

## Abstract

Daniel Larsson, *Den dolda transitionen. Om ett demografiskt brytningskede i det tidiga 1700-talets Sverige*, Avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg 45 (Göteborg 2006). 258 pages. Written in Swedish with an English summary (The Hidden Transition. A Demographic Long-term Change in Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century Sweden). ISBN 91-88614-57-3; ISSN 1100-6781.

Historical agricultural and economical research indicates that the extensive changes in society that occurred in Sweden (within agriculture, trade, landownership and production) at the end of Sweden's Time of Greatness in 1720 should have noticeably affected the living conditions of the population. A study that systematically compares the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century's demography has however still not been made. Through different analyses of parish registers and other sources, this thesis shows that changes in important areas of demography took place already in beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Mortality crises as a consequence of harvest failure and epidemics between the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century and the 1710's were more frequent and more severe than between 1720–70. They caused a relatively greater number of deaths among adults than crises during later periods, and together with low land prices it contributed to a comparatively low marriage age for women, a factor seen by historical demographers as central to the number of children in the families. The particular economic and demographic conditions (e. g. high taxes, shortage of men) during the Great Northern War (1700–21) brought about an increase in the average age at marriage for women to 25–27 years. This level would remain until long into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That the marriage age did not decrease after the war depended chiefly on substantially increased land prices and a lower mortality among adults. With the end of the war and the subsequent changes in society, mortality stabilized and provisions to the population during crop failures improved significantly during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This happened through a series of different but often connected factors, the most important were the increased ambition of the state authorities to increase hunger relief, grain imports, market integration and a general improvement in the economic situation of the peasants.

The development of the population in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century Sweden can be said to have been characterized by crises. At the same time, there was a considerable capacity for the population to recover. The changes in society during the 18<sup>th</sup> century led to a significant demographic transformation as early as one hundred years before the 19<sup>th</sup> century's more recognized transition.

*Keywords:* history, Sweden, transition, crop failure, demography, 17<sup>th</sup> century, 18<sup>th</sup> century, nuptiality, mortality, fertility, diseases, parish register, Tabellverket, Great Northern War, demographic change, grain prices.