³

As we were mainly interested in households with *corvée* labour in their contracts, we restricted the analysis to crofts with more than zero *corvée* days for men. This represented 392 contracts from 314 unique households. 71 unique households had contracts from more than one point in time. To avoid pseudo replication, we calculated the mean number of *corvée* days for men and women for each household and used this for the presented analysis. 25 households were excluded due to unclear specification of *corvée* days for women in the contract. This

³¹ Nordiska museets arkiv, Nm 83 Arbetslöner (*Wages*), 128 answers, conducted 1938; Nm 3 Matberedning och måltidsseder (*Food preparation and meal customs*) 718 answers, conducted 1928; Nm 28 Skörd (*Harvest*) 422 answers, conducted 1930; Nm 8 Jordbruk (*Farming*) 120 answers, conducted 1928; Nm 21 Åkerns beredning (*Field preparation*) 564 answers,

conducted 1930.

³² A method suggested as especially fruitful for analysing nineteenth century rural women's work tasks by Verdon, *Rural women workers*, pp. 31–9.

³³ J. Fox, M. Friendly & S. Wiesberg, 'Hypothesis tests for multivariate linear models using the *car* package', *R Journal* 5 (2013), pp. 39–52.

resulted in a final dataset with 289 unique observations. Model fit was evaluated based on McFadden's pseudo- R^2 implemented in the companion R package.³⁴

We used a number of alternative model specifications as robustness checks before settling on the final *glm* model. This included modelling the response variable as a Gamma distribution, as well as modelling the dataset as a generalized mixed effects model with household id (nested in estate) as random effects. The coefficient for women's corvée days and year remained significant and with the same direction and magnitude in all models tested.

Thirdly, we compiled the specific tasks listed in the crofter contracts, besides the corvée days. In order to understand how these were gendered, we used work lists combined with ethnographic questionnaires. Through the various information in the work lists, we could find both information about which sex did which task, as well as which type of worker did what kind of tasks. Analysing this together with the information in the ethnographic questionnaires enabled us to understand *how much* work men and women did for the landowner, and *which tasks* they did, both for the landowner and in their own households.

II

The results are presented in three steps. Firstly, we present how many days of corvée labour that men and women did respectively. Secondly, we analyse the relationship between these days. In the third and longest section, we present the results from the triangulation of sources regarding work tasks for men and women.

Men performed a much higher number of corvée days per year compared to women. For crofts with specified corvée days in their contract, men did an average of 99 days per year, while women did 23. In the households where both men and women had specified workdays ($N=167$), women did on average between 15 and 20 per cent of the households' total corvée days per year.

The contracts specified *days per week or year*, divided up into men's work and women's work. For men, the most common specification was the number of days during the whole year, while for women this varied between number of days per year, number of days per summer season, and number of days for a specific task, such as 'xx days during haymaking or with flax'. However, not all contracts had specified workdays. On average, 77 per cent of the contracts specified corvée days for men, and 34 per cent of the contracts had specified corvée days for women. As we can see in Table 2, it varied from 67 per cent in Dufek to 89 per cent on the Blomberg estate for male days, and between 0 per cent and 100 per cent for women. In five cases, there were contracts with only 'women days' and no male days specified in the contracts. These contracts were four cases of widows who had signed the contract, and in one case a woman who paid for the croft in corvée days, and cloth that she had woven. Almost all crofts that did not do male corvée days made cash payments instead.

However, as we can see in Table 3, also the number of days they had to provide varied greatly both between and within the estates for both men and women. For men, the average varied

³⁴ A. C. Cameron & F. A. G. Windmeijer, 'An R-squared measure of goodness of fit for some common nonlinear regression models', *J. Econometrics* 77 (1997), pp. 329–42.

TABLE 2. Number of contracts with specified corvée labour

	<i>Number of contracts in sample</i>	<i>Number of contracts with corvée days for men</i>		<i>Number of contracts with corvée days for women</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Scania</i>					
Dufveke	12	8	67%	0	0%
Knutstorp	179	112	63%	20	11%
<i>South-western Sweden</i>					
Blomberg	18	18	100%	16	89%
Ryholm	26	25	96%	13	50%
Torpa	46	45	98%	34	74%
Koberg	226	184	81%	89	39%
Total	507	392	77%	172	34%

Source: See Table 1.

TABLE 3. Number of corvée days to be carried out each year for men and women in contracts per region and estate

<i>Region/Estate</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Scania</i>								
Dufveke	Men	8	25	170	105	104	25	51
	Women	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Knutstorp	Men	112	10	212	98	84	52	44
	Women	20	3	20	12	12	12	6
<i>South-western Sweden</i>								
Blomberg	Men	18	36	312	149	156	156	73
	Women	16	20	40	29	30	30	6
Ryholm	Men	25	26	26	160	156	156	71
	Women	13	6	25	14	10	8	8
Torpa	Men	46	15	156	66	52	52	30
	Women	34	3	12	8	8	6	3
Koberg	Men	184	6	236	95	104	104	46
	Women	89	3	63	14	10	6	3

Note: Only contracts with corvée days for men and women over 0 included.

Source: See Table 1.

between 66 at Torpa and 160 at Ryholm estate. At Blomberg, the days a crofter had to work varied between 312 days, meaning six days a week, i.e., all available working hours, and 36 days, which meant less than one day per week.

