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Nº 3

RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
SCANDINAVIA

EVIDENCE FROM THE MARITIME SECTOR

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In October 1704 the English private ship of war *Postilion* returned to her homeport Rye in East Sussex with the galiot *St Maria of Stockholm* in tow as a possible prize of war. *St Maria* had been on her way from Rouen in Normandy with a cargo of French wines after delivering her cargo of Swedish copper in France. To make certain that the captured vessel really was a legitimate prize a number of her crew were interrogated by the English authorities; in this case the ship's master, steersman and carpenter was interrogated. The thirty year old master Jörgen Scheel of Stockholm explained that he was born in Stockholm; he had always lived there, he was in fact still living there with his mother, and he was therefore a subject to the King of Sweden. He further deposed that the entire crew bar one was comprised of Swedes while the last person, in master Scheel's opinion, was Dutch. A closer inspection of the crew, however, shows that in modern terms the crew was of a more eclectic composition than Scheel's deposition would lead us to believe. The crew consisted of seven men and a boy hailing from Stockholm, Roslagen, Härnösand, Lübeck, Stettin, Kolberg (Szczecin and Kołobrzeg in Poland respectively) and the Dutch Waddensee island Vlieland. Besides Vlieland all the places could be considered Swedish in 1704, so Scheel was right when he claimed they were all Swedes. They had all mustered the *St Maria* in Stockholm, so the bigger city proved its pull on its hinterland. The glimpse into the life of Jörgen Scheel and the crew on *St Maria of Stockholm* points to some interesting elements of life in the early eighteenth century and indicate the economic changes Scandinavia underwent during the century. It raises the question of who these mobile people were and what mechanism made them travel vast distances to find work?¹

The purpose of this paper is to illuminate alternative variables in connection with labour mobility in the early modern maritime labour market. Specifically, the paper will seek to quantify movements from around Europe in general and particularly from rural Denmark, Norway and Sweden to urban centres of Scandinavia to investigate the universal mobility prevalent in the period, the characteristics of the migrants and their skill level. Finally, the paper will aim to add a new layer of knowledge to the general perception of labour migration in the eighteenth-century maritime sector in Scandinavia by highlighting the consequences of

¹ HCA 32/71. For an introduction to the issue of what constituted Sweden geographically in the eighteenth century see Chris Evans, "Where in the World was Sweden? A Brief Guide for Foreigners," in *Sweden in the Eighteenth-Century World: Provincial Cosmopolitans*, ed. Göran Rydén (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013), 33-40.

alternative migrant characteristics such as marriage status, citizenship status, and literacy.² A move from the impoverished coastal regions on the Western Coast of Jutland or Norway to Stockholm, Copenhagen or even Amsterdam could mean more than mere economic gain; it might also mean an increase in social capital.³

This paper is the result of the ESRC-funded project, ‘Migration, human capital and labour productivity: the international maritime labour market in Europe, c. 1650-1815’. Thus far the project has been concerned with the study of the link between labour migration and labour productivity. The first results based on the dataset have underlined that labour productivity in the maritime sector (measured as shipped tons per man) increased dramatically during the eighteenth century, and that human capital amongst the common sailors also increased and had a significant effect on labour productivity.⁴

The relational database, which is at the core of the project, utilizes a relatively underused source, namely the HCA 32 series or English Prize Paper archive held at the National Archive in Kew Gardens. One of the central tasks of the High Court of Admiralty was to ascertain whether the ships captured by privateers or Royal Navy vessels were indeed lawful prizes. A lawful prize would be a ship belonging to a state that England, and later the United Kingdom, was at war with, or it could be a neutral ship sailing on enemy ports, with cargo belonging to enemy subjects or with a crew from an enemy state. To ensure the prize was lawful, a number of crew-members from the captured vessels were interrogated by the British authorities, typically in a port town pub. The crew members were asked to depose name, age, rank, place of birth, place of residence, length of working relationship with the ship’s master and other relevant information – towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, the standing interrogation consisted of 32 questions. In total, the project’s database contains information on more than 15,000 sailors and more than 6,000 ships distributed on two primary periods. The early period covers captured vessels and interrogations held during the Spanish War of Succession (1701-1714) and the later period covers the American War of Independence and the French Revolutionary Wars (1776-1783 and 1792-1802). Focus in this paper will primarily

² By alternative characteristics we allude to it not being the traditional economic incentives, market size or migration in the wake of war and regional conflicts.

³ As for instance seen in J. R. Bruijn, *Commanders of Dutch East India Ships in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), in which a number of examples of outport mariners use their increased social status to become mayors, tax collectors or hold other civic offices in their hometown.

⁴ For the most recent publication based on the dataset and underlining this correlation, see: Jelle van Lottum & Jan Luiten van Zanden, ‘Labour Productivity and Human Capital in the European Maritime Sector of the Eighteenth Century.’ *Explorations in Economic History*, Volume 53, July 2014, pp. 83–100.

be on the second period as the sample size for both Copenhagen and Stockholm is significantly bigger for this period. However, for the sake of investigating development over time, Period 1 has been included where appropriate.

The most common explanations for the economic transformation are thought to be the reorganization of the agricultural society, the two revolutions in Sweden, the ability to stay neutral during the many wars involving England, France and the Netherlands and, more importantly, to capitalize on this neutrality through trade.⁵ This trade boom subsequently led to an increase in migration to Denmark. In Sweden, however, the government of the Age of Liberty period was convinced that Sweden was suffering from emigration – an annual loss of 8- 9,000 people was projected – and tried to stem this alleged emigration. Nonetheless, contemporary studies undertaken by Pehr Wargentin in the 1780s suggested that immigration and emigration more or less had cancelled each other out during the eighteenth century. Generally, the early modern city suffered from excess mortality and depended upon migration to sustain growth. Between 1720 and 1748 Stockholm had an excess of 30,000 deaths and Copenhagen was not faring much better. To keep the cogs turning people from the outside were needed. However, during large parts of the eighteenth century both external and internal migrants did flock to the cities.⁶ Connected to and simultaneous with the neutrality, trade boom and the reorganizing of the traditional agricultural society, the overall mortality began to decline in both Scandinavian countries from around 1775 and onwards. However, this was particularly the case in rural areas; the unhygienic overpopulated cities still experienced excess mortality.⁷

Stockholm had had a population around 55,000 at the height of the Swedish golden age (*Stormaktstiden*) in 1700, but the plague in 1711, the great Nordic war and the general stagnation in the tumultuous aftermath of the golden age meant that by 1720 Stockholm's population was down to 45,000. Population growth in the city did not pick up until ca. 1810.

