THE RHYTHM OF LIFE AND WORK:
INTRODUCTION TO A SPECIAL ISSUE IN HONOR
OF PROFESSOR CHRISTER LUNDH

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Christer Lundh, professor in Economic History at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, turns 65 in April 2017. This is the age of retirement in the Swedish public’s mind. It has really only been the age for retirement in Sweden since 1967, and since 1994 has been an option rather than a rule (Johannisson and Philp 2015). Given the usual short and slow-changing historical memory of people (including economic historians), and the Swedish tendency to put extra weight on the events and situation between c.1967 and 1994—a, this far, peak era of the Swedish equality and welfare systems—when defining our self-image, it is however unsurprising that 65 is still considered the age of retirement. Fortunately, Lundh has no plans to stop working. On the contrary, he has instead recently initiated several new research projects. We, his colleagues, proposed this special issue for Lundh, not as a thank you for the work he has done, but rather as a way to express our gratitude and admiration for the work he continues to do. Our intention here is also to present and bring attention to some of the topics that Lundh has been working on through a set of research articles written by
colleagues and former students of his. The set of articles included in the special issue expands on Lundh’s work and the current research frontier in these fields.

Lundh’s career in academia started at Lund University with research on the labor market, its ideological foundations, institutions and actors. From there Lundh moved on to researching migrants and their fates in the labor market, while simultaneously participating in the task of setting up the Scanian Economic Demographic Database at Lund University. These fields—the labor market, migration and historical demography—have continued to define his work since then. A complete bibliography of Lundh’s academic works up until the autumn of 2016 is included as an appendix to this introduction, and gives ample proof of Lundh’s impressive capacity for work.

Lundh’s work on analyzing the functioning of the labor market has resulted in one of the seminal books on the Swedish labor market: *The Rules of the Game: Institutions and wage formation in the Swedish labor market 1850-2010* [Swedish: *Spelets regler: institutioner och lönebildning på den svenska arbetsmarknaden 1850-2010*]. This demonstrates the influence of institutional development on the way the labor market developed in Sweden. Several of Lundh’s PhD students have continued the task of analyzing the development and workings of the Swedish labor market. Two of the contributions in this volume (Bengtsson and Karlsson 2017 - this issue; Waara 2017 - this issue) re-evaluate the argument in *The Rules of the Game* and relate it to the most recent work in the field.

In their quite critical—but highly analytical—overview of Swedish historical labor market research, Erik Bengtsson and Tobias Karlsson suggest that Lundh’s book provides an excellent “gateway” into various questions and topics in labor market research due to its multifaceted and versatile content. They also show gaps in Swedish scholarship and propose key topics to be explored in the future. Joacim Waara also calls for new perspectives on and interpretations of the Swedish labor market by taking Peter Swenson’s (2002) argument for a cross-class alliance as his point of departure. According to Waara, the notion of a cross-class alliance in Sweden between employers and employees from the 1930s
until the 1990s should be challenged. Apart from a short period during the war and some years after, there were more tensions between the two labor market parties than are commonly put forward.

Lundh has recently initiated a project together with Sakari Heikkinen to further our understanding of labor markets and wage formation by comparing Finland and Sweden during the 1930s. In this volume, Heikkinen (2017 - this issue) has contributed research on the labor market in Finland during the shocks of the First World War and the Finnish Civil War, finding great variation in the outcome for manufacturing workers. Lundh and Heikkinen have compared Finnish and Swedish wage formation during the Great Depression (Lundh and Heikkinen 2013). They showed that the Swedish and Finnish labor markets reacted quite differently during the depression, due primarily to divergent labor market institutions (in particular low union membership and an absence of collective agreements in most industries in Finland). The role of differing labor market institutions also forms the core of Heikkinen’s analysis in this volume, but he also addresses the role of economic policies in wage development.

In another contribution to this volume, Svante Prado and Dimitrios Theodoridis (2017 - this issue) study whether electrification had any influence on the demand for skilled workers. The expectation is that demand should increase because human capital, i.e. the skills of the workers, should complement the new technology. The authors investigate this in Swedish mining and manufacturing in 1931. They find that companies that used more electrical machinery in production also employed a larger share of white-collar workers, indicating that the use of this new technology was indeed positively, if weakly, also associated with the use of more skilled workers. The increased demand for skilled workers should also lead to an increase in the wage premium paid to these workers, but this was not the case in Sweden. The skill premium was instead somewhat reduced in Sweden during the first decades of the twentieth century, possibly because of the institutional developments during this time.
Lundh’s work on migrants in the labor market has also continued and is very much ongoing. He is, for example, currently working with Yitchak Haberfeld and Debora Birgier on processes and outcomes of self-selection in migration (see Haberfeld and Lundh 2014; Birgier et al. 2016). The continued importance of Lundh’s work on migration is illustrated by a 2016 third edition of Lundh’s book, first published in 2010: *The immigration to Sweden* [Swedish: *Invandringen till Sverige*]. There was definitely a need for a scholarly voice saying that the current situation in Europe is not all that new in the sometimes alarmist public sentiments of the refugee “crisis” of 2016.