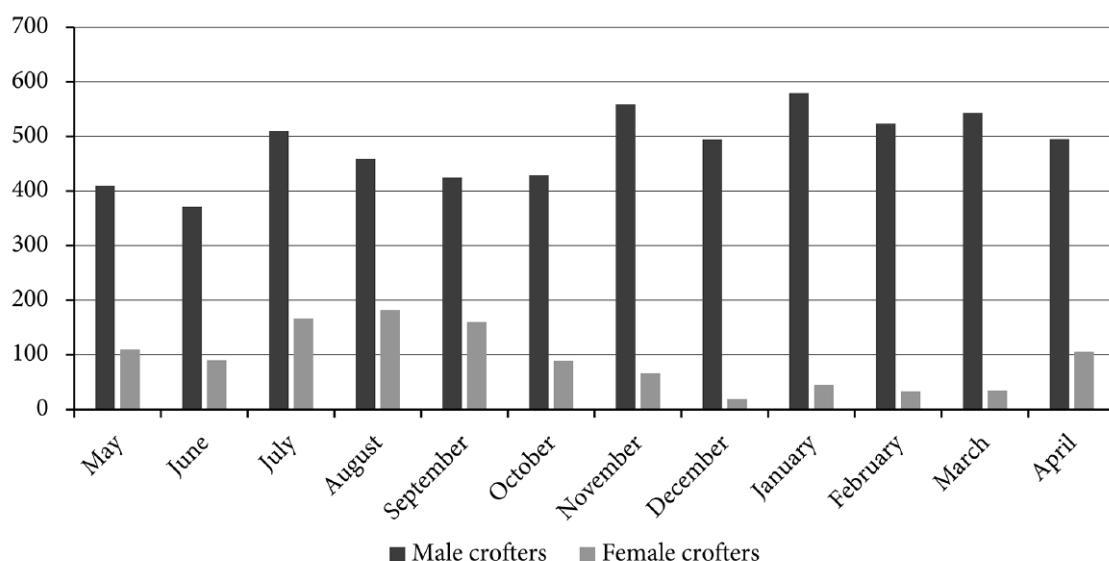


FIGURE 2. Total amount of corvée days performed by crofters according to workdays list for the Blomberg estate May 1872–April 1873.

Source: Dagsverksjournaler (*work lists*) Blombergs säteris arkiv, SE/GLA/10976/D1:2.

Women averaged between 8 and 29 corvée days per year. The contracts did not always specify when these days were to be performed. However, in the Blomberg workdays list displayed in Figure 2, we can see that women's corvée days were concentrated in the summer months to a larger extent than for men. At Blomberg, female crofters seem to have been employed during harvest time. This pattern is also confirmed by the workdays lists that we have from other estates.

Two important results were found here. Firstly, there were large differences between the number of workdays carried out by men and women. We will discuss the implications of this further, but at this stage we can conclude that the experiences of being a male crofter and a female crofter were totally different. When studying only the total number of corvée days for the household or counting only men's days, as in most previous research, this will not become visible. However, if instead we analyse this with an understanding of intra-household gender division of labour, this finding is of huge importance.

Secondly, the variance *between* and *within* estates concerning the number of days crofters worked, points to a flexible system, where the estates used the labour of their subservient households in carefully designated ways. The function of the crofter household as a flexible provider of labour also meant that the internal division of labour in the crofter household needed to adapt to rather different terms, and that flexibility was to a large extent borne by the crofter household.

While it is known that both men and women did corvée days, no studies have calculated the number of days or the relationship between men's and women's days decomposed per household. This also provides insights into a core question about gender division of labour,

TABLE 4. The relationship between specified corvée days for men and corvée days for women in contracts

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>P</i>
Intercept	13.216	1.206	10.96	<0.001
Corvée days for women in contract	0.008	0.000	17.31	<0.001
<i>Estate</i>				
Blomberg				
Dufeke	-0.187	0.043	-4.36	<0.001
Knutstorp	-0.203	0.029	-6.95	<0.001
Koberg	-0.358	0.030	-11.94	<0.001
Ryholm	0.023	0.048	0.49	0.627
Torpa	-0.610	0.035	-17.66	<0.001
Year	-0.004	0.001	-6.93	<0.001

McFadden R-square 0.28 (0.3-0.4 indicate an excellent fit).

Total N: 289

Note: Results from a GLM model with the dependent variable, corvée days for men in contract, modelled as a Poisson distribution with a log link function.

Source: See Table 1.

i.e., of whether women's work *complemented* or *compensated* men's work.³⁵ That is, were the tasks so distinct that they could only be completed by a specific gender, so that a landowner had to get a man to do some tasks and a woman to do other tasks and could not exchange them, or could many days done by men decrease the need for women's days? In practical reality, it was probably somewhere in between, with some tasks heavily gendered and others less so, so that men and women both complemented and compensated each other's efforts. Nonetheless, this question is in dire need of more empirical evidence, which we provide here.

We found a significant positive relationship between the number of corvée days for men and the number of corvée days for women ($\chi^2=290.65.64$, $df=1$, $P<.001$). For every additional corvée day specified for women in the contract, the number of corvée days for men increased by 0.8 per cent, while keeping year and estate constant (Table 4). That is, although not all women had corvée days specified in their contracts, crofts with a higher number of corvée days for women also had a significantly higher number of corvée days for men. Additionally, we found significant differences between estates in the number of corvée days for men ($\chi^2=470.95$, $df=5$, $P<.001$), mainly driven by a higher number of corvée days for men in contracts at Ryholm than at other estates (Table 4; Ryholm). The number of corvée days for men decreased significantly over time ($\chi^2=47.21$, $df=1$, $P<.001$), and the number of corvée days for men in the contracts decreased by 0.4 per cent annually (Table 4: Year). This is not to be interpreted as an effect of the households doing fewer corvée days to pay for their crofts, but rather as an effect of the cash share of rent increasing.