⁵ Lars O. Lagerqvist, *Svensk Historia* (Stockholm: Svenska institutet, 2001), p. 92-94; Ole Feldbæk, ed., *Danmarks Økonomiske Historie* (Herning: Systime, 1993), p. 148 and Ole Feldbæk, 'Eighteenth-Century Danish Neutrality: Its Diplomacy, Economics and Law,' *Scandinavian Journal of History* Volume 8, 1983, no. 1, pp 3-21; Michael Roberts, *The Age of Liberty : Sweden 1719-1772* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶ Hans Chr. Johansen has detected the highest levels of net-immigration in 1775-89: Hans Chr Johansen, *Danish population history, 1600-1939* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2002), p. 80-81 and Erland Hofsten & Hans Lundström, *Swedish population history: main trends from 1750 to 1970* (Stockholm: Statistiska centralbyrån: 1976), p. 174-5.

⁷ Johansen refers to the period 1775-1840 as the "early mortality decline", but stresses that Copenhagen still had a higher mortality rate than other towns. Johansen, *Danish population history*, p. 100.

Between 1760 and 1850 the population in Stockholm only increased by 5,000 people, and this was simply due to the high degree of migration from the rural areas. The excess mortality was still very high throughout the century.⁸

Copenhagen's population growth was slightly different than that of Stockholm. Copenhagen was suffering from excess mortality, and it was also affected immensely by the plague in 1711 but the development in Copenhagen was significantly more positive than in Stockholm. Sweden and Stockholm had experienced its golden age of empire from the middle of the seventeenth century till the second decade of the eighteenth century. Copenhagen on the other hand would flourish later in the century during Denmark's golden age (*den florissante periode*) when neutrality would bring prosperity to the city.⁹

Amongst the sectors benefitting the most from the economic boost of the later part of the eighteenth century and the effects of the early mortality decline was the maritime sector in which, from 1750-1800, productivity doubled and the numbers of ships tripled.¹⁰ However, little attention has been paid to the roles migration and human capital played in bringing about this boom. Indeed, in the case of the Netherlands, it has been argued that not only were migrants vital in bringing about growth in this sector by providing extra workers, but also that they increased the human capital in the sector. The skills of migrants had a positive effect on the receiving economy.¹¹

Labour migration in the eighteenth century was by no means something rare. Rather it would seem that certain professions were mobile by default and used to move in order to work, this can be said to be particularly true of the maritime sector.¹² More often than not the move was from an outpost to a hub thereby increasing the opportunities to work in the maritime sector. Frequently, when discussing migrants in the early modern period, focus has been on cross community migration as put forward by Patrick Manning but to illustrate the importance of the Scandinavian centres it is necessary to also include internal migration as promoted by

⁸ Lars Nilsson (ed.) *Staden på vattnet* (Stockholm: Stockholmia, 2002.), p. 189-190.

⁹ Johansen, *Danish population history*, p. 81.

¹⁰ Feldbæk, *Danmarks Økonomiske Historie*, p. 107-115 & 139-140.

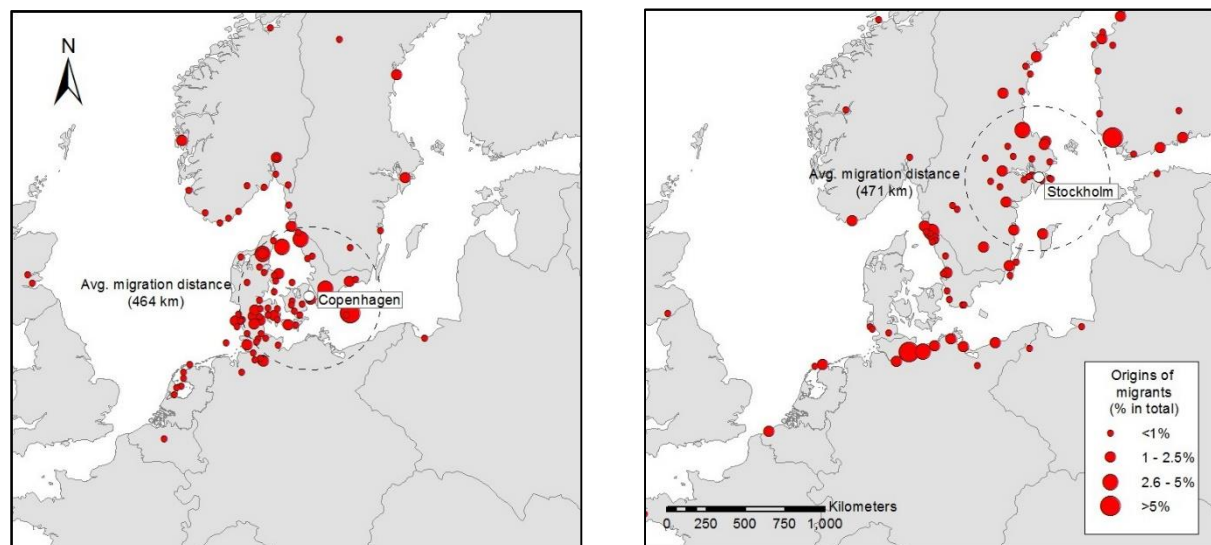
¹¹ Jelle van Lottum, "The Economic Contribution of Labor Migrants in the European Maritime Labor Market of the Long Eighteenth Century," *Working on Labor: Essays in Honor of Jan Lucassen* (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2012), p. 242.

¹² See for instance the examples put forth by Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003); Jan Lucassen, & Leo Lucassen, "The Mobility Transition Revisited, 1500-1900: What the Case of Europe can Offer to Global History," *The Journal of Global History* 4, no. 3 (2009), 347-377.