Lundh has also been involved in research analyzing the manorial economy, and the conditions of the contract workers at these manors (Lundh and Olsson 2001; 2008; 2011). In this research Lundh used sources on historical consumption (Lundh 2012; 2013a) that now form the foundation of an ongoing interdisciplinary project on socioeconomic dimensions of diet and health during the twentieth century. One of the contributions in this volume (Kathryn Gary and Mats Olsson 2017 - this issue) develops the study of the manorial economy in another way by analyzing Sweden’s failure to develop a substantial land reform despite an important tradition of manorialism. The absence of land reform lies according to them in some interesting paradoxes discussed in the article. The authors discuss various efforts and initiatives for land reform, and the reasons behind the failure of such initiatives, and they compare the Swedish development to other European countries. These results also have interesting further implications for the way we understand the roots of Swedish egalitarian society.

Lundh has at the same time worked in the field of historical demography and has been a part of the wave of historical demographic research that appeared in the last decades of the twentieth century. This wave has shifted the focus from aggregates and long-term trends towards individuals and households, and their life courses and behaviors. (For a global history of the field of historical demography, see Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, Ioan Bolovan and Sølvi Sogner 2016. See also Fauve-Chamoux [2017 - this issue] for a first-hand account of the research community during this time.)
One of the prime examples of this type of historical demography based on data on individuals and households is the Eurasia project on Population and Family History, which carried out comparative studies on individual-level data for historical populations in Europe and Asia (Bengtsson, Campbell, and Lee, et al. 2004; Tsuya, Feng, Alter, and Lee, et al. 2010). Lundh, together with Satomi Kurosu, edited the third volume published by the project, analyzing marriages: *Similarity in Difference: Marriage in Europe and Asia, 1700-1900* (Lundh, and Kurosu, et al. 2014).

Despite all the work Lundh has put into analyzing patterns in marriage behaviors historically and in the present day, he has admitted to not being particularly interested in the topic in and by itself. His interest in this, as in other aspects of historical demography, has instead been as windows into how people made decisions and organized their lives. He is, of course, not alone in this, and this special issue includes another fine example of how information on historical marriages can be used to learn about other aspects of society; in this case the life courses of disabled people (Haage et al. 2017 - this issue). In the article, the authors are able to show that even though about a quarter of disabled people did marry, their probability of marrying was much lower than for non-disabled. The probability varied between different disabilities. The blind or deaf mute had a higher likelihood of marriage than the crippled or mentally disabled. The authors suggest that the lower probability of marriage for the disabled individuals, as well as the differences between the groups, indicate their level of social exclusion.

Recreating the life courses of historical populations is an extremely laborious task but has also proven to be a fruitful way to advance our knowledge. Work of this type is very much ongoing in many research groups across the globe, and one of the ways forward, in which Lundh is involved, is to study urban populations as well (see Karlsson and Lundh 2015 for a description of the Gothenburg Population Panel). The article by Kurosu et al. (2017 - this issue) is an excellent example of how the work of the Eurasia project in general, and the work presented in *Similarity in Difference* in particular, is now being expanded to urban populations. In the article, Kurosu et al. show that
there were many similarities in the marriage patterns between this urban population and the population of the two villages studied for *Similarity in Difference*. Over time there was, however, a divergence in the sense that marriages were delayed much more in the urban than in the rural area. The article shows that marriage decisions were influenced by socioeconomic status and by parents and siblings in this urban population. The results thus confirm the property–power framework of the Eurasia project that was developed and has previously been tested for mostly rural populations.

Manfredini et al. (2017 - this issue) also further our understanding of the consequences of the distribution of power and resources within the household by studying gender differences in infant and child mortality among sharecroppers in a community in nineteenth-century Italy. Many studies of populations in pre-industrial societies have found that while infant mortality is higher for boys, this gender difference in mortality risk is reversed after the first year of life. Several explanations have been offered for this, both biological and social. Manfredini et al. find the expected crossover in the descriptive analysis, but this loses its statistical significance once they adjust for socioeconomic status and family context. They do find indications of an influence due to household structure (nuclear vs. complex), which meant that girls were more disadvantaged during early childhood in complex households. They conclude that the reasons behind the gender differences in mortality in early life are most likely multifaceted, but that they include a social aspect.