³⁵ See for example Sharpe, 'Female labour market', pp. 167–8, who discusses this question.

This points to a gender division of labour *regarding crofts* in which female crofters' work on the estate complemented rather than compensated male crofters' work. When this result is analysed along with the question about the number of days crofters worked for the landowner, an interesting pattern appears. Our basic premise is that a semi-landless crofter household could neither afford nor socially legitimize any other situation than one in which both men and women did productive labour for the survival of the household all their available time, as long as they could find work. With this in mind, the division of *corvée* labour also gives us the other side of the coin, i.e., the work in the crofter household. With our approach of studying household labour organization at two levels simultaneously, we found that if men did two or three days a week of *corvée* labour, a common workload as shown in Table 3, and women only did a fraction of this, we could conclude that women were able to allocate more time for the work in the crofter household. This obviously does not mean that men did not work on their crofts, but what it does mean is that the *complementary* gender division of crofters' labour on the estate was often combined with a *compensatory* gender division of labour in the crofter household, since women needed to do what their crofter husbands or sons did not have time for because of the landowner's demands. This is further illuminated by the following section, in which the gender division of labour *on the estates* proves to be much less distinct than is implicated by the allocation of the *corvée* days. Thus, if we see the crofter as the *corvée* labourer, he was a man. But if we see the crofter as working in a small, semi-landless household with various tasks including cultivating a small plot of land, the crofter was a woman.

The contracted workdays were not the only work that crofters did. This is seen in the number of days worked: only a minority of the male crofters did *corvée* days every day, and among women, *corvée* days were a minor part of a work year. In the contracts, a large number of specified tasks were stipulated, tasks to which we now turn in order to reveal who probably did these tasks and what implications this gendering had on the labour organization at the crofts. The contracts specified many tasks that the crofters had to carry out outside of the *corvée* days. Variation was great, some crofters had to perform many of these tasks, whereas other tasks were more uncommon. The occurrence of tasks in the crofter contracts are listed in Table 5.

The most useful list for finding the gendered structure of certain tasks came from the Blomberg estate. Figure 3 shows the gender division of labour regarding certain tasks, and the total number of workdays allocated to each task. The workers who carried out these tasks are not separated by category, i.e., crofter, tenant farmer or other, instead the gendering of tasks is shown. The list has been condensed for the sake of overview, and a few categories only undertaken by men but consisting of rather few days in total, such as collecting ice, tending swine and woodworking, have been erased. As seen in Table 2, we do not have many crofter contracts from Blomberg, although as evident from Figure 2, Blomberg had many more crofters than we have found contracts for.

Figure 3 shows that few tasks were performed solely by men, and these tasks constituted a smaller proportion of the total number of days. Among the tasks that were done by 40–60 per cent of each sex, as well as those mostly carried out by women, we find the core agricultural tasks of haymaking, harvesting, preparing the fields, threshing, and weeding fields of potatoes and grain. Ploughing, transportation, forest work, and sowing were to a larger extent done by men. It is interesting to note the pattern also seen by Tranberg, of women doing

TABLE 5. Work specified in crofter contracts outside *corvée* days

<i>Farming</i>	<i>Transportation</i>	<i>Payments in kind</i>	<i>Other</i>
Hay harvesting	Transporting post	Spinning flax (by type and weight)	Spreading gravel
Bringing in hay	Transporting mill stones	Picking pine cones (in bushels)	Brickwork
All spring seed	Transporting manure (sometimes in number of days)	Picking lingonberries, wild strawberries, cloudberries (quantity specified in contract)	Guarding a gate Guarding a garden
All fall seed	Unspecified transportation (number of transports/days)	Cereals	Forestry
	Unspecified transportation (in Swedish miles)	Wooden products	Beat hunting (days in beat)
		Butter, eggs	Brick laying
		Sand	Clearing cow path

Source: See Table 1.