Jan and Leo Lucassen.¹³ Though moves across cultural borders undoubtedly are important, the sheer distance of the internal moves within Scandinavia is enough to merit more attention. If the maritime sector indeed was harbouring as much human capital as the emerging literature would suggest, the moves of these highly skilled people – regardless of the distance – is relevant to investigate the impact both on sending and receiving societies.

In other words, instead of merely focusing on migration between different states this paper seeks to highlight all the people, internal as well as external migrants, who moved to the two biggest Scandinavian urban centres in the eighteenth century, Copenhagen and Stockholm. These groups of migrants filled two important gaps in contemporary urban life. They made up for the population deficit of the early modern city, and they supplied the maritime sector with highly skilled labourers. The two cities were contemporary urban centres and commercial hubs, and as will be shown, drawing on a considerable hinterland when manning their ships. Though Finland, Norway and Northern Germany were important elements of the maritime labour markets none of the ports in either country constitute a large enough sample. However, these countries were essential in supplying labour to the larger ports.

Figure 1 – Map of the origins of migrants to Copenhagen and Stockholm in the eighteenth century.



As the map above clearly indicates migrants from practically all over Northern Europe were willing to travel from the rural areas to the two Nordic commercial urban centres. Unsurprisingly, a large contingent of Norwegians found their way to Copenhagen alongside the mariners from the very active areas in Northern Germany and from former Danish

¹³ Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013); Lucassen & Lucassen, “The Mobility Transition Revisited”.

possessions in Skåne. More surprising, maybe, are the large number of migrants originating from the islands Læsø and Bornholm. Not surprising that they moved to Copenhagen, but rather their number as these islands were quite small. With few exceptions, the mutual characteristic of the areas in Copenhagen's hinterland is that they were largely rural maritime areas. Also, the majority of the migrants could be called internal migrants in contemporary terms as they came from what were then Danish possessions. In total, 88% of the migrants in Copenhagen came from rural areas, and the remaining 12% came primarily from the North German towns of Altona, Hamburg and Bremen. On average the migrants to Copenhagen had moved 465km to arrive at their destination.

Similarly, the migrants who flocked to Stockholm came from rural maritime areas within Sweden, together with regions which either were part of the Swedish realm at the time Finland and Pomerania, in modern Germany and Poland.¹⁴ In particular Turku (or Åbo) was a port which provided Stockholm with large contingent of sailors, and in the latter part of the eighteenth century Turku could be categorised as an urban setting. The German sailors who found their way to Stockholm came from the maritime towns of Pomerania: Wolgast, Wismar and Stralsund. The sailors from an urban setting who went to Stockholm were primarily from Turku or Gothenburg. In total slightly more migrants moved from an urban setting to Stockholm than was the case in Copenhagen: 14% were from urban areas versus 86% from rural areas. On average the migrants to Stockholm travelled 474km to reach their destination, slightly more than to Copenhagen, again a considerable distance which underlines the high level of mobility in the early modern maritime sector. That migrants from urban areas found their way into Stockholm and Copenhagen should probably be seen in the light of the commercial strategy of both countries in which trade was centred into these two hubs.¹⁵

The map likely shows two things about the maritime sector and the early modern labour market. Firstly, people born in maritime regions were brought up with knowledge of sailing and shipping, and secondly, that even over great distances people had to go to the commercial hubs to find work. There existed fewer opportunities in the rural areas, and sons were likely to follow in the footsteps of their fathers.¹⁶

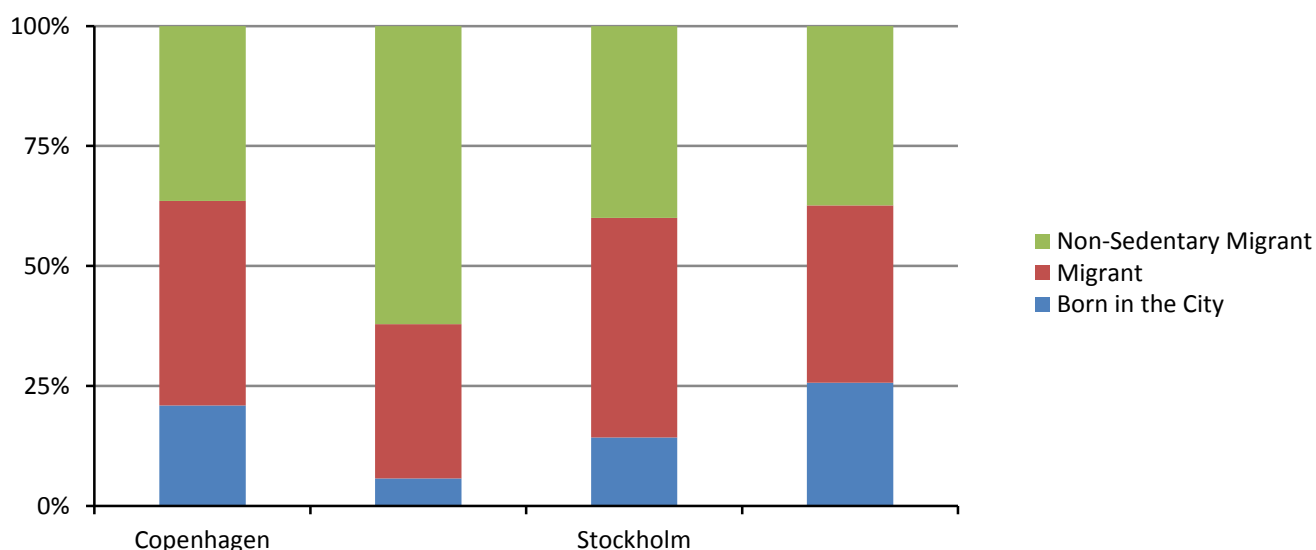
¹⁴ Ulf Pauli, *Det svenska Tyskland: Sveriges tyska besittningar 1648-1815* (Stockholm: Svenska humanistiska förbundet, 1989.), p. 29.

¹⁵ Nilsson (ed.), *Staden på vattnet*, p. 85-90.