Another way forward for historical demography has been to study populations in new times and places. An example of this is Öberg and Rönnbäck’s (2017 - this issue) study of socioeconomic differences in mortality among European settlers in pre-colonial West Africa. Socioeconomic differences in adult mortality are today found in all populations in high-income countries, but it has become increasingly clear that such differences are not an historical constant. The expectation in the literature has been that socioeconomic differences in adult mortality were small while mortality from infectious diseases was still...
high. Infectious diseases are “democratic” and difficult to shield oneself from, especially if one’s understanding of the infectious agents is lacking. Based on this argument we would expect no socioeconomic differences in adult mortality among the Europeans relocating to West Africa in the pre-colonial era. Mortality was shockingly high among these Europeans because they were exposed to tropical infectious diseases (Öberg and Rönnbäck 2016). Nevertheless, Öberg and Rönnbäck (2017 - this issue) do find that mortality was clearly lower among the upper-class civilians than for the other occupational categories. These socioeconomic differences are a very surprising result and go against the previous expectations mentioned.

Another way to move beyond the aggregates, in historical demography, as in many other fields, has been the study of regional variations. The article by Dribe and Stanfors (2017 - this issue) is continuing the work by Lundh (2013b) and others in studying the regional variation in marriage behaviors in Sweden. In the article, Dribe and Stanfors investigate how age differences between spouses varied and changed in Sweden at the end of the nineteenth century. Their results indicate that industrialization, urbanization and increasing reliance on wage labor contributed to changing marriage behaviors. These socioeconomic changes meant that marriage became less connected to property and wealth, leading to smaller age differences between spouses—a literal interaction between the rhythms of life and work.

Lundh has also been instrumental in the ongoing efforts to analyze regional variations in wages and living conditions in Sweden (e.g. Lundh et al. 2004; Enflo, Lundh, and Prado 2014; Lundh and Prado 2015; see also Papers 1 and 2 in Collin 2016). In this volume, Öberg and Collin (2017 - this issue) study the regional differences in height in Sweden during the twentieth century, finding substantial differences between the counties, but also a process of convergence of heights over time. Öberg and Collin try to explain the geographical differences in height by associating it with different measures of material living conditions. The different measures—the county-specific real wages in the agricultural and the manufacturing sectors, and GDP per capita—are not always very
closely associated and also have different associations with the average height. Öberg and Collin also find the surprising result that the average height was positively associated with food prices as well as the relative prices of animal foods in each county, meaning that the men were the tallest in the counties where the food, and animal foods, were the most expensive. This result remains even after controlling for the level of income in the county.

Two further contributions to this volume widen the scope of topics covered. Carlson (2017 - this issue), brings in the history of economic thought that he and Lundh both studied as PhD Students in Lund. Carlson’s paper is an investigation of the portraits of economic scholars written by the famous Swedish economist and economic historian Eli Heckscher. As Carlson emphasizes, these writings offer an opportunity to gain deeper insights into Heckscher’s own perceptions of the foundations of economic theory and the development of the field. Interestingly, in quite a similar way Keynes wrote biographies of famous economists, as well as politicians and cultural personalities etc., of which the most renowned were published in 1933 (Keynes 1933). As a recent scholar notes, these essays and biographic vignettes not only give us a window into Keynes’ perception of the state and evolution of the scholarly field, but are in fact important sources for understanding their narrator (see Harcourt 2016). Similarly, Carlson’s essay draws an interesting picture of Heckscher.

Albinsson (2017 - this issue) instead discusses the various uses of the concept of “cultural entrepreneurship”, arguing for a quadruple framework—including economic prosperity, artistic innovation, social change and institutional development—whenever the concept is used. This is important, as the concept is often ambiguously used and vaguely defined. Albinsson’s aim is therefore to bring clarity to how such a concept can be understood. In his interesting and in-depth analysis, Albinsson delves far back in history to the roots of the concept of entrepreneurship/entrepreneur, and the concept of culture.
Lundh’s research mirrors the duality that is social science history in general and economic history in particular, in being driven both by theoretical questions and by a curiosity about historical lives and developments. We all try to apply the scientific method in an effort to expand our knowledge beyond what is already known and question the conventional wisdom. As social science historians, we are however left to do so in dialogue with two partially different epistemological traditions: social science and history. Social science history, including economic history, has always been right at this intersection by being thoroughly empirical and carefully contextualized, but with the aim of being generalizable. In this way the theories are always present in the background. We feel that the research articles presented here illustrate the strength of the discipline and approach to research. Like Lundh’s work, they also show the potential of basic historical research to contribute societal questions in the present day.

In essence, Lundh has researched many different topics and time periods, using different levels of analysis. The seemingly disparate lines of research do however come together in outlining a fuller picture of the rhythm of life and work and how these interact.

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