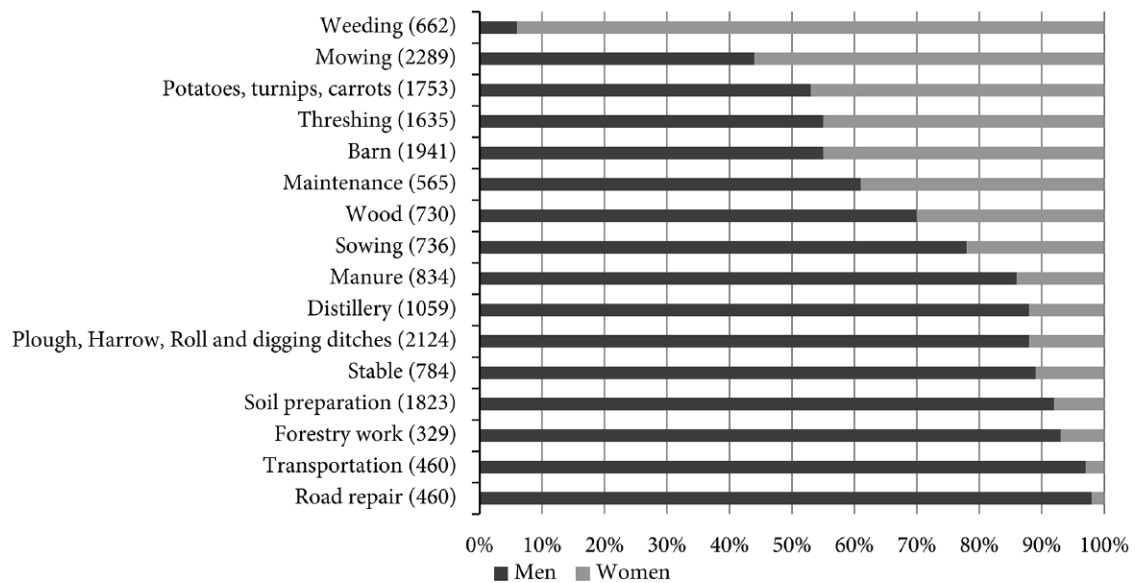


FIGURE 3. Share of days performed by men and women at Blomberg estate.

Source: Dagsverksjournaler (*work lists*) Blombergs säteris arkiv, SE/GLA/10976/D1:2.

the hard manual work of weeding and preparing the fields, while transportation duties, taking care of horses and pigs, and handicrafts were done more by men.³⁶

³⁶ Cf. Tranberg, “‘Ledighed taales ikke’”.

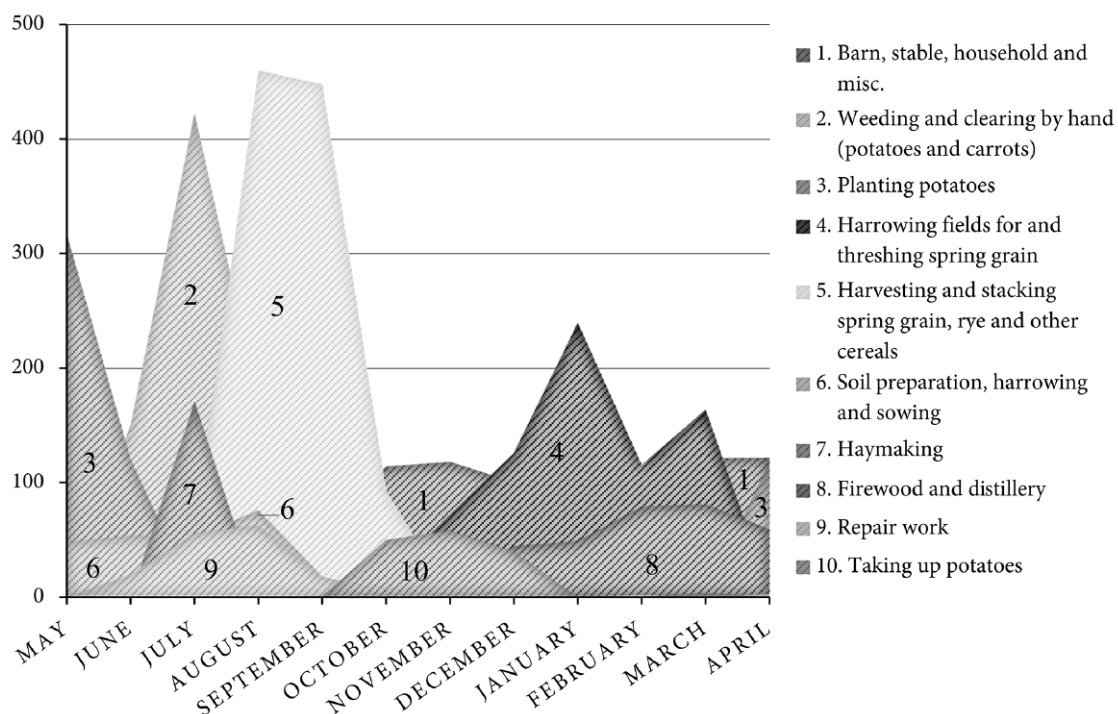


FIGURE 4. Days worked by all women workers in different categories over the year on the Blomberg estate May 1872–April 1873

Source: Dagsverksjournaler (*work lists*) Blombergs säteris arkiv, SE/GLA/10976/D1:2.

In Figure 4 where we can see how the days worked by all women workers were distributed over the year, we find that there was a clear seasonality to the different tasks. As expected, we can see sharp labour demand peaks for women around the harvest in the autumn, for potato planting in the spring and weeding potatoes and carrots in June. We can also see that the actual demand for female labour around hay harvesting is relatively small. The categories in this figure have been condensed for the sake of overview, since the source is very detailed. This means that categories showing many workdays are often also categories demanding a lot of work. However, the most important message from this figure is that women were important for a great many different tasks.

It is important to note that crofters' wives (women crofters in Figure 5) constituted only a small proportion of the women in these lists; the larger share comprised female day labourers, as shown in Figure 5.

For the Råda estate, work lists do distinguish between men and women but not regarding the type of worker (i.e., crofter, servant, day labourer etc.). Thus, with regards to the gender division of labour on the estate, we can see that women participated to a large extent in the categories, drawn up by the estate manager, of 'farming' and 'soil preparation'. The categories in this figure follow the rather broad categories found in the original source.