¹⁶ J.R. Bruijn, 'Career Patterns', in *'Those Emblems of Hell'? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870*, ed. P.C. Royen, J.R. Bruijn and J. Lucassen (St. John's: International Maritime Economic History Society, 1997) p. 27.

The composition of the maritime workforce in Copenhagen and Stockholm

Figure 2 – Percentage of interrogated crewmember categorised as Born in the City, Migrant and Non-sedentary Migrant.



What Figure 2 is clearly showing is that people migrating to the two Scandinavian urban centres were essential in turning the wheels of the maritime industry. At no point were there less than 70% migrants manning the ships which belonged to owners in either Copenhagen or Stockholm. In particular Copenhagen is interesting in the period covering 1776-1803 as it becomes clear that even when the general mortality rate decreased from around 1750, more migrants were found as part of the crew on the Copenhagen ships. The increase of migrants on board Copenhagen ships was predominantly within the non-sedentary category, meaning people who did not settle in Copenhagen but rather took the odd voyage from there. It is possible that these were people attracted to the neutrality of Danish shipping in that period. Likewise it is very possible that the boom Copenhagen experienced in the Golden Age attracted people from further away. The increase in non-sedentary migrants in Copenhagen resembles the increase of non-sedentary migrants in the Netherlands during the same period.¹⁷ What this likely indicates is a more competitive market as the migrant obtained more advantages by not settling permanently. By maintaining flexibility he could go wherever the highest wages were paid.

¹⁷ Jelle Van Lottum, Lex Heerma van Voss, and Jan Lucassen, 'Sailors, National and International Labour Markets and National Identity, 1600-1850', in: Richard Unger (ed.), *Shipping and Economic Growth 1350-1800* (Leiden and Boston, 2011), p. 317.

Stockholm in the same period tells a different story. Migrants were still an integral part of the maritime sector, but there seems to have been a change in the migrant stock during the eighteenth century towards a more native maritime sector. An interesting observation regarding this is that the main decrease of people is found amongst the sedentary migrants. They constituted 46% of the mariners in the first decade of the century, and only 37% in the later part of the century. It appears from Figure 1 that these 9% have moved from being migrants to being native in Stockholm, indicating a more permanent settlement that differs dramatically from the experience in Copenhagen. It is tempting to conclude that part of the explanation for this change is that the migrants in Stockholm stayed and started families. The increase in natives in the later part of the eighteenth century is there for first or more likely second generation migrant descendants. Was Stockholm better to attract and entice migrants to stay during their Era of Liberty (1721-1772) than Copenhagen was during the absolutist overtures to the Danish commercial Golden Age?

The different trends amongst migrant communities over the century raise more questions regarding the characteristics of the migrants to Copenhagen and Stockholm, as well as more general questions regarding the migrant experience in the maritime sector in the eighteenth century.

Table 1 – Average Age of Migrants and Non-Sedentary Migrants in Copenhagen and Stockholm

Average age of Migrant	Copenhagen Period 1	Stockholm Period 1	Copenhagen Period 2	Stockholm Period 2
Sedentary Migrant	40.2	33.5	36.5	36.8
Non-Sedentary Migrant	34.8	34.6	31.4	32

The numbers for Copenhagen in particular indicate an interesting trend. The non-sedentary migrant was, generally speaking, younger than the resident migrant; they were in different places of their life cycle.¹⁸ The low average age for migrants in Stockholm in period 1 is due to the aforementioned sample size. Generally, for the later part of the eighteenth

¹⁸ It was common for the communities depended on sending away their workforce to have various cycles centred on the migration and the migratory experience. See for instance Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650*, p. 137-138.

century, the averages for Copenhagen and Stockholm were very similar which indicates that it could be the same “type” of person who maintained a non-sedentary life strategy.

The Migrants’ marital status

A variable that could have a profound effect on a person’s tendency to move is marriage and marriage’s position in a person’s life cycle. The average age for marriage in the eighteenth century was still quite high – a high number of women lived 2/3 of their reproductive life outside of marriage – and marriage demanded quite some start-up capital of the prospective couple.¹⁹ It seems reasonable to believe that a single man, and potentially a younger man, is more likely to take work where it can be found and thus be more mobile than people born in the big cities or permanently residing migrants who have already married. The average age of the two types of migrants for in particular Period 2 does seem to indicate they were at different places in their life.

When the ship *The Guilded Lion of Stockholm* was captured off Rye in East Sussex by the British privateer *The Flying Horse* in February 1704, the master Mathias Stangenberg, 38 years old, was interrogated and indirectly expressed this view when he answered that “he was Borne in Coleberg in Brandenburg and now liveth in Stockholm with his wife and family and hath lived there two years being married there and before was a seafaring man and had no settled place of abode and saith that he is a subject to the king of Sweden”. It was not uncommon for single mariners to state in the interrogations that they had no fixed place of abode and took work where it could be found. This might have been the case with the master of the ship *The Hope of Stockholm* which was captured by the same privateer, *The Flying Horse*, in December 1704. The master Martin Stangenberg, also from Kolberg (present-day Kołobrzeg), in all probability a relation of aforementioned Mathias, stated that “he was born at Coleberg in Brandenbergh where his mother now lives and further sayes that he is a single man and have no settled place of abode and that he is at present a subject to the king of Sweden being made a Burgher of Stockholm the eleventh of April last.”²⁰ Even as he was made a burgher of Stockholm he still did not settle there as he had no family to keep him in one place.

¹⁹ Johansen, *Danish Population History*, p. 70. The so-called Hajnal line or Northern European Marriage pattern cutting through Northern Europe dictates that a majority of people in the early modern period remained single, see John Hajnal, “European Marriage Patterns in Perspective,” *Population in History* (1965), 101-143, 131-132.

²⁰ HCA 32/61 and HCA 32/62 If they were brothers or otherwise related it is not something mentioned in the interrogation. Moreover, the ships were owned by different people: Mathias Stangenberg owned an eighth of his ship, and a consortium of at least four people owned Martin Stangenberg’s ship.