From the Torpa estate, we found a compilation of women's tasks for the period 1865–66 listing the following work: washing, mangling, slaughtering, scrubbing, planting potatoes, picking

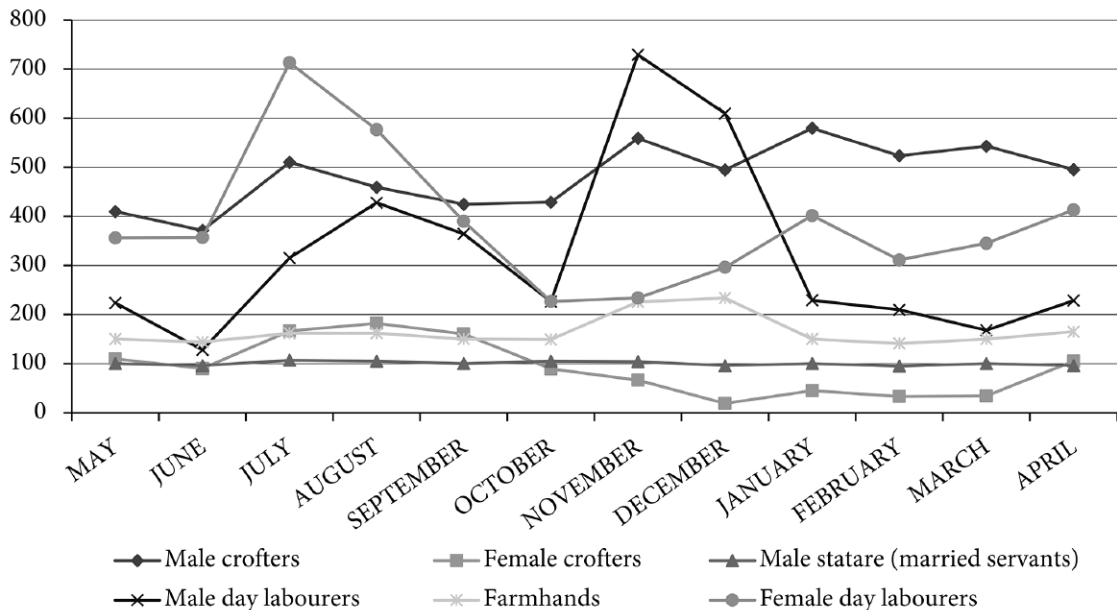


FIGURE 5. Days worked from May 1872–April 1873 on the Blomberg estate per gender and type of worker.

Source: Dagsverksjournaler (work lists) Blombergs säteris arkiv, SE/GLA/10976/D1:2.

potatoes, gardening, haymaking, dressing flax, washing sheep, cutting sheep, thinning out turnips, picking turnips, sieving seeds and grain, cutting clover, and picking lingonberries.³⁷

We now turn to the ethnographic questionnaires in order to triangulate the data from the work lists and to also discuss tasks that are not mentioned in the estate archives but that obviously needed to be performed.

Not surprisingly, haymaking and harvesting were the most obvious seasonal work peaks found in the work lists, and these could be understood as demanding all available labour. In the contracts and work lists, it was often specified that more work was required during these times, or that women's workdays were to be used at that time of the working year. In the work lists, it is uniformly the case that women's workdays took place during the summer season, from May to October. Haymaking and harvesting were also potential sources of conflict or dissatisfaction between crofter and landowner. Since the very weather-dependent task of haymaking and harvesting had to be carried out during a few weeks or even a few critical days, the crofters' and tenant farmers' own fields and the landowners' fields were to be harvested at the same time – and of course, the landowners' fields were prioritized. This meant that crofters and tenant farmers had to leave their crops in the fields on days with good weather in order to work for the landowner, only to find their own crops destroyed by rain the next day, as vividly described in the questionnaires.³⁸

³⁷ Torpa gårdsarkiv, D3:2 Dagsverksjournal 1860–1865.

³⁸ Nm 83: EU 25706; Nm 28: EU 1853.

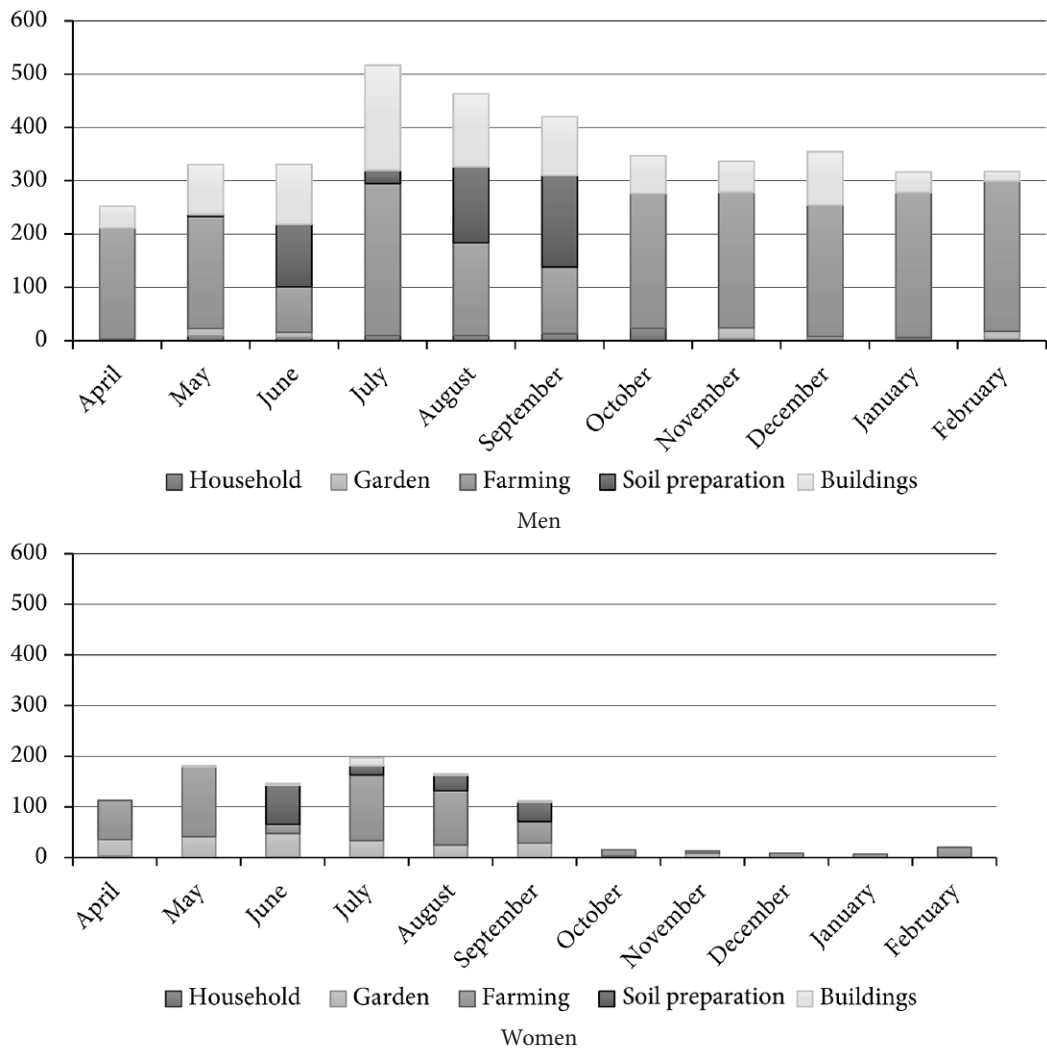


FIGURE 6. Number of workdays by all tenants on the Råda estate Apr. 1868–Feb. 1869 by type of work.

Source: Dagsverksjournaler m.m. (*work lists*) Råda säteris arkiv, SE/GLA/10095/2:1.

Men, women, and children worked together in the fields, including servants, crofters, and tenant farmers.³⁹ The traditional division between women using the sickle and men using the scythe is clear in the questionnaires, but this was definitively not uniformly so.⁴⁰ As seen in Figure 3, most tasks are described for both men and women, such as the actual cutting and gathering of the crop, binding it together, and transporting it when dry.⁴¹ Only women and children were described as gleaning.⁴²

³⁹ Nm 3 EU 267; Nm 28: EU 1459, EU 1486, EU 1971, EU 1732; Nm 83: EU 16497, EU 11757, EU 12016.

⁴⁰ Nm 3: EU 274; Nm 28: EU 1459, EU 1971, EU 1486; Nm 83: EU 16599.

⁴¹ Nm 3: EU 267; Nm 28: EU 1486, EU 1971; Nm 83: EU 8141, EU 16497.

⁴² Nm 28: EU 1459, EU 1732; Nm 83: EU 16599.

This tells us two things: that women were part of the core agricultural work and that women's work was used as a flexible and varied source of labour. This means that being a male crofter was a very different experience from being a crofter's wife. Men worked during the whole year for the landowner, while women had demanding work peaks and slack periods, and thus needed to even this out themselves. Although difficult to estimate, it also calls for an understanding of women having to work harder since they were called to work when the workload was extremely pressing. This is partly true for the group of crofters and tenant farmers as a whole, as their workdays were always used when the need was pressing, but they were not required during slack periods. But this was an even stronger tendency for women.

Threshing was one of the most one-sided male tasks found in the questionnaires, but this task was also mentioned as being done by women.⁴³ Grain was often threshed early in the morning. Threshing was often done early in the morning by male servants, sometimes referred to as 'crack-of-dawn-threshing' (*ottetröskning*).⁴⁴ In the work lists, it is clear that threshing could be done by women too, although more often by men. This suggests that female crofters could do the threshing at the croft since they were not so frequently required by the estate.

A physically demanding task was cutting peat, which was used primarily as fuel. Peat was often part of the contract with crofters, meaning that the crofters could, using their own labour, take peat from the landowner's peat bog for household use as well as for the landowner's use. The work process started by cutting large blocks that were then flattened and laid to dry, a procedure that demanded turning the heavy peat. Many of the people answering the questionnaires stated that men usually cut the peat and women worked with the drying.⁴⁵ Although more typically men's work, clearly women took part too.

Manure handling was often part of the contract, sometimes specified as piecework for covering a specific field. In the work lists, handling manure constituted a rather large proportion of the days. On the Blomberg estate, as shown in Figure 3, a significant share of the work with manure was performed by men; however, the preparation of the manure was to a large extent undertaken by women, while men spread the manure on the fields. In the questionnaires, transporting and spreading of manure was described as being performed by men and women together.⁴⁶

Tasks related to potatoes, which previous literature often understood as a task for women and children, were instead described as all-gender, all-age tasks in the questionnaires; this was also supported by the work lists.⁴⁷ When potatoes were to be harvested (with a hoe and by hand), men, women, and children of both sexes needed to work. In the work list from the Blomberg estate, it is clear that the more manual the task, the larger the share of women. Clearing and weeding the potato field by hand was the most one-sided female-gendered task in the work list, with about 95 per cent of the days being performed by women. On the other hand, earthing up potatoes and hoeing was likewise clearly gendered towards men. Potatoes were planted equally by men and women, and while both men and women harrowed and ploughed the potato field,

⁴³ Nm 3: EU 239, EU 267; Nm 28: EU 1971; Nm 83: EU 11929, EU 11943, EU 16497, EU 16599, EU 12352.