Table 2 – Marital Status of Sailors born in the City, Migrants and Non-Sedentary Migrants ca. 1700-1710 & 1776-1803

	Copenhagen Period 1			Stockholm Period 1		
	Born in the City	Migrant	Non-Sedentary Migrant	Born in the City	Migrant	Non-Sedentary Migrant
Single	29%	27%	41%	0%	40%	38%
Married	71%	71%	56%	100%	60%	62%
Widowed	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%
	Copenhagen Period 2			Stockholm Period 2		
	Born in the City	Migrant	Non-Sedentary Migrant	Born in the City	Migrant	Non-Sedentary Migrant
Single	50%	53%	53%	36%	38%	47%
Married	50%	46%	47%	61%	57%	53%
Widowed	0%	1%	0%	3%	5%	0%

Contrary to what the examples above seem to indicate, Table 1 shows that there was relatively little difference between natives', migrants' and non-sedentary migrants' marital status, in particular in the later period of the century. The commonly accepted notion that the single sailor would have a girl in each port is not supported by this data. Granted, he could still have a girl in each port, but he would not necessarily be single. The quite extreme numbers for Stockholm, especially for natives, are due to a small sample size and should in fairness be disregarded here. It has been added for comparative reasons.

Something that might distort the figure slightly is that internal migrants have also been included in the numbers, meaning people who travelled a shorter distance into the cities might have had the possibility to start a family close to the commercial hubs. However, the purpose of the paper is to investigate and highlight the characteristics of the rural maritime migrants flocking to the cities. Also, as indicated by the map showing the distance travelled by the migrants to the cities, the general picture was that the distance travelled to gain access to the market was significant.

Finally, marriage did not necessarily mean the end of the roving life at sea: the wife could come on board too!²¹ When the ship *The Dolphin* of Emden was captured and taken into Great Yarmouth the master Albert Willems was interrogated. Regarding his marital status and his wife he answered that he was indeed married, and his wife was at home with her parents in Amsterdam. However, when the ship's mate, Gert Tunnes, was asked about the marital status and his knowledge of the master he answered "That he [the master] is married but where his wife resides this deponent doth not know as the said master who took her from Amsterdam and married her at Riga put her on board a Ship at Elsinour bound to Emden but whether she is now in Emden or gone to Amsterdam this deponent doth not know nor can he form any belief."²² Being married can be hard, maybe it becomes easier when you are not entirely sure where your wife is? Marriage did not necessarily mean the sailors would settle down.

Skill level of Labour migrants in Copenhagen and Stockholm

As mentioned above, the early modern maritime sector was a high tech sector, the ships were huge pieces of finely tuned equipment which had to be handled with equal degrees of care and roughness. Though the contemporary view of the sailor varied greatly, mostly in a negative way, there were also kinder words for the sailors who otherwise were depicted as being the dregs of society. Adam Smith was one of the those who appreciated the levels of skill amongst the sailors: "Though their skill and dexterity are much superior to that of almost all artificers, and though their whole life is one continual scene of hardship and danger, yet for all this dexterity and skill [...] they receive scarce any other recompence but the pleasure of exercising the one and of surmounting the other".²³ More recently a series of studies have shown that there existed a very clear correlation between the human capital level measured in numeracy and literacy and labour productivity, which means if a crew had a high level of human capital ships were likely to perform better. The importance of human capital on board the ships was also underlined with the educational mechanisms in place on board. It was not uncommon to receive education aboard the ships – the Danish East India Company even offered an economic reward to the crew member who was in charge of teaching the boys.²⁴

²¹ HCA 32/336 The sailor about the master: "whether he is a married man or not the examinant cannot set forth other than there was a woman on board who passed for and appeared in the character of his wife"

²² HCA 32/581

²³ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London W. Strahan & T. Cadell, 1778) cited in Van Lottum and Van Zanden, 'Labour productivity', p. 84.

²⁴ Erik Gøbel, "Asiatisk Kompagnis Kinafarer 1732-1772: Sejlruiter Og Sejltider," *Handels- Og Søfartsmuseet Årbog* (1978), 7-46.

Also, amongst the many documents confiscated by the English and British privateers were a large number of educational texts and handwritten copies of the most widespread contemporary textbooks as Klaas de Vries' *Schatkamer*.²⁵ What is more, there must have been an immense interest in the commercial hubs as for instance Copenhagen and Stockholm to attract the labourers with the highest possible skill.

Table 3 – Literacy level amongst maritime labour migrants in Copenhagen, Stockholm, Northern Europe and Globally 1700-1713 & 1776-1803

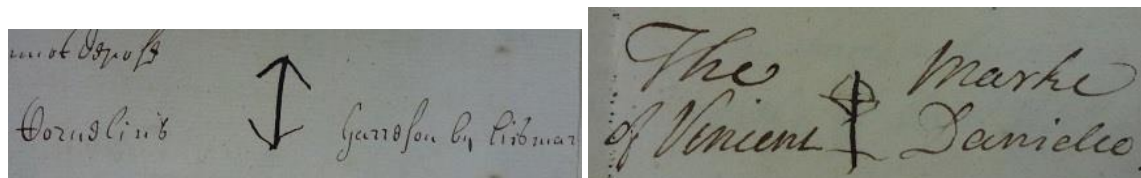
Literacy	Copenhagen M P1	Stockholm M P1	Copenhagen NRM P1	Stockholm NRM P1	Total Northern Europe P1	Total Global P1
Signed	76%	88%	60%	77%	73%	59%
Mark	22%	13%	28%	8%	13%	11%
Cross	2%	0%	11%	15%	7%	14%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	17%
	Copenhagen M P2	Stockholm M P2	Copenhagen NRM P2	Stockholm NRM P2	Total Northern Europe P2	Total Global P2
Signed	89%	85%	91%	81%	88%	85%
Mark	0%	4%	0%	3%	1%	0%
Cross	11%	12%	9%	16%	11%	14%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

Table 3 above seems to indicate that the two Nordic capitals to some extent managed to attract skilled labourers throughout the century. The urban migrants in Copenhagen had a higher level of projected literacy than their Northern European counterparts, whereas the non-sedentary migrants were at a considerably lower level in the beginning of the century. In Stockholm the two different types of migrants were closer to each other, skill-level wise, in the early period, and both groups were at a higher level than their general Northern European counterparts. It is also interesting to make note of the percentage of marks used by the migrants to Copenhagen in particular, at 22% and 28% the mark was used significantly more than

²⁵ Klaas de Vries, *Schatkamer of Konst der Stierlieden* (Amsterdam, 1759). For such a copy, see for instance HCA 32/466.

anywhere else. The use of elaborate marks, judging from our data, seems to have been a typical Northern European phenomenon. However, as is also clear from the table, the use of the mark died out over the century.

Figure 3 – Example of sailor's marks.²⁶



The use of marks disappears more or less from both Copenhagen and Stockholm in the latter part of the eighteenth century. However, when examining the table it would appear that a substantial number have changed from using a specific mark to simply using the cross as a signature. This at least was the case amongst the sedentary migrant populations in both cities, Copenhagen in particular saw a sharp increase from 2% to 11% in people using the cross as a signature. Nonetheless, even with this increase Copenhagen was still displaying higher levels of human capital in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Interestingly, the group with the highest level of projected literacy was the non-sedentary migrants in Copenhagen. What this indicates, is that not only did Copenhagen attract migrants, but more importantly the city attracted skilled migrants.

Of course, the figures in Table 3 should be used carefully when ascertaining the level of literacy in the maritime sector. A mark or cross or initial does not necessarily mean that the signee was illiterate. There are many reasons why a person might choose not to sign their name on the deposition given as part of the Prize Paper interrogation. The sailors frequently refused to sign when they did not understand why they were signing anything in the first place, or like common sailor Antonio Santos from Mozambique, who refused to sign, "having never made a mark in his life".²⁷ Likewise, the ability to sign one's own name does not necessarily indicate personal literacy. It is possible that the signee was only able to sign his (or her) own name and nothing more. However, we can use the ability to sign as a proxy for literacy levels, which,

²⁶ HCA 32/61, HCA 32/62.

²⁷ HCA 32/313. See also HCA 32/812, 22 year old supercargo Oliver Putnam from Newport, Mass. refused to sign. HCA 32/300 the Captain of the Courier de Rochelle refused to sign because he mistrusted the document written in English and because there had not formally been declared war between England and France. HCA 32/369 the master of Jeune Victoire refused to answer and sign before he had received orders from the owner in Bordeaux.

while not necessarily reliable on an individual level, can offer insight into the broad skill levels present within the maritime migrant population. This continues the line of research on the Scandinavian maritime population previously illustrated by van Lottum and Poulsen. In their study they demonstrated how the labour migrants in Denmark as a group had a higher level of human capital than their working class counterparts on shore.²⁸ The high level of literacy amongst maritime labour migrants in Copenhagen should in all probability be seen as the result of institutional investments in basic education of skippers and the general population. From 1675 onwards, the Skippers' Guild of Copenhagen was obliged to upkeep a navigation school and examine all aspiring steersmen, masters and navigators as well as foreign skippers wishing to do business in Denmark.²⁹ The rise of maritime schools in the period, coupled with the establishment of basic schooling throughout Denmark additionally emphasises the link between skill levels in the general population, and the utility of such skills within the economy.³⁰ When the ship Jomfru Anna Maria was dragged into Newcastle upon Tyne in September 1794 enroute from Bordeaux to Copenhagen, the crew was interrogated as according to the regulations. All of the crew were from Schleswig-Holstein and the town Ballum, though they were working from Copenhagen. Regarding his relationship to the master the boatswain Hans Michelsen Brink answered that Niels Lorensen was the master "who he has known long, having been school fellows."³¹

Social Advancement

Another incentive to migrate, whether on a permanent basis or for shorter period, was, and arguably is, the possibility for social advancement and economical gain. The need for migration both in the sending and receiving country is closely connected to the demographic and economic development in both places.³² However, it is very likely that sailors with a high level of human capital had the possibility to rise in social status through migration. The limited

²⁸ Jelle van Lottum & Bo Poulsen, "Estimating levels of numeracy and literacy in the maritime sector of the North Atlantic in the late eighteenth century", *Scandinavian Economic History Review* (2011), 59:1, pp. 67-82.

²⁹ Ole Feldbæk (ed.), *Dansk Søfarts Historie* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1997), p. 198.

³⁰ Charlotte Appel, *Læsning Og Bogmarked i 1600-Tallets Danmark.*, Vol. Bind 2 (København: Museum Tusculanum; Det Kongelige Bibliotek, 2001), p. 265-266

³¹ HCA 32/689.

³² Asbjørn Romvig Thomsen, *Lykkens Smedje? : Social Mobilitet Og Social Stabilitet Over Fem Generationer i Tre Sogne i Salling 1750-1850* (Auning: Landbohistorisk Selskab, 2011). p. 262.

possibilities for social advancement in the rural areas and maritime communities would mean that people from these areas needed to move in order to be socially upwardly mobile.³³

Joseph Anton Ponsaing was an example of this upward social mobility linked to skills and luck. In 1772 the 20 year old Joseph Anton moved to Copenhagen in the hope of work. He found what he was looking for with the Danish Asiatic Company as a clerk to the captain. For Ponsaing this was just another move in a series of moves that has characterized his life thus far. As the son of a travelling teacher of languages he had undoubtedly travelled frequently. In fact, he was unsure where he had actually been born, but knew only that he came to Holstein when very young. At age 6 he and his mother moved again arriving in Faaborg in 1758. The family disappears from view after the arrival on Funen, but fourteen years later Ponsaing arrives in Copenhagen and begins his career with the DAC. In the following years, Ponsaing made exemplary progress and obtained higher and higher rank, becoming a member of the Skippers' Guild in Copenhagen, burgher of Copenhagen, and marrying somewhere along the way. In 1790 Ponsaing was sailing as first mate on the DAC ship *Castellet Dansborg*, and hereafter, he switched from sailing for the monopoly company DAC to Fabritius and Wever and was given the rank of first mate. In 1797, 27 years after he began his maritime career, he was given his first command of ship. A high level of mobility and general perseverance had served Joseph Anton Ponsaing well.³⁴

³³ van Lottum & Poulsen, "Estimating Numeracy and Literacy Levels" p. 78-79.