⁴⁴ Nm 3: EU 272, EU 286; Nm 28: EU 1971; Nm 83: EU 25706.

⁴⁵ Nm 83: EU 11943, EU 16497, EU 16706, EU 16599,

EU 11757, EU 12110.

⁴⁶ Nm 21: EU 1095, EU 1217, EU 1228, EU 1549, EU 1720, EU 1735; Nm 83: EU 8141.

⁴⁷ Nm 3: EU 239; Nm 28: EU 1486, EU 1971; Nm 83: EU 12347, EU 16706, EU 11757, EU 11929, EU 16497.

and harvested potatoes, men did a larger share of this work. From the rather clear pattern of the ethnographic questionnaires, we can conclude that potato harvesting involved a work peak that included labour from male crofters and their wives and children, as well as male and female servants. Moreover, it is likely that the potatoes planted at the croft were harvested by the female crofter and children.

Many contracts contained quite a heavy burden of transportation. This could be specified in number of days, as in day-long trips; for a certain distance; or with a certain purpose such as transporting a specified amount of iron, wheat, etc. Often the requirements were carefully specified – for example, how heavy the cargo should be on the way back, if the crofter or tenant farmer could sit on the wagon or needed to walk beside it, etc. This was also found in the work lists, where transporting products from a distillery was separate from transporting cheese, herring, grain to the mill, etc. As found in the Blomberg work list, transportation was almost entirely work for men.

Transportation work has been discussed as an example of how hierarchies played out when different objects were transported. Regarding work described as ‘carrying’ and ‘fetching’, women did about the same amount of work as men, while for ‘driving’ and ‘freighting’, women were mentioned only in a fraction of the cases. Delivering all the products that the household had to bring to the landowner consisted of a large amount of carrying or fetching, although this was not specified in our sources. Regarding driving and freighting, which is what the transportation duties in our sources consisted of, men dominated, especially in the transportation of iron. Transport of iron constituted the longest trip in our sources; thus it required the most working time. Transportation of travellers and post, which was often part of the contracted duties in our sources, were more of a collective duty that had to be performed, with households taking turns. These types of transportation were delegated to subservient people in the household.⁴⁸ We can therefore assume that longer transports, especially of iron, were undertaken by men, while the other tasks could be understood as a shared burden for the household. This conclusion is also strengthened by the ethnographic questionnaires, which revealed that, for example, grain was transported to the mill by men, women, servants, and masters, sometimes with the help of children, although mostly by men.⁴⁹ Taking grain to the mill was described as a rather pleasant task, since it included time waiting with others, meaning time for drinking, playing cards, and just chatting.⁵⁰ This finding also underlines the pattern identified regarding, for example, potatoes, i.e., the more manual the work was, the more likely it was undertaken by women, while transportation with a wagon and draught animal was done by men. Other examples of work involving manual transportation, i.e., ‘carrying’ or ‘fetching’, included collecting pine cones, picking berries, and delivering chickens and feathers. These tasks were seldom described in the work lists but, as we found in the Torpa estate archive, they were typically undertaken by women.

Spinning was uniformly described in the questionnaires as women’s work and was most often described as a task done by all women of the household: mistress, maids, girls, and older

⁴⁸ K. Hassan Jansson, R. Fiebranz & A.-C. Östman, ‘Constitutive tasks: Performances of hierarchy and identity, in Ågren (ed.), *Making a living*, pp. 128–35.

⁴⁹ Nm 3: EU 193, EU 202, EU 264, EU 272, EU 274, EU 258.

⁵⁰ Nm 3: EU 274.

women. There is no mention of men spinning, but they could help out by carding the tow. When a delivery was due, finishing the contracted amount could be quite stressful, so the men had to help out. What is also interesting about spinning is that it was work for the evenings.⁵¹ It was probably the most clearly gendered task that was part of the crofters' contracts, but it could only be done when everything else for the day was finished. Weaving, while not a task mentioned by crofters as payment for the croft but still necessary for the household, was also described as women's work, with men helping out.⁵² Many of the contracts did include spinning duties, and they were often defined as in Tranberg's study, where the raw material was collected from the estate and returned after spinning without payment or according to previous terms (*efter vanligheten*), paid in cash an amount decided upon by the land owner.

Milking was uniformly described as women's work, as was making butter and cheese.⁵³ While crofters could keep cows themselves, usually no more than two or three, the bulk of milking labour took place at the estates, typically by specifically appointed maids. Therefore, it is usually not visible in the work lists. However, sometimes the questionnaire responses described how milking was an opportunity for crofters' wives to earn cash wages.⁵⁴ Although milking was hard work, it made a difference for the household if the wife could take it on, since it meant cash payments. We did not encounter milking cows as a duty in the crofters' contracts, so when it was performed by crofters, it was probably as extra days for payment. Since it was an everyday task, the milker needed to live in physical proximity to the cowsheds, which usually was not the case with crofters.

All work with clothing was described as women's work: sewing, knitting, mending, and washing.⁵⁵ Food preparation and cooking stands out as a 'silent' task. Although we know that it had to be done, and done every day, and that people were aware of that when planning work, it has not been described who did the actual work. Food was part of the crofter contracts since they specified whether food was included during a workday or if the crofter had to bring his food for the day, with the latter clearly dominating. This meant that the crofter had to bring food for the whole day in order to perform the task specified in the contract. Even in the questionnaire devoted to 'Food preparation and meal customs', there were few responses about whom actually prepared the meals. But when it was mentioned, it was always women.⁵⁶ A more visible task relating to food was that of delivering food to people whose workdays were spent away from the house. For example, delivering food to threshers, peat workers, or people digging ditches was described as women's or children's work.⁵⁷

We can now return to the list of tasks that crofters had to carry out according to their contracts, and we can analyse it along with tasks necessary for the survival of the crofter

⁵¹ Nm 3: EU 239, EU 268; Nm 83: EU 5621, EU 8141, EU 11929, EU 16599, EU 12339, EU 14617, EU 25706.

⁵² Nm 3: EU 239; Nm 83: EU 8141, EU 11929, EU 16599, EU 12036.

⁵³ Nm 3: EU 239, EU 268, EU 272, EU 287, EU 286; Nm 83: EU 8153, EU 11943, EU 16564, EU 11965, EU 12016, EU 25706.

⁵⁴ Nm 83: EU 11943.

⁵⁵ Nm 3: EU 196, EU 239; Nm 83: EU 5621, EU 8141,

EU 16564, EU 16599, EU 5495, EU 11757, EU 12016, EU 12036, EU 40861.

⁵⁶ Nm 3: EU 193, EU 202, EU 212, EU 239, EU 268, EU 287, EU 264, EU 267, EU 269, EU 272, EU 273, EU 274, EU 276; Nm 83: EU 16706, EU 25706.

⁵⁷ Nm 3: EU 239, EU 268, EU 272, EU 273, EU 274; Nm 28: EU 1971; Nm 83: EU 11943, EU 15877, EU 16706, EU 16564, EU 16599, EU 12097, EU 12328.

household. The tasks listed under 'farming' in Table 5 could be undertaken by both men and women, and if men were called to do farming work as *corvée* labour for the landowner, women were probably to a larger extent left with these tasks at the croft. One of the most time-consuming tasks besides the *corvée* days was transportation, which we found was done primarily by men. This, like the *corvée* days, kept the male crofter away from the croft and left the female crofter responsible for the daily chores of both agriculture and taking care of the small livestock that most crofters had. Spinning was probably done by women, often in the evenings. Apart from the collection and delivery of the raw and spun material, this task was carried out at the croft. Other tasks that were asked for as payment for the croft, such as berry picking and provision of eggs, were also likely considered female tasks. The tasks listed as 'other' mostly included what has been shown to be male work, which also probably kept men away from the croft for shorter or longer periods of time.⁵⁸

Thus, we have two clear findings in this article: female crofters worked very few *corvée* days compared to male crofters, and both men and women did most of the tasks in agriculture. Nothing prevented landowners from demanding more female *corvée* days, and the estates apparently made use of female workers, but they did not take them from the crofter households. This, coupled with the second part, which was that women did almost all tasks that men did, gives us a result where female crofters were more useful for landowners at the crofts rather than doing *corvée* labour at the estates.

III

We analysed contracts between crofter households and landowners, together with work lists from estates and ethnographic questionnaires, with the aim of contributing to the empirical question of the labour organization and the gender division of labour in a semi-landless rural group during the second half of the nineteenth century. We reached three main findings that contribute to our understanding of both the crofter institution and rural labour organization, and to the question of gender division of labour. Firstly, we found that the number of *corvée* labour days varied between and within estates, but that a uniform pattern emerges in which women did many fewer workdays compared to men. Most men spent two or three *corvée* days working for the landowner every week, while women worked one or sometimes two days every month on average. While men's work was more intense during the summer, it was continuous throughout the whole year. Women's *corvée* work was concentrated in the summer months and, especially, the hay harvest. This is, to our knowledge, the first comprehensive analysis of the relationship between men's *corvée* labour and women's *corvée* labour in the Swedish manorial economy.

Secondly, we investigated the correlation between men's and women's workdays and found a clear positive correlation. In the contracts that had specified *corvée* days for women, we could see a pattern in which crofts that had a high number of *corvée* days for men also had a high number of *corvée* days for women. This indicates that men's and women's days were not exchangeable. For example, the crofts did not usually exchange a male *corvée* day for two women's days. This relationship is strong although the number of days varies.

⁵⁸ Nm 3: EU202; Nm 83: EU 25706.

Thirdly, we found that the contracts also contained long lists of specified work. These tasks were not gendered in the contracts, but through the triangulation of the sources, we show that the gender division of labour was not as strict as one might have assumed. Thus, the contracts we studied produced a paradoxical result: a relatively strict spatial gender division of labour since men did much more work for the landowner than women, while the gender division of labour regarding tasks does not seem as strict.

For a large number of men who became crofters after marriage, much of their year was spent working on someone else's land. Marriage did not, as it often did before the nineteenth century, mark a drastic shift from service to having one's own farm. For women, marrying and becoming a crofter to a large extent meant working in their own households. They did spend time working for the estate, but to a lesser extent than men. Instead, women were to varying extents left to manage the crofts on their own.

Corvée labour for the landowner was not gendered in a way that meant men did certain things and women did certain things, since women did so few days. Our ethnographic material further underlined this picture – although not evenly distributed, most tasks could be carried out by both men and women, with a few tasks mostly reserved for men or women. The labour organization, on the other hand, was much more clearly gendered. This means that the role as a crofter in the sense of doing corvée labour for a landowner was more of a male experience, while a crofter in the sense of working one's own small plot of land and keeping the household together was more of a female experience.