³⁴ HCA 42/217.2. Unfortunately for Joseph Anton, this would be his first and last journey as captain: A mental breakdown in China meant demotion and loss of status. However, before retiring, he returned to the rank of first mate, but never again to the rank of captain.

Figure 4 – Ranks of Migrant and Non-sedentary Migrants in Copenhagen and Stockholm 1776-1803.³⁵

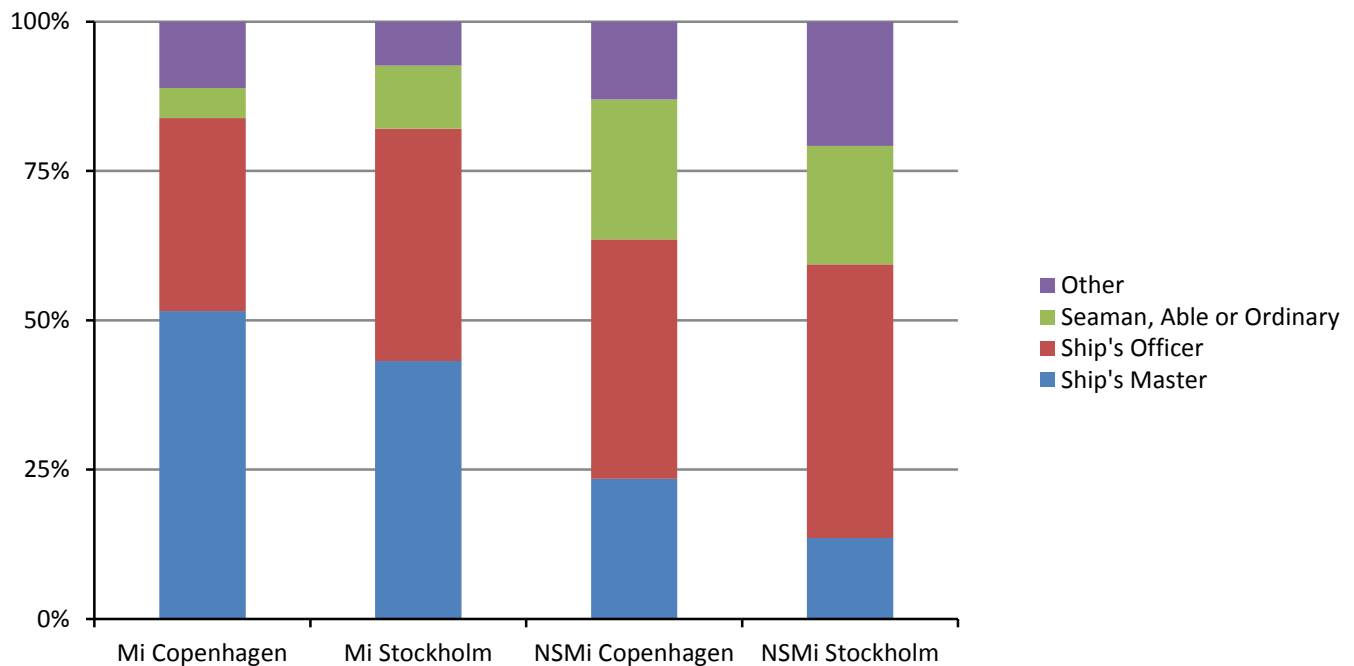


Figure 4 above alludes to more migrants sharing Ponsaing's luck. More than 80% of the migrants to Stockholm or Copenhagen in the latter part of the eighteenth century were either master of the ships or officer of the ship. The professional mobility level was very high. When the vessel *Fortune* sailed from Copenhagen in 1704 the Swedish born mariner Benjamin Burgason was on board as a common sailor. Benjamin was originally born in Kungsbacka in Sweden around the year 1658, the same year Kungsbacka was incorporated into the Swedish realm alongside the three counties Halland, Skåne and Blekinge, as part of the agreement surrounding the Peace of Roskilde between Denmark and Sweden. At age 13 he settled in Copenhagen and lived there as a single man for thirty-three years when he, with rest of the crew, was carried into Dover by British privateers. In the interrogation Benjamin explained how it came about that he was no longer merely a common sailor: "the deponent being now steersman [...] and the deponent was appointed in Bordeaux by Christian Petersen to serve him as his steersman in the said Vessel, but did not go from Copenhagen Steersman but as a common man, the former Steersman leaving the said Vessel on some difference between the

³⁵ We have used the standardised occupational classification HISCO. The officer category above consist of Ship's "Deck Officer", "Navigating Officer" and "Boatswain", the Seaman category covers "Ship's Deck Rating, Barge Crew or Boatman (Specialisation Unknown)", "Seaman, Able or Ordinary" and "Ordinary Seaman". The category named Other consists of cooks, carpenters and sailmakers.

said master and him”. The possibility for promotion amongst the people in the maritime sector was good. People deserting when the vessel was in harbour, people dying during the voyage – the average work life for the mariners was supposedly 12.5 years on average – and other reasons.³⁶ For the ones with the sufficient skills, opportunities were a plenty in the maritime sector. The non-sedentary migrants were also frequently employed as masters and officers on board the ships in this period as shown by Figure 2, but why would a ship-owner hire a non-sedentary migrant to the important task of master? What this could indicate is that there was a system in place. Sailors would flock to the commercial hubs from a young age, making networks and work their way through the ranks. After having proven themselves as able and trustworthy sailors, the migrant sailors could be given the command of a ship.³⁷

Burgherschaft

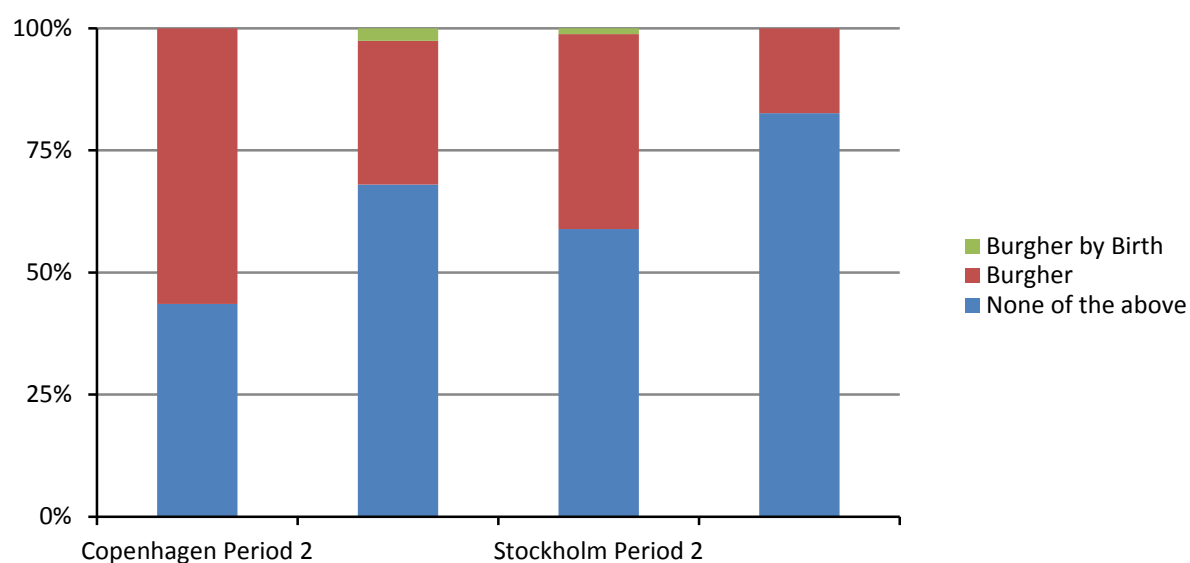
As the 79 lasts heavy ship General Major Walterstroff returned from the Dutch Caribbean island Curacao in 1798 she was captured and dragged to London on her route to Altona outside Hamburg. Her captain, Thomas Tandrup, gave some insights into the importance of being formally recognised as a burgher to be a successful captain. He had moved from an unspecified place in Jutland to Flekkefjord in Norway, but he was burgher of both Copenhagen and the Danish Caribbean island of St Croix: "to enable him to enjoy the rights and privileges of the Market to the burghership of that place."³⁸ To have a successful career in the merchant marine it was necessary to become burgher or citizen of one of the major commercial hubs. The high number of migrants holding citizenship, in particular in Copenhagen, seems to indicate that it was indeed ambitious and skilled people who moved to the two Nordic capitals. However, there were also big regional differences between the two capitals. 18% more had become citizens in Copenhagen compared to Stockholm. This likely indicates two different things: it was more important to be a citizen in Copenhagen in order to trade successfully than it was in Stockholm. Also, it is very likely that there is institutional explanation for it. In Copenhagen the captains on the European vessels had to be burghers to fill the position as captain, and it is unclear whether something similar was in place in Sweden and Stockholm.

³⁶ Lucassen & Lucassen, "The Mobility Transition Revisited", p. 363.

³⁷ Even with the many possibilities to advance it did take time, however, it was possible for migrants to reach some of the highest statuses in society, for an example from the Dutch VOC see, Bruijn, *Commanders*, p. 114-117.

³⁸ HCA32/662.

Figure 5 – Burgerschaft, Freeman, or Citizen in Copenhagen and Stockholm 1776-1803.



Joseph Anton Ponsaing, mentioned above, epitomises this as well. He had been working his way through the ranks in the Danish Asiatic Company, had taken his exam in the Skipper's guild, but he needed a final element to become captain of a ship, namely the burgerschaft or citizenship of Copenhagen. On the 12th of April 1795 he became burgher of Copenhagen and in his letter of citizenship it is stipulated which skills he possessed and what qualified him to become a citizen. These skills included calculation of time using the sun, correction of compass deviations, keeping a journal correctly and the ability to keep the right course wherever he went. A year and a half after he had become a citizen of Copenhagen he sailed out of Copenhagen as captain of Eenrum and had reached the peak of his career.³⁹

Conclusion

What this paper has demonstrated is that there were slight differences in the type of migrants who went to either Copenhagen or Stockholm during the eighteenth century. The frequently relatively young non-sedentary migrant was a more important part of Copenhagen's labour market than in Stockholm throughout the century. That Copenhagen had more non-sedentary migrants shall undoubtedly be seen in the light of sharing hinterland both with the Dutch and Hamburg (in the Wadden sea region) and with Stockholm (in Skåne and Västergötland). The potential migrants in these regions had more opportunities than the people who was attracted to Stockholm and the Swedish market.

³⁹ HCA 42/217.2 and HCA 32/617-618.

Of the migrants who found their way and settled in the cities, the Stockholm migrant was more likely to be married than the Danish counterpart, and in both cities the sedentary migrant was more likely to be married than the unsettled non-sedentary counterpart, which seems to indicate that the people were in slightly different stages of their life, or that different tradition dictated marriage at different times.

A mutual characteristic which is very clear from this investigation is that migrants – both sedentary and non-sedentary – from the rural areas of both the Danish and the Swedish realm were all important to the maritime labour markets, and that in both cases the migrants can be said to have had a relatively high level of human capital indicating that it was rather skilled labour that flocked to the commercial hubs.

That the skill level of migrants in Copenhagen was slightly higher than that in Stockholm could have been the reason why both types of migrants in the Danish capital held slightly higher ranks than the migrants to the Swedish capital, which again can partly explain why more migrants were burghers in Copenhagen. In both cases the numbers seem to indicate that migration from a rural to an urban setting could be a fertile way of furthering one's social status.

This paper has given a glimpse into a very mobile and fluctuating part of the early modern labour market and has sought to highlight some alternative variables to the usual economic explanations which can have been integral in making people take up work over vast distances with or without settling permanently. Rather than offering any absolute truths the paper points towards new venues of study when discussing early modern labour migration which in combination with economic explanations for mobility can present a more holistic view of the world in the eighteenth